

# PROMOTIONSKOLLEG GLOBAL SOCIAL POLICIES AND GOVERNANCE

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## GLOBAL SOCIAL POLICY – WISHFUL THINKING OR REALITY?

Workshop at the University of Kassel, 1– 2 February 2008

### [BACKGROUND]

Following the Copenhagen Summit for Social Development in 1995, the term “global social policy” has been increasingly used in debates concerning the establishment of rules and mechanisms for social redistribution and protection at a global level. As a result, the social dimension has moved closer to the forefront of political and academic debates on globalisation, which once seemed to be defined merely in economic terms. This development raises the question not only of what constitutes a global social order, but also whether such an order is a desirable and feasible goal of global politics, given the deepening social, socio-economic and ecological problems on a world-wide scale. As a result, the historical conditions, strategies and actors of a global social policy agenda attract growing interest.

However, depending on the perspective taken, debates on the current state and potentials of social policies at a global level give rise to rather different assessments. On the one hand, commentators point to the introduction of social transfer mechanisms and regulation by international institutions or the development of a “Post-Washington-Consensus” in international development policy, as signs of an emerging global social order. On the other hand, sceptics argue that those steps more often than not produce rather limited or even adverse effects, as, for instance, in the case of poverty reduction programmes. Moreover, social policy would face limits at a global level, due to existing economic and political conflicts, power asymmetries and lack of an institutional framework for its implementation. Accordingly, global social policy constitutes merely a political or normative agenda without significant social impact or empirical content.

## [INVITATION]

In order to discuss the current state and the development of global social policies against this background, the graduate college *Global Social Policies and Governance* invites experts, scholars and especially young researchers to a workshop to be held at the University of Kassel. Five thematic panels create an opportunity to reflect on the overarching question of whether and to what extent the concept of “global social policy” in scientific debates refers to the actual emergence of global regimes of social protection, redistribution and/or development. Given the growing popularity of the concept “global social policy”, and the diversity of approaches in analysing such policy, the workshop also provides a platform for interdisciplinary exchange on this topic among practitioners and scholars at both, senior academic and graduate student levels. T

For participation please send an e-mail to Christian Möllmann ([moellmann@uni-kassel.de](mailto:moellmann@uni-kassel.de)) by **21 January 2008**. The workshop will be multilingual. Sessions will be held in either German or English, depending on the language preference of the speakers.

## [FIVE THEMATIC PANELS]

### **Panel I      The emergence of social policy**

Social policy analyses more often than not take the OECD world as their point of reference, thereby usually focusing on the development of the modern welfare state. However, debates on global social policy imply a widening of this perspective, as they include also non-OECD countries. Against this background, the panel asks for basic definitions of “social policy” and explores its development in both the OECD and non-OECD area. What are social politics about? What are the particular actors, instruments and conflicts in social politics and how do they relate to specific historical conditions?

### **Panel II      Concepts of global social policy**

The national level usually still provides the basic framework for social policy-making. Yet the term global social policy suggests the development of social policy-making beyond the boundaries of the nation state. To what extent and in which way can we indeed speak of the emergence of *global* social policy and how can we conceptualise such a process? The panel focuses on different perspectives on this problem and highlights their theoretical underpinnings, strengths and lacunas?

**Panel III      Policy fields I: Global social policy in the area of work and trade**

Social politics at the national level are often characterised by highly institutionalised actor constellations and mediating mechanisms. Alongside the globalisation of social politics, the range of the actors involved widens, creating new political dividing lines, but also new opportunities for transnational cooperation. Who are the actors of global social policy in the area of work and trade? What is the role and agenda of international organisations like the ILO and WTO? Can trade unions and social movements shape global social policies and if so, how?

**Panel IV      Policy fields II: Strategies and problems of global health policy**

Health policy often appears as one of the most developed areas of global social policy. So, for instance, the WHO has been developing strategies for the improvement of health care access around the world for a long time. But the World Bank and the ILO have also recently become engaged in health policy, accompanied by private organisations such as development agencies, foundations, the pharmaceutical industry and larger NGOs. Given the increasing density of actors in this policy field, how can the latter be analysed and conceptualised in a meaningful way? Which strategies and actors compete in global health policy-making? What are the reasons for the ongoing problem of insufficient access to primary health care three decades after the declaration of Alma Ata?

**Panel V      Policy fields III: Approaches and problems in the area of international poverty reduction**

The urgency of global poverty reduction appears virtually uncontested in social policy debates at the global level, given the increasing gap between rich and poor world regions on the one hand and the social implications of this development on the other. Yet assessments of concrete strategies for poverty reduction, as developed by international institutions like the World Bank, often differ considerably. Thus it remains open, whether programmes in this area effectively target the causes of social inequality or rather maintain or even increase it. Debates on a “Post-Washington-Consensus” in development policy also raise questions: How are economic and political strategies of fighting poverty and social exclusion changing at the international level? What are the implications of such a process with regard to the establishment of successful global social transfer mechanisms?

**Friday, 1 February 2008**

**12.00-13.00      Welcome / Lunch**

**13.00            Opening Remarks**

**13.15–15.45      Panel I: The emergence of social policy**

Michael Opielka (University of Applied Sciences Jena)

Johannes Jäger (BFI University of Applied Sciences, Vienna)

Discussant: Dana de la Fontaine (University of Kassel)

Chair: Sarah Schmelzer (University of Kassel)

**15.45-16.15      Coffee break**

**16.15-18.45      Panel II: Concepts of Global Social Policy**

Lutz Leisering (University of Bielefeld)

Paul Stubbs (Institute of Economics, Zagreb)

Discussant: Christoph Klutsch (University of Kassel)

Chair: Claudia Mayer (University of Kassel)

**20.00            Dinner**

**Saturday, 2 February 2008**

**9.00-10.30            Panel III: Global social policies in the area of work and trade**

Thomas Greven (Free University of Berlin)

Discussants: Frauke Banse, Daniel Hawkins (University of Kassel)

Chair: Donna McGuire (University of Kassel)

**10.30-10.45            Coffee break**

**10.45-12.15            Panel IV: Strategies and problems of global health policy**

Alexandra Kaasch (University of Sheffield)

Discussant: Anne Tittor (University of Kassel)

Chair: Franziska Müller (University of Kassel)

**12.15-13.45            Lunch**

**13.45-15.15            Panel V: Approaches and problems of international poverty reduction**

Irene Knoke (Südwind) [enquired]

Discussant: Bernhard Leubolt (University of Kassel)

Chair: Kristina Dietz (University of Kassel)

**15.15-15.30            Coffee break**

**15.30-16.30            Roundtable discussion: Global social policy – Wishful Thinking or Reality?**