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Social Policy across Borders: Commonalities, Convergence and Paradoxes in Connectivity, 1850-1975. Cambridge: Martin Daunton, Trinity Hall, Cambridge; Julia Moses, St John's College, Cambridge, 12.09.2008-13.09.2008.

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Social Policy across Borders: Commonalities, Convergence and Paradoxes in Connectivity, 1850-1975

The international conference 'Social Policy across Borders: Commonalities, Convergence and Paradoxes in Connectivity, 1850-1975' took place at the University of Cambridge on 12-13 September 2008. Martin Daunton (Trinity Hall, Cambridge) and Julia Moses (Pembroke College, Oxford) co-organised the event. The Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, the Trevelyan Fund and the Ellen McArthur Fund at the University of Cambridge, the Royal Historical Society and the British Academy generously sponsored it. The interdisciplinary conference focused on the function of foreign models in debates about social policy. Foreign models play a critical role in contemporary debates about social policy. Politicians, journalists and experts frequently cite foreign models when seeking viable alternatives or when merely framing political arguments. The origins and functions of these models, however, remain little understood.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed a revolution in social policy across much of Europe and other parts of the globe. Although based upon domestic and local experiences, politics and economies, social policy at this time was largely influenced by considerations of other countries' and localities' experiences with the 'social question'. Convergent economic developments of many countries, as well as several of their current or former colonies, brought similar social concerns and common searches for solutions during this period. Crucially, this period saw the development of increasingly universal conceptions of the social, the meaning of soci-

ety and the role of government.

There have, however, been few truly connective accounts of the development of social policy. In an era of increasing international and domestic communication, the growth of congresses and journals, international organisations, and frequent study trips, ideas about social policy were frequently communicated across borders. The growth of inter- and intranational labour migration at this time further added to general awareness of foreign models of social policy. It also required national and local governments to re-evaluate and sometimes alter their existing policy to accord with that of neighbouring governments.

The decision to accept, reject, ignore or re-interpret this information was therefore constantly at hand and proved especially important for government administrations when adopting and implementing legislation. This international and transnational communication also proved an important factor in the convergence of social policies at this time. Looking to the development of social policy as an example of national 'special paths', as many national case studies do, requires re-examination in this light.

Several national or comparative studies engage with the transfer of social policy ideas from one state to another, yet the systematic study of the connective elements of this history has been limited. Moreover, the few studies of the transnational exchange of social policy ideas generally focus on the adoption or rejection of

foreign models. With few exceptions, they do not move beyond this concrete level of exchange to consider how the process of transnational communication functions as a central feature of modern societies.

Moreover, the existing scholarship on transnational exchanges of social policy has mostly looked to seemingly obvious models of social policy innovation. In this, larger, highly industrialised European states such as Germany and Britain have been given pride of place. Past research has also neglected the importance of transnational, imperial and international organisations and informal networks in facilitating and moulding communication about foreign models of social policy as well as providing fora in which universal ideals of social policy could be developed and promoted. Finally, existing scholarship on transnational connections in social policy has largely neglected the role of economic coordination in fostering socially-oriented goals.

The conference organisers aspired to address these and related voids in research and bring together a variety of new findings on how foreign and international ideas about social policy were assimilated, transformed or rejected in processes of communication about them. They also sought to investigate how policy models were fabricated in this process. This conference thereby served as an illustrative platform for further research into this important area.

The event began with a keynote speech by DANIEL RODGERS of Princeton University. Professor Rodgers spoke about the roles of networks and narratives in policy transfer. He highlighted the means through which policy exchanges occur and demonstrated that policy transfers are not always voluntary: in particular situations, such as through imperial expansion or war, foreign models of social policy can be imposed. Professor Rodgers also discussed the impact of situating policy models in narrative frameworks such as, for example, a narrative of societal progress. He demonstrated that policy models do not necessarily originate from larger states or those that are most industrialised. Instead, the narratives of policy development that are picked up as so-called models are often those that *à*modelâ states themselves espouse.

The first panel focused on how ideas about the composition and meaning of society influenced reflections on foreign models of social policy. LAWRENCE GOLDMAN (St Peter's College, Oxford) examined the importance of statistical congresses as a means of establishing networks of policy experts. He argued that the role of these

congresses in examining society fundamentally changed over the course of the nineteenth century, as expertise became professionalised. JAMES THOMPSON (University of Bristol) argued against overemphasizing imperial connections in British history and instead sought to re-situate British history within a European framework. He did this by focusing on the issue of the labour question and, in particular, trade unionism and its role in British society. TIMOTHY SMITH (Queen's University, Ontario), whose paper was read out due to illness, focused on debates in Canada during the 1980s and France during the 1990s. He demonstrated that politicians and activists manipulated images of other states's social policies in order to achieve their own domestic ends. In her comments, SUSAN PEDERSEN (Columbia University) reflected on the periodization of policy transfers and the changing significance of interpersonal contacts, elite networking and expert organisations.

The second panel examined the role of international organisations in moulding social issues as seemingly universal phenomena. SANJOY BHATTACHARYA (Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine, UCL) focused on the work of the World Health Organisation in eradicating smallpox in South Asia. He highlighted the importance of local actors in communicating information about the disease to both members of the WHO and members of local communities. MADELEINE HERREN (Heidelberg) argued that labour was the predominant intellectual framework for international organisations when viewing social problems during the interwar period. She focused on several case studies, including the League of Nations. INDERJEET PARMAR (Manchester) examined the role of American philanthropic foundations in forging knowledge about and solutions to social issues. In particular, he argued that institutions such as the Rockefeller Foundation created a hegemonic framework for assessing social problems. In his comment, PIERRE-YVES SAUNIER (CNRS, Lyon) emphasised the need to examine connections while considering potential blockages.

The third panel focused on exchanges about the economics of social welfare. Martin Daunton (Cambridge) examined the role of international economic organisations in regulating trade and employment after the Second World War. He argued that issues of welfare stood at the core of discussions between economics and politicians in revising the operation of the Bretton Woods financial settlement and in the abortive negotiations to establish an International Trade Organisation. TAMOTSU NISHIZAWA (Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo) explored how modernized Japan learned from Germany

and Britain about economic and social welfare ideas and assimilated those ideas domestically. In particular, he focused on the activities of Tokuyo Fukuda and the Japanese Society for Social Policy. DAVID TODD (Trinity Hall, Cambridge) investigated exchanges of ideas about British free trade between France, Germany and the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. He focused on the role of individuals in espousing the socially-orientated aspects of either free trade or protectionism. In his comments, FRANK TRENTMANN (Birkbeck, University of London) built on an earlier point about periodization and also reflected on how different narratives and meta-narratives of policy models changed in different contexts and over time.

The penultimate panel focused on the transfers of policy models within imperial frameworks. ERIK GRIMMER-SOLEM (Wesleyan) focused on the social aspects of German policies for land use and compared German policies in Silesia with those in its African territories. He argued that German social policy targeted at agriculture focused on the ideal of securing an independent peasant middle class, which remained a consistent policy from the early 1900s until the end of the Second World War and which applied to both metropol and colony. EDMUND ROGERS (Fitzwilliam, Cambridge) investigated the discussion of New Zealand as a model for old-age pensions in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He argued that, due to its origins from a 'new country', New Zealand's system of old-age pensions was negatively-tinged in British policy debates. Nonetheless, it served as a useful example for those interested in a successful model of financial conservatism. In his comments, CHRISTOPHER CLARK (St Catharine's College, Cambridge) reflected on the issue of comparing the circumstances that dictate whether policy convergence happens as a byproduct compared to when it is itself an engineered and intentional phenomenon.

The final panel focused on policy transfers between states and involving international organisations and national governments. MARIA-SOPHIA QUINE (University of East Anglia) explored the experience of the Fascist government in interwar Italy in combating disease and providing health insurance. She argued that, despite the encouragement of international organisations to address problems including tuberculosis and malaria, the Italian government was reticent to act and often provided misguided or inadequate solutions. STEIN KUHNLE (Hertie School of Governance, Berlin) examined the impact of German social insurance on the adoption of Scandinavian welfare policies in the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries. He argued that, despite the common German influence, the first social security legislation in the Scandinavian countries varied according to specific national needs and purposes. Julia Moses (Pembroke, Oxford) investigated the roles of international organisations and national models of policy in the development and revision of accident insurance and compensation laws in Britain, Germany and Italy from the 1870s to the 1920s. She argued that both national narratives and common conceptual frameworks for social problems proved fundamental for governments when analysing policy models and developing relatively convergent solutions. In his comment, read out due to problems in trans-channel traffic, PAUL-ANDRÉ ROSENAL (l'École des hautes Études en sciences sociales, Paris) reflected on the importance of international migration and the issue of labour for transnational and international exchanges.

In the concluding roundtable discussion, the commentators and organisers explored further points for investigation as well as common themes. Five issues stood out. The first was that of blockages: when do policies transfer fail and why? When do possible transfers never happen at all? Second, the question of periodization â a theme throughout the conference â predominated. Third, the matter of absences was addressed: what was the role of business in exchanges; that of confessional organisations? How did the context of the Cold War influence the transfer of policy ideas? Fourth, which policies are internationally salient at particular junctures and why? Finally, how do narratives of national development and policy development dictate domestic and international discussions of policy models? How are models fabricated in this process? The conference organisers are currently planning to edit a volume that engages with these points and highlights and further thematises some of the conference findings.

Conference overview:

Keynote Lecture

Daniel Rodgers (Princeton University)

Bearing Tales: Networks and Narratives in Social Policy Transfer

Transfers of Ideas about Society and Social Issues

Commentator: Susan Pedersen (Columbia University)

Timothy Smith (Queen's University, Canada)

Best Practices and Worst Stereotypes: How Nationals Learn from Other Nations

- James Thompson (University of Bristol)
Framing the Labour Question: Political Economy, Idea Transfer and Social Policy in Britain, 1870-1945
- Lawrence Goldman (University of Oxford)
The International Statistical Congress and the Politics of Nineteenth-Century Statistics
- International Organisations and Universal Social Issues
Commentator: Pierre-Yves Saunier (CNRS, Lyon)
- Sanjoy Bhattacharya (Wellcome Centre, UCL)
Troubled Transmissions, Unexpected Outcomes: World Health Organization networks, Disease Control and Eradication Policies, and their Impact on South Asia
- Madeleine Herren (Heidelberg University)
Transcultural Bargaining with Trojan Horses: alternatives to the institutional history of international labour organisations?
- Inderjeet Parmar (University of Manchester)
American Philanthropic Foundations and the Politics of International Knowledge Network-Construction in the Cold War
- Exchanges on the Economics of Social Welfare
Commentator: Frank Trentmann (Birkbeck College, University of London)
- Martin Daunt (University of Cambridge)
Distributive Justice, Trade and Employment: Re-creating the Global Economy after the Second World War
- David Todd (University of Cambridge)
- Exchanges of Ideas about British Free Trade between France, Germany, and the United States, 1830-1870
- Tamotsu Nishizawa (Institute of Economic Research, Hitotsubashi University)
Economics of Social Reform across the Borders: Germany, UK and Japan around 1900
- Exchanges within Federal States and across Empires
Commentator: Christopher Clark (University of Cambridge)
- Eddy Rogers (University of Cambridge)
A "Most Imperial Contribution": New Zealand and old-age pensions in Britain, 1898-1908
- Erik Grimmer-Solem (Wesleyan University)
Reform Redux: the Second Life of the German Social Question in the Colonies, 1900-1918
- Transfers of Social Policy Ideas
Commentator: Paul-André Rosental (L'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales)
- Maria-Sophia Quine (University of East Anglia)
Social Modernity Italian-Style: Welfare Policy from Liberalism to Fascism in Trans-national Perspective
- Julia Moses (University of Cambridge)
Workplace Accidents, Transfers of Ideas and Convergence in European Welfare Policy, 1870-1930
- Stein Kuhnle (Hertie School of Governance, Berlin)
The early formative years of Scandinavian welfare states and the impact of ideas from outside

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