



## SECOND EDITION



# A Handbook of Comparative Social Policy, Second Edition

*Edited by*

Patricia Kennett

*Reader in Comparative Policy Studies, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, UK*



**Edward Elgar**

Cheltenham, UK • Northampton, MA, USA

© Patricia Kennett 2013

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical or photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

Published by  
Edward Elgar Publishing Limited  
The Lypiatts  
15 Lansdown Road  
Cheltenham  
Glos GL50 2JA  
UK

Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc.  
William Pratt House  
9 Dewey Court  
Northampton  
Massachusetts 01060  
USA

A catalogue record for this book  
is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Control Number: 2012954977

This book is available electronically in the ElgarOnline.com  
Social and Political Science Subject Collection, E-ISBN 978 1 78254 653 5



ISBN 978 1 84980 366 3 (cased)

Typeset by Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Stockport, Cheshire  
Printed and bound in Great Britain by T.J. International Ltd, Padstow

---

## Contributors

---

**David Bainton** is a lecturer in Education at Goldsmiths College, University of London. After a chemistry degree Dave taught in secondary schools in London, Zimbabwe and Bhutan, before doing a PhD (Bristol) that looked at the effect of Western education on indigenous knowledge in Ladakh, Northern India. His current research interests are the effects of globalization on the educational experiences of children and communities in the Global South, and how translation might offer a way to be sensitive to the global reconfiguration of livelihoods and subjectivities.

**Jaak Billiet**, PhD, was a Professor in Social Methodology at the University of Leuven (Belgium) and is now Professor Emeritus. His main interest in methodology is with modelling of measurement error in social surveys. His substantial research covers longitudinal and comparative research in the domains of ethnocentrism, political attitudes and religious orientations. He was a founding member of the Central Coordination Team involved in the European Social Survey. Publications include *Improving Survey Response* (Wiley, 2010) in cooperation with Stoop, Koch and Fitzgerald); *Cross-Cultural Analysis: Methods and Applications* (Routledge, 2011) as co-editor with Davidov and Schmidt, as well as articles in *Sociological Methods & Research* (2008), *European Sociological Review* (2008), *Social Science Research* (2009), *Survey Research Methods* (2009, 2010) and *Public Opinion Quarterly* (2010).

**Jonathan Bradshaw**, CBE, FBA, is Professor of Social Policy at the University of York. He was founding director of the Social Policy Research Unit and served two terms as Head of Department. His main research interests are poverty, child well-being, family policy and comparative social policy. His most recent book is *The Well-being of Children in the UK* (Policy Press, 2011). He is the UK member of the EU expert group on social inclusion and works as a consultant to UNICEF. He is a partner in the Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey 2012. He is a member of the Board of the Child Poverty Action Group and Chair of York Welfare Benefits Unit.

**Jochen Clasen** is Professor of Comparative Social Policy at the University of Edinburgh. His research interests cover labour market policy, social security, welfare state theory and comparative methodology. Recent book publications include *Investigating Welfare State Change: The 'Dependent*

*Variable Problem* in *Comparative Analysis* (editor, with N.A. Siegel; Edward Elgar, 2007), *Converging Worlds of Welfare? British and German Social Policy in the 21st Century* (editor; Oxford University Press, 2011) and *Regulating the Risk of Unemployment: National Adaptations to Post-industrial Labour Markets in Europe* (editor, with D. Clegg; Oxford University Press, 2011).

**Graham Crow** is Director of the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science and is based at the University of Edinburgh where he is Professor of Sociology and Methodology. He is also Deputy Director of the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods. His publications include *Comparative Sociology and Social Theory* (Macmillan, 1997), *Social Solidarities* (Open University Press, 2002), and *The Art of Sociological Argument* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). He is currently writing a book for Bloomsbury on community studies.

**Ray Forrest** is Chair Professor of Housing and Urban Studies at the City University of Hong Kong and Emeritus of Urban Studies at the University of Bristol. From 2001 to 2004 he was Head of the School for Policy Studies at Bristol and from 2004–08 was Associate, then Acting Director of the Centre for East Asian Studies. He was also Co-Director of the ESRC Centre for Neighbourhood Research (2001–05). He is a founding member of the Asia-Pacific Network of Housing Researchers. He is currently co-editor of *Housing Studies* and edits the Routledge *Housing and Society* series.

**Norman Ginsburg** has been Professor of Social Policy at London Metropolitan University since 1996. His research interests are the comparative impact of social policy on social injustice and inequality, and the social effects of urban regeneration and housing policy. He is the author of *Divisions of Welfare: An Introduction to Comparative Social Policy* (Sage, 1992). Recent publications include articles on globalization and the liberal welfare states, social policy in Sweden, social aspects of urban regeneration, the demise of council housing, and on globalization and racism.

**Ian Gough**, AcSS, FRSA, is Emeritus Professor at the University of Bath and Visiting Professor at the London School of Economics, where he is currently researching climate change and social policy. He is the author of numerous books, including *The Political Economy of the Welfare State; A Theory of Human Need; Global Capital, Human Needs and Social Policies*; and *Insecurity and Welfare Regimes in Asia, Africa and Latin America*.

**Linda Hantrais** is Emeritus Professor of European Social Policy in the Department of Politics, History and International Relations,

Loughborough University, UK, and an academician of the Academy of Social Sciences. Her research interests span international comparative research theory, methodology, management and practice, with particular reference to public policy and institutional structures in the European Union, and the relationship between socio-demographic trends and social policy. She has coordinated several European research projects and has acted as consultant for an ESRC-funded Researcher Development Initiative for a training programme in International Social Research Methods. Her more recent publications on these topics include: *Family Policy Matters: Responding to Family Change in Europe* (Policy Press, 2004); *Social Policy in the European Union* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, 3rd edition); *Cross-National Research Methodology and Practice* (editor, with S. Mangen, Routledge, 2007); *International Comparative Research: Theory, Methods and Practice* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

**Bob Jessop** is Distinguished Professor of Sociology at Lancaster University and co-directs the Cultural Political Economy Research Centre. He is best known for his work on state theory, Thatcherism, critical political economy, and welfare state restructuring, and is currently researching the crisis of crisis management in the epic recession of 2008–12. His best known work includes *The Capitalist State* (1982), *Nicos Poulantzas: Marxist Theory and Political Strategy* (1985), *Thatcherism: A Tale of Two Nations* (with Kevin Bonnett, Simon Bromley and Tom Ling, 1988), *State Theory* (1990), *The Future of the Capitalist State* (2002), *Beyond the Regulation Approach* (co-authored with Ngai-Ling Sum, 2006), and *State Power* (2007). He has also published more than 200 book chapters and 70 refereed journal articles on these and related topics.

**Patricia Kennett** is Reader in Comparative Policy Studies at the University of Bristol. Her research interests involve exploring cross-nationally the interrelated dynamics of space, place, power and policy, and the processes and differentiated nature of inclusion and exclusion. Her particular geographical focus is on Europe and East Asia. Patricia is currently leading an ESRC project on the uneven impact of the economic downturn on cities and households in Bristol and Liverpool, which follows the recent completion of a three-year qualitative research project on Governance and Citizenship in East Asia (funded by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, China). Recent publications include an edited collection *Women and Housing: An International Analysis* (with Chan Kam Wah; Routledge, 2010), as well as journal articles on gender justice, and choreographies of governance and citizenship in East Asia.



**Huck-ju Kwon** is Professor and the Deputy Director of Asia Development Institute, Graduate School of Public Administration, Seoul National University. He was previously Research Coordinator at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD). He serves as East Asian Editor of *Global Social Policy* (Sage). His recent publications include *The Korean State and Social Policy* (Oxford University Press, 2011), *Transforming the Developmental Welfare State in East Asia* (Palgrave, 2005), and 'Economic crises and the welfare state in Korea: reforms and future challenges', in *Korea Journal of Policy Studies* (2010).

**Noemi Lendvai** is a Lecturer in Comparative Social Policy at the School for Policy Studies at the University of Bristol. She has done extensive research on the post-communist transformation and Europeanization of welfare in New EU Member States. Her theoretical focus is on translation as a critical comparative social policy method as well as various typology works around forms of variegated or varieties of welfare capitalisms in Eastern Europe. As a Max Weber Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence in 2010, she has also done some work on East-West migration and emerging practices of social citizenship in a hyper-mobile European Union.

**Steen Mangen** convenes the MSc in European Social Policy at the London School of Economics. His main research interests have included contemporary Spanish and German welfare states, qualitative methods in cross-national settings and urban regeneration policies in Western Europe. *Spanish Society After Franco: Regime Transition and the Welfare State* was published by Palgrave in 2001 and *Social Exclusion and Inner City Europe: Regulating Urban Regeneration*, also by Palgrave, was published in 2004. With Linda Hantrais he co-edited *Cross-National Research Methodology & Practice*, published by Routledge in 2007, and contributed to *A Companion to Europe since 1945*, edited by Klaus Larres and published by Blackwell in 2008. He is currently completing a cross-national research project on the changing role of faith-based organizations in Western European welfare states.

**James Midgley** is Harry and Riva Specht Professor of Public Social Services and Dean Emeritus of the School of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley. He has published widely on issues of social policy, social development and international social welfare. His most recent books include *Social Security, the Economy and Development* (Palgrave, 2008) (editor with Kwong-leung Tang); *The Handbook of Social Policy* (Sage, 2009) (editor with Michelle Livermore); *Grassroots Social Security in Asia: Mutual Aid, Microinsurance and Social Welfare* (Routledge, 2011)

(editor with Mitsuhiro Hosaka); and *Colonialism and Welfare: Social Policy and the British Imperial Legacy* (Edward Elgar, 2011) (editor with David Piachaud). He holds honorary professional appointments at Nihon Fukushi University in Japan, Sun Yat Sen University in China, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and the University of Johannesburg, South Africa and is a Fellow of the newly founded American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare.

**Ramesh Mishra** is Emeritus Professor of Social Policy at York University, Canada. His areas of interest are comparative welfare states, globalization and social protection, and social rights. He has published extensively in these areas and his books and articles have been translated into many languages. His books include *The Welfare State in Crisis* (1984), *Globalization and the Welfare State* (1999) and *Modernizing the Korean Welfare State* (co-editor, 2004). Among his other publications are 'Globalizing social rights' in *Man & Development* (December 2002), 'Globalization and welfare states' in *Welfare States and the Future* (Macmillan, 2005) and 'Social rights as human rights', *International Social Work*, 48(1) (2005).

**David Nelken**, PHD, LLD (Cambridge), is Distinguished Professor of Legal Institutions and Social Change at the University of Macerata in Italy and Distinguished Research Professor of Law at Cardiff University, UK. He is also the Visiting Professor of Criminology at the Oxford Centre of Criminology (teaching a masters course on comparative criminology and globalization). An academician of the UK Academy of the Social Sciences, he received a Distinguished Scholar award from the American Sociological Association in 1985, the 'Sellin-Glueck' career award from the American Society of Criminology in 2009, the 'Adam Podgorecki' career prize from the International Sociological Association (RCSL) in 2011 and the 2013 international prize from the (USA) Law and Society Association. His latest books are *Comparative Criminal Justice: Making Sense of Difference* (Sage, 2010); *Comparative Criminal Justice and Globalisation* (Ashgate, 2011); and *Using Legal Culture* (Wildy, Simmonds and Hill, 2012).

**Julia S. O'Connor** is Professor of Social Policy and a member of the Institute for Research in Social Sciences at the University of Ulster. Her main area of research is welfare states in comparative perspective, focusing on OECD and EU countries. Current research projects include a study of employment insecurity, regulation and social protection and a study of state transformation and gender equality. Recent publications include articles on socioeconomic policy and outcome convergence in EU countries; gender, citizenship and the state; and non-standard employment and EU employment regulation.



**Andrés Pérez-Baltodano** is a Professor of Political Science at Western University in Canada. He is a former director of the Nicaraguan Institute of Public Administration. Between 1983 and 1988 he worked with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada, where he organized a multinational research programme in public policy and participation. He has published extensively in the areas of globalization, human security and the state, with special emphasis on Latin America. His most recent book is entitled *La Subversión Ética de la Realidad: Crisis y Renovación del Pensamiento Crítico Latinoamericano*, published by the Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica (IHNCA), Universidad Centroamericana in 2009.

**Alan Walker** is a Professor of Social Policy at the University of Sheffield. He was Director of the ESRC Growing Older Programme 1999–2004, the European Research Area in Ageing 2004–12 and the FUTURAGE Project 2010–12, and is currently Director of the New Dynamics of Ageing Programme and two European projects, INNOVAGE and MOPACT. He has a long-standing interest in social policy in China and East Asia, and has edited a collection on this topic with Chack-kie Wong, *East Asian Welfare Regimes in Transition* (Policy Press, 2005). Other recent publications include *Fighting Poverty, Inequality and Injustice* (with A. Sinfield and C. Walker) (Policy Press, 2011) and *Social Quality: From Theory to Indicators* (with L. Van Der Maesen) (Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

**Chack-kie Wong** is a Professor in the Department of Social Work and Associate Director of Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Currently he is a member of the Central Policy Unit of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. His research interests are in the areas of comparative social policy, welfare attitudes, poverty and Chinese social welfare. He has published articles in *Social Policy and Society*, *Journal of Social Policy*, *Social Policy and Administration*, and *International Social Work*.

---

## Acknowledgements

---

I would like to thank the authors for their willingness to contribute to the *Handbook*, for the time and effort put into producing and revising their individual chapters and for their patience during the editing process. I am also grateful to the publishers for their advice and support.

---

# Contents

---

<i>List of contributors</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xv

Introduction: the changing context of comparative social policy <i>Patricia Kennett</i>	1
--	---

**PART I THE STATE AND SOCIAL POLICY IN A  
GLOBALIZING WORLD**

1 Hollowing out the ‘nation-state’ and multi-level governance <i>Bob Jessop</i>	11
2 Globalization, human security and social policy: North and South <i>Andrés Pérez-Baltodano</i>	27
3 Globalization and the decline of ‘social protection by other means’: the transformation of welfare regimes in Australia, Japan and Eastern Europe <i>Ramesh Mishra</i>	46

**PART II CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS**

4 Defining comparative social policy <i>Jochen Clasen</i>	71
5 Conceptualizing state and society <i>Graham Crow</i>	84
6 The ethnocentric construction of the welfare state <i>Alan Walker and Chack-kie Wong</i>	98
7 Translation: towards a critical comparative social policy agenda <i>Noemi Lendvai and David Bainton</i>	115

**PART III COMPARING AND CATEGORIZING SOCIAL  
POLICY PROVISION AND REDISTRIBUTION**

- 8 Gender, citizenship and welfare state regimes in the early  
twenty-first century: 'incomplete revolution' and/or gender  
equality 'lost in translation' 137  
*Julia S. O'Connor*
- 9 Structured diversity: a framework for critically comparing  
welfare states? 162  
*Norman Ginsburg*
- 10 Social development and social welfare: implications for  
comparative social policy 182  
*James Midgley*
- 11 Social policy regimes in the developing world 205  
*Ian Gough*

**PART IV THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

- 12 Crossing cultural boundaries 227  
*Linda Hantrais*
- 13 Cross-national qualitative research methods: innovations in  
the new millennium 243  
*Steen Mangen*
- 14 Quantitative methods with survey data in comparative  
research 264  
*Jaak Billiet*

**PART V THEMES AND DEBATES**

- 15 Child poverty and child well-being in comparative perspective 303  
*Jonathan Bradshaw*
- 16 The contours of the housing question 329  
*Ray Forrest*
- 17 Global economic downturn and social protection in  
East Asia: coping with crisis and reducing poverty 353  
*Huck-ju Kwon*

18	Globalization, crime and comparative criminal justice <i>David Nelken</i>	381
	<i>Index</i>	399

---

# Introduction: the changing context of comparative social policy

*Patricia Kennett*

---

The field of comparative social enquiry has grown dramatically since the 1960s, in terms of the number of studies being undertaken, the range of approaches used and the countries analysed. The analytical emphasis on the notions of modernization and convergence, and social expenditure as a proportion of GNP as the measure of welfare effort, whilst still evident in contemporary cross-national research, ceased to dominate the comparative landscape from the 1980s. There is now much more interest in recognizing and explaining qualitative as well as quantitative differences in types of welfare systems, addressing the role of institutions and ideas; acknowledgement that formal social policies are only one element in the arrangement of welfare and that social policy is not just about ameliorating the impact of social inequality or altruism but itself contributes to social divisions in society. There has been a greater recognition of diversity and the importance of analysing context, processes, culture and the outcomes of social policies across countries and their impact on different groups.

The changing discourse around social policy and the welfare state can also be associated with the economic and political conditions of the 1980s, which were in marked contrast to what had gone before. In many OECD countries, post-1945 was an era in which the notion of Keynesian welfare capitalism, in its various institutional forms, incorporated a commitment to extended social citizenship and a certain minimum standard of life and security as a matter of right. National welfare regimes helped to underpin a global system of interacting national economies characterized by mass production and mass consumption. This model of institutionalized, bureaucratic provision and social rights was perceived as the inevitable outcome of a 'modern' or developed society. By the 1980s it was the political rhetoric of deregulation, privatization, the efficiency of the 'free market' and rolling back the frontiers of the state that had become the global economic discourse influencing both national and international policies. As Taylor-Gooby (2001) argues in a European context, 'Keynesianism (the view that state intervention is the best way to promote growth and employment) is quite simply dead, a result of the general acceptance that governmental capacity to manage investment within its borders is



limited' (p. 19). At the same time many of the fundamental assumptions associated with the national welfare state and the social rights of citizenship have been discredited and renegotiated, and the discourse about the role of the state in welfare has moved in a new direction (Kennett, 2001; Taylor-Gooby, 2001). According to Harris (2002) the 'new' welfare of the 1980s and 1990s centred on personal and community relationships (Etzioni, 1995; Driver and Martell, 1997), community governance and the notion of active membership, in contrast with the 'old' welfare of the post-war period which emphasized society, universal citizenship rights and statutory state provision (King and Wickham Jones, 1999; Rose, 1999). More recently, fundamental to the 'new' welfare is a re-balancing of the social contract between the state and the individual, between rights and responsibilities, work and welfare (Kvist, 2000; Barbier, 2001).

The current context then is one in which many of the old certainties of the past have been eroded and there has been a recognition of the emergence of 'new' social risks (Jenson and Saint Martin, 2002; Taylor-Gooby, 2004; Bonoli, 2005). The predominantly inward-looking, domestic preoccupation of social policy has made way for a more integrated, international and outward approach to analysis (Kennett, 2001, 2010; Hantrais, 2009), and a recognition of the importance of scale (Brenner, 2001). Central to this endeavour is a reassessment of the place of the state in contemporary social policy analysis. The pre-eminence of the national scale, the national state and the national citizen has been weakened by internationalization, the growth of multi-tiered networks and partnerships and the re-emergence of the regional and the local within national states. There has been a proliferation of scales, channels, projects and social networks through which social interaction and active participation can be pursued. Thus, within the modern world system, the notion of unfettered state sovereignty has become problematic and contradictory (Clapham, 2002; Weiss, 2003; Kennett, 2008, 2010) and has presented new challenges for comparative analysis in the social sciences.

These challenges have been captured in recent academic work relating to processes of globalization and transnationalism that have contributed to a de-centring of the state in social policy analysis. The burgeoning literature reflects the multi-faceted nature of global processes, and indeed the vagueness and inconsistencies in the use of the concept (Geschiere and Meyer, 1998; Giddens, 1999; Held and McGrew, 2000, 2002). General debates have been concerned with the economic, cultural, technological, social and political dimensions of globalization. In addition, the relationship between globalization, social policy and the welfare state has generated interest amongst commentators (for example, Deacon et al., 1997; Midgley, 1997; Mishra, 1999; Yeates, 2000; Scharf, 2000; Swank, 2002;

Kennett, 2010). This interest emerged in the context of the retrenchment and reorientation of welfare mentioned earlier and the changing role of the state as its dominant position has increasingly been challenged by stronger and more influential transnational and supranational institutions and the assertiveness of subnational governments. Global and transnational processes are said by some to have contributed to the erosion of the functions of nation-states and deprived national governments of their ability to establish and maintain an autonomous welfare model. Clearly there are differing opinions on the nature, extent and impact of global processes on social policy and welfare systems. What is more certain is that the current context of social policy is one that looks beyond the boundaries of the state in terms of incorporating transnational and subnational activities, and is sensitive to the nature of the mixed economy of welfare, the range of conduits through which policies are made and delivered and the changing relations of space and power within, across and between states and societies (Macrae, 2006; Kennett, 2008). As Geschiere and Meyer (1998) argue, 'The inspiring capacity of the notion of globalization is precisely that it forces social scientists to critically reflect upon how they construct their objects, and to seek for more appropriate fields of investigation which take account of people's actual entanglement in wider processes' (p. 603). So, in de-centring the state the researcher is encouraged to reconsider established structures of 'boundedness' and seek out alternative orientation points and identify reconstructed boundaries as individuals, communities and societies seek to make sense of a changing world.

It is in this context then that this *Handbook* brings together the work of key commentators in the field of comparative analysis in order to provide comprehensive, but by no means exhaustive, coverage of contemporary debates and issues in cross-national research. The collection explores the contextual, conceptual, analytical and processual aspects of undertaking comparative international social research. The collection is divided into five themes. The first part – 'The State and Social Policy in a Globalizing World' – is concerned with extending the epistemological framework through which comparative international analysis is explored by emphasizing the need to look beyond the boundaries of the state not only in relation to transnational activities, but also in terms of the mixed economy of welfare and cultural political economy (Sayer, 2001; Jessop and Oosterlynck, 2008; Kennett, forthcoming) within different societies. The three contributors to this section explore the future of the nation-state and the nature of governance, debates that have been, according to Jessop (Chapter 1 this volume), reinforced with the recent global financial crisis and global climate change; and the implications for human security and social protection in different societies and for different groups of people.

#### 4 *A handbook of comparative social policy*

Bob Jessop in Chapter 1 identifies the transfer of powers previously located at the national level to a more diverse, multi-level and multi-sector range of actors and institutions. In addition, he stresses the importance of conceptual distinctions and complexity in order to understand the future of national and/or nation-states. The differential impact of globalization on the states and societies of the North and the South is also a concern of Andrés Pérez-Baltodano in Chapter 2. He argues that global interconnectedness has generated new forms of human insecurity that require a range of social policy responses beyond national boundaries. He outlines the formation and development of the democratic Western European state and, drawing upon this 'universalist' model, considers the different levels of 'stateness' achieved by countries in the North and the South. He argues that an understanding of the varying capacities of states to respond to global pressures is vital in order to fully comprehend the varying conditions of human security across societies.

In the final chapter in Part I, Ramesh Mishra focuses on Australia, Japan and the post-socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the former USSR as representative of societies with institutional patterns defined as 'social protection by other means'. He argues that these were developed during an era of relatively closed and insulated national economies and considers the extent to which they have been undermined by the opening up of national markets to international competition.

The reassessment of the role of the state in social policy analysis forms part of a fundamental reappraisal of the assumptions embedded in social science research that has been underway since the 1980s. The rationality, essentialism and universalism of policy discourse and practices through which the welfare state was established have been called into question. The emphasis on diversity, difference and contingency and the notion of spatial and temporal variation challenged many of the assumptions on which the theoretical and epistemological traditions of social policy have been built. The universalism of social policy discourse was, in reality, exemplifying the experience of the white, able-bodied, heterosexual worker and was unable to capture the 'particular' experiences and social needs of diverse ethnic, cultural, sexual and gender interests.

Parts II and III of this volume – 'Concepts and Definitions' and 'Comparing and Categorizing Social Policy Provision and Redistribution' – focus on the conceptual and theoretical frameworks for analysing social policy cross-nationally. In Chapter 4 Jochen Clasen begins by exploring the distinctive features of and the meanings applied to comparative social policy over recent years. For comparativists the unit of analysis has traditionally been different national contexts. However, as the boundaries of state and society are becoming increasingly blurred the concerns for