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Reconstructing nation, state and welfare: the transformation of welfare states.

John Clarke

Chapter for M. Seeleib-Kaiser (ed) *Transforming Welfare States*.

The transformation of welfare states has been the subject of diverse disputes – centred around the depth or scale of transformation; around the causes of transformation; around the direction of transformation; and around the degree of convergence or difference between welfare states. Such intensive debates have tended to assume the existence of a specific object of analysis – the welfare state, or sometimes its plural companion, welfare states. This assumption has some troubling consequences. On the one hand, it means that conceptual difficulties about the character of welfare states are avoided – displaced by a presumption that authors and readers will share a common, or take-for-granted, conception of welfare state-ness. As usual, in the social sciences, taken-for-granted assumptions or forms of knowledge should be marked ‘handle with care’. On the other hand, the lack of conceptual attention leads directly into a casual empiricism – in which more specific objects on inquiry are allowed to stand for welfare states. Typically, these are spending programmes or patterns of social expenditure. For example, recent books take major social programmes (unemployment/labour market policies, pensions programmes) or larger scale patterns of social expenditure as proxies through which to examine the changing fortunes of welfare states/the welfare state (see, for example, Castles, 2004; Ellison, 2006).

The problems of selecting specific indicators as proxies for welfare states are extensively discussed (see, inter alia, Castles, 2004; Daly, 2000; Sykes, 1998), but these tend to centre on the contested principles of selection – of adequacy, of focus (the relative visibilities and invisibilities that are created), or of comparability. They rarely extend to the conceptual problem of the relationship between the proxy and the object being discussed. For example, Castles sets up his use of the OECD Social Expenditure Database by noting that: ‘In respect of the majority of chapters focusing on social expenditure trends, an important preliminary point to recognize is that spending is not the be-all and end-all of the welfare state’ (2004: 14). But the other things that might make up the welfare state remain resolutely invisible, obscured by the might (and availability) of the expenditure data. This oscillation between taken for granted abstraction and casual empiricism leaves untouched a number of major issues about welfare states. In this context, I intend to raise some questions about how we understand the ‘welfare state’ as a concept and link these to recent developments in studying states as compound entities. Terms such as assemblages, constellations, and articulated formations point to new possibilities that might, and perhaps, ought to be extended to thinking about welfare state-ness. I then suggest that thinking about welfare states as formations that articulate welfare, state and nation can illuminate the issue of ‘transformation’. In particular, such a view makes visible the different, and potentially divergent, dynamics of transformation that are at stake in the reconstruction of welfare states.

What’s a welfare state?

In some senses, the foundational problem for studies of welfare states is the elusiveness of the term itself. As Raymond William’s *Keywords* (1976) indicated, the term ‘welfare’ had a history that linked generalised sense of well being (as an inversion of the injunction to ‘fare

well') to a public or collective sense of doing things to support such well-being. We might stop and contemplate the significance of the more recent revival of 'wellbeing' in policy circles, carrying a different set of meanings to welfare. Alternatively we could return to Williams' view of how the term 'welfare' came to be used – not least in its connection to 'state' – to express an alternative to nineteenth century British ideas and practices of Charity and Philanthropy. In political and popular usage, then, the idea of the 'welfare state' combined two positive orientations – a disposition to promoting collective wellbeing and an opposition to the socially narrow and prejudiced world of philanthropy.

However, these popular usages do not point to any degree of conceptual rigour. Rather they point to the ways in which ideas of welfare and the welfare state are potently located in popular discourses (and the political antagonisms they express). In more academic settings, 'welfare state' has been consistently elusive in conceptual terms. The state-ness of welfare, for example, may refer to very different types of state and very different forms of state activity. In relation to welfare, we might distinguish different roles played by states – funding, the direct provision of services, the coordinator of 'mixed economies of provision', regulation and arm's length governance, guarantor of rights and so on. Which of these defines the 'state-ness' of welfare states? Equally, there are questions about how to identify the 'welfare' aspects of states. As I noted earlier, the tendency in studies of welfare states is to identify what might be called 'core' activities or programmes: welfare states appear to involve unemployment/labour market related policies (though we might return to the question of whether it matters if they are directed to unemployment or labour markets). They appear to involve policies addressed to old age (at least pensions, but possibly policies of social care as well). In British social policy, the welfare state used to be construed as the institutions involving public policies towards income maintenance, health, education and housing.

Such programmatic specifications leave open two questions. The first is about those other state policies and practices that might promote well-being, but are rarely counted as part of the domain of the welfare state. The existence of state funded, promoted or regulated 'leisure' institutions and activities might be seen as attempts by the state to promote a healthy, balanced and happy population. Are these objectives different from 'welfare'? Equally, questions of transport (infrastructure, provision, regulation) might also be thought of as 'welfare' questions, since they impact in multiple ways on individual and collective health, wellbeing and social participation. A third, and perhaps more troubling, set of policies and practices involves the policies and apparatuses of policing, criminalisation and the law which, many scholars have argued, have come to take on an increasing part of what used to be 'welfare' parts of the state's role (see, for example, Garland, 2001; Stenson, 2000). Such a view suggests a shift in analytic focus from the 'welfare' activities of states to a concern with shifting combinations of policies and practices directed at 'governing the social' (Clarke, forthcoming a).

The second set of questions implied by programmatic conceptions of the 'welfare' character of states concern their relationship to social relations. Many studies of welfare states have an implicit normative character that presumes 'welfare' is both benevolent and progressive. In many ways, this implicit normative orientation to welfare has been deepened by the anti-welfarist and anti-statist politics of neo-liberal and neo-conservative political movements. With such enemies, how could we entertain doubts about welfare states (except in instrumental terms about improving their efficiency and effectiveness, perhaps)? Nevertheless, there are reasons for making the 'social' character of welfare states more visible than is conventionally the case. It might enable us to think about the structured

patterns of inclusion and exclusion in relation to the resources of welfare. We might also see more of the conditions of inclusion: the forms of subordinated or dependent inclusions where access to welfare is not an individual or unconditional status. Such issues link welfare states to questions of citizenship and its formation in relations of class, gender, sexuality, age, nationality/ethnicity, and able-bodiedness. Each of these forms of differentiation has provided constitutive dynamics shaping citizen status and access to the welfare provision of states.

More challengingly, such issues might point us to the role of welfare in producing social divisions and differences. Most studies of welfare states see them as 'secondary' social institutions, acting upon the social relations of the societies of which they are part. In those terms we can assess their impact or effects: have they reinforced or remedied structured forms of social inequality? Have they reduced class differentials? Have they narrowed the gender gap and so on. But welfare states are also formative institutions: they establish the categories through which services and benefits are organised and distributed. They determine and act upon points of difference (think, for example, about how many of our age categories are inscribed in welfare policies and practices). They sort, categorise and allocate positions to people; they issue incentives and rewards for certain classes of people and certain types of behaviour, and dole out constraints and punishments for others. It is in such terms that the Foucauldian concern with 'governing populations' offers a distinctive and potent vantage point on welfare and welfare states (see, for example, Marston and McDonald, 2006). Welfare states, in this light, work on populations – organising, categorising, improving, regulating and directing them.

Taking these detours in response to the banal question 'what's a welfare state' may appear both unnecessary and frustrating. But I want to insist that both of the terms 'welfare' and 'state' are difficult and elusive, and that bringing together as an object of inquiry is a fraught enterprise. In what follows, I want to offer an approach to studying welfare states that treats this conceptual difficulty as an inherent part of welfare state-ness, rather than being something that can be resolved either by theoretical fiat ('a welfare state is the sum of pensions, health care, labour market and education policies') or by empirical convenience ('we have comparative data for these three programmes'). Instead, I want to start from the view that the phrase 'welfare state' is, above all, a *practical* concept – one that is deeply rooted in popular and political discourse. Its practicality, then, leads to a concern with its use – how it is made to mean; how its meanings are mobilised, challenged, changed, valued and devalued. From this starting point, welfare states are fundamentally ideas or images that come to be realised in complicated combinations of institutions, policies and practices.

Assembling welfare states:

We might engage with this question of 'complicated combinations' by reflecting on how the term welfare state incorporates divergent understandings of 'welfare' (from the its American usage to mean supplementary, or non-social insurance programmes, such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children, abolished in the 'end of welfare' in 1996, to the array of benefits and services linked together in the Nordic 'welfare model'). These are linked with very different models of how states do welfare: direct provision to the regulation and funding of diverse non-state agencies. Dismantling the concept of the welfare state in such ways enables us to see how different national welfare states have involved particular combinations of welfare and state, in which both differences of the substance and meaning of welfare, and differences in the role played by the state, are central to the form of 'welfare state'.

This interest in combinations coincides with developments elsewhere in the social sciences, particularly, but not only, in approaches to the state. Combination has echoes of 'assemblages' (Latour, 2005), 'ensembles' (Sharma and Gupta, 2006), 'constellations' (Leibfried and Zürn, 2005) and 'articulated formations' (Clarke, 2004). Each of these terms speaks to a sense of construction and combination – the building of elements into a temporary unity. For Latour, assemblage is a concept that re-opens the question of how the social is constituted concept for thinking about the social.:

When social scientists add the adjective 'social' to some phenomenon, they designate a stabilized state of affairs, a bundle of ties that, later, may be mobilized to account for some other phenomenon. There is nothing wrong with this use of the word as long as it designates what is *already* assembled together, without making any superfluous assumption about the *nature* of what is assembled. (Latour: 2005: 1; emphasis in original)

For Latour, this idea of assemblage as a 'stabilized state of affairs' foregrounds the analytical challenge of tracing *associations* – the production of the network of connections between people and things that create an assemblage. Latour gifts us two important insights in this brief comment. The first is the idea of assembling as a process (with assemblages as its result). The second is the insistence on temporality – 'what is already assembled'; a 'stabilized state of affairs'. This inserts questions of time into our view of institutions, systems and structures – they are assembled, or constructed, and stabilized – for a determinate period of time. They are vulnerable to de-stabilization, deconstruction and projects of reassembling.

In their Introduction to a recent collection on *The Anthropology of the State*, Sharma and Gupta argue that the 'conditions for studying the state have shifted', requiring 'new ways of thinking' (2006: 27). The first response, they argue, involves thinking of the state through questions of culture:

The first analytic move entailed in reconceptualizing states consists of seeing them as culturally embedded and discursively constituted ensembles. Instead of viewing states as preconstituted institutions that perform given functions, we argued that they are produced through everyday practices and encounters and through public cultural representations and performances...

Thinking about how states are culturally constituted, how they are substantiated in people's lives, and about the socio-political and everyday consequences of these construction, involves moving beyond macro-level institutional analyses of "the state" to looking at social and bureaucratic practices and encounters and at public cultural texts. It requires conducting institutional ethnographies of specific state bureaucracies, inquiring into the micropolitics and daily practices of such institutions, and seeking to understand their relation to the public (elite or subaltern) that they serve. (2006: 27)

For Sharma and Gupta, states are ensembles – assemblages of ideas (imaginaries of states and state-ness), policies, practices, people and objects (in which state-ness is embodied). Such conceptions of the state are liberating for a field of study that has been dominated by institutionalist understandings of states that treat them as integral and coherent objects of analysis. Sharma and Gupta's second analytic move is to consider states in a 'transnational

frame', arguing that 'the current regime of globalization necessitates that we unhinge the study of the state from the frame of the nation-state' (2006: 28). I will return to some of the implications of this unhinging later, but here its importance is the coincidence of this concern with the framing of states as nation-states and the reflections by Stephan Leibfried and Michael Zürn on nation-states as 'constellations'. More specifically, they argue that the 'golden age' nation-states can best be understood as a constellation of four key elements – resources, law, legitimacy and welfare – assembled together in congruent social and political space. This assemblage they name TRUDI, designating the form of nation-state that 'had evolved four dimensions and fashioned them into a tightly woven fabric – a multi-functional state that combines the Territorial State, the state that secures the Rule of Law, the Democratic State, and the Intervention State' (2005: 3).

While it is true that Leibfried and Zürn's conception of the multi-functional state comes out of a more conventionally political institutionalist view of states, the metaphors of 'constellation' and 'fabric' point to a more constructed (if not constructivist) understanding of the formation and transformation of states. So, for example, when they explore the 'reconfiguring' of the national constellation, their metaphors emphasise the complexity of assemblages and their dis-assembling. For example, talking about possible current and future trajectory, the 'fabric' metaphor takes a dominant role in the hypothesis that:

...the changes over the past 40 years are not merely creases in the fabric of the nation-state, but rather an unravelling of the finely woven national constellation of its Golden Age. Nor does there appear to be any standard, interwoven development of its four dimensions on the horizon. However, although an era of structural uncertainty awaits us, it is not uniformly chaotic. Rather, we see structured, but asymmetric change in the make-up of the state, with divergent transformations in each of its four dimensions. (2005: 1)

And, later they explore TRUDI in similar terms:

Is TRUDI worn out, is it unravelling? Can, and will, it be mended or rewoven – perhaps transformed into one gigantic world state with a uniform pattern, or re-styled into semi-sovereign, sub-national, regional governments? Or will the threads of TRUDI simply separate and follow individual fates in post-modern fashion, with the rule of law moving into the international arena while the nation-state clings to the resources of the territorial state, and the intervention state comes unspun and goes every which way? (2005:3)

It might be argued that such terms are merely metaphorical, rather than strictly conceptual. But they do point to the analytic problems of conceptualising states and their transformations and, for me, have the important value of identifying two dynamics at the same time – both the woven-ness (what Latour might prefer to call a 'stabilized state of affairs') of elements into a form of state and the possibility that that different elements (the 'threads') might be subject to different pressures and trajectories of change (rather than the singular transformation of the state...). For me, their reflections also make more visible the contingent and constructed national character of the nation-state; an important given the 'methodological nationalism' that has been an organising principle welfare state studies. Welfare states are – more or less implicitly – understood as nation-states (Clarke, 2005a).

In my own work, I have become increasingly interested in treating welfare states (and their shadow couplet nation-states) as specific articulated formations in which ideas and

institutionalised practices of welfare, state and nation are assembled together (e.g., Clarke, 2004; Clarke and Fink, forthcoming). As with the 'Golden Age' of nation-states identified by Leibfried and Zürn, so the 'Golden Age' welfare states (Huber and Stephens, 2001) involved assemblages of elements – expansive conceptions of welfare; enlarged state scope for social intervention, in specific nation building/rebuilding projects – that were solidified or stabilized into the formations we came to call 'welfare states'. Such stabilizations of assemblages tend to conceal the conditions of their own assembly – they come to look like, and be addressed as coherent, singular entities. Only as the threads become unwoven, as the carefully articulated joints become unglued, does it become possible to see the 'traces of association' through which they were constructed. And, at such points it becomes more possible to see how the different elements might be the subject of different, divergent, or even contradictory, forces, pressures and political-cultural projects seeking new directions and new assemblages.

These were, of course, national formations in at least two senses. They took place in that (apparently) stable territorial political and social space that nation-states claimed to both occupy and represent. But they were also nation-states in the sense that they were part of the field of agencies, policies and practices through which nations were being constructed, invented and improved. Nations – the unique combinations of people, place and politics – were always in process of being brought into being, although this is rarely the focus of welfare state studies (for some different exceptions see Castells and Hineman, 2002; Hughes and Lewis, 1998; and Lewis, 1998). Treating welfare states as articulated formations of welfare, state and nation makes visible three key things: first, the different elements that have been articulated; second, the specific significance of the nation for thinking about welfare states; and third, the possibility of dis-articulation of the different elements. Let me make one further point about the question of disarticulation in the context of debates about welfare state transformation or welfare reform. As I will argue in the final section, it becomes important for assessing whether what is being 'reformed' or 'transformed' is welfare, the state or the nation. The temptation is always to confuse and conflate these. Instead, just as Leibfried and Zürn suggest with their 'threads', we may be better advised to disentangle the different elements and their trajectories.

Welfare states as nation states: producing peoples and populations.

In this section, I want to look a little more at the question of welfare states as nation states. The methodological nationalism of welfare state studies means that the 'national' character of welfare states has been treated banally: how do we assess and explain the difference between different national welfare states or systems? This takes the 'national' as a matter of the place where welfare states happen: it uses a 'container' model of the national space. Sometimes, the nation is a more active element in such analyses – as a politics or a culture that is distinctively different from other nations which is reflected or reproduced in welfare policies. But such approaches to the nation never pose it as an object of construction, as something to be worked on, assembled, produced by social practices (nation-building is thought to be the business of developing or emergent nations and their states, not relevant to the study of 'mature' societies).

Sharma and Gupta are surely right that the 'current regime of globalization' has made more visible the constructed character of the nation (and its articulation with states). Various processes have contributed to 'unsettling' the apparent stability of the nation – both in practice and in academic work. Questions of globalization, international or supra-national institutions, the flows of finance, commodities and people across national borders, and the

increasingly contested and mobile spaces of nations (from the reunification of Germany to the end of the Soviet bloc) have all posed problems about the nation-state as a stable and unified entity (and for of sovereignty). It may be important to note that the new visibility of these issues should not allow us to think that no such flux, uncertainty or unsettling existed in the past. The 'stabilized state of affairs' that we call the nation-state concealed the conditions of its own construction (particularly its intimate entanglement with – and dependency on – other places, especially its colonial others). In the current regime of globalization, it is easier to see the transnational conditions of formations of the national. But earlier regimes of globalization – especially that of European colonialism – underpinned the rise of the (apparently) territorially closed nation-state which rested on economic, political and cultural relations with 'elsewhere'.

Nation-making can be viewed as a continuous process, rather than a specific phase of national development. States have been a crucial engine for such processes, installing and disseminating national histories, projected futures and conceptions of the national character or culture that needs to be protected or projected. Welfare policies and practices have been one of the assemblages through which states do such work – ranging from specifying and monitoring 'national membership' (and thus 'eligibility') through 'improving' the population to current concerns to make policy personal and ensure that citizens are active. I will return to some of these issues in the following section, but it is important to think about how welfare is engaged in the process of nation-making. I think that these nation-welfare articulations have two aspects: making peoples and making populations, identified in recent work by Partha Chatterjee (2003). Chatterjee argues that citizenship is bracketed by a double logic – the homogeneous conception of the nation, and the heterogeneous conception of the objects of governing:

In short, the classical idea of popular sovereignty, expressed in the legal-political facts of equal citizenship, produced in the homogeneous construct of the nation, whereas the activities of governmentality required multiple, cross-cutting and shifting classifications of the population as the targets of multiple policies. Here, then, we have the antinomy between the lofty political imaginary of popular sovereignty and the mundane administrative reality of governmentality: it is the antinomy between the homogeneous national and the heterogeneous social. (2003: 36)

I find this an immensely suggestive distinction. Welfare states have been one of the critical sites for homogeneous constructs of the nation – particularly the promulgation (and contestation, we might add) of the 'legal-political facts of equal citizenship'. The Marshallian view of citizenship rests on these developments and their institutionalization in the apparatuses of the state, with 'social' citizenship being represented in the welfare policies and practices of states. But welfare also articulates the more specifically national character of particular places, valorising and enforcing specific conceptions of national character, values, culture and ways of life.

Welfare is also a key site for the construction and management of populations: the 'mundane reality of governmentality'. It involves the labour of classification (what sorts of people are there?). It requires the production of knowledge about the composition of the population (its shifting and always problematic demography), about its actual and desired levels of development (health, education etc), about its 'needs', and about its disorders (dysfunctional families; the socially excluded; the delinquent; the passive-dependent individuals and so on). Studies of governmentality, deriving from Foucault's work, have made a major impact on our understanding of welfare and its importance as a site for

defining and governing populations (e.g., Marston and McDonald, 2006). 'Governing the social' frames the welfare work of states in a different way and, in doing so, makes us think about the 'social facts' (or what Poovey, 1995, calls 'political arithmetic') that have been a core concern of social policy studies since the nineteenth century.

It might also be worth thinking briefly about the distinction between people and population here. Chatterjee separates them out for analytic purposes, but at times political-cultural projects work across this distinction, moving from population to people (and disturbing the conception of the homogeneous nation). In particular, such projects have been around questions of the scope and reach of 'equal citizenship', addressing and challenging the categoric exclusions of some sections of the population from the 'nation'. For example, Dagnino's analysis of citizenship struggles in Brazil points to this exclusion/inclusion in citizenship as a critical focus:

The role of social movements of the 1970s and 1980s in shaping this redefinition of citizenship obviously reflected their own struggle and was rooted in its practices. If they drew on the previous history of rights as ensured by *regulated citizenship*, they also rejected many aspects of this history. They rejected the concept of the state and the power embedded in it. They also rejected the control and tutelage of the political organization of popular sectors by the state, political parties and politicians that had for so long sustained populism. And they further rejected the culture of favours, which created clientelistic relations with these political actors, and had outlived populism as the predominant political arrangement in the relationship between civil and political society. The redefined conception of rights and citizenship expressed a reaction against previous notions of rights as either favours or the objects of bargains with the powerful. (2004: 156)

The Brazilian struggles were simultaneously for citizenship and for its transformation. The same double dynamic may be detected elsewhere, such that demands for citizenship cannot be read solely as claims for access to an existing condition and set of inclusionary relationships. Where the principles of exclusion are also under challenge, such struggles may also mean the 'negation of a dominant political culture' (Dagnino, 2004: 156). In this unstable relation between segments of a population and the national character of citizenship, we might glimpse some of the reasons why the national and its relation to questions of race/ethnicity is such a turbulent and troublesome focus of contemporary political and governmental attention.

Transforming welfare states: deconstruction and reconstruction?

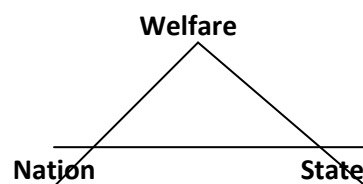
In this final section, I return to the possibilities created by thinking of welfare states as articulated formations, assemblages, ensembles or constellations. Earlier, I indicated that such concepts might allow us to think of how the different elements articulated in welfare state formations have been differently contested and subject to potentially divergent political projects for their 'reform'. To put it crudely, some political projects have had 'welfare reform' as their focus; some have had 'state reform' as their objective; and others have certainly been about the remaking of the nation. These may all contribute to the 'transformation of welfare state' but we should be wary of thinking that they all fit together and share a coherent and singular direction. Indeed, both within specific national welfare states and in contrasts between them, it might be better to argue that contemporary processes of transformation are incoherent, multiple and possibly contradictory (Clarke, 2006 and forthcoming b).

Each of the terms here – welfare, state and nation – has been the focus of multiple challenges (Clarke, 2004). ‘Anti-welfarism’, for example, combines and condenses social movement critiques of welfare’s inadequacy, inaccessibility, and demeaning conditionality, welfare providers’ anxieties and frustrations about the problems of managing relations with ‘client groups’, and neo-conservative as well as neo-liberal critiques of ‘welfare dependency’. That such neo-liberal and neo-conservative challenges have become the dominant position in the reform of some national welfare provision (most notably in the USA, of course) should not disguise the multiple and contradictory orientations that are condensed in anti-welfarism and the drive to ‘welfare reform’. Active subjects are not only the fantasy of neo-liberals. Similarly, ‘anti-statism’ condenses many different doubts about, and challenges to, the authoritative position of the state as a ‘power’ in, and over, society. Even those who have viewed the state as the best available ‘engine’ for social improvement have doubts about both its effectiveness and about its ‘dark side’: the exercise of power and authority without adequate controls (‘social control’ in the older socialist sense). Social movements in both the North and the South have both looked to states to underwrite rights, justice and equality, while at the same time looking to an active and powerful civil society as a means of both challenging and making demands on the state. This is the double dynamic that Dagnino’s analysis of social movements in Brazil makes visible – driving both demands on the state and demands for its transformation. Such ambivalence about the state needs to be kept in view even as we take note of the dominance of neo-liberal ‘market liberating’ discourses of anti-statism – both in some national settings and in international organisational settings of ‘global governmentality’ (Larner and Walters, 2004).

Projects of state reform are rarely singular and coherent (Clarke et al, 2007). The remaking of the apparatuses, practices and personnel through which the social is governed has been shaped by different forces – and has taken different forms. We might also want to consider how state reform projects have typically been about much more than the ‘welfare state’, but about remaking the whole architecture of governance and the relationships between state and society, state and economy, as well as inter-state relations. Questions posed in debates about governance and governmentality, arguments about states becoming ‘disaggregated’, or the shifting relationships between different modes of authority have had little impact on the discussion of welfare states (as though welfare states were somehow separate from states: see, *inter alia*, Newman, 2005; Slaughter, 2004; Hansen and Salskov-Iversen, forthcoming; van Berkel, 2007).

Such state reforms have often been co-terminous with the contested reinvention of ‘nations’. Here, too, we can see the tense and strained intersection of different forces, interests and projects – ranging from the pressures to ‘open’ the nation to the flows of a globalising world to the attempts to restore the ‘traditional’ unity of people, place and race in the face of movements of people (or, at least, the wrong sorts of people). Europe has become increasingly susceptible to such restorationist projects – versions of ethnic-cultural ‘protectionism’ (in the context of economic liberalisation). For example, Kalb argues that one effect of ‘globalising’ neo-liberal market reforms has been ‘an upsurge of counter-narratives of nationalism, localism, religion and tradition, often of a male chauvinist and paternalist persuasion (2005: 187). Such divergent contestations of the nation have powerful implications for both welfare and state, since managing to construct a unifying conception of the people fits uncomfortably with the challenge of governing a multi-ethnic population.

For studies of welfare states and their transformation, distinguishing these three elements opens up new analytic policies. Many of the debates of the last twenty years have been about conceptions of transformation that are uniform and unilinear (the end of/survival of the welfare state; globalization and convergence versus national difference; the rise of neo-liberalism and the end of the 'social'). By looking at these three elements and the forms in which they are articulated, we might see more uneven and differentiated dynamics of change. In Clarke (2004), I used a triangle to make visible the multiple and divergent contestations of welfare, state and nation that had unsettled taken-for-granted articulations (that we had talked of as welfare states). In this context, I want instead to think about the three axes (welfare-state; state-nation and nation-welfare) and ask about the implications of their dis-articulation and re-articulation (alternatively, dis-assembling and reassembling).



If we begin with the nation-state axis, we might begin by considering **what sorts of relations between state and citizens** are being constructed in this current period? This would make visible questions about:

- Membership (who counts as part of the nation?)
- Conditionality (how are entitlements being revised?)
- Activation (how are citizens expected to be active?)
- Participation (in what ways are citizens invited to shape policy and practice?)

These are more than just questions about 'what sorts of citizens?', although as the emerging governmentality literature demonstrates, reinventions of the citizen are significant in the current period (e.g., Clarke, 2005b; Cruikshank, 1999; Rose, 1999; Maasen and Sutter, forthcoming). They are questions about the relations and practices in which citizens are imagined and which citizens inhabit (albeit often in contradictory, recalcitrant or difficult ways: Clarke et al., 2007). So, 'membership' sets in play questions about how the nation is embodied and regulated, in particular about how the complicated configurations of place, race and ethnicity are being worked on the contemporary patterns of migration (e.g., Balibar, 2002; and Morris, 2002 on civic stratification). Issues of conditionality and activation address how those who are citizen are being engaged by states, as states withdraw, make benefits and services more conditional and transfer responsibility to 'active' citizens (see, for example, Dwyer, 1998; Hvinden and Johansson, 2007).

Turning to the nation-welfare axis, we might ask **what sorts of peoples and populations** is welfare intended to produce? Here we can see contested imaginings of the nation in welfare – as traditional/restorationist conceptions of the people contend with adaptations to the 'open economy' necessary for globalization and the flows of migrants that are associated with the current regime. While most European states find themselves engaged with these issues, there are specific national variations in terms of both how the migration regime is constructed and how migrants are placed in welfare regimes (see, for example, Morris, 2002; and Morrisens and Sainsbury, 2005 on migration regimes and welfare regimes). But the question of the 'people' in welfare is not only a question of migration: it is also a question of 'modernization'. How are traditions, cultures and values to be both preserved and yet transformed to make a 'modern nation' capable of competing successfully in a

'global world (see Cameron and Palan, 2004, on the imaginary geographies of globalization)? Such modern nations need to be made, or at least, supported by innovations in welfare, such as encouraging independence, entrepreneurialism, or by welfare policies and practices that sustain ways of life or values that are seen as still vital for survival (e.g., Danish Commission on Globalization, 2006). Isin and Turner point to the paradox of managing the new combinations of work and welfare in tandem with migration and nation-making:

Governments that are faced with ageing populations and low birth rates are forced to rely on foreign migrant workers to keep their economic growing. The labour markets of western states also depend on these workers, because their own labour force is not sufficiently mobile or is reluctant to take on unskilled work... There is however a paradox in this growing dependency on the migration of foreign labour. Western states need migrant labour, but their democratic governments, responding in part to electoral pressures and media campaigns against foreign labour, especially in Europe, cannot be seen to be too lenient towards high levels of migration, especially illegal immigration.

The argument about state security and the need to defend political borders has turned public opinion against outsiders in general and against Muslim foreign workers in particular. The heightened securitization of the state has therefore typically conflated three categories of persons: migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. ... Although economic migrants contribute significantly to growth, they are often thought to be parasitic on the welfare systems of the host society. These workers do not fit easily into a welfare model of contributory rights in an age of terrorism, when states have turned to the maintenance of security as their principal contribution to the functioning of society. European governments have been reluctant to give citizenship status to migrants without stringent criteria of membership and naturalization is often a slow and complex process. Applicants for citizenship are increasingly expected to pass a test to prove that they are more knowledgeable about the society that they want to join than its current citizens. (2007: 10-11)

As I argued earlier, however, welfare is also implicated in the production, regulation and governing of populations: the segmented, categorised and always improvable groupings that make up the nation. We can see shifting categorisations of the population: not only migrants (and the problem of how to sub-classify them), but also different groupings of the workless (the 'long term unemployed' versus the 'actively seeking work'); the invention of new categories of age in the context of ageing populations (no longer just 'old people'). As the categorisations shift, so they bring new 'needs' and new 'problems' into visibility for welfare policies and practices to address. Here we must note another limitation of analyses centred on welfare states: that they treat welfare separately from other governing policies, practices and apparatuses. The work of governing the social is shared by other agencies and modes of regulation – from processes of crime control to the management of urban spaces (Garland, 2001; Ruppert, 2006). This is not the place to pursue this argument, but it reflects a peculiar combination of analytical optimism (being able to separate out the welfare things that states do from all their other practices) and a political optimism (a view that welfare denotes progressive or at least benevolent interventions). I am not sure that either of these can be sustained.

Finally, we come to the third axis: that between welfare and state. Here we can pose the question of **what sorts of governance arrangements of welfare** are being put into place? The elementary forms of this discussion tend to be phrased in terms of distinctions between state and market forms (or between hierarchy, markets and networks). Alternatively, the

concept of mixed economies of welfare has been used to address the shifting alignments and roles of multiple 'sectors' (public, private, not-for-profit/third sector) in the delivery of welfare – though, as Seelieb-Kaiser's introduction to this volume reminds us, such governance arrangements need to address processes of policy-making, funding and regulation. In such roles, states may continue to act as agents of what Jessop calls 'meta-governance': organising the architecture of governance and its internal relationships. Within the complex of new governance mechanisms, the state 'reserves to itself the right to open, close, juggle and re-articulate governance arrangements, not only terms of particular functions, but also from the viewpoint of partisan and overall political advantage' (Jessop 2000, p.19).

While the typologies of governance systems and sectors point to some of the contemporary dynamics of change in the governance of welfare, they seem a little too inflexible to cope with emergent and hybrid forms of organization involved in the production and distribution of welfare (Clarke, forthcoming). Cross-sectoral forms of working (in the UK such forms as Trusts, Partnerships and social enterprises) pose novel problems of analysis and evaluation. Janine Wedel's thoughtful and suggestive work on 'flex organisations' that function on and across sectoral boundaries between public and private points to one way of engaging with such developments (2000). Such governance arrangements cannot be grasped in purely sectoral terms, nor in simple models of privatization or marketization. Instead, we need to examine how resources, authority, expertise and (occasionally) accountability are being reconstructed in hybridised architectures of welfare governance. Such innovations also affect the spatial and scalar organisation of welfare as 'new spaces of welfare' are brought into being (Cochrane, 2006). Forms of decentralization and devolution coincide, sometimes, with changes in the welfare mix. For example, Aldred's study of public-private partnership in health reveals both innovative organisational forms engaged in the invention, and bringing into being, of 'local health economies' (Aldred, 2007); while van Berkel points to how labour market activation policies in the Netherlands have combined 'personalisation' in policy and practice with privatization and decentralization of the activation service itself (2007).

In short, each of these axes has been subject – in different ways in different places – to forms of unsettling and remaking. Treating welfare states as assemblages or articulated formations makes these processes more visible and, perhaps, explains some of the frustrations of contemporary debates about the transformation of welfare states. If welfare states are not coherent and singular objects of analysis, then tracking change is likely to demand more than a singular indicator (or even a singular set of indicators). In the end, this is an argument for a more fine-grained approach to the study of welfare states (singly or comparatively). It requires attention to social objects as assemblages, ensembles, constellations or formations and thus to the possibility of multiple, rather than singular, processes of transformation.

It also implies escaping from the methodological nationalism that has dominated studies of welfare states. This is not a return to the unproductive debate about the global versus the national. Rather it is a claim that all national formations are produced in and through transnational relations, processes and practices (and that such transnational conditions vary in place and time). National welfare systems certainly persist, and national political and institutional formations remain important locations for political and governmental projects and conflicts. Nevertheless, conceptions of welfare, nation and state (and how they might be best assembled) are themselves subject to transnational flows of ideas, policies, comparative-competitive evaluation, models of 'best practice' and relations of learning and mimicry (see, inter alia, Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson, 2006; Hansen and Salskov-Iversen,

forthcoming; Larner and Walters, 2004; Lendvai and Stubbs, 2006; Newman, 2006). Each 'national' project of welfare reform is articulated with such transnational flows, borrowing, rejecting and indigenising different elements. While such flows and institutionalisations of 'global governmentality' carry certain dominant messages, models and discourses (not least circulating the whole battery of neo-liberal conceptions of the need for both welfare and state reform), they form a field of exchange in which specific national projects are engaged. Those engagements are multiple (rather than a singular relation or mode of transmission) and allow spaces of possibility for 'national' calculation and manoeuvre – albeit, such spaces are differently distributed between nations: debt and dependency, for example, tend to narrow such possibilities. Here, too then, we ought to avoid singular conceptions of our objects of study (and the binary distinctions that they bring in their wake): not pure nations (and the global/national distinction) but national formations lodged in transnational fields of connection. Did anyone say that studying welfare states should be easy?

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