

Research Group

Towards Understanding Southern Welfare. Ideational and historical foundations of social policies in Brazil, India, China and South Africa

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Abstract:

Historically, social policy and the welfare state have been projects of Northern and Western European nation states. After World War II, accelerating and broadening since the 1990s, public welfare programmes have also spread in the global South, even though socio-economic and cultural conditions differ from those that led to the rise of social policy in Europe. Research regarding social policies in the global South still is at an early stage. We want to advance this field of research, by investigating in-depth the ideational and historical foundations of social policies (rather than issues of implementation and welfare outcomes) in Brazil, India, China and South Africa: What ideas informed the definition of social problems and the choice of social policy instruments in these countries since the 1940s (1930s)? What were critical points of policy change, can we distinguish periods? What social forces pushed or checked social ideas and policies? Our research adds new perspectives to the field: a) We aim at “understanding” Southern welfare through an *ideational* approach, inquiring into the perceptions, beliefs and ideas of domestic actors, rather than imposing preconceived categories. b) We aim at contributing to an emerging *theory* of formal welfare in the global South. c) We adopt an *interdisciplinary* approach that brings in disciplines and research traditions that are recent in the field (sociology, social policy research) or marginal (law) or not normally linked to research on social policy (land policy). The Research Group will focus on three thematic fields: (Constitutional) rights and values regarding the social; social security; and land reform. d) We pursue a *comparative* approach under a common theoretical framework, drawing on preparatory ZiF workshops in 2014 and 2015. The fellows of the Research Group have roots in and first-hand expertise on the countries under investigation.

Disciplines: law (comparative constitutional law, social law), sociology, social policy research, land policy (the latter two incorporating several disciplines), global and comparative history, development economics. Further disciplines will figure in workshops.