

To cite this article: Gibrán Cruz-Martínez & Pamela Bernales-Baksai (2022): *Old and New Challenges for Welfare Regimes: A Global Perspective*. International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-03-2022-545>

---

## ***Old and New Challenges for Welfare Regimes: A Global Perspective***

*Gibrán Cruz-Martínez*

*Pamela Bernales-Baksai*

*Complutense University of Madrid*

*FLACSO Chile*

[gicruz@ucm.es](mailto:gicruz@ucm.es)

[pamela.bernales@flacsochile.org](mailto:pamela.bernales@flacsochile.org)

---

### Structured abstract

#### Purpose

This paper presents an introduction to the special issue titled “Old and New Challenges for Welfare Regimes: A Global Perspective”

#### Design/methodology/approach

- The authors of the special issue combine case studies and comparative analysis across America, Asia, Africa and Europe. The authors were invited to develop their studies with a focus on one or more of three axes: (1) Institutional and governance challenges surrounding the implementation and expansion of social welfare programs; (2) State of the art and diversity across emerging welfare states; (3) Challenges associated with migration and demographic pressures.

#### Findings

- Articles in this special issue contribute to our understanding of recent challenges and transformations of welfare regimes, with special attention to the following policy areas: youth-emancipation, the reduction of poverty and income inequality, social protection and taxation, the role of historical institutionalism to better understand social policy implementation and expansion, the lack of transformative social protection in ‘New Right’ governments, determinants of social equality and the transformative effect of migration into welfare states.

#### Originality

- To our knowledge, the existing publications on transformations and challenges of welfare regimes are still very much centered around a Western-European context. The global perspective and diversity of policy areas covered aims to shed light on the important lessons and policy implications from less traditional welfare states.

**Keywords:** social policy; welfare state; welfare regimes; Global South; governance; migration;

## **1 Introduction**

What is the current situation of social welfare provision in less traditional welfare states? How are they dealing with challenges raised by demographic transitions, international crises and the increasing demand for the universalization of social welfare? This introductory article outlines the main issues and questions raised by ten studies throughout this special issue entitled: “Old and New Challenges for Welfare Regimes: A Global Perspective”.

While there is a consensus on the need to create welfare systems, there is controversy concerning how much welfare should be guaranteed, by whom, and with the use of which policy tools/devices (Leisering, 2020; ILO, 2001; Kanbur, 2014). This becomes especially challenging during times of significant demographic transformation (e.g., ageing and increasing cross-national mobility) and global crises (e.g. Covid-19 pandemic, economic downturns). Although international organizations have supported the relevance of the welfare state to creating fairer and more inclusive societies through initiatives such as the 2030 United Nations’ Sustainable Development Agenda (UN, 2015) and the International Labor Organization’ Social Protection Floor (ILO, 2012), there are still large parts of the population without the minimum levels of protection.

In the last World Social Protection Report before the COVID-19 pandemic, the ILO confirmed that 55 per cent of the world population (i.e. around 4 billion human beings) lacked social protection coverage, and only 29 per cent were covered by a comprehensive social security system (i.e. with child and family benefits and old-age pensions). In the Americas, about 16 per cent of the population remained uncovered, while in Asia and the Pacific this number increased to 62 per cent, and in Africa to 82 per cent (ILO, 2017). The analysis of cross-regional social expenditure data unveils similar trends. While advanced economies invest over 15 per cent of their GDPs on cash transfers, Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa spend just over 5 per cent, and Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific less than 5 per cent (Bastagli, Coady, & Gupta, 2012). In healthcare and education, cross-regional differences in expenditure are smaller, but still significant (Bastagli et al., 2012).

Protection levels are likely to be even more precarious after nearly two years of lock-downs, job losses, and economic downturns generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, COVID-19 has deepened and explicitly showed the tremendous social inequalities that persist both between and within countries (UNDP, 2021; Amnesty International, 2021; Filgueira et al., 2020) as well as the dissimilar and path-dependent strategies adopted across countries (Beland, et al., 2021; Dorlach, 2020; Popkova & Vodenko, 2021; Miller, 2021). The pandemic has unveiled that some groups remain highly vulnerable, even in countries with well-developed welfare systems (Del Pino, et al., 2021; Sherr, et al., 2020). Thus, the debate on how to develop social policy systems capable of delivering adequate protection to the whole population is at the center of national and international agendas and will continue to be on the front pages for several more years.

As the conditions have changed, emerging welfare states cannot pretend to have a similar trajectory as consolidated ones. They develop their strategies according to their current contexts: internal needs (e.g. a higher proportion of older population), external pressures (e.g. immigration waves), and policy legacies. This special issue brings together a set of articles that aim to contribute to the understanding of the diversity of modes in which countries, inside and

outside the high-income – so-called developed- world, are responding to the challenging conditions of current times.

In compiling the special issue, we aimed to include a wide range of countries from different regions. The issue comprises a variety of welfare regimes and different policy areas (e.g., cash transfers, care, youth, taxation, education, health and others). The studies examine responses and challenges of social policy systems in Mozambique, Uganda, Ghana, Zambia and South Africa (Gasior et al., 2021), Brazil and Mexico (Tomazini, 2021), Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Croatia, Slovenia and Bulgaria (Broka & Toots, 2021), Ecuador (Ubasart & Minteguiaga, 2021), India (Nakray, 2021), Japan (Milly, 2021), Austria (Landini, 2021), Mexico (Martínez-Martínez et al., 2021), Greece (Burgi & Kyramargiou, 2021), and 15 post-soviet states<sup>1</sup> (Panaro, 2021). Most papers refer to emerging welfare states, and some discuss social policies in more consolidated social policy systems such as the cases of Austria, Greece and Japan, currently face challenges that involve citizens from emerging welfare states.

Authors were invited to develop their studies with a focus on one or more of three axes:

- a) Institutional and governance challenges for the implementation and expansion of social welfare programs.
- b) State of the art and diversity across emerging welfare states
- c) Challenges associated with migration and demographic pressures.

Four articles cover institutional and governance challenges for social policy implementation or expansion in Mexico and Brazil (with special attention to ambiguities and disagreements on the first conditional cash transfer programs), Ecuador (role of state capacity in welfare regime transformation), Mexico City (the impact of measuring and conceptualizing poverty on the design of social policies) and Greece (the shortcomings of policy design in universal minimum income scheme). Four papers address the diversity across emerging welfare states in Central and Eastern Europe (youth welfare citizenship regimes), Africa (impacts of tax-benefit models on the reduction of poverty and inequality), India (assessment of the degree of transformative social policy under Modi-fare) and 15 post-soviet states (exploring the determinants of social equality). Finally, two papers assess challenges associated with migration and demographic pressures in Japan (role of transnational care labor recruitment in host countries' health systems) and Austria (how chauvinistic arguments are shaped by the different types of social programs: universal or targeted).

## **2 Institutional and governance challenges for the implementation and expansion of social welfare programs.**

Tomazini (2021) adopts a gradual institutional change approach to examine the processes involved in developing the pioneer conditional cash transfers (CCTs) policies in Brazil and

---

<sup>1</sup> Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

Mexico. She points out that axiological, partisan and electoral ambiguities have been at the basis of the formation of consensuses for the development of CCT programs, conditioned their features and limited their scope in these two countries. In turn, Ubasart-González and Minteguiaga (2021) delve into the links between state and welfare regime transformation processes witnessed by Ecuador during the governments of the so-called Citizens' Revolution (2007-2017). They argue for the need for comprehensive analysis of social welfare provision which considers the different dimensions that affect the state capacity to manage public goods and services. The analysis draws attention to achievements regarding decommodification, stratification, commodification and access to labor markets and defamiliarization of social welfare and the processes undertaken by the governments of the Citizens' Revolution in terms of resource recovery for the state, resource management, decentralization and deconcentration processes, transformations in public administration and policy de-corporatization processes.

Martínez-Martínez et al. (2021) propose a methodology to measure poverty beyond income. Using the case of Mexico City and its municipalities, the authors built a multidimensional poverty index that combines objective social deprivation, income deprivation and subjective social deprivation. The results show that the current official multidimensional poverty measurement underestimates the number of poor individuals by 14 percentage points. The authors argue that the building of poverty indexes and the decisions on how to measure poverty directly affect the design of social policies (especially anti-poverty policies). Therefore, if poverty is only conceptualized as a lack of income, anti-poverty policies would be considered effective by just transferring cash to income-poor households. However, if other aspects, such as public insecurity or life satisfaction, are incorporated in the poverty measurement, then it becomes an institutional challenge for social welfare programs. This is because the welfare system should adapt the anti-poverty social policies to look beyond cash transfers and implement adequate social welfare programs based on the particular deprivation of geographical areas.

Burgi & Kyramargiou (2021) critically examine the recent introduction of the Greek General Minimum Income (GMI) scheme. The main purpose of the authors was to test if the new "universal" scheme constituted a paradigm shift in the fragmented Southern-European welfare system. Using critical grounded theory, the authors argue that the new scheme pushes individuals suffering from poverty to adapt to degraded socio-economic conditions rather than enhancing their effective freedom. Moreover, working in the informal economy – or 'shadow economy' as the authors refer to it – is tolerated as it is considered an "engine for growth". According to the authors, this is the main challenge for social policy expansion in the Greek welfare system in the era of Sustainable Development. The paper is a good addition to the Global Social Policy and the literature on universal social protection.

### **3 State of the art and diversity across emerging welfare states**

Broka & Toots (2021) fill a gap in welfare regime literature by revisiting the youth welfare citizenship regimes typology developed by Chevalier (2016) for consolidated welfare states in six Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. Rather than simply placing all CEE countries into a simplistic "post-communist" regime, the authors conduct a cross-country examination adapting Chevalier's indicators to CEE reality. Moreover, the use of post-financial crisis data (2016-18) allows the authors to understand the fundamental trends and traits in youth welfare.

Based on two dimensions, the authors classified the six emerging welfare states in a multi-value (1-3) range between familiarized and individualized social citizenship on one hand, and between inclusive and selective economic citizenship on the other. The results show Estonia clustered close to the Nordic countries, Latvia, Lithuania, Croatia and Slovenia close to the Bismarckian welfare model, and Bulgaria as an outlier close to the Mediterranean welfare regime.

Gasior et al. (2021) examine the very relevant link between taxation and social protection in five low- and middle-income African countries (Mozambique, Uganda, Ghana, Zambia, and South Africa). By using state-of-the-art tax-benefit microsimulation models (based on EUROMOD), the authors examine the composition and distribution of incomes and shed light on the role of tax-benefit systems in poverty and inequality in Africa. For example, among the many interesting results relevant to policy, the authors found that South Africa has the most effective income inequality-reducing system (almost equally driven by tax and benefit), indirect taxes increase inequality in all countries, and even though the income share of the poorest 40 percent of the population in Uganda, Mozambique and Zambia are negligible, they contribute via indirect taxation to around 20 percent of the total tax liability. Now, in terms of poverty, the authors show that the tax-benefit systems -mainly driven by indirect taxation- lead to higher poverty rates for all countries besides South Africa. Pensions and benefits achieve close-to-zero poverty reduction in Uganda and Zambia. With the exception of South Africa, poverty increases as households become larger. The authors highlight the novelty of this study for being, to their knowledge, “the first study where poverty and inequality are measured in terms of both consumption and income, for multiple African countries”.

Nakray (2021) examines the political economy of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi: Modi-fare. The author argues that Modi-fare is embedded in neoliberal path-dependency. Using Koehler’s (2011) conceptual framework, the author tests the degree of Modi’s United Progressive Alliance transformative social policy. The author argues that the Indian welfare regime under Modi’s reduced social development outlays with fewer economic resources for basic education and primary health care. Moreover, the country saw an undercut of rights-based welfare acts introduced by former governments. Therefore, rather than transforming social policy, the author argues that India continues to be an informal-insecurity regime.

Panaro (2021) challenges dominant approaches of equitable social policy determinants, highlighting the effects of a strong civil society over a de-facto electoral democracy. Using time-series cross-section regression analysis with 15 post-soviet states, the author argues that regime type only partially accounts for social equality in the education and health sectors. He shows that electoral autocracies do not present more equitable social policy than close regime types. Democracy weakly explains social equality levels, as free and fair elections are do not produce equitable social policy. However, the main explanatory factor for equitable social policy is civil actors. Civil society organizations' strength and civil and liberal liberties are the strongest determinants for social equality in the region.

#### **4 Challenges associated with globalized neoliberal capitalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with particular attention on migration, and demographic pressures.**

Milly (2021) and Landini (2021) study two developed welfare states, namely Japan and Austria, analyzing social programs that involve immigrants from emerging welfare states. In an interesting study, Milly (2021) analyses the challenge for ageing societies from the perspective of cross-country care labor migration relationships. The study addresses the Japanese efforts to recruit migrant care labor, comparing the benefits obtained by migrants and their respective countries' health systems. Findings reveal that, while in some countries remittance and income for individual migrants are the central benefits, others get most of the benefits for the health care systems. These significant cross-country differences relate to current economic growth and social policy expansion of home countries, as well as different modes of bilateral partnership with varying roles of public and private actors. Landini (2021) explores the legitimizing explanations behind welfare chauvinism. Studying the 2017–2019 period in Austria, the author traces links between the presence and variations of chauvinist arguments used by politicians to exclude migrants and universal or means-tested social program designs. Thus, these two articles illuminate different dimensions of how access to social welfare is affected by dynamics that transcend the territorial borders of welfare states (i.e., are good additions to the literature on global social policy and social-policy nexus).

Overall, the articles focus on recent social policy developments across countries in Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Southern Europe, Western Europe, South America, Central America, South Asia and East Asia. The articles in this special issue contribute to our understanding of youth-empowerment, poverty and income inequality reduction of social protection and taxation, as well as the role of historical institutionalism to better understand social policy implementation and expansion, the lack of transformative social protection in 'New Right' governments, determinants of social equality and the transformative effect of migration into welfare states.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the reviewers and authors of all the articles for their contributions to the development of our special issue.

Also, we extend special thanks to the participants of the 2021 ECPR Joint Sessions 'Transformations and Challenges in the Emerging Welfare States of the 21st Century' for their valuable comments and feedback on previous versions of papers.

## 5 REFERENCES

- Amnesty International, 2021. Amnesty International report 2020/21: The state of the world's human rights. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/3202/2021/en/>
- Bastagli, F. et al.(2012). Income inequality and fiscal policy (No. 12/08R): International Monetary Fund.
- Beland, D., Hick, R., Moreira, A., Whiteford, P., & Cantillon, B., 2021. Special Issue:Social policy in the face of a global pandemic: Policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis. *Social Policy & Administration*, 55 (2), pp. 249-402.
- Burgi, N.M. & Kyramargiou, E., 2021. The elusive promise of universal social protection: the case of the Greek general minimum income (GMI), *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-11-2020-0497>
- Broka, A. & Toots, A., 2021. Locating Central and Eastern European emerging welfare regimes: is the youth welfare citizenship typology useful?, *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-04-2021-0104>
- Chevalier, T., 2016. Varieties of youth welfare citizenship: Towards a two-dimension typology. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 26(1), pp. 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928715621710>
- Del Pino, E., Moreno Fuentes, F. J., Cruz-Martínez, G., Hernández-Moreno, J., Moreno, L., Pereira-Puga, M. and Perna, R., 2021. Governmental response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Long-Term Care residences for older people: preparedness, responses and challenges for the future: Spain, MC COVID-19 working paper 13/2021. <http://dx.doi.org/10.20350/digitalCSIC/13688>
- Dorlach, T. (coord.), 2020. CRC 1342 Covid-19 Social Policy Response Series. Bremen: Globaly Dynamics of Social Policy CRC 1342. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.socialpolicydynamics.de/crc-1342-publications/crc-1342-covid-19-social-policy-response-series>
- Filgueira, F., Galindo, L.M., Giambruno, C., Blofield, M., 2020. América Latina ante la crisis del COVID-19. Vulnerabilidad socioeconomica y respuesta social. Serie Políticas Sociales, 238. Santiago de Chile: CEPAL.
- Gasior, K., Leventi, C., Noble, M., Wright, G. & Barnes, H., 2021. The distributional impact of tax and benefit systems in five African countries, *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-01-2021-0008>
- ILO, 2001. Social security: A new consensus. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- ILO, 2012. Social Protection Floors Recommendation, International labour Conference, Recommendation 202. Retrived from: <https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/RessourcePDF.action?id=31088>
- ILO., 2017. World Social Protection Report 2017-19: Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Geneva: International Labour Organization.
- Kanbur, R., 2014. Social Protection, Consensus and Challenges, in Cornia, G.A. & Stewart, F., *Towards Human Development: New Approaches to Macroeconomics and Inequality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 86-98.

- Koehler, G., 2011. Transformative Social Protection: Reflections on South Asian Policy Experiences. *IDS Bulletin*, 42(6), pp. 96-103 doi:10.1111/idsb.2011.42.issue-6
- Landini, I., 2021. The exclusion of migrants and refugees from welfare programs in Austria: the “legitimizing explanations” across different policy areas. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-10-2020-0486>
- Leisering, L. , 2020. The Calls for Universal Social Protection by International Organizations: Constructing a New Global Consensus. *Social Inclusion*, 8(1), pp. 90-102. DOI: 10.17645/si.v8i1.2569
- Martínez-Martínez, O.A., Coutiño, B. & Ramírez-López, A., 2021. Beyond multidimensional poverty: challenges of measurement and its link with social policy in Mexico, *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-01-2021-0021>
- Milly, D.J., 2021. Eldercare in Japan, transnational care labor, and emerging welfare regimes. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-10-2020-0485>
- Miller, E.A., 2021. Older Adults and COVID-19: Implications for Aging Policy and Practice, *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, 33 (4-5),pp. 305-569.
- Nakray, K., 2021. India's tryst with Modi-fare 2014–19: towards a universalistic welfare regime, *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-12-2020-0531>
- Panaro, A.V. (2021) Determinants of health and education equality: evidence from post-Soviet states. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-07-2021-0177>
- Popkova, E.G., Vodenko, K.V., 2021. Special Issue: Coronavirus: sociological and social policy perspectives. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*.
- Sherr, L., Cluver, L., Tomlinson, M., Idele, P., Banati, P., Anthony, D., Roberts, K., Haang, K., & Hunt, X., 2020. Beyond Masks: Societal impacts of COVID-19 and accelerated solutions for children and adolescents. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti.
- Tomazini, C., 2021. Pioneering anti-poverty policies in Brazil and Mexico: ambiguities and disagreements on conditional cash transfer programs. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-10-2020-0465>
- Ubasart-González, G. & Minteguiaga, A.M., 2021. State transformations and welfare models: the significance of the return of public institutions in Ecuador of the Citizen Revolution (2007–2017). *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-10-2020-0484>
- UN, 2015. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015. Seventieth session, agenda items 15 and 116, A/RES/70/1. Retrieved from: [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E)
- UNDP, 2021. COVID-19: Socio-economic impact. Retrieved from: <https://www.undp.org/coronavirus/socio-economic-impact-covid-19>