

Conclusions

Looking in very small developing countries for replication of the Scandinavian model of a welfare state may result in disappointment, if credence is given to the proposition in this paper that there is a qualitative threshold of smallness around the one million population mark below which social, economic and political formations acquire a distinctive character. The classic welfare states of Europe are large relative to the group of states and territories that are the subject of this paper.

The personality of the modern state in many very small jurisdictions flows from key events that took place in the era of global decolonisation from 1950 to the 1980s. The nature and purposes of government in small states have been defined historically by metropolitan powers exercising strong influence via colonial rule.

The role of government in small states certainly has a defensive dimension, but it also has a strategic orientation. The combination of a large government sector relative to population, often plus a limited productive base, left post-colonial small state economies quite reliant upon state employment and aid funding.

There is, in short, scope for comparative investigation of what the balance is in individual small states' policy-making between the defensive and the proactive bases for government transfers, in-kind benefits, and wage and salary payments. This clearly will require a good deal of sifting of country-specific qualitative, as well as quantitative, information.