

## GSP Forum: New (?) Directions in Global Social Policy

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corporations. The issue of regulating or coping with influential TNCs raises a series of questions about labour and environmental standards, the provision and regulation of finance, the privatization and transnational provision of social services. The rise of the corporation as a significant actor and source of authority has led to increased attention to social policy concerns.

A case can also be made that social policy developments in one part of the world are of increasing relevance to people living in other parts of the world. Under the shadow of the Washington Consensus, policy models were exported to developing countries. However, in recent years policy models are also being imported to northern or western states. The introduction of flat taxes in some Central and Eastern European states has thrown down a challenge to the welfare states of Western Europe. After the privatization of social security systems in numerous developing states, the US under the Bush administration has advocated similar steps for its own system.

What might a deeper exchange between IR and social policy studies achieve? For IR practitioners and academics, there is a rich theoretical and empirical literature about the creation and development of social policies that are of increasing concern to many international and transnational actors. For social policy practitioners and academics, there are the insights gathered from IR work about the functioning of the global system and how that might influence the content and possibilities of social policy creation and implementation.

This exchange of information and views is a difficult undertaking. As outlined earlier, social policy and IR scholars do not often exchange views or pay attention to each other's scholarship. It takes both time and energy to read across disciplines and think about things in new ways. One of the goals of *Global Social Policy* is to make that task easier both for academics and practitioners in the two fields.

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### *New (?) Directions in Global Social Policy*

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To coincide with the journal's editorial changeover, this short article reflects on global social policy as a field of academic study and research and situates the journal therein. I contribute this short piece in the spirit of opening up rich and fruitful dialogue around the development of global social policy in the years to come. I write this as an England-based social policy scholar who has a long-standing interest in the intersection of global and transnational processes with national and subnational ones in the study of welfare states and social policies.

Over the last decade, global social policy has emerged as a vibrant field of academic study and research. It examines the ways in which globalization processes impact on the means supportive of the right to social participation, with a particular focus on international actors' discourses and practices of social policy and their national impacts. Global social policy is strongly multidisciplinary, embracing anthropology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science and sociology. With an essential focus on sectoral policies in the health, social care, social protection, housing, education and labour arenas, global social policy relates to the concerns of diverse fields of study, from migration studies through development studies to international relations, from social work to public administration and management studies, through area/regional studies and organization studies, to name but a few.

Global social policy has brought new concerns and questions into 'globalization studies' and social policy analysis alike. Globalization studies paid insufficient attention to the role of social policies and the welfare state in shaping and mediating the globalizing strategies of state and non-state entities, while social policy focused on the national and subnational dimensions of health and welfare arrangements to the neglect of the global and transnational ones. This intersection between globalization studies and social policy analysis has proved challenging and has generated much innovative work in social policy as we rethink how we construct our fields of enquiry and revisit existing conceptual and theoretical frameworks in new contexts.

As is to be expected, this is a multifaceted and long-term project, but already it has reaped dividends. It is now accepted that ostensibly 'national' welfare states are as much the creatures of transnational and global processes as they are of national and subnational ones; that accounts of social policy development need to attend to the global political geographies through which social policies are constituted and reconstituted. Much of this work shares common ground with those that would emphasize the need to incorporate the consequences of countries' imperialist past for the development of welfare regimes in colonized and colonial countries alike, before, during and after colonization itself.

Importantly, this project has helped forge connections with other fields of enquiry not heretofore regarded (or identifying themselves) as affiliating with 'social policy'. For example, the connections between 'foreign' and 'domestic' policy together with the significance of transnational dimensions to social and political action more generally as they relate to the welfare arena are now the focus of enquiry. Trade, finance, budgetary and accounting policies and practices are being examined as key elements of public policies impacting on health, welfare and livelihoods, as evidenced by the growing critical literature over private pension, health and education markets. Similarly, matters of international diplomacy, organizational change and interorganizational alliances among bodies with or without an institutionalized social dimension

are treated as central to the global politics of welfare state reform and the political processes giving rise to global policies.

This journal has been the premier forum through which these developments have been given expression. But there is much scope for further work. Indeed, there is a sense in which coverage of 'core' social policy areas has only just begun. While health and social protection (in particular pensions) currently are favoured topics in global social policy, the field would benefit from extended focused attention to these areas as well as greater attention to the neglected areas of housing, social care, education and livelihoods. But we also need to broaden areas of enquiry to ask questions about a wide range of global public policies that impact on health, welfare and livelihoods. Agricultural policy is one example and the consequences of international trade agreements for the incomes and livelihoods of farmers and food security merit attention. Global water and energy policies merit similar treatment from a social policy perspective, as do the implications of developments in information and communications technology for social policy and services provision. The impacts of corporate and governmental internationalization strategies on, for example, subsistence economies, alternative economic systems, practices and arrangements, and the right to livelihood more generally also invite further analysis.

Transnational cooperation in matters of security policy is often critically commented on in relation to civil liberties and human rights but less commonly so in relation to the social rights of migrants and refugees. Much attention has been focused on the EU's institutionalized internal and external social policies but the social dimensions and impacts of other world-regional and transregional formations and alliances are less well attended to. There is now a wealth of literature on the global social justice movement(s) and their intersection with institutions of global governance, but relatively little of it concretely addresses the intersection of the movement with the development of social policy at national and global levels. Finally, there is a wealth of research into international trade diplomacy that is potentially relevant to this journal, as there is also from Future Studies with its attention to social utopias and dystopias.

These are but a few examples and in no way exhaustive of the wide range of ways in which research emerging from these different fields intersect with global social policy as a field of academic study and as a practice. Whatever the area or issue, the core concern must nonetheless clearly be with how global(ization) processes impact on collective interventions supporting the means to social participation and social development.

Perhaps one of the major challenges involved is opening up to study a far wider range of national and cultural variants of welfare arrangements. The more internationalist perspectives associated with recent work on OECD countries and the newly industrializing countries of East Asia and South America have begun this task, yet more work needs to be undertaken to

extend this work to other parts of the globe. This would be of immense benefit to the field, not only enhancing knowledge and understanding of the astonishingly wide variations in social welfare relations and arrangements and the diverse responses to globalizing forces that exist worldwide, but also fulfilling the field's aspirations to globality and enriching its theoretical claims.

As more material is brought into the field, one of the issues to be addressed is whether we can simply add 'globalization' and stir? In other words, does global social policy essentially entail scaling up traditional concerns on a global/international level or are we required to fundamentally rethink existing approaches? How do traditional concepts such as community, altruism, reciprocity, obligation, need, choice, identity, equity, equality, rights, justice and citizenship apply to a global policy context? How do theories of social policy development fit with the emergence, development and impacts of global social policies? Do theories of social policy and regional integration, developed in the EU context, apply to other world regions and international formations, or does such a starting point unnecessarily restrict our analysis and imagination?

In all of this, we need to engage with the widest possible diversity of perspectives. This entails engaging with scholars, policy-makers and activists from all parts of the globe and working within, or influenced by, different cultural, political and social contexts and traditions. Given the inequality of resources between policy-makers, academics and publishing venues around the world, it takes considerable effort to open space for a wide range of voices.

Global social policy, like national social policy, is a site of political and ideological struggle between left and right, emancipatory and conservative, progressive and regressive social forces. Global social policy is being forged through a struggle between these political tendencies, though some of them now appear in different guises. For instance, while much of the focus in global social policy has been on neoliberalism's accompanying social policy and its manifestation through international bodies such as the World Trade Organization and World Economic Forum, regressive forces also take the form of institutionalized religions: thus, to the traditionally conservative religious social policy of Catholicism and Christian fundamentalism can be added the conservative religious social policy of Islamic and Confucian countries. An example would be cooperation between the Vatican, several Islamic states and the US to undermine reproductive rights.

This implies that global social policy cannot be solely defined by that which is produced by an 'approved' list of organizations and perspectives, i.e. those which broadly approximate or appear sympathetic to 'our' values. Numerous other organizations pursuing policies ostensibly at odds with the values of social protection have a significant impact upon social policy. Failing to recognize and engage with these forces means failing to engage with some extremely strong influences on social policy. Again, using the example of

religious fundamentalism, it is an increasingly important shaper of global policy, not simply in supposed 'backward' religious-dominated states of the Middle East but also in 'developed' major world powers such as the US.

One of the key challenges that lies ahead, then, is to take the existence of such divergent perspectives as an incentive to further develop the field because eventually we need to recognize and engage with a conservative global social policy, whatever form it may take, wherever it is manifested and from whichever tradition it may emanate. The task must surely be to recognize the contributions of the widest possible range of policy actors and openly debate the issues with them.

In conclusion, global social policy is entering an exciting period of consolidation and innovation. This means more focused attention on 'core' social policy areas together with the examination of previously neglected policy areas. It involves incorporating more diverse perspectives and arguments from different disciplinary, cultural, social, political and geographical backgrounds. With your help, the journal will continue to be the principal forum for key global social policy debates and innovations in the years ahead.