The idea of *The Welfare State Reader* is to bring together in a single volume a fine selection of enduring and contemporary writings on or about the ‘welfare state’, including some of the most influential writers to shape our thinking on this subject. *The Welfare State Reader* is therefore aimed at a broad studentship in social policy (and beyond), and given the material included, it certainly makes for interesting and often essential (course) reading and reference.

In this 3rd edition, the editors have comprehensively overhauled the content of the Reader (from the earlier 2nd edition of 2006), bringing it up to date with contemporary discussions about this most crucial aspect of social and political life. The book includes 17 new selections. Out go some of yesterday’s hot topics, debates, authors and thinkers (Giddens on ‘positive welfare’ in the 2nd edition, for instance; Hutton on welfare strategy in the 1st edition), to be replaced by some of today’s cutting-edge welfare research themes. We now find ‘happiness’ and ‘social investment’ included, for example, along with ‘climate change’ (also a new entry) – one can do little more than merely wonder what might feature in a fully revised 4th edition in years to come?

The Reader continues to be divided into three parts; each section is set in context by a new editorial introduction with 31 diverse readings in total. Part I considers ‘approaches to welfare’, and includes an extract from Paine’s *Rights of Man*, followed by sections focusing on ‘classical’ approaches (Briggs, Marshall, Titmuss), ‘perspectives on the Left’ (now trimmed down for the new edition with the loss of O’Connor and Korpi, but still featuring The Commission on Social Justice, and Offe), ‘responses from the Right’ (Hayek, Murray, Mead) and ‘feminism’ (Pateman, Hernes).

In Part II, ‘welfare regimes’ are now ‘under threat’, with readings on ‘trajectories’ (Esping-Andersen, Manow and van Kersbergen, Pierson), readings on ‘constraints’ (Swank, Kvist and Saari, Armingeon) and readings on ‘challenges’ (Meier and Werding, McDonald, Schierup and Castles, Bonoli).


In his review of the 1st edition, Hartley Dean reflected critically, ‘inevitably the materials chosen do not wholly encapsulate the main debates concerning the welfare state, nor do they by themselves provide an entire or coherent narrative’ (Dean 2000) – how very true. Given the title, The Welfare State Reader, I would have liked, or indeed might expect, to be served up with a little more flavour of the contested ‘welfare state’ concept (Veit-Wilson 2000), or indeed a more contemporary selection discussing the origins and term ‘welfare state’ itself (Petersen and Petersen 2013) – conceptual confusion is implicit in the range of works presented of course, but this conceptual challenge is never really uncovered and made more explicit, as one might hope for.

Naturally, it may feel a little frustrating to have a few pages from influential and well known texts chosen for me, and once selected, then edited (with bits of text missing) – surely the inquisitive and meticulous scholar of social policy would want to have the (complete) original work close at hand? This makes the Reader rather redundant, or consigning the value to the short introductory pages that attempt to justify chosen selections (i.e. the particular or important bits of text the editors think we should really focus our attention on).

Having said all that, it does manage to combine all of the material into a single volume on ‘the welfare state’ (accepting that there is no such thing as the welfare state, and there are unwelfare states too), thus making it quite a handy companion volume to own. There are other collected readings dedicated to the ‘welfare state’ to choose from, including more voluminous two- (Goodin and Mitchell 2000) and four-volume collections (Alcock and Powell 2011). The fact that The Welfare State Reader is now published in the 3rd edition, some 14 years on from the first, means that it probably does deserve praise for helping to stimulate social policy debate, and this suggests that it will continue to find a place as a ‘resource’ on the social policy student’s bookshelf.

References


Christopher Deeming, University of Bristol
This 2nd edition of the original 2004 handbook provides a welcome revision of one of the major overviews on this subject. In her introduction, Kennett skilfully outlines the changing context of comparative social policy and presents the rationale for the five themes of this compilation. As any comparative social policy is inherently international, it is indispensable to consider the global context of social policy-making. The first three chapters are thus devoted to the theme of how Globalization affects the welfare of citizens in different parts of the world. While the first two chapters mainly deal with conceptual and theoretical discussions of the impact of globalization trends, Ramesh Mishra examines their consequences for the welfare systems in Australia, Japan and Central and Eastern Europe. These three settings were selected because their welfare systems deviate from the ‘mainstream’ Western welfare state by offering ‘social protection by other means’ in formerly relatively closed economies. Mishra’s chapter title already indicates that these alternative forms of social protection are in decline due to economic liberalization, resulting in a ‘mainstreaming’ of welfare systems in these countries.

The second part of the handbook addresses the theme of Concepts and Definitions. It starts with the short, yet authoritative contribution on ‘Defining comparative social policy’ by Jochen Clasen, who discusses the problems with defining both social policy and the comparative method as a particular research strategy applied on an ‘ambiguous, contested and amorphous subject matter’. Next, Graham Crow deals with the question of ‘what to compare’ and the respective problems related to comparisons on the basis of either societies or states, the two most common units of analysis in comparative social research. This discussion of key conceptual and methodological issues is rounded off by Noemi Lendvai and David Bainton, whose chapter takes a translation perspective to scrutinize research design and methodological issues such as the equivalence of meaning, country selection criteria, contextualization, and conceptualization. Their chapter is a refreshing addition to the handbook as it challenges the theoretical and methodological ethnocentric biases in mainstream comparative social policy research and argues for new research avenues that take issues of language and translation more seriously. In a later chapter on ‘Crossing cultural boundaries’, Linda Hantrais addresses similar issues, albeit mainly from the perspective of doing comparative research in multinational teams. A number of chapters criticize the ‘ethnocentric construction of the welfare state’ by widening the comparative perspective to countries outside the Western hemisphere.

Other key concepts that feature frequently in this handbook are those of ideal types and welfare state regimes, which are the focus of the third part of the handbook (Comparing and Categorizing). In another state-of-the-art contribution that makes this handbook worthwhile obtaining, Julia O’Connor presents a revised chapter on gender and citizenship issues in relation to welfare state regimes. The following three chapters take further critical perspectives on
welfare state comparisons and typologies (Norman Ginsburg considering the social divisions of class, gender and race; James Midgley and Ian Gough in two distinct contributions from the perspectives of the Global South). Unfortunately, the chapter on different strategies of equality by Walter Korpi and Joakim Palme that featured in the first edition was dropped.

The fourth part on the Research Process is considerably shorter than in the 1st edition. Hantrais’ contribution has already been mentioned above. Two chapters on qualitative and quantitative research methods respectively complement this part. It is notable that set-theoretic or configurational approaches such as qualitative comparative analysis whose usefulness have been repeatedly highlighted by various contributors to this handbook were not discussed in a distinctive chapter, but only subsumed under qualitative research methods, which does not do justice to these genuinely comparative approaches. Instead of offering a proper explanation of the underlying assumptions of these techniques, examples of social policy studies that applied such methods are mainly enumerated.

The final part of the book, simply titled Themes and Debates, includes four specific comparative social policy areas. Any selection of specific areas inevitably raises the question of why these particular policies have been chosen while others have been neglected. Notable in this respect is the absence of employment policies (where the concept of ‘activation’ has led to a veritable explosion of research in the recent decade), pension policy (with ageing populations usually identified as one of the main challenges of the welfare state) as well as health and other care services and benefits.

The title modestly suggests that this is ‘a’ and not ‘the’ handbook of comparative social policy, an appropriate assessment given that comparative social policy has become a research area of immense growth in recent decades that would make it hard to capture the full variety of theoretical, conceptual, methodological and empirical debates in the field in only around 400 pages. Rearranging some of the chapters might provide the volume with a more logical narrative, yet as handbooks are rarely read in a front-to-back order this is a minor issue. Overall, Kennett and colleagues can be congratulated on producing an informative overview of the key debates and concepts dominating comparative welfare state analysis today.

Elke Heins, University of Edinburgh

Minimum Income Protection in Flux
EDITED BY IVE MARX AND KENNETH NELSON

An authoritative book on how successfully European countries and the USA protect their citizens from poverty and destitution is undoubtedly a much needed resource for scholars and policymakers seeking to understand social protection systems. The insurance-based and universal benefits that have underpinned many of these systems for so long have been undermined by
growing inequality and instability, as well as by severe fiscal restraint in tough economic times. In these circumstances, safety-net benefits, often seen as only a ‘last resort’, have become central to social security systems.

This book does a splendid job of bringing together information on minimum income protection across countries. Its great strengths are the array of learned authors that it has assembled, its systematically thematic rather than country-by-country analysis and the richness of its data. A number of important themes stand out. A depressing one is the disconnect between theoretical commitments to tackling poverty and the manifest inadequacy of benefits to bring incomes above the recognized poverty line, 60 per cent of median income – with in many cases adequacy getting worse. Just as significant is the growth of in-work poverty, because of a combination of low relative pay and new patterns of work within households. This has stimulated the spread of means-tested support to address this and the conundrum of not creating new ‘poverty traps’ in the process.

It is now many years since policymakers felt that they could rely on near-full-employment complemented by decent insurance benefits based on income replacement to achieve social solidarity. Low pay and a lack of contribution-based entitlements are excluding too many from such a world. The lead authors ask in the introductory chapter whether a new concept of social citizenship is needed, which emphasizes the need to give selective help to those with least means, in return for a set of responsibilities including active involvement in the labour market.

Throughout the book, the authors ask not just how such solidarity can be developed within countries, but also across Europe. It notes that the right to an income allowing people to live in dignity has been the subject of EU resolution, and the authors generally seek to promote a more active engagement of supranational institutions in this area, while clearly under no illusions about the difficulty in achieving the required level of transfers across countries.

However, in this respect and others, the international academic community represented by the authors of this book is at risk of being overly optimistic about what is politically feasible, or at the very least of neglecting a very simple reality that has constrained the ability of social insurance benefits to combat poverty. This is the fact that, unlike social insurance, social assistance is rarely structured in a way that allows it to be effective in containing relative poverty.

Specifically, while social insurance is often linked to earnings and therefore tends by default to keep up with living standards, social assistance is more often linked to prices. This is not just an accident, but a product of a way of thinking about maintaining a ‘minimum’ living standard that relates to a constant basket of essentials, as opposed to maintaining an acceptable income relative to the average. While the chapters of this book go into great depth examining the inadequacy of safety-net benefits in relation to a relative income measure, they rarely bring to the fore the point that they are not actually designed to do so.

Ironically, this problem has been less severe in the past decade than the previous one, because general incomes have risen by less. This has caused the
emphasis to shift more to a concern with absolute poverty, and clearly minimum income protection has a crucial role to play here. Indeed, for the time being, analysts and supporters of minimum income systems may do well to acknowledge that at present they are often fighting a rearguard action – and focus on doing that effectively, rather than on higher but for the time being unrealistic goals such as the promotion of cross-European solidarity in transferring money to the poorest families in the poorest countries.

Donald Hirsch, Loughborough University

Money for Everyone: Why We Need a Citizen’s Income
By Malcolm Torry

A Citizens Income – often known as a Basic Income – is a proposal to reform the tax and benefit systems that could have considerable implications for economic, employment and social policies. Although a Citizen’s Income can be designed in many ways and justified from many political perspectives, the essential idea is straightforward. A Citizen’s Income would be periodically received by everyone as a right of citizenship and unconditionally, i.e. without reference to marital or employment status, employment history and intention to seek employment. It would replace most benefits, tax reliefs and allowances, and could be age-related, for example with a higher payment for elderly people. It therefore represents an alternative both to means-testing and to the social insurance principle, albeit one that is capable of complementing (rather than replacing) either or both.

It is now many years since an English language introduction to Citizen’s Income was published (Fitzpatrick 1999), though the introduction by Raventós (2007) was translated into and published in English more recently. Torry aims to fill a much needed gap, therefore. It provides a wide ranging but general introduction for those who are new to the subject, while offering those with more familiarity a useful compendium of recent literatures and debates. Across 17 chapters and almost 300 pages, Torry offers a sweeping narrative that seeks to cover all the bases – including the UK coalition government’s faltering efforts in the direction of Universal Credit.

The early chapters place Citizen’s Income in a variety of contexts, often seeking to understand policy ideas and reforms at a human, down to earth level and communicate this to the reader accordingly. For instance, Chapters 2 and 3 offer brief overviews of a range of past reforms and potential reforms which did not quite happen. Chapters 5 and 6 explore how a Citizen’s Income might be implemented and the extent to which embryonic forms of the proposal can be found in various countries around the world (see also Murray and Pateman 2012). Chapters 6–9 investigate a number of criteria for the benefits system, including: coherence and administrative simplicity; the need to reflect and support family and household patterns; incentives, efficiency and dignity; and being fit for purpose vis-à-vis the labour
market. Later chapters consider a number of key questions: Would people receiving a Citizen’s Income continue to work?, Would it address poverty and inequality?, Is the idea politically and economically feasible? The final chapters consider policy alternatives (including tax credits and Negative Income Tax) and the limitations of a Citizen’s Income reform. 

Money for Everyone is very much a defence of the Citizen’s Income proposal. So much so that those in the unpersuaded or undecided camps may well feel that their doubts and objections have not been given a thorough airing. For instance, Torry considers one standard objection: people receiving a Citizen’s Income would not work (or would work less), thus enhancing dependency and undermining the principle that those who gain from communal co-operation should make adequate contributions in return. Torry’s reply is that the desire to work is innate and that the existing interaction between benefits and the labour market is highly dysfunctional. Citizen’s Income seeks to change the nature of the debate. Rather than asking what conditions should be met before benefits can be received, we should ask whether people’s behaviour would change if a universal benefit were instituted, ‘Here the answers will stem from empirical study rather than from ideological commitments, though how a philosopher would view the situation would still of course depend on their viewpoint’ (p. 195).

Perhaps. But it is not just about philosophers. We all view the world around us through various social frames. And so it is not just about ideology but about the social relations, mutual dependencies and communal contributions which underpin social membership. The doubter is entitled to ask why we should try to change the terms of the debate in the first place. True, the virulent combination of market individualism and moralistic desert which today frames so many social policy issues indicates that something has gone seriously wrong in our social values. When finger-wagging increasingly extends not just to the unemployed but to all those deemed by a cabinet of millionaires to be ‘not working hard enough’, then conservative and economic liberal discourse is exposed for what it has always been: a war against the poor where being needy is prima facie evidence of a lack of moral virtue and social position is purely about motivation, efforts and application, with the role played by luck, inheritance and social structure being all but exor cis ed from the vocabulary of public debate. Nonetheless, any case for the defence must anticipate all facets which those making a case for the prosecution would advance.

By and large, though, Torry’s book deserves to become a standard introduction to the Citizen’s Income debate.

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Neighbourhood Effects or Neighbourhood-based Problems? A Policy Context
Edited by David Manley, Maarten van Ham, Nick Bailey, Ludi Simpson and Duncan MacIver

This book sets out to interrogate the link between area-based policies, neighbourhood-based problems and ‘neighbourhood effects’, defined here as ‘the idea that the neighbourhood in which an individual lives can negatively influence their life choices across a vast range of domains’ (p. 2). While drawing attention to the challenges inherent in what is termed the neighbourhood effects shibboleth (p. 2), the authors also argue convincingly for the importance of examining place-based policy prescriptions that have been made to improve neighbourhoods and the lives of individuals within them. Hence, the book makes an explicit link between neighbourhood-based policies and neighbourhood effects drawing on analysis from two previous volumes in the same series which tackled the theoretical foundations of the neighbourhood effects debate and the processes of neighbourhood change and selective mobility in and out of neighbourhoods respectively.

The book is divided into two sections. The chapters in the first half of the book each tackle problems that are perceived to be the result of negative area effects accrued from living in areas of concentrated poverty. It draws on a wealth of evidence to investigate in turn the problems of poor educational attainment, worklessness, crime and poor health outcomes and the effectiveness of place-based policies in addressing them. The second part of the book focuses on the policy solutions that have been developed with regard to these problems in five national contexts: the UK, the USA, Australia, the Netherlands and Canada. Between Part 1 and Part 2 is a thought-provoking and pivotal chapter, which makes the case that who you are affects where you live rather than the oft-cited where you live affects who you are of the wider neighbourhood effects literature. The editors rightly point out that this counter argument is rarely given sufficient space in the literature, a dearth which this volume can claim to address.

Although there are some strong and different conclusions about the source, scale and measurement of neighbourhood effects, the underlying argument that the neighbourhood effects literature needs to engage with the wider social and economic processes that occur beyond the local level is well made. The book reminds the reader that an area focus cannot by itself tackle broader structural problems, which is timely, given the renewed political focus on localism.

In the final chapter, the overarching conclusion is that there are no easy generalizations to be made about the likely empirical significance of neighbourhood effects and their relevance to policy-making for specific places. The complexity of empirical as well as theoretical challenges involved in research into neighbourhood effects is such that researchers are seeking to establish the effects of difficult to identify forces but forces which nonetheless shape our ideas. In such uncertain circumstances, the author suggests it would
be risky to predicate the existence of area-based policies on the existence of strong neighbourhood effects. Equally, it would be unwise to abandon area-based initiatives and not to design them to capture neighbourhood effects in the hope they exist. I was convinced by the conclusion that a lot more work needs to be done to begin to really understand how place and space shape social and economic life at the neighbourhood level and beyond. I would wholeheartedly recommend this book to policymakers, students and researchers engaged in this important endeavour.

Rionach Casey, Sheffield Hallam University

Crossing Boundaries in Public Management and Policy: The International Experience
By Janine O’Flynn, Deborah Blackman and John Halligan

Modern societies are enmeshed in a complex, interdependent, diverse, multilevel and shifting set of boundaries – organizational, professional, sectoral, governance and personal – and these exert a huge influence on the core tasks of modern public management and policy. This new book sets out to tackle the challenges and ambiguities associated with managing in this context through a series of individual contributions that are international in nature and varied in terms of policy area. The book is structured against an overarching framework consisting of four questions that are intended to place some order upon an unconsolidated and multi-disciplinary literature that lacks both synthesis and focus. The questions relate to understanding the notion of crossing boundaries, to determining the antecedents and reasons driving an interest in them, to defining the nature of cross boundary work, and lastly, to identifying the critical barriers and enablers underpinning effective cross boundary policy and practice. In answering these questions, the book is divided into two parts. The first looks at so-called potential solutions to cross boundary management, including those based on structure, culture, power, diagnosis and responsiveness. The authors do not necessarily advocate any particular solution, but focus instead on critiquing each approach and exploring their inherent tensions and paradoxes. However, it would be useful to know whether the solutions included are representative of a comprehensive list of possible approaches or whether other models exist in practice.

The second part of the book presents case studies of boundary management in different policy areas – children’s services, education and employment, health, community safety and airport management – and these concentrate on identifying the factors and issues that help and hinder cross boundary practice. These individual contributions are sandwiched between an introduction that sets the overall context and scene for the book, and a conclusion that brings together the key findings that emerge, especially the contrasts and similarities, tensions and paradoxes, and future issues for academics and practitioners. Inevitably, a book consisting of a series of individual contributions tends to be variable in quality. O’Flynn’s opening chapter that sets out
to capture and distil the multiple perspectives occupying a diverse theoretical and empirical literature is one of the better ones. Head’s chapter on the factors determining the success of collaboration, and Talbot’s chapter on service integration in children’s services are also worthy of note. Some of the important messages that are highlighted in the book include the emergent rather than prescriptive nature of cross boundary management, the central important of accountability and governance issues, the pivotal role of individual agents and actors in the process, and the potential of innovation in providing a catalyst for collaboration.

Overall, the book is a useful addition to the literature on collaboration, but it is limited in a number of respects. The authors claim that ‘it is more than a book about collaboration, networks or joined-up government’, although this is unclear, and arguably, attempting to deliver coherence across a very fragmented field using a framework based on four central questions is rather ambitious. The conclusion is by far the weakest chapter and fails to provide the necessary synthesis and coherence that was promised in the introduction. It is a rather cursory ending offering more of a summary of the individual contributions as opposed to a more developed and integrated analysis of the material presented. Also, and partly stemming from its inter-disciplinary focus, it lacks a strong and coherent theoretical grounding, making it difficult to assess its overall value in this respect. Given its focus on determining ‘what works’, there might have been some mileage in articulating more clearly the key messages from the book in a language that is more accessible to policymakers and practitioners. In conclusion, the value of the book lies primarily in highlighting the importance of boundary management in international public policy and management rather than in generating theories and insights that are particularly original.

Paul Williams, Cardiff Metropolitan University