

Welfare Geography

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Component-I (B) - Description of Module

Items	Description of Module
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Component II - e-Text

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Introduction

Welfare geography is an approach to geography where the emphasis is on spatial inequality and territorial justice. Destined up with the rise of radical geography in the early 1970s, welfare geography stresses the need to identify and explain the existence of crime, hunger, poverty and other forms of discrimination and disadvantage. Welfare geography sought to reveal who gets what, where and how. This early work was largely descriptive and developed the abstract formulation used in welfare economics, grounding it empirically but maintaining the use of algebraic representations. It provided a basis for evaluation. Current welfare configurations, regarding who gets what, where and how, could be judged against alternatives. This preoccupation with description eventually aimed to match, and then superseded, by work on the processes through which inequality is shaped. Marxist economics replaced neo-classical economics as the basis for illustrative analysis, which takes place at two different levels. The

first involves understanding how the whole social, economic and political system functions, and teasing out universal tendencies. In the case of capitalism, this level of analysis reveals that inequality is endemic. Uneven development is the spatial imprint, the geographical result of the restlessness of capitalism as a system. The second level of explanation attends to the details of particular social, economic and political systems; for example, how housing policy under capitalism advantages some people in some places and disadvantages other people in other places. The analysis of the politics behind these policies has recently been strengthened as part of renewed interest in the relationship between social justice and the state. Accompanying an attention to the restructuring of the welfare state, which characterizes much of this recent work (Peck, 2001), have been endeavors to theorizing a relational ethics of care. Illustration of feminist theory, this work seeks to uncover the social relations behind construction of care and justice. Understanding politics as an integral part in the daily deed, the emphasis is on the connections and relations rather than the difference between categories, such as private and public, state and market (Smith and Lee, 2004).

Welfare geography focuses on the connection between the spatial variation of need and structures of a provision in the creation of geographies of welfare (Smith 1973). A rather late arrival of welfare approach in humanities and social sciences and particularly in geography has several political, historical, and psychological reasons, e.g., the Vietnam War, crime explosion, environmental degradation. The manifestation of social, political and economic injustice through these crises in cities and towns led a group of social scientists to come up with a new idea and promote the radical approach. Especially, with geography, the issue of distribution was taking new urgency (Smith, 1977). Before the dawn of the Quantitative revolution, geography, like all the other main sister disciplines from Humanities and arts, faced many philosophical and methodological problems. Geography did not progress as a well-regulated discipline.

In the recent years, geographers have, however, adopted new strategies by restructuring their courses of the study and designed the themes around contemporary issues like socio-economic development, rural-urban studies, making the subject a primary source of awareness of local surroundings and regional milieu.

During the last five decades, the subject matter of geography has experienced immense changes in the subject-matter, philosophy, and methodology. The issues of primary concern on which the geographers are concentrating nowadays include hunger, poverty, racial discrimination, pollution, environmental pollution, social inequality or injustice and use and the overuse of depleting resources, etc.

Some of the leading works and issues which have been useful in the public policy making are Black-Ghetto, Geography of Crimes and Geography of Social Well-being. The quantitative revolution of the 1960's infused a vigor into geography, which was vastly essential for the in-depth and comprehensive analysis required in any public context and the formulation of proposals for public policy.

Scientific revolution paved its way in geography in the early 1960s. The pragmatists introduced the use of scientific methods (positivism) for finding solutions to the problems faced by human beings. It is with this intent that scholars like David M. Smith have embraced the welfare approach while debating the problems, prospects and the future scenario of human geography.

The welfare approach in geography has been defined differently by some eminent scholars of geography. Mishan was of the view that, "theoretical welfare geography is that branch of study which endeavors to formulate positions by which we may be able to rank, on the scale of better or worse, alternatives in the geographical situation open to society." While Nath has defined welfare geography as that area of geographical study where we can study the possible impacts of different geographical policies for the well-being of society. In the spatial context, Smith defined welfare geography as the study of "who gets what, where and how."

The geographers whose prime concern are the problems of society and are trying to formulate more realistic plans for public policy by giving the description and explanation of the phenomena. Through such analysis, they evaluate their plans and suggest suitable strategies for the balanced development.

The explanation involves the empirical identification of territorial levels of human development and the human condition. This is a major and instantaneous research area in which astonishingly little work has been done in India and other developing countries as well as developed.

Explanation covers the how? It involves in identifying the cause and effect relationship links among the different activities undertaken in society, as they contribute in determining who gets what and where. This is where the analysis of the economic, demographic and social patterns mentioned above logically fits into the welfare structure.

Geographical distance and ease of understanding mean that some people will be enjoying the better place to for advantages or disadvantages, whether the structure is a road, railway, hospital, school, theatre, community hall, cinema, park or a recreational place. Therefore, locational decisions and comprehensive plans for spatial allocation of resources must be made with utmost care and dedication, if the benefits and penalties are found to be proportional among the population in a more or less predictable and reasonable manner. In such public policy decision-making, geographers' role becomes authoritative as they have the necessary expertise in the Spatio-temporal analysis of any such phenomena.

Spatial allocation problems are related to the identification of priority areas, planning routes, the location of factories or other sources of employment, the spatial arrangement of facilities providing medical care, housing complexes, shopping centers and allocation of land for different urban and recreational uses. Each of these decisions could be made in some ways, and every decision can have a different influence. Geographers by their expertise can build up more sophisticated knowledge and models of the process of development. This involves unscrambling and complex networks of economic, social and cultural relationships and also the ecological relationships in equilibrium, so easily disturbed by ill-conceived 'developmental' projects. Geographers by sharing out, analysis, and synthesis of space can contribute, successfully, meaningfully and more efficiently to the formation of the policies for the public, property, etc.

In developing countries like China, India, and Brazil there is relatively a high degree of internal inequality. On the other hand in the Third World nations, wealth and power and other facilities of public interest are still largely in the hands of urban elites or big landlords. In India, more than 50 percent of the population is still below the poverty line and on the contrary over 50 percent of the total national assets are in the hands of only a dozen families. Moreover, in India, most of the economic activities are concentrated in metropolitan cores, although still, more than 70 percent of the total population is residing in the rural areas. The urban-based industrial and social

infrastructural policy adopted by planners is widening the already wide gap on the one hand, between the rich and the poor and on the contrary between rural and urban population.

The highly advanced and developed countries like U.S.A., Russia, Australia, and Japan also have spatial disparities in levels of human development. In the United States, the overall material standard of living is higher than anywhere else in the world. Millions of Americans, especially Negroes (black people), live in poverty and social denial in ghettos (city slums). In many parts of the rural south of U.S.A. (Texas, Georgia, etc.) the living conditions of some people are as bad as anywhere in the African continent. In these ghettos, the rate of crimes like drug addiction is very high.

The perseverance of widespread poverty in American slums, the most affluent society in the world is a paradox which underlines the failure of economic growth under a capitalist system to uplift the lives of all people to a current standard of decency. In 1976, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 12 percent (26 million) Americans were below poverty line.

One of the opinions put forward by the capitalist for the existing regional inter-regional and intra-regional disparities is that human beings are not born equal, and hence they cannot be equal in their societies.

This situation gets further serious if the social, political and economic organization is intended or formed with an urban-biased or rich people-centered policy. The planners with the help of geographers can construct general social amenities which can benefit all sections of the society. Geographers, however, cannot be the cure for all the ills, inequalities and socio-economic imbalances that are persistent.

Geographers can analyze the spatial dimension of environmental problems, natural hazards and more particularly they know how to handle, analyze and interpret spatially distributed data. This consciousness of and facility of tackling the spatial dimension, which is a major component of all problems of resource and environmental management, is something not provided by those in other disciplines and have a tendency to be overlooked if a geographer does not arrange it.

A welfare society needs better sharing of commodities, better distribution of commodities and better of means of manufacture among individuals (groups or classes) and places. All these things are more easily attainable if geographers who are dealing with the man-environment interface and elaborate the spatial distribution of phenomena are actively involved in the procedure of planning and formulation of public policies at different levels of development, i.e., the local, regional, national and international levels.

In countries like Sweden, the Netherlands, France, Norway, Israel, Denmark, U.S.S.R., Australia and New Zealand where geographers in collaboration with the scholars and scientists of other fields to design public policies. Which is effective and beneficial and reaching all sections of the societies. Similarly, Geographers in India can also provide practical proposals for solving the various social, economic and infrastructural problems that are caused by rapidly increasing population.

Difference between Welfare Human Geography and Humanistic Geography

By their efforts, geographers can bring the causal relationships between inequality arising between the spatial organization of society and social structure. Public policies about restructuring and rearrangement can be designed properly by the experts through planning. The experts who have expertise in man-environment relation and spatial analysis of phenomena. For this purpose, geographers will have to emphasize on themselves through their applied and practical researches

Although, human geography has appeared from earth sciences and has persistent links with physical geography. Hitherto the core aim of this particular branch of knowledge is to examine the various problems of different social groups about their environment. At present, especially after the 1960s, the geographers have adopted welfare approach as a go-to approach for the study of the human behaviour. The welfare approach, in fact, emerged as the response to quantitative revolution, spatial science, positivism, and model-building which was thought to be unsatisfactorily concerned with contemporary glitches of human societies.

The 1970s saw a chief redirection of human geography in the direction of 'welfare' issues such as hunger, deprivation, malnutrition, poverty, crime, distribution of income, assets, and access to

social services (e.g., education and healthcare). This corresponded to a major change in social concern, from constrained economic conditions of development or progress to wider aspects of the quality of life. Spatial distribution of phenomena and distributional issues have presumed new importance in the present era of slow economic growth, for in these conditions policies of distribution in favor of the poor or socially deprived can be instigated only at the expense of the rich or better-off members of society. This is also known as Pareto optimality—a condition in which it is not possible to make some people rich without making others poor. The Pareto model assumes that one society has touched the edge of production possibilities, i.e., if there is no more growth; the poor cannot be made rich unless at the expense of the rich.

The basic emphasis of the welfare approach is who gets what, where and how. The ‘who’ refers to the population of the area under review (a city, region or country, or the entire world), subdivided into groups by caste, class, race, or other relevant characteristics like religion.

The ‘what’ refers to the different goods and bads enjoyed or tolerated by the population, in the form of services, commodities, social relationships, environmental quality, and so on?

The ‘where’ reflects the fact that living standards differ according to the place of residence. The ‘how’ refers to the procedure whereby the observed differences arise.

The initial task posed by the welfare approach is descriptive. The present state of society concerning the fact that who gets what? Where? Maybe signified by the extension of the abstract interpretations of welfare economics, and hence, the practical objective is to give these empirical substances to the people. In a spatially disaggregated society, the general level of welfare may be written as:

According to the Dictionary of Human Geography edited by R.J. Johnston, D. Gregory and David M. Smith (1994), “in a spatially disaggregated society, the general level of welfare may be written as:

$$W = f(S_1 \dots S_n),$$

Where S is the level of living or social well-being in a set of n regional subdivisions. In other words, it can be said that welfare is the function for the distribution of goods and bads among different groups of the people as defined by the area of residence.

Social well-being may be defined regarding what people get, as follows:

$$S=f(X_1 \dots X_m),$$

Where 'X' represents the quantity of them goods and bads consumed or experienced. Social well-being may also be expressed regarding the distribution within the area in question:

$$S = f(U_1 \dots U_k),$$

Where 'U' is the level of well-being, 'utility' or satisfaction of each of the k population sub-groups. In all the above expressions, the terms may be weighted differentially and joined according to any function, to denote the combination of territorial or regional levels of well-being, goods, and bads that maximize the objective function (W or S).”

For identifying a discrepancy in territorial distribution, development of social indicators is of great importance. Such indicators may be as follows: housing, income, education, employment, social orders or social participation, etc.

The welfare approach found Neo-classical economics as the least suitable one to explain social inequality. The Marxian economics provides a useful tool for analyzing social problems such as housing, income, education, employment, etc., because capitalism has an inherent tendency of to create disparity. The second level of explanation deals with the process of how specific elements of a socio-political and economic system operates. D.M. Smith (1977), in his Human Geography: A Welfare Approach, first suggested the approach which later amalgamated with other approaches of geography dealing with the issues of inequality. The issues dealt by welfare geography demand an interdisciplinary approach of the highest order. Moreover, in a rapidly changing era of globalization where the developing South stands deprived vis-a-vis the advanced North, there has been a transformed interest in welfare geography.

Welfare and Social wellbeing

The welfare geography approach deals with the issues related to inequality and injustice. The approach grew up as a reaction to the quantitative and model-building traditions of the 1960s. In the 1970s there was a major redirection of human geography towards social problems, viz., poverty, hunger, crime, racial discrimination, access to health, education, etc. The issues such as the distribution of the fruits of economic development received attention mainly as a result of

dramatic socio-political changes in Eastern Europe and South Africa. Therefore, the basic emphasis of welfare geography is on who gets what, where and how. The 'who' suggests a population of an area under review (a city, region or nation)? The 'what' refers to various facilities and handicaps enjoyed and endured by the population in the form of services, commodities, social relationships, etc. The 'where' refers to the differing living standards in different areas? Moreover, 'how' reflects the process by which the observed differences arise.

The empirical identification of inequality in territorial distribution involves developing social indicators. These may combine particular elements of social well-being in a composite manner. Conditions that may be included are income, wealth, employment, housing, environmental quality, health, education, social order (i.e., the absence of crime, deviance and other threats to social stability and security), social participation, recreation, and leisure. Alternatively, the focus may be on individual aspects of social well-being, such as inequalities in access to health care or the differential experience of a nuisance such as noise, air pollution and so on.

Descriptive research of this kind is justified because it provides information on aspects of life hitherto neglected in geography. It also provides a basis for evaluation, whereby the existing state is judged against an alternative (the past, predicted or planned) according to some criterion of welfare improvement. Thus, the impact of alternative plans for facility location or closure (e.g., hospitals, schools) could be judged by the test of which would most equally distribute the benefits (such as access to health care) among the population of various sub-divisions of the area under review. This raises the question of rules of distributive justice and the manner in which they are applied (explicitly or otherwise) in the political process. Although originally proposed as an alternative framework for human geography, the welfare approach has now been merged with other lines of inquiry within geography directed towards the fundamental problem of inequality. Implicit in 'welfare geography' is recognition that the issues in question extend beyond the limits of a single discipline, and in fact, render disciplinary boundaries increasingly irrelevant. The welfare approach logically requires a holistic social science perspective.

In order to achieve the welfare target, geographers are attacking social problems and exploring the causes of socio-economic backwardness, environmental pollution, and uneven levels of development in a given physical setting. Now, the main objective of geographical teaching and research is to train students in the analysis of phenomena, so that they can take up

subsequently the problems of society as the fields of their research and investigation, thereby helping the local, state and national administration. Problems are being tackled with approaches ranging from positive to normative, from radicalism to humanism, and from idealism to realism. In brief, geographers are increasingly concerning themselves with the problems of society, conditions of mankind, economic inequalities, social justice, and environmental pollution.

For reduction of regional inequalities and for the improvement of the quality of life, the main concern of geographers is with what should be the spatial distribution of phenomena instead of with what it is. It is in this context that the spatial inequality in social amenities and living standards is investigated by geographers to trace the origin of disparity rather than to condemn injustice.

The geographers who are mainly concerned with the problems of society and trying to formulate pragmatic proposals for public policy clarify the description and explanation of the phenomena. On the basis of such analysis, they evaluate their plans and prescribe suitable strategies for balanced development. Description involves the empirical identification of territorial levels of human well-being i.e. the human condition. This is a major and immediate research area in which surprisingly little works has been done in India and in other developing countries.