

*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. The project studies the dynamics and interdependencies between states, societies and international actors for the period from 1918 to 2018. International (between states) and transnational (between societies) influences have been especially important for the transformation of African social policy. This applies not just to the rise, but also the decay and current renaissance of welfare statehood in Africa. During and after 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 drawn on these international and transnational influences and incorporated them into national policies in different ways. While many similarities across African states' social policy can be identified, the project will also record and explain the structural differences between national policies. 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 diversity of the continent in terms of 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). These causal mechanisms will be used to explain the dynamics of interstate as well as international and transnational interdependencies.

**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 entanglements with internal actors, discourses and conflicts. This assumption, the project posits, also applies to social policy. The fundamental mechanisms for the production, 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. A distinction will be made between perception and translation mechanisms, conflict and cooperation mechanisms as well as collective decision-making mechanisms (cf. Project B01). 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 objects of investigation, while taking international and transnational influences' structuring effects into account. This approach is not only compatible with the policy perspective of Collaborative Research Centre 1342 and its analytical focus on interdependencies, but also features a strongly historical orientation. 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. Furthermore, a theoretical tradition from the political sociology of Africa that conceptualizes the dynamics of state rule using the term "trajectories" is also relevant (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). With this view on state formation, special attention is paid to politicisations of the "social question", as well as decisive points where constellations of actors and paths of policy generation can be recognized. The overall reconstruction of state rule dynamics as trajectories will allow assessing the plausibility of competing hypotheses on causal mechanisms.

### **Sub-questions**

**Forms:** *Which forms of 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 the project. The project follows a semi-open design, which is appropriate in light of the gaps in current knowledge about social policy in Africa, while facilitating comparisons within the project and as well as within the wider context of the CRC. The design is not open in terms of its focus on the fields of *health, education and food policies*. These three fields directly affect very large parts of the population and in all cases can be observed historically since the colonial period. Historical dynamics and changes in domestic, 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, so that synergy effects can be expected. Food security policy is to some extent an African particularity, since some regions on the continent have periodically encountered shortages. State bodies, since the colonial phase, have provided emergency aid and 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 distinctiveness of social policy on the continent. The project will thus investigate case-specific forms of social policy beyond the three policy fields mentioned above. This requires a broader 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). The project is especially interested in the forms of welfare that have given rise to political conflicts, since conflicts lend visibility to certain arguments and positions that might otherwise remain obscured.

**Figurations:** *Which constellations of actors have been significant for the dynamics of social policy?*

The project, and the entire CRC, proceed from the fundamental assumption that the emergence of social policy can be explained by interdependencies between different 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. Apart from the state, there are other providers of social policy whose roles as partners and competitors of the state need to be investigated. This applies to Christian missionary societies as well as Muslim brotherhoods. A further category of domestic actors who interact with the state are trade unions and social movements. At the same time, social policy in all African states, even after the colonial era, has been strongly marked by international and transnational influences. In addition to interdependencies between social groups and state institutions, the project will also focus on colonial policies and the policies of international organizations in order to determine the role of these vertical interdependencies for the dynamics of social policy in Africa.

**Phases:** *Which social questions were significant at which points in time? Which policies emerged in different periods? What is the relationship between continuity and change in African social policy? Which (international) historical conditions influenced the dynamics of social policy?*

These temporally oriented questions shall provide for a more precise periodization of African social policies. Current research shows that the first contours of (colonial) state social policy became visible after 1918 (Veit et al. 2017). Consequently, the project begins its investigation in the period after the First World War. A significant expansion of social policy, also in colonial protectorates such as Tanzania and Uganda, then occurred in the late-colonial period until about 1960 (Cooper 1996; Eckert 2006). The postcolonial phase, during which social questions were closely tied to nation-building projects, lasted until about 1980 (Mkandawire 2009). During this period, it is likely that the East-West conflict and the competition between the superpowers for the loyalty of African governments had an effect on shaping social policy. The decay of nascent welfare states during the subsequent period of structural adjustment ended in the mid-1990s and transitioned into the renaissance of African social policy under the heading of “fighting poverty” (Ferguson 2015). The comparative analysis will show the extent to

which this periodization applies generally to the continent and 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 project 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 conceptual solutions have framed 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 did they change over 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 conditions and interests. This relates 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) *Colonial experience*. The sample contains French and British ex-colonies.<sup>1</sup> The difference will inform on how colonial experience impacted social policy, how empire-specific knowledge repertoires have

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<sup>1</sup> Tanzania's German colonial phase until 1918 had little direct 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).

been continued or transformed, and whether political during the colonial political figurations resulted in specific forms of the welfare state.

(2) *Expansion of the welfare state & economic strength*. 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, including over time. 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 weaker 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) *Post-colonial ideological orientation*: 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) *Inter-state 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 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) *Archive material* 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.

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The project is funded by "Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft".

