The Politics of Global Social Policy

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SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY MAKING.


The Politics of Global Social Policy Change.

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Introduction and overview.

Drafting what is scheduled to be the last paper among 11 for the end of a two-day conference is a daunting prospect. When I have been given the brief to Search for Alternatives and address “what types of alliances, participation and activism will be conducive to global social policy reform” the task becomes almost impossible. To write by oneself “What is to be done” is indeed a foolhardy endeavour when the whole point is that an effective movement for shifting us from a world framed by the idea of global neo-liberalism to one framed by the idea of global social reformism or global social justice has to be a collective endeavour emerging out of an emancipatory counter hegemonic project rooted in the emerging trans-national civil society.

However, following Gramsci, I do believe in the spirit of this conference that ideas matter and backed by institutional power make a difference. I do therefore believe there is a role for ‘organic intellectuals’ in attempting to bridge the disparate struggles of particular interests (which are generated by the globalisation process) into a vision that might facilitate a more inclusive and solidaristic globalisation. Cox (1999, p26) argued “the challenge is to bridge the differences among the variety of groups disadvantaged by globalisation so as to bring about a common understanding of the nature and consequences of globalisation, and to devise a common strategy towards subordinating the world economy to a regime of social equity”.

In a globalised world this struggle has to take place at several levels simultaneously including at the local, national and international. Within this context this paper will attempt to address aspects of the recent and ongoing struggle of ideas between a neo-liberal approach to social policy at a national and at a global level and the (re) emergence of more equitable approaches at both levels. It will also make some suggestions for how this more progressive approach to globalisation might be furthered by intellectuals and research activities within and around UN agencies and other international organisations.

The focus of the paper is social policy or more particularly global social policy. Let me set out what I take to be meant by this focus. Social policy within one (capitalist or market-based) country may be understood as those mechanisms, policies and procedures used by governments, working with other actors, to alter the ab-initio distributive and social outcomes of economic activity. These mechanisms and policies may be conceptualised as being constituted of three strands. Redistribution mechanisms alter, usually in a way as to make more equal the distributive outcomes of economic activity. Regulatory activity frames and limits the activities of business and other private actors normally so that they take more account of the social consequences of their activities. The articulation and legislation of Rights leads to some more or less effective mechanisms to ensure citizens might access their rights. Social Policy within one country is made up then of Social Redistribution, Social Regulation and the promulgation of Social Rights.

Global Social Policy is by extension the mechanisms, policies and procedures used by intergovernmental and international organisations, working with other actors to do TWO things: first influence and guide NATIONAL social policy and second provide for a supranational or GLOBAL social policy. Within this second sense Global Social
Policy is about global social redistribution, global social regulation and global social rights. Global social policy in this sense embraces the emerging mechanisms of global social transfer (Funds for AIDS/TB/Malaria, differential drug pricing, the projected Global Social Trust Network), global social regulation (The UN global compact, core labour standards, international food quality regulation) and global social rights (the advancement up the UN agenda of social rights and their monitoring and enforcement through soft law). One of the questions in this paper is whether this concept of “global social policy” which I believe I was the first to coin in 1997 (Deacon 1997) has taken root among scholars and international organisations as a way of thinking about the international policy that is necessary to re-embed free floating global capital in a set of international institutions which might ensure that the global economy had a social or public purpose.

The paper is structured as follows.

- First the analytical framework within which the paper attempts to understand the role of ideas in policy making will be briefly set out.
- Second it examines the long decline and recent reassertion of the idea of equity and universalism as an organising principle for national social policy within the social policy discourse within and between international organisations.
- Third it turns to the idea of global social policy as international redistribution, regulation and rights and asks whether this concept has taken root. The section will show that not only is there a substantial amount of scholarly work articulating a global social reformist project within which global social redistribution, global social regulation and global social rights plays an important part but also that this approach is now entering the global policy making agenda.
- Finally the paper turns to the institutional framework of global social governance and addresses the problem of the stalled and stalemated institutional and policy reform debates surrounding them and finally asks how progress towards a more socially just global social policy might be made despite this situation. Here we will turn to what I see as the emergence of reformist inclined global social policy making in practice through international networks, task forces and projects and ask how these might be steered towards a more coherent global social reformist political project in alliance with other global social actors from below. The question of a global counter hegemonic project re-emerges here.

The struggle over ideas matters.

In my view ideas about what constitutes desirable national and international social policy in a globalising context as articulated and influenced by epistemic communities within and around International Organisations are every bit as important in influencing national and international social policy as the (“perceived”) constraints of a deregulated global economy. Boas and McNeill (2004) have recently discussed the relationship between institutional power and the power of ideas in social development and argue that ‘powerful states (notably the USA), powerful organisations (such as the IMF) and even, perhaps, powerful disciplines (economics) exercise their power by ‘framing’; (the terms of the policy debate) which serves to limit the power of potentially radical ideas to achieve change’. Within a matrix of state and global
institutional power ideas do have a part to play in both sustaining those relations of power and in challenging them even if radical or socially progressive ideas have had a hard time of it in the last decades. (Weiss T, Carayannis T, Emmerij L and Jolly R. 2004).

In terms of theoretical reference points we need then to include work of Haas (1992 etc) on epistemic communities. Focussing on national states he concluded that ‘epistemic communities (networks of knowledge based experts) play a part in ….helping states identify their interests, forming the issues for debate, proposing specific policies, identifying points for negotiation’ (Hass, 1992). The same can be said about international epistemic communities, their associated think tanks and invisible colleges and the shaping of an international social policy agenda. (Stone 2001). But equally important is the work on trans-national social classes and the associated international class struggle that is identified within this framework by Sklair (1995 etc) and others. If national welfare state formation was in part the outcome of class (and gender and ethnic struggle (Williams 1987)) and the resultant formation of cross class (and gender and ethnic alliances) so will be any trans-national social policy. To this we must add the concept of hegemonic struggle from Gramsci as used by Gill (1993), Cox (1995) and others. By hegemony we mean universal norms, institutions, and mechanisms that lay down general rules of behaviour for states and those forces of civil society that act across national boundaries. As early as 1993 Gill and Law were suggesting that a counter-hegemonic bloc (to global neo-liberalism) existed in embryo in the shape of Amnesty International, Green-peace, Oxfam, and the World Council of Churches. This was before The World Social Forum and the Global alliance of Brazil and China with India creating the G21. Arrighi (1993) even suggested at that point that ‘the next hegemon would have to be world social democracy’. Within the same debate it is interesting to note, however that postmodernism was influencing Cox (1993, p286) to depart from the search for a new progressive hegemony and suggested a search for ‘a new form of world order; post hegemonic in its recognition of co-existing universalistic civilisations, post-Westphalian in its restructuring of political authority into a multi-level system and post-globalisation in its acceptance of the legitimacy of different paths towards the satisfaction of human needs’. Whatever view we take about the desirability of a global social democratic hegemony (within which a major role would be played by global social policy mechanisms of redistribution, regulation and rights) compared to a decentred globalisation with strong regional social policies the concept of hegemonic struggle is I believe a useful reference point for scholarly work on the global struggle for a post neo-liberal global economic and social policy. This paper is written within the context of this kind of understanding of how global social policy is being made and changed. The question of a global or regional strategy is returned to at the end.

The fall and rise of universalism in international discourse about national social policy.

Before turning to the question of the emerging global social policy this section of the paper stays at the level of national social policy and national social development and reviews the role of ideas within and between international organisations in influencing the debate about desirable national social policy. The focus is the retreat within international social policy discourse during the 1980’ and 1990’s from the idea of
universal entitlement to social provision and welfare and its replacement by the idea of targeted and selective allocations to the poor with private provision for the better off. This tendency is now in retreat as I show below.

In the context of work on the making of post-communist national social policy I argued and demonstrated (Deacon 1997 p197) that “the opportunity created by the collapse of communism for global actors to shape the future of (national) social policy has been grasped enthusiastically by the dominant liberal tendency in the World Bank. In alliance with social development NGOs who are being given part to play especially in zones of instability, a social safety net future is being constructed...this is challenging powerfully those defenders of universalist and social security based welfare states to be found in the EU and ILO”. The struggle between ‘Europe’ and ‘America’ to fashion the social policy of post-communist states continues with many countries still balancing between these two forces/approaches. The Bank itself has recently reflected upon this story in terms of the attempt to move countries towards more privatised and individualised funded pension schemes.

“When examining the circumstances that enabled pension privatisation ... it turned out that the driving forces of pension privatisation proved to be the neo-liberally minded ministries of finance and economics, backed by the International Financial Institutions’ policy advice and financial support.” (Holzmann, Orenstein and Rutkowski 2003, p. 68).

More generally Orenstein goes on in the same volume to suggest (2003. pp 188) that while path dependency may be a factor limiting radical reform and that historical-institutional theories and path dependency may explain a lot about why countries adapt innovations in particular ways to suit their conditions,

“Countries reform in response to global and regional models, under the influence of norms and ideas spread by the leading international organisations and epistemic communities of the day”

He continues (Orenstein 2003 pp189) to argue for analysts of policy change to take account of what he calls the ‘Global Politics of Attention’.

“Why has the World Bank focused so much attention on promoting pension policy diffusion in Central and Eastern Europe...are C and EE states seen as targets of opportunity because of ongoing economic transformation and the impending European Union accession process….are C and EE countries seen by others as global pension reform leaders and thus potential models? .......whatever the reason it would seem important to investigate further the link between the internal processes of global policy advocates and global patterns of policy diffusion”.

In a later paper for UNRISD I subsequently argued (Deacon 2000) that certain tendencies in the globalisation process and certain policy positions adopted by international organisations give cause for concern with regard to social policy in more southern and more underdeveloped economies. My concern with this emerging consensus was that the coexistence of four tendencies would undermine an equitable and universalist approach to social policy in a social development context. These tendencies were:
• The World Bank’s continuing belief that governments should only provide minimal or basic levels of social provision and social protection.
• The OECD’s Development Assistant Committee’s concern (subscribed to in Geneva 2000 by the UN as well as the Bank and IMF under the banner of the Millennium Development Goals) to focus on only basic education and health care with its new international development targets.
• International NGO’s continuing self-interest in winning donor contracts to substitute for government social services
• The moves being made within the WTO to speed the global market in private health, social care, education and insurance services

My concern was that where state provides only minimal and basic level health and social protection services the middle classes of developing and transition economies would be enticed into the purchase of private social security schemes, private secondary and tertiary education and private hospital level medical care that are increasingly being offered on a cross border or foreign investment presence basis. The result would be predictable. We know that services for the poor are poor services. We know that those developed countries that do not have universal public health provision at all levels and public education provision at all levels are not only more unequal but also more unsafe and crime ridden. Unless the middle class is also catered for by state provision good quality social provision can’t be sustained. This was the prospect for many countries that might buy into this new development paradigm.

In other words while in practice most West European universalistic welfare states are proving to be sustainable in the face of neo-liberal globalisation the global hegemonic approach to social policy making in the context of development was still a safety net or residual approach. This concern was echoed by both Townsend (2002) and Tendler (2000) within the context of an UNRISD sponsored research project that I mention below.

How did the idea of social policy geared to securing greater equity through processes of redistribution and universal social provision get so lost in the context of the global discourse about desirable social policy? Four reasons might be offered. Globalisation in terms of the form it took in the 1980s and 1990s was primarily a neo-liberal political project born at the height of the transatlantic Thatcher-Regan alliance. This flavoured the anti-public provision discourse about social policy within countries and contributed to a challenge to the idea of the EU’s social policy agenda. The collapse of the communist project coinciding as it did with the height of neo-liberalism gave a further push to the rise of the myth of the marketplace. Most importantly the perceived negative social consequences of globalisation generated a new concern for the poor. In the name of meeting the needs of the poorest of the poor the ‘premature’ or ‘partial’ welfare states of Latin America, South Asia and Africa were challenged as serving only the interests of a small privileged work force and elite state employees. A new alliance was to be struck between the Bank and the poor (See Graham 1996, Deacon 1997). The analysis of the privileged and exclusionary nature of these provisions made by the Bank was accurate. However by destroying the public state services for this middle class in the name of the poor the politics of solidarity which requires the middle class to have a self-interest in public provision which they fund was made more difficult. The beneficiary index measures of the Bank showing how
tertiary education spending for example benefited the elite contributed in no small measure to this development. The Bank technical expertise was ill-informed about the political economy of welfare state building which requires cross class alliances in defence of public expenditure. Once again American exceptionalism (in this case in terms of its residual welfare state) was sold as the desirable norm. Finally in the late 1980s and 1990s the self-confidence of defenders of the social democratic and other equitable approaches to social policy was temporarily lost. The critics of neo-liberal globalisation came to believe their worst-case prognosis.

Are there signs of a shift in the global discourse leading to a reassertion of the politics of social solidarity and universalism? There are a number of global initiatives that have the aim of re-establishing the case for and finding ways of implementing universal public provisioning as part of an equitable social policy in southern countries. Among them are:

1) The UNRISD research programme on Social Policy in a Development Context under the leadership of Thandika Mkandawire has the stated objective to “move (thinking) away from social policy as a safety net … towards a conception of active social policy as a powerful instrument for towards a conception of active social policy as a powerful instrument for development working in tandem with economic policy”. Research within this programme that draws attention to the early origins of universalistic Nordic welfare states should nail the argument that universalism is not compatible with a lower level of economic development. (This programme is a good example I think of where UNRISD steering UN linked researchers can have a progressive impact on national social policies. I return in the last section to the question as to whether UNRISD is playing such a role in relation to developing progressive global social policies.)

2) The rethinking presently being undertaken within the ILO concerning the sustainability of its traditional labourist approach to social protection. In particular is to be noted the Socio-Economic Security In Focus work programme which is searching for new forms of universalistic social protection such as categorical (by age) cash benefits to complement the very limited coverage in the south of work based social security schemes. Good practices being revealed within this programme could inform southern social policy making.

3) The report of the UN Secretary-General (E/CN.5/2001/2) on “Enhancing social protection and reducing vulnerability in a globalizing world” prepared for the February 2001 Commission for Social Development almost became an important mile-stone in articulating a UN social policy. Among the positive features of the report were a) the fact that it was the first comprehensive UN statement on social protection, b) the thrust of its argument was that social protection measures serve both an equity-enhancing and an investment function and such measures need to be a high priority of governments and regions, c) it argued that social protection ‘should not (serve only) as a residual function of assuring the welfare of the poorest but as a foundation.. for promoting social justice and social cohesion’. It has to be said however that discussion on even this paper became bogged down at the Commission and was never approved. It remains a non-paper. While the EU were supportive the G77 wished again to link it to issues of global financing and governance arrangements (Langmore 2002). The north-south impasse on global social standards stemming from
the labour standards and global social policy principles stand-offs bedevilled the Commission’s work. This demonstrates the importance of linking global social policies of redistribution to global social policies that attempt to set norms for improved southern country social policies.

4) The more recent meeting of the Commission on Social Development (47th Session on Feb 4-13th 2004) seems to have managed to avoid this pitfall in terms of its discussion of the issue of Improving Public Sector Effectiveness. However the Report of the Secretary General on this topic (E/CN.5/2004/5) did contain among its recommendations the sentiment that international co-operation should “include the elaboration of norms and guidelines …on the respective roles and responsibilities of the public and private sector” (para. 59a) but such an idea did not find expression in the (advanced unedited version) of the agreed conclusions now published on the UNDESA web pages. These agreed conclusions rather stress “that each government has primary responsibility for its own economic and social development, and the role of national policies and development strategies cannot be overemphasised” (Para 7). On the more central question of the issue of universalism versus targeting and the balance of public and private provision the agreed conclusions are very much in favour of universalism and equity. “The Commission emphasise the crucial role of the public sector in, inter alia, the provision of equitable, adequate and accessible social services for all so as to meet the needs of the entire population” (para 1) and again in the context of assessing the choice between public and private provision the Commission notes that while services can be provided by private entities it also “reaffirms that any reform of public service delivery should aim at promoting and attaining the goals of universal and equitable access to those services by all” (para 12).

5) Perhaps it is within attempts to steer developing countries towards the meeting of the Millennium Development Goals that are after all focussed on basic education and basic health and basic sanitation and water services that we should look to see if my earlier concern that these would lead to targeted residualism was soundly based or not. Certainly the UNDP’s Human Development report (2003) which focuses on these goals balancing in an interesting way its focus on basic services for the poor with a concern for equity. In general terms it firstly reasserts some of the lessons of high human development achieving countries. In high achievers such as Botswana, Kerala in India and Cuba “Public finance was adequate and equitable. In high-achieving countries political commitment is reflected not just in allocations of public spending to health and education but also in their equity” (UNDP 2003,p87).

Recognising the concern of the Bank and others that none-the-less public spending on health and education can be ‘captured’ by the better off it strikes a balance between the need to maintain public expenditure for all social groups while also giving priority to the poor. In education is asserts the need to increase expenditure on primary education (to benefit the poor) but at the same time argues “Still, additional resources are needed for higher education as well if countries are to build capacity to compete in the global economy-but not at the cost of primary education. Entire education budgets need to increase”. (UNDP 2003, p94). Within health policy the balancing of the concern with equity with a pro poor focus is handled by arguing for rationing and regulatory measures that ensure some health service workers are directed to work for the benefit of the poor. Thus for example countries could “use service contracts to
require medical personnel to spend a certain number of years in public service” (UNDP 2003, p101). The report notes that in some regions for example Latin America there has been a massive push to private health provision because of pressures to liberalise combined with low public sector health budgets. Here it is concerned that “Because managed care organisations attract healthier patients, sicker patients are being shifted to the public sector. This two-tier system undercuts the pooling of risks and undermines cross-subsidies between healthier and more vulnerable groups” (UNDP 2003, p113). Apart from addressing these concerns about within-country equity the report’s main thrust is to argue for a global contract between richer and poorer countries to ensure a greater degree of global equity. We return to this in the next section.

It will be important to track this issue of reaching the poor while maintaining equity through the work of the Millennium Project through which The UN hopes to meet the Development Goals.

While attempts to restore the case for an equitable approach to social policy may not be unsurprising coming from UN agencies a more important indicator as to whether the global ideological tide is shifting would be what the World Bank is saying. A Nordic evaluation of the 2000/2001 World Bank Development Report on Poverty concluded that (Braathen, 2000) although the Bank at least at the discursive level had shifted from its 1990 focus of social paternalism to a 2000 focus on social liberalism and even social corporatism within which the poor are to be given a voice it still did not embrace in any significant way the social radicalism approach which would involve redistributive policies except perhaps in the sphere of land reform.

The latest World Bank’s World Development Report (2003) that is focussed on making services work for poor people suggests that there might be some movement despite the resignation of the lead writer Ravi Kanbur (Wade 2002). There is a tension within the text and probably among the authors between those who stay with the line that much public spending by developing countries benefits the rich and is therefore to be refocused on the poor (e.g. figures 2 page 4) and those who would appear now to have accepted and argue the point that “cross class alliances” between the poor and non poor are needed to pressure governments to “strengthen public sector foundations for service delivery” (Figure 10.1 page 180). Most striking is the assertion that “In most instances making services work for poor people means making services work for everybody-while ensuring poor people have access to those services. Required is a coalition that includes poor people and significant elements of the non-poor. There is unlikely to be progress without substantial ‘middle class buy-in’ to proposed reforms” (World Bank 2003, p60). This section of the report goes on to quote the words of Wilbur Cohen, US Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare under President Lyndon Johnson in the 1960’s: Programmes for Poor People are Poor Programmes”. I was clearly wrong to be so concerned....all is forgiven! The report itself is extraordinarily complicated in its recommendations and prescriptions and concludes with a rejection of the one size fits all approach which the bank used to be accused of when it tried to sell Chile to the world. Instead it adopts an eight sizes fits all model. Which model is to be applied depends on the capacity of government, its openness to influence by the poor, the degree of homogeneity of the country etc. At least two of the models involve a strong emphasise on government being to major provider at either national or local level.
My conclusion is that the intellectual tide has turned against the feared neo-liberal social policy prescriptions arguing everywhere at a national level for privatisation and targeted benefits only for the poor. The restoration of the case for good quality public services universally available with additional measures to ensure they are accessed by the poor is once again being made. We now turn to whether we can see signs of the case being made for trans-national or global social policies of redistribution and equity.

**Global Social Policy. Has its time come?**

Is the case for a global social policy of redistribution, regulation and rights being put my scholars and listened to by policy advocates within and around international organisations? In 1997 my colleagues and I (Deacon1997) asserted “There is now a global social policy, constituted of global redistributive mechanisms, global regulatory mechanism, elements of global provision and empowerment.” Given this we went on to argue our preference for “a global social reformist project which would call for more rather than less redistribution of resources between states, for more rather than less global social and labour regulation as framework for the operation of corporations, for more rather than less authority to be given to supranational bodies to intervene in the affairs of states where those states fail their citizens”. The argument continues by insisting on the linkages between the elements. “Their should be no free trade without global social regulation. There should be no global social regulation without global redistribution. To ensure citizens (and no their governments benefit) there should be no global social redistribution without the empowerment of citizens before a global court of social rights. Trade, regulation, redistribution and empowerment go hand in hand”. Good stuff! In many ways all that has happened since has been the unfolding of global politics of this project and its stumbling on four counts; the unilateralism of the USA, social protectionism of the EU, the opposition of many Southern governments and voices to a Northern driven agenda especially when the resources to fund one key element of the matrix: redistribution is missing, and a concern that this modernist project does not respect immense cultural differences. As Yeates (2001, p169) put it “It must be acknowledged that historical, cultural, ideological, religious and institutional differences render the pursuit of ‘universal’ public goods, or an agreed global cosmopolitan form of progress particularly difficult”.

None-the-less others within academe continued to develop the idea of a global social policy. Townsend and Gordon (2002. p421) acknowledge that “what remains is perhaps the most difficult: to bring about extensive redistribution of resources between and within countries to eradicate poverty and establish decent human rights”. But they argue that this objective “is more plausible to world opinion than it was even five years ago”. George and Wilding (2002) devote a whole chapter to “The Future of Global Social Policy”. They argue for seven major roles for social policy at a global level.

- The promotion and establishment of basic human rights at an international level.
- To supplement and complement national social policy (because of cross-border social issues: drugs, aids, crime, migration).
- To create an international level playing field.
To raise standards internationally by action at the global level.
To reduce poverty and inequalities and to provide a safety net for global capitalism.
To provide the services which global capitalism needs to survive and prosper (Environmental law, employment law, migration regulation)
To promote a sense of one inextricably linked global world (bringing into being the emergent ideas of global citizenship and global responsibility).

To achieve all of this they argue (George and Wilding 2002, p192) “global social policy will be multi dimensional- a mix of regulation, redistribution, provision of services and guaranteeing of basic rights”. They conclude that the bringing into being of such a comprehensive global social policy will require “creative thinking about…a radically new approach to global governance” (George and Wilding 2002, p210). This is something we return to in the next section.

The case for a social democratic approach to the management of globalisation has been made by scholars working in disciplines other than social policy. Political scientists (Pattomaki H 1999 and 2001, Held D 2004, Lent 2004) are among such contributions. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine in detail proposals and ideas arising from this literature across all three dimensions of redistribution, regulation and rights but some further discussion of the polices, practicalities and politics of redistribution might be useful.

In the context of widening global inequity there is a case for global redistribution and for establishing a global levy through international taxation and other means. How might this new money be spent? How might international social transfers take place? What mechanisms for global resource allocation might be developed? Who would decide and on what criteria would allocations be made? Are there steps being taken upon which this project could be built? Some initial answers to these questions are suggested below. How far these are developed further in practice will be the outcome of a period of international and supranational debate and consensus building.

It is likely that steps towards a formal system of global redistribution that might eventually involve a Global Tax Authority and a Global Social Affairs Ministry will build upon firstly existing ad hoc mechanisms and secondly proposals for such mechanisms that are already within the global policy debate. Among existing mechanisms for international redistribution are the ones used by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (www.theglobalfund.org). This fund uses a combination of criteria and mechanisms to allocate its resources where they are needed most in the world. Using the World Banks’ categorisation of countries into low and middle income the fund firstly distinguishes between low income countries who are fully eligible for monies and lower-middle income countries who must match international funds with national funds and focus activities on the poor and vulnerable and aim to be self sufficient over time. A few upper-middle income countries are also eligible in much the same way as lower-middle income countries if they have exceptional need based on disease burden indicators.

The procedure used by this fund for allocating funds within the constraints above is based on a competition between bids from Country Co-ordinating Mechanisms (CCMs) within each eligible country. A partnership is aimed at between the global fund and national political effort that also embraces through the CCMs national
partners drawn from the private sector, the professions and users groups. Where governments are non-functioning the applications can be made for non-governmental organisations. A board of internationally appointed technical experts adjudicate between competing applications using the following list of criteria: epidemiological and socio-economic criteria, political commitment (of recipient governments), complementarity (to national effort), absorptive capacity (of governance mechanisms), soundness of project approach, feasibility, potential for sustainability, and evaluations and analysis mechanism in place. There are arguments for and against this responsive mode of resource allocation. Such an approach might miss the most needy who are unable to bid but it does involve a partnership between national and global effort. At the same time there is room for debate about the implicit conditionality built into the allocation mechanism. Good national governance is likely to be rewarded (except where it is recognised that no effective government exists). On the other hand a global fund that simply poured money into the coffers of a corrupt national government is likely to be criticised. All of the above criteria in various combinations are eminently suitable for decision making about the allocation of monies arising from a proposed Global Levy. They might be used either in response to bids or in the context of a top down planning/allocation system. Details could vary depending on whether the monies were to be used for health or education or social protection purposes.

An idea on the drawing board and ready to be experimented with is that of the Global Social Trust Network (Cichon M. et al 2003). It builds on the idea and practice of social partnerships within one country that fund social protection in many richer countries and seeks to extend this to develop international social partnerships between people in richer countries and those needing social protection in poorer countries. This global fund will be derived from resources voluntarily committed (at the suggested level of 5 Euro a month or 0.2 per cent of monthly income) by individuals in OECD countries via the agency of social partner organisations such as Trade Unions or National Social Security funds. National Social Trust Organisations would then be established in both donor countries and recipient countries and transfers would be organised through a Global Board with technical assistance provided in this case by the ILO. Monies would then be spent by the National Social Trust Organisations with poorer countries in partnership with embryonic social protection mechanism at local level. One suggestion is that the Global Social Trust Network would finance universal pensions at the level of one dollar a day. Pensions are recognised as being a very good cash benefit that actually meets the needs of whole families within extended family networks in poorer countries. The Director of the Social Protection Network of the World Bank has commented favourably upon the ideas so long as the payments are linked to its Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers process. (Holzmann R 2002) These ensure that Countries do not receive cheap loans from the Bank or have debt written off unless there is a public and transparent policy process in place within the recipient country to reduce poverty. There is room for discussion as to whether the priority for international social protection expenditure should be old age pensions or, as favoured by Townsend (2002, pp368), universal child benefits. Any Global Levy could usefully provide additional resources to put into this Global Social Trust and thereby build upon the eloquent idea of the international social partnership embodied in it. The Global Levy proposed here could also supplement incomes being argued for or already being collected for other global
funds such as those for cheap drugs of those for the World Water Contract (Petrella 2001).

This proposed Global Levy in addition to building on the practice of and complementing the emerging global funds discussed above which seek to supplement national resources will also make a major contribution to the realisation of the provision of global public goods and the prevention of global public bads. Sustained intellectual work being undertaken under the umbrella of the United Nations Development Programme by Inge Kaul and her colleagues (Kaul et al 1999, and 2003) is now shaping a conception of global public goods that goes beyond the mere formal economist’s criteria of good which are technically non-excludable and non-rival in their consumption (e.g. world peace) to embrace goods such as basic education and health care which are (or should be) “socially determined public goods”, that is goods which might be considered rival and excludable but which by political decision could be regarded as nonexclusive (Kaul et al 2003, pp 83). Political decisions about this could reflect the list of global social rights embodied within the 1967 U.N Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights. Another approach would be to regard as socially determined global public goods those goods listed within the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals being progressed through the UN Millennium Project Task Force (www…). In other words those things that we all benefit from but that no individual entrepreneur has an interest in providing such as education and health in poor countries should be considered as global public goods which international effort should ensure is provided either by public service or privately in ways and with access criteria that enable all to benefit. A Global Levy could be used for such purposes.

Kaul and her colleagues make a useful distinction between development assistance whereby richer countries donate monies to enable poorer countries to catch up in the development stakes and global public goods (Kaul 2003, pp 358) Development assistance might continue in the context of progressive globalisation and could be provided with additional funds from a Global Levy. Additionally mechanisms need to be set up to manage the provision of genuinely global public goods and diminish the existence of global public bads. Kaul and her colleagues envisage the establishment over time by each country of Global Issue Ambassadors located within international development departments. These ambassadors would work for policy coherence towards global issues across ministries such as trade and aid. There would be ambassadors for climate stability, food safety, international drug running etc. National ambassadors would liaise with and develop international policy under the guidance of a Global Chief Executive (for e.g Food safety). Such a CEO would be advised by a global board drawn from relevant international organisations and be responsive to global civil society and global business interests (Kaul 2003. pp395). This approach effectively adopts a networking and partnership form of global policy development and practice-shifting which involves the collaboration between stakeholders in the international organisations, the global corporate sector, international NGO’s and civil society organisations. These governance questions are returned to in the next section.

To what extent is the idea of a redistributive, regulatory and rights based global social policy finding it’s way into the lexicon used by international organisations? Has the concept of global social policy taken root? Will it fly?
It is possible to argue that many of the new international initiatives particularly but not exclusively those arising from within the UN Secretary General’s Office embody in practice such a concept without using the terminology. The Millennium Development Goals and work associated with it touches on global redistribution as does the various funds for Aids/TB/Malaria. Differential North-South drug pricing embodies the idea. The UN Global Compact encourages the voluntary adoption of international soft regulations for international corporations. The discussion of the MDGs in the UN Human Development Report (2003) has a strong emphasise on an international compact. The aforementioned work within the UNDP on Global Public Goods is an important component of these trends.

Where does the most recent attempt to reach a global consensus between North and South, business and labour and other voices fit in terms of this discussion? Does the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation (ILO 2004) adopt the language and concepts of global social policy in its attempt to chart a path towards “A Fair Globalisation”? In the words of the press release (www.ilo.org) “The Commission argues that a broader Globalisation Policy Forum is required, to bring together international organisations and other key actors and participants in global debates on globalisation and its impact, and the design of global economic and social policies”.

In terms of global social redistribution the report however continues to mince words about global taxation but argue that; “A greater effort of resource mobilization at the international level is a basic requirement. The commitment to the target of 0.7 per cent of GDP for ODA must at last be respected (p.453-458). A wide range of options for additional sources of funding should also be actively considered (p471-472). The potential of voluntary private contributions and philanthropic endeavours for global solidarity should be more fully tapped (p471-472)”. Interestingly it argues that “international action is likewise needed to support national social protection systems, in order to ensure that there is a minimum level of social protection in the global economy (p. 488–491)”

In terms of global social regulation the report argues; “The rules of the global economy should be aimed at improving the rights, livelihoods, security and opportunities of people, families and communities around the world. That includes fair rules for trade, finance and investment, measures to strengthen respect for core labour standards, and a coherent framework for the cross-border movement of people (p361-367). It continues treading delicately around the ILO/WTO social clause/labour standards issue by saying that; “The capacity of the ILO to promote respect for core labour standards should be reinforced. All relevant international organizations should assume their responsibility to promote these standards and ensure that their policies and programmes do not impede their realization (p426)”. Perhaps it’s most radical ideas are to be found in the sections dealing with migration. “Steps should be taken to build a multilateral framework that provides fair and transparent rules for the cross-border movement of people. We recommend a systematic approach which (a) extends and revitalizes existing multilateral commitments on issues such as the rights and protection of migrant workers and trafficking, especially of women; (b) develops common approaches to major policy issues through dialogue between countries of origin and destination (c) and seeks to build a global framework for an orderly and managed process in the common interest. (433–444).
In terms of global social rights some of the above points also apply. In addition it is to be noted that the report links the issue of social rights to the resources needed for their realisation in practice: “Education, health, human rights, the environment and gender equality should all be addressed through an integrated approach to economic and social goals (511–514)”

The report seems to back two horses with regard to the reformed global governance arrangements that might be needed to bring these changes about. It argues both that: “There should be serious consideration of existing proposals to create an economic and social security council, and a global council on global governance (530-531)” and that “ECOSOC’s capacity to coordinate global policies in the economic and social fields should be strengthened by upgrading its level of representation, including an executive committee at ministerial level and inter-ministerial interaction on key global policy issues, and the adoption of new forms of functioning. (533–534)”. It also calls for inter-parliamentary oversight of the UN system and greater national public scrutiny of national actions in international bodies. Its most important proposal that paves the way from here to their is the idea that; “International organizations should launch Policy Coherence Initiatives in which they work together on the design of more balanced and complementary policies for achieving a fair and inclusive globalisation (608–611)”. And that; “A Globalisation Policy Forum should be established by interested international organizations. The Forum will be a platform for regular dialogue between different points of view on the social impact of developments and policies in the global economy. Participating institutions could produce a regular “State of Globalisation Report”. (618–622).

The time for a Global Social Policy has arrived. In the next section we turn to some of the implications for action within and around the existing inadequate instruments of global social governance and ask questions about the kinds of international alliances, networks and social pressure which might combine to further this shift from a world run within a neo-liberal hegemonic framework of ideas to one run within an ethic of global social solidarity and responsibility. At the same time we will suggest what this might mean for the research and policy evaluation priorities of UNRISD.

Network, Projects, Task Forces, and Policy Coherence Initiatives: Elements of the counter hegemonic project?

How then do intellectuals in and around international organisations act in relation to the existing global governance institutions and in some kind of alliance with global social movement from below who are also concerned (or some of them are) to fashion a socially just globalisation to make progress in this direction? The problems of trying to fashion a common interest out of the myriad inter-group conflicts thrown up by globalisation has been usefully rehearsed by Cox (1999). Industrial workers in developed and polluting economies clash with environmentalists, workers in developed economies share little common interest with those taking their jobs in emerging economies, indigenous peoples clash over land and resources with those who claim these raw materials for production. This is still to say little about reconciling the diverse paths to social progress that different cultures have thrown up.
The focus here is not so much building such alliances between civil society movements from below. The analysis of steps being made through the World Social Forum in that direction still needs to be undertaken. I do not believe as Callinicos (2003) seems to that they represent a fifth international ready to overthrow the capitalist world order in favour of some unspecified ‘socialist’ one. I am more inclined to see this movement as contributing to the reform and not overthrow of capitalist globalisation. The focus here however is rather the struggle within and between international organisations and policy advocates at the international level. The specific questions we now turn to are those concerned with the a) the reform of existing institutions of global social governance and b) the prospects of the adoption by them of a socially redistributive globalisation agenda.

What passes for a system of global governance in the social sphere is a complex of overlapping and competing agencies all seeking to influence policy. At the global level there are a number of competing and overlapping institutions and groupings of countries all of which have some stake in shaping global social policy towards global social problems. This struggle for the right to shape policy and for the content of that policy is what passes for an effective system of international social governance. The fragmentation and competition may be analysed as being made up of five groupings of contestations. First The World Bank, IMF and WTO are in competition for influence with and the rest of UN system. The Bank’s health, social protection and education policy for countries and for the world is for example not the same as that of the WHO, ILO, or UNESCO respectively. While the world may be said to have one emerging Ministry of Finance (with lots of shortcoming) it has two Ministries of Health, Two Ministries of Social Security and Two Ministries of Education.

Then again the UN social agencies (WHO, ILO, UNICEF) are not always espousing the same policy as the UN Department of Economic and Social affairs and furthermore the Secretary General’s initiatives such as the Global Compact or the Millennium project may by-pass and sideline the social development policies of the UN’s Department of Economic and Social affairs.

Quite apart from conflict between the UN and Bank and within the UN system there is also the G7/8, G20, G16, G77, the new G3/G21 and other groupings of countries. While the rich 7/8 continue to assume the right make global policy the newer G20 is struggling to forge a broader global consensus and the G77 remains more a party of opposition to the northern agendas although the emergence of the alliance of the G3 (China, Brazil, India) and G21 at Cancun suggests the ground may finally be shifting. Regional groupings of countries also have to be brought into the picture.

Interaction between all of these actors has lead to international social policy making in recent years becoming stalemated with the EU, G77 and USA adopting entrenched positions. Significant global institutional reform seems check-mated and major global social policy change is difficult to achieve. This is the case notwithstanding the new the new proposals on institutions and policies by the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation.

Because there are now so many loci of action and initiative on global social issues we may be witnessing a shift in the locus and content of global policy debate and activity from those more formally located within the official UN policy making arenas.
(whether of ECOSOC in New York or in the councils of the ILO and WHO in Geneva) and focussed on UN/Breton Woods institutional reform such as the establishment of an Economic Security Council to a set of practices around Networks, Partnerships and Projects which in some ways bypass these institutions and debates and present new possibilities for actually making global change in particular social policy arenas.

Ngairies Woods in a chapter in Held and McGrew’s (2002) Governing Globalisation argues: "The global governance debate is focused heavily on the reform and creation of international institutions....yet global governance is increasingly being undertaken by a variety of networks, coalitions and informal arrangements which lie a little further beyond the public gaze and the direct control of governments. IT IS THESE FORMS OF GOVERNANCE THAT NEED SUSTAINED AND FOCUSED ATTENTION TO BRING TO LIGHT WHOSE INTERESTS THEY FURTHER AND TO WHOM THEY ARE ACCOUNTABLE"

Among examples of these networks, partnerships and projects are the UN Secretary General’s Millennium Project involving ten task forces to manage the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. The essence of this emerging networking and partnership form of policy development and practice-shifting through a focus on specific projects is the collaboration between stakeholders in the international organisations, the global corporate sector, international NGO’s and civil society organisations. Such a shift in the locus and substance of global policy-making and practice has received support recently from commentators coming from very different intellectual positions. Rischard (2002), The World Bank’s Vice President for Europe in High Noon: 20 Global Issues and 20 Years to Solve Them argues that global multilateral institutions are not able to handle global issues on their own, that treaties and conventions are too slow for burning issues, that intergovernmental conferences do not have adequate follow up mechanisms and that the G7/8 type groupings are too exclusive. Instead what is needed are Global Issues Networks (GINs) involving governments, civil society, and business facilitated by a lead multilateral organisation who create a rough consensus about the problem to be solved and the task to be achieved, establish norms and practice recommendations and then report on failing governments and encourage good practice through knowledge exchange and a global observatory which feeds a name and shame approach. Charlotte Streck in Global Environmental Governance: Options and Opportunities Argues for Global Public Policy Networks which bring together governments, the private sector and civil society organisations. She insists that recent trends in international governance indicate that the focus has shifted from intergovernmental activity to multi-sectoral initiatives..from a largely formal legalistic approach to a less formal participatory and integrated approach. Such GPPNs can agenda-set, standard-set, generate and disseminate knowledge and bolster institutional effectiveness. Streck is building here on the work of Reinicke and Bennet (2000) who argued that International Organisations had a particular role they could play in GPPNs as convenor, platform, net-worker and sometimes partial financier. (see also www.gppi.net). To these ideas have now to be added the ‘ILO’s’ Commission’s proposals for Policy Coherence Initiatives, multi-stakeholder Policy Development Dialogues and A Globalisation Policy Forum.
There is clearly something in these accounts of the way policy-making has become projectised and task centred. A key question is how intervention in these tasks and projects and dialogues might become subject to some principles of justice and equity. There is a case therefore for not only the networks and partnerships focused on short-term projects and tasks but also for longer term GLOBAL POLITICAL ALLIANCES that might fashion sets of principles of the kind espoused by the ILO’s Commission and steer members of the task forces. If intervention to mend neo-liberal globalisation is project and task and initiative based then the actors in those projects and tasks need a solid ethical reference point and set of policy principles against which they can assess their proposals for action. We are back to global social policy but not a policy to be debated and won in the chambers of the UN or won in intellectual dialogue with Bank experts (though these activities need to continue) but a policy implemented in practice by those who find themselves on such projects. A global reformist political alliance would act as a reference point for actors in practice.

Perhaps this is happening soce voce. Perhaps the choice of experts to sit on the Commission, perhaps the choice of people to serve on the Millennium Task Force, perhaps the work of the Helsinki Process (www.helsinkprocess.fi) which has launched three Tracks within which international dialogue between Northern and Southern voices will take place leading to a conference in 2005 is evidence of such an implicit anti-neoliberal global political alliance within and between international actors. Perhaps the conference convened by Gordon Brown on February 16th 2004 at which the new President of Brazil and many INGOs spoke about the need to get other countries signed up to his International Finance Initiative to double overseas aid is a sign of the emergence of a global social democratic alliance. Perhaps this is kind of war of positions albeit at a fairly reified level whereby the diceing global hegemony of neo-liberalism is being contested and out manoeuvred. Perhaps if countries follow the Swedish initiative and legislate to ensure that ALL government policy is subordinated to a responsible approach to globalisation progress will be made. Perhaps if countries follow the proposals of Kaul to appoint issues ambassadors for global public goods issue such as education and health and water these ambassadors will in effect be participants in this war of positions. Perhaps the US Treasury does not have total grip anymore? Perhaps the next edition of Boas and McNeill’s book will conclude that “powerful states (notably the USA) contend with other powerful states (notably Europe, China and Brazil), powerful organisations (such as the IMF) contend with other powerful organisations (such as the ILO) and powerful disciplines (notably economics) contend with other disciplines (notably social and political science) to wage a war of positions as to how the terms of debate about globalisation should be framed. To the extent that this is the case the role of intellectuals and their ideas struggling in and against the International Organisations will have been important but not decisive. The shift in influence of contending ideas will reflect a shift in the balance of power whereby social movements from below will have had an impact upon national governments and international actors.

Before concluding and considering the implications of all of this for UNRISD and associated researchers there is an important caveat or corrective to enter. It is conceivable that because of the continued opposition by the world superpower to any kind of strengthening of the UN system and any talk of global taxation and redistribution an alternative route to a more systematic global governance might need to be looked for in the concept of a strengthened Regionalism with a Social
Dimension (Deacon 2001, Yeates 2004). Within this scenario the EU which anyway “offers novel ways of thinking about governance beyond the state” (Held and McGrew 2000) would be joined by ASEAN, SADC, MERCOSUR, SAARC and new regions in a global federation of regions linked to, say the Canadian lead G20 international governance mechanism. In this case a international redistribution would be handled on an interregional basis and funds allocated on Socio-Economic criteria of need to some regions who would then decide to allocate it to activities and projects within the region using mechanisms already established by the EU or by new mechanisms such as those being experimented with by the Global fund for AIDS/TB/Malaria discussed above. Such a regional approach to a global social policy might also chime with the sentiments of many southern voices who react against a northern drive global social democracy as strongly as they react against a northern driven global neo-liberalism (Bello 2000). It might also embody at a global level the post hegemonic, relativist, and multi-cultural global order that we saw Cox had argued for in 1993. One of the problems is of course that many regions are not so coherent and in some case the more protectionist inclined regions listed above compete under USA influence with more open free trade mega-regions like the AFTA and APEC. The social dimensions of most regions are also still fairly weak by comparison with the EU.

Whether we have in mind the further development of a global social policy or a pattern of regional social policies what follows for UNRISD in particular and other intellectuals and scholars working in and around the UN social agencies? There is a distinction to be made between the positive role that UNRISD research has played in the struggle against neo-liberal policies within one country (the Social Policy in a Development Context Programme for example) and the relative neglect of research on international policy (UNRISD 2003). The work on international business regulation is an exception to this. My point is that for the UNRISD with its focus on national social development and for WIDER with its focus on national economic development and indeed for research and policy advocacy within all the UN social agencies (WHO, ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO) there is an overemphasis on researching and advocating policies for national governments. UN researchers see themselves as working for inter-national agencies and in some sense bound to offer advice to the countries that fund the agency. By the same token it does not come naturally to researchers within international organisations and paid by them to research the organisations themselves and the shortcomings they collectively exhibit in terms of any desirable system of global social governance. The spotlight needs to be turned on the emerging system of global social governance and the emerging practices of global redistribution, regulation and rights.

The moment is ripe given the recommendation of the ‘ILO’s’ report that “Research programmes and data collection on the social dimension of globalisation should be strengthened” (623–629) to work towards the establishment of a Global Social Policy Research Centre serving a Global Social Policy Observatory and acting as a Global Social Policy Advocacy Think Tank whose purpose would be to track, monitor, and analyse for effectiveness all the elements of the emerging global and regional policies of social redistribution, regulation and rights. It would be an institute which shadowed and contributed to both the Globalisation Policy Forum that the ILO report said should be established by interested international organizations and the Policy Coherence Initiatives within which international organisations would work together
on the design of more balanced and complementary policies for achieving a fair and inclusive globalisation as well as shadowing and commenting on all the other parallel global policy dialogues which are emerging at the moment. The existing Global Social Policy Journal and the associated Global Social Policy Digest might be one building block of such a project. The initiative of the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation at the University of Warwick to form a Globalisation Studies Network of institutes and programmes across the world that are researching aspects of globalisation might be another? If an initiative like this were taken then, in the words of the conference title research would not only as it has done make a difference to national policy making but would also make a difference to International policy making.

My brief was to “examine where and how global social policy is made, the way reformist and radical thinking engages with the relevant policy-making institutions and actors; and what type of alliances, participation and activism might be conducive to global social policy reform”. Comments as to how effectively this brief has been engaged with would be welcome.

Bob Deacon, February 28th, 2004. B.Deacon@sheffield.ac.uk.

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1 In terms of the actual impact of economic globalisation upon social policy in more northern and more developed economies a new scholarly consensus is emerging (Scharfe 2000. Sykes et al 2001, Yeates, 2001, Swank 2002) that argues and demonstrates that globalisation does not necessarily have to lead to the residualisation (and privatisation) of social provision. In the north there are arguments and experiences that show that redistributive social policy with high levels of income taxation and high levels of public health, education and social security ARE
sustainable in the face of global competition. In a comparative survey of Anglo-Saxon (e.g. UK) Conservative Corporatist (e.g. Germany) and Social Democratic (e.g. Sweden) welfare states both the neo-liberal and social democratic approaches remained competitive. The neo-liberal approach of course risked creating increased inequity that compensatory social policy such as tax credits seeks to minimise. The most challenged were work-based welfare states funded on the basis of labour taxes with locked in inflexible labour contracts for industrial workers. So long as revenue for social provision was raised from citizens rather than capital and service jobs are high quality public ones high level universal social provision is sustainable and does not undermine competitiveness and ensure full employment. (Scharfe 2000, Sykes et al 2001). Swank (2002) concluded that “the political institutions and programmatic structures of the larger welfare states of Western Europe are precisely those that are most likely to blunt the pressures of internationalisation; the political institutions and programmatic structures of (relatively small) liberal welfare states are those most likely to facilitate some retrenchment in the presence of economic and political pressures generated by globalisation. As a result we are not likely to see substantial convergence around a market-conforming model of minimalist public social protection” (Swank 2002, p5). The conclusion is based upon a regression analysis of data measuring several dimensions of a country’s openness to globalisation, several measures of welfare state effort and several measures of institutional arrangements over the period 1965 to 1993 for fifteen countries. The conclusions drawn from this quantitative analysis are that international capital mobility has no effect upon these measures of welfare state effort in universalist (Nordic) welfare states and conservative (German/French) welfare states but does have a negative effect in liberal (Australia/ USA/ Canada/ UK) welfare states (Swank 2002 p119). The quantitative analysis is then reinforced by a detailed review of policy changes in several of the countries that represent the three welfare regimes. In the case of the universalist welfare states Swank concludes that ‘the political and normative features of universalist program structure combined with inclusive electoral institutions, social corporatism and centrality of the polity have done much to bolster the Nordic welfare states against retrenchment pressures over the last two decades’ (pp160). Similarly ‘the structure of the conservative model tends to promote high levels of legitimacy and the values of “cross-class solidarity”, trust and confidence in the system of social insurance” (p213) enabling pressures for change to be resisted. Whereas features of liberal welfare states lend themselves open to liberal reform as in the case of the UK pensions system. (p238).