

Five Theorising global social policy

Nicola Yeates and Chris Holden

<1> Overview

Global social policy demands new theories to account for its development and the different forms it takes. This chapter reviews different ways of theorising global social policy. It distinguishes between social theories concerned with the *impacts* of global social policies on welfare outcomes and social theories concerned with *why* global social policy takes the forms that it does. We focus on the latter. First, we consider the possibility of globalising theories of national welfare state development. Second, we consider the opportunities to ‘welfarise’ globalist social theories that were not originally devised with the concerns of global social policy in mind. The chapter argues that a single social theory of global social policy is neither desirable nor possible, but that better integration of social theory into global social policy studies is attainable. It concludes by briefly considering possible future lines of direction for thinking theoretically about global social policy.

Key concepts: global social policy theory; industrialisation; class struggle; political mobilisation; institutionalism; international organisation; diffusion theory; world society theory; world systems theory; exploitation theory; organisation theory.

<1> Introduction

A foundational idea in **global social policy** (GSP) is that the enactment of social policy transcends the nation-state. That is, social policies are formulated in many extra-national sites, spaces and forums that are outside the sole control of national governments and other domestic actors (**see Chapters 1 and 2, this volume**). If the forms that GSP takes and the conditions under which they develop are distinct from those of national welfare states and social policies, what does this mean for the ways in which we theorise GSP? Few would argue that theories of national social policy development are *directly* applicable to GSP, but the real questions are whether existing theories can be re-purposed for GSP or whether entirely new theories need to be devised. If the latter, from which bodies of scholarly thought might we seek inspiration for developing GSP theory?

What role does theory play in GSP studies? One part of the answer is that theory helps make sense of complexity. Theory systematically – that is, *according to a logic* – prioritises and orders the many different elements involved in the production, distribution and

outcomes of individual and collective welfare and the relationships between them. Different theories vary in their priorities for what they aim to explain, and accordingly emphasise different elements. For example, a theory about the origins of GSP might focus on broad social, economic or political conditions, whereas a theory about how GSP is implemented might focus on institutional design. No single theory can explain all aspects of GSP. Also, theories arise from different socio-political projects. For example, theories connected with equality or liberationist movements seeking total social or political transformation develop along different lines than theories focused on more efficient **governance** of the existing world order.

To help clarify these points, we adapt O'Brien and Penna's (1998) distinction between *theories of social welfare* and *social theories of welfare*, as follows:

- *Theories of global social welfare/policy* systematise knowledge about the actual impacts of GSP on individual and collective welfare outcomes worldwide.
- *Social theories of GSP* systematise knowledge about why GSP takes the forms that it does.

Such theories of how GSP actually 'is' are different from *normative theories of GSP* (although normative theories may build on theories of global social welfare/policy):

- *Normative theories* address the question of what *ought* to be done (as opposed to what is actually done). They feature strongly in GSP making in practice, to make it more effective, rational, socially just, humanitarian and so on.

Theories of global social welfare/policy constitute the 'bread and butter' of GSP as a field of social research and as a political practice. They mobilise research findings and formulate knowledge claims about the impacts of actual GSPs on individual and collective welfare. Such theories feature across the book. **Chapter 6** focuses specifically on normative theories concerning **global social justice**. We do not dwell further on either of these types of theory in this chapter; instead, we focus on social theories of GSP that aim to explain the forms that GSP takes and why. We start by looking at how social theories of national welfare state development may be 'scaled up' or 'globalised' to explain GSP.

<1> Globalising theories of national welfare state development

Holden (2018) discussed three main types of social theories of welfare state development - theories of economic development, industrialisation and urbanisation; theories of class struggle and political mobilisation; and theories of the effects of differing political institutions – in terms of how they may be applied to GSP. We summarise some main elements of that discussion and introduce additional elements.

<2> **Economic development and capitalism**

Early welfare state theory explained the welfare state in functionalist terms, arguing that the welfare state is essentially the outcome of the 'needs' of industrial society (Wilensky, 1975; Flora and Alber, 1984). The increasing specialisation and division of labour associated with economic growth and industrialisation, coupled with urbanisation and increasing labour mobility, undermined the security functions of the family and generated new social problems. Social policies and welfare provision were a response to these problems, and states variously controlled, supplemented or substituted for the open market.

Some Marxist approaches share the functionalist emphasis of the industrialisation thesis, pointing to the role of the welfare state in meeting the accumulation needs of advanced capitalism by, for example, ensuring a healthy, educated labour force, though some writers in this tradition have also emphasised that the welfare state legitimises capitalism by meeting certain needs of the working class within it (Gough, 1979; Offe, 1984). Muller and Neuss (1978) argued that the English Factory Acts were necessary because unrestrained use of female and child labour, long working hours and dangerous working conditions could destroy the ability of the labour force to reproduce itself. Feminist political economists have argued that state interventions like the Factory Acts were also important in maintaining gender norms. By placing limitations on the work of women and children, the Acts simultaneously reinforced gender norms and facilitated the reproduction of the workforce (Moos, 2021).

On first consideration, the industrialisation thesis has little to tell us about GSP, since it suggests that welfare states will develop only where there is industrialisation, and industrialised countries are a minority in the world. Nevertheless, greater economic integration among countries, especially but not exclusively industrial ones, may have implications for welfare provision. For example, greater labour mobility *between* countries has stimulated the development of reciprocal **social security** agreements and portable social rights for the purposes of taxation and medical treatment. At the same time, inter-country competition to retain/attract investment (and jobs) from mobile capital seeking to lower production costs may result in lower social standards and reduced welfare provision.

We might therefore ask whether there is something about capitalism in its globalising phase that suggests a *need* for GSP. There is certainly some evidence for this. For example, the establishment of international **labour standards** in the early 20th century was widely supported by social liberals as well as by workers' representatives, on the basis that this

would provide an international mechanism for ensuring a 'level playing field' for all countries, thereby preventing competitive social devaluation. The International Labour Organization (ILO) was established as the **intergovernmental organisation** (IGO) to broker international dialogue in relation to this question of global social standards.

We also find 'positive' forms of social policy integration instituted at world-regional level to accompany the establishment of regional markets (e.g. the European Union's Single Market). Many region-building projects have instituted common social standards and other social programmes to deter member governments from pursuing competitive social devaluation and facilitate institutional cooperation on other social policy matters. However, 'negative' forms of regional social policy integration, which relate strictly to the removal of barriers to labour mobility and other forms of integration, have tended to prevail (Yeates, 2019; **see also Chapter 2, this volume**). This could be seen as consistent with the industrialisation thesis, first because transnational forms of governance and regulation express how institutional capacity evolves with capitalism (Wilensky, 1975) and, second, because the limited forms of 'positive' social policy express the minimal state intervention needed to make global markets function effectively.

Overall, Holden (2018) argues that theories of economic development provide *some* explanation for the emergence of forms of GSP aimed at ensuring social stability, **social reproduction** and the incorporation of developing countries into the world market. However, such theories do little more than tell us whether the preconditions exist for the further development of GSP. They cannot explain the emergence of GSPs that are not a function of the 'needs' of the global economy/capitalism. Nor can they easily explain social and political relationships among states and other social actors, including their capacity for building global alliances, which (arguably) determine whether such developments take place, when they happen, and the forms they take.

<2> Class struggle and political mobilisation

In 'modernisation' theory, mass democracy is a key factor in the development of welfare states because it allows working class demands to be heard (Flora and Alber, 1984). For T.H. Marshall (1950), the emergence of social rights was the culmination of the development of citizenship. Marxist theories often argue that welfare states developed partly to head off revolution or instability caused by mass revolt. Many theories emphasise the importance of political parties (particularly leftist ones) and organised labour movements to the creation of national welfare states. Korpi's (1983) 'power resources' model is one example. Esping-Andersen (1990, p 111) built on this approach to argue that it is not simply the overall level of welfare expenditure which is influenced

by the relative power of left and other parties, but the *type* of welfare state that is created.

Economic **globalisation** has often been considered to have led to welfare state retrenchment and declining social standards because it sets in motion international competition. A more sophisticated approach, however, recognises the role of politics and the balance of power, globally, regionally and nationally, as major factors shaping the pace, timing and effects of national welfare retrenchment and GSP development or the lack thereof (Yeates, 2002). However, globalist platforms have not generally been adopted by left parties or mass movements, although there are numerous examples of trades unions organising effectively on a transnational basis (Yeates, 2002, p 78). While there have been significant moves towards transnational organisation by both labour and business interests, globalisation has shored up the power of capital by enabling it to be more mobile internationally.

Agrarian interests were important in influencing many welfare settlements at the national level (Pierson, 2006; Esping-Andersen, 1990). Alliances between agrarian interests and those of workers or social democratic movements are more likely to give rise to more progressive outcomes than agrarian alliances based on nationalism or with more middle-class interests. This would seem to be particularly important to the development of GSP, given the largely agrarian nature of many developing economies. Yet while there may be some scope for transnational alliances of farmers, possibly together with workers, such alliances may be difficult to form given the different interests of farmers in high and **low-income countries** within the world trade system.

The global movement against **neoliberal** capitalism contains a wide spectrum of groups and opinions, from **protectionist** unions and small farmers in the developed countries to guerrilla groups and landless labourers in the developing countries. This diversity enables the movement to construct coherent coalitions primarily when conducting focused single-issue campaigns rather than politically broader ones (Yeates, 2002, p 82). The World Social Forum (WSF) process (created in 2001) functions more as a space within which ideas and tactics can be exchanged and developed rather than as a single movement with a common programme. In effect, the global anti-capitalist/anti-globalisation movement influences the course of GSP primarily by campaigning *against* what it finds unacceptable in the agendas of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization (WTO) (Patomaki and Teivainen, 2004), and by challenging their legitimacy, rather than by promoting a common global vision.

However, because IGOs have acted as a conduit for reform demands, much as national parliaments often did in the period of initial welfare state development, and because they are now more closely monitored and visible to wider publics, they arguably need to respond to challenges to their legitimacy. Such pressures may therefore incentivise them to foster collaborative relations with relevant **civil society** groups and **international non-governmental organisations** (INGOs) and to develop stronger GSPs.

Theories of class struggle and political mobilisation highlight the role of social and political forces in GSP and the wide range of social actors involved. They can help explain the timing and nature of GSPs. However, such theories tell us little about the political institutions that structure the possibilities for global alliances in favour of stronger GSPs. In order to understand more fully the forms that GSP takes and the scope for their further development, we therefore need to consider political institutions more closely.

<2> Political institutions

Some writers have emphasised the role of political institutions in the development of the welfare state (Flora and Alber, 1984; Huber et al, 1993; Bonoli, 2001). Institutionalists point to the importance of both temporal aspects of institutional development, such as sequencing and **path dependency** (Pierson, 2004), and to the effects of different institutional configurations on policy outcomes (Bonoli, 2001). Bonoli (2001) outlines how political constitutions which concentrate power with the executive branch of government have generally been found to be associated with big welfare states, whereas more fragmented political systems, which include a greater number of **veto points** have tended to produce smaller welfare states. Fragmented systems, such as in the USA, provide opportunities for anti-welfarist groups to block the adoption of comprehensive social policy programmes of public provision. Libertarian groups have taken advantage of these to oppose progressive welfare reforms.

The development of GSP is at least as dependent on international and global political processes as it is on those occurring within individual countries. GSP actors, however, are not necessarily institutionalised in any narrow, constitutional, sense (although see Hawkins and Holden, 2016, for a discussion of how some aspects of trade and investment law can be seen as a form of '**global constitutionalism**'). There is no global equivalent to (liberal) parliamentary democracy. Instead, multiple GSP actors are engaged in dynamic relationships with each other, as often working outside the bureaux and boardrooms of IGOs as inside them (Yeates, 1999).

The United Nations (UN) system provides the closest thing to a structured, hierarchical

system of global political institutions, with citizen representation via governments that regularly meet collectively in its General Assembly. Otherwise, the UN encompasses a wide range of IGOs with markedly different mandates, resources and modes of operation (**see Chapter 2, this volume**). These organisations have a degree of autonomy within their specific areas of responsibility, but outcomes usually lie with governments and the bargains they may strike between them. In any case, capacity to utilise different means of influence (for example, by exercising proposal rights and veto points) is likely to reflect differences in wealth and power between governments. Fragmentation and competition between IGOs within the UN may exert a brake on the further development of GSPs, in a manner that is consistent with the thesis outlined by Bonoli and others.

The IMF provides a useful example of the importance of both a focus on path dependency in the historical development of institutions and of veto power, both of which privilege the USA. Many important IMF decisions require the support of 85 per cent of votes on its Executive Board. Due to the weighting of votes, initially established in 1944, the USA therefore has an effective veto. Decisions over which the USA can exercise its veto include measures to increase the number of Executive Directors and to adjust voting quotas. The USA, therefore, can veto measures to give developing countries more influence in the IMF and steer it in a more egalitarian direction (**see also Chapter 2**, this volume, where this point is discussed in relation to the World Bank).

Nevertheless, since the **global financial crisis** (GFC) of 2007–9, there have been signs that major global institutions have shifted their position on important social policy issues. While these shifts indicate the importance that ideas can have in GSP, they also demonstrate the continuing importance of broader economic forces and of political mobilisation in shaping GSP; the extreme growth of inequality is now seen as dysfunctional for the global economy and may itself be seen as a cause of political discontent, manifested in the rise of both right-wing populists (Holden, 2017) and left-wing movements. However, the implementation of new social policy ideas in tangible GSPs will remain subject to the institutional constraints discussed above.

Theories of political institutions highlight the wider institutional landscape that is missed by the previous two approaches, but they do not tell us very much about the varied range of social actors involved in GSP-making and *how* they navigate this institutional landscape. Combining these three approaches to national welfare state development and applying them to GSP may help provide a more rounded explanation of the drivers and forms of GSP. However, there are some further difficulties in applying these theories to GSP. Notably, theories of national welfare state development were created primarily to

understand how welfare states in **high-income countries** came about, whereas GSP is also concerned with low and **middle-income countries** as well as with transnational processes that impact upon welfare in a world without a centralised government or state.

<1> ‘Welfarising’ globalist social theories

Theories of national welfare state development are a good place to start thinking about the nature of GSP, but doing so leads us to realise how far GSP as a political practice is structurally different from national social policy. Globalist social theories, on the other hand, were developed to understand global processes, but they were not developed with welfare in mind. In what follows, we briefly consider what insights welfarising three types of global social theory – theories of organisational behaviour; theories of diffusion; and theories of domination and exploitation – may afford for GSP.

<2> *Theories of organisational behaviour*

Social theories addressing how formal organisations work – their origins, structure, performance, survival and their relationships to their wider environments – are clearly of potential relevance to GSP. In principle, organisation theory can provide insights into the institutional and other characteristics of IGOs, their behaviours and interactions with other IGOs and other social actors, the effects of their wider environment(s) on IGOs, and the influence and impacts of IGOs. Relations of power, interdependence and (mutual) influence among them and how these relations change over time are all important areas of interest (see Niemann et al, 2021). From a constructivist perspective, the theoretical challenge is to explain why some IGOs are ‘more meaningful’ than others and discern the conditions for IGOs’ success, failure, rise and decline (**Box 5.1**).

Box 5.1 Realist and constructivist approaches to intergovernmental organisations

The ‘realist’ tradition within the academic discipline of International Relations has long regarded IGOs as ‘insufficiently interesting’ (Reinalda, 2009) because the main locus of power and authority in global politics is seen to reside in nation states. In this view, IGOs are no more than the institutionalisation of relations among sovereign states – organisational forums and mechanisms which governments can use to dialogue with each other using an agreed method of communication (including provision for managing disagreements). IGOs facilitate this dialogue and execute the wishes of governments, but they do not have much independent agency from them.

The constructivist tradition sees IGOs as meaningful actors in their own right (as opposed to agents of national governments). Constructivists point to how IGOs are sources of

significant ideas, expertise and authority, and how they shape the behaviour of state and non-state actors. IGOs play significant roles in managing international relations, facilitating exchanges, adjudicating in dispute settlement, generating ideas, disseminating norms and enforcing them (Reinalda, 2009). They play a key role in forming global public policies and the instruments and programmes that enact them (Barnett and Finnemore, 1999; 2004).

Theories of organisations chime with institutionalist theories that see differing political institutions as significant in explaining social policy development, as well as with theories of political mobilisation insofar as formal organisations are social policy actors in their own right (as opposed to convenors of other transnational actors) embedded in wider policy and social movement networks.

For institutionalists, organisational characteristics and behaviours are of vital importance. It matters greatly, for example, whether, in the lexicon of organisational theory, an IO's institutional 'birth characteristics' are such that its mandate and governance structure bind it to certain social policy perspectives and shore up the power of particular social actors. It matters immensely whether such characteristics enable an IGO to be agile in the face of a hostile political environment that threatens its resource or power base, or to mark out a stake in new social policy fields not originally within its scope. These 'inner-organisational' characteristics resonate with institutionalist theories of social policy change, in particular with theories of path dependency, since they help explain the long-term effects of original design features of IGOs, the difficulty or ease with which they can flex their agenda or position to survive or gain ground, and the future survival chances of the organisation – and thus its capacity to remain influential, under changing conditions (Kaasch et al, 2019).

Some neo-institutionalists suggest that an organisation's success is not only attributable to how rationally it acts (e.g. how efficiently it uses its resources) but also to how *it interacts* with other organisations and its wider societal environment. Thus, an IGO may be formally mandated to make social policies, but its success as a knowledge actor and norms-shaper depends on being accepted as legitimate and how it relates to widely accepted norms and values (Kaasch et al, 2019). Such actors may include other IGOs, but the relevant universe of actors typically extends beyond them. We might conclude that if IOs' social policies are seen to chime with widely shared norms and values prevailing at a given time, they are likely to be recognised as having valid contributions to make. An implication of this may be that IGOs need to follow meta socio-cultural or political 'scripts' to be successful. This may lead, in turn, to greater standardisation, homogenisation or

convergence. Sociologists term this process ‘institutional isomorphism’ (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). GSP scholars might accordingly examine what sorts of isomorphic mechanisms – imitation, persuasion, coercion, or the effects of working under similar constraints – result in greater convergence (or not) among IGOs’ social policy interventions.

Organisational theory tells us that *how* an IGO interacts with other actors and its environment(s) is important to becoming and remaining a meaningful actor, but what drives such interactions? Resources are a fairly obvious example (Brosig, 2011) but they come in various forms: funding, access to expertise, credibility, and power. For GSP studies, a key question relating to social policy-focused IGOs is what sorts of resources are deemed most ‘tradable’? The ILO and the World Health Organization (WHO), for example, are both relatively funding-poor but expertise-rich; and they convey a high degree of moral authority, so they might wish to ‘trade’ with organisations with complementary resources. At the same time, the resources that IGOs ‘trade’ with others risk undermining their autonomy and/or legitimacy (Kaasch et al, 2019).

Theories of formal organisations can help explain aspects of GSP insofar as they explain the conditions under which different IGOs become and remain meaningful actors - the contexts, sources of legitimacy and mechanisms (Kaasch et al, 2019). Such theories may help surface new insights into how IGOs navigate multiple sites, structures and levels of **global social governance** and the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ organisational relations mediating inter-IGO coordination. Some see improvements in IGOs’ navigational capacities as a condition for more coherent and robust GSPs to develop and prosper.

<2> Theories of worldwide cultural and policy diffusion

A second set of global social theories emphasises **cultural diffusion** and **policy diffusion** on a worldwide scale. World Society theory is the pre-eminent example of an explicitly global ‘take’ on cultural diffusion. It ‘emphasizes the importance of global institutions and culture in shaping the structure and behavior of individuals, organizations, and nation-states around the world’ (McNeely, 2012). World Society theory (also known as World Polity theory, global neo-institutionalism and the Stanford school of global analysis [Boli et al, 2010]) was developed by, and remains most associated with, sociologist John W. Meyer (Meyer et al, 1997; Krücken and Drori, 2009).

World Society theory is less focused on IGOs per se than on how ‘whole arrangements of organisations and roles and relations, structurally’ (Meyer, 2009, p 41) come to exist. In particular, it seeks to explain the emergence/dominance of the nation-state model

founded on 'global models of nationally organized progress and justice' (Meyer et al, 1997, p 174), and the organisation of the world into 'formally equal, autonomous, and expansive nation-state actors' (Meyer et al, 1997, p 174). The theoretical challenge is to explain the spread of nation states with standard identities and structural forms in the absence of centralised systems to enforce such structures and in the presence of diverse local cultural, functional or power processes worldwide (Meyer et al, 1997, p 173). How is it that nation states are 'more isomorphic than most theories would predict' (Meyer et al, 1997, p 174)? For World Society theorists, the answer lies in worldwide cultural and associational processes founded on universalistic definitions of justice and progress (of individualism, **universalism**, rationality, social equality and so on).

World Society theory 'speaks' to institutionalist accounts of GSP seeking to understand how certain ideas and models become the norm. Take the example of human rights; governments instituted expansive concepts of universal and indivisible human rights, comprising social, economic, civil and political rights, in various UN treaties after World War Two (WW2). These concepts were then incorporated into national social policies. These diffusion processes were an outcome of the prior diffusion of global cultural constructions of individualism and the acceptance that all human beings have legitimate entitlements to rights of association, decent work, appropriate education, affordable health care, comprehensive social security, protection from abuse and so on. But they were also a further spur to it, and consolidated the domination of certain structural features of 'modern' nation-states (Koo and Ramirez, 2009).

A second example is education. The expansion of mass primary, secondary, tertiary and life-long education links many more people directly to 'universalistic and rationalized cultural rules' (Meyer, 2010, p 9), both entitling and obligating them to incorporate highly valued cultural attributes and values of liberal individualism (Meyer et al, 1992; Shofer and Meyer, 2005). From this perspective, education is a major social institution for socialising people into world society. Educational and knowledge-producing IGOs such as UNESCO, the OECD, the World Bank and others are channels through which such cultural constructs are re-created, reproduced and further diffused (Chabbott, 2003; Jakobi, 2009; **see also Chapter 14, this volume**).

World Society theory offers a radically different 'take' on social theories of welfare state development in that *national* welfare states and social policies are conceptualised as the outcome of *global* social processes. The worldwide spread of certain sorts of social policies involves a range of social actors (nation states, professions, IGOs) and diffusion processes that unfold transnationally and on a worldwide scale, even if they 'touch down'

in national contexts in different ways. The implication of this for GSP is profound; it means that *national* education, health, social security systems and so on can be considered first and foremost the result of *global* diffusion processes. Also, what matters theoretically is *which* cultural precepts come to dominate by virtue of being 'imagined' as universal, *which* social actors are recognised and which are not, and by *which* social processes.

As a theory of global diffusion, World Society theory does not deny differences in the specifics of how countries organise (fund, regulate, provide) their welfare states, but its main concern is isomorphic tendencies that produce degrees of standardisation, homogenisation and convergence. It also suggests an expansive definition of GSPs as encompassing national welfare states in addition to the social policies of global bureaucracies and **non-state actors**. *How GSP is constructed* is at the forefront of World Society theory; how certain actors come to be validated as legitimate partners and how certain social issues are taken up as matters of world-societal importance by global policy actors (Tag, 2013).

In terms of future development of World Society theory in GSP, Meyer's interest in education has been a key point of engagement with GSP, but there remains ample scope to investigate whether the strong degrees of homogenisation and diffusion in education occur in other sectors (see Tag, 2013, for an initial application to early childhood as a GSP issue). Such research would help test and develop Meyer's observation that 'the growing list of perceived "social problems" in the world indicates not the weakness of world-cultural institutions but their strength' (Meyer et al, 1997, p 175). Also, the processes by which certain social policy issues become seen as of world-societal significance and as matters for GSPs to redress, while others do not, is of interest.

Political science and public policy studies focusing on the international 'movement' of ideas and practices also use the concepts of diffusion, **policy transfer** and **lesson drawing** to explain why some policy ideas or models are taken up by other countries and identify the key transferring actors and mechanisms involved (Rose, 1991; Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000; Hulme, 2005). Although the initial focus of this work was on high-income countries, its usefulness for explaining policy change (or continuity) in a **multi-level governance** framework has come to the fore, as has its potential to offer insights into the complex dynamics of the global policy community, and the rise of generic agendas in education and social welfare (Hulme, 2005, p 418). Stone (2004) led the way in arguing for the integration of non-state transnational actors, networks and market mechanisms into policy transfer theory, while Haas (1990) identified the significance of transnational knowledge networks and the importance of '**epistemic communities**' of knowledge-

based experts in diffusion processes.

The concepts of travelling and embedded policy have also become significant in global policy sociology. Such approaches have been used in GSP studies to elaborate how social policy ideas and discourses are formulated, communicated and circulated among communities of transnational and national actors. For example, Orenstein (2009) showed the existence of epistemic communities supportive of pension privatisation and how these ideas ‘travelled’ through global and national institutions (IGOs, policy networks, international partnerships). Many GSP studies, however, overly focus on uni-directional diffusion/travel processes resulting from interventions by IGOs and their impact on country-level social policy (Deacon et al, 1997; Deacon, 2007). Yeates (2007) argued that a productive approach is to see such global policy processes as multi-directional, involving interactions among multiple actors within multi-level governance systems in which all parts interact with each other.

<2> Theories of global domination and exploitation

A third set of global social theories seek to explain structures, relations and behaviours of social actors in the global order in terms of inequality and power. World Systems theory exemplifies one such approach. Globalisation is, in this view, the ‘becoming of the world-system’ that has been continuously developing over thousands of years. World Systems theory is most associated with the work of Immanuel Wallerstein (1974; 2004). He aimed to integrate the study of society, economy and polity in a globalist analysis capable of explaining the existence of transnational social/economic structures and dynamics that condition development in *all* parts of the world as well as the persistence of global social relations of inequality and under development. He traced the long-term rise of the capitalist world economy and its associated organisation of the world into core, semi-periphery and periphery zones (Chase-Dunn and Grimes, 1995; Chase-Dunn and Hall, 1997; Chirot and Hall, 1982). Unlike (most) other global social theories, World Systems theory emphasises zones and the interconnections between them, not inter-state relations among countries. World Systems theory is not a theory of capitalism per se; the world-system is the canvas on which capitalism paints.

Relations of domination and exploitation are seen in how, historically, certain countries gained control of much of the world economy, and how this global power is reflected in the dominant economic and political position of the core countries that sustains the under-/mal-development and exploitation of other zones. For example, the socio-economic structures and robust public institutions of core zone states enable them not

only to manage internal affairs but also influence other states, IGOs and institutions in ways that maintain their dominant position in the world. Periphery states have lesser capacities to significantly influence the world around them or build the socio-economic infrastructures needed for development. This is not to say that the country composition of the zones cannot or does not change; mobility is possible within this hierarchical system. For example, over the last 400 years, the status of global hegemon has passed from the Netherlands to the UK to the USA.

World Systems theory shows how different parts of states can be integrated with each other across national borders. The theory notes, for example, how some cities in peripheral countries can be more economically integrated with core countries than with the 'hinterlands' of their own countries. Also, it provides an historically informed globalist social theory of global inequality and exploitation. In this respect, theorisations of global inequality should be seen not just as the background context of GSPs. Rather, they become vital parts of the explanation of the forms that GSP takes and of their effects. In this regard, the UN, the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO reflect the interests of core zone political powers; they institutionalise these powers' economic and trade advantages – and therefore dominance – over peripheral and semi-peripheral zones.

Where this theory really comes into its own for GSP, is its attention to macro-level global political shifts that result from world-system dynamism. It is not only that states that established their dominance in the world-system early on tend to remain dominant because they control the key economic IGOs (the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO), but that countries' upward or downward mobility within the world system, combined with their international development strategies, unleash further dynamics that impact upon the politics of GSP. For example, China pursues a markedly different way of 'doing' international development aid compared with the West, one that seems to give it much influence over the development of countries in which it has invested (Urbina-Ferretjans and Surrender, 2013). It remains to be seen whether China or other emerging world powers will favour a more comprehensive approach to GSP, but there are few signs of this so far. China is an interesting case in these terms because it also demonstrates that it is possible for a country to break out of the periphery.

World Systems theory may cast critical light on how core zone states' extraction of productive resources from the periphery extends to the domain of social reproduction and social services. Yeates' work on global health worker **migration** and recruitment (Yeates, 2004; 2009; 2014) showed how the dominant direction of travel is from more peripheral zones to core ones, and how this systematic 'extraction' of human resources

for health and development works primarily to the benefit of countries and populations in the core zone countries. Her later work (Yeates and Pillinger, 2019) connected this dynamic of social reproduction in the world-system and the development of post-war GSPs, concluding that the **multilateralisation** of social policy in this area (e.g. the conclusion of ILO and WHO agreements ostensibly controlling such migration and recruitment) develops alongside the intensification of health labour recruitment and migration to core zones.

As a theory of domination and exploitation, World Systems theory has much in common with Marxist analyses that emphasise how global relations of inequality are the outcome of capitalist social relations on a global scale. However, other Marxist theories of imperialism differ in various ways and contain various critiques of World Systems theory (e.g. Brewer, 1980). Susan Soederberg (2006) offers a Marxist interpretation of the role of **global governance** in sustaining global relations of domination and exploitation, at the apex of which sits the USA. She argues that global policies on debt relief, **corporate social responsibility** (CSR), and development assistance fail to engage with the fundamental contradictions of global capitalism and that they normalise austere forms of capitalist expansion. In a similar vein, Robert Cox applies the Gramscian notion of hegemony to international relations (Cox, 1983). In a hegemonic order, he argues, the structure of meaning, of values and understandings, is ‘relatively stable and unquestioned’; it appears as ‘the natural order’ of things. Such an order cannot rely on one dominant state for its survival or reproduction, but is secured by the dominant social strata of the dominant states (Gill, 1993). There are few analyses of GSPs from these perspectives, but their focus upon social inequalities, exploitation and power asymmetries within global capitalism has clear relevance for GSP and there is much scope to apply and develop them.

Table 5.1 Summary features of social theories relevant to global social policy

	Proponent	Original focus	GSP focus	GSP as...
Economic development and capitalism	Wilensky Offe Gough	Relationship between the economy and welfare state	Relationship between economic globalisation and GSP	The outcome of the ‘needs’ of globalising economies, of global capitalism
Class struggle and political mobilisation	Korpi Esping-Andersen Gough	How social actors, class conflict and class alliances shape the timing and	The role of transnational social and political actors in GSP formation	The outcome of worldwide social and political contestation

		forms of welfare state development		
Political institutions	Huber et al P. Pierson Bonoli	The role of differing political institutions on the development of welfare states	IGOs as global institutions shaping the forms that GSP takes	The outcome of institutional structures and orientations
Organisational behaviour	Kaasch and Martens	How (international) organisations work and interact with their different environments	How IGOs become meaningful actors, cooperate with other actors, and produce social policy knowledge and norms	The social policies of international bureaucracies
Cultural diffusion and policy transfer	Meyer Jakobi Tag	How global diffusion of norms, ideas, and political practices become deeply institutionalised in world structures; how policy ideas travel between jurisdictions	The development and diffusion of global norms, policy ideas and models shaping welfare arrangements	The outcome of the worldwide diffusion and embeddedness of global cultural norms and policy ideas; IGO GSPs as channels for diffusion processes.
Global domination and exploitation	Wallerstein Chase-Dunn Soederberg Cox	How world-level structures and relations of inequality, exploitation and imperialism shape development and under-development	How core-periphery and other global relationships of power shape the forms and outcomes of GSPs	The outcome of uneven patterns of development and power within the world order (world-system)

Source: the authors

<1> Conclusion

The academic analysis of GSP is a field whose social-theoretical basis is still under construction. A unified theory of GSP is neither desirable nor possible given the varied questions that GSP analysts ask, but better integration of social theory into GSP studies is needed and attainable. This integration is challenging because it involves working across disparate theoretical approaches rooted in explaining national welfare state development or processes of global social change. There is significant scope for new generations of GSP scholars to take forward this theoretical development. In this context, we have highlighted an array of theoretical approaches and specific social theories that may contribute to understanding better the origins, development and forms of GSP.

Social theories of GSP will in future need to ensure they reflect the perspectives, circumstances and experiences of all countries and populations of the world, especially the countries and regions of the **Global South**, if they are to avoid replicating first-world and gender biases. Among other things, this would mean foregrounding connections between higher-income and lower-income parts of the world, as well as between lower-income ones. Similarly, the ways in which certain Southern actors are developing capabilities of their own to shape norms and policies within their own 'neighbourhoods' and beyond are important (Yeates, 2018). There is ample scope to learn from theories of imperialism and social movements, from feminist and intersectional theories, and from Development Studies, Global Public Policy and Administration, and Global Political Economy. Comparative methodologies will also be of vital importance to answering questions about how different sorts of GSP are structured and by which transnational forces, under what conditions, and with what outcomes. Similarly, comparative methodologies can help us to better understand under what circumstances formerly global social policies may become **deglobalised** – a crucial question in a period when populist nationalism has become globally widespread.

<1> Summary

- We can distinguish between theories of global social welfare/policy, social theories of GSP, and normative theories that have a strong affinity to the former.
- Two different approaches to developing social theories of GSP are to 'globalise' theories of national welfare state development and to 'welfarise' globalist social theories.
- No single theory is sufficient to fully explain GSP, but blending elements of different theories may prove useful as a basis for systematic theorisation of GSP. Such blending will be a multi-disciplinary endeavour.

- A unified theory of GSP is neither desirable nor possible, but better integration of social theory into GSP studies is needed and attainable.
- This integration may draw on globalist social theories other than those discussed in this chapter, such as theories of imperialism and of social movements, and from insights from Development Studies, Public Policy and Administration, and Global Political Economy, among others.
- Such theoretical development should give priority to different forms of global social inequality and avoid replicating rich-world biases. Comparative methods will also be vital.

<1> Questions for discussion

- What do different theories of welfare state development offer for GSP studies? What aspects of GSP do they offer good insights into and what do they miss?
- Compare two globalist social theories in terms of the insights they potentially provide for GSP studies.

<1> Follow-up activities

- Read as many of the texts cited in this chapter as possible and make notes about them in relation to the Questions for discussion above.
- Pick a topic or issue in GSP covered in this book that most interests you and try to apply the insights of one of the theories discussed in this chapter to it. Don't worry about being comprehensive – just having a go is important. Compare your answer(s) with those from other students in a discussion group.
- Select one or two articles from the journal *Global Social Policy* to see which theoretical approaches seem to have influenced the author(s).

<1> Further resources

There are no further specialist resources on social theories of GSP to consult. The *Global Social Policy Reader* (Yeates and Holden, 2009) provides an excellent sample of key GSP readings, many of which are considered theoretical classics in the field.

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