Global Vulnerability and Social Policy: An Agenda for Discussion¹

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ABSTRACT: As changes in the global economy and in family structure place the lives and opportunities of many individuals at risk, social policy plays a major role in addressing the degree of vulnerability individuals will face in a society. In this paper, we present some of the most important issues scholars and policy-makers need to consider about the role social policy plays in a globalized world. First, we argue that the major aim of social policy is the furtherance of social citizenship. We understand social citizenship as the enhancement of individual and community capabilities to lead a decent life and to make informed choices in face of a changing global economic environment. Second, we suggest that the furtherance of social citizenship should be the benchmark against which to evaluate the degree of success or failure of any social policy. Then, after discussing some of the major social, ideological, and economic forces shaping social policy, we propose that a new type of welfare regime is emerging in the developing world. This regime is part liberal and part paternalistic, and some of its major components are the de-centralization of public administration to local authorities, a preference for targeted social policies instead of universal ones, and local community participation. Third, we argue that some of the main challenges of contemporary social policy are the product of internal and international migration, labor market instability, rising costs of subsistence in cities, and increasing spatial segregation. Finally, we suggest some of the theoretical frameworks, data, and methods scholars may want use to advance research on social policy.

KEYWORDS: Globalization, Social Citizenship, Social Policy, Vulnerability, Welfare Regimes.

RESUMO: As mudanças na economia global e na estrutura familiar requerem que as políticas sociais incluam em suas prioridades a avaliação do grau de vulnerabilidade que as pessoas em situação de risco estão sujeitas nesta sociedade. Neste artigo apresentamos algumas das principais questões que os estudiosos e os formuladores de políticas sociais precisam considerar sobre o papel das políticas sociais em uma sociedade globalizada. Primeiro, argüimos que o principal objetivo das políticas sociais é a promoção da cidadania social. Nos entendemos que cidadania social é o fortalecimento das capacidades individuais e comunitárias de conquistar uma vida decente e de fazer escolhas informadas diante das mudanças globais e econômicas. Segundo, sugerimos que a promoção da cidadania social deveria ser o principal indicador para avaliar o sucesso ou o fracasso das políticas sociais. Assim, depois de discutir algumas das maiores forças sociais, ideológicas e econômicas que estão modelando as políticas sociais, nos propomos que um novo tipo de regime de bem estar social esta emergindo nos países em desenvolvimento. Este regime é parte liberal e parte

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paternalista e alguns de seus principais componentes são a descentralização da Administração Pública para os governos locais, a preferência por políticas sociais específicas ao invés de políticas universais e a participação da comunidade local. Terceiro, nós arguimos que algumas das principais mudanças nas políticas sociais contemporâneas são produto das migrações internas e externas, da instabilidade do mercado de trabalho, da elevação do custo de vida nas cidades e do crescimento da segregação social. Finalmente, nos sugerimos alguns referenciais teóricos, dados e métodos que alguns estudiosos podem usar para avançar na pesquisa em políticas sociais.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Globalização, Cidadania, Política Social, Vulnerabilidade, Sistemas de Bem Estar Social.

Introduction

An essential starting-point for discussion is defining the purpose of social policy. We see the essential aim of social policy as the furtherance of social citizenship. Social policy is about strengthening those rights and obligations that enable all members of a society to share equally in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society (Marshall 1964 [1949]:78). From this perspective, social policy is not the handmaiden of economic policy, with its objectives confined either to alleviating the damage economic policy causes or to providing the human capital appropriate for the current model of economic growth. Both these aims can be part of social policy, but they are subordinate to its main goals of enhancing individual and community capabilities to lead a decent life, and to make informed choices in face of a changing global economic environment that creates both opportunities and risks.

This perspective sets a goal and a benchmark against which to evaluate the success or failure of particular social policies. By this standard, for instance, it is not enough to judge the success of targeted anti-poverty programs by the percentage of their intended recipients who actually received them. We also need to know whether these programs and the ways in which they are implemented raise capabilities in an enduring way.

Standards of evaluation need to be complemented by an understanding of how social policy is used in practice. Governing elites are likely to use social policy to further their own political and economic interests and to adjust their views of its purpose to those ends. Thus, Michael Mann (1987) criticizes Marshall's emphasis on social rights as the most advanced stage in citizenship as neglecting the potential of social policy to enable authoritarian regimes to co-opt workers and weaken civil and political liberties. Consequently, the second major issue that we want to place on the agenda for discussion is that of the shaping of social policy by the dominant ethos of the time. In the present case, these are the economic and political ideologies associated with contemporary globalization.

These ideologies will have a different impact on social policy depending on a country or region's level of economic development and on cultural and institutional traditions. These are important issues for comparative research. Dominant ideologies are not the only sources of change in social policy. In a globalized world, initiatives from 'below' can be communicated transnationally and be the basis for powerful social movements seeking to

transform policy on issues such as gender, indigenous rights or migrant rights. However, the nature of dominant ideologies and their contradictions set the challenges facing contemporary social movements as well as the opportunities open to them.

We also need to consider the changes in the social and economic environment that form the often harsh reality against which policy and ideology must be judged. We will look at urbanization, labor markets and at demographic change. Not all of these changes are directly linked to globalization trends, but globalization intensifies their impact by making local populations increasingly vulnerable to global economic crises and global economic strategies. The complexities of the challenges facing social policy require a multifaceted approach to data and methods that is discussed in the concluding section.

The Shaping of Social Policy

Our starting point is Esping-Andersen's (1990:26-29) three different types of welfare regime that emerged as ways of resolving the contradiction between social citizenship and the market in the advanced capitalist democracies. These are the liberal, the corporatist, and the social-democratic. In the liberal type, social welfare is obtained mainly by market mechanisms, such as private pension or health care schemes, supplemented by minimal public assistance programs targeted at the poor. In the corporatist type of social welfare there is a stratified system of state provision that provides different levels and kinds of benefits to different occupational groups, while reserving to the family many of its traditional welfare functions. Finally, in the social-democratic type there is a universalistic system of state provision in which all citizens are entitled, as individuals, to a high level of benefits.

These types of welfare regime are the outcome of historical processes, such as the contrast between the market-driven development of the Anglo-Saxon countries and the state-centered development of the late capitalist developers in the continent of Europe. Differences in the patterns of development combine with differences in class formation to produce consistent differences between the three country groupings in the way welfare is administered and provided. Crucial to sustaining these welfare regimes are the class coalitions that favor state or market provision. In the liberal model, only a marginalized group benefits from public welfare, while other classes see the market as their main source

of welfare. In the other two models, historical factors lead middle as well as working classes to see welfare as a public provision.

The three models of welfare capitalism are, then, useful reminders that there are alternative ways of implementing social citizenship even in advanced market economies. Esping-Andersen's analysis also makes clear that social policies are not politically neutral. They stratify societies in different ways, and create the bases for the political coalitions that gain power. The concept of welfare regimes can also be applied to developing countries, but needs to take account of the much greater unevenness of development in which differences in the amount that is being spent on social policies are as important as is how they are spent (Filgueira 1996).

In the Latin American context, a stratified corporatist type of welfare regime of limited reach dominated during the Import Substituting Industrialization (ISI) period, in which social security and health benefits were gradually extended to key sectors of the formally employed population. The extension of these benefits, along with public education, were less contested in the ISI period than were the extension of political and civil rights, which were frequently curtailed by military dictatorships (Roberts 1994; Filgueira 1996). The extension of social rights was a means by which elites could co-opt crucial sectors of the newly emerging working-class and was part of the modernization project that even the authoritarian and nationalist regimes of the time espoused. We want to suggest for discussion that in the contemporary period, a new type of welfare regime is emerging in Latin America, and, we suspect, elsewhere in the developing world. It is part liberal and part paternalistic. It is emerging with considerable differences between countries, but with similar consequences for the relations between states and their low-income populations.

Like the welfare regimes identified by Esping-Andersen (1990), the new type of welfare regime is based on particular assumptions about the role of the state, the market and the household in providing welfare. It also depends upon and creates particular class coalitions. Its main policy components are, first, the de-centralization of public administration to local authorities, including the delegation of certain services to the private sector or NGOs. Second is a preference for targeted social policies as against ones based on universalistic entitlements. The new social policies are often market friendly in terms of the privatization of pensions and health services or the deregulation of labor markets. However, the new

policies also mandate local community participation in administering services and generally give greater support for voice at the local level than in the past. In the ethos of the new policies, the greater role for local participation in social policy is seen as an essential means of reforming corrupt and bureaucratic states through the potential economic efficiency and accountability of de-centralization, partnerships and targeting (Franco 1996). The new social policies, including the emphasis on greater local popular participation, are endorsed by the multilateral agencies and encouraged by the conditions attached to loans (World Bank 2003).

This emerging welfare regime represents what Dagnino (2003) terms the perverse confluence of two projects. One is the project of a minimal state that entrusts the market and civil society with the state's former social responsibilities and the other is the project of an active and participatory citizenry that naturally will demand more of the state. These changes are potentially contradictory in that both democratization and decentralization defuse and limit movements as well as provide new spaces for collective action. This perverse confluence is, we suggest, an integral part of the new political economy that generates the new social policies. This political economy is based both on the weakness of the market and of civil society in developing countries. The market, by itself, fails to provide full and adequate employment as attested by continuing high levels of rural and urban poverty, unemployment and informal employment. At the same time, the state takes on a proactive developmental role faced by what technocrats see as the incapacity of civil society in terms of low levels of popular education, the weakness of independent civic or professional associations, and the malfunctioning of democratic politics. The state both takes on the role of organizing citizens and improving their quality. Nevertheless, its reach is limited both by resources and by the demands that can potentially be made upon it.

What the change of welfare regime implies are potentially radical changes in the relations of the state with citizens. The limited bureaucratic authoritarian state of old is increasingly replaced by a proactive state that intervenes in the lives of individual citizens. These new relationships are often not mediated by civil society intermediaries, such as political parties or trade unions, but are direct and technocratic. Thus, local communities must compete with each other over projects that will access state benefits. These benefits are no longer universal entitlements, but must be earned by demonstrating worth and need. These various

trends mean that the citizen's relation with the state is now more likely to be based on individual identities, more multithreaded, and a more necessary part of everyday life than it was in the 1960s and 1970s in Latin America. Contemporary social policy is a mix of state and private systems of service provision. The state system in health, pensions, and education becomes increasingly a system for lower-income populations. In this context, the impact of social policy on social stratification is complex and potentially far-reaching. The challenge for social policy research is, then, not the absence of the state, but its new ways of governing. These vary, of course, between countries, but they require us not only to look at what is spent on social policy in terms of percent of GDP, but how social policy is implemented.

Contemporary Challenges for Social Policy

High and persisting levels of poverty are clearly major challenges for contemporary social policy, but poverty needs to be placed within its spatial and social environment and the changing meaning of poverty understood in terms of the new challenges brought by global changes. In this section, we discuss two major changes that have a direct bearing on both social policy and poverty. One is urbanization and the other is demographic change.

Contemporary urbanization is increasingly affected by global rather than national economic processes. One of the impacts of globalization has been to increase both internal and international migration. Global agricultural trade undermines subsistence farming, as in the import of cheap corn to countries like Mexico. It also stimulates new forms of large-scale commercial farming, as in the case of soy bean production in Brazil, or smaller-scale, but capital intensive, farming in fruits, flowers, or market-garden products, such as asparagus, tomatoes, or avocados. The combined effects of the new forms of export farming, the packaging and transforming industries that surround them and the undermining of subsistence farming are to make rural populations increasingly dependent on off-farm incomes for survival. These increasingly involve short and long-distance migrations that are both internal and international. The rise of export industries in manufacturing and the services give rise to new cities and increase the attraction of some cities as against others, stimulating an urban-to-urban migration that, in Mexico, for example, is larger than rural-to-urban migration.

The scale of rural, urban and international migration in the contemporary world raises the substantial challenge for social policy of attending to the needs of those left behind. This has become an important issue in China, where various reports attest to the neglect of children left behind in the villages, even when cared for by extended family. Remittances have become an important source of both rural and urban survival throughout the developing world. However, they are not reliable and decrease the longer the migrant is absent. What is the best way to support the families left behind, particularly the children, mothers left alone to care for young children and the elderly?

The shift of population to cities is an old and familiar challenge for social policy since it makes poverty dependent on wages, not on the possibilities of self-subsistence. In the ISI period of urbanization in Latin America, the informal economy, land invasions and self-constructed housing did provide alternatives for those who did not have access to the formal housing and labor market. Indeed, as Mangin (1967) pointed out, squatter settlements in the major cities of Latin America were social policy ‘solutions’ as well as problems. Contemporary urbanization, we argue, does not so easily admit these informal solutions to the challenges of coping with urban life because of changes in the nature of labor markets, in the requirements for housing and infrastructure and, importantly, because of the increasingly negative effects of urban spatial segregation.

In the urban areas, a major challenge is labor market instability. In the 1960s and 1970s, the large Latin American cities offered prospects of social mobility to city-born and migrant alike as a result of the structural transformations of the economy from agricultural to non-agricultural work and from blue to white collar work (Oliveira and Roberts 1994; CEPAL 1986). There are now indications of a hardening of the occupational structure, with fewer opportunities for job and income mobility. Thus, though there are important increases in the proportion of the urban labor force working in well-paid white collar service occupations, the percentage of these ‘higher’ occupations has not changed since the 1970s, and remains at some 12% (Portes and Hoffman 2004). There are proportionately less jobs in the public sector or large-scale manufacturing industry, the one a victim of free market reforms, such as privatization, aimed at downsizing the state and the other reflecting the higher levels of productivity demanded by global competition. These jobs had been secure in the past, with contracts and social security. They are replaced by jobs in commerce, the services and

small-scale industry that often do not have a stable contract or social security. In Chile, perhaps the most economically dynamic Latin American economy, the proportion of workers in insecure job situations increased during the 1990s, even though poverty levels decreased. The urban worker in a developing country faces opportunities, but also substantial risks – of unemployment and of losing benefits.

The costs of subsisting in the contemporary city of developing countries are likely to be rising, thus increasing the vulnerability of low-income populations. Although the large metropolises of the developing world still have poor infrastructure and sub-standard housing, their increasing size and complexity makes it difficult for either governments or populations to rely on informal solutions to housing needs. In the Latin American cities, there are far fewer empty spaces to be seized by those seeking shelter, and these are mainly located on increasingly distant peripheries. Also, utilities, such as water and electricity, are now formally installed in almost all neighbourhoods, and, as a consequence, require payment and cannot be appropriated free of charge as often happened in the past. Another element adding to the costs of shelter in the large cities is state provision of housing to replace irregular settlements. Public housing projects rarely reached the poor in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, but they are increasing doing so today, as in the case of Santiago where an estimated 90% of the poor population is housed in projects financed by state loans between 1980 and 2000 (Tironi 2003). Many of these, as Marquez (2004) shows, have difficulty in meeting repayments.

But perhaps one of the most serious challenges for social policy is the growing spatial segregation of the cities. This segregation is occurring in two principle ways. One is through the increase of large-scale segregation as the poor find shelter on the peripheries of the cities or are located there in government housing projects. As the cities grow in size and the distance from periphery to center increases, so too does the social and physical isolation of low-income settlements. There is evidence that the poor are doubly disadvantaged when they live in homogeneously poor neighborhoods—from being poor and by the lack of local facilities or sources of aid and information (Kaztman 1999; Filgueira 2002). Isolated and without resources to maintain networks of aid and information, the poor living amongst those equally poor are more likely to be unemployed, to be victims of crime etc, than are

the poor, with similar educational and personal characteristics, that live amongst the non-poor (Kaztman et al. 2003).

The negative effects of segregation are likely to be intensified by the tendency of the wealthy to opt out of public services through private educational and health services, and, at the extreme, through living in gated communities with their own services. These tendencies towards socio-economic segregation are substantial challenges to social policy. They weaken the class coalitions in support of high quality public services. They also mean very unequal access to services. In education, there is the risk that only the wealthy can obtain the quality of education that will ensure access to the relatively small proportion of well-paid jobs. For most of the urban population, increases in their education level beyond primary school are unlikely to make a substantial difference to their incomes or job security. In health, also, differences in quality of care are exacerbated by segregation. There is a further important issue. The large metropolises of developing countries are rarely governed as a unit. Instead, they are split between a large number of separate jurisdictions, a tendency increased by decentralization policies. In the case of Santiago in Chile, despite a revenue sharing policy to balance out inequities, there are substantial differences in the per capita resources of schools in the wealthy municipalities as compared to the poor ones (Marcus 2004).

Contemporary demographic trends show considerable variation between countries, but, in general, birth rates are declining in most parts of the developing world. The potential advantages of this are offset by a decline in family size that makes some of the caring functions of the family – for the elderly or the young – more difficult. A dramatic example of this is China's one child policy, which has recently resulted in the government making annual payments to the rural elderly who only have one child (or two female children!). Also the migration of family members in search of jobs further undermines the function of the family as a caring institution. Traditional carers – women – are less available than before as a result of increases in women's labor force participation, resulting both from higher levels of education and from the need to generate more family income. The increase in the proportions of female-headed single parent families and of elderly one or two person families also attest to family fragmentation, as does the declining proportions, in many countries, of extended families.

González de la Rocha (2001) details the types of social isolation that can occur in urban situations as a result of the above trends – the infirm and those that care for them, the single mother, the returned migrants without resources to enter into networks of reciprocity. Now the issue is the poverty of resources of the urban poor, no longer the resources of poverty in terms of social networks that were emphasized in studies of the urban poor in developing countries in the 1970s and 1980s. Taking account of individual situations and individual trajectories now becomes an important challenge for social policy. The poor are poor for different reasons and helping them overcome their poverty requires attention to those differences, and not simply uniform packets of aid.

Current research approaches to understanding poverty in Latin American cities that use the concept of vulnerability illuminate this complexity (Kaztman et al. 1999). Changes in the economy and in family structure bring risks to the contemporary Latin American city that can no longer be as easily handled as in the past through self-help and extended kin-based networks. Examples of groups made vulnerable by changes in economy and society are family businesses, the young in face of unemployment, workers on temporary contracts, female-headed single-parent households, and the elderly. We saw above that neighborhood can also be a factor in vulnerability.

Social policy implementation in several Latin American countries has adopted a vulnerability perspective. Programs in Argentina and Chile, for example, target “vulnerable” groups, usually on a community basis providing special programs for single mothers, the elderly, the young, and the handicapped. An issue with this approach is that it does not take an integrated view of the family and community context of vulnerability. As Kaztman (1999) points out, the disadvantage of the vulnerability perspective is that it can focus attention exclusively on the situation of the poor and neglect the responsibilities of other actors, such as state or private agencies.

Absolute poverty and state neglect may be less of an issue than is the state’s uniform handling of poverty situations that need more flexible and individualized approaches (Rosanvallon 2000). Uniform treatment makes the poor dependent on state services and less able to manage individually and strategically the range of institutional resources in education, information, or health required for survival in modern society. The poor are socially excluded not by neglect, but by the way more powerful actors in society channel

the access of the poor to resources. Inequality of opportunity, rather than poverty, becomes the major research issue from the social exclusion perspective. In addition, inequality is likely to be a more persistent feature of urban economies than is poverty.

Implications for Data and Research

To the extent that the challenge for social policy is vulnerability and risk, then there is a need for measures that go beyond states, such as poverty, to indicate probabilities that certain types of people are likely to fall into poverty, stay in it or get out of it. These require longitudinal surveys that follow a panel of people over time. Some of the household surveys in Latin America have some capacity to measure such processes, through repeating interviews with households over a period of a year or year and a half. They do show that a state, such as poverty or female employment, is quite different when viewed as a process in terms of the proportions of people who are always poor, never poor or intermittently poor.

Understanding the negative effects of spatial location, requires much better and more standardized geographical information systems than we have at present. Censuses are an important source of such data, but they need to provide, for public analysis, census block data and on a series of variables that are comparable between cities and countries. Census mapping is increasingly used by governments in social policy analysis and implementation as in the *Oportunidades* program in Mexico and in the *Foncodes* poverty programs in Peru. But these data need to be available for public analysis and debate. Mapping is also a way of analyzing the rural and the urban dimensions of the social policy challenge. It is not simply individual characteristics that determine life chances and welfare, but also spatial location – how near or far one is from a school or health clinic, from internet communication etc.

Given the importance of the changing relations between states and populations in terms of social policy, then case studies of policy implementation are a necessity. There are many hurdles between a well-formulated policy and its achieving its objective at the local level. Not the least of which are the different perceptions and priorities of those involved in the implementation process – state bureaucrats with their career preoccupations, community leaders with their own goals and sensitive to the divisions within their own communities. In this respect the notion of interface becomes an important methodological tool in

contemporary social policy analysis (Long 2001). This notion draws our attention to the various crucial situations in which those involved in policy implementation and those at the receiving end come into conflict or negotiate understandings. The current social policy situation is one in which interfaces are increasingly complicated. There are many state agencies involved in policy implementation on a sectoral basis. The intermediaries are more diverse than in the past, involving local and international NGOS, both religious and secular. Communities themselves are perhaps more fragmented, with diverse interests within them and a diverse leadership. Since much of contemporary social policy seeks to change people rather than administer standard benefits, the relationships involved in implementation are complex and personal. They may empower, but they may also create dependencies, and understanding what types of relationship and interface situation leads to the one outcome rather than the other is an important research goal. Understanding this and its consequences for enhancing social citizenship requires case studies, based on observation and interview. The ethnographic method is as essential to policy analysis as is the analysis of quantitative data.

Quantitative data and its analysis must not be neglected. Faria (2005) comments that Latin American social science has tended to theorize at the expense of data analysis, leaving policy analysis to economists. He points to the opportunities now being created for social scientists by the increasing public availability of census and survey data. Also, data from sectoral ministries such as education and health, as well as from anti-poverty programs are potentially available for social science analysis.

Finally, we need more comparable cross-national research. This is not easy, particularly in terms of ensuring comparability between national case studies of policy formulation and implementation. Even statistical data, however, are often not strictly comparable, although the International Agencies have made considerable strides in this direction with respect to censuses, household and labor surveys in recent years.

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