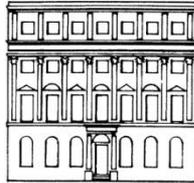


# German Historical Institute London



## BULLETIN

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Valeska Huber and Nicole Kramer:  
*The European Welfare State in a Global Context*  
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*The European Welfare State in a Global Context.* Conference organized by the University of Frankfurt, the German Historical Institute London, and the London School of Economics and Political Science, and held at the GHIL, 11–13 April 2013.

The transnational and global turn is increasingly affecting writing on the welfare state, a field of research usually closely linked with the nation-state. In April 2013, Christoph Cornelißen (Frankfurt am Main and Gerda Henkel Visiting Professor GHIL/LSE, 2010/11) organized a conference that focused on the European welfare state, discussing its characteristics, the global challenges that it faced, its transnational entanglements, and counterparts in other world regions. In his introduction he emphasized that the welfare state was a European invention, while questioning the narrative of a success story. The aim of the conference was to open up new geographical contexts and to sharpen historical approaches when studying a field dominated by the social sciences. Cornelißen therefore suggested combining a transnational agenda with a cultural approach to the history of the welfare state, something that we still lack.

Opening the conference, Stephan Leibfried (Bremen) surveyed arguments concerning the origins of the welfare state and the changes it underwent. After 1945 most industrial societies were attracted to welfare ideology, which led to a huge expansion of social services and opened a window of opportunity for free trade. Despite emerging criticism of welfare in the 1970s there was no large-scale retrenchment because, among other things, ‘needs outpaced cuts’. Pointing to T. H. Marshall’s 1949 lecture ‘Citizenship and Social Class’, Leibfried addressed a key aspect: welfare took different forms in different countries as the role of education as social policy in the Anglo-American world demonstrates. He also showed, referring to Gøsta Esping-Andersen’s typology, that welfare systems are composites of more than one type.

The first section explored the differences and similarities between welfare regimes. Christoph Boyer (Salzburg) chose a macro perspective to compare welfare states in Eastern and Western Europe, asking how they coped with industrial and social transformation. Both sides had to balance social and investment policy, leading to stagnation in

The full conference programme can be found under Events and Conferences on the GHIL’s website <[www.ghil.ac.uk](http://www.ghil.ac.uk)>.

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one case and mass unemployment in the other. This paper raised the question to what extent the welfare state influenced political stability, causing the deconstruction of Communism. While there might be evidence regarding finances, we still know little about individual attitudes to the socialist welfare state.

Béla Tomka (Szeged) argued that there was no master plan for a Communist version of welfare. Pre-war structures merged with socialist principles such as the allocation of social rights in the production process, or price stability as the fourth pillar of social policy. Tomka therefore suggested the term 'hybrid systems'. The constantly changing paths of Eastern European welfare states shaped their transition in the 1990s, leading to a high degree of volatility.

Pauli Kettunen (Helsinki) looked at the Nordic welfare model, emphasizing transnational interdependencies. As cross-national comparisons had been used by experts and politicians since the nineteenth century, the making of welfare states was based on national resources as well as transnational processes. Kettunen stressed the importance of exploring the culture of welfare in order to understand the Nordic model. In Nordic states the term 'welfare society' is preferred to 'welfare state'. Welfare societies in this sense include a normative and moral order, unleashing both integrative and controlling forces.

Giovanni Silvano (Padova) dealt with southern Europe and discussed clientelism as one of the main features of a Mediterranean model. Using the example of the generous Italian pension system, he showed how the inclusion of different social groups meant that the majority of the population was covered, making the system more universalist than selective. Finally, he argued that the Italian welfare state was not a post-war product, but dated back to 1890, when the Crispi Act laid foundations which were further developed during the fascist era.

In his keynote lecture Martin Geyer (Munich) analysed the end of the social democratic consensus which Ralf Dahrendorf had already diagnosed at the end of the 1970s. The search for the causes of this shift led to the periphery of the world of welfare states, the crisis of South America and Africa on the one hand and the rise of the Asian Tiger states on the other. While the latter showed a way of connecting social provision with economic progress, the former had to cut welfare programmes and benefits under the guidance of the Inter-

national Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Geyer argued that these world regions served as laboratories where what was later known as the neo-liberal consensus was developed.

The second section was devoted to the transnational and comparative history of the German welfare models. Nicole Kramer (Frankfurt/Nottingham) first compared different pension systems in Germany, Britain, and Italy. In a second part she analysed international debates on ageing within the Council of Europe and the World Assembly on Ageing. The 1970s were marked not by *less* welfare but by *different* welfare, she argued, which was linked to social movements and private providers, with the state occupying the role of regulator and controller. The example of old age highlighted how different fields of welfare, such as health, pensions, and social care are interconnected.

Johannes Paulmann (Mainz) adopted an entangled approach to German social policy, providing snapshots of four occasions on which German welfare regulations were connected with locations outside Germany. He moved from GDR contract workers returning to Mozambique to the remuneration of Askari First World War veterans in Tanzania in the 1960s, from Vietnamese workers in the GDR transferring money and goods and attempting to increase their income to local contractors employed by Siemens in the construction of the Cahora Bassa dam in Mozambique in 1969. Drawing on these different examples, Paulmann discussed the difficulties of benefits transfers, the role of companies and other actors, the unequal distribution of welfare undermining the universal welfare state, and the justification of entitlement to welfare by reference to 'imagined communities'.

Other papers presented classic comparisons between Germany and Britain while charting new terrain. Felix Römer (London) provided insights into a conceptional history of social justice, focusing on ways of measuring income distribution in Britain and Germany. He highlighted scientific discourses and the role of experts, looking at Anthony Atkinson, John Leonard Nicholson, and other social scientists, and contrasting their methods with German approaches to functional income distribution. Wiebke Wiede (Trier) moved the focus more explicitly to the recipients of welfare, looking at the different practices of British job centres and German employment offices. Where British job centres emphasized independence, charac-

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ter training, and skills, their German counterparts were marked by bureaucratization and professionalization.

In the afternoon the perspective widened to include Asia and Africa. Kingo Tamai (Osaka) highlighted the trajectories of Japanese welfare development in a more general way, drawing conclusions about Japan's role in Asian welfare regimes. The other papers assessed the role and legacy of European colonial regimes in Africa, India, and the Indian Ocean, and connected the fields of decolonization, aid, development, and welfare. Andreas Eckert (Berlin) focused on labour in Africa. He highlighted factors that led to the creation of a working class, including the Second World War, the discourse of international organizations, the creation of labour unions, fast growing populations, the demand for labour, and the increasingly precise definitions of urban labour and rural ('tribal') agriculture. Drawing on various examples, such as Senegal, where the *allocation du foyer* was intended to contribute to the stabilization of a male workforce, he showed how problematic the definitions of a formal and informal sector are. The distinction between formal and informal labour is also particularly contentious in the Indian welfare state, whose history Ravi Ahuja (Göttingen) presented as a connected history of India and Britain. He outlined the different debates connected to labour in India between 1918 and the 1970s, which went back to the Beveridge plan of 1944 but also, for example, to the International Labour Organization (ILO). The 1940s saw two universalization schemes (employment act and public distribution act) in reaction to the 1943 Bengal famine, but as in the African cases, many people were effectively excluded from the formal sector.

Two further papers highlighted a specific location and field of welfare in a comparative perspective. Heloise Finch-Boyer (London) examined the example of La Réunion, one of the French *départements d'outre-mer* (DOM), arguing that social legislation was key to French decolonization. She stressed Prime Minister Michel Debré's strategic use of welfare policies in the 1960s, which were intended to create popular support for France. Investment in shanty town development, the extension of health care schemes, and provision for families without reference to race opened the avenue to discussions about citizenship. Ulrike Lindner (Cologne) looked at maternity and child services in British colonies in Subsaharan Africa, in particular, in Tanganyika, Kenya, and Nigeria. She showed how three different

systems developed in the three cases: Nigeria saw an early attempt to professionalize Africans; Kenya relied on hygiene education and community medicine; while Tanganyika outsourced to missionaries, who received mandatory grants. Lindner's paper thus clearly brought the necessity of case specificity to the fore.

Global interdependencies were recalled in the last section, exploring the impact of the Cold War and the role of transnational actors. Tomasz Inglot (Mankato) studied the diffusion of concepts through the iron curtain. The emergency welfare states, as he described Eastern European countries experiencing crises on a regular basis, constantly looked beyond the borders of the bloc. Western welfare states served as points of reference, whether in a competitive way, or as examples from which to learn lessons.

Celia Donert (Liverpool) discussed the ways in which Eastern European welfare states tried to promote their ideas of welfare. She looked at women's social rights and pointed out that bourgeois and socialist visions of gender equality were hotly debated at both the UN Conference on Women in Mexico City and the World Congress of Women in East Berlin. Ultimately, these meetings served as platforms for an alternative feminism interested neither in social rights nor the welfare state.

Christian Johann (Berlin) turned to the ideological opponent by focusing on the United States, which he described as a middle-class welfare state. He explored how the middle class shaped social security programmes and vice versa. His approach dealt with a variety of actors, such as politicians and experts, but also recipients and the staff of welfare bureaucracies.

While many papers touched on the role of supranational organizations, two presentations looked at this issue in more depth. Daniel Maul (Gießen) pointed to the successes of the ILO as a standard-setting agency, bearer of a moral discourse about global prosperity, and clearing house for information. However, the concept of social and economic modernization linked to democratic values came under pressure in the 1970s. To study the global context, he suggested, means to rethink the connection between democracy and the welfare state.

Matthieu Leimgruber (Geneva) shed light on how the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) took over the role of international standard bearer. He gave a detailed

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account of the structures and mechanisms of internal social policy debates. It became clear that the replacement of the ILO reflected and enforced the shift in social policy development as the OECD contributed to the growing critique of welfare state expansion.

Kiran Patel's (Maastricht) concluding remarks called for the historicization of the welfare state as a moving target. Most importantly, Patel showed that the transnational expansion of research on the welfare state has to go beyond the state in order to gain a fuller picture of history in non-European societies. This could reunite those working on contemporary history with researchers on the early modern period, when the term 'welfare society' was of much greater importance. Finally, he reflected on the question of what is European by reminding us that the organization of Europe itself is a specific feature. The European Union and its predecessors might not have designed social policy, but they provided a 'hub of knowledge'.

The conference succeeded in defining crucial new perspectives in a well-researched area. The transnational and global approaches brought to the fore modes of examination that will enrich research on welfare states in general. To start with, the conference stressed the need to look at other world regions to explain why the context in Europe is changing. What is going on in the developing world must be taken into account when assessing the hotly debated ruptures of the 1970s and 1980s. Furthermore, the analytical framework of models needs to be systematically complemented by an examination of what Pauli Kettunen and Klaus Petersen have called the 'historical layers of the welfare state'. Finally, an interest in European or global comparisons and interdependencies does not necessarily result in a macro perspective. On the contrary, experiences, mentalities, non-state networks, and images were emphasized as focal points for writing a transnational history of the welfare state. This research agenda also has the potential to fill what Christoph Cornelißen has identified as a lacuna: a cultural history of welfare.

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