

Modern Concepts in Geography – Unit 4

Welfare Approach in Geography

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? And ‘how’ reflects the process by which the observed differences arise.

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:

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

Where, S is the level of living or social well-being in a set of n territorial subdivisions. In other words, welfare is some function of the distribution of good and bad among groups of the population defined by area of residence.

Social well-being may be defined in terms of what people actually get, as follows:

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

Where, X represents the quantity of the m good and bad consumed or experienced. Social well-being may also be expressed in terms of the distribution within the area in question:

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

Where, U is the level of well-being, satisfaction or 'utility' of each of the k population subgroups. In all the above expressions, the terms may be weighted differentially and combined according to any function, to represent the combination of territorial levels of well-being, good and bad or group well-being that maximises the objective function (W or S).

For identifying disparity in territorial distribution, developing social indicators is of extreme importance. Such indicators may be as follows: income, employment, housing, education, social orders, social participation, etc.

The welfare approach found Neo-classical economics least suitable to explain social inequality. The Marxian economics provides a useful tool for analysing social problems, because of the inherent tendency of capitalism to create disparity.

The second level of explanation deals with the process of how specific elements of a socio-political- economic system operate. D.M. Smith (1977), in his *Human Geography: A Welfare Approach* first suggested the approach which later merged with other approaches of geography dealing with the issues of inequality.

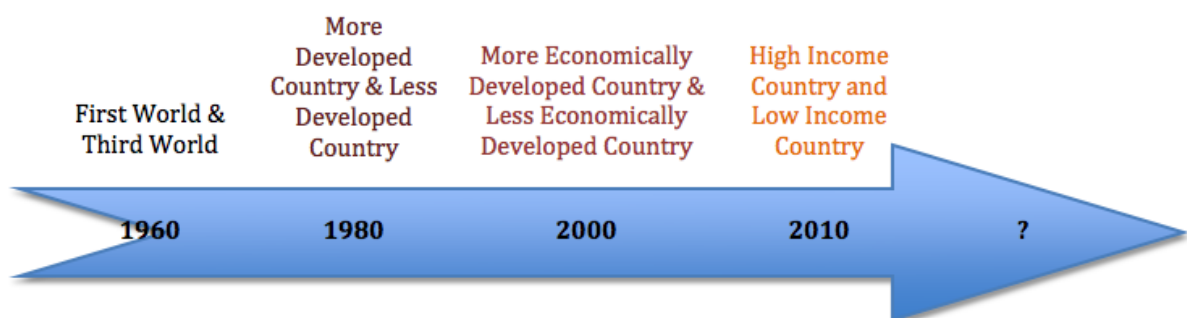
The issues dealt by welfare geography demand an interdisciplinary approach of the highest order. And, in a rapidly changing era of globalisation where the developing South stands deprived vis-à-vis the advanced North, there has been a renewed interest in welfare geography.

Welfare approaches

The welfare approach in geography was developed against quantitative and locational analysis. As quantitative and location analysis is similar to the capitalist policy, it created many social and economic problems, and welfare approach is developed to make positive changes of common men, and it deals with social and economic justice such as:

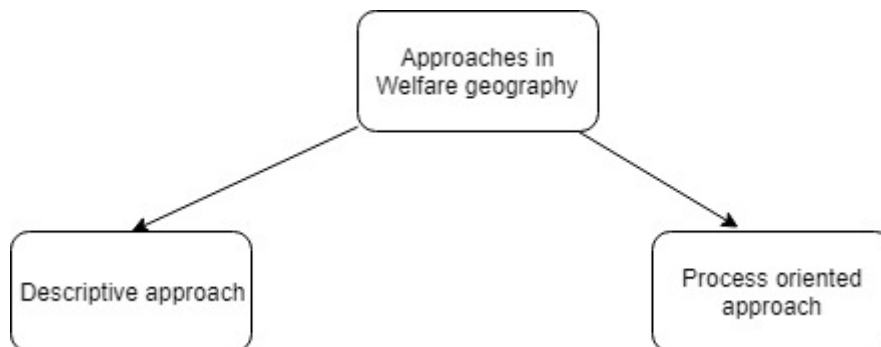
- Inequality
- Poverty
- Gender discrimination
- Women inferiority
- Crime
- Education and health care facilities.
- Welfare for all
- Environment control & Sustainable planning

For example, the main victim of inflation would be poor people; development should be focus to reduce inflation at an optimum level.



Approaches in welfare geography

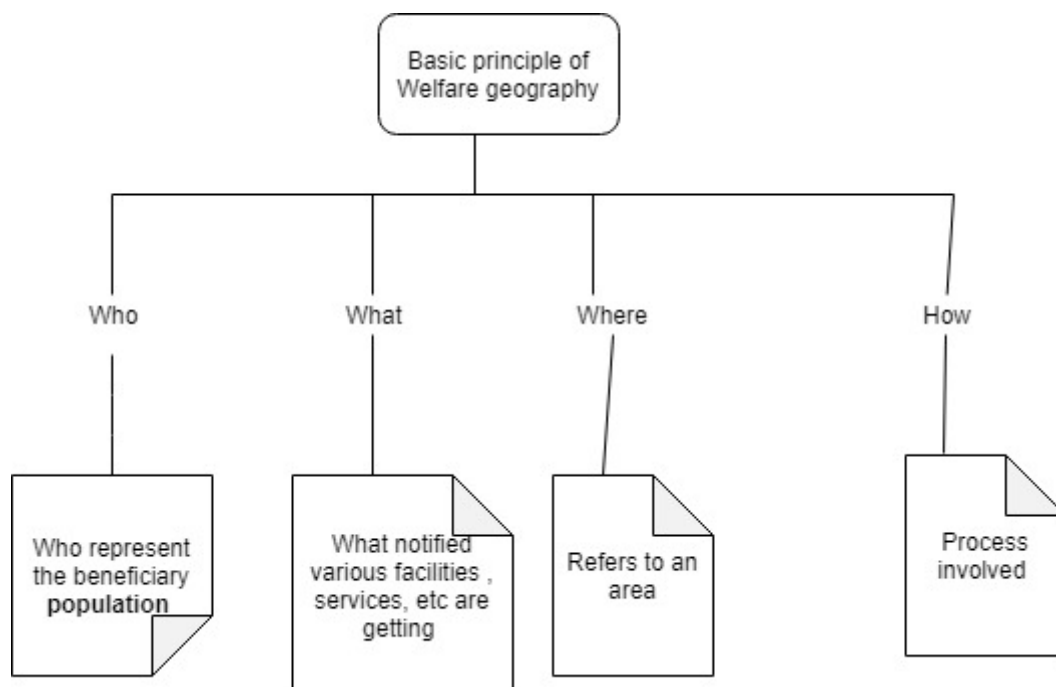
There are two approaches to welfare geography. Descriptive approach and Process oriented approach.



Descriptive approach:

The descriptive approach is used to identify injustice & inequality in a particular population in a particular area. For example to identify the beneficiary of toilet construction, fertilizer subsidy

The descriptive approach is based on the following principles; it is shown in the diagram.



- **Who?**

Identifying the subgroup of the population to whom should give preferential treatment or give overburden, for example, for the welfare of the society, the poor should get the subsidy and rich should pay tax.

- **What?**

Who gets what, what should be given to the targeted population? It can be:

- Cloth, Food grains, House
- Water, roads, LPG
- Education, health, social justice, etc.

- **Where?**

Who gets where it deals with identifying the region of the target and welfare should be based on the region-specific. Livelihood and requirement of the different region are different, for example,

- city planning model cant be implemented in the village
- Plain area development not suited in the hilly area
- Designing of houses in the city is not fitted for the village.

- **How?**

Who gets how it deals with the process involved in welfare geography, such as

- Top-down approach
- Bottom to Up approach
- what cost they are going to pay to get a particular service
- How much they are working to get basic service.

Contribution of geographer in welfare geography:

The following are:

- ***Pareto Optimality:***
 - Poor people cannot be sustained or get better without at expense of rich people. Someone must be compromised for better or for others.
 - Pareto supported the special treatment of poor people for welfare, for example, subsidies scheme for the poor.
- ***Smith & Knox :***

Smith was the first geographer who coined the welfare geography, and he has written book "welfare geography". He stated that:

- A quantitative tool such as GDP & GNP is not necessarily a direct measurement of quality of life.
- There should be a qualitative tool such as happiness index, HDI (both later developed) to measure the welfare of society
- The main focus in geography should be the focus on the welfare of people.