

Welfare and the Welfare State

Present and future

Bent Greve



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Welfare and the Welfare State

The welfare state plays a key role in people's everyday lives in developed societies. At the same time, the welfare state is contested and there are constant discussions on how and to what degree the state should intervene, influence and have an impact on the development of society. Recent years have seen an accelerated transformation of the welfare state in the light of the global financial crisis, demographic change and changes in the perception of the state's role in relation to social welfare. This raises fundamentally new issues related to social policy and welfare state analysis. This book provides:

- an introduction to the principles of welfare
- a conceptual framework necessary for understanding social policy at the macro-level
- a comparative approach to welfare states globally
- an overview of new ways to organise and steer welfare states
- an introduction to welfare state politics and underlying economic framework
- an account of equality and inequality in modern societies
- new directions for welfare states.

The book's focus on core concepts and the variety of international welfare state regimes and mechanisms for delivering social policy provides a much needed introduction to the rapidly changing concept of welfare for students on social policy, social studies, sociology and politics courses.

Bent Greve is Professor of Welfare State Analysis at Roskilde University, Denmark. He is regional and special issues editor of *Social Policy & Administration*, and has written over 20 books on welfare, including ten books in English, and many articles in international and national journals.

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Foreword

The welfare state is central in people's everyday lives. At the same time, the welfare state is contested and debated, and is argued to be in a crisis. Welfare and welfare states used to be a national issue and prerogative. Today welfare and welfare states are not only influenced by national decisions, but also are influenced by regional and global aspects.

State, market and civil society all play a role in the development of society and their interaction can have profound impact on the way societies work and function, particularly with regard to who has access to income, goods and services.

However, there is a strong need to know basic concepts and how they can be understood and interpreted. This book provides an overview of the central concepts through a state, market and civil society lens. It also attempts to provide the reader with knowledge on distribution in societies and how this interacts and influences different groups and their position in society.

A comparative approach has been used as this better enables us to understand our own country's welfare. A comparative approach offers a mirror that helps us see differences and similarities between countries and their welfare states. It also helps to underline and see the linkages to the impact of global and regional issues on welfare states and their development.

Finally, the book attempts to present challenges and future perspectives for welfare states and their development.

*Bent Greve
Roskilde and Bagsværd, January 2014*

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Central concepts

Introduction

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1.1 What are the central issues?

The welfare state, in all developed societies at least, plays a key role in people's everyday lives. At the same time, the welfare state is contested and there are constant discussions on how and to what degree the state should intervene, influence and have an impact on the development of society, including on the market and civil society. Many questions arise: should there be a stronger or a leaner welfare state, or a larger role for families, the voluntary sector or the market? Such issues have been discussed for many years, as have subjects concerning the welfare state in crisis. Different measures have been used, such as direct cutbacks in the form of retrenchment, more marginal changes or just gradual changes. At the same time, for centuries the sovereign and the state have played a role and the boundaries between state, market and civil society have been analysed, debated and discussed from many and varied perspectives.

Recent years have seen an ongoing transformation of the welfare state in the light of the global financial crisis, demographic change and changes in the