Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) "Global Dynamics of Social Policy"

Summary of the research programme

Social policy aims to protect social rights and to create social security. In addition to the market and familial support networks, social policy is a key producer of welfare. In the Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) "Global Dynamics of Social Policy" we analyse the global dynamics of public social policy. Its research focus and design go beyond earlier social policy research in three regards:

1. Geographically, it systematically includes countries from the *Global South* in the analysis and breaks with the OECD-centrism of past research.
2. Conceptually, it builds upon a *wider understanding of social policy* by including – in accordance with the Anglo-Saxon understanding of the welfare state – education policy as a fundamental policy for promoting equality of opportunities.
3. Analytically, it replaces social policy research's orientation towards the nation state with *an interdependence-centred approach*, placing and analysing common determinants of social policy in the context of transregional and global interrelationships. In the analysis of global dynamics of social policy, cross-border interdependencies such as de-(colonization), war, trade relationships, capital movements, migration flows, transnational news and information links, international organizations, and international treaties, come to the fore. Our central assumption is that only through the interplay of national frameworks with horizontal and vertical international interdependencies can the developmental processes and dynamics of social policy in a global and historical perspective be adequately explained.

The CRC comprises 15 projects and is divided into two project areas. The six projects in Project Area *A* mainly rely on macro-quantitative techniques to analyse and explain social policy dynamics in a global perspective. They focus on explaining the (non-)emergence of social security programmes, be it in the fields of employment protection and legislation; provision for old-age, accidents or unemployment; health and long-term care; family or education policy. During the first phase we are especially interested in the introduction and diffusion of social policy: which countries were the (regional) pioneers and why? What was the order and timing of the introduction of which social policy programmes in different parts of the world? To what extent were the emergence, expansion and retrenchment of social policy driven by international influences or affected by domestic factors? A central objective being pursued by all projects in Project Area A is the development of the Global Welfare State Information System (WeSIS) on global social policy covering the period from 1880 to 2020. WeSIS will facilitate the visualization of social policy dynamics in the form of a global social policy atlas. Project A01 is dedicated to building this database. It is closely interlocked with the other projects in Project Area A and serves as the hub of the entire CRC. Nevertheless, Project A01 also uses these data to pursue its own research programme.

Project Area *B* comprises 9 subprojects that apply qualitative, case study analyses to investigate in detail the causal pathways between international interdependencies and social policy dynamics in selected groups of countries. During the first phase the guiding question is: by means of which causal mechanisms do interdependencies between states interact with national constellations to affect the introduction, diffusion, generosity and degree of inclusion of social policy and which types of

interdependencies – mediated by which national determinants – explain the different consolidation trajectories and scopes of social policy? A central goal across all the projects of Project Area B is to develop a general theoretical framework of social policy dynamics, an approach which overcomes the pure nation-state narrative. It will do so by capturing the causal mechanisms leading to the emergence of public social policy due to the interaction between national factors with inter- and transnational interdependencies. This task is the responsibility of a dedicated project (B01), which in close cooperation with the other eight projects in Project Area B not only collates the work in this project area but also theoretically informs the projects in Project Area A. Together with the database project in Project Area A (Project A01), the theoretical Project (B01) builds the linchpin between the two project areas.

The synthesis of both project areas of the CRC will generate theoretical and empirical added value for the whole project and for international comparative welfare state research. Furthermore, through the systematic inclusion of the Global South this CRC contributes to enhancing the visibility of German social policy research. In the past, such research remained tightly focused in the Western world, or even West Europe. By means of its research policy, the CRC will overcome this self-enclosure.

Problem statement and research objective

Topic. The research topic of this Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) is the dynamics of public social policy in a global and historical perspective. We understand social policy to be the sum total of the policies that the international community committed itself to in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, UN). The economic, social and cultural rights defined there and to be guaranteed by the international community encompass two areas of classical social policy, namely (1) *employment legislation and protection* and (2) *social security and health care*. In addition, in its regulatory mandate this pact includes (3) *the education system*, an area that is an elementary prerequisite for attaining equality of opportunity and social participation.

Social policy aims at protecting social rights and creating social security. In addition to the market and familial support networks, social policy is a key producer of welfare. Social scientific research usually understands social policy as a matter for the nation state and explains its development almost exclusively in the context of national conditions and processes. There is often a lack of systematic consideration of the influence of interdependencies with other states. This is problematic because a country's social policy is multifariously influenced by the social standards of other states and by political, social and economic relations with other countries. For example, social policy in developed democracies comes under pressure when companies outsource their activities to countries with lower social costs, or if workers develop higher social aspirations when faced with higher social standards in other countries. Child labour and a lack of safety and health provisions in countries of the Global South generate public outrage and consumer boycotts in the North. International organizations and civil society groups take over where states seem overwhelmed in coping with starvation, extreme poverty or the suffering of refugees. Global debates among experts, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations spread social policy ideas, programmes and instruments across national borders. And finally, migratory flows from poor to rich countries and increasing global economic competition are seen by many as a threat to high social standards. As a result of these and similar interdependencies, the national social policies of all countries of the world depend on and mutually influence each other in many ways. The central aim of this CRC is therefore to describe and

explain the developmental dynamics of social policy on the basis of *international interdependencies* and *their interaction with national conditions* from their beginnings in the last quarter of the 19th century to the present day.

Social policy is not a phenomenon limited to the developed democracies of the North. More and more transition economies and developing countries are developing their own programmes, expanding the spectrum of social policy tasks, discovering and reacting to new social risks, increasing social expenditures and including new groups of people in social security systems. Worldwide, despite some episodes of retrenchment and social polarization, social policy endeavours continue to increase. On closer inspection though, this global expansion of social policy is not a new phenomenon. After the initial wave of social policy legislation at the level of the nation state during the last third of the 19th century in Western states followed upsurges of expansion during and after the First and, above all, the Second World War. Comprehensive social security systems became standard in Europe, North America, the "Antipodes" (New Zealand and Australia), Japan and, with a different orientation, the socialist countries of Eastern Europe.

Other regions also developed social policy programmes between the end of the Second World War and 1980, but these were typically restricted to a small section of the population. In colonial regimes, social security is concentrated on the colonizers themselves and their bureaucratic and military apparatus. It is often the elites – military, state administration and core industries – who benefit from social protection programmes. Since the 1990s, however, there has been an extensive expansion of social policy, which is affecting more and more countries in the world and ever larger parts of the world's population, however inadequate the level of protection it has achieved may be.

This is all the more remarkable because at the same time social policy in the Western industrialized countries is characterized by debates about austerity, welfare cuts and restrictions on social rights. However, the expansion of public social policy is not a steady and uninterrupted process. Episodes of social policy expansion and restriction alternate or unfold simultaneously in different spaces or fields of social policy. Sometimes, social policy development surges ahead due to crises, revolutions, and reformist breakthroughs, at other times it follows gradual patterns of step-by-step adjustment. But despite all the contradictions, non-simultaneity and inconsistency in these developments, the global trend towards expansion of social policy has so far prevailed. *The following question need to be explained: How did this worldwide expansionary dynamic of social policies come about? Why were restrictive episodes and adverse socioeconomic or political conditions unable to halt it? Which regional and national differences and patterns are emerging in its wake? And which typical temporal and spatial sequences can be identified?*

Three analytical dimensions of social policy dynamics. In our research centre, the global developmental and expansionary dynamics of social policy are analysed in three dimensions, namely introduction and design, generosity, and degree of inclusion of social policy programmes:

1. With regard to the introduction of social policy programmes, a spatial expansion of public social policy can be identified. In contrast to the much discussed and partially implemented welfare cuts in Western countries, social policy in Asia, Africa and Latin America seems to be on the rise. More and more countries are adopting policies for social security and at least partially implementing them. Even in the poorest regions of the world, such as the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, programmes have been introduced in recent years to ensure basic social

protection for the population. However, this territorial expansion does not proceed smoothly, but rather regional or cross-regional clusters are emerging, each with its own social policy profile.

2. Measured by the *generosity* of social policy, an increase in the level and scope of social benefits can be observed despite episodes of retrenchment. While social policy interventions were initially limited to single risks and specific situations, social protection has increased significantly over time, introducing new programmes and extending the scope of existing programmes. Furthermore, the idea of social protection is penetrating more and more policy areas. Both in the developed Western OECD countries and in the Global South, neighbouring policy areas such as education policy are increasingly being infused with social policy ideas and concepts.

3. Finally, the *degree of inclusion* of social protection is also increasing: programmes that were initially restricted to specific population and occupational groups, such as the military or civil servants, or closely linked to the formal labour market, are increasingly being expanded to include other groups and extended with social security systems for all citizens or residents. Social protection reaches out from the workforce to the entire citizenry, from urban residents to rural residents and from the working population to target groups outside the labour market. This process creates special *inclusion and exclusion profiles*.

The CRC works under the assumption that national factors alone can explain neither the dynamics of social policy in these three dimensions nor the diversity of national social policies. Our core argument is that the global unfolding of social policy and the national differences in social policy have to be reconstructed from the mutual influence and reciprocal contingency of national developmental paths: The development of social policy in a country can only be explained if, in addition to different national circumstances, the various interdependencies with other countries and international organizations are taken into account. The main focus of our investigation is therefore the role of worldwide *interdependencies*.

We distinguish *horizontal* interdependencies between states and *vertical* interdependencies between states and international organizations. By interacting with the national constellation in politics, society and the economy, the nature and extent of these networks of interdependence shape the developmental dynamics and patterns of national social policy. This *interdependence-centred* approach structures our studies of the developmental dynamics in the three dimensions of social policy:

1. Looking at the *introduction* and shaping of social policy, we are interested in the patterns and causes of its spatial diffusion. At what time and why did which states introduce, extend or reduce specific programmes for which social risks? Why do countries implement social protection programmes at specific points in time and in specific sequences? Are there substitution or complementarity effects? Which social policy configurations exist at a given time in a country and how did they come about? What role do learning processes between states, economic competition, international organizations or relationships of violence play? Which bilateral, (trans-)regional, inter- and supranational influences have had which impacts on which social policy programmes?

2. With regard to the *generosity* of social policy, we examine the extent to which horizontal and vertical interdependencies, in conjunction with national factors, have influenced the range and level of social benefits: To what extent do the nature and intensity of international interdependencies correspond with dynamics of social policy expansion or retrenchment? Do international organizations and cross-border exchanges of ideas promote the expansion of social policy, while competition between economic locations and migration hinder a generous social policy? Are these effects different across space and time?

3. Regarding the *degree of inclusion* of social policy programmes we ask: when and why do governments expand or limit the scope of social protection programmes? Which social groups obtain socially security at an early stage and which groups can permanently maintain a special status and social protection privileges? Which groups of people are left out? What role do international models; flows of trade, migration and capital; and friendly or powerful nations play in explaining inclusion and exclusion patterns?

The aim of the research centre is to describe developments in social policy in these three dimensions since the end of the 19th century and to explain them with an interdependence-centred approach. Our main focus is on the period after the Second World War. One challenge this research project faces is the time and space constraints imposed by the term "social policy". The definition of this term and how it is used in conjunction with other terms – with different meanings and scope – changes over time and varies between countries and areas (see, for example, Kaufmann 2003, Béland/Petersen 2015). This change of the term's meaning is in itself an essential element of our research, but makes its demarcation difficult.

The working definition of social policy should not be arbitrarily broad, but must draw a clear dividing line to policy fields that are unambiguously not social policy. At the same time, however, it must be flexible enough to capture developmental dynamics and manifestations of social policies that deviate from the typical patterns of development, objectives, and institutional structures of traditional Western welfare statehood. Therefore, and in the knowledge that the family as well as companies, religious communities or charities are important producers of welfare (see Seeleib-Kaiser 2001: 39-44, Cammett 2014, Cammett/MacLean 2014), we focus our research on *public social policy* as a bundle of separate public social protection programmes, based on the minimum legal consensus of social rights as defined in international law. The fundamental economic, social and cultural rights contained in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1966 in the areas of labour law, social security, health care (including long-term care), and education are built on those adopted in ILO conventions since 1919 and the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948 (Kaufmann 2003; Nullmeier/Kaufmann 2010, Davy 2013; Leisering 2013). If relevant, we consider functional equivalents to state social policy, such as familial or market-based welfare production, as part of the national constellation and thus as independent variables that explain the developmental dynamics and patterns of public social policy.

Characteristics of the CRC Research Areas. The CRC consists of two project areas. Project Area A consists of six projects that investigate social policy dynamics in a global perspective, primarily using macro-quantitative methods. They focus on explaining the (non-)introduction of social security programmes and their design in the fields of employment protection and legislation, social security, health, family and education. During the first phase these projects are especially interested in the

constitution and diffusion of social policy: *Which countries were the (regional) pioneers and why? What was the order and timing of the introduction of which social policy programmes? To what extent have trans- and international influences contributed to the emergence, expansion and retrenchment of social policy and to what extent have these three developments been influenced by internal state factors? How has the interaction of national and international interdependencies influenced tendencies of expansion and restriction, developmental sequences, changes of tempo, developmental breaks and reversals, (non-)synchronicities and clustering in social policy?* The overarching objective of this project area is to establish a comprehensive worldwide social policy database, covering the period from about 1880 to 2020: the Global Welfare State Information System – WeSIS. Project (A01) is taking the lead here; it is closely interlocked with the other projects in Project Area A and serves as the hub of the entire CRC. Nevertheless, Project A01 also uses these data to pursue its own research programme.

Project Area *B* comprises 9 projects that apply qualitative, case study analyses to investigate in detail the causal pathways between international interdependencies and the social policy dynamics in selected groups of countries. During the first phase the guiding question is: *by means of which causal mechanisms do interdependencies between states interact with national constellations to affect the diffusion, generosity and degree of inclusion of social policy and which types of interdependencies – mediated by which national determinants – explain the different consolidation trajectories and scope of social policy?* A central goal across all the projects of Project Area B is to develop a *theoretical framework for social policy dynamics*, an approach which overcomes the pure nation-state narrative by capturing the causal mechanisms leading to the emergence of public social policy due to the interaction between national factors with inter- and transnational interdependencies. This task is the responsibility of a dedicated project (B01), which in close cooperation with the other eight projects collates the work in Project Area B. Together with the database project in Project Area A (Subproject A01), the theoretical project (B01) builds the linchpin between the two project areas. Shifts, trends and breaks in social policy identified with the aid of the database created in Project Area A inspire the search for causal pathways in Project Area B, while Project Area B's theoretical findings on the causal mechanisms in turn provide impulses for further data collection.

The synthesis of both project areas of the CRC will generate theoretical and empirical added value for international comparative welfare state research. Furthermore, through the systematic inclusion of the Global South this CRC contributes to enhancing the visibility of German social policy research, which has hitherto remained largely confined to the Western world.