

Tea Torbenfeldt Bengtsson, Morten Frederiksen & Jørgen Elm
Larsen (eds.), *The Danish Welfare State. A Sociological Investigation*
(Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

How is the welfare state transforming in an era of globalization, individualization and hence increased competition, and how are the changes seen on a macro and micro level? This is the main question raised in this book, containing 15 chapters, including a thorough introduction and a conclusion. More specifically, it explores how risk concepts and risk thinking transform the welfare state from responding to and from protecting its citizens from threats putting them at risk, to risks being seen as threats to the welfare state itself.

The book addresses a current discussion in Denmark concerning whether the welfare state, instituted to protect its citizens, is developing into a competition state, mobilizing citizens to take part in the struggle for the state to be competitive. In this picture, so-called non-productive citizens such as the unemployed, chronically ill, or newly arrived refugees, are increasingly seen as risk factors or even threats, and not primarily as humans worthy of protection. According to the editors of the book, Denmark as a modern welfare state endorsing both universal welfare and individual responsibility is an interesting case illustrating this development. Thus, they provide a frame for discussing whether it is worth 'getting to Denmark', as Fukuyama claimed in *The Origins of Political Order* (2011) as a metaphor for democracy.

The state increasingly seems to respond to macro-level threats from globalization and economic crisis with micro-level initiatives; hence the anthology focuses on risks both on a macro- and micro-level. In the opening chapter a thorough introduction is given to four sociological approaches to risk, namely risk society (Beck); risk culture/cultural theory (Douglas); risk control/governmentality (Foucault); and risk as uncertainty/managed uncertainty (Luhmann). These theorists, of whom particularly Beck and Foucault are cited in the book, claim in different ways that risks are socially founded. The explanation of this theoretical framework does not only serve a didactical purpose but also helps to underline how a social understanding of the risks of modernity can be used when analyzing welfare states like Denmark. Whereas the competition state is often associated with neoliberalism and deregulation, the social investment state is associated with reregulation, which several of the chapters analyzing policies on a micro level illustrate. Both the competition and the social investment paradigm however rely on a highly educated, healthy and productive workforce. Accordingly, policies of education, activation, and health become important. However, there may be unintended consequences of such risk management policies. As pointed out in several chapters, new risks may occur especially among the poor and poorly educated classes, who do not respond adequately to activation policies and often meet sanctions and cuts in benefits. Thus, the welfare state may end up reproducing rather than overcoming inequalities.

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The book comprises three parts. The first part concerns risks at a macro level, mainly explored comparatively. Hence, in chapter 2, "Denmark from an International Perspective", Peter Abrahamsen discusses the social investment paradigm drawing the traditional Social Democratic Denmark closer to liberal and continental models. In chapter 3, "Social Investment as Risk Management" Jon Kvist compares social investment strategies of Denmark, Germany and United Kingdom. In Chapter 4, "Employment Relations, Flexicurity, and Risk: Explaining the Risk Profile of the Danish Flexicurity Model", Carsten Strøby Jensen explains how flexicurity presently is under pressure by cuts in unemployment benefits and decreasing support for labor unions. In chapter 5, "Precarity and Public Risk Management: Trends in Denmark across Four Decades", Stefan Andrade shows that the Danish labor market has not yet become more precarious than in other European countries, though low- and unskilled workers have become more vulnerable to risks of poverty and unemployment. In chapter 6, "Towards a New Culture of Blame?" Morten Frederiksen shows from survey data, that Danes' attitudes towards social assistance and unemployment surprisingly have changed very little.

The second part of the book is devoted to risk perspectives on the universal welfare state at a micro level. Thus, in chapter 7 "When Family Life Is Risky Business - Immigrant Divorce in the Women-Friendly Welfare State", Mai Heide Ottosen and Anika Liversage discuss whether new and unintended risks of exclusion follow divorces in immigrant families. Education is the focus of chapter 8, "The Risky Business of Educational Choice in the Meritocratic Society", where Kristian Karlson and Anders Holm demonstrate how citizens' ability to risk management in educational decisions is related to inequality in education. Unintended inequality is also the topic in chapter 9 "Health in a Risk Perspective: The Case of Overweight", where Nanna Mik-Meyer explores the increased focus on health problematizing an already vulnerable group. A similar tendency is seen in chapter 10, "Failing Ageing? Risk Management in the Active Ageing Society", Tine Rostgaard explains how the Danish 'active approach' to elder care problematizes inactive groups unwilling or incapable of change.

The third and last part of the book stays on the micro level and explores the Danish welfare state's approach to social problems and marginalized groups. In chapter 11, "Controlling Young People Through Treatment and Punishment", Tea Torbenfeldt Bengtsson shows how the Danish system for juvenile crime is currently strengthening control influenced by 'fears of "being soft on crime"'. In chapter 12, "Alcohol and Risk Management in a Welfare State", Margaretha Järvinen argues that the healthcare authorities' governmentality perspective on alcohol consumption does not reach certain alcohol consumers. In chapter 13, "The Tough

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and the Brittle: Calculating and Managing the Risk of Refugees” Katrine Syppli Kohl explores how Denmark’s selection of quota refugees has developed from choosing the weakest to picking those deemed most ‘capable of integration’, thus presenting the background for the Parliament’s 2016 suspension of the entire quota refugee program in Denmark. Lastly, in Chapter 14, “Cash Benefit Recipients - Vulnerable or Villains?”, Dorte Caswell, Jørgen Elm Larsen and Stella Mia Sieling-Monas examine the Danish unemployment policy including evermore severe sanctions as means of encouraging job seeking.

To sum up, the anthology offers a comprehensive overview of the Danish welfare state on a macro- and micro level, convincingly applying risk theories and discussing the social investment paradigm. In an era where publishing in journals is given priority over anthologies, this volume demonstrates that the anthology format is still justified. The volume is highly recommendable to students, scholars, and not least, decision makers.

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