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Global Social Policy Forum

Editors' Introduction: Global Social Policy at Six

Global Social Policy has been publishing for five years. Volume 6 sees the first change in editorship in the journal's brief history. We thought that this would be a good opportunity to reflect upon the journal's development and possible trajectory. As a result, this Forum contains five short articles looking at the journal's activities and possible directions for development. It begins with Rama Baru, a long-time Regional Editor, who has been with the journal since its founding. She discusses issues of particular importance to Regional Editors and the challenges of the journal's global reach. Next is Founding Editor Bob Deacon's reflection upon the origins and contributions of the journal. This is followed by three contributions from the incoming Editors. Meri Koivusalo stresses the need to develop the globality of the journal and considers the relationship between health and social policies. Robert O'Brien develops some ideas about the relationship between global social policy and the field of international relations. The Forum concludes with an article by Nicola Yeates, who articulates a range of ideas about the development of global social policy as a field of study and research and the role of *GSP* therein.

We hope these musings provoke reactions from our readers and look forward to publishing further thoughts or rejoinders to the views expressed here.

Meri Koivusalo, Robert O'Brien and Nicola Yeates

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GSP: The First Five Years

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GSP the journal was conceived in the context of the first phase of the Globalism and Social Policy Programme (GASPP), which was an Anglo-Finnish project initiated in 1997 designed to analyse the impact of

globalization upon social policy and to begin to articulate a more socially responsible alternative to neoliberal globalization. At this time, social policy analysts (Mishra, 1999) were warning of the threat of globalization to established social democratic welfare states, and in the wake of the WTO Ministerial in Singapore in 1996, northern reformist (and protectionist) attempts to secure a social clause in the WTO trade rules had met with opposition from many southern governments, who did not want internationally agreed and imposed labour standards to put at risk their comparative trading advantage. The journal therefore was created to 'advance the understanding of the impact of globalization upon social policy and social development'. In the minds of the first editorial team, globalization here was understood partly in terms of the global economy. The journal would 'encourage discussion of the implications for social welfare of the dynamics of the global economy.' But importantly, it was also understood in terms of the politics of globalization. Hence, an aim of the journal was to 'analyse the contribution of a range of international actors to the global social policy and social development discourse and practice'. The first international Editorial Advisory Board was convened in Helsinki in December 1999 and it was there affirmed that the journal 'is envisaged as serving not only a global academic audience but also a global policy making audience'. Indeed, as stated on the inside back page of each issue: 'The journal aims to contribute to the making of global social policy and to serve the cause of social justice within and between countries'. *GSP* was born, then, out of the European (some might say Anglo-Nordic) social policy school that had always been concerned to apply the analytical insights from a range of disciplines (economics, political science, sociology) to the policy fields of social protection health education, social care and housing. This was done in the belief by the Editor that this tradition had applicability to the new international struggle to embed the global economy in global institutions that would redistribute, regulate and enhance rights.

To this combined scholarly and policy-relevant end, a number of steps were taken. The Editorial Advisory Board included policy analysts working inside the ILO, WHO, UNDP, UNDESA, UNICEF and the World Bank as well as those coming from global labour and social movements and think tanks such as Social Watch, the ICSW, the ICFTU, the Trans-national Institute, Oxfam and the Breton Woods Project. To begin to ensure a global reach and global contributions, Editorial Advisory Board members were appointed from every continent and region except, it has to be said, the Arab region. Regional Editors were appointed for Africa, East Asia and Latin America. The initial board was nevertheless heavily European and North American. Additionally, the location of *GSP* within the GASPP framework would be important for enabling the journal, particularly in its Forum section, to draw upon the contributions of international organization and social movement actors. The seven international GASPP seminars convened between 1997 and

2004 (www.gaspp.org) informed several of the Forums and generated a number of articles. The *GSP Digest* was conceived from the outset as a useful crib or update for scholars and policy actors of recent developments in international social policy. In its format it echoed the UK-oriented *Digest* of the *Journal of Social Policy* and the European-oriented *Digest* of the *Journal of European Social Policy*. In terms of book reviews, it was the intention of the first Reviews Editor to ensure that we did not fall into the trap of northern scholars reviewing all the books. A range of reviews was solicited from the global South.

Within its first five years, *GSP* has, I believe, begun to realize its aims both in terms of the relevance of most of its articles and in terms of the content of several of its Forums and its *Digest*. The global discourse within and between international organizations (IOs) concerning desirable national social policy and the associated practice of IOs has been the subject of a number of articles. Global *pension policy* and practice was examined by Orenstein (*GSP* 5.2) and Ervik (*GSP* 5.1). Global *labour market policy* by Vosko (*GSP* 2.1), McBride and Williams (*GSP* 1.3) and Barrientos and Kabeer (*GSP* 4.2). Global *health and social care policy* by Lethbridge (*GSP* 5.2), Correa (*GSP* 2.3) and Holden (*GSP* 2.1). The twin debates concerning whether global social policy has advanced from the neoliberal hegemony of the 1990s and whether the prospects for a cosmopolitan world order have increased have been addressed by Yeates (*GSP* 2.1), Deacon (*GSP* 5.2), Mehrotra and Delamonica (*GSP* 5.2) and Day (*GSP* 2.3). Weiss (*GSP* 1.1) addressed the contribution of United Nations Economic and Social Ideas to global policy, while O'Brien focused upon the relationship between organizational politics in the multilateral economic organizations and social policy (*GSP* 2.2). Gough (*GSP* 4.3), however, advanced an analysis concerning the paradox that while understandings of obstacles to human well-being are increasingly universal, policy proposals to address them are increasingly local. The contribution of other non-state actors to the making of global social policy has been analysed by Stone (*GSP* 1.3) in terms of think tanks, by Stubbs (*GSP* 3.3) and Ramia (*GSP* 3.1) in terms of INGOs, and by several articles on global business regulation, listed in the following paragraph. Regrettably, there have been no articles addressing the contribution of global social movements to global social policy.

In terms of the three Rs of global *Redistribution, Regulation and Rights*, two articles addressed the issue of redistribution: Day (*GSP* 2.3) and Clunies-Ross (*GSP* 4.2); regrettably only one the issue of rights, by Oestreich (*GSP* 4.1); but perhaps an excess dealing with regulation and, in particular, aspects of global business regulation: Pearson and Seyfang (*GSP* 1.1), Whitehouse (*GSP* 3.3), Lewis and Macleod (*GSP* 4.1), Murray (*GSP* 4.2), Millar (*GSP* 4.2) and Djelic (*GSP* 5.1). Finally, in terms of this overview of *GSP* articles published between 2000 and 2005, a number have contributed to the aim of *GSP* to increase understanding of the impact of globalization upon social policy in particular countries. Countries and regions included in the analysis have been China

(*GSP* 3.1, 5.3), Chile (*GSP* 3.1), East Asia (*GSP* 1.2), Korea (*GSP* 1.2, 2.3), Russia (*GSP* 1.3), the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (*GSP* 1.2), the former Yugoslavia (*GSP* 4.1), European countries (*GSP* 2.2, 3.2), the Arab region and Middle East (*GSP* 3.3, 2.3), Peru (*GSP* 4.3) and Bangladesh (*GSP* 1.1). We have not received or published any articles on Africa south of the Sahara, except one addressing internal migration in South Africa (*GSP* 5.3). It would appear from this analysis that one of the aims of *GSP*, to increase the dialogue between social policy analysts and development studies analysts, has not yet been achieved. Those concerned with the impact of globalization upon social development in the poorest countries and those dealing with the impact of globalization upon middle-income and richer countries still to a large extent occupy two parallel literatures.

From my point of view as Editor, the most challenging part of the journal to keep alive, and when it worked, the most rewarding, has been the Forum. *GSP* 1.1 invited a range of 'movers and shakers' of global social policy to address the desirability of a global social reform agenda and their contributions are still relevant today. The important North–South dialogue on the prospects for a socially progressive globalization was begun in *GSP* 1.2 and extended to embrace a South–South dialogue in *GSP* 1.3. The extent to which any of these ideas for global social reform were reflected at the level of UN reports and conferences was covered in *GSP* 2.2 in terms of the Monterrey Finance for Development Conference, in *GSP* 4.2 in terms of the ILO's World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. Other Forums had a specific policy focus: labour in *GSP* 2.1, health in *GSP* 2.3, migration in *GSP* 5.3, public service privatization in *GSP* 5.2, or a regional focus: Europe in *GSP* 3.2. *GSP* 4.1 assessed the contribution of the Global Development Net. *GSP* Forum 4.3, using the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a focus, addressed the issue of the relationship between global policy-making at the level of IOs and local perceptions. *GSP* Forum 5.1 asked whether global social policy ideas did actually matter and included the challenging contribution by Rieger that perhaps they did not. This view notwithstanding, there has certainly been a shift in the global social policy discourse since 1999 towards a wider acceptance of the need for a socially responsible if not yet (!) social democratic globalization. The MDGs, despite their limitations and the articulation at the G8 in July 2005 and the UN summit of September 2005 of the need for some form of international taxation on air travel, is testimony to this. *GSP* has, of course, merely reflected this rather than been a significant player in its articulation. However, during this period from 1999 to 2005, the now stronger southern social movement and government voice in the globalization debate that is often concerned that the South should get out from underneath a northern, even *reformist* northern driven global agenda has not been reflected adequately in the pages of *GSP*. The applicability of the European social reform story is increasingly questioned by social development specialists even as others now point to its relevance (Mkandawire,

2004). The ‘North–South dialogue on the prospects for socially progressive globalization’ begun in the Forum of *GSP* 1.2 in 2001 is, in my view, the most important but has proved the most difficult dialogue to maintain.

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Views from the South

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Ever since its inception, the *Global Social Policy* journal has been visualized as a collaborative effort to give voice to social policy issues from both developed and developing countries. This was institutionalized by the manner in which the editorial board was constituted, with representation from both the North and the South in the form of Regional Editors and members of the Advisory Board. This is what distinguishes *GSP* from most other international journals, which normally do not have representation from the southern countries on their editorial team. Over the years the content of the journal has reflected the concerns of Latin America, Africa, South Asia, East Asia and North America on various social policy issues. However, in future, there is a need to seriously review how this can be strengthened and made much more vibrant. Is it possible to consider having one issue every year that would focus on a region, which would address some major social policy concern? This would help the Regional Editors to take a more proactive role in planning and identifying potential authors and book reviews for the journal. The journal has tried to work around special themes; the one I worked on with Eeva Ollila and Meri Koivusalo on health was quite a success, and we were able to get a fairly good regional representation on health service related issues. I find that it is extremely useful for teaching and research for courses related to comparative studies in health systems. Similarly, the articles on pension reforms in Latin America, Russia and other Eastern European countries have been a valuable addition to the research in global social policy.

Books published from the different regions also need better representation in *GSP*. For the South Asian region, I tried to establish a link with Sage India in order to send titles to the editor of book reviews but I do not think it worked very well. Maybe one could plan for theme-based book reviews and the Regional Editors could select some suitable publications for review in *GSP*. Similarly, if there are special issues from the different regions then