# The International Political Economy of Global Social Policy Governance

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## Introduction

Social policy has been studied mostly at the national level as nation-states have been the focus of social policy making since the creation and spread of the notion of a welfare-state in the nineteenth century. The idea of social policy making beyond nation-states flourished much later, and was consolidated in the 1990s, following the discussion on the (negative) effects of globalisation and the need for 'global governance' (Goodin & Mitchell 2000; Rosenau & Czempiel 1992). The discussion of policy making at the global level covers several issue areas from security to trade and social policies. This chapter explores global policy governance in the issue area of social policy. Moreover, the chapter investigates global social policy governance from an international political economy (IPE) perspective, in other words, it addresses the relations between politics and economics, between states and markets (Strange 1994). In doing so, it also highlights the role of state and non-state actors such as private companies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), networks, social movements and think tanks, and the multi-level nature of policy making in the national, regional, and global levels. We advance that the regional level has become a key locus of social policy making and therefore explore this level in depth.

The definition of social policy is not straightforward (Bianculli & Ribeiro Hoffmann 2016a). Hall and Midgley conceptualise social policy as the 'measures that affect people's well-being, whether through the provision of welfare services or by means of policies that impact upon livelihoods more generally' (2004: XIV). From a more general approach, Mkandawire argues that social policy 'should be conceived of as involving overall and prior concerns with social development, and as a key instrument that works in tandem with economic policy to ensure equitable and socially sustainable development (…) as collective interventions directly affecting transformation in social welfare, social institutions and social relations' (2001: 1). These attempts to define social policy emphasise objectives, instruments and mechanisms that work at the collective level rather than at the level of the individual. Indeed, it is contended that the most important component of social policies relates to the promotion of the integration process by paying attention to social development, what in turn would lead to the construction of a 'communitarian identity' (Bizzozzero 2000). Thus, changes in the level where social policies are addressed could lead to the transformation of identities. We deem the relation between social policies and identities a key issue in the literature as it mobilises deep expectations of citizens about the political entities they belong to, especially at national and regional levels, as explored below.

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**Box 37.1. Definition of social policy**

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This chapter proceeds by addressing firstly the global, and then the regional level of social policy making. In so doing, the objective is twofold. First, to revise how the literature has evolved, key authors in the field, and the main topics addressed; second, to provide an IPE perspective. This implies examining the profound interconnections between politics and economics, i.e., states and markets, but also an increasing array of civil society actors, on the one hand, and across levels, i.e.,

the national, the regional and the international, on the other. We also explore the drivers and mechanisms of global social policies in case studies; labour policy and the International Labour Organization (ILO) on the global level, and the case of the European Union (EU) and comparative regionalism studies, on the regional level.

**Studying social policy from a global perspective**

Social policy is traditionally studied at the national level, with a focus on single countries or comparative studies (Kennett 2013; Surender & Walker 2013). During the 1990s a new sub-field was developed by scholars advancing the necessity to develop social policies at the global level to counteract the negative impacts of economic globalisation, namely, Global Social Policy (GSP). A key scholar to the consolidation of this research agenda was Bob Deacon, who died in 2017, and was Professor of International Social Policy at the University of Sheffield, directed the Globalism and Social Policy Program at this institution, and was the founding editor of the journals *Critical Social Policy* (1980) and *Journal of Global Social Policy* (2001). Deacon also acted as advisor and consultant on aspects of international social policy to many international organisations such as the ILO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Council of Europe. Deacon's place in the GSP is summarised by Stubbs when he argues that 'his trilogy of books "Global Social Policy" (1997), "Global Social Policy and Governance" (2007), and "Global Social Policy in the Making" (2013) will define the discipline for years to come.'[1] The context of these books structured the agenda of GSP, i.e. how globalisation influences social policy, the actors involved in global social policy making (such as think tanks, global policy advocacy coalitions, global social movements, knowledge networks, epistemic communities), and their role in the promotion of regulation, rights and redistribution, referred to in Deacon's work as the '3 Rs'. Moreover, in his work, global social policy 'builds on a tradition of critical development theory which has sought a broader understanding of human development and addresses the social impacts of an international political economy through the lens of whether or not they meet basic human needs' (Deacon & Stubbs 2013: 7).

More recently, Seckinelgin (2014) has claimed that the work by Deacon and his colleagues, such as Paul Stubbs and Alexandra Kaash, has developed at least two central orientations: '(a) considerations of the role played by international organisations within globalisation processes that impact peoples' wellbeing in different contexts and (b) normative considerations based on the possibilities of thinking of alternative roles for international organisations to address commonly observed global wellbeing problems' (2014: 589). Throughout his work, Deacon has advanced a critical approach to globalisation and an activist dimension to academic concerns. The impact of globalisation on the making and context of social policy was summarised by him as (a) setting welfare states in competition with each other, (b) bringing new (international) players into the making of social policy, (c) raising the issues with which social policy is concerned to supranational level, (d) creating a global private market in social provision, and (e) encouraging 'a global movement of peoples that challenges territorial-based structures and assumptions of welfare obligation and entitlement' (Deacon 2007: 9–10). Despite being a declared Marxist, he advanced a reformist approach to counter globalisation, while being aware of the limits: 'One problem identified by Paul Stubbs and I (Deacon and Stubbs 2007) is that the very processes of consultancy-driven international development has captured and de-radicalized a whole generation in many countries that might otherwise have played such a radical role. Not only have governments become agencies for the realization of neo-liberal goals, as Cohen and Baumann identified, but so have many of those who would have been activists in an earlier era been bought off by and bought into the existing form of development politics' (Deacon 2014: 211). Holden has also criticised the rather conservative turn of GSP to the extent that 'the dominant forms taken by GSP will continue to be piecemeal, minimalist and essentially neoliberal for as long as an effective global political movement in favour of a more extensive GSP is absent' (2018: 1).

In addressing some of these criticisms, Yeates (2008), for instance, took a more bottom-up approach in the discussion of GSP, exploring the historical and geographical contexts of social policy as well as the phenomena of global migration flows and the challenges thus posed to GSP. The questions of gender, race, intersectionality as well as 'post-colonial issues' also only gained prominence

in the literature (Deacon 2014; Razavi & Hassim 2006; True 2003). In all, gender governance, and therefore gender (global) policy, can be seen as a 'specific dimension of social governance, covering regulation aiming to achieve equal opportunities and equal treatment, and measures aiming to redistribute benefits between women and men' (Van der Vleuten 2016: 406). Yet, it is far more comprehensive: 'Achieving gender equality in politics, economy, and society constitutes a cross-cutting aim, which is reflected by gender mainstreaming as a transformative strategy to achieving gender equality by incorporating a gender perspective in all policies (...) Finally, gender is not only a variable but also a perspective' (idem), and it is possible to study governance and (global) social policies from a gender perspective. Differently from studying gender as a policy area or a mainstreaming agenda, which is more present in the literature, a gender perspective on (global) social policy would ask 'where are the women in global social policy making?' Building on Van der Vleuten, this implies 'looking for "femocrats" (feminist bureaucrats) and openings for feminist alliances, analysing gender relations at summits, the construction of power, masculinity and femininity, and the processes of socialization' (2016: 420).

More recently, in a provocative article, Steffek and Holthaus (2017) argued that the sources for what they refer to as 'welfare internationalism' are not 'domestic analogies', or the transposal of welfare ideas and institutions from national to the global level after the Second World War, but rather they stem from four different origins: 'One was a transfer of notions of professional colonial administration to the international sphere: expert-driven, rationalist in a utilitarian way and openly paternalistic. The second was a cosmopolitan interpretation of 19th century public unions as caretakers of global public interests, understood as the interest of individuals rather than states. The third ingredient was European reform-oriented socialist traditions that had found an international institutional home in the ILO, guided by its charismatic founding director Albert Thomas. Fourth, welfare internationalism was influenced by forms of imperial humanitarianism — the belief that Western societies ought to limit the suffering of distant strangers' (2017: 108). In this light, the domestic welfare state and welfare internationalism developed at the same time; and the origins of the latter are less virtuous than often portrayed in the literature, exposing 'paternalistic, technocratic and racist

traits' (Steffek & Holthaus 2017: 108). The authors also advance that 'the assumption that IOs should be responsible for individual welfare raises some thorny issues of the practical-political kind. The material resources of IOs are notoriously limited and often insufficient to live up to the promises made in their mission statements. What is more, in practice, welfare internationalism often implies a redistribution of resources across borders. Such redistribution from wealthier to poorer areas of the globe is regularly called for — on moral, legal, and political grounds — but proved hard to achieve in the past. The long-standing controversy over the size of official development assistance (ODA) can illustrate the point. At an aggregate level, it never even came close to the mark of 0.7% of developed countries' gross domestic product (GDP) that was first envisaged in 1970' (2017: 107). Steffek and Holthaus's call for a critical view on GSP, questioning its origins and the possibilities under which it could play a positive role in the wellbeing of individuals is certainly much more radical than the more traditional questioning of the limits of global social policy under neoliberalism (Haarstad & St Clair 2011), and require a deeper thinking about the way ahead, in light of the increasing concentration of wealth and democratic crisis worldwide.

From a less radical perspective, some particularities of GSP and the developing countries such as informality, conditionality, and the role of South–South cooperation have been underscored (Surender & Walker 2013). South–South cooperation has provoked a discussion about the content and mechanisms of policy diffusion, and therefore, how it has affected global social policy making. The High-Level United Nations Conference on South–South Cooperation (SSC) held in Nairobi in 2009, acknowledged SSC as an important element of international development cooperation, distinguishing it from official development assistance (ODA). The Nairobi Outcome Document adopted by the United Nations General Assembly 'established six principles of South–South cooperation: Respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence; equality (horizontality); non-conditionality; non-interference in domestic affairs; mutual benefits. It also established the elements that should inform SSC practices: common objectives and solidarity; multi-stakeholder approach; national well-being; promotion of national and collective self-reliance; internationally agreed development goals; alignment to national development; priorities at the request

of developing countries; capacity development' (BRICS Policy Center & South–South Cooperation Research and Policy Centre 2017: 16). These practices have spread in bilateral, triangular, and multilateral cooperation and therefore, global social policy making.

The role of knowledge, policy networks and the so-called 'turn of think tanks' have also been discussed in the GSP literature (Reinicke 1999; Stone 2013; Williams 2016; Witte et al. 2005). Stone's study on how 'knowledge organizations deliver conceptual understanding of policy problems, how networks set policy agendas and the effectiveness and legitimacy (or not) with which they implement and monitor (non) governmental public action' (2013: 2) calls attention to the changing nature of GSP and the powerful role of policy research institutes. The concept of policy network has been used extensively in the literature on regulation, norms diffusion and even world order (Bianculli et al. 2015; Börzel 1998; Castells & Cardoso 2005; Jordana 2017; Slaughter 2004). Similar developments are still missing in social policy. As Stone argued: 'In classical political science, public policy occurs inside nation-states. In the field of international relations, a "realist" perspective would also hold that states are the dominant actor in the international system and that international policies are made between states. With its strong tendency to "methodological nationalism" (Wimmer & Schiller 2002), and traditional comparative public policy has compounded this standpoint. Scholars in the field usually compare policy development within and between states where states remain the key policymaking unit' (Stone 2008: 23). In other words, the double state-centrism of international relations and of social policy has led to the downplay of the relevance of policy networks in the study of global social policy. Finally, the role of political parties has been addressed in a study on the responses to the 2008 crisis, where the authors concluded that 'in welfare states with relatively low benefits and therefore small automatic stabilizers, crisis responses are indeed shaped by partisan politics' (Starke et al. 2014: 228). While partisan politics plays a less relevant role in GSP, it is also a crucial element at the regional level. Next, the case study of labor policy and ILO is discussed.

*Case study: The International Labour Organization*

The ILO is one of the world's oldest international organisations and has just turned its centenary. It was created in 1919 as a functional organisation to the League of Nations at the Versailles Treaty, with the main aim of promoting social justice through international labour standards. While it is a precursor of the idea of GSP, it drew on earlier movements and initiatives, such as the International Association for Labour Legislations. ILO's unique 'corporatist tripartite' structure, which includes representatives from its member-states governments as well as from organised labour and employers in decision-making bodies, is seen as an answer within capitalist countries to the spread of communism. The ILO has adopted almost 200 conventions and 200 recommendations, ranging from basic human rights charters to detailed regulatory codes for specific industries, but the gap between treaty adoption and ratification has increased over the years, leading to a current discredit of its capacity to influence societies (Helfer 2006: 653). In a study about ILO's law making and monitoring of labour standards, it is argued that the organisation was quite successful during its first decades, establishing close relations with national trade unions. Yet, in the post-war period its attempt to expand its mandate was frustrated, and ILO remained stagnated until the 1990s, when it entered a new phase to respond to the changes triggered by economic globalisation and the transformations in labour markets.

Robert Cox, a leading international relations, and IPE scholar who worked at the ILO for about 25 years, has elaborated about the role of international institutions and the ILO in his 'critical theory' approach (Cox 1977; Cox et al. 1973; Moolakkattu 2009). In an interview in 2009, he summarised his view on ILO in the following terms:

> I left the ILO in the 1970s for personal reasons. But I also had the feeling that the organization was moving towards the side-lines of the world. Subsequently, any international issues involving labour, which used to be dealt with by the ILO, were increasingly being dealt with by the WTO or OCDE. In other words, those organizations that deal directly with economic issues were the ones that were decisive. The ILO continued to exist because it has a constituency, but like most

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bureaucratic organizations, you can create them, but you can't kill them (…) I doubt that it is likely to be a forum for any significant activity in the international field. That function was important in the period between the two World Wars and the years immediately following, when welfare states were building up. The ILO rules and regulations had a certain influence on countries, being incorporated into their laws. The ILO helped the labour movements in those countries by giving them a model that they could follow when they were strong enough politically within a country to influence and enforce something. In that period the ILO played an important role, I am not sure it has continued to play that sort of role. Even in the period of the independence of the African countries, for example, some of the ILO rules were contrary to the interests of development, because they represented a way of making the organized worker into a kind privileged person, as a minority within society; and there were those in the ILO who began to be interested much more in spreading employment than protecting the position of employed workers. Spreading employment was the way to help those societies develop, and that became sort of conflictual within the ILO. The traditionalists said 'no, we can't do that, our role is to promote standards'; but to promote standards in countries whose economies which were not in the shape that standards meant something for the general good was not a very useful activity. (…) they didn't take much of an interest for a while in the phenomenon of multinational corporations, in the way that corporations were operating in a number of different countries and how that created differences within countries. I didn't want to say anything negative about the ILO, but I don't see it as something that has a great future. The social movements will not be much interested in using the ILO as they are in perhaps in getting more publicity through other organizations, such as the United Nations, or other organizations that have an impact on opinion in some countries (…) What is happening now is that they [labour standards] are negotiated as part of trade agreements. The values and interests are different there, the

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interests of trade are preeminent. The United States, for example, with its strong movement to prevent the exporting of jobs, leads towards a form of protectionism. So, workers' organizations are making themselves felt in different ways, but not through the ILO.

(Saggioro Garcia & Borba de Sá 2013)

Whitworth (1994) explores the role of the ILO in the agenda of gender, and shares the current negative assessment of the ILO, without, however, undermining its historical role. She argues that ILO's treatment of gender was influenced by women's movements and changing understandings of gender relations, and 'has revolved around the perennial debate between what they call the protectionists and the equal righters' over its history, i.e. between the idea that women required special protection because of their physical differences and role in childbearing, and the idea that this kind of legislation would make them less employable and therefore hinder women's equality on the labour market (Whitworth 1994: 8). Boris et al. (2018) analyse the role of women's transnational networks in shaping ILO's debates and policies, and what were the gendered meanings of international labour law in a world of uneven and unequal development at the turn of the organisation's 100th anniversary. They, thus, called attention for the need of further research into gender politics and the ILO.


### The regional as a *meso* level for social policy

As argued above, social policy has been mainly tackled – both from a policy and academic perspective – at the domestic and global levels. Social policies have thus been studied either in (domestic) comparative perspective or from a global approach. On the contrary, the regional level has remained underexplored (Deacon 2011). Consequently, social policy regionalism (Bianculli & Ribeiro Hoffmann 2016a) has not been given appropriate attention in the social policy literature until more recently, despite the resurgence of regionalism and interregional relations since the late 1980s. Moreover, and rather paradoxically, whereas there is an extensive literature on the creation and development of regional organisations and regionalism initiatives, including comparative

approaches, studies on the expansion, diffusion and impact of regional social policies and regulations remain rather minimal.

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**Box 37.2. Definition of regional organisations**

The international relations scholarship has defined organisations as formal institutions with 'prescribed hierarchies and capacity for purposive action' as opposed to looser international regimes with 'complexes of rules and organisations, the core elements of which have been negotiated and explicitly agreed upon by states' (Keohane 1988: 384). Regional organisations thus refer to formal institutions involving members based on their geographical delimitation: they are composed of states that belong to or perceive themselves as belonging to a region (Hurrell 1995). Despite differences in their institutional design, and especially on the question of supranational decision-making, regional organisations share common characteristics, i.e., territoriality, identity and scope.

This section explores the region as a unit to mitigate the negative effects of market instability and the challenges to domestic welfare systems (Beeson 2007; Telò 2001), but also as a development space for managing uncertainties through social regulation (Deacon et al. 2010; Kaasch & Stubbs 2014; Yeates & Deacon 2006), and thus responding to global challenges and opportunities. In other terms, it investigates regionalism and regional organisations as providers of social policies and regulations.

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**Exploring the drivers and mechanisms of social policy regionalism**

Explaining policy dynamics and change in regional integration and cooperation is certainly a challenging task (Caporaso 1998). Relevant theoretical accounts have been proposed to explain processes of institutional, policy and norm transformation. Drawing on earlier work (Bianculli & Ribeiro Hoffmann 2016b), we address and assess the multiplicity of possible drivers of regional social policies and regulations to enlighten the empirical analysis of the complex reality

of regional policy dynamics. A wide variety of actors can act as drivers of regional institutional, norm and policy change. These range from international organisations, 'peer' regional organisations, institutions and bodies within regional organisations, governments of member-states, labour and business representatives, and civil society organisations (CSOs) including NGOs and social movements.

**Table 1: Drivers of institutional, norm and policy change at the regional level**

| *Actors* | International organizations/UN system | 'Peer' ROs | ROS and regional institutions (from the RO under consideration) | Member-state governments | Business | Labour | CSOs, NGOs, social movements |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Mechanisms* | | | | | | | |
| Diffusion (*direct and indirect influence*) | X (top down) | X (horizontal, interregional) | | X (bottom up) | | | |
| Judicial power | | | X | X | | | |
| Legislative power | | | X | X | | | |
| Pressure, contestation | | | | | X | X | X |

*Source*: Bianculli & Ribeiro Hoffman (2016a)

International organisations are depicted as relevant drivers of social policies at the regional level. Regional development banks, regional economic commissions and regional branches of the UN social agencies, i.e. ILO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UNDP, and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), have promoted 'regional social policy from above' (Deacon & Macovei 2010). Yet, their strategy focuses mainly on countries pertaining to regions, thus overlooking regional organisations and associations. Furthermore, when targeting regional organisations, these global entrepreneurs tend to neglect the social dimension of regionalism and regional cooperation. Despite its limitations, the role of international organisations is fundamental as drivers of social policy regionalism since they support lesson learning across countries, thus promoting capacity building in regional organisations, in fields such as labour migration, communicable diseases monitoring, and social protection and social security, among others. (Deacon & Macovei 2010: 61). Scholars have found similar empirical support for a positive dynamic between international and regional organisations, mainly through capacity-building and coordinating or monitoring activities in policy fields related to cross-border employment and health problems (Lavenex et al. 2016). UN regional commissions, as in the case of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), their discourse and policy recommendations had a strong development component in the post war era, which was then rather neglected under the years of neoliberal trade liberalisation and regional integration. Yet, social policy came into the organisation's policy as a means to respond to the failures of import substitution industrialisation, and later on of neoliberalism (Mahon 2015). Thus, starting in the mid-1990s, but especially with the turn of the century, ECLAC called for more active social policies, thus moving towards a rights approach (Ocampo 1998).

If we accept that regions are constructed, then states and state-led organisations are not to be taken as the sole drivers of regionalism. Alternatively, different non-state actors, including firms, transnational corporations, NGOs, and other types of social networks and social movements are relevant actors in regionalism and the broadening of scope and depth of regional integration and cooperation. From a bottom-up perspective, studies have delved into the role of social movements and

CSOs, i.e., 'regional social policy from below' (Brennan & Olivet 2007; Olivet & Brennan 2010). Civil society and social movements are portrayed as counter-hegemonic actors, resisting neoliberal reforms, and promoting alternative, progressive policies and instruments at various levels. From a regional perspective, the expansion of free trade negotiations created an opportunity to discuss the relation between regional organisations and the provision and regulation of social policy. In Latin America, for example, negotiations for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) generated contestation and protests about the negative effects of (regional) trade liberalisation, as illustrated by the creation of the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA) in 1997 and the demonstrations during the Third Summit of the Americas in 2001 (Briceño-Ruiz 2007; Tussie & Botto 2003; Von Bülow 2010). Yet, similar developments abound in other world regions, as in the case of the Southern African People's Solidarity Network (SAPSN), ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum (ACSC/APF), People's SAARC (South Asia), and Civil Society Europe (CSE). These networks bring together CSOs and social movements, and through their collective action they underpin the creation of transnational political spaces, where politics are discussed and deliberated beyond borders, and at the regional level.

Relations between regions and regional organisations is another relevant driver of institutional and norm change in social policy regionalism. Portrayed as the process of dialogue and relations between two regional organisations, interregionalism and transregionalism have gained increasing significance in international political economy starting in the 1990s and as repercussion of the new or open regionalism (Doctor 2007; Rüland 2010). Taken as 'region-to-region relations', interregionalism operates as a horizontal driver, and can assume at least three forms (Hänggi 2006). Whereas the first category refers to institutionalised relations between regional groupings (e.g., EU–Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), the second category relates to relations between regional groupings and third states (e.g., EU–China). Finally, the third category, loosely referred to as 'other interregional or transregional mechanisms', includes relations between a regional organisation and a more or less coordinated group of states in different regions (e.g. the Asia–Europe Meeting/ASEM), relations between two more or less coordinated groups of states in different regions (e.g.

the Forum for East Asia–Latin America Cooperation/FEALAC) and relations among states, groups of states and regional organisations from different regions (e.g. Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation/APEC). In all, interregionalism and transregionalism have proved to be useful tools to push for regional integration worldwide. They are portrayed as playing a fundamental role in promoting norm and capacity building through the engagement of formal regional organisations (i.e., interregionalism) and through less formalised relations between regions as well as non-state actors (Ribeiro Hoffmann 2016). Furthermore, whereas the literature has emphasised the qualitatively asymmetric profile of the regions involved in (Doidge 2007), as focus has been mostly on EU's interregionalism vis-à-vis regions and sub-regions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, inter and transregionalism have increasingly bridged South–South regions, organisations, and actors, i.e., MERCOSUR– Southern African Development Community (SADC), SADC–ASEAN, and Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).

Certainly, explaining the transformation of regional integration processes remains a difficult task (Caporaso 1998). Yet, the legislative or regulatory power of regional institutions and member states has been extensively analysed in the more traditional theories of regional cooperation and integration. Though an important building block of regional integration theories, neofunctionalism primarily focuses on how integration evolves through functional spill over and institutional activism, i.e., supranationality, all of which is expected to lead to more integration, yet many questions remain unanswered (Haas 1958; Niemann & Schmitter 2009). Among others, these include the (non-technocratic) role of policymakers, societal actors, and even external and international variables, all of which could be explaining the process of regional integration. Liberal intergovernmentalism has thus attempted to bring together 'a liberal theory of preference formation with an intergovernmental focus on power-bargaining among states' (Caporaso 1998: 9). Nevertheless, two factors remain still neglected: first, the relevance of transnational linkages and society in further promoting regional integration, and secondly, the capacity of supranational organisations to promote policy outcomes that contradict the preferences of dominant states (Mattli & Stone Sweet 2012).

More recently, new regionalism theories assumed a critical engagement with the international relations and IPE literatures and have addressed the relevance of civil society actors, thus showing that regional integration processes involve continuing linkages between state and non-state actors and across levels – the international, the regional, and the domestic (Söderbaum 2016). As regionalism and regions advance and mature, pressure and contestation from below may emerge. In other words, as 'their powers and prerogatives increase (...) so does public scrutiny' (Fioramonti 2013), being this exacerbated during periods of crisis. This brings us then to the role of non-state actors and civil society.

Whereas the notion of civil society is no longer confined to the borders of the territorial state (Kaldor 2003), the emergence of regional and international governance structures does not indicate the demise of the state and national patterns of social organisation (Price 2003). However, the regional arena as a meso level between the national and the international offers a new space for dialogue and contestation, and one where civil society, taken as a large and heterogeneous group, deploys diverse preferences and collective action strategies that relate to three broad types: conformist, moderate and radical (Korseniewicz & Smith 2001; Scholte et al. 1999). In terms of their role, civil society, i.e., mainly business associations, NGOs and think tanks, can have three roles: legitimization, manipulation, and contestation (Fioramonti 2013). First, they can act as 'legitimizers' of the regional status quo when accepting to participate in formal and institutionalized mechanisms, thus having voice and influence without actually questioning the policy process. Second, civil society can 'manipulate' standing participatory mechanisms to promote reforms in regionalism and regional organizations from within. Finally, 'contestation' occurs when civil society 'provides a counter-hegemonic challenge to mainstream regional institutions, especially market-driven regional integration processes' (Fioramonti 2013). In any case, these categorizations can be taken as 'ideal types' as the actor constellation, their collective action strategies, role and effectiveness in (re)shaping regions and regionalism change in line with their respective capabilities and the changing patterns of regional governance. Therefore, the extent to which these dialogues and mobilisations can turn into direct influence or impact on regional social policies remains contested and requires further

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scrutiny. In all, their effectiveness is varied. Certainly, the role and effects of social actors depends on the political opportunity structure, which shapes patterns of inclusion/exclusion, and thus affect the collective action strategies of these groups. Thus, whereas studies have found empirical evidence pointing to civil society as being mainly engaged in service provision and legitimisation of regional policies (Godsäter & Söderbaum 2017), scholars have also argued that even if the participation of civil society is still a challenge in this regional policy area, the emergence of policy networks and epistemic communities certainly contributes to the diffusion of ideas and standards (Herrero & Loza 2018). Diffusion is precisely the last mechanism through which norms, policies, and institutions in the area of social policy can spread over time and across space (Gilardi 2012). The literature has identified different diffusion mechanisms (Marsh & Sharman 2009). From a comparative regionalism perspective, direct and indirect mechanisms have been identified (Börzel & Risse 2012). Focused on the diffusion process as initiated by the sender, direct mechanisms include coercion, manipulation of utility calculations, socialisation, and persuasion. Indirect mechanisms, on the contrary, investigate the diffusion process from the recipient perspective and involve competition, lesson-drawing and normative emulation. Furthermore, whereas these various mechanisms are not mutually exclusive (T. A. Börzel & Risse 2012), in practice, the distinction between indirect and direct mechanisms may become blurred (Lenz 2012). Based on this analytical categorisation, when examining social policy regionalism in Europe and Latin America, diffusion processes are underscored as playing a role in the ways in which norms, policies and institutions diffuse in this policy area. Yet, these more intensely operate indirectly, through competition, lesson-drawing and normative emulation (Bianculli & Ribeiro Hoffmann 2016). As an interdependent process, diffusion can lead to particular patterns of policy adoption (Elkins & Simmons 2005; Risse 2016). Comparative studies across regions and regionalism have shown that whereas 'full-scale adoption or convergence around specific models of regional cooperation and integration' are rare, diffusion is most likely to lead to selective adoption, adaptation, and transformation (Risse 2016: 88).

**Regional organisations and the practices of social policy regionalism**

Regional organisations exhibit interesting variation in the ways in which they deal with social problems, leading thus to different practices or models of social policy regionalism. For reasons of scope and size of this chapter, it has been decided to investigate the development of a social agenda and social policy governance in the EU in more detail, being this followed by a more succinct description of social policy regionalism across different regional organisations and regions.

*Case study: The EU*

The EU stands out as a pioneer in the implementation of social policy regionalism, even if this agenda came at a later stage in the regional integration process. Certainly, the EU's strategy followed the policy guidelines of international organisations, i.e., Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OCDE) and UN institutions. In time, EU norms, instruments and practices served as an inspirational model, resulting in emulation by other regional projects. The EU's delay in implementing a social policy agenda is explained by policymakers' reluctance given the peculiarities of the national social protection systems, and the well-developed public health and education services already in place in 1957, which added to these countries' strong commitment to expenditure on social benefits (Threlfall 2010). Yet, the EU would gradually incorporate social policy elements. Thus, and especially after the adoption of the Social Charter in 1989, the EU was perceived as a relevant actor in this policy area (Leibfried & Pierson 1995). Since then, an EU social acquis Communautaire has progressively developed, including binding and non-binding agreements, i.e., treaties, directives, regulations, declarations, recommendations, and guidelines. Regarding the mechanisms and instruments in place, Structural Funds are key. These include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) established in 1975 to support the creation of infrastructure and jobs, and the European Social Fund (ESF) created in 1958 under the Treaty of Rome to promote the integration of the unemployed and disadvantaged social groups into the labour market through training. In 1994, the EU launched the Cohesion Fund with the aim of financing large infrastructure projects in the fields of environmental protection and transport. In all, both the

Structural and Cohesion Funds aim to reduce economic and social disparities between member-states and regions. Furthermore, in 1992, the Maastricht Treaty on the European Union (TEU) incorporated relevant social policy areas as part of the tasks conferred to the EU, including education, youth policy and public health, while also expanding the scope of existing funds support. However, EU competences in this domain remained limited. Having been unable to reach a unanimous agreement, 11 Member States decided to move ahead by concluding an Agreement on Social Policy, which was included as an appendix. The United Kingdom (UK), who had vetoed the agreement, was thus exempted. Despite these shortcomings, the TEU was a breakthrough in the area of social policy due to the creation of a European citizenship, which led the EU to take up many issues such as the rights of intra-community migrants. Additionally, important regulations were issued in the area of gender equality in the 2000s, even if most social regulations have not followed the supranational path. On the contrary, these remain as non-binding initiatives.

In 1997, the Treaty of Amsterdam (ToA) incorporated the Agreement on Social Policy into the text,[2] which included a co-decision to replace cooperation, extended the provisions related to ESF, and the free movement of workers and social security for EU migrant workers. The ToA made the European Commission (EC) responsible for the implementation of the European Employment Strategy (EES) through a coordinated strategy with member states, based on the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). In all, the European Social Model gained full recognition in 1997, and Social Dialogue is a fundamental component: business and labour representatives can contribute to the design of EU social policies. Three years later, the Lisbon Strategy extended the OMC to pensions, health, and long-term care as part of the 'social OMC'. As the objective set for the EU was 'to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion,'[3] the Lisbon Strategy and later revisions embraced overarching social policy aims, including social cohesion, equality between men and women, and effective social protection systems, among others. The Lisbon Treaty, signed in 2007, took a step forward by incorporating a 'social clause' that requires the EU's policies to consider social requirements, while recognising and

emphasising the role of social partners at the regional level to acknowledge diversity across national systems. Despite existing limitations, the EU increasingly projected itself both as the institution where discussion of common problems should take place and as the venue where solutions should be found – through the reform of the European Social Model and through streamlining and consolidating social policies into the heart of integration policy (Threlfall 2010: 85).

However, starting with the international financial markets' crises, and its quick spread to the region's economy and social and political institutions, the European Social Model came under pressure. Against this background the EU adopted the Europe 2020 Strategy, which prioritised inclusive growth through high employment, social and territorial cohesion, while also prioritising pensions, health and social care. These were followed by the establishment of the European Semester in 2011, which included Country Specific Recommendations to member states in areas of perceived weakness, the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) in 2014, and the EC Communication on the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) intended to support a transformed process of convergence towards better living and working conditions in Europe. However, while the EU continued to put forward austerity as a crucial policy to overcome the crisis (Hyman 2015) and evidenced a 'balanced budget fundamentalism' (De Grauwe 2011), member states were not affected in the same way. Recent studies have shown that the EU 'has failed to rebalance the social and economic dimensions of its governance, while fiscal consolidation measures have put the so-called European Social Model under strain' (Vanhercke et al. 2017: 201). Moreover, and based on an analysis of CSRs, evidence has shown that since 2010, progress in EU social policy has been dominated by 'powerful political and anti-welfare state tendencies', thus more strongly supporting market development, and delegitimising a market-correcting model of social policy at the EU level (Copeland & Daly 2018: 1015).

Moving beyond the EU, and from a comparative regionalism perspective, different models have been proposed to assess the various practices in which regional organisations have enacted social policy regionalism. A first categorisation has reflected on regional social policies across four axes: regional redistribution

mechanisms, social regulations, social rights, and social intergovernmental cooperation (Deacon et al. 2007; Deacon et al. 2010; Yeates 2014). In addition to the so-called 3Rs – redistribution, regulation, and rights – intergovernmental cooperation is also depicted as a looser form of instrument for social policy regionalism. First, regional social redistribution mechanisms involve regional banks and funds and aid from third parties. Second, regional regulations can include the setting of standards to avoid a race to the bottom and the regulation of private social services. Third, regional treaties and legal systems, such as the European Union Court of Justice and the Council of Europe's Court of Human Rights, can raise awareness and assure access to social rights. Finally, regional intergovernmental cooperation includes several instruments, i.e., technical cooperation, capacity building, harmonisation of domestic policies and regulations, and the mutual recognition of education degrees and social security entitlements.

A second categorisation distinguishes four social governance regimes. Based on their specific logics, regional organisations can thus promote an individual rights regime, a market-led regulatory regime, a state-led developmental regime and a state-led conservative regime (Van der Vleuten 2016). The individual rights regime relies mainly on social standard setting, solid monitoring commissions and courts, and is mainly found in regional organisations that do not pursue market integration. Present in regional organisations whose main objective is market integration; market-led regulatory regimes more strongly involve the elimination of obstacles to unfair competition. The third type, the state-led developmental regime, aims to promote social policy as part of an alternative and transformative project to overcome structural inequality and exclusion. Finally, state-led conservative regimes promote social policies through lax declarations and statements, thus refusing to establish standard-setting instruments and bodies.

In all, from a comparative regionalism perspective, different institutions and decision-making mechanisms may be created or charged with the responsibility of dealing with social policy problems or challenges, whereas the number and type of policy instruments adopted to implement and translate the policy problems into effective action may also vary. Moreover, empirical evidence suggests that

this variation may be explained by the specific ways in which social issues are defined and framed as regional problems, all of which may lead to different patterns of social policies and regulations across regional organisations, and even across policy areas within the same organisation (Bianculli 2018).

**The complexity and challenges of the IPE of global social policy**

The broad purpose of this chapter was to discuss how the literature on global social policy has evolved, the key authors and main topics addressed, and to assess the achievements on global social policy making beyond nation-states. We explored the relations between politics and economics, states and markets in the development of global and regional social policy governance.

We argued that the theoretical debates on GSP need to incorporate broader perspectives, moving further beyond traditional comparative and state-based tools given the increased multidimensional characteristics of contemporary public policy and decision-making processes, which more and more operate above and beyond the state.

At the empirical level, we analysed how global social policy making has evolved from the nineteenth century to current times, and how international and regional organisations designed and addressed social policies beyond the states, thus contributing to the provision of welfare policies and services. We discussed the paradigmatic case of ILO showing that despite its key role at the beginning of the twentieth century, it has become increasingly challenged by the increasing marketisation of society and neoliberalism in the global political economy. We have also contended that regional organisations, given their deeper claims to collective identities, presented themselves as a possible *meso* level of governance to fill the gap between national and global social policy making. Yet, evidence showed mixed results regarding the role of the EU and other regional organisations in the context of comparative regionalism studies.

Challenges and prospects to effective delivery of social justice ahead vary across levels – global, regional, and domestic – as the effects and consequences of global social policy and social policy regionalism remain contested. We conclude with a

call for more research in this area in order to contribute to the alternative responses to the ever-increasing inequalities among and within societies worldwide.

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