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Editorial Introduction

Special Issue on The Social Policy Dimensions of World-Regionalism

The regionalist strategies of states, businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social movements are key to understanding the complex relationship between contemporary globalization and social policy processes. In bringing together a range of contributions focused on the social politics and policies of world-regional integration processes, this special issue of *Global Social Policy* has two major aims. First, it seeks to advance a wider appreciation of the significance of regionalist and regionalization processes in the making of global social governance and policy. Second, it begins to address the substantial gap in the scholarly and policy literatures on regionalisms that privilege issues of trade, diplomacy and 'security' to the neglect of welfare. This collection shows that there is a tangible social policy dimension to several regional groupings and that questions of trade and 'security' policy *are in practice* entangled in wider *social* policy issues concerning the resources that people have access to and control over and how certain social groups and entire populations are treated.

The *Forum* section, coordinated by Brid Brennan and Cecilia Olivet at the Transnational Institute, brings together scholar-activists from South America, Africa and Asia to reflect on the opportunities, successes and challenges presented by regional processes for those involved in campaigning for a more socially-just globalization. The *Articles* section contains five full-length articles on the social policy dimensions and impacts of long-established and more recently emerged (statist) regionalisms in Europe (Threlfall on the EU), Asia (Chavez on ASEAN) and the Americas (Abrahamson on CAFTA, Hosein on CARICOM and Ruiz on the FTAA).

Although each article differs in its overall argument, focus and perspective, collectively they underline the centrality of social policy and politics in mediating the development and impacts of regionalist strategies – as well as the significance of regional formations in the (re)making of social policy under conditions of globalization. The *Review Article*, authored by Van Langenhove and De Lombaerde, similarly underlines the extent to which social policy questions feature centrally in scholarly discussions of world-regionalism, and usefully connect current debates about regionalization processes to those featuring in globalization and social policy literatures.

Many of the articles in this collection were first presented at the UNESCO High-Level Symposium on the Social Dimensions of Regionalism (Montevideo, Uruguay, February 2006), coordinated by myself together with Bob Deacon (Sheffield University) and Luk van Langenhove (UNU-CRIS).

We hope you find this issue of the Journal useful and welcome any feedback and contributions you may wish to make (email: gsp@mcmaster.ca).

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