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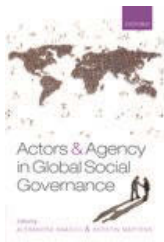
CHAPTER

1 Actors and Agency in Global Social Governance 🔓

Abstract

The introduction paves the way for an actor-centred approach to global social governance. The chapter highlights the necessity to think beyond existing conceptualizations and approaches, by combining different analytical tools from social policy, international relations, global governance research and comparative politics research. Different notions of agency and governance mechanisms at the disposal of different groups of actors are introduced, and applied to specific groups of actors. That includes both, individual legitimacy (e.g. institutional characteristics, constitutions, mandates), and structural contexts to global social governance. The chapter introduces the key questions running through the volume: what constitutes global social governance actors? How can global social policy actors be classified? What makes global social policy actors legitimate? What is the relationship between global social policy actors? By what mechanisms do global social policy actors exert influence?

Keywords: global social policy, global governance, agency, policy actors, legitimacy
Subject: International Relations
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Introduction

Today's social policies demand to be dealt with through global lenses. Demographic changes, restrictions of national budgets, and the growing gap between rich and poor are amongst the issues that challenge social policy arrangements of different countries in similar ways and foster solutions at policy levels above the individual nation state. At the same time, globalized labour markets, worldwide environmental concerns, the increasing emergence of international rights norms, regional and global migration streams, as well as global economic and financial crises have contributed to the formation of increasingly important transnational contexts within which social policymaking occurs, and to which national social policy systems respond with reforms. Social policy today is much less 'national' than is typically assumed in the research on welfare regimes and social policy, which focuses primarily on the comparison of national institutions and processes.

Since the mid-1990s, global social policy scholarship has emerged as an innovative, and increasingly important, dimension of the study of social policy that also informed related subjects, such as international

relations (IR), comparative politics, development studies, and global governance research. Global social policy is now considered a respected field of research and teaching. Nevertheless, studying social problems from a global perspective is still in tension with the continuing application of social policy implementation on the national level. With this book, we seek to advance our understanding of the global dimension of social policy by applying the notion of *global social governance* to policy actors, their relations to each other, and their pathways, as well as their footprints of influence in specific policy fields of social concern ↳ in which they are active. Focusing on a broad array of individual and corporate global social policy actors, ranging from internationally operating intergovernmental organizations (IOs or IGOs) to states formations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), our aim is to draw a fuller picture of the agency of global social policy than is provided by current accounts.

In order to address the challenge of analysing global social governance in a comprehensive and systematic manner, this volume focuses on the concept of agency in global social governance. It considers the multiple facets of individual scope and legitimacy of a particular actor in conjunction with the configuration of global social governance characterized by multicentred and multiscaled obstacles and forms of collaboration. By doing so, we seek to go beyond a mere mapping of actors or a list of case studies without broader application or generalization, and intend to study the contextualized actor's range and power in designing, shaping, and facilitating various global social policies. Thus, the contributions discuss the role of particular (corporate) actors within global social policy structures and assess the impact of a number of key organizations, states, groups, and individuals in the governance of global social policy. At the same time, a variety of social policy fields are addressed, including labour market issues, family policy, health policy, education policy, migration issues, and global (re)distribution via various forms of development aid or remittances.

This volume starts with mapping out the field and introducing key issues in global social governance research, drawing on a number of literatures. The different (groups of) actors are conceptualized through global governance approaches and concepts of inter-actor relationships. Our aim is to contribute to the development and application of transnational or global social policy perspectives in the study of globalization and social policy. The following empirical chapters are compiled and designed in order to address the transformative power of individual and collective agency, but also to discuss the limits of this agency given the existing multi-actored and multiscaled relationships and structures. These chapters discuss the role and place of key IOs, global and regional state formations, and civil society as well as business actors. Overall, our book attempts to make a contribution to the rising study of social policy from a global perspective by integrating different approaches and applying them to a diversity of actors.

Studying Social Policy From a Global Perspective

Classically, political science deals with social policy from a *comparative politics* viewpoint. Comparative social policy studies clearly have their strengths in ↳ developing and employing systematic ways of defining units of analysis and comparing cases. They usually focus on analysing policies of nation states. Also, comparative methodologies offer much in terms of organized and disciplined sets of questions, which are case-oriented and set-theoretic, and at the same time allow for careful decisions about cases and units of analysis. The focus of such studies is often on 'what and how' questions and comparative analyses' results speak a language of similarities and differences (convergence and divergence) between cases. This poses problems at different levels: on the one hand, comparative studies have only to a limited extent been able to systematically open up transnational contexts and interventions that might affect the comparison of cases both empirically and methodologically. On the other hand, the unit of comparison is usually the nation state (or sometimes units within the nation state, e.g. federal states or similar entities), and has neither been significantly extended to regions nor to systematic comparative analyses of transnational actors or factors.

From an *international relations* point of view, social policy has not been intensively conceptualized as a distinct field of research (Armingeon 2010). Major IR theories, in particular realist, institutionalist, and constructivist approaches, offer different viewpoints on how the international system works, what the main actors and their motives are, and how international processes develop. The major theoretical schools provide conceptual frameworks upon which international relations can be analysed. They differ, however, in their underlying understanding of how the world operates and how power is distributed and exerted. In addition, IR theories offer normative as well as theoretically guided empirical studies. Thus, IR approaches help us to understand what is going on at international and transnational level; in particular, IR approaches direct our attention to how actors, in particular IOs and NGOs in the transnational sphere seek to shape international standards and norms of social policies, which may infiltrate the national contexts of policymaking. However, IR approaches only rarely deal with the question of how these international standards and norms translate successfully into the national context of social policies.

The literature on *global social policy*, particularly Deacon (Deacon 2013; 2007; Deacon et al. 1997), has demonstrated how IOs (and other global social policy actors) play a role as global social policy actors and may influence national social policymaking in various ways. It is useful to highlight the importance of multiple levels or scales in social policymaking (e.g. the contributions in the special issue by Leng and Whittaker 2010). While its origin is in the tradition of comparative welfare state research, this body of literature has shifted away from comparative methodologies in favour of alerting us to global social problems (e.g. Alsharif et al. 2010: 317) and the interactions between global social policy actors employing discourse analysis (e.g. Ervik 2005). They often come with strongly normative connotations and aims.

Frequently, they ↳ employ approaches of policy transfer, diffusion, or translation in the field of social policy (e.g. Hulme and Hulme 2008). Part of the literature questions the use of the nation state, as a unit, for the study of social policy (Yeates 2008). As part of a special issue of *Global Social Policy* (Kaasch 2013), several contributions discuss conceptualizations of global social policy and governance.

These lines of research all have a share in understanding the global dimension of social policymaking; however, they also have their limits. While comparative politics struggles with accounting for transnational processes and actors other than the nation state, IR rarely looks at the specifics of social policy on a global scale. Although the literature on global social policy has demonstrated how IOs and others play a role as global social policy actors and may influence national social policymaking in various ways, they have little to offer in terms of a coherent explanation and characterization of global social governance. Indeed, the global social policy literature is vague with regard to broader characterizations, generalizations, and conceptualizations. Given the now substantial body of literature on the roles and positions of various global

social policy actors, we suggest that a more systematic and comprehensive account of these actors and their agency is needed. We seek to further develop scholarship in this regard by employing the notion of global social governance.

Towards Global Social Governance

Few scholars have applied concepts and theories to systematically analyse social policy on a global scale. Existing accounts of the term 'global social governance' are theoretically limited and are mainly descriptions of transformative global social policy projects (e.g. Deacon 2003). Global social governance has, for instance, been described as 'a number of competing and overlapping institutions, all of which have some stake in shaping global social policy towards global social problems' (Deacon 2007: 143). Most accounts of this kind are of a broad and general character. The notion also seeks to encompass both the actors involved as well as the structures of, or relationships between, actors in global social governance. The literature, though, goes little beyond crude mappings of IOs and trade agreements (Mishra 1999) or investigations into the contestations between particular actors (Deacon 2007). By combining the notion of global governance with social policy in the light of their value in understanding actors and their agency, we seek to strengthen the approach to view and analyse social policy problems from a global perspective and through a multitude of participating actors.

While some early concepts of global governance use this notion to incorporate a normative political aim (United Nations World Commission on ↳ Environment and Development 1987; Commission on Global Governance 1995), in the social sciences most scholars apply the concept of global governance analytically, focusing on the scope and dimensions of political processes that take place in the global sphere, in which the state is viewed as one actor amongst others. In the tradition of the liberal institutionalist approach in particular, the international arena is perceived as an interdependent system of different actors in which next to the state other actors, such as IOs, NGOs, multilateral companies, or the individual, operate, and the traditional notion of government is displaced by governance (Rosenau and Czempiel 1992). What is important in this view is that, under the concept of global governance, politics are mediated between the different actors involved in a non-hierarchical way (though the power at the disposal of particular actors may be very different). It refers to the collectivity of institutions, actors, and mechanisms by which global challenges are dealt with.

By engaging with key theoretical approaches and their potential to inform the development of concepts of global social governance and, on this basis, reflecting on important empirical examples of global social policy actors, we aim at drawing a fuller picture of what global social governance is (and what it could or should be). The contributions, on the one hand, go beyond the emphasis of general global governance accounts of the cooperative global search for solutions to global problems by highlighting the social component at transnational policy levels. The virtue of a focus on global social governance is that it turns the attention to the social side of globalization (on the issue of socialization of global policy see also Kaasch and Stubbs, 2014). It can be regarded as a division of global governance into different policy fields (comparable to what is typically done for national policy levels), and thus any policy field study has the potential of being compared with another policy field (e.g. global economic governance (Kirton et al. 2010) or global environmental governance (Speth and Haas 2006)). On the other hand, an improved understanding of global social governance can inform social policy studies and develop a 'social' view of global governance. Such a social view turns attention to the social problems and concerns that characterize today's world. Rather than trade, economic exchanges, financial liberalization, and political struggles connected to (non-)regulation, it is the social reality of people and the mechanisms to address these transnationally that come into focus here.

For the purpose of this book, global social governance is understood as a multi-actored process of shaping global and national social policies. It involves different categories of actors that interact and exert influence over policies by means of collaborative as well as individual agency. The mandates and spheres of influence may be overlapping, and specific actors may function in different and multiple roles. The relationships between actors can be characterized by consensual as well as contestational modes (for a discussion see Kaasch 2013). Struggles over positions drive global social governance, no matter if the ↳ content issue is highly or hardly controversial—global social policy actors are legitimacy-seeking agencies that depend on multiple forms of external and internal, long-term as well as short-term mandates. These mandates are closely related to the governance mechanisms at the disposal of different global actors and the scope or leeway for developing influence over a social policy issue. Accordingly, the contributions to this book, both in a theoretical and empirical manner, ask questions such as: What characterizes the different types of actors in global social governance? In what ways are they able to influence international, transnational, and national social policymaking? Global social policy as a field of studies has now reached a stage where more organized conceptual and theoretical contributions can be, and are, developed.

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By applying the notion of *global social governance*, we bring together different theoretical tools under one umbrella. In this edited volume we are particularly interested in the different notions of agency and governance mechanisms at the disposal of different groups of actors. The specific groups of actors need to be understood, on the one hand, on the basis of their own characteristics, constitutions, mandates, and so on (legitimizing factors). On the other hand, they have to be seen in relation to each other and as part of a complex global social governance structure. We begin our volume with a set of theoretical approaches that we believe are relevant for the study of global social governance. By focusing on IOs active in the realm of social policy, examining significant state formations engaged in social activities outside their own borders, and including civil society actors which shape social governance on a global scale we aim at delivering an account of what is going on in global social governance.

What Constitutes Global Social Policy Actors?

While global social policy studies are usually strongly interested in actors, there have been only limited attempts to distinguish the nature and characteristics of global social policy actors. A common concern is the dominant focus on IOs as global social policy actors (Yeates 2001). At the same time, the global social policy literature, related literature, and the global social policy digest also give attention and space to actors other than IOs. This includes, for example, the advocacy and monitoring function of various NGOs and think tanks, national research or development institutions, or powerful individuals.

In this volume we apply a broad notion of actor and agency. An actor of global social governance can be an individual or corporate body with the ↳ capacity to make a change in global social policy. We consider it important to understand the particular mandates, legitimacies, governance mechanisms, and power resources at the disposal of an actor in order to improve our understanding of global social policy in its broad and global perspective. For this reason, it is crucial to go beyond 'traditional' approaches to IOs. Numerous global initiatives provide evidence of the range of actors involved—actors that are incoherently composed, coming from different groups or categories of actors addressed here.

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How can Global Social Policy Actors be Classified?

Global social policy actors vary greatly in terms of their characteristics and mandates. However, no systematic attempts have been made to classify them in a comprehensive way taking into account both their intrinsic characteristics and their relationships to each other. The actors can be distinguished in several ways; one encompassing and convincing example comes from Braithwaite and Drahos (2000: 4). They distinguish a variety of public and private global actors that can also be applied to the study of global social governance. Included are, amongst others, organizations of states, states, NGOs, and epistemic communities.

While this categorization is mainly built on the composition of a particular actor, including the difference between public and private actors, another distinction can be made with regard to individual and collective agency. In the field of global social policy, inspiring individuals such as Jeffrey Sachs have been crucial in promoting particular ideas (see Stubbs and Wedel, this volume). Also, profit versus not-for-profit actors can be distinguished. Furthermore, hybrid forms of global social policy actors can be found, a characterization that has been used to describe, for example, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Bartsch 2005).

In this book, we focus on a selective range of types of actors to explore the characteristics that shape their 'actorness'. In addition, such a selection makes within-category comparison possible. Among the public actors, we classify individual states as well IOs. Private actors range from NGOs or civil society organizations (CSOs), including faith-based and philanthropic organizations, to business actors. Although such distinctions never fully work—an IO may include members other than nation states in its governance (a prominent example is the International Labour Organization (ILO) with its tripartite structure), or public resources might finance NGOs.

What Makes Global Social Policy Actors Legitimate?

Questions of legitimacy can arise at different levels and differ between different kinds of actors. One sphere of legitimate action is the right to speak at particular global fora and be included in the production of global knowledge and the concerted formulation and spread of particular sets of ideas. Other issues of legitimacy arise with regard to the appropriate involvement of transnational policy actors in national policymaking processes. For IOs, perhaps the question of their legitimacy is fairly straightforward, while at the same time it has also been most forcefully questioned and rejected. With regard to their assemblies and national representation in them, international organizations represent a kind of democratically legitimate transnational political instance. However, the activities by, and influences through IOs are in no way only derived from democratically concerted action; the secretariats and personal factors play an important role as well. Even if action happens through democratically legitimated institutions, power resources are unequally distributed, calling into question any action taken.

For country or regional influence on the development of global social policy, particularly, the question of unequal power relationships comes into focus. While the particular agreements made between the European Union (EU) or a donor country might appear more legitimate and thought out, owing to the limited number of contract partners, the dangers of exploitative structures and missing social goals in such bilateral agreements might lack external supervision and be detrimental to the more vulnerable contract partner. On the part of non-governmental actors, the picture is different. While they are often perceived as less interest-driven, 'good' actors, representing and calling for the 'real' needs of people, also have doubts raised about their legitimacy to speak on behalf of particular groups of people without being based on democratic structures. In this volume, the chapters discuss such questions of legitimacy by discussing the

agency of particular organizations or other kinds of actors in their role as global social policy actors, and their potential and effective influence on national and regional social policy. Furthermore, the authors address issues of voice and power in global social policy discourses.

What are the Relationships Between Global Social Policy Actors?

While actors of global social governance can be studied in their own right, and at various levels of policymaking, they also act in relation to each other. There ↳ are, in general, few straightforward hierarchies in global governance; the power at the disposal of different global social policy actors, though, differs remarkably. Global social policy actors unfold their agency in complex, multilevelled, overlapping systems of interaction. Some developments happen in a parallel manner—for example, different social policy fields can be conceptualized in isolation from each other and dealt with by different 'ministries' at the global level (Deacon 2007). At the same time, no social policy agency and position is uncontested; commonly there are various different actors around a (perhaps most) powerful one or alongside two opposing epistemic communities, which support either one side or question the policy as a whole, thus drawing attention to particular groups or issues. At times, a number of global social policy actors can be united by a particular concern or search for solutions to a particular global social problem, which is perceived as a common one. Such situations may generate particular modes of exchange and policy learning. They can also result in goal setting (such as the Millennium Development Goals).

As actorness can be individual or collective, so can the relationship between actors be based on a formal, inter-organizational collaboration or be the product of a personal or professional friendship between staff of different global organizations, perhaps based on alumni networks or colleagues and collaborators from previous employments. The complex network-like relationships within and between global social policy actors have been described frequently. With the contributions to this edited volume as well as with the framing chapters, we would like to improve our understanding about the interests, strategies, forms, and mechanisms of not just the agency of particular global social policy actors but also in their relationships with each other and their relative roles within broader systems of global social governance.

By What Mechanisms Do Global Social Policy Actors Exert Influence?

The actual impact of global social policy actors on national social policy and legislation is frequently contested. Global social policy scholars find themselves in a peculiar dilemma of having to defend their topic of concern and interest as such ('does it matter at all?'), while they are asked to be overly critical of particular global social policy actors (e.g. the World Bank) that are commonly considered as extremely 'threatening' to the 'social' development of national policies. How can we deal with this obvious tension? Instead of fighting the unwinnable fight of providing waterproof evidence of global actor influence on national social policies, in the studies presented in this ↳ book we distinguish between different mechanisms of global social policy through which global social policy actors might develop a particular impact on the development of national social policy. It is not our intention to mark such mechanisms and influences as essentially good or bad; we attempt to understand, rather, the functioning and procedures and strategies used by global social policy actors to have an impact.

One such mechanism, which has been written about previously, is the production and spread of knowledge (e.g. Broad 2006; St Clair 2006; Stone 2005; Stone and Maxwell 2005). The secretariats of IOs, global think tanks (as one type of CSO), the development institutions of nation states, and other actors have engaged in theoretical and applied research and have provided expertise in key questions of global and national social policy. Some of them run explicit training programmes to disseminate this knowledge. Their websites are

also important tools for spreading information. Other related mechanisms are various types of events (workshops, conferences, book launches, and so on) used to gather particular epistemic communities for sharing and spreading ideas. By these mechanisms information and ideas are spread both vertically (to other policy levels) as well as horizontally (at the global/or if applicable regional level). For example, with regard to appropriate pension policy, a fully developed contestational discourse has evolved with extensive advocacy activity from major epistemic communities. Another possible mechanism is organized multilevel governance, including formal legal frameworks. This is more applicable to the regional and mostly the EU level. One outcome of the book will be a more comprehensive map of different mechanisms of influence in global social policy, derived from the case studies reported in the different chapters.

Plan of the Book

In this volume we wish to contribute a valuable account of the diverse actors and agencies in global social governance. In this introduction and in Chapter 2 by Bob Jessop, Part I concerns conceptual approaches that help understand and contextualize global social policy actors within a broader system and approach of global social governance as networks or epistemic communities, as well as interwoven in complex relationships of inter- and inner-organizational relations. Against the backdrop of these chapters, key global social policy actors of a different colour will be presented, showing their agency as global social governance in a historical and current perspective. One key group of actors is IOs, dealt with in Part II. While there are numerous IOs within and outside the United Nations (UN) system engaged in some way in global

social policy discourses, this book focuses on three ↳ particularly prominent and major ones—the ILO, World Bank, and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)—in order to draw some comparative conclusions on their agency and governance mechanisms. While this perspective concerns the secretariats of IOs rather than the power of particular states, which form these organizations, Part III comes close to examining the national influence while still studying it as a form of collective agency: we look here at different groupings of countries that in some form of trans- or supranational organization or institution set specific global social policy goals and agendas, and which may evolve into highly influential actors, both internally and externally. This part contains chapters on the EU, BRICS (the five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), and the G20. Part IV focuses on non-state actors, including chapters on NGOs and civil society organizations, the media as global social policy actors, and influential individuals who shape global social governance in their personal way.

As the guiding chapter in Part I, our introduction paves the way for an actor-centred approach to global social governance. We highlight the necessity to think beyond existing conceptualizations and approaches in order to fully grasp the range of global social governance. In Chapter 2 Bob Jessop conceptualizes global social governance from a metatheoretical perspective. By breaking down global social governance and policy into its respective parts and exploring each aspect individually using different theoretical strands, he provides us with an enriched understanding of the meanings of global social governance.

In Part II, Bob Deacon reports on the recent position of the ILO as a re-emerging key global social policy actor through its dominant role in conceptualizing and organizing its network around issues of global social protection. Therefore, the major focus of Chapter 3 is the role of the ILO as a global social policy coordinator. In addition, Deacon also traces the significant influence of individuals within the ILO. In Chapter 4 Karen Mundy and Antoni Verger discuss the changing role of the World Bank and question the, still persistent, view of the World Bank as a neo-liberal advisor in global social policies. Using the example of the World Bank's education policy, they demonstrate that the formal education policies are the iterative outcome of internal dynamics, political opportunity structures, and geopolitical or ideological shifts among the most powerful governments. The OECD's position in global social policy is the focus of Rianne Mahon's

contribution. In Chapter 5 she illustrates how the organization institutionally shapes the view in the field of family policy and traces how social affairs, in particular family issues, found their way into the organization.

Part III of this volume highlights the role of long-established as well as newly emerging powerful state formations in global social policy. Valeria Fargion and Marco Mayer explore in Chapter 6 major

contradictions between what the EU proposes internally and what it announces externally in respect to ↳ global social governance. The EU has slowly but surely developed the most advanced social policy at the supranational level. It is also increasingly unfolding as an external power, and therefore propagates its 'European Social Model' abroad. As the new kids on the block, the so-called BRICS states have recently become influential agents in social policy issues. In Chapter 7 Rebecca Surender and Marian Urbina-Ferretjans investigate the characteristics, processes, and implications of increasing 'South-South' relations for global social governance. John Kirton, Julia Kulik, and Caroline Bracht focus on the role of the G20 in global social policy in Chapter 8. Considered as the forum of leaders for advanced and emerging countries, the G20 has become a significant conglomeration of states whose social policy goals have not yet been analysed in significant depth. By examining key documents of the G20, the authors fill this gap and argue that social themes have steadily been connected to the initial issues of employment and labour.

Civil society and NGOs are also important global social policy actors. However, they have often not been sufficiently considered in regard to their agency in global social governance (exceptions are Stubbs 2003; Lewis and Kanji 2009). We fill this gap in Part IV of our volume. Although NGOs are particularly active actors in national social policy processes, their engagement and role in global social governance is much more complex and ambiguous. Chapter 9, by Johannes Kruse and Kerstin Martens, seeks to conceptualize NGOs as explicit actors shaping global social governance. These include NGOs active in diverse policy fields, for example through the World Social Forum. Special types of civil society actors are philanthropic organizations. In Chapter 10 Frank Nullmeier examines the media as a global social actor and shows, with a particular focus on the media reception of the ILO in a number of international newspapers, that the realities of media representation (e.g. regarding the social protection floor) might be different to those of scholars and practitioners. Chapter 11, by Paul Stubbs and Janine Wedel, focuses on the role of individuals as global policy entrepreneurs. With reference to the concept of policy flexians, they examine how power brokers such as Jeffrey S. Sachs and George Soros influence global social governance through their particular lens. They also address questions of accountability in this context.

While Chapter 1 sets the stage for this edited volume on theoretical and empirical contributions by actors and their agency under the umbrella of global social governance, the conclusion by Alexandra Kaasch, Chapter 12, provides a mapping of the different actors and their relations to each other in global social governance. She highlights new perspectives on the complex relationship within and between global social policy actors, focusing on epistemic communities and global knowledge networks as well as their overlapping and to some extent competing agencies. This chapter will also contribute to the contextualization of the broader environment within which specific actors—dealt with in the following chapters—can be understood.

An Actor's Approach to Global Social Governance

This volume contributes to the literature on global social policy by illuminating the varied impact of transnational actors on national social policymaking and by offering broader theoretical contributions to the study of global policies that go beyond a pure application to the field of social policy. By discussing various (groups of) actors with reference to key theoretical approaches in the study of global social policy, this book makes a very important and needed contribution to several bodies of literature. It contributes to the conceptualization and theorization of the field of global social policy specifically. However, discussions about the development, roles, positions, and governance mechanisms of global social policy actors also inform the social policy literature. This book provides compelling evidence of how particular transnational actors, structures, and contexts need to be taken into account if we want to provide an appropriate picture of the world's social state and social policy arrangements on all levels. It is, furthermore, unlikely that solutions to the most pressing social problems that the world faces today will and can be found, and provided for, strictly at the national level.

The focus on different social policy fields contributes to the specialization of literature, for example, education policies, family policies, or social protection. By focusing on IOs active in the realm of social policy, examining significant state formations engaged in social activities outside their own borders, and including civil society actors that shape social governance on a global scale, we examine a broad spectrum of actors in global social governance. In addition, this book attempts to speak to the global governance literature by emphasizing the value of a social perspective on the global world, global problems, and global governance. This leads to a refined understanding of current global governance as well as it can be compared and contrasted with characterizations of other global governance fields, such as environmental governance.

By employing a range of different and interdisciplinary academic perspectives and approaches, including political science, social policy, sociology, international law, international relations, organization studies, and development studies, the contributions speak, and are accessible to, a broad academic readership, if not also international practitioners and activists. Thus, it brings together people who—owing to their rootedness in their specific discipline—usually do not necessarily meet and speak with each other, and it unites them under the theme of global social governance. In addition, the chapters represent useful teaching material for courses on global governance, social policy, and international and European global social policy.

There are also limits to this collection. Obviously we cannot deal with every actor of global social governance, but needed to make choices. Therefore our volume is far from being a comprehensive or exhaustive account of all relevant ↳ and interesting global social policy actors. We made careful choices within each part of the book; however, other choices could have been made. Nonetheless, in providing this actor-centred account to global social policy we hope we establish avenues for further research, for example on other kinds of state formations, such as CIVETS (Columbia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey, South Africa) or state formations of the Middle East countries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab countries. Similarly, other kinds of non-state actors need additional consideration as providers of global social products and services, be they companies or philanthropic organizations.

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