Guest Editorial

The “Social”

The Global Career of an Idea

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This special issue assembles contributions from the global North and South to inquire into the future of the “social” from an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing on sociology, political science and law. What does “social” mean, and do social policy and the welfare state have a future in a global age? The issue is published on the occasion of the eightieth birthday of Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, who is considered the doyen of the sociology of social policy in Germany (see his recent books, translated into English, Kaufmann 2012, 2013a, 2013b).

Kaufmann’s ambitious sociological approach, which emphasizes national state traditions and notions of society and culture, contrasts with the dominating approaches to social policy, which are either normative (prominently Titmuss 1987; for a critique see Pinker 1979), descriptive (much of the textbook literature), political economy (Lenhardt and Offe 1977; Esping-Andersen 1990, the most influential recent writer on the welfare state) or policy studies. Although there is a vast literature on social policy and the welfare state, surprisingly few scholars have investigated the societal and cultural dimensions of social policy and the welfare state in depth.¹

The Idea of the “Social”

Semantics can help to trace the essence of social phenomena. The inconspicuous term “social” is a case in point. In British and French usage, “social” is mostly used in a descriptive sense according to its Latin origins, referring to a relationship or interaction between at least two persons. In nineteenth-century Germany, the word “social,” besides its descriptive meaning, assumed a strongly normative and critical connotation vis-à-vis living conditions seen to be unacceptable. This connotation has fed into the term “social policy” and still lingers in a growing use of the term in global social policy.

In common usage, the “social” is often juxtaposed with the economic or, alternatively, with the individual. The precise meaning of the “social” is difficult to pin down. This hints at problems of identifying the “social” in “social policy”:

[T]he systemic character of social policy is not nearly as evident as that of the market economy. What “the social” means in distinction to the economic and the political, or in other words: which social phenomena and problems are relevant as the effective sphere of social policy and why – to this day no clarity has emerged on this question. (Kaufmann 2013a: 97–98)

Nullmeier, in his political theory of the welfare state (2000: chap. 6), points at the inferior legitimacy of social rights as compared to civil and political rights.

Historically, the “social” as an idea and term originated in Western Europe (Kaufmann 2012: chap. 2; 2013a; this issue). As Kaufmann has shown, the term “social” emanated in the 1830s in Germany, with influences from France, and soon fed into the term “social policy” and other nineteenth-century semantics like the “social question.” In a critical vein, the word was contrasted with the “individualistic” to denote something that was seen to be absent from the then emerging civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*; Kaufmann 2013a: 32). “Social” implies the recognition, first explicated in systematic terms by the German philosopher Hegel (1770–1831), of the cleavage between the modern political ideal of equality and the socio-economic inequalities of the emerging industrial-capitalist society. The problem, as the Hegelians saw it, was that “society,” and this included the economy, was a source of uncontrollable dynamics and social problems. Unlike the solution envisaged by Marx (who was a Hegelian) – the overthrow of capitalism – “social policy” and “social reform” were conceived to amend the problems of capitalism within the system.

The content of the word “social” is vague. One could revert to a general constructivist position and suggest that “social” is what people define as “social.” In politics, a semantic field of the social can be identified, that is, notions that are often associated with the social and with social policy. This includes social justice, solidarity, protection, security, social rights, need, welfare and, above all, equality. There is an egalitarian strand in social policy thinking, for example, among the British Left, which conceives of the welfare state as the pursuit of equality. By contrast, Zacher (2013: 24), the doyen of constitutional social law in Germany, defines the relationship between the social and equality in a more sophisticated way:

“[S]ocial” has something to do with *equality* and *inequality*. “Social” negates a certain measure of *inequality* – or more precisely: certain constellations of inequality. ... “social” is a mandate to distinguish unreasonable inequalities from reasonable or at least tolerable ones (or less important ones), and to eliminate, compensate for, or at least diminish the unreasonable ones.

The quote makes clear that the precise content of the social is a matter of collective definition and contestation. The meaning of the “social” is changing, and it varies across time and between social groups. Despite or rather because of its vagueness, reference to the “social” may exert considerable political pressure on policy makers, as already alluded to by Marx (see Kaufmann 2003b: 22n34).

In the history of political ideas, the difficulty to pin down the meaning of social policy and the “social” indicates the compromise character and the historical changeability of social policy: “From the point of view of the great political doctrines of liberalism, socialism and conservatism, ‘social policy’ has evolved as a seemingly heterogeneous sequence of inconsistent compromises” (Kaufmann 2013a: 25).

In the second half of the twentieth century, social policy expanded to become a structural component of modern society – the “welfare state,” or (revealingly) the “social state” in German usage. As for the “social” and its nineteenth-century origins, Kaufmann emphasizes the normative and cultural dimension of the twentieth-century welfare state. The welfare state in his view is more than just a list of social services: we can speak of a “welfare state” if and only if social services are linked to normative orientations – if political actors assume a collective responsibility for the well-being of the entire population (Kaufmann 2013b). In this perspective, social policy and the welfare state have two dimensions: *provision*, that is, delivering social services, and, less common, *recognition*, that is, perceiving, recognizing and deliberating “social questions” in public.² Recognition can derive from diverse cultural backgrounds and national state traditions. Kaufmann speaks of the “idiosyncrasy” (*Eigensinn*; Kaufmann 2013b) of each welfare state (Ginsburg 1992; Castles 1993 are cited as kindred approaches).

Transformations of the “Social”: National, Regional, Global

Like the rule of law, democracy and (especially after 1990) economic markets, the post-war welfare state became a component of “mixed societies” in Western and Northern Europe and in some non-European Anglo-Saxon countries – “democratic welfare capitalism” (Marshall 1981). Still, the welfare state remained contested, and since the crisis and transformation of the welfare state from the 1990s, criticism of the welfare state has become more pronounced.

The “social,” social policy and the welfare state have been projects of nation-states. But from the 1950s and, more forcefully, from the 1990s the European Union (EU) emerged as the first “social world region” (Deacon et al. 2010). Although the European Union started in 1957 as a project of implementing market liberalism in Europe and peace among the European countries (as the European Economic Community), “social” concerns came in through the back door, adding a social facet to Europe. The political project of a “social Europe,” however, has been contested up to the present day, especially by British governments.

While welfare states in the global North are in crisis and transformation, the “social” seems to be on the rise on the global level since the 1990s. Countries in the global South increasingly aim to establish systems of social security, health provision and education, and, at the same time, international organizations and donors in the development community increasingly attend to “social” issues. Deacon (1997, 2007) postulates a “socialization” of global politics, that is, “social” issues moving to global agendas that had been dominated by military and security matters and by economic issues. As a result, “global social policy” (Deacon 1997) has been emerging.

Changes in semantics may indicate more far-reaching social change. Remarkably, the term “social” has also reached the global level, as indicated by novel semantics of global social policy like “social protection,” “social pensions,” “social cash transfers,” “corporate social responsibility” or “social sustainability.” A new strand of literature is postulating that some transitional countries in East Asia are turning into “new welfare states” (Kim 2008). Even if the nation-state, which has been the origin of the welfare

state, is losing ground, the “social” seems to re-appear in global politics and global discourses. Indeed, “welfare internationalism” started as early as the 1940s (Kaufmann 1973, 2003a, 2012: chap. 4; Leisering 2010). Social policy issues are also increasingly entering national political agendas in countries of the global South. Social protection issues, for example, matter in national elections. One could speak of a “socialization” of national politics that goes along with the “socialization” of global politics identified by Deacon.

While neo-liberal policies both on national and global agendas, combined with the impact of a globalizing economy, have been putting pressure on national social policies, the “social” seems to be resilient or to even be growing. In developed welfare states, despite cuts in social spending, overall state expenditure on social benefits by and large is not falling. In many countries of the global South, welfare programs and social spending are growing, especially in the field of “social cash transfers,” that is, cash benefits that are similar to social assistance or non-contributory pensions in the global North.

Global social policy also encompasses new ideas and semantics that had not figured before in national social policies. A key example is the global formula of “social sustainability,” often extended to “social and ecological sustainability.” The historical rise of social policy in Europe in the nineteenth century was a response to problems of industrial society and thereby contributed to making industrial capitalism viable. In a similar vein, “social sustainability” can be seen as a response to problems of global capitalism.

Along with the “social,” related semantics like “human development” or “human security” (Gasper 2011) or composite terms like “social development” have emerged in the 1990s. While the term “social” retains a reference to structural or societal aspects of social problems and policy measures, the term “human” is more individualistic and outcome-oriented.

The new semantics include “social quality,” an idea and term created by European scholars and practitioners though less referred to by politicians. “Social quality” originated in the 1990s (Beck et al. 1997; for a recent assessment, see van der Maesen and Walker 2012c) – a decade that was also a formative period in the rise of the “social” on global agendas. “Social quality” reacted to the tide of neo-liberalism that penetrated the politics of the global North at the time and to economic globalization, which put pressure on developed welfare states. The social quality approach is strongly characterized by linking theory and measurement. Moreover, unlike individualistic concepts like human development, social quality emphasizes social relationships and the balance between economic and social concerns, rejecting wholesale economization of social life. In short, social quality retains the structural and societal perspective that characterizes the original idea of the “social” as delineated above. Social quality thus reflects a European intellectual background distinct from related Anglo-Saxon concepts. Social quality also differs from other concepts by a strong theoretical and ontological foundation that, among others, distinguishes “constitutional” components of the “social” and of social quality, which include the basic assumption of “constitutive interdependency” of human beings (see also Dean 2013), and “conditional” components, which include opportunities and contingencies (Beck et al. 2012: 46–

50, 60). Research on social quality is, above all, normative theory (Beck et al. 2012), combined with theoretically grounded elaborate indicators that cover four domains (socioeconomic security, social inclusion, social cohesion and social empowerment; Herrmann et al. 2012: 103).

The idea of social quality is only beginning to go global (Lin et al. 2011). The change of the name of the *European Journal of Social Quality* to the *International Journal of Social Quality* and the leading role of Asian scholars among the editors testify to the opening of the idea beyond Europe. Several articles in the journal have discussed the relevance of the concept to non-Western countries (for Asia, see Lin 2011; see other articles in vol. 1, no. 1, in 2011; on global discourses, see Gasper 2011).

The contributions to this special issue analyze the "social" and social policy worldwide, highlighting diversity and changes and the underlying social forces. Who are the agents of the "social" and what societal structures are relevant contexts of the "social" that account for diversity and changes? Considering the spread of the "social" beyond its origins in the global North, questions arise like: Does the "social" travel at all from the North to the South? Is the "social" and social policy in countries in the South similar to that in countries in the North, or is it different? What kind of interactions between North and South can be identified with regard to the "social," including South-North interactions? What indigenous traditions in countries in the South are close to the idea of the "social," ideas like *Ubuntu* in Southern Africa or *Ren* in China? How diverse is social policy globally, but also within Europe? What limits to its global spread can be observed? Looking beyond the level of states, what notions of the "social" can be found on global arenas, that is, in agendas of international organizations or even in "world culture" (Meyer 2009)? Do these global notions of the "social" impinge on national notions, and if so, with what consequences?

The Contributions

The opening contribution by Franz-Xaver Kaufmann investigates the historical origins and the diversity of the ideas of the "social" and social policy in Europe and beyond. Based on his path-breaking studies (Kaufmann 2012, 2013a; first published in German in Kaufmann 2002, 2003b), he analyzes changes in social thought and in law from the early nineteenth century to the second half of the twentieth century. While nowadays "social policy" is a broad expression used across the globe to denote a wide range of issues like old age security, health, housing and so on, Kaufmann argues that "social policy" has a distinct origin in European history and a distinct meaning. He shows that the idea of "social policy" emerged in mid-nineteenth-century Germany against the backdrop of secularization, the Enlightenment and the functional differentiation of modern society. Kaufmann argues that "social policy" emerged as a response to problems of societal integration that, from the point of view of Hegelian philosophy, arose from a disjunction between "state" and "society," with "society" as a source of social problems. The diagnosis of separate spheres was developed in the twentieth century by the sociologists Talcott Parsons and Niklas Luhmann under the name "structural" or "functional differentiation" of society (Luhmann 1982).

For the twentieth century, Kaufmann pinpoints the move from “social policy” to the broader cultural idea of a universalistic “welfare state.” He maintains that the idea emerged in international politics and human rights law as early as the 1940s – he speaks of “welfare internationalism” – that is, even before the post-WWII rise of national welfare states. The contribution by Davy (in this issue) examines the legal side of welfare internationalism more closely. Regarding the post-WWII welfare states, Kaufmann emphasizes their socio-cultural diversity – he speaks of the “idiosyncrasy” of each welfare state. This is exemplified by a comparison of six modernized countries, which include welfare states and non-welfare states, namely, the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, Sweden, France and Germany. These countries differ according to national notions of “state” and “society.” In Kaufmann’s view, “social policy” and “welfare state” are not only about delivering social services, but also have strong socio-cultural underpinnings that account for the diversity of social policy.

Kaufmann emphasizes the cultural embedding of the ideas of social policy and the welfare state and the European origins of the idea of the “social.” But, at the same time, his sociological concept of social policy is more generalized than the descriptive, normative or political economy concepts that dominate the Western literature. This enables Kaufmann’s concepts to “travel” beyond the historical origins of social policy and the welfare state, that is, beyond the European nation-state. Kim and Shi (this issue) in fact apply some of Kaufmann’s concepts to South Korea and Taiwan in a seminal way.

Ulrike Davy advances and deepens Kaufmann’s analysis of welfare internationalism, based on novel data. While political debates on globalization mostly refer to economic globalization and the ensuing huge inequalities between and within states, calls for a “social dimension of globalization” have been voiced since the 2000s (World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization 2004). Davy’s analysis confirms that the “social” has indeed taken shape in the global sphere, in the form of declarations and legal covenants set up under the United Nations (UN) system. Social rights enshrined in UN-sponsored international human rights bodies constitute binding obligations of states.

But Davy insists that this has been a historical process. In the early decades, social rights did not have the unequivocal “social” meaning that we take for granted today. Based on UN documents of the 1940s and 1950s, Davy argues that UN-sponsored social rights – the legal pillar of the “global social” – originally did not primarily reflect welfare statism (as seen today), but drew on competing ideas like developmental thinking or socialism, that is, on more holistic and aggregate (rather than individualistic) notions of the “social.” The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, which included social rights, and even the more binding International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 – the “Social Covenant” – did not per se reflect a full notion of the global social. The reason is that national social policy ideas shape a state’s interpretation of UN-sponsored international social rights.

Based on an analysis of all state reports under the Social Covenant from 1977 to 2011, Davy finds that the states’ understanding of the social rights laid down by the UN became more homogeneous over time. Only from the 1990s did essentials of

welfare statism spread globally. This recent understanding of the "global social" includes the recognition of social problems, above all poverty (not named in earlier state reports), and the commitment to secure basic rights, such as the right to food and housing, with instruments like social assistance and measures enabling access to health services, education and land. The article draws on a unique global database of UN documents created by the author.

Martin Seeleib-Kaiser, by comparing Germany and the United States in terms of social welfare, exemplifies Kaufmann's idea of the idiosyncrasy of Western societies in a thought-provoking way. Seeleib-Kaiser challenges common juxtapositions of "social" Germany versus the "un-social" United States. He provides evidence that in some respects the United States is as "social" or even more "social" than the German welfare state. In historical perspective, the article demonstrates how Germany's system of social protection, commonly seen as conservative, has been converging toward the liberal American welfare model during the past two decades, at least in the fields of social protection for the unemployed and for pensioners as two core institutions. Using the concept of "welfare systems" rather than the "welfare state," Seeleib-Kaiser includes occupational welfare as a major source of welfare. This approach makes a big difference when assessing the social quality of the United States.

Despite an overall process of convergence, Seeleib-Kaiser finds stark dissimilarities in the arrangements for the social protection of outsiders. Whereas Germany continues to constitutionally guarantee a legal entitlement to minimum social protection for all citizens, such a guarantee does not exist in the United States. The lack of such legal entitlement for poor people of working age, combined with the criminalization of the "dangerous class" and extensive imprisonment, is a key differentiating characteristic of the US model at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Overall, Seeleib-Kaiser's findings qualify but also confirm Franz-Xaver Kaufmann's argument that the United States is "capitalism," which lacks collective welfare responsibility for all citizens, rather than a genuine "welfare state."

When inquiring into the prospects of the "social" in a global context, it is helpful also to look into the varieties of the "social" within Europe. Post-war images and theories of the "welfare state" have been modeled on Western and Northern European countries only. By contrast, Philip Manow investigates the Southern European welfare states, especially Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and to some extent France. He shows that the Southern European variety of the welfare state differs markedly from the Western and Northern European variety. Far from being universalist and related to a strong state, social policy in Southern European countries is fragmented, associated with particularistic provisions, decentralized occupation-based social security, strong insider-outsider cleavages, clientelism and a weak state. The modern secular state is questioned both by the church and parts of the political Left in these countries. Manow makes clear that common notions of "social Europe" are social constructions that only apply to subregions of Europe, namely, to Northern and Western Europe.

More specifically, Manow addresses the relationship between party systems and welfare state regimes in European countries. He emphasizes that the European party systems show a systematic variation with respect to the electoral success of communist parties, which, as he argues, is related to the intensity of past conflicts between the

nation-state and the Catholic Church in the mono-confessional countries of Europe's South. The article provides empirical evidence that the pro-clerical/anti-clerical cleavage feeds into the party systems of Southern Europe, with consequences for the political economy of these countries. While the conflict between capital and labor is commonly seen as the source of social policy, Manow demonstrates that religious cleavages may also shape social policy in a country.

In the global South, basic assumptions and categories of the "social" associated with the post-WWII welfare states are not easily applicable, such as state, democracy, the conflict between capital and labor, formal employment, industrialization and social democratic thought. The experience of Southern European countries is instructive because in these respects, there are some similarities to developing countries.

The development of social policy in East Asia has been gaining momentum in recent decades, challenging scholars to offer an adequate explanation. Kim Won Sub and Shi Shih-Jiunn analyze social policy in two of the most economically advanced Asian societies, South Korea and Taiwan. The authors address two questions: Are we witnessing the rise of welfare states in the "emerging markets" of East Asia? And if so, what are the driving forces behind these? Western welfare state research has traditionally focused on domestic factors like political parties, trade unions or bureaucracies. Drawing on Franz-Xaver Kaufmann's concept of "welfare internationalism," the authors argue that to explain social policy development in East Asia, external factors – international policy diffusion – have to be taken into account. However, external factors are mediated by domestic institutional structures, such as state-society relations, state autonomy, state capacity and democracy. In this way, the interaction between international and domestic factors becomes the focus of analysis. Kim and Shi find that South Korea and Taiwan have indeed turned into welfare states, and that external "social" ideas and international organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO), which have received little attention in previous research, have contributed to this development in different historical phases. The concept of welfare internationalism helps to explain the parallel rise of the welfare state in South Korea and Taiwan as well as their differences.

The authors distinguish three phases in the development of national welfare states that reflect the changing international environment as well as changes in the domestic social and political structure. The analysis highlights the commonalities between the two societies, which seem to follow the same developmental logic. What is more, the authors' characterization of the three developmental phases even suggests some comparisons with the experiences of Western European welfare states, for example, the "productivist" approach under authoritarian and socialist regimes, the influence of democratization toward institutionalizing social rights, and the paradigmatic shift toward a "social investment strategy." The distinctiveness of an (East) Asian welfare regime is a controversial issue in comparative welfare state research – Kim and Shi seem to deny the distinctive character as compared to Western welfare states. The "social" seems to travel well to certain regions outside Europe. Still, the influence of international policy diffusion distinguishes the rise of East Asian welfare states from the earlier history of European welfare states.

The idea of modern social policy is mostly traced to nineteenth-century origins, as done by Kaufmann (in this issue). Elmar Rieger, in a thought-provoking perspective, contends that the "social" can be traced to the era of emerging civilizations in ancient Judaism. Rieger starts from the Kaufmannian assumption that the "social" is about normative images of a just and socially coherent society, not just about setting up social services. Rieger therefore distinguishes between the cultural or ideational side of the welfare state on the one hand and the social engineering or outcome side on the other hand, arguing to take the rhetoric and symbolism of social policy more seriously.

Rieger delves into ancient history to show how symbolism and ideology emerged as an autonomous field of social conflict and societal union as early as in the axial age civilizations before Christ. Taking ancient Israel as example, Rieger makes the point that societal integration may take place even in the absence of strong institutional correlates of social politics. The integration of society is more due to the communicative action of social policy than to its organizational quality.

In this perspective, the symbolic side of social policy, that is, the discursive, political, and cultural recognition of social groups and their needs, is a significant "fait social" (to use Durkheim's term), even if the actual provision of welfare benefits by the state is rather thin. In terms of Nancy Fraser's distinction between the redistribution and the recognition side of social policy, Rieger emphasizes the latter. Rieger relies on specialist studies on antique Judaism to corroborate his point that Judaism was an early society in which concerns about social integration entered public discourses. In this way, Judaism developed features of social policy, while other large civilizations of the time did not. In fact, the Bible (the Old Testament) says a lot about the recognition of social problems.

The symbolic side of social policy is often dismissed as pure rhetoric or hot air. By contrast, Rieger aims to show that the symbolic or recognition side of social policy alone is an achievement of social policy because it may advance social integration. This can help to explain why the welfare state in modern society is compatible with ever-increasing economic and social inequality. Rieger's argument may help us to better understand current social policy in the global South and in international organizations. Global social policy is replete with hot air but still may contribute to advancing social integration in a global society and in states in the global South.

Conclusion: Ubiquity, Limitations and Diversity of the "Social"

The articles in this issue span a broad range of aspects of the "social." Coming from different disciplines – sociology (Kaufmann, Kim and Shi, Rieger), political science (Seeleib-Kaiser), political economy (Manow) and law (Davy) – they address diverse characteristics and contexts of the "social": the history of ideas on state and society (Kaufmann), party systems and religion (Manow), emerging markets in East Asia and world society (Kim and Shi), occupational welfare (Seeleib-Kaiser), and societal discourses and images (Rieger). The contributions also cover a wide time span, ranging from ancient Judaism (Rieger) to the nineteenth-century beginnings of modern social policy (Kaufmann) to the European interwar years (1919–1939; Manow) to the post-

WWII decades (Davy) to present-day issues (Kim and Shi, Seeleib-Kaiser; also Davy and Manow). Furthermore, the contributions cover diverse world regions: Europe (Kaufmann, Seeleib-Kaiser), including the neglected Southern European welfare states (Manow), the United States (Seeleib-Kaiser, Kaufmann), the former Soviet Union (Kaufmann), East Asia (Kim and Shi) and the world as a whole (Davy). The broad range of themes and approaches already indicates the *ubiquitous* presence and the many faces of the “social.”

Indeed, the contributions show that despite the *prima facie* evidence of welfare state retrenchment in Western countries and stepped-up economic globalization, the “social” has a firm basis in present-day society: social policy is a cultural idea that originated in Western and Northern European countries and still is a key element of their “societal communities” (Parsons 1969: 11, 49) (as seen in Kaufmann, this issue); the “social,” broadly understood as reflecting images of a just society, may even be part of some civilizations since ancient Judaism (Rieger); even in non-Western cultures, the “social” is set to grow (Kim and Shi on East Asia); and social rights under the UN human rights regime materialize the growing “global social,” even if different interpretations of social rights competed till the early 1990s (Davy). The “social” is resilient, and it is even spreading beyond its European origins and beyond the nation-state to the EU and the UN. In the process, the “social” is changing. While a variety of “social questions” in European countries have given rise to national welfare traditions (Kaufmann), the nature of the global social question that underlies the global social is anything but clear (Davy). The global social needs to accommodate a broad range of cultural beliefs in order to be truly global. Elements of global social citizenship seem to be emerging (Davy, this issue; Davy et al. 2013).

But the cultural idea of social policy is *limited*. It is not equally spreading everywhere. The quest for the universalistic standards of social security and living as laid down in Articles 9 and 11 of the UN Social Covenant (Davy) is limited by the resilience of particularism and clientelism (Manow, for Southern Europe) and by recurrent insider-outsider cleavages (in the United States, and also partially in present-day Germany; Seeleib-Kaiser). Moreover, welfare statism is often checked by a notion of “development” and the “developmental state” (riding high in the “emerging markets” in the global South; Kim and Shi) that prioritizes aggregate economic growth over individual social rights, even if legitimized through long-term welfare goals. More recently, however, emerging “new welfare statism” is combining with developmentalism in policies like social investment, activation and state regulation of private welfare (Kim and Shi; Kaufmann 2012: chap. 14). And in many countries of the world, including the original heartland of welfare statism, Europe, social rights have for a long time been interpreted in a collectivist, developmental way (Davy). This implies imbalances between economic and social concerns and falls short of a full notion of social quality. Another check to the universalization of the “social” is the disjunction between discourse and action. Forceful declarations, deliberations and laws are often decoupled from actual policies and institution building. While the rise of global social policy indicates a growth of “social” concerns, the gap between talk and action is also widening. Measuring the “social,” which is part of the idea of social quality, has a role to play here.

But even in the world regions where notions of social policy and welfare statism seem to be firmly entrenched in politics and culture, the "social" remains vague, indefinite and *diverse*. Social policy and welfare statism have many faces and are changeable. The self-interpretation of the Western and Northern European countries as welfare states after WWII during their heyday, the *trente glorieuses*, is just one historical variety of the "social." The idea of raising human welfare goes back to the Enlightenment (Janowitz 1976), but the idea of a collective responsibility of national governments for the individual well-being of their citizens by way of granting social rights remains contested, especially in the United States (Seeleib-Kaiser) but also in Southern Europe, where the idea of a strong secular state has not fully developed (Manow). Even in countries that emphatically subscribe to the cultural idea of state welfare – mainly countries in Northern and Western Continental Europe – social policy remains an arena of contestation.

We cannot expect a linear, uniform and undisputed rise of the "social," since the "social" is bound up with basic tensions. For the concept of social quality, Beck et al. (2012: 50–53) posit, first, a tension between (formal) organizations and systems on the one hand and (informal) communities, family and networks on the other hand. This implies that the "social" cannot be equated with the state and social policy. The interaction of society and formal systems makes up the "social." Second, Beck et al. (2012) posit a tension between societal development and biographical development, that is, between macro and micro, between collective and individual. Regarding social welfare, this includes the tension between the idea of national "development," which may include strong (collective) welfare aims, and individual social rights, which address specific social problems of specific groups of individuals at a specific point in time (rather than "in the long run," as in developmental thinking). Davy elaborates on these two variants of the "social" in her analysis of changing understandings of social rights in international human rights discourses.

Regarding the first tension (between organizations and communities), the side of organizations, which would include the welfare state, is less elaborated in the theoretical foundations of the concept of social quality. In fact, social quality is defined as "the extent to which people are able to participate in social relationships under conditions which enhance their well-being, capacities and potential" (Beck et al. 2012: 68). This definition comes down on the outcome side of the "social," including social policy and the welfare state only as parts of the "conditions" of social quality. The thrust of "social quality" transcends conventional social policy issues to include non-state welfare production and wider contexts like social cohesion and social empowerment. Some Asian proponents of social quality are even led to question the state-centered European tradition, drawing attention to "welfare pluralism" and "welfare society" rather than the "welfare state" (van der Maesen and Walker 2012a: 12; 2012b: 28–29).

"Welfare state" and "welfare society" could be taken just as two legitimate foci of research. But the preference for "welfare society" and "welfare pluralism" also raises issues of a theory of the state that is a desideratum in social quality theory. The state – or more appropriately, the polity – is more than an organization that provides social services; it is also a societal and cultural entity. Whether and to what degree the state

assumes a collective responsibility for the well-being of each citizen, and whether and to what degree the state recognizes social problems (reflecting deliberations in the political public), affects the social quality in a country. Moreover, the state is not just a provider of welfare, like other providers – as implied in “welfare pluralism” – but also acts as legislator and regulator of non-state welfare provision. In this way, the state or the polity in a country comes in as a constitutive source of social quality. Regarding indicators, it would make sense to include polity indicators among the social quality indicators (in the domain “social inclusion”; Herrmann et al. 2012: 103; Walker and Walker 2012: 196), such as whether the national constitution includes social rights (for other indicators relating to polity and state, see Weible and Leisering 2012: 250–251). This might draw on Franz-Xaver Kaufmann’s work (2013b) on state traditions in Western countries.

All contributions explicitly or implicitly adopt a concept of the welfare state that has most expressly been developed by Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, namely, his dual concept of provision and recognition as the two dimensions of the welfare state, as outlined above. The recognition dimension that has been neglected in most of the standard literature on Western social policy is highlighted in all contributions to this issue: non-welfare states, as distinguished by Kaufmann from welfare states, above all the United States, have sizeable systems of welfare provision but lack a wholesale recognition by the state of a responsibility for the individual welfare of its citizens. Manow reveals that in the Southern European welfare states, a universalistic recognition of need pertaining to all groups of society is absent. Kim and Shi show that substantial recognition of social questions, as in early social legislation in South Korea, can go along with very thin actual provisions, only to be expanded decades after the legislation. Davy found that the pursuit of social rights according to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has only recently (since the early 1990s) resulted in an explicit recognition of specific social problems like poverty, inequality and disability by the states party to the Covenant. Rieger advances the intriguing thesis that recognition alone, even if coupled with weak provision systems, may act as a force of social integration. He sees the symbolic or discursive side of social policy as a rationale of social policy in its own right.

The “social” or social policy, we may conclude from this collection of articles written in honor of Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, is not just about social services, as found in standard textbooks of social policy, and not just about addressing the insecurities of labor markets, as Esping-Andersen (1990) postulates, but reflects a culturally entrenched notion of the relationship between state and society – a recognition of the tension between the ideal of political equality and socio-economic inequality, and of a collective responsibility by the state for identifying and redressing social problems (Kaufmann 2012). At the same time, the “social” continuously eludes clear definitions or scholarly classifications. The “social” as discourse and contestation will always be with us (Rieger).

The future of the “social” is not clear. What varieties of the “social” are emerging in the world society, and to what world regions are they spreading? The generalized dual categories of recognition and provision open up the European concept of the “social” beyond its origins. The emergence of new democracies and the increasing

weight of "welfare internationalism" are rather recent, leaving the "social" in an open situation of accelerated change. The quest for the "social" persists. There is much to be researched both in terms of normative theory, as done in a sophisticated way in theories of social quality, and in terms of empirical analysis of the diversity of ideas and discourses on the "social" in global politics and in countries of the global South, as attempted in this issue.

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Notes

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1. For the UK, see Marshall (1950, 1981) and Pinker (1979); for the United States, see Janowitz (1976); for the Netherlands, see de Swaan (1988) and van Kersbergen (1995); for Germany, see Nullmeier (2000), Zacher (2013), and Achinger (1979); and for social anthropology, see von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann (1994).
2. In a similar vein, Marshall (1981: 89) saw a "welfare consciousness" of the public as an essential ingredient of a welfare state.

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