



## BOOK REVIEW

Ian Greener

### **Social Policy After the Financial Crisis**

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The book titled “Social Policy After the Financial Crisis” provides a view of the current social policy following the financial crisis that Europe experienced after 2008. The author notes that it was the greatest crisis in the banking sector since 1930.

The book starts by indicating that our current approach to the economy and society is failing. The book also begins with a description of how we have reached the current point.

In his book, the author examines how the economies caused a crisis of public administration, and also a crisis of social policy. He points out that we need to rethink the way we manage our economies and our society in order to try to find a new approach to managing economic and social policies. He points out that our economies do not provide their citizens with sustainable growth or improved lives but instead they concentrate wealth in the hands of elites running corporations (especially financial companies). The main task of social policy has been to mitigate the most extreme forms of poverty and to support the business environment mainly in relation to poverty reduction and to what has been unfairly distributed by the market.

The book highlights the need to rethink our approach to economy, not only in terms of achieving real sustainable growth but also because, if a government wants to achieve real improvement in prosperity, this cannot be done without a fairer and more productive approach to economy and economic policy. Current services in the area of social services are increasingly burdened with ever increasing expenditure in areas such as health care. At the same time, there is an increase

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in taxation in the economic system and rising voter resistance. However, improving our social policy is essential – there is evidence showing that our health is socially determined, which is not so much due to our individual choice but is a result of handling social inequalities. This path is not the right set-up in the living standard of the population.

In the second chapter, the author presents the historical development and context of economy after World War II. He introduces various approaches to economy and what these approaches changed. This chapter examines the expansion of public services in the post-war era and how the public policy expenditure changed until the 1970s. These concern the transformation of monetarists towards Keynesianism, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom in the 1980s, followed by the well-known “progressive politics” that emerged in the 1990s. The chapter ends at the beginning of the financial crisis, which brought about a complex of issues that had an impact on social policy.

Chapter 3 centres around Jessop’s interpretation of public affairs administration and considers challenges we face today. It introduces different approaches to “welfare” – Jassop himself tends to use the term “workfare”. It mainly analyses the increasing demands on public social systems and highlights the complexity of modern economy financing. The chapter also mentions the issues faced by the globalised world and the achievement of goals such as full employment in the 1970s.

The fourth chapter discusses how sudden behavioural influences challenge our ideas of who we are and that we need to incorporate these ideas if we want to better manage our economic and social systems. The author has chosen to draw on the experience of the UK and US as two economies that set an example of a financial, individualised model of economic growth, which is also the cause of most economic and social problems. These issues also have significant implications for other countries that trade with or have significant links to these countries. In the conclusion of this chapter, the author presents framework elements for his explanation (a summary of behavioural elements in decision-making: paradox of welfare, hard choices, not knowing what we like).

Chapter 5 combines the results from previous chapters and explains the relationship between emerging forms in economic and social policy management based on various historical concepts (e.g. Galbraithian concepts, opulence, post-national governance, oligarchic governance) up to the current behaviour described in Chapter 4 (framework elements: paradox of welfare, hard choices, not knowing what we really want). This chapter presents arguments submitted by economists such as Galbraith, Stiglitz and Standing. The chapter then goes on to work with each of the four GAPO dimensions and examines how they relate to behaviour in the framework elements management (see Chapter 4). Therefore, this chapter starts by exploring Galbraithian elements of economic and social administration (GAPO).

The sixth chapter titled “Economic governance and social policy” is critical to understanding the debate on social policy services because the way the economy is managed establishes the decisive context in which the rest of the society operates, and which links the different branches of social policy. This chapter shows possible alternatives to a business-based approach, consumer spending options, and well-functioning international capital markets. The author draws attention to the approach to managing economic issues based on long-term interests of the population rather than on short-term purposes and necessary prerequisites to address issues related to specific social policies.

The seventh chapter titled “Health and healthcare policy” deals with the issue of health and the management of health policy using different approaches. A major part of the work in the field of social policy deals with health care instead of looking at the organisation of health services, including relationships between doctors, managers and patients as well as the funding of these services. The chapter analyses health care through the GAPO framework, which illustrates the extraordinary impact of corporations on health care. The chapter stresses that health care requires careful state regulation and control.

The eighth chapter titled “Education” describes a crucial area for the economy and society. This chapter draws attention to the fact that education is currently used as a means of segregating people into categories from which they may strive to escape. The author points out that education is a social good that we need in the labour market, and it should also be a means of sustaining democracy.

The chapter titled “Social security” begins with analysing the GAPO framework in the context of social security, which shows the standard of living since the 1970s, when people were exposed to a greater insecurity in the labour market. This chapter shows that people’s insecurity and a lack of system control create the need for state intervention in social security. The author points out that understanding social security means raising awareness of the links between the work, income level and the wider functioning of the economic system. It turns out that these links need not be set up as they were in the 1980s. This chapter discusses social security today and at the same time asks what alternatives could be available in the future.

Chapter 10 combines the analysis of previous chapters, especially various areas of social policy. It presents this analysis using a third framework, i.e. where the social policy comes from or where it stands now, but it also looks at the issue from an alternative viewpoint, that is, using individual identifiers which define the issues in an addressed manner. The author summarises the collected findings from selected areas of social policy – such as health care, education, social security – and at the same time he tries to define a new ideal management system for the social-policy structure.

The book is based on the diagnosis of where we are now and helps explain all possible contexts by means of individual identifiers, and then it presents an alternative approach to the solution.

The main message of the book is to become aware of the current links between the individual sub-areas. The book shows that there are clear alternatives to how we manage our economy and society even if our governments try to convince us otherwise. We can focus on an economy and society favouring well-being over meaningful economic growth, which is not subject to exploitation. The introduction of this will certainly be significant in the change of our current trajectory towards a better future.

The book provides an interesting insight into how to look for possible solutions to managing social policy so as to achieve a meaningful and effective solution while maintaining current social priorities also for the future.

The book is for everyone who want to think about the current functioning of the social policy system seen from various angles and for those who are not afraid to ask alarming questions. Even addressing standard issues may be completely different from the current proposed policies.

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