

CRC 1342 Global Dynamics of Social Policy

Project B09: The Rise, Decay and Renaissance of Social Policy in Africa

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Summary

This project of the Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) on Global Dynamics of Social Policy aims to identify the central mechanisms for the emergence, decline and reconstruction of social policy in Africa. It will study the dynamics and interdependencies between states, societies and international actors for the period from 1918 to 2018. International and transnational influences have been especially important for the transformation of African social policy. This is valid not just for the rise but also the decay and current renaissance of welfare statism in Africa. Before and after the end of colonial rule, multilateral and bilateral development policies have at times either fostered welfare state elements, or encouraged their dismantling. Furthermore, religious organizations such as churches and Muslim brotherhoods have contributed to shaping the dynamics of social policy in Africa.

African actors have picked up inter- and transnational influences and incorporated them into national policies in different ways. While many similarities in African states' social policy can be identified, the project seeks also to understand the structural differences between national developments. The first phase of the project comprises a comparative analysis of six countries – Egypt, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda – in the social policy fields of health, education and food security. The case selection reflects the broad internal variance of the continent in terms of divergent colonial experiences, post-colonial developmental trajectories, international integration, and domestic political conflicts. The principal differences and similarities in the dynamics of social policy making will be described and explained by means of historical-comparative case analysis. Empirical material will include interviews with policy-makers, civil society organizations and experts, as well as archival sources.

Research Programme

The central objective of this research project is to identify mechanisms that have been decisive for the dynamics of social policy in Africa during the colonial and post-colonial period (1918-2018). This will involve explaining these mechanisms as an entanglement of domestic, international and transnational dynamics.

Research question: *Which mechanisms determine the dynamics of social policies in Africa?*

More strongly than on other continents, politics in Africa is characterised by a wide range of external influences and their entanglement with internal actors, discourses and conflicts. This also applies to social policy, as per the basic premise of this research project. The fundamental mechanisms for the creation, dismantling and renaissance of state welfare policies during the research period will be established through a systematic comparison of developments in social policies in six countries. This will involve differentiation between interactional, perception and decision-making mechanisms, as well as mechanisms relating to expansion and restriction. As an initial approximation, indications of such mechanisms can be found in the expansion of pension provision to African veterans who fought for France or Great Britain in the Second World War, or in terms of restriction, as in the structural adjustment programmes of the World Bank and IMF since the 1980s.

The project's theoretical starting point is the *political sociology of world society* (see Schlichte 2005). In this tradition, state rule and state policy are the central subjects of investigation, taking international and transnational influences' structuring effects into account. This approach is not only compatible with the policy perspective of Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) 1342 and the analytical focus on entanglements, but also features a strongly historical focus. The approach in particular draws upon Max Weber's sociology of rule, the process sociology of Norbert Elias, and Pierre Bourdieu's field theory. Our preliminary work on "internationalised rule" (see Schlichte 2008, 2017a, b; Veit 2010; Veit/Schlichte 2012; Karadag/Schlichte 2016) is of particular relevance here. Also significant to the approach of this project is a theoretical tradition in the political sociology of Africa, which conceptualises the dynamic of state rule under the term "trajectories" (see Bayart 1996; Migdal/Schlichte 2005). This term emphasises the historicity of political institutions, path dependencies and specific political logics. Trajectories are thus geared to establish long-term determinants of political developments (see Bayart 1996). In this view of state formation, special attention is paid to politicisations of the "social question", as well as decision points where actor constellations and paths of policy-generation become recognisable. The overall reconstruction of state rule dynamics as trajectories will allow assessing the plausibility of competing hypotheses on causally-effective mechanisms.

Sub-questions

Forms: *What forms of state social policy have emerged during the period of observation?*

Compiling an overview of the forms of social policy in Africa is a first step in project. The project follows a semi-open design, which accounts for the gaps in current research but simultaneously facilitates comparisons within the subproject and is also compatible within the CRC. The design is not open in terms of its focus on the fields of *health, education and food security policies*. These three fields directly affect very large parts of the population and can be observed in all cases throughout the research period. Historical dynamics and changes in internal, international and transnational figurations and discourses of knowledge are moreover clearly observable in these fields. There are

also other projects dealing with health and educational policy within the CRC, which allows for synergy effects. Food security policy is to some extent a distinctively African feature since the continent has periodically encountered shortages. State bodies, since the colonial phase, have provided emergency aid and various other forms of “social assistance”. From a quantitative perspective, these forms of welfare are frequently more significant than “social insurance” (Seekings 2013).

The design is open in that it attempts to account for the special features of social policy on the continent. The project will thus investigate case-specific forms of social policy beyond the stated policy fields. This means expanding the view beyond established OECD forms of social policy. The subsidisation of fuels, housing schemes and humanitarian aid, for example, have to be taken into account. Functional equivalents to state social policy are also significant: in addition to the “extended family” as the fundamental unit of the moral economy of African societies, these apply to solidarity relationships operating under a wide variety of names (charity, “solidarité communale”, “zakat”, “ubuntu”) and are supported by civil society actors beyond the state (i.e. churches, Muslim brotherhoods, NGOs, self-help groups). All forms of welfare arising from political conflicts are of special interest to the subproject since arguments given and positions taken are more clearly recognisable during conflicts than at other times.

Figurations: Which constellations of actors have been significant to dynamics of social policy?

The subproject, and the entire CRC, takes the basic assumption that the emergence of social policy can be explained through the entanglements between a wide variety of actors. States and their respective social policies are at the centre of this relational analysis. We regard states as figurations (Elias 2006), in which various groups of actors compete for power, capital and status. There are also other carriers of social policy in addition to states whose role as partners to and competitors of the state must also be investigated. This applies to Christian missionary societies as well as Muslim brotherhoods. Another category of domestic actors addressing the state are unions and social movements. At the same time, social policy in all African states is still strongly characterised by international influences even after the colonial era. In addition to interrelations between social groups and state institutions, a key focus of the subproject will be colonial policies and the politics of international organisations, which will help determine the role of these interdependencies for the dynamics of social policy in Africa.

Phases: Which social questions were addressed and when? What policies arose during the various periods? What is the relationship between continuity and change in African social policies? Which world-historical circumstances had an influence on the dynamics of social policy?

These time-oriented questions shall enable a precise periodisation of African social policies. On the continent, the colonial past shapes social policy considerably. It can be assumed that institutional path decisions still affect social policy to this day. However, the emergence, continuities and fractures of colonial social policy are only partially explored and are therefore part of this research project. The project thus covers a, in contemporary Political Science, relatively long period of investigation.

Current research shows that (colonial) state social policy first started to take shape after 1918 (Veit et al. 2017). Accordingly the period of investigation of this subproject begins after the First World War. A more sizable expansion, also in protectorates such as Tanzania and Uganda, can then be seen in the late-colonial period until c. 1960 (Cooper 1996; Eckert 2006). The post-colonial phase in which social issues were closely linked with “nation-building” lasts until around 1980 (Mkandawire 2009).

During this period, competition between the Cold War's super powers for the loyalty of African governments probably also impacted on the design of social policy.

The subsequent historical phase was marked by economic crisis and structural adjustment. In this phase of particularly strong external influences a large number of social policies in Africa have been abandoned. The disintegration of African welfare states in the mid-1990s transitioned into a renaissance of social policy under the heading "The fight against poverty" (Ferguson 2015). Democratisation and international re-appraisals provided impetus for this revitalisation. A comparative analysis is intended to show to what extent this periodisation can actually apply across the board on the continent and, in particular, which local variations can be observed. How have international conditions and discourses entwined with internal conflicts about social rights and economic opportunities?

During this funding period of the CRC, the subproject will thus concentrate on colonial patterns in the development of welfare policies and continuities and change in the two decades following independence, as well as the pattern of disintegration (1980-1995) and the renaissance of African social policy (since 1995). Our research strategy can be termed as 'decreasing historical depth': the more recent past will be covered more intensely while the phases further back in history will be investigated in broader terms.

Knowledge: *Which transnational, colonial-specific and indigenous perceptions of problems, knowledge repertoires and resolution concepts have guided colonial and post-colonial welfare practices? Which forms of knowledge and which types of expertise took a guiding role in the production of social policy, and how have they changed during this time? How have global discourses been translated into local welfare policy?*

As early as the late-colonial phase, but also in the decades that followed, Africa played a central role in global development discourses. New approaches by international organisations and NGOs were frequently implemented for the first time in Africa. The research project will thus pay special attention to global expert discourses on welfare, poverty reduction and development policy with elements of social policy. Of particular interest is how African actors co-produced transnational knowledge repertoires, discourses and ideas, and adapted and translated them to local social and political circumstances. This applies to modernisation theories, dominant in the late-colonial phase, as well as the Keynesian and socialist development models of the state formation period until 1980. Also neo-classical expert discourses since around 1980 and the "Millennium Development Goals" debate have been co-produced by African actors and translated into local (social) policy. These efforts of translation and their effects on social policy are thus a key aspect of the analysis within the project.

Implementation

During the first CRC funding period, socio-political dynamics shall be described and explained from a sample of "diverse cases" (Gerring 2007: 88): Egypt, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda. The case selection takes the heterogeneity of social and political structures on the continent into account. While similarities between individual states' colonial and post-colonial political development can be observed, political systems and social structures of the 55 member states of the African Union vary strongly. In view of this diversity and the highly deficient state of research on the dynamics of social policy in Africa, the project has to start from an open comparative design (see Kaelble 2009). In collaboration with other CRC projects, more general hypotheses concerning the regional and global dynamics of social policy will be developed.

Selection of cases

The sample was selected on the basis of four characteristics:

(1) The first characteristic concerns *colonial experience*. The sample contains French and British ex-colonies.¹ The difference will inform on how colonial experience impacted social policy, how empire-specific knowledge repertoires have been continued or transformed, and whether political during the colonial political figurations resulted in specific forms of the welfare state.

(2) The next category concerns the *expansion of the welfare state*, which corresponds to the level of *economic strength* of the respective country. Based on data of the World Bank and UN organisations, we selected upon the criteria of domestic and foreign-aid expenses for social assistance, social insurance, health, and education. South Africa, a middle-income country, has a substantial welfare system with a long tradition. In Uganda, on the other hand, beyond primary education and primary health services, only the small formal economic sector is covered by a publicly organised social insurance system. The other cases vary more strongly, also regarding historical fluctuation. Overall, however, it can be said that state social provision is more significant in the economically stronger countries of Tunisia and Egypt, while the welfare state in the relatively weak economies of Tanzania and Senegal has experienced existential crises. This category will help to illuminate the relationship between state and society during phases of welfare expansion and contraction, and regarding the question which figurations promote or impair the growth of the welfare state.

(3) The third characteristic concerns the *post-colonial orientation towards certain development models*: in some cases, there was an official socialist phase, even if these phases varied strongly regarding their respective length and intensity. In other cases, there was a period of state-centric development, but a principal market orientation was never fundamentally questioned. This category primarily allows a comparative investigation of the appropriation of knowledge and development models in different historical phases, and the various forms of social provision linked thereto.

(4) As a fourth characteristic, domestic armed conflicts and war participation are considered. *Wars and civil wars* have repeatedly been catalysts of accelerated public social policy (Obinger 2017; Veit et al. 2017). Some countries in the sample managed to deal with internal conflicts on a civil level. In other cases, armed conflicts of various intensities took place. Some of these conflicts affected only individual regions, while others at times put even the legitimacy and existence of the state into doubt.

Category	Egypt	Senegal	South Africa	Tanzania	Tunisia	Uganda
1. Colonial experience	GB	F	GB	GB	F	GB
2. Welfare state/ economic strength	weak					
	strong					
3. Temporary socialist development model						
4. Domestic armed conflict/ inter-state war participation						

There are also various further characteristics within the sample, which may be relevant to ongoing work under certain circumstances: for instance, the relationship between *religion* and the welfare

¹ Tanzania's German colonial phase until 1918 had little impact on social policy, whereas independent South Africa from 1910 until at least 1948 was closely linked to social policy in the British Commonwealth (Veit et al. 2017).

state (Kahl 2005; van Kersbergen/Manow 2009). We can thus examine the six countries for this factor too, and investigate whether, why and how a majority Muslim society can bring forth its own forms of the welfare state. Finally, this sample also provides a comparative assessment of the impact that *democratisation* has on the design of social policies in Africa.

Sources, data and collection methods

Data generation and collection will focus on six different forms of empirical material: (1) On the basis of *academic secondary literature*, the main features of social policy in Africa in general and the case countries in particular are reconstructed. The quality of existing research however differs greatly between case countries. Related historical and social science literatures serve to analytically embed social policy development into broader political and social dynamics. (2) *Grey literature*, particularly the many studies published by international organisations (IOs), serves to investigate changing policies and knowledge repertoires of IOs, and provides valuable fundamental data. (3) *Sources in archives* in the six case countries, in former colonial centres, and from IOs will provide insights into historical dynamics and the political backgrounds of social policy dynamics. (4) Depending on the degree of openness of the political discussion in different phases, *print media* from the case countries will provide information on the social debate and/or official discourses on social policy. In particular, we hope for indications of social conflicts that have led to the introduction of welfare benefits. (5) An important body of sources, especially for the last three to four decades, will be *interviews* with political actors and experts on social policy in the six countries and within IOs. These interviews shall provide crucial insights on political figurations and knowledge repertoires underlying social policy dynamics. (6) *Statistical data*, drawn in part from other projects, shall finally substantiate the comparison between the cases and expand the comparative perspective beyond the sample.

Analytical methods

The project employs a predominantly qualitative methodical approach. Through interpretive analyses we will relate forms of social policy, political figurations and knowledge repertoires during different historical phases. The analysis is divided into three steps: (1) To begin, *individual case studies* will be created. These studies are structured based on the questions formulated above: forms, figurations, phases, knowledge and, eventually, mechanisms. (2) Hypotheses on causal mechanisms for welfare state expansion and contracting, and their institutional change in Africa, will then be developed through *case comparison* (see Tarrow 2010). (3) The causal claims and mechanisms generated via this comparison will subsequently be tested through an extended sample of descriptive statistics. By extending our data basis, we seek to control for other, non-African patterns of social policy making.

Literature

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