

# THE WELFARE STATE IN CHINA – ORIGINAL OR CONVENTIONAL?

Stein Ringen

Kinglun Ngok

Hao Ran

# FOUR MAIN OBJECTIONS

- that it is static
- that it is theoretically biased
- that it is based on too narrow an observation of social policy arrangements, mainly social security
- that it is based on too narrow an observation of countries, OECD countries mainly and among them with not detailed enough attention to the Southern European and Antipodean ones.

# ADDITIONAL DIMENSION

We suggest the introduction of an essential, but in the typology literature mostly disregarded, dimension in social policy between order *versus* fragmentation, a distinction that cuts across differences in design. The underlying rationale is that what determines how well social policies work, for example in poverty protection, is not only the kind and scope of social policy in a country but also how well, within any system, the different components work together.

1.

Is China inventing a welfare state of its own making of a kind that has not been seen previously?

2.

Is China producing a 'socialist' welfare state?

There are two main references in previous experience

- the predistribution state and
  - the universalistic redistributive welfare state
- along the lines of the Nordic social democratic model.

3.

Is the welfare state in China 'developmental'. The reference here would be the East Asian 'tigers', in particular South Korea.

4.

Does the Chinese welfare state contain a dimension of family policy?

The question here is whether there are provisions, in addition to those that might modify income and class inequalities, designed to modify gender inequalities?

5.

Is China producing a hybrid welfare state that combines 'progressive' provisions in some policy areas with conservative or liberal designs in others, as is seen for example in the British welfare state?

6.

Is China producing a mainstream liberal or conservative welfare state, the references of comparison being the American and German models?

7.

Is the welfare state in China, however it is being designed, shaping up to being ordered or fragmented? Is it a welfare state to smooth out strains and tensions in the 'socialist market economy' or one that has the capacity to generate social justice?

# The system stands on three pillars

- social assistance (the basic provision),
- social insurance (the main body), and
- welfare services.