



# Tracking the Global Social Policy Discourse: From Safety Nets to Universalism

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## 1. Introduction and summary

This paper is not so much concerned with tracking the history in the global social policy discourse of the case for a basic income rather it is concerned with tracking the re-emergence in that discourse of the case for both universalism and for equity. Unless this broader case for universalism and equity is established and accepted internationally the case for a universal basic income will I fear fall.

There are three themes in this paper. One concerns the place of universal social provisioning in the global discourse concerning desirable national social policy. A second concerns the response of southern governments to a northern imposed social policy agenda. The third concerns the prospects for the development of a regional dimension to southern regionalism. Linked together the themes and the analysis associated with enable an assessment to be made of the prospects for equitable social provision in a globalizing world.

In sum the chapter argues firstly that the idea of universalism as an approach to welfare policy came to be seriously challenged in the context of neo-liberal globalization. This challenge derived from an analysis of the inequitable impact of the partial welfare states of post-colonialism. However the World Bank and northern donors in their understandable concern to focus on the poorest of the poor failed to appreciate the historical lessons of cross-class solidarity building which was the underpinning of European Welfare States. While focussing public provision on the poor the middle class were being seduced by global private markets in health, social care and social security thus breaking the basis upon which future equitable universal social provisioning might have been built. There is some evidence that the intellectual tide is now turning. Not only is there empirical evidence that universal welfare states are compatible with globalization but also there are signs that important actors influencing the south may be rediscovering the importance of universalism.

Second the northern driven socially responsible globalization agenda with which the United Kingdom government have been associated through for example the formulation of Chancellor Gordon Brown's Global Social Principles

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(Ferguson 1999) has run into the sand of southern opposition. The social policy principles have joined the labour standards issue in the global north–south impasse. Two things are required to move beyond the impasse. One is much greater northern commitment to either greater north-south transfers or to global taxation for global public goods and to the opening of northern markets to the south. The other is for the idea of international social standards to be devised and owned by the south.

Thirdly constructive regionalism with a social dimension represents one possible future for world co-operation based on principles different from those of global neo-liberalism. A key question is whether the European attempt to combine regional economic policy with a regional social agenda will be replicated in southern trading groups. On the one hand there is evidence of an advancing social dimension to southern regionalism in MERCOSUR, ASEAN etc. On the other hand competing neo-liberal inspired regional groupings (e.g. FTAA, APEC) may undermine this. The southern policy of the EU will be important: can it shift from being perceived by the south as part of the problem to being part of the solution?

Overall it is argued that the prospects for equitable social provision in a globalizing world depend on a greater northern commitment to global social transfers, to a larger voice being given to the south in the articulation of international social standards and to the fostering in the south of a regional approach to social policy which echoes the model provided by the European Union. If these things happen then the specific case for a universal basic income may rise higher up the international policy agenda.

The analysis and conclusions in this paper are derived largely from the results of the Anglo-Finnish Globalism and Social Policy Programme that was set up in 1997 specifically to examine the relationship between globalization and social policy and articulate a case for a socially progressive globalization ([www.stakes.fi/gaspp](http://www.stakes.fi/gaspp)). That project held five international seminars. The first in 1997, involving middle and high-level participation from several United Nations agencies and the World Bank as well as scholars for several continents, focused on the governance of global social policy. The second in 1998, involving

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international trade union and social movements spokespersons, focused on global trade and investment agreements and their implications for social rights. A third took place in late 1999 and focused on the role of INGOs and consulting companies as subcontractors in global social governance. The fourth was hosted in 2000 in India and focused on the globalization of social rights. This enabled the GASPP network to be broadened to include many southern voices. A useful south-north dialogue on social policy emerged from this. A fifth takes place in 2002 in Dubrovnik in conjunction with the WHO and ILO-SES immediately after this BIEN conference on the globalization of private health and social protection and the implications of this development for socio-economic security.

## **2. Globalization and the threat to equity?**

A key question is whether, as is often presumed, the globalization process influences or indeed determines for countries what their social policies are. Does globalization limit the social policy choices available to governments in the north and the south?

In general terms I have argued elsewhere (Deacon 1997, 1999a) that globalization

- sets welfare states in competition with each other. This raises the spectre but not the certainty of a race to the welfare bottom. It raises the question as to what type of social policy best suits competitiveness without undermining social solidarity.
- § brings new players into the making of Social Policy. International organizations such as the IMF, World Bank, WTO and UN agencies such as WHO, ILO etc have become involved in prescribing country policy. Also relevant are regional organizations such as MERCOSUR, ASEAN, SADC etc. International NGOs have substituted for government in this context.
- generates a global discourse about best social policy. Because supranational actors have become involved the traditional within-

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country politics of welfare has taken on a global dimension with a struggle of ideas being waged within and between IOs as to desirable social policy. The battle for pension policy in post-communist countries between the Bank and the ILO was a classic example. (Deacon, 1997)

- creates a global private market in social provision. Increased free trade has created the possibility of mainly the United States and European private health care and hospital providers, education providers, social care agencies and social insurance companies benefiting from an international middle class market in private social provision.

When we began the GASPP project there was a worry among those concerned with universal social provisioning as part of the struggle for social equity that these factors would push social policy in all countries in a residual neo-liberal direction. In other words there was a worry that the neo-liberal character of globalization would determine that social policy took on a neo-liberal character too (Deacon 1997, Mishra 1999).

These fears have been partly allayed. In terms of the actual impact of economic globalization upon social policy in more northern and more developed economies a new scholarly consensus is emerging that argues and demonstrates that:

§ globalization does not necessarily have to lead to the residualization (and privatization) 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. United Kingdom) 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

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compensatory social policy such as tax credits seeks to minimize. 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);

§ at the same time the fears of social dumping in the south have been shown to be exaggerated (Alber J and Standing, G, 2000). Moreover evidence from a recent global survey of the impact of globalization upon economies has shown that some governments in the south have chosen to increase their social spending during liberalization (Taylor, L, 2000);

§ moreover it is now recognized internationally that globalization and openness of economies generates the need for more not less attention to social protection measures (OECD, 1999).

§ A response to globalization in some middle-income countries has indeed been to create universalistic forms of social policy. A good example is Korea (Huck-Ju Kwon, 2001);

§ some of the social policy responses adopted in Latin America and elsewhere in the hey-day of the Washington neo-liberal consensus such as the full privatization of pension schemes are now being shown by comparative policy analysts to have questionable advantages in terms of net savings effects and other criteria (Mesa-Lago, 2000 and Huber and Stephens, 2000). Mesa-Lago shows that neither old-fashioned state socialism (Cuba) nor new-fashioned neo-liberalism (Chile) but socially regulated capitalism (Costa Rica) does best economically and socially.

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This is reassuring but despite this evidence I have argued (Deacon, 2000) that certain tendencies in the globalization process and certain policy positions adopted by international organizations still give cause for concern especially with regard to social policy in more southern and more underdeveloped economies. I examine these below.

Today we are not confronted by a global neo-liberal Washington consensus where belief in unregulated market reigns supreme. The dominant global discourse has shifted from a socially irresponsible neo-liberal globalization to one that expresses concern about global poverty. A “socially responsible” globalization discourse and practice has replaced the earlier one. It has had to because of the global social movements against the neo-liberal form of globalization. This new consensus is not a truly global consensus. Many social movements in the south would not subscribe to it.

In an UNRISD paper (Deacon 2000) I showed in some detail that the new consensus among northern donor agencies and major International Organizations consisted of the following elements:

- § global macro-economic management needs to address the social consequences of globalization;
- § a set of social rights and entitlements to which global citizens might aspire can be fashioned base on UN conventions;
- § international development co-operation should focus aid on meeting basic social needs;
- § debt relief should be speeded up so long as the funds are used to alleviate poverty;
- § the globalization of trade generates the need for the globalization of labour and social standards;
- § good governments are an essential ingredient in encouraging socially responsible development.

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There are, however, a number of disagreements as to how to proceed with this new orientation:

- § much of the south is understandably suspicious of even progressive social conditionality;
- § how both world trade and world labour standards can co-exist without the standards being reduced to minimal core standards or used for protectionist purposes is far from clear;
- § initiatives to empower the UN with global revenue raising powers, which fund global social rights, are firmly resisted by some.

My concern with this emerging consensus is that despite the apparent shift from global neo-liberalism to global social responsibility the coexistence of four tendencies within the new global paradigm, if allowed to be pursued, will still undermine an equitable approach to social policy and social development. These tendencies are:

- § 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) to fund only basic education and health care with its new international development targets;
- § the 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 is the following. Where the state provides only minimal and basic level health and social protection services the middle classes of developing and transition economies will be enticed into the purchase of private social

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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 is 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 classes are also catered for by state provision good quality social provision cannot be sustained. This is the prospect for many countries that buy into this new development paradigm. Research is urgently needed into the welfare strategies now being adopted by the middle class in developing countries.

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 globalization? Because in my view:

- § globalization 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 regional trading blocks such as the European Union (EU) which had a partly protectionist purpose;
- § 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;
- § the perceived negative social consequences of globalization 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 was accurate. However by destroying the public state services for this middle class in the name

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of the poor the politics of solidarity, which requires the middle class to have 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;

§ 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 globalization 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:

§ a new UNRISD research programme on Social Policy in a Development Context under the leadership of Thandika Mkandawire, which 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 development working in tandem with economic policy”. This programme held, with Swedish funding, its inaugural conference in October 2000 at which social policy scholars from most regions of the world were present (See [www.unrids.org](http://www.unrids.org));

§ the rethinking presently being undertaken within the ILO concerning the sustainability of its traditional labourist approach to social protection. In particular the Socio-Economic Security In Focus work programme which is searching for new forms of universalistic social protection to complement the very limited coverage in the south of work based social security schemes. Good practices being revealed

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within this programme could inform southern social policy making ([www.ilo.org/ses](http://www.ilo.org/ses));

§ the ongoing activities of several UN agencies support this more universal approach. Such activities include the UN Commission of Human Rights and their increased focus on the convention on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights, the continuing work by UNICEF to work for Basic Services for All, the activities following on from the UNESCO conference on Education for All in 2000, and the programme of work leading to the high level meeting on Finance for Development in 2002;

§ also important is the follow up work from Geneva 2000 by the UN Social Policy and Social Development Secretariat including the codification of UN social policy. The work programme of the Commission for Social Development that included in 2001 a focus on social protection and in 2002 a focus on economic and social policy is of especial relevance. Some comments on this are elaborated below.

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 is an important milestone in articulating UN social policy. Among the positive features of the report are the following.

- § it is the first comprehensive UN statement on social protection;
- § the thrust of its argument is 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;
- § it defines social protection broadly to include not only cash transfers but also health and housing protection;
- § it accepts that unregulated globalization is increasing inequity within and between countries;

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- § it argues 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’ (para. 16);
  - § it argues that if equity is the goal then ‘tax-funded social transfers are highly effective if the fiscal situation permits’ (Para 89 and 95k);
  - § while being rather vague on the nature of a public-private welfare mix in provision it does point out that ‘insurance markets are difficult to operate effectively’ (Para 95c).

It has to be said that discussion on even this paper became bogged down at the Commission. 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 to which this chapter turns below bedevilled even the Commission’s work.

From the standpoint of those concerned to see the case for universal provision to secure an equitable social policy at a national level being reasserted in international social policy discourse there is cautious room for optimism. The point should not be overstated however for two reasons. The Bank is still powerful and not convinced about redistributive politics and a north-south tension over social standards still complicates any global agreement on desirable social policy. On the first point a recent Nordic evaluation of the new 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. It is to the second point that the chapter now turns.

### **3. The north-south impasse and beyond**

Reaction against the worst excesses of global neo-liberalism gave rise in the 1990s to a number of mainly northern generated initiatives to begin to challenge

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this policy drift, to reinsert a social purpose into the global economy, to counter some of the more obvious negative aspects of partial global economic integration. These included;

- § the suggestion to include a social clause in trade agreements;
- § the proposition for a better than safety nets set of global social policy principles,
- § the emergence of a discourse concerning global public goods;
- § the increased emphasize given to social rights in the human rights agenda;
- § the emergence onto the UN agenda of global tax regulation.

However in terms of reaching a north-south agreement on a global approach to national social policy that goes beyond safety nets there are real obstacles to be overcome. An impasse now seems to have been reached in the global dialogue concerning the desirable social policies to be implemented in an era of globalization. Northern based global social reform initiatives such as the social policies principles initiative of UK's Gordon Brown which were concerned to modify the free play of global market forces with appropriate global social policies of international regulation have met with understandable but frustrating opposition from many southern governments and some southern-based NGOs and social movements. The debate in Geneva 2000 characterized this development when the proposal for a set of social policy principles was rejected on the grounds that these might become a new conditionality imposed by the North and there was anyway no money forthcoming from the richer countries to help pay for the implementation of such principles. Moves beyond this impasse would seem to require two changes. One would be a greater commitment on the part of the North to support international resource transfers to pay for global public goods such as basic universal education combined with an opening of trade opportunities in the north for southern countries and the other is for the south to own and develop for itself any such social policy principles or standards based on a review of best practice in the south.

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An interesting initiative that might point to a way beyond the impasse was a recent 2001 South-South conference on social policy in a globalizing era convened by the UNDP's Technical Co-operation between Developing Countries unit. The aim of the conference and subsequent programme was to develop through policy dialogue, comparative research and exchange programmes understanding in the south of ways in which an equitable and socially inclusive approach to social policy might be pursued within the context of globalization. ([www.tcdcwide.net/SSPGnet](http://www.tcdcwide.net/SSPGnet))

At this conference it was argued that a south-south dialogue can and should learn from the northern debates and experiences but also there is already a considerable body of knowledge about what policies in the south contribute most to sound human development. I articulated in an opening address that the south might learn from the north that:

- § neo-liberal globalization does not mean countries have to adopt neo-liberal social policies;
- § a commitment to equitable social welfare and economic efficiency and competitiveness are compatible;
- § social provision (education, health and social care, social protection) provided by the market works for some at the cost of equity;
- § social provision based on workplace entitlements used to work for some at the price of the exclusion of others. It is increasingly ill advised as a strategy for welfare,
- § social provision based on citizenship or residence entitlement is the surest way of maximizing social inclusion and equity;
- § social policy in a globalized era requires not only national social policy but also regional and global social policy. Regulations at EU/MERCOSUR/ ASEAN/SADC and global level are needed to ensure the sound operation and equitable outcomes of the international market in labour, health, education and social care.

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In terms of already existing good southern practice it was noted that Chen and Desai (1997: 432) argued while reviewing the positive experience that combined economic growth with conscious social development in Botswana, Mauritius, Zimbabwe, the Indian state of Kerala, Sri Lanka, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Barbados, Costa Rica and Cuba:

The key ingredients to successful social development appear to be responsive governance, socially friendly economic policies, and the universal provisioning of social services. In all these endeavours the role of government is central.

These examples of good practice in the south have been reinforced in the recent UNRISD collection edited by Dharam Ghai (2000). Other best practice countries and policies that have already been identified from this earlier research and comparative evaluation include:

- § in Asia Korea because of its extension of labour based benefits to a wider population as a result of the government increasing outlays for social expenditure from 5 per cent of GDP in 1980 to 7.8 per cent in 1997, in India the state of Karella because of its tradition of sustained public expenditure despite globalization, Malaysia because of its more restrictive approach to globalization, Singapore because of its investment in human capital and job creation;
- § in Latin America Uruguay or Costa Rica because of their reform of PAYG pensions without a full privatization, Brazil because of the experiments with a minimum income approach to socio-economic security, Colombia because of the broadening of its tax base in the face of globalization, Argentina because of the state subsidized employment programme in health and education which enabled female workers to get jobs;
- § in southern Africa Mauritius or Botswana because of the introduction of universal pension entitlements.

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None-the-less the UNDP conference also noted the significant differences between the experiences and prospects of some southern countries from more developed ones. These included the observations that:

- § coverage by formal social protection schemes in many developing countries is tiny;
- § families and community networks contribute a large measure to social protection;
- § basic land reform and the redistribution of assets has not begun in some places; entrenched elites have not yet (?) perceived that their interests might also be served in the long term by a more equitable approach;
- § the fiscal and institutional capacity of many states has been severely hampered by former colonialization and subsequent globalization;
- § the western concern with state-based rights and equity is not easily transferable to a Confucian-influenced 'Asian' discourse or a traditional African village practice of extended familial duties;
- § the Islamic practice of Zakat embraces the notion of redistribution but within a framework of obligations that may not extend to those who are not Muslim;
- § some governments perceive their countries short term interests being served by entering the unregulated global market on the basis of the comparative advantage of the absence of 'expensive' social protection measures.

All of these and more factors would need to be taken into account in a south-south dialogue. This would result in such a dialogue giving more emphasize to new forms of universalism out side the work based systems of social protection. It would involve articulating ways in which governments can support familial forms of welfare etc. But, in my view can be unhelpful if we exaggerate these differences. The lessons from one of the most developed parts of the 'south' namely East and South-East Asia is interesting. It seems that the path of social

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welfare development may be somewhat different from Europe (a greater focus on regulating compulsory private provident funds rather than actual state provisions). However taken overall these emerging welfare states are ahead of Europe when you compare the time when legislation was enacted for risk contingencies with the level of the development of the economy (Kulhne S.et al., 2000). Moreover they now face the same issue that Europe faces with regard to the sustainability of pension provisions (Gough, 2001). China too is addressing in its reform of the work-place welfare state the same question Germany or France faces...whether to move to individual un-pooled private pension funds or to a resident based (within cities at last) pooled public pension scheme. I think the differences can be made too much of certainly for large parts of the southern hemisphere.

Recent research and analysis by Wood and his team at the University of Bath addressing the issue of social policy in a development context conclude that for large parts of the developing world lessons drawn from comparative welfare state analysis based in the north can still be applied. Here the issue is primarily one of ensuring effective states modify inequity generating markets. For other large parts of the south such as India, Sub Saharan Africa and parts of South East Asia the issue is not so much one of supporting states against markets but of supporting 'citizens' against inequity generating states. In other words in my terms for much of the developing world the issue is, as in the north, one of the political economy of building cross class alliances to support universalism and equity. In the less developed parts the issue is the political economy one of building effective social movements to struggle against entrenched elite interests. A south-south dialogue needs to embrace both perspectives and include social movements as key participants.

#### **4. The social dimension of regionalism**

The emerging south-south dialogue is also taking another form. Several emerging trading blocks and other regional associations of countries in the south are beginning to confront in practice the issues of the relationship between trade and labour, social and health standards and the issue of how to maintain levels of taxation in the face of competition to attract capital. In this context the potential

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advantage for developing countries of building a social dimension to regional groupings of countries are being considered. Such advantages may be summarized as having an external and internal dimension. In relation to the rest of the world such an approach affords protection from global market forces that might erode national social entitlements and can create the possibility of such grouped countries having a louder voice in the global discourse on economic and social policy in UN and other fora. Internally through intergovernmental agreement, regionalism would make possible the development of regional social redistribution mechanisms, regional social and labour regulations, regional sectoral social policies in health, education etc. They might also develop regional social empowerment mechanisms that give citizens a voice to challenge their governments in terms of supranational human and social rights. A regional approach could facilitate intergovernmental co-operation in social policy in terms of regional health specialization, regional education cooperation, regional food and livelihood cooperation and regional recognition of social security entitlements. This in turn would facilitate the regulation of the de-facto private regional social policies of health, education and social protection companies.

Initial analysis of the extent to which SADC, MERCOSUR, and ASEAN have developed a regional dimension to social policy in their southern regions is summarized in the table 1. This summary is taken from a report to UKDFID on this topic (Deacon 2001).

There are some signs of such a regional approach to social policy. However in each region there are complicating factors associated with a) the particular histories of the regions and b) the geopolitics of the region that are affecting the pace of development of the social dimension of the regions. In terms of SADC the era of the front line state solidarity afforded to South Africa by the other countries is still waiting to be rewarded. In terms of ASEAN the initial policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states is only being eroded slowly. In terms of MERCOSUR the differential devaluation of Brazil and Argentina and the diverse ways the economies are responding to globalization threatens unity. At the same time a wider neo-liberal regionalism with expectations of a lower level

of concern for the social dimension is a competing alternative certainly in the case of Asia (APEC) and Latin America (FTAA).

Table 1. The social dimension of regionalism in three Southern regions

Aspect of regional social policy	SADC	MERCOSUR	ASEAN
Regional Redistribution	Customs duties in SACU eroding. No new initiatives	Talk of a regional social fund. A few regionally funded project in border areas.	Nothing significant. Some capacity building for new members.
Regional Social and Labour Regulation	No. Campaigned for by COSATU	Important Labour and Social Declaration. Reciprocal Social Security entitlement. Joint Health and Safety inspection	Recent Declaration on ASEAN and Caring Societies. No legal force.
Regional Health Policy	Yes and recently strengthened with equity concerns	Little documented.	Yes but dependent on external funds. Recent trade and health initiative.
Regional Education Policy.	Recent capacity review. Quality assurance and other measure	Mutual recognition of qualifications	ASEAN University scholarships and exchanges. Curricula design in schools
De-facto private regionalism	New initiatives by regional private health care companies.	Beginnings of cross border private provision	Major lobbying of international health insurance companies.
Cross border learning from best practice.	Yes especially pensions and grants to school attendees.	Cuts both ways re Chile sold by Bank and Uruguay seen as alternative approach.	Recently through safety networking party.
Human including Social Rights moves.	SADC Gender Unit as model. Call for SADC court of rights.	Civil society lobby With regional focus. Possible new MERCOSUR Working Group.	Policy of strict non-interference. Little evidence of regional lobbies, but may be changing.

An important factor in this global transatlantic struggle for and against global neo-liberalism or global social democracy is the EU. Whether the EU is perceived as a model to follow or merely a self-interested northern social protectionist block will depend on whether it opens its borders to southern trade unilaterally and increases its support for north-south transfers (Deacon, 1999b). The UK government role is quite important here both in terms of arguing for easier trade access for the south which may benefit some countries but also for potentially undermining the European Social Democratic project in favour of neo-liberalism.

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The ambivalence of the UK position in this crucial EU versus USA struggle for the social dimension of regionalism is really rather important.

While an adequate assessment of the significance of the social dimension of southern regionalism will have to wait upon further research and the passage of time it can be concluded that:

- § there is a social dimension to each of the three regional groupings studied. These range from the least developed in ASEAN to the most developed in MERCOSUR;
- § regional think tanks, regional NGOs and to some extent the regional secretariats are more focussed on advancing this dimension than national governments;
- § emerging social problems with a regional dimension may stimulate further intergovernmental co-operation. These include cross border labour migration, cross border AIDS infection, cross border drug running;
- § the imminent advancing of free trade arrangements within each region will either lead to increased concern with differential labour standards and other aspects of regional social policy or to the beginning of the erosion of the trading block;
- § in all regions the political choice between either strengthening the existing regions, together with their emerging social dimension, or dissolving the existing regions in favour entering neo-liberal inspired wider trading blocks will need to be faced soon;
- § Europe as a model of a socially regulated region and as an agency which could help further a social dimension of regionalism elsewhere is an important question. Within MERCOSUR Europe is playing a role and is seen by some actors as a model. This is the case to a lesser extent in SADC. In ASEAN Europe is more often neither seen as a model nor are its attempts to influence regional policy accepted. If Europe wishes to extend its influence to help construct a world of

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regions with a social dimension (to counter global neo-liberalism) then it will have to put its social development policy before its trade interests and it will have to match its moralising about rights with resource transfers to enable these to be realized in practice.

The wider significance of the social dimension of southern regions arises when the current north-south global social policy making impasse is brought into the picture. After Geneva 2000 (see above) the need is to foster a set of north/south alliances in favour of the social dimension of globalization thought through in ways that do not appear to threaten southern trading interests. Fostering a south-south dialogue on the role of the social dimension of regionalism within the context of a greater commitment on the part of the north to greater resource transfers/global taxes may be one way of building such alliances.

## **5. Conclusions: the prospects and preconditions for equity and universalism**

This paper has argued and demonstrated that globalization is not incompatible with universal social provision within countries if cross class alliances necessary for that strategy to work can be built and sustained. Certain features of both the global discourse on social policy (the favouring of neo-liberalism) and the emerging global private market in health and social care may however undermine the prospect for such solidarities being built in many developing countries. Attempts by northern global social reformers to soften the harshest aspects of the global neo-liberal project by injecting a social dimension into globalization have foundered on the rocks of southern opposition born of past colonialism and structural adjustment conditionality. The batten is now passing to the south to figure out ways of developing effective social policies in a globalizing context. Some southern voices, those that are critical of the neo-liberal features of globalization are now beginning this job. A south-south dialogue on best practice in social policy from the standpoint of equity is being initiated. Within that emerging dialogue the role of the social dimension of southern regionalism is likely to figure large.

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At the Indian National Convention against Globalization on March 21-23 2001 Walden Bello of Focus on the Global South addressed the theme of the present Global Conjuncture. (Bello, 2001). He noted the existence of the post Washington Consensus attempts to develop a softer approach to corporate globalization. He rejected however the strategies of bringing the social agenda to bear on the workings of the WTO, the Global Compact with TNCs initiated by the UN Sec. General and the increased co-option of INGOs into the business of the World bank etc. Instead of shoring up corporate globalization we should he argued seek to enter a period of de-globalization that would include reorienting economies for the local market and “carrying out long postponed measure of income (and land) redistribution”. Such a strategy would work for a plural world, would weaken the influence of the WTO, Bank and IMF and “turn them into just another set of actors coexisting with and being checked by other international organizations, agreements and regional groupings. This strategy would include strengthening diverse actors and institutions such as UNCTAD...the ILO, and evolving economic blocs such as MERCOSUR, SAARC, SADCC, ASEAN. A key aspect of “strengthening” of course, is making sure these formations evolve in a people-oriented direction and cease to remain regional elite projects”

There are therefore prospects for equitable social provisioning north and south in a globalizing world if common purpose is found between those northern and southern voices articulating the importance of both nurturing solidarities within countries and nurturing a social dimension to regionalism in the context of a co-operative world order based on negotiated inter-regional agreements rather than on unregulated market principles. Within that framework the case for a universal basic income might find greater international support.



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## Footnote

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