

Audio Transcript

John Clarke - welfare state and nations

Julia Waldman: How did your interest develop in the relationship between welfare state and nation?

John Clarke: I think it was a sense of frustration originally about we work always with the concept of welfare state and we hardly ever say what it means and so I guess my interest started by trying to think about literally what the phrase means. What do we identify when we talk about welfare state? And it does seem to me it's a rather easy, popular, nice term and were not very careful about saying what it means. I wanted to know what it meant, I also wanted to know what it concealed what it concealed, what was hidden in that beautiful little phrase. And I guess that means for me I started to take it apart and thinking that especially in the last couple of decades the thing that we call welfare has been under different sorts of challenge and attack. And the thing that we call state, states has been under challenge and attack, and there not necessarily pressed by the same forces nor do they move in the same directions, so as it were, I just want to take welfare and state apart slightly and then say so what we think about as welfare states are putting something called welfare together with a state that protects, manages, divides it and we sort of accept it as a lump but we probably shouldn't and then behind that I guess, in hiding is the fact that we know in a binary way that welfare states and national welfare states we know that they vary between countries. But I guess my interest is more in thinking about welfare and welfare states as ways of doing nation building, as shaping nations, as sort of producing a sort of design of nation. So welfare states, welfare policies carry ideas and ideals about how people should live in a particular place at a particular time and try to make that come true, and I guess I have a little triangle where I think the welfare is connected to state and the nation is connected to state and state is connected to welfare so I'm trying to work round that as a triangle. It's good for me I don't know whether anybody else believes it.