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Global ideas of welfare and the narrowing scope of social policy

Julia Chukwuma*

Abstract

This paper documents contemporary trends within social policymaking. I illustrate how the scope of social policy has narrowed over time, with social assistance programmes nowadays being favoured over more comprehensive forms of social policy. I argue that, overall, social service delivery has been subject to privatisation with the ascendancy of neo-liberalism. I moreover provide an overview of the relevant literature discussing the evolution of welfare states (and their retrenchment). With an initial focus on the European context, I survey theories according to which welfare states emerged as a consequence of industrialism, were the outcome of class struggles or a result of historical institutionalism and/or power relations. I then move on to review concepts and theories that account for social policy trajectories in countries of the Global South, and Africa in particular. Many of Africa's post-colonial states sought to promote social policy as a way of facilitating social cohesion and nation-building and in order to create inclusive states. Still, the rise of neo-liberalism significantly shaped and influenced their particular practices. Finally, I introduce Ben Fine's Systems of Provision (SoP) approach as the theoretical framework, which stands out amongst the various theories seeking to explain social policy trajectories. A crucial benefit of the SoP approach is that it encourages and facilitates a context- and system-specific analysis, helping to understand how contextual factors and structures determine consumption outcomes in a specific setting. Moreover, it takes account of both social dynamics and constructs as well as global trends, such as globalisation and neo-liberalisation, which impact processes and narratives as well as the meaning that participants within a system of provision attach to the consumption of a specific good and/or service.

Keywords: social policy, social service delivery, neoliberalism, privatisation, Africa

JEL classification: I38, H50, P16

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1. Introduction

In the early 2000s, “social protection” re-appeared as a “buzzword” in the international development discourse, and became actively promoted as a new global public policy to address poverty (Hickey and Seekings, 2017, p. 9). In response, the dynamics and factors explaining the increased attention to social protection since the early 2000s have been discussed broadly in the scholarly debate. According to Barrientos and Hulme (2009), social protection evolved as a “quiet revolution” and, in line with Hanlon et al. (2010), social protection seems to have emerged as an alternative to “the neoliberal economic model”, but also “the Northern model of social protection”. Similarly, for (de Haan, 2011, p. 3), social protection appears to have served as the “ideal vehicle for addressing the critique of the impact of structural adjustment”. Other scholars, for instance, Peck and Theodore (2015), point out that the rising popularity of social protection as a policy instrument is the consequence of “a global process of policy reform” led by the World Bank, highlighting the dominance of the World Bank in shaping development policy.

Yet, the newfangled global attention on scaling up social protection initiatives in low-income countries needs to be treated with caution. Upon closer inspection, the notion of what universal and integrated social policy entails seems to have narrowed significantly. Certain social policy dimensions such as free and affordable health care for all, which, in the 1950s and 1960s, were deemed essential to improving human well-being, only marginally figure in today’s policy discussions. Today, projections of social policy, including by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), tend to favour residualism. This promotes social protection programmes based on means-tested targeting, income transfers directed at the poor and the imposition of conditionalities. This differs from more universal transfers (such as universal pensions for the elderly, child grants or disability benefits) or policies (Lavinias, 2017). In many instances, social protection programmes take the shape of residual social assistance schemes, narrowing the initial universal scope of social policy. Today’s focus is often on income-targeted social assistance schemes, such as conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes, which have become “the primary – and sometimes the only – social protection instrument addressing poverty and vulnerability” (Barrientos, 2011, p. 243). Fine (2009, p. 3), for instance, emphasises the regressive impact of neo-liberalism “on income distribution and ... [its] antipathy to social policy in deference to individual and market responsibility”. As a result, all-encompassing social policies, addressing broader dimensions of human well-being, reaching beyond the immediate relief of poverty, are nowadays largely being disregarded. More broadly, this trend seems to reflect the “impoverishment” of the concept of development itself (Harris-White, 2006; Fischer, 2018). Today, development is understood as poverty alleviation and deliberations of wider social and economic transformation receive limited attention. Adesina (2020) underscores that the “proclamation of social assistance, in the form of means-tested cash transfers, as a ‘quiet revolution’ in the global South or a ‘development revolution’ ... is conclusive evidence of the ‘impoverishment of the concept of development’”.

Thus, while, more recently, there have been formal pledges to universalism, e.g. via the Social Protection Floors Recommendation and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, such wider formal commitment to universal social protection seems to reflect the narrowing of the scope of social policy more generally (Mkandawire, 2011; Adesina, 2015; Martinez Franzoni and Sanchez-Ancochea, 2016; Lavinias, 2017). According to Fine (2012, p. 23), the World Bank, in particular, is responsible for discrediting the welfare state, which had been characterised as “the embodiment of universalism”. Similarly, Fischer (2018, p. 222) emphasises that “the strongest influence on this shift of meaning probably comes from the World Bank, which explicitly takes the position that universalism is achieved as long as everyone has access to something, **regardless of how this is provided**” (emphasis added). The World Bank is commonly perceived as opposed to a comprehensive welfare state and of “[falling] short of any commitment to universalism or social justice” (Kabeer, 2014, p. 339). However, nowadays, also the new policies of once traditional proponents of a human-rights based, comprehensive social security system and inclusive social policies that cover a multitude of contingencies (such as the International Labour Organisation, ILO) often disregard the broader range of available social policy instruments.

In this light, it becomes clear that in spite of the notion of social protection as an “ideal concept for the consensus-oriented aid industry” (de Haan, 2011, p. 3), there is no clear agreement on what exactly social protection, or social policy, is (according to whom) and how its functions can be defined. In addition, apart from differences between development actors, an internal consensus within different international organisations is often missing with each agency having both “a more ‘economistic’ and a more ‘social’ face, depending on who represents the agency” (Voipio, 2007, p. 54). Nonetheless, the disregard of the broader range of available social policy instruments has been criticised. And, in response to the tendency to focus on narrow forms of social protection, Adésinà (2015, p. 100) has called for a “return to a wider vision of social policy” and pleads for the “recognition of the multiple tasks of social policy – production, protection, redistribution, reproduction, and nation-building/social cohesion”.

This paper examines the rise of social protection in the international development discourse and reviews how social policy has traditionally been analysed within the literature (both within development studies and beyond). Against the backdrop of the shrinking scope of social policy, section 2 argues that to the present day, there is no consensus on what social policy is, which programmes, instruments and systems it should entail and to what extent and under which conditions it should be offered. No commonly agreed definition of social policy prevails, and development actors continue to use a plurality of terms interchangeably (social protection, social assistance, etc.). Section 3 contends that the understanding of social policy and its functions strongly depend on underlying ideological positions as well as political and economic interests of development organizations and national governments, which implement different policies in practice. Notably, two distinct ideological positions are

identified. On the one hand, proponents of the instrumentalist position consider social policy as a means to achieve economic growth and to manage socio-economic risks of the poor. On the other hand, advocates of an activist position comprehend social policy as a human right for all citizens and not only a residual group. Section 4 turns to an exploration of the existing literature on the evolution of welfare and social policy. The section examines factors explaining the emergence of Keynesian welfare states in post-war Europe as well as their retrenchment with the ascendancy of neo-liberalism throughout the 1980s. This is followed by a review of the literature analysing social policy trajectories and trends within countries of the Global South, and on the African continent especially. Against this backdrop, I single out the Systems of Provision (SoP) approach as an apt analytical framework to guide my analysis of how social policy takes form in a specific context and sector (section 5). I lay out the origin, theoretical background and key characteristics of the SoP approach, including an overview of the evolution of the SoP approach from a framework focused on private and commercialised consumption to a theory incorporating public consumption (previously often disregarded by consumption theorists as social policy). I discuss the five “fundamental” elements of SoP research and highlight its anchoring in Critical Political Economy. Section 6 concludes that, in practice, the scope of social policy has narrowed since the 1950s and that, in a broad field of theories exploring social policy developments, the Systems of Provision approach stands out, mainly due to its attachment to an investigation of system- and context-specific determinants.

2. Social policy and social protection: a contested terrain

Despite the rising popularity of social protection in the international development discourse, there is no consensus on what social protection refers to, nor on how it should be operationalized. No common definitions of social policy or social protection are available and several terms (such as social security, welfare, social entitlements, etc.) are in use. Midgley (2012, p. 8) highlights that “no generally accepted, standard definition of the term [social protection] has yet emerged. In addition, a large number of synonyms for social protection are currently in use”. The concept itself is elastic and employed differentially across a spectrum of stakeholders (Standing, 2007b, p. 521; Midgley, 2012, p. 8; Drolet, 2016, p. 76). Scholars, such as Standing (2007b, p. 512), emphasize the importance of distinguishing between different terms, arguing that e.g. welfare, social security and social protection should not be used interchangeably. According to him, social protection is the broadest term, encompassing the “full range of protective transfers, services, and institutional safeguards supposed to protect the population ‘at risk’ of being ‘in need’”. For Standing, social security only covers state-based entitlement systems guarding against unforeseen threats, while the term welfare state is used differently depending on the country context, but is generally understood to be targeted at promoting happiness, social justice, income equality or equal life chances (Standing, 2007b, pp. 512–513). He argues that in most low-income countries, the main focus has been on

expanding social assistance programmes in order to remedy the gap in social insurance and contributory social security schemes, which primarily served civil servants in the formal sector who are able to contribute to these schemes (Standing, 2007b, p. 515). Another view is presented by Midgley (2012, p. 10), who highlights that there is broad spectrum of terms in development discourses, including “social security, economic security, income security, income protection, income transfers, cash transfers, transfer payments, social transfers, tax funded benefits, entitlements, and welfare among others”. He contends that social protection only gained popularity recently: “for many decades, social security was preferred and most academic literature as well as official documents and international conventions referred to social security rather than social protection” (Midgley, 2012, pp. 9–10).

In turn, according to Fischer (2018), social policy encompasses social protection, with the latter consisting of social insurance programmes, social assistance programmes and labour market regulations as proposed by Townsend (2009).^{*} While social insurance is based on work-related contributions along the life-cycle, social assistance is financed by tax revenues and addresses the needs of selected segments of the population, subject to poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion most directly (Freeland, 2013, p. 25). In countries of the Global North, social assistance programmes cover only a very small minority of the population. In developing countries, however, social assistance is the standard social protection instrument to address vulnerability and poverty (Barrientos, 2011, p. 243). Nonetheless, for Fischer (2018, p. 227), inspired by the body of work of Thandika Mkandawire, the prime focus on social protection in international development is misplaced, as it constitutes only a part of social policy. A similar view is reflected in the definition of social policy provided by Mackintosh and Tibandebage (2004, p. 143), who resort to a broad definition of social policy, conceiving it as the entirety of “governmental and non-governmental public action [shaping] social provisioning such as health and education”. As a result of the vast variances in conceiving what social policy and/or social protection is and the interchangeable use of these different terms, there is no consensus on its scope, main objectives, instruments or best practices.[†] However, generally, an emphasis on public interventions to address poverty and vulnerability is reflected in most established definitions of social protection. Furthermore, many definitions of social protection propose measures to promote resilience against shocks. Often, this is based “on the understanding that a

^{*} Additionally, O'Brien et al. (2018) list social care, alongside social assistance, as a distinct form of non-contributory social protection.

[†] Notably, Midgley discusses the extent to which the variety of definitions and terms may be a challenge for research and policymaking. On the one hand, he reflects that “academics [may] need to agree on basic terminologies if they are to communicate effectively and undertake research that can inform policy” (Midgley, 2012, p. 10). On the other hand, “[t]here may be merit in using a broad umbrella term to connote a category of interventions rather than specific programs. In this sense, social protection refers not to a particular type of intervention but to a category of interventions. Attention would then be focused specifically on particular programs that are easier to define. For example, there is much more agreement among scholars about the definition of social assistance, food for work, and tax credits than there is about the meaning of social protection” (Midgley, 2012, p. 11).

primary cause of persistent poverty is to be found in the constraints faced by the poor in taking advantage of economic opportunity, which can be explained, to a great extent, by their vulnerability to the impact of economic, social and natural hazards” (Barrientos, 2011, p. 2).[‡]

Other scholars provide broader and far-reaching definitions of social policy. Mkandawire (2001, p. 1) has continuously criticised the conception of social policy as a residual social safety net, strongly advocating for the importance of social policy to address overall concerns of social development **in coherency with economic policy**. He urges caution regarding the tendency of making economic development the sole concern of social policy, which he deems “undercuts the intrinsic value of social policy” (Mkandawire, 2011, pp. 150–152).[§] Hence, while a multitude of existing definitions of social policy, social protection, social assistance, social security, etc. exist, I deem the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development’s (UNRISD) understanding of social policy (based on Mkandawire (2001), and also more in line with Fischer’s broader conception of social policy encompassing social protection) the most relatable. I hence adopt their definition of social policy as

state intervention that directly affects social welfare, social institutions and social relations. It involves overarching concerns with redistribution, production, reproduction and protection, and works in tandem with economic policy in pursuit of national social and economic goals. Social policy does not merely deal with the “causalities” of social changes and processes; it is also a contribution to the welfare of society as a whole (UNRISD, 2006, p. 1).

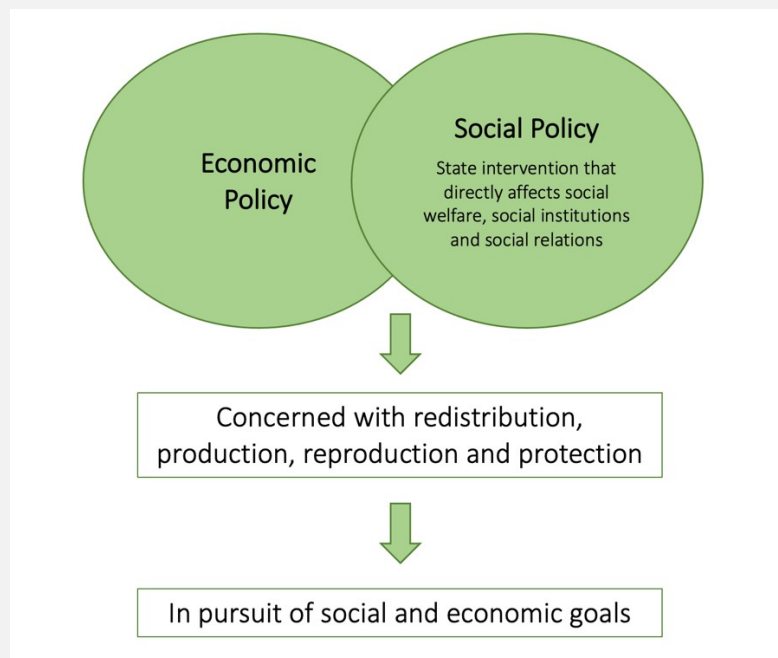
Here, the criticality of the interplay between (and overlap of) economic and social policy for development (understood as social and economic transformation rather than poverty alleviation) is stressed, drawing on contributions by Elson and Cagatay (2000) and Chang (2004), who have highlighted that the dichotomy of social versus economic policy is misplaced altogether. As outlined by Mkandawire (2001, p. 6) and UNRISD (2006, p. 1), social welfare is concerned with access to adequate and secure livelihoods and income and requires social policy interventions, targeting redistribution, addressing unemployment and guaranteeing access to education and healthcare. At the same time, social policy interventions can also seek to transform class, race, or gender or other social relations. Lastly, social policies can also serve as instruments to determine social norms and institutions, shaping the “rules of the game”^{**} that guide human interaction and regulate the roles of public and private agents involved in social provisioning. Figure 1 illustrates how social policy and its functions are understood in the context of this research.

[‡] Appendix A provides an overview of selected definitions.

[§] Yeates (2018, p. 1) adds that this entails “actions by governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) supportive of the right to the means of social participation. This right is underpinned by services and arrangements to ensure an adequate income, a relevant education, affordable housing, a healthy existence and a sustainable livelihood”.

^{**} This term was coined by North (1990).

Figure 1: Definition and conceptualisation of social policy



Source: Own illustration (inspired by Mkandawire, 2001 and UNRISD, 2006)

While I consider social policy to be the broader category, encompassing social protection measures (such as social insurance, social assistance, labour market regulations, and social care) alongside other interventions promoting well-being and social welfare, many scholars continue to use these terms interchangeably and, in today's international development discourse, the term "social protection" is employed more widely. This poses a difficulty to any effort to harmonise or standardise the use of terms across the next sections. I hence propose to use the terms interchangeably.

3. Social policy in practice: activism versus instrumentalism

With contested definitions and conceptualisations of social policy, different policies have been promoted in practice. Two particular positions stand out. On the one hand, advocates of social protection as a human right promote inclusiveness and universal schemes along the life cycle (the activist position). On the other hand, proponents of a charity-based paradigm conceptualize social protection as a residual and targeted approach to tackle poverty with the aim of furthering economic development (the instrumentalist position). This section turns to a discussion of these two positions and highlights how the trajectories of neo-liberalism have impacted how the conceptualisation and practices of social policy have evolved over time. I base my understanding of neo-liberalism on Brenner et al. (2010, p. 4), who assert that "in the most general sense, neoliberalization denotes a politically guided

intensification of market rule and commodification” while highlighting the “variegated” character of neoliberalism.*

In principle, the integration of social protection within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the broad support for the ILO’s Social Protection Floors Recommendation and the ILO and World Bank co-headed Social Protection Interagency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) convey that a majority of development partners agree that the purpose of social protection exceeds smoothing consumption and alleviating short-term poverty. In practice, however, different ideological positions to social protection/social policy persist – “from macroeconomic stabilizer to humanitarian response; from risk management to promoting social justice” (Gentilini and Omamo, 2011, p. 329). Furthermore, within these different paradigms, the scope of social policy has narrowed.

For Deacon (2007), development agencies that promote different practices of social protection have engaged in a so-called “Gramscian war of position”.[†] In the 1990s and 2000s, this war over ideological hegemony has most distinctively been carried out between the World Bank and the ILO. Indeed, Devereux et al. (2015) identify two potentially contradictory directions within social protection debates. The activist and rights-based approach to social protection emphasizes that all citizens are entitled to social protection benefits. The instrumentalist and growth-oriented approach perceives social protection as a tool to reduce poverty and boost economic growth (Devereux, Roelen and Ulrichs, 2015, p. 7). Instrumentalists understand poverty as a hindrance to efficient development and, thus, see social protection as a way of managing risks – until the market allows for private insurance against such risk (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2007, p. 1). In contrast, rights-based approaches perceive poverty and vulnerability as symptoms of structural inequities and social injustices and advocate for the social protection as every citizen’s right (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2007, p. 1). Indeed, for Barrientos and Hulme (2009, p. 5), the role of social protection is extended to “securing basic needs as a precondition for human and economic development”. Along similar lines, Bangura (affiliated with UNRISD) states that universal social policy attempts to cover “the entire population with adequate benefits and is grounded in claimable entitlements, whether derived from rights or payments by institutions and individuals” (Bangura, 2010, p. 135).

In principle, these different viewpoints do not need to be mutually exclusive, but may affect what different development partners and policy makers highlight as the main function of social protection (Devereux, Roelen and Ulrichs, 2015, p. 7). As Ulriksen and Plagerson (2014) point out, the distinction between “neoliberal” social protection with an “emphasis on the fulfilment of duties”, on the one hand, and social protection as a human right, on the other, is highly relevant in contemporary discussions on

* Similarly, Fine (2012b) highlights the “diversity and complexity across time, place and issue” and thus the “lack of distinctiveness” of neo-liberalism.

[†] This alludes to Antonio Gramsci’s distinction between the war of manoeuvre, the proletariat’s military struggle against the bourgeoisie, and the war of position, the struggle for cultural and ideological hegemony (see, e.g. Morton (2007) for more details on Gramsci’s social theory).

social policy design. Often, there is “little consensus on the basic principles” deemed relevant for the design of welfare systems, and “debates on the issue appear to have reproduced the long-standing divide between universal and residual approaches that has characterised social policy debates more generally” (Kabeer, 2014, p. 338). Thus, a position along the ideological dichotomy lays the foundation for what is perceived the ultimate objective of social policy and what form it should take: “is it primarily a means to achieve economic development targets (an 'instrumentalist' agenda), or is it a means to achieve social justice (an 'activist' agenda)?” (Devereux and Solórzano, 2016, p. 1). While instrumentalists may push for conditional cash transfers, proxy-means testing and narrow targeting, activists favour unconditional transfers that maximize freedom (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2007, p. 4). In the same vein, Kidd (2017) identifies two different social protection paradigms promoted by international organisations. While the citizenship paradigm is based on the premise that social protection is a right for all citizen, the charity paradigm conceptualizes social protection as “handouts” to the poor. According to Kidd, the citizenship paradigm is characterized by inclusive, lifecycle social protection systems, mainly built around conventional social security programmes, i.e. old age, disability, and unemployment transfer schemes, similar to the systems implemented in many of the high-income countries. The premise here is that social protection is perceived as a right of all “right holders” within a country. Such universal systems may be costly and will require adequate levels of taxation, but also need to be based on the consensus that redistribution is a public good, which contributes to more just and cohesive societies (Kidd, 2017, p. 1). In the following two sections, the origins of and shifts within the two positions are laid out in more detail.

3.1. *The activist position and a human rights-based approach to social policy*

Today, social security is enshrined in most human rights conventions as well as in the development strategies of major development organisations based on the understanding that “governments are – or at least should be – responsible to all of their citizens, not just to those below an arbitrary and uncertain poverty line” (Deaton, 2008, p. 109). Still, the notion that the State bears some degree of responsibility for the well-being of its citizens and the people living within its borders is not a recent viewpoint. Already in the 19th century, first attempts were made to introduce welfare policies in European countries. In 1834, the *New Poor Law Act* was adopted in the United Kingdom (Gough, 2008, p. 39). Later in the mid-1900s, William Beveridge – the “architect of the modern welfare state” (Ahmad, 1991, p. 107) – fuelled social and economic planning, including the promotion of full employment, and put in place a comprehensive social insurance system, entailing a National Health Service (NHS) for all and an universal children’s allowance (Pedersen, 2018). In Germany, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck introduced a health insurance scheme in 1883. Throughout the 20th century, state activity in Western Europe considerably increased and after the end of the Second World War, welfare states – often combining universal benefits and contributory insurance schemes – were introduced in most Western European countries as a response to the emerging needs ensuing

economic hardship in the late 1920s and 1930s (de Neubourg, 2009, p. 65).[‡] Formal security systems in Europe materialised as “one set of policy responses” reflecting the “emergence of the modern nation-state and of ‘self-regulating markets’ as organising institutions of liberal economies was associated with dramatic economic transitions and social dislocation” (Devereux, 2013, p. 14). Social protection became “indisputably an inevitable part of the market economy” (Drahokoupil, 2004, p. 837). For Lavinias (2017, p. 9), the post-war period of Western Keynesian welfare states was marked by a “virtuous relationship” between social and economic policy and the “decommodification of a wide array of public services (housing, healthcare, education, professional training and the guarantee of monetary income)”.

The ILO has traditionally been an advocate of a rights-based approach to social protection, seeing it as “grounded on basic rights” (Barrientos, Hulme and Shepherd, 2005, p. 12). Accordingly, the conventions and recommendations adopted at the ILO in the first half of the 20th century reflected the intention to provide security benefits and social services, essential for maintaining a minimum standard of living, to all persons in need of protection (including non-nationals residing within the territory). The ILO adopted the first International Labour Convention on Social Security in 1919, and the mandate was later integrated in the ILO Constitution, and, in 1944, reaffirmed in the Declaration of Philadelphia. The historic Declaration of Philadelphia of 1944 underscored that “all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity”.[§] As per the declaration, the ILO committed to support the (Western) world’s nations in their efforts to extend social security measures, including the provision of basic income to all people in need of protection, comprehensive health care, quality education, adequate protection for workers, child welfare, maternity protection, adequate nutrition, housing and facilities for recreation and culture to their citizens. The text reflected the spirit of the time: the provision of all-encompassing social services was the responsibility of the European welfare state, and its purpose was to guarantee a decent standard of living for all.

Only a few years later, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, recognizing the right to social security. In 1952, the ILO adopted a detailed Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, outlining minimum standards for seven branches of social security: medical care; sickness benefit; unemployment benefit; family benefit; maternity benefit; invalidity benefit; and survivors’ benefit. Subsequently, other human rights treaties have reflected the right to social security, notably, the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

[‡] Briggs (1961, p. 228) identified three main functions of the welfare state, namely to guarantee a minimum level of income, to reduce insecurities by providing support to sick, old or unemployed members of society and to enable access to social services.

[§] 1944 Declaration of Philadelphia, Article 3(f)

against Women. While children are mentioned in most of these conventions and human right bodies, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) puts particular emphasis on their specific vulnerabilities. Moreover, within the 1996 revised European Social Charter, several articles highlight the importance of guaranteeing an adequate level of social protection to everybody. In the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam of the European Union, the Community and the Member States are requested to aim to promote social protection.

Conventions between African countries have also acknowledged the right to social protection. The 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, known as the Maputo Protocol, was signed, including provisions on economic and social welfare rights.^{**} In 2004, Member States of the African Union formally recognized the "centrality of social protection for social policy enhancement" and the resulting Ouagadougou Plan of Action committed adhering Governments to "improving and strengthening the social protection schemes and extending them to workers and their families currently excluded".^{††} The commitment to reinforce social protection systems across the continent was reconfirmed with the adoption of the Social Policy Framework for Africa in 2008, which entails clear recommendations on how to boost social policy across countries (African Union, 2008).

More recently, in 2012, the ILO formulated a new normative instrument as part of its strategy to extend social protection. The Social Protection Floors Recommendation offers non-binding guidelines on how to build and shape national social protection systems.^{‡‡} The ILO defines social protection floors as "nationally-defined sets of basic social security guarantees which secure protection aimed at preventing or alleviating poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion".^{§§} National governments are advised to enable (i) access to essential health care, including maternity care; (ii) basic income security for children, providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services; (iii) basic income security for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, in particular in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability; and (iv) basic income security for older people. The ILO recommendation was endorsed by most international organizations and many ILO Member States at the Cannes Summit end of 2011. Furthermore, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreed to work with the ILO on

^{**} 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, Articles 22, 23 24

^{††} Ouagadougou 2004 Plan of Action on Employment Promotion and Poverty Alleviation: <https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/african-union/1563-au-declaration-on-employment-and-poverty-alleviation-in-africa-september-2004/file.html> (last accessed 23/06/2020).

^{‡‡} ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:3065524:NO (last accessed 23/06/2020).

^{§§} On the homepage of the International Labour Organization, social protection floors are defined and annotated in more detail: <http://www.ilo.org/secsoc/areas-of-work/policy-development-and-applied-research/social-protection-floor/lang--en/index.htm> (last accessed 23/06/2020).

identifying funding for social protection in poorer countries and mid-2012, the SPIAC-B was put in place to facilitate coordination across agencies. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in 2015 prominently featured social protection as a key instrument in promoting development.^{***} At the same time, in Africa, the 2015 Addis Ababa Declaration on Transforming Africa Through Decent Work for Sustainable Development was approved, including a strong component on the establishment of national social protection floors.^{†††}

A widely used classification of the different instruments of social protection (understood as a human right) into four groups, was proposed by Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) in the early 2000s (see Table 1). Based on this framework, social protection performs (i) protective (ii) preventive (iii) promotive and (iv) transformative functions, albeit these functions may overlap. The first three functions are also known as the *PPP framework*: social protection schemes are designed with the objective of providing relief from deprivation, e.g. through the provision of social assistance and social services to people living in extreme poverty (protective measures). At the same time, a coherent social protection programme includes mechanisms that aim to prevent deprivation, e.g. social insurance systems, including informal mechanisms such as savings groups and risk diversification strategies (preventive measures). The social protection framework also includes a component aimed at enhancing livelihoods and promoting income stability, e.g. through microfinance (promotive measures). However, with time, the significance of social protection in supporting the transformation of lives by addressing unequal power relations that trigger vulnerability, was recognized, adding a fourth dimension to social protection (Mkandawire, 2004). Thus, inclusive social protection schemes also need to include measure that seek to promote social equity and social inclusion, like initiatives that encourage social cohesion and transform public attitudes and behaviours (transformative measures) (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004, pp. 9–11). This last element is based on the understanding that not only economic risks, but also structural inequalities create vulnerability, and these structural vulnerabilities need to be addressed, requiring “a political approach to social protection, focusing on rights, duties, democracy and advocacy” (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2007, p. 1).

^{***} Social Protection within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Target 1.3. (substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable); Target 3.8 (universal health coverage); Target 5.4. (provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies for unpaid care and domestic work); Target 8.5 (full and productive work and decent work); Target 10.4. (greater equality).

^{†††} See Appendix B for a chronological outline of selected key events, reports and declarations related to social policy/social protection/social security.

Table 1: Transformative Social Protection Agenda

Type	Poverty-focused social protection intervention	Types of instruments
Protective	Social assistance	Cash transfers, food transfers, fee waivers for social services, school subsidies, school feeding
Preventive	Social insurance	Health insurance, premium waivers, subsidies risk-pooling mechanisms
Promotive	Productive transfers, subsidies and work	Agricultural input transfers, fertiliser subsidies, asset transfers, public works programmes
Transformative	Social equity measures	Equal rights/social justice legislation, affirmative action policies, asset protection

Source: Holmes et al. (2012) adapted from Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004)

Nonetheless, while notably the ILO has been influential in pushing forward an alternative to the neo-liberal understanding of residual social safety nets (Hickey and Seekings, 2017, p. 1), the publication of its 2012 Social Protection Floor Recommendation demonstrated that the organisation has become complicit in enabling the triumph of a “minimalist understanding of universalism” (Martinez Franzoni and Sanchez-Ancochea, 2016). For instance, Lavinias (2017, p. 80) highlights that the ILO is equally to be held accountable as “the scope of social protection was narrowed, and by the same institution [the ILO] which had conceived of it in the 1950s” as many conventions and recommendations seem no longer to reflect the principle of unconditional and universal provision of a wider array of social services. Lavinias (2017, p. 98) further highlights that the ILO’s Social Protection Floors Recommendation does not clearly provide guidance on whether access to social services should be “public, free and universal”. And, she stresses that the ILO’s vigour to promote access to a wide range of social services to all people seems to have vanished as “all the other dimensions of the contingencies that made up a complex and integrated social security system back in the 1950s—housing, education, ongoing professional training, all on equal terms—have been tossed out” (Lavinias, 2017, pp. 81–82).

3.2. *The instrumentalist position and the International Financial Institutions*

Since the late 1960s, the World Bank has become the leading agency in guiding development policy-making (Van Waeyenberge and Fine, 2011, p. 26) and its shifts in ideology have been greatly influential for policymaking at the country levels. Prior to the Washington Consensus, state intervention was deemed essential for the coordination of extensive infrastructure investment projects and governments were expected to provide for a “big push” to foster economic growth and employment creation and as a consequence poverty reduction (Saad-Filho, 2010, p. 2). While throughout the 1950s and 1960s, poverty reduction was not explicitly addressed but

expected to be a by-product of trickle-down economic growth and productivity increases, the focus was expanded from “lending for infrastructure” to a more explicit form of “lending for poverty” in the 1970s (Van Waeyenberge, 2006, pp. 2–3). During the tenure of Robert McNamara as president of the World Bank, from 1968 to 1981, special emphasis was put on responding to people’s basic human needs.

In parallel, however, from the 1970s onwards, concepts of state failure started to emerge in mainstream development economics and notably in the policy analysis of the IFIs. Rent-seeking theories (e.g. Krueger, 1974) as well as public choice and rational choice theories (e.g. Bates, 1988) became prominent, making the state’s bureaucratic apparatus as well as incentives of people in power to maximize their own interests culpable for slow economic development. In 1981, a World Bank milestone report, the so-called Berg Report, was published, stating that “although internal constraints and changes in the world economy are heavily implicated in Africa’s slow economic growth, domestic policy deficiencies and administrative constraints have also been important – in many cases, decisive – and will continue to block economic progress unless changes are made” (World Bank, 1981, p. 24). In other words, bad governance and poor policy choices of African governments were made responsible for limited economic performance.

The Washington Consensus⁺⁺⁺ – a “consensus” across the World Bank, the IMF and the U.S. Treasury Department – marked by “a heavy attachment to universalist neo-liberal ideology, with absolute commitment to the free market at the presumption of the state as a source of both inefficiency and corruption” emerged as a response to these alleged weaknesses (Saad-Filho, 2010, pp. 3–4). The World Bank’s “Finance Ministry Agenda” with its liberal market propositions gained the upper hand (Wade, 2002, p. 219), and neo-liberal policies, characterised by structural adjustment programming, fiscal austerity imposed through conditionalities led by the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI), became dominant (Craig and Porter, 2006, p. 2) and the “readily accepted orthodoxy in the official donor community” (Van Waeyenberge, 2006, p. 5). These neo-liberal policies, however, resulted in high social and economic costs (Cornia and Stewart, 1990, p. 12). Craig and Porter (2006, p. 3) suggest that the IFI’s failed structural adjustment programmes and adverse results from free and uncontrolled market rule caused “high street protests, public debunking of narrow neoliberal orthodoxies and calls for re-regulation, strengthening governance and social protection”. Hence, by end of the 1980s, the IFIs had to acknowledge the ambiguous and rather limited effect on economic performance and the negative social impact of their programmes, which had triggered calls for an “adjustment with a human face” (e.g. Cornia et al., 1987).

At the turn of the decade, the 1990 World Development Report reflected a first hesitant attempt of the World Bank to address social costs of structural adjustment in their development policy (Hickey and Seekings, 2017, p. 7). The report, announcing

⁺⁺⁺ Williamson (1990) coined the term Washington Consensus and he summarizes its underlying economic policies as “prudent macroeconomic policies, outward orientation, and free-market capitalism”.

the World Bank's intention to put poverty back on the agenda, marked the beginning of "tentative moves to incorporate social protection within international development, including minimalist efforts to address the social costs of structural adjustment through social action funds and a largely rhetorical focus on safety nets" (Hickey and Seekings, 2017, p. 7). In reality, however, social concerns were merely added to the World Bank's basic policies of stabilisation, liberation and privatisation (Van Waeyenberge, 2006, p. 9). The IFIs fell short on scrutinizing their problematic fundamental assumptions of perfectly working markets and instead focused on promoting narrow safety nets for the poor and most vulnerable parts of population (Adésinà, 2010, p. 6). Other forms of non-contributory social protection were dismissed as too expensive and "likely to reinforce a culture of poverty" (Merrien, 2013, p. 90).

Subsequently, in the late 1990s, economic crises in Mexico (1994), East Asia (1997) and the Former Soviet Union (1998) prominently demonstrated the shortcomings of fast moving capital and comprehensive deregulation (Conway, de Haan and Norton, 2000, p. 8; Craig and Porter, 2006, p. 3). Neo-liberalism had to give space to a "softer more inclusive poverty reduction and good governance agenda" as trust in free markets and self-regulation vanished and questions around the legitimacy of the IFIs arose (Craig and Porter, 2006, p. 2). As a result of "the negative consequences of unfettered market capitalism", ideology shifted "significantly enough to offer social protection in an ideological environment termed the Post-Washington Consensus" (Hickey and Seekings, 2017, pp. 7–8). Around the same time, Joseph Stiglitz was appointed chief economist at the World Bank, and called for a re-evaluation of the Washington Consensus, before being forcibly removed from the Bank, in response to his explicit criticism of the IMF and the U.S. Treasury Department (Bayliss et al., 2011, p. 3). Still, the World Bank introduced its Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers formally replacing the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), reflecting an awareness that poverty needed to be addressed directly through appropriate social and economic policy making (Saad-Filho, 2010, p. 8).

In the early 2000s, a team around Ravi Kanbur, an economist brought into the World Bank by Stiglitz to lead the development of the 2000/2001 World Development Report, presented their first draft of the World Bank's flagship publication, emphasizing that "liberalizing the economy and opening it to free international movements of goods, services and capital did not automatically help the poor; in fact in sometimes worsened their condition" (Wade, 2002, p. 224). The 2000/2001 report, intitled *Attacking Poverty*, sought to signal the World Bank's shift towards a slightly softer policy agenda away from structural adjustment towards a policy of social protection and labour. Kanbur, though, resigned from his position, dissatisfied with the World Bank's stipulation to more aggressively promote privatisation and trade liberalisation (Van Waeyenberge, 2006). Besides, the World Bank also published its

first Social Protection and Labour strategy in 2001 with a strong emphasis on social risk management.

Since then, the World Bank, promoting its “pro-market approach to combating poverty”, has been a champion of social safety nets (Holzmann and Jørgensen, 2000). The residual approach to social protection of the World Bank reflected in its 2001 Social Protection and Labour Report further illustrated the prevailing differences in the understanding of social protection across agencies. While the ILO, at the International Labour Conference in June 2001, started its global campaign on social security and coverage for all, the World Bank put strong emphasis on social risk management and safety (Hickey and Seekings, 2017, p. 8). In the World Bank’s Social Protection and Labor Strategy 2012-2022, it again positions itself as a proponent of a neoliberal and residual view of social protection, actively promoting conditional cash transfers, emphasizing social risk management, and adding macroeconomic stability and financial market development ambitions to their social protection understanding, stating that “conditional cash transfer programs have been especially successful at reducing poverty, along with improving both school attendance (especially for girls) and infants’ and children’s access to health services” (World Bank, 2012, p. xviii).

After the 2008 financial crisis, however, bids for a shift in paradigm intensified. In response, the SPIAC-B, co-chaired by the ILO and the World Bank, was established in 2012. The SPIAC-B has a long list of participating organizations^{sss} and its establishment may be perceived a key step in consolidating differing ideas within the international development community. In 2015, the World Bank and the ILO presented their shared mission and commitment to universal social protection^{****} and in 2016, the Global Partnership on Universal Social Protection was launched.⁺⁺⁺⁺ However, despite these joint statements in favour of universal social protection, Kabeer (2014, p. 339), amongst others, argues that the World Bank “still falls short of any commitment to universalism or social justice”. Also, a background document commissioned by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the IMF states that “IMF staff contacted by this evaluation indicated that they have not seen a departure from the Bank’s standard advice on designing and implementing social safety nets so far” (Zhou, 2017, p. 8). Along the same lines, Kidd (2017, p. 6) states that up until today the World Bank with its “long-standing commitment to structural adjustment and belief in low taxes and minimal social spending” seems to continue to pursue a so-called “charity paradigm” to social protection, offering social protection to the extreme poor mainly in the form of conditional or unconditional benefits.

^{sss} Full list of participating organizations: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---nylo/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_211034.pdf (last accessed 23/06/2020).

^{****} A shared mission for universal social protection (concept note): http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/genericdocument/wcms_378996.pdf (last accessed 12/08/2021).

⁺⁺⁺⁺ World Bank, ILO launch global partnership for universal social protection: http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/sdg-2030/latest/WCMS_525012/lang--en/index.htm (last accessed 13/02/2018).

Similarly, the commitment to universal, rights-based social protection of the World Bank's sister agency, the IMF, remains elusive in practice. In 2012, the IMF committed to supporting national Ministries of Finance, notably in Mozambique, in their efforts to increase domestic social protection expenditure to 40 percent of total government spending (ILO and IMF, 2012). However, the IEO (2017, p. 13) highlights that "some in the development community consider the Fund's preferred targeting approach to be inconsistent with the rights-based approach to social protection espoused by the UN and its related agencies".^{****} Furthermore, the IMF has been criticised for not being an active participant (or merely present) in most of the SPIAC-B's meetings (Zhou, 2017, p. 8). Peter Bakvis of the International Trade Union and Kentikelenis et al. (2016) emphasize the IFI's reluctance to change their approach to social protection "at a time when global policy debates around the Sustainable Development Goals are overwhelmingly focused towards the universal provision of key welfare services" (Kentikelenis, Stubbs and King, 2016, p. 22). As a result of these concerns, an open letter was sent to Christine Lagarde and the former IMF's Executive Directors in December 2017 to voice alarm related to the Fund's policy advice and lending conditionalities, which force countries to pursue fiscal consolidation measures resulting in social expenditure cuts, since the IMF puts "fiscal objectives above the objective of ensuring respect for the right to social security as a human right".^{ssss} In brief, while the **rhetoric** at the IFIs may have changed over time as they now position themselves as proponents of e.g. the universal social protection floor, their main focus – in practice – remains on poverty reduction and targeting on the basis of income. In reality, the IFIs, then, continue to promote narrow social protection practices, despite the World Bank's commitment to universal social protection as well as the IMF's formal commitment to encourage social spending.

4. Scholarship and theories of social and welfare policy

This section looks at the scholarship concerned with attempting to put forward explanations for the development of welfare and social policies. First, different concepts that explain the development of extensive welfare policy across Western Europe after the end of the Second World War are discussed. It is laid out that while several scholars have suggested that welfare states were a consequence of industrialism, other theories point to the important role of class struggles, historical institutionalism, power relations, etc. However, no framework has received as much attention as Gøsta Esping-Andersen's attempt to classify welfare state into three

^{****} Notably, Kidd et al. (2017) highlight that targeting approaches using proxy-means tests (PMT) are embedded within a neo-liberal paradigm and are in contrast to a human rights-based approach to social protection. Based on an extensive review of the literature, they emphasise that means-tested targeting approaches generates high exclusion errors, ranging between 50 and 93 percent (Kidd, Gelders and Bailey-Athias, 2017, p. ix).

^{ssss} Open letter to the IMF on social protection: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Development/IEDebt/Open_Letter_IMF_21Dec2017.pdf (last accessed 13/02/2018).

different regime types. Second, the section touches on contributions that explore the link between the rise of neo-liberalism and the contraction of comprehensive social policy systems and decrease in social expenditure. Third, reflecting an awareness that Western concepts/theories of welfare are not necessarily transferable to the developing country context, alternative propositions seeking to provide explanations for social policy trajectories in countries of the Global South are reviewed. In this context, I emphasise that, while after independence many post-colonial African states were inclined to promote social policy as a way of facilitating nation-building and creating inclusive states, the rise of neo-liberalism significantly reshaped social policy making on the African continent.

4.1. Welfare state expansion theories

While a prominent notion in the literature is that welfare states emerged in response to industrialisation as a means to prevent social unrest and to ensure compensation of the working class for the negative consequences of capitalism, some stress a far more active role of the working class in promoting, driving and changing welfare policy. For Cousins (2005, p. 20), for instance, six different main drivers can be identified. He suggests that welfare states could have emerged (i) as part of the logic of industrialisation; (ii) in response to the needs of advanced capitalism; (iii) as a product of modernisation of societies; (iv) due to struggles over politics and social class; (v) due to social organisation of production; and/or (vi) as a consequence of structure and interests of the state or polity. Kpessa and Béland (2013) categorize social policy development theories into four main strands: (i) industrialism as the driving force for social policy development; (ii) the power resource approach, which is more attentive to the role of political forces; (iii) historical institutionalism, highlighting the shaping character of political institutions and policy legacies; and (iv) the role of ideas, culture, shared values and world view in shaping social policies. However, as Huber and Stephens (2001) emphasize, these theories are not necessarily mutually exclusive and various factors have interacted in the development of welfare states. For example, Gough and Therborn (2010) elucidate that, in their view, industrial capitalism triggered social policy-making to respond to the requests of the industrial labour force – which organised in unions and parties – for adequate housing, insurance in case of unemployment, old-age, sickness or injury as well as access to basic social services. At the same time, political elites were interested in maintaining social order (Gough and Therborn, 2010, p. 743).

To organise my review of theories of the advent and expansion of welfare states in developed countries, I group these into three strands: those based on a “logic of industrialism”; those emphasizing the importance of politics, power and class; and Esping-Andersen’s regime type approach.

The logic of industrialism

Industrial capitalism brought about new social challenges, but also additional resources for social spending, contributing to the foundation of welfare states in Europe (Gough and Therborn, 2010, p. 743). Scholars, such as Kerr et al. (1960),

Rimlinger, (1971) and Wilensky (1975), have argued that industrialism increased the demand for public spending and, since it weakened family-based support networks, was the main root for the emergence of welfare states in European countries. Kerr et al. (1960, p. 152), for example, argue that the state with its enlarged responsibilities is charged with organizing and maintaining the newly emerged urban labour force. As a result, after the end of the Second World War and welfare policies expanded, for some, “economic security [was] transformed from ‘charity’ into a ‘right’ for which potentially every citizen was eligible” (Hemerijck, 2012, p. 34).

Nonetheless, while Myles and Quadagno (2002, p. 36) recognize that “industrialism and its correlates (economic growth, population ageing) are necessary to account for the common trend line in welfare state expansion”, they query whether industrialism alone can account for the evolution of welfare policies in European countries. Instead, they highlight the important role of politics and power relations. In similar vein, Titmuss (1964, p. 34) argued that the “fear of social revolution, the need for a law-abiding labour force, the struggle for power between political parties and pressure groups, a demand to remove some of the social costs of change — for example, industrial accidents — from the backs of the worker, and the social conscience of the rich all played a part [in the emergence of the welfare state]”. As such, the theories embedded within a logic of industrialism were seen to neglect elements such as preferences of political partners, party ideology as well as power relations between the working and the capitalist class.

Politics, power, and class struggle matter

Several theorists have looked into alternative explanations for welfare state expansion beyond industrialisation. While within Marxism, some scholars perceive the welfare state as a derivative of the capitalist system, necessary to maintain social order, others highlight the more active role of the working class in requesting social protection, thus highlighting the importance of power dynamics. In contrast to theorists that highlight the role of industrialisation and disregard politics and power struggles as an explaining variable for welfare state expansion, Marxist theorists, notably O’Connor (1973), Gough (1979) and Offe (1984), argue that the welfare state was a necessary by-product of the capitalist system and that the main objective of welfare policies was to ensure the fitting reproduction and maintenance of a healthy and productive labour force, which was essential for capitalists to expand their surplus value. Notably, O’Connor (1973, p. 6) highlights how the industrial state needs to assure continued accumulation of capital while, at the same time, maintain its legitimacy and guarantee social harmony. For Watson (2000, p. 66) and Midgley (2012, p. 14), welfare is a form of social control that legitimizes capitalism and reduces the risk of a revolt of the working class, making social policy instrumental in maintaining the legitimacy of the exploitative capitalist system and allowing leaders to exercise social and political control.

For Mooney (2000, p. 168), these Marxist interpretations are relevant but do not sufficiently consider the importance of class as “collective agency, which may have a

role in shaping and/or resisting policy developments”. He and his colleague argue that while Marxist theorists often consider class struggle as a key feature of industrialised societies, they “fail to explore its specific relevance to social policy” (Lavalette and Mooney, 2000, p. 4). In the context of today’s debates on social policy, Matthews (2018) stresses a similar point and argues that in most advanced capitalist societies, the workforce has not only been “a passive bystander”, but labourers have actively requested and directed welfare policies (Matthews, 2018, pp. 1–2). Devereux (2013, p. 14) also makes reference to class struggle and expounds that “if ‘self-regulating markets’ serve the interest of capital, ‘social protectionism’ serves the needs of labour”. And, Korpi (1989), the father of the Power Resource Theory, stresses that class is a major determinant of conflicts of interest in capitalist societies, able to push for social change and the materialisation of social rights of citizens. In his opinion, Marxist approaches underestimate the power of the working class to push for social reform (Korpi, 1989, p. 312).*

Besides theories that focus on class and power relations, other scholars have explored the organisation and structure of the state in an attempt to explain the emergence of welfare states. Skocpol (1985), for instance, argues in favour of “bringing the state back in”. She highlights the importance of the make-up and organization of states, which need to be “conceived as organizations claiming control over territories and people may formulate and pursue goals that are not simply reflective of demands or interest of social groups, classes, or society” (Skocpol, 1985, p. 9). For Quadagno (1988), industrialisation in combination with other factors is held responsible for welfare state expansion in the mid-20th century. While welfare programmes may have evolved in response to the emergence of industrial capitalism, “the link between welfare state development and forms of social production may be modified in an advanced capitalist state if labor obtains the political resources to free welfare programs from market criteria” (Quadagno, 1988, p. 7). Similarly, in an effort to combine different theories, Gough (2008) identifies “five I’s” as main drivers of welfare state development, namely, industrialization, interests, institutions, ideas and ideologies, and international influences.

While these theories continue to inform contemporary discussions on the welfare state or social policy, Gøsta Esping-Andersen’s work on welfare state regimes has become a dominant reference within the scholarly debate on welfare state theories since the 1990s.

Esping-Andersen’s “Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism”

In the 1990s, Esping-Andersen made major contributions to the discussion on welfare states.[†] In *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, he identifies three different types of welfare state regimes, classifying them on the basis of their level of

* Korpi’s work makes reference to the influential work of T.H. Marshall (1950), who identified three types of rights for the attainment of “citizenship”, namely civil, political and social rights.

† Prior to Esping-Andersen’s work, the British Social Policy Specialist Richard Titmuss (1958, 1964, 1974) differentiated between more comprehensive institutional and residual welfare states.

social stratification and de-commodification.[‡] He argues that “the outstanding criterion for social rights must be the degree to which they permit people to make their living standards independent of pure market forces” (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 3). Esping-Andersen defines a regime as “the combined, interdependent way in which welfare is produced and allocated between state, market and family” (Esping-Andersen, 1999, pp. 34–35) and distinguishes between the following three regime types: (i) liberal welfare state regimes, characterized by modest universal transfers and social insurance systems as well as means-tested social assistance programmes (such as the United States, Canada and Australia); (ii) conservative and strongly corporatist welfare state regimes, influenced by the Church and committed to the traditional family hood (such as Austria, Germany, France and Italy), and (iii) social-democratic welfare state regimes, devoted to universalism and the decommodification of social rights (such as the Scandinavian countries) (pp. 26–29). Esping-Andersen’s welfare state regime approach became an important reference point within the scholarly debate (Scruggs and Allan, 2006, p. 55; Powell and Barrientos, 2011, p. 73).

Nonetheless, Esping-Andersen’s approach has been subject of vast criticism. Fine (2000, p. 15), for example, points out that “much of the literature has been concerned to question the legitimacy of Esping-Andersen’s typology, both for the countries that he does include as well as for those that he does not, and, by the same token, for the characteristics that are nor are not included”. Powell and Barrientos (2011, p. 70) conclude along similar lines that Esping-Andersen’s approach has been criticized for being too centred on Scandinavian debates; ignoring the development of feminism as one of the most important and creative forces in social sciences over the past two decades; not being well-adapted to encompass the postmodern development of industrial society; being ill-adapted to understand the differences between welfare states in the politics of retrenchment; and not paying sufficient attention to the political differences between consensus and majoritarian regimes.

Trifiletti (1999, p. 9), as a feminist scholar, criticizes Esping-Andersen’s neglect of women’s role in and outside of the labour market and the regime approach’s male centeredness. She proposes the inclusion of a Mediterranean regime to explain labour market and family policies in e.g. Italy or Spain. Alva and Gunnar Myrdal (1936) highlight the importance of women’s participation in labour markets as well as public spending for education and health for economic development. Castles and Mitchell (1992, p. 2) suggests the inclusion of a fourth “radical” world of welfare capitalism for a more appropriate classification of Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom – countries that “depart at least somewhat from the expenditure-based orthodoxy that more social spending is the only route to greater income redistribution”. Ferrera (1996, p. 18) proposes the consideration of a “Southern” or

[‡] Decommodification can be understood as “the extent to which needs are to be satisfied through the labor market, or, as an alternative, through political mechanisms” (Esping-Andersen and Korpi, 1987, p. 40).

“Latin” welfare state-regime, as “the academic debate has so far largely neglected the study of the Southern European welfare state”.

Even though Esping-Andersen (1999) addresses parts of this criticism in his follow-up essay *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies* (1999), by including the family into his analysis, acknowledging the existence of a fourth regime type and referring to Japan as an unique fusion of both liberalism and conservatism, “the welfare regime approach is insufficiently sensitive to differences between countries, and unduly neglects how those differences affect outcomes differentially across the different components that make up social policy” (Fine, 2012a, p. 12). Furthermore, for Jensen (2008, p. 151) and Powell and Barrientos (2011, p. 79), based on Powell and Hewitt (2002), the discussion of ideal types of welfare state regimes overly emphasizes transfers and cash benefits and excludes services, such as healthcare, pre-school care, elder care services, education, etc. Adésinà (2015) also points at the shortcomings of Esping-Andersen’s decommodification index, which “ignores important social policy instruments such as (publicly) financed education, (universal) healthcare provision, labour market protection, equity or affirmative action policies, land reform, social cohesion or nation-building instruments” (Adesina, 2015, p. 100). In particular, Adésinà’s criticism hints at the approach’s lack of applicability for developing countries. Nonetheless, in spite of major shortcomings, Esping-Andersen’s welfare regime approach remains prominent in today’s debate on welfare states. The above theories focus on identifying explanatory factors for welfare state expansion. Other contributions have, however, analysed the cutback of social expenditure with the rise of neo-liberalism, which are discussed in the ensuing section.

4.2. *Neo-liberalism and social retrenchment*

While the post-world war II period was characterised by factors such as “a buoyant economy, the Keynes-Beveridge rationale for state intervention, theories of industrial society and post-capitalism, the promise of a science of society and the pursuit of socialism through welfare”, the legitimacy of the welfare state had considerably weakened by the end of the 1970s (Mishra, 1984, p. 18). In that period, the general political and scholarly conversation shifted to a “discourse of welfare state crisis” (Wincott, 2013, p. 809). Economic laissez-faire liberalism started to blossom and privatisation and structural adjustment replaced post-war, more state-centred development strategies (Putzel, 2002, p. 1).

In the early-1970s, the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates was replaced by a floating exchange rate scheme. Oil prices rocketed as a consequence of the two oil price shocks of 1973 and 1979. The volatile economic situation led to questioning of the compatibility of the welfare state and market liberalisation (Hemerijck, 2012, p. 40). Keynesian macroeconomic policy-making was made responsible for stagflation – a situation characterized by a combination of high inflation rates, increasing rates of unemployment and stagnant growth – and “from the early 1980s on, European political economies no longer seemed capable of guaranteeing industrial full employment while preserving generous social protection”

(Hemerijck, 2012, p. 40). In 1981, Western economists came together in Paris at a conference hosted by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and concluded that social expenditure for the welfare state “was out of control” and was stalling economic growth (Ringen, 2006, p. viii). With the rise of neo-liberalism, “with [its] absolute commitment to the free market at the presumption of the state as a source of both inefficiency and corruption” (Saad-Filho, 2010, pp. 3–4), the concept of universalism suffered and residualism gained grounds. As Bayliss et al. (2016, p. 25) highlight, the responsibility was put on individuals to cater for their own welfare and greater discrimination between “deserving” and “undeserving” poor called for means-testing, often designed to restrict eligibility. The expansion of neo-liberalism and monetarism challenged the post-war Keynesian welfare state, and “in the face of persistent stagflation Keynesianism has virtually collapsed as a theory and as a guide to action” (Mishra, 1984, p. 27).

The emerging neo-liberal ideas were backed by newly elected, neo-liberal, conservative governments, notably Margaret Thatcher’s government in Britain and Ronald Reagan’s administration in the United States of America. The rise of Thatcherism and Reaganomics “sealed the political revival of self-regulating markets” and most Western countries started to reorient their policies, putting more emphasis on market solutions and monetary discipline (Hemerijck, 2012, p. 40). Neo-liberalism also meant cuts in social spending (Standing, 2007a, p. 30). And, while early empirical work substantiated a positive correlation between aggregate social spending and economic development (Wilensky, 1975), in the 1980s, German economist Herbert Giersch (1985) coined the term Euroclerosis, making high social benefits responsible for economic stagnation and high unemployment – and ideas which was also taken up by other economists (e.g. Hansson and Henrekson, 1994). Others, however, have highlighted the importance of welfare policies for economic and social development (Korpi, 1996, p. 19; Wood and Gough, 2006, p. 1697; Vaughan-Whitehead, 2015, p. 1) and as Mkandawire (2011) points out: “the argument now is that, whatever merit the welfare state may have had in stimulating economic growth and in combating poverty, its time has passed – a point further reinforced by the collapse of socialism and of the ideologies of solidarity and equality that drove it” (Mkandawire, 2011, pp. 163; 165). Consequently, the rise of neo-liberalism resulted in many policy makers tightening their welfare programmes and replacing their comprehensive social policies, which focused on elements such as education, housing, etc. with more narrowly conceptualized social protection programmes (focusing on cash transfer schemes such as child benefits, unemployment benefits, etc.). From the 1980s onwards, many African policy makers cut back on social expenditure, and by the 1990s, neo-liberal policy-making had become the norm across a multitude of capitalist countries (Kus, 2006, p. 492).

However, for Pierson (1996, 1994), welfare state policies under Thatcher and Reagan, did not mean as drastic a retrenchment of the welfare state. He argues that due to the “institutional stickiness” of welfare states as well as widespread

unpopularity of austerity policies, it was not as straightforward for conservative politicians to decrease welfare benefits, as these unpopular policy measures would need to “withstand the scrutiny of both voters and well-entrenched networks of interest groups” (Pierson, 1996, pp. 113–114). Along similar lines, Powell and Hewitt (1998, p. 11) note that “the welfare state is being redefined, but reports of its death have been much exaggerated”.

Nonetheless, while conceding that right-wing governments may not have been able to reverse all introduced social services, Ringen (2006, p. xxxviii) insists that the function and responsibilities of welfare states are considerably changing and “what was a we-will-take-care-of-you welfare state is becoming a take-care-of-yourself welfare state”. Related to this, Fine (2009) argues that neo-liberalism seems to favour individual and market responsibility over social policy and distinguishes two different phases of neo-liberalism: a first phase of neo-liberalism with strong emphasis on markets and privatisation and a second phase that aimed at both addressing the social costs of unbound market forces, while at the same time sustaining the extensive expansion of financial activity. For Fine, the 2007 crisis and its consequences “are clearly a source of growing inequality and poverty and, by that token, provide a rationale for remedial social policy” (Fine, 2009, pp. 3–4). In like manner, Mkandawire (2016a) is of the view that neo-liberalism strongly affected social policy-making. He calls for a “fourth great transformation”[§], which will provide basis for a developmental, socially-inclusive and democratic new global order. According to him, “the current crisis of neo-liberalism provides us with the opportunity to seriously rethink the world order and the limits it imposes on nation states to pursue progressive and socially inclusive economic and social policies” (Mkandawire, 2016b, pp. 105–106).

4.3. Theories on social policy development in the Global South

The above review focused on the development and evolution of welfare states and social security systems in Western nations. However, in many developing countries, and particularly in the African context, theories of social policy development need to consider circumstances such as informal systems of mutual support, colonial legacy as well as efforts to re-build socially cohesive nations after independence. Over the years, several scholars have challenged the applicability of conventional welfare theories for developing countries and have attempted to formulate theories that explain social policy development in less industrialised countries, and notably in Africa.

Kpessa and Béland (2013, p. 332), for example, highlight how the “logic of industrialism” lacks explanatory power for less developed countries, by stressing that

[§] The other three great transformations since Polanyi that Mkandawire (2016a) identifies are firstly, the period in Europe when the belief prevailed that belief that markets were the nature’s way of managing exchange in an efficient way, secondly, society’s reaction in defending itself against the ravages of the market and thirdly, neoliberalism’s launch of a counter-movement giving the market primacy.

social policy was not only an instrument for industrial development, but also a nation-building tool. Similarly, according to Adésinà (2015, p. 113), in many post-colonial African countries, in spite of relatively stagnant development, leaders introduced ambitious social citizenship projects to boost education and to assure an adequate standard of health care and housing as part of their nation-building efforts. Thus, on the African continent, social policy was mostly about “enhancing functional citizenship which required public spending on education and health care” and was considered a pre-condition for economic development and growth (Adésinà, 2015, pp. 108-109). Also, Mkandawire (2009) notes that nationalist African leaders contemplated that “the holding together of the nation and the mobilisation of the population behind the new nation-building project demanded that the state embark on some form of social policy even if only to establish the fact that its policies were inclusive” (p. 141). On that account, political ideologies emerged such as Kwame Nkrumah’s conscientism in Ghana, Kenneth Kaunda’s humanism in Zambia, Obafemi Awolowo’s democratic socialism in Nigeria and Leopold Senghor’s *négritude* in Senegal. As Kpessa et al. (2011, p. 2116) highlight, these ideologies were based on a “common humanistic narrative tied to the state provision of social benefits” . On this basis, African states were created that were “internally stronger and more cohesive in the first two decades after independence than in the post-1970s following the implementation of structural adjustment programmes (Kpessa, Béland and Lecours, 2011, p. 2116). Chabal (2009, p. 6) argues that patrimonial states, which require legitimate rulers to be predominantly accountable to their followers and provide them with the necessary resources, were successful models of state in the 1960s.

Nonetheless, in the 1970s and 1980s, many African policy makers cut back on social expenditure under the pressures of the IFIs, which were promoting structural adjustment programming.** Neo-liberalism, with its high social costs, resulted in the disenchantment and disengagement of many African leaders with their nation states, but also, as social policy and nation-building were strongly intertwined in many African countries, impacted the national unity in these countries (Kpessa, Béland and Lecours, 2011, p. 2128). In this context, Korpi’s Power Resource Theory may seem as a good starting point to analyse why the World Bank and the IMF, while lacking “policy-making legitimacy in domestic policy circles”, were able to mobilise against local constituencies, including organised labour movements, and push for structural adjustment programming and social policy retrenchment (Kpessa and Béland, 2013, p. 333). However, while factors such as economic growth, group mobilisation, culture and ideas and political power are important concepts to consider when analysing social policy development in African countries, the Power Resource Theory or theories focusing on historical institutionalism are not entirely apt to explain, for example, why social policies often serve an urban elite and not the informal sector,

** Some leaders, such as Burkina Faso’s revolutionist Thomas Sankara, tried to resist neo-liberalism and promoted anti-imperialism and self-sufficiency, e.g. in his address to the African Union: “debt is a cleverly managed re-conquest of Africa [...] Each of us becomes the financial slave, which is to say a true slave” (Sankara, 2007).

who pushed forward the anti-colonial movement; or why citizenship-based social programmes, introduced after independence, were replaced by fee-for-service programmes stressing individual responsibility later in the 20th century (Kpessa and Béland, 2013, pp. 328–330).

Also other scholars such as Bailey and Turner (2002, p. 8) highlight the importance of the colonial legacy as explanatory factor for social policy development in Africa, noting that “in the countries that were British colonies, social security programmes are generally more modest than in French-speaking Africa”. Also for MacLean (2002, pp. 70–71), “different patterns of state formation established in the early part of the colonial era result in contrasting social policies” and while the French government seems to have been more a proponent of activist social policies, Great Britain’s strategy was to “increase Africans’ standard of living to enable them to support themselves and their extended families rather than to provide a public social safety net”. Thus, as pointed out by Kraus (2007), social protection programmes in some countries may also have been weaker due to a strong traditional belief that the family is the first line of assistance and mainly responsible for the provision of support. According to Mkandawire (2016b, p. 3), it was widely assumed that “traditional forms of social protection would take the place of social security provided by the state”. He accentuates that colonialism shaped “nationalist agendas and forms of mobilization and resistance, and on the ideological progression and the ‘social pacts’ that emerged” (Mkandawire, 2016a, p. 3).

Against this background, Mkandawire (2016b) makes the distinction between (i) concession economies where resources were exploited by private companies, notably the DR Congo, Congo and the Central African Republic, (ii) cash crop economies,^{††} where local leadership, self-management and voluntary effort was at least partly enabled and measures to protect peasants from vulnerability were only introduced to complement traditional forms of social protection, and (iii) labour reserve economies,^{‡‡} where Africans were coerced in partaking in the capitalist, settlers-dominated labour market. He argues that, since colonialists in these exploitative labour reserve economies were cognisant of the necessity to ensure the reproduction of labour, their “solution was to transfer the burden of social security onto rural communities, most of whom were living at the subsistence level, deliberately maintained to force peasants into the capitalist labour market” (Mkandawire, 2016a, p. 6). However, in his opinion, these high intensities of economic inequality produced higher levels of labour militancy and political pressure to correct historical injustices. Additionally, because social welfare regimes were actually put into place in these labour reserve economies, although highly racially segmented, foundations for new initiatives were available.

^{††} Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda (enlarged West Africa)

^{‡‡} Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe (East and Southern Africa)

For Devereux (2013), social protection in today's Africa was imported and is determined by its complex pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial history. In his view, social protection in African countries manifests a merger between ideas of European social security systems and donor-driven humanitarian responses efforts. He contends that "attempts to graft these imported models onto domestic policy agendas have failed to recognise that the economic and social structures of African countries are fundamentally different from those of Europe, resulting in grossly inadequate coverage and programmatic responses that fail to meet the actual social protection needs of local populations" (Devereux, 2013, p. 13).

In contrast, Gough and Therborn (2010, p. 741) argue that "a political responsibility for the well-being of a state's population is not a European invention", but have been part of religion and culture in other parts of the world as well. They concur that the welfare state "in its recent meaning" appears as an European intervention, but attribute the emergence of the European welfare state *inter alia* to the "unique Western European family system" characterized by much weaker kinship ties compared to other parts of the World (Gough and Therborn, 2010, p. 742). They furthermore emphasize that the international environment after the Second World War was particularly conducive for the emergence of welfare states in European countries, as, in spite of US imperialism, the "Marshall Aid had none of the conditionalities of the later IMF-World Bank structural adjustment programmes"(Gough and Therborn, 2010, pp. 743–744).

Related, Gumede (2018) makes reference to selected radical scholars, such as Rodney (1981), Onimode (1988), Ake (1996), Amin (1997), and Shivji (2005), who highlight the responsibility of imperialism and colonialism for the "underdevelopment" of African countries, and are in favour of radical delinking from global capitalism (Gumede, 2018, p. 124). Bevan (2004) highlights the important role of external forces, and identifies five components that form part of African countries' so-called "rectification mix"^{§§} – namely, polity, market, society, kin and self. She stresses the important role of "external members of 'the mix', including international migrants and diasporas, the international financial institutions, UN organisations concerned with development and humanitarian aid, international development and humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and bilateral and regional donors" (Bevan, 2004, p. 104).

Based on a similar understanding of limited opportunity to access basic social services, Gough and Wood (2004) develop a regime approach to explain social policy development across countries, with two new regime types seen as particularly

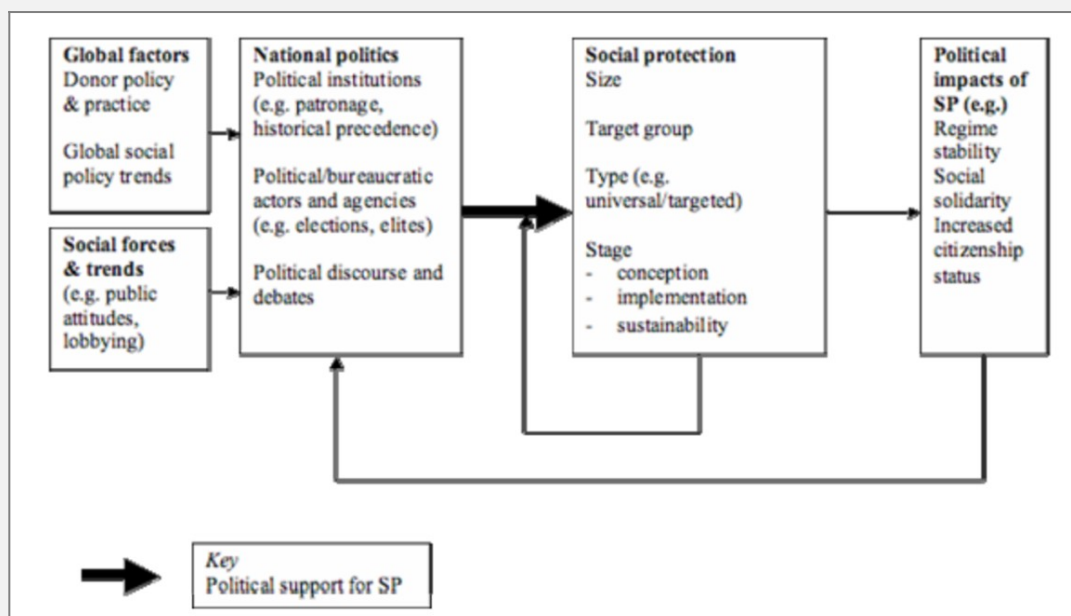
^{§§} Bevan (2004) states that "[she is] using the word 'rectification' since the adjective 'welfare' seems inappropriate to describe some of the activities in the mix, which, while they generate livelihoods and social protection for the perpetrators and their households, involve the adverse incorporation or exclusion of some or all of the members and/or directly damage or remove the livelihoods, life chances and lives of others" (p. 103-104).

relevant for developing countries: (i) welfare regimes as portrayed in Esping-Andersen's work, (ii) insecurity regimes characterized by no institutional arrangements that can provide for security and risk mitigation, and (iii) informal security regimes where family and community bonds serve as an important source of support. Strong family ties are seen as particularly relevant in developing countries, and "far more extensive in the developing than in the industrial world" (Gough, 2008, p. 59). In like manner, Niño-Zarazúa et al. (2012), while acknowledging the vast diversity across the continent, propose a taxonomy of sub-Saharan African states and identify two models of social protection: the so-called middle-income countries model characteristic of Southern Africa that focuses on age-based social transfers (e.g. universal social pensions or child grants) and the low-income countries model, which strongly relies on poverty-based transfers. For the authors, three key determinants help to explain future dynamics of these two models of social protection: (i) politics and the policy process; (ii) financial viability and (iii) institutional capacity (Niño-Zarazúa et al., 2012, p. 168).

The work of Niño-Zarazúa and his colleagues was influenced by the work of Hickey (2007), who identifies four key aspects relevant in the context of an analysis of the politics of social protection in Africa. These include: (i) political institutions, (ii) political actors and agencies, (iii) socio-economic forces, and (iv) the global dimensions (see Figure 2). Firstly, Hickey points at the importance of institutions, both formal and informal institutions, highlighting the significance of elections, policy legacies as well as patron-client relations throughout policy-making processes and defining "the rules of the game" as North (1990, p. 3) puts it.^{***} Secondly, Hickey attributes considerable influence to political parties, agencies, elites, etc. in shaping ideology and political debate and thus determining the distribution of goods and power (Hickey, 2007, p. 3). Thirdly, socio-economic forces, according to Hickey, include public attitude, degree of social cohesion or fragmentation, level of citizens' voice and related urbanisation and economic inequality are highly relevant to social policy-making, although global actors, notably donors, may be equally influential in shaping policy (Hickey, 2007, p. 4).

^{***} "Institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction" (North, 1990, p. 3).

Figure 2: Basic Framework illustrating the links between politics and social protection



Source: Hickey (2007)

In similar fashion, Devereux and White (2010) identify three key elements that shape social protection in African countries. While “technocrats” base their policy making on an evidence-base, which is based on other countries social protection initiatives, “political” and “ideological” concerns evolve around the questions “what is popular?” and “what is right?”. In the realm of the political, the authors argue that the interest of ruling elites may not necessarily result in the most effective allocation of available resources, and point at dangers such as nepotism and corruption (Devereux and White, 2010, p. 64). Furthermore, they observe that African politicians may favour to support “deserving” and economically-active poor people and be opposed to “handouts” to the “undeserving” population as this could create dependency (Devereux and White, 2010, p. 64). With regard to ideology, they highlight that depending on the depth of the social contract between a government and its citizens, claims for social protection as a right and their entitlement may become louder (Devereux and White, 2010, p. 65). Yet, some African scholars (see, notably, Adésínà (2020) and Ouma and Adésínà (2019)) have highlighted the negative role of Western donors and the damaging effect of their efforts of “policy merchandising” on Africa’s democracy. The question raised by Adésínà (2020, p. 562) summarises the criticism well: “What, in the experience of Europe with social policy making, suggests that externally inducing policy makers in a country is the appropriate way to go about public policy making in Africa?”

In spite of these existing theories on social policy development in developing countries, e.g. Mkandawire (2012, 2011) or Kpessa and Béland (2013) stress that comprehensive theories on social policy and welfare in developing countries are still lacking, particularly in the African context, noting that “there is little in social policy studies in developing countries as heuristically potent as Titmuss’s and Esping-

Andersen's work on welfare regimes" (Mkandawire, 2011, pp. 151–152). Yet, the literature on the Developmental Welfare State theory may present an alternative as it more closely looks at economic policies, notably industrial policy, and their nexus with social policies. The term "developmental state" was first coined by Johnson (1982), who was referring to the Japanese economic miracle and the country's use of industrial policy to achieve it. Later, Amsden (1989) and Wade (1990) highlighted the important role of state intervention in South Korea and Taiwan, respectively, and demonstrated that active industrial policy supported the process of structural transformation in these countries. The East Asian countries, characterized by accelerated export growth, solid agricultural sectors as well as a favourable demographic transition, prioritized industrialisation, which was identified as main factor for their economic development (Ikpe, 2008, pp. 4–5). Thus, the idea of the developmental state paradigm is based on the understanding that an active state facilitates economic growth while an economy transitions from an agricultural to an industrial base. Chang (2004), however, stresses that the experience of the East Asian developmental states has been used by free-market economists as proof that it is advantageous for a state to ignore social policy and to merely focus on economic policy. Yet, Chang continues that "this is a fundamentally mistaken characterization of the East Asian developmental experience. The East Asian countries have used many policies and institutions to address social problems" (Chang, 2004, p. 247).

Nonetheless, while the focus on social policy as an important factor for development may have been disregarded at first, according to Mkandawire (2012), a second generation of developmental state literature puts stronger emphasis on the welfare and social policy aspect with regard to the developmental state. For instance, Kwon et al. (2017, p. 101) explicitly highlight that "social outcomes of the developmental welfare state were impressive in the East Asian countries". Also Fine (2014, 2009) argues that while the developmental state paradigm may have been inclined to neglect the role of welfare, placing the provision of welfare services within the framework of the developmental welfare state allows to acknowledge diverse causes, contents and consequences of elements of social policy.

In response to the shortcoming of existing theories that have tried to analyse the characteristic features of social policy development in various settings, Fine (2002) recommends an analysis of specific systems of provision that bear on social policy, which allows to take into account different contexts. The SoP approach opposes the categorisation of different welfare states into regimes but enables to unpack the diverse and complex determinants that drive a specific social policy intervention. In the following section, I introduce the SoP approach and its comparative advantage to guide context- and sector-specific social policy research.

5. The Systems of Provision (SoP) approach

In the previous sections of this paper, I surveyed different theories and frameworks, which seek to account for how social service delivery systems take form in different places, with the most popular one being Esping-Andersen's welfare regime approach. In addition, I reviewed the scholarship by African and other development scholars, who have advanced alternative theories seeking to provide explanations for social policy trajectories in African countries. Although these theories provide a wealth of potential explanatory variables for welfare system developments, a particular strength of the SoP approach to public service delivery is its emphasis on context- and system-specificities (Bayliss and Fine, 2020). As Fine (2004, p. 88-89; emphasis in original) puts it:

[S]ocial policy is *programme-specific*. In other words, housing, education, health programmes, etc., have to do with housing, education and health ... [I]mplicit in the previous point is the differentiation of social policy by country as well as by programme. Each country will be at its own stage of development, will have its own structure and dynamic of economic, political and ideological forces, and these will interact with, or be concretized through, the provision attached to particular programmes.

Since its inception, the SoP approach was concerned with understanding the context- and system-specific factors that determine consumption patterns and norms. Generally, the study of consumption has received considerable attention over past years across social science disciplines (see e.g. Daunton and Hilton (2001) for an overview of consumer history). The SoP approach was conceptualised in response to the shortcomings of neo-classical consumption theory, which sees consumption as a mere outcome of rational and individualised decision-making (Fine and Leopold, 1993). For Fine and Leopold (1993), post-modern theories and studies of consumption outside of economics, focusing on the "cultural lives of the consumers" (Daunton and Hilton, 2001, p. 6), were also inapt to assess adequately the complexities and diversities that generate consumption outcomes and to take into consideration structural shifts in notions and material practices of consumption and production with trends such as globalisation, neo-liberalisation, commodification and financialisation. In view of this, the SoP approach was presented as an alternative, coherent and robust approach to analysing consumption within social sciences, having been developed as a means to escape both "the devil of neo-classical economics and the deep blue sea of postmodernism" (Fine, 2013, p. 218).

In later years, the SoP approach shifted away from concentrating on private and marketized consumption only to also incorporate public consumption and public provisioning systems, recognising that, in many places, the lines between public and private consumption have become diluted. This gave rise to the public sector systems of provision (PSSoP) approach (Fine, 2002). According to Fine et al. (2018), consumer theory has long neglected to pay special attention to the provision of public goods and services, conveniently classing public consumption as social policy and leaving it untouched. Fine insists that "as soon as consumption becomes (recognizably) public, it tends to be redefined as something else, most notably as the

welfare state, or, of course, social policy, putting it outside the realm of consumption studies” (Fine, 2014, p. 29). Yet, the commercialisation, commodification and financialisation of social services, over the past decades, have led to an increasing role of the private sector in previously public provision systems, while still requiring some form of state activity and regulation, as “even private provision cannot prevail in a totally disembodied market” (Bayliss et al., 2016, p. 9). The (PS)SoP puts emphasis on analysing the specificities of a good/service-specific public sector system of provision in a concrete location, as opposed to adopting an “Esping-Andersen-like” welfare regime approach of classifying welfare states into (ill-fitting) categories (Fine, 2009, p. 16). Moreover, the approach is committed to understanding the determinants that drive specific social policy interventions and how they impact citizens (Bayliss and Fine, 2020), which is at the core of what I aim to do with my research.

What is more, the SoP approach emphasises that the way in which a good or service is produced and provided influences whether individuals or groups of individuals will (and/or can) consume it. Such focus on production originates in Critical Political Economy, heavily concerned with the question of how societies produce the material conditions that enable their continued existence (Fine and Saad-Filho, 2016, p. 14). The logic of focusing on the sphere of production as starting point of an analysis appears meaningful, as goods and services need to be produced first before they can be exchanged or distributed; the production of a good or service – the process of workers putting their labour power towards creating value – is thus at the heart of the economy, while the way a production system is organised has implications for society (Choonara, 2009, p. 18). As Bayliss and Fine (2020) outline, the SoP approach is deeply concerned with understanding how the value of a product is created and seeks to comprehend the social relations that underpin its production. The SoP approach hence centres the fact that production processes are inherently linked with consumption outcomes.

As such, the SoP is a structured analytical framework that offers a way of paying attention to different elements within a specific provisioning system. It does so by, on the one side, considering the entire vertical chain of activity (from production, to transformation, to distribution, to consumption). On the other side, it takes account of the horizontal context (the social and historical environment). The vertical investigation of a material system of provision of a specific good or service addresses the question of how a good/service is produced, distributed, consumed, in order to understand who gets what. The approach does so by connecting the consumption of a product to the entire chain of activities within a provisioning system, recognising that such a system is shaped by different agents, their relation to each other as well as structures and processes within the SoP. Consumption, then, is seen as integrally interrelated with the production, transformation, provision and distribution of a particular good or service, themselves shaped by social, political, economic, geographic and historical factors (Bayliss, Fine and Robertson, 2016b, pp. 1–2). Each SoP is different, consists of multiple factors, agents and

institutions and is constructed by a plurality of parties, making it essential to analyse elements (and their relationships) such as the context, financing, policy design and the role of public and private actors, among others (Bayliss et al., 2016, p. 1).

At the same time, the SoP approach emphasises that consumption norms are also a product of personal experience and cultural/social dynamics (the horizontal context). Depending on their location, gender, class, race, social statuses, etc. (and the intersections across these dimensions), people will give different meaning and attach different levels of importance to the consumption of a specific good/service. By way of illustration and borrowing from Bayliss et al. (2016a, p. 30): “although chemically the same, water in a drought is different from water in a flood. Bottled water is not the same as supply from a public water system. The culture of water consumption is therefore contextual”. Moreover, over the years, the SoP approach has been adapted to more explicitly account for trends such as globalisation and neo-liberalisation and their impact on narratives and consumption outcomes. Evolving narratives impact not only policy, but also influence the culture and meaning attached with a particular good or service: for example, if the narrative is that private healthcare provision is of higher quality, Nigerians may feel unhappy if they have to seek publicly provided healthcare. Therefore, beyond looking at the vertical chain of activities from production to consumption, the approach puts emphasis on understanding what it “means” to an individual or group of individuals to consume a specific good or service. The “material culture” is not only affected by the way the good/service is being provided, but also contingent on differences in gender, age, income level, location, occupation, race, ethnicity, etc. (Bayliss et al., 2016, p. 3). The SoP approach hence considers the interconnected nature of the material system of provision of a certain good or service with the material culture, influencing consumers’ needs, preferences and ability to consume a good or service (Bayliss et al., 2016).

In essence, the SoP approach seeks to combine the investigation of the vertical chain of activities with the horizontal context in which the provisioning system is located. The framework encourages the researcher to link the investigation of the material system of provision of a good/service with an analysis of the cultural meanings attached to the good/service in view of gaining a better understanding of why a good/service gets produced, provided and consumed. Table 2 summarises the “five fundamentals” of the SoP approach. Figure 3 illustrates the central tenets of the SoP approach graphically.

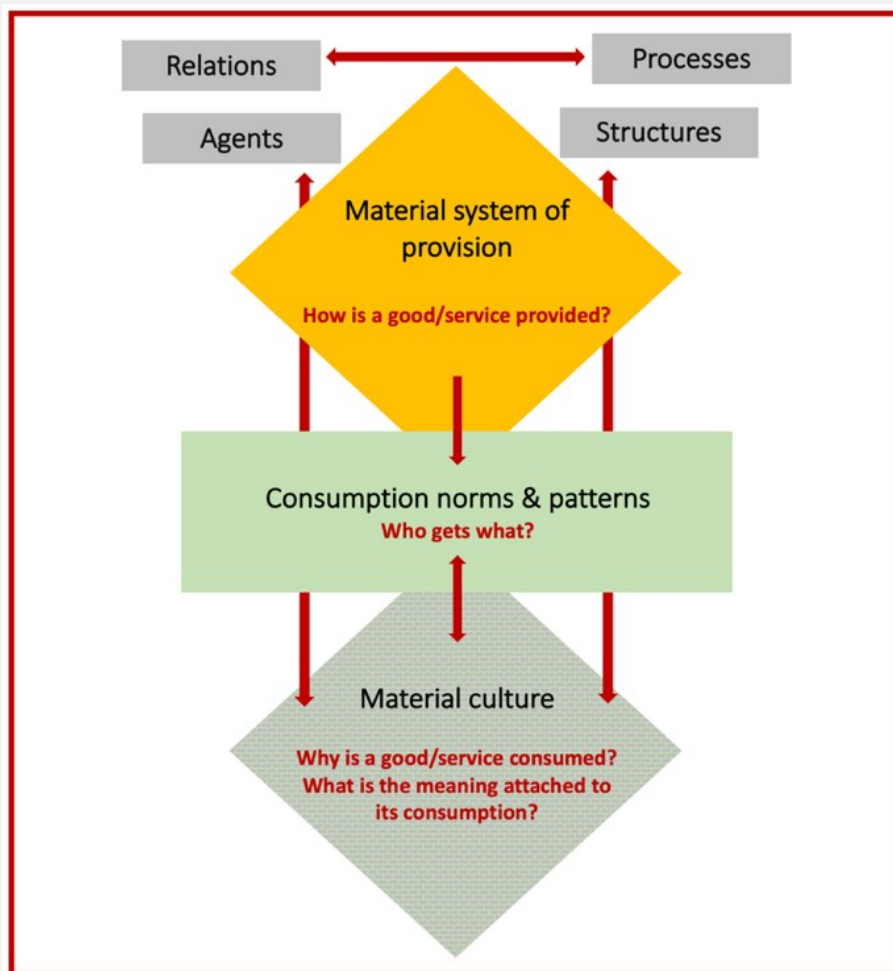
Table 2: The five fundamentals of the SoP approach

Agents and agencies	First, systems of provision are determined by their participants, i.e. its consumers, producers, the state (which can take the role of a regulator, a policy maker, a consumer, a provider, etc.), global institutions, etc.
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Structures	Second, these agents operate within a particular set of structures, which are highly context-specific and evolving.
Processes	Third, processes such as globalisation, trends of privatisation and financialisation etc. as well as processes linked to a specific activity impact “how things are done” within a system of provision.
Relations	Fourth, agents, structures and processes are related in particular ways: what is the structure of certain relations, what is the relation between different agencies within these structures and which processes are in place that reinforce and/or alter processes in place?
Material cultures	Fifth, the SoP approach emphasises the importance of material cultures and the meaning, norms and beliefs attached to the consumption of a particular good or service.

Based on Bayliss and Fine (2020)

Figure 3: Conceptualisation of the SoP approach



Source: Own illustration

6. Conclusion

In today's international development discourse, particular emphasis is put on promoting social protection systems as part of a country's development strategy. Yet, the form these social protection systems take in practice, e.g. in the African context, differ greatly from the generous welfare states that were put into place across most of Europe in the mid-20th century. This paper argued that, over time, the focus shifted from the ambition to provide a wide range of social services universally towards the fostering of more narrowly conceived social assistance programmes, such as means-tested cash transfer programmes. As a consequence, since especially the IFIs endorse an instrumentalist approach to social protection, truly universal access to social services (provided through an integrated system) is not guaranteed and residual and targeted forms of social protection continue to be implemented in many countries.

The literature, aimed at analysing and understanding the different approaches to and practices of social policy, is vast, and a number of scholars have brought forward theories and ideas that help explain social policy trajectories and welfare practices, at different points in time and place. While many scholars have concentrated on theories of the European welfare state, development scholars have also presented their own notions on social policy development in the Global South. Still, the "Global South" is a diverse and broad category, making it difficult to develop a framework that allows to classify countries within specific groups. Yet, there have been scholarly contributions trying to imitate Esping-Andersen's regime approach as well as contributions, which identify determinants that have similarly affected social policy practices across a multitude of developing countries.

In the interest of taking into consideration various elements brought forward by an array of these scholars but maintaining the view that it is necessary to account for the heterogeneity of social policy systems of developing and emerging countries, Fine's SoP approach stands out as a practical and structured framework to guide the analysis of a specific social service delivery system and the elements that shape the policy landscape embedding it. In this sense, I have provided information on its origin as well as its evolution from a framework focusing on private consumption to a framework, incorporating public consumption and social policy. I have outlined its theoretical background and have presented the five "fundamental" elements of a SoP investigation (agents, relations, structures, processes, and material culture).

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Appendix

Appendix A: Summary of selected definitions of social protection or policy (most recent to least recent)

Source	Definition
Fischer (2018, p. 227)	“Social policy generally refers to the range of publicly or collectively provided, funded and/or regulated forms of services and interventions in a society, such as schooling, health care and social protection. The function or purpose is not only to provide these public or social goods, but also to affect various social outcomes through such provisioning (such as learning or health) or else to influence the access to and the incidence of adequate and secure livelihoods and income (as per Mkandawire 2004, p. 1). It is also generally considered to include several other areas such as housing policy, as well as more legal or regulatory aspects such as in child protection or labour market regulation. Within this broad understanding, social protection has received most of the recent attention as a more narrow view of social policy, whereas it is properly understood as a subset of social policy. ”
ILO (2017, p. xxix)	“Social protection, or social security, is a human right and is defined as the set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability throughout the life cycle. Social protection includes child and family benefits, maternity protection, unemployment support, employment injury benefits, sickness benefits, health protection, old-age benefits, disability benefits and survivors’ benefits. Social protection systems address all these policy areas by a mix of contributory schemes (social insurance) and non-contributory tax-financed benefits, including social assistance.”
Fiszbein et al. (2013, p. 3) (World Bank)	Social protection as the “collection of programs that address risk, vulnerability, inequality, and poverty through a system of transfers in cash or in kind.”
World Bank (2012, p. 101)	“Social protection and labour systems, policies, and programs help individuals and societies manage risk and volatility and protect them from poverty and destitution – through instruments that improve resilience, equity, and opportunity.”
UNICEF (2012, p. 14)	“Social protection is the set of public and private policies and programmes aimed at preventing, reducing and eliminating economic and social vulnerabilities to poverty and deprivation. Social protection is essential to UNICEF’s commitment to the realization of the rights of children, women and families to an adequate standard of living and essential services. [...] Within this broad set of policies, UNICEF’s work on social protection concentrates on [...] social transfers; programmes to ensure economic and social access to services; social support and care services; legislation and policies to ensure equity and non-discrimination in children’s and families’ access to services and employment/livelihood.”
European Union (2012) [*]	“Social Protection refers to nationally defined systems of policies that provide income security and access to health services for all people, and equip and protect them throughout their lives to protect them against poverty and risks to their livelihoods.”
Barrientos, 2009 (p. 253)	“Social protection is commonly taken to include social insurance, social assistance and labour market regulation. Social insurance normally covers schemes financed by contributions from employees, employers and the state; and protecting contributors and their dependents from contingencies associated with the life course, employment and health. Social assistance is predominantly tax-financed and aims to support those in poverty. Labour market regulation enhances security and protection of workers and ensures rights to participation and voice.”
UNRISD (2006, p. 1)	Social policy defined as “ state intervention that directly affects social welfare, social institutions and social relations. It involves overarching concerns with redistribution, production, reproduction and protection, and works in tandem with economic policy ”

^{*} See here: <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/results-and-indicators/social-protection-0> (last accessed 12/08/2021).

	in pursuit of national social and economic goals. Social policy does not merely deal with the “causalities” of social changes and processes; it is also a contribution to the welfare of society as a whole.”
Cichon and Hagemeyer (2006, p. 5) (ILO)	“Social security is a set of institutions, measures, rights and obligations whose primary goal is to provide – or aim to provide – according to specified rules, income security and medical care to individual members of society.”
Mackintosh and Tibandebage (2004, p. 143)	“We employ a broad definition of ‘social policy’, to include governmental and non-governmental public action to shape social provisioning such as health and education , including influencing the distributive outcomes of social sector market processes. Indeed we argue that understanding the mutual interaction of public policy and market behaviour is key to designing effective developmental policy in health care as it is in other social sectors.”
Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004, p. 9) (IDS)	“Social protection describes all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised ; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups.”
Mkandawire (2001, p. 6)	“Social policy as collective interventions directly affecting transformation in social welfare, social institutions and social relations . Social welfare encompasses access to adequate and secure livelihoods and income. Social relations range from the micro to the global levels, encompassing intra-household relations of class, community, ethnicity, gender, etc. Social institutions are the ‘humanly devised constraints that shape human interactions’ or the ‘rules of the game’ in a society (North, 1990).”
Holzmann and Jørgensen (2000, p. 9) (World Bank)	Social protection “consists of public interventions (i) to assist individuals, households, and communities better manage risk, and (ii) to provide support to the critically poor This definition combines the traditional SP tools, including labor market interventions, social insurance programs and social safety nets, under a unifying theme.”
Norton et al. (2001, p. 7)	Social protection refers to “the public actions taken in response to levels of vulnerability, risks, and deprivation , which are deemed socially unacceptable within a given polity and society.”
United Nations (2000, p. 4)	“Social protection is broadly understood as a set of public and private policies and programmes undertaken by societies in response to various contingencies to offset the absence or substantial reduction of income from work; to provide assistance for families with children as well as provide people with health care and housing.”
Van Ginneken (2000, p. 36)	Social protection can be defined as “ entitlement to benefits that society provides to individuals and households – through public and collective measures – to protect against low or declining living standards arising out of a number of basic risks and needs .”

Source: Own compilation

Appendix B: Timeline of key events, declarations and reports related to social protection

Time	Selected key global events	Selected human rights declarations	ILO declarations, recommendations, etc.	World Bank / IMF reports, periods, etc.
1919	World War I (1914-1918)		ILO International Labour Convention on Social Security	
1944	World War II (1939-1945)		Declaration of Philadelphia	Bretton Woods Conference
1948		Universal Declaration of Human Rights		1950s/1960s Lending for infrastructure Ideas of trickle-down economic growth and convergence
1952		Social Security Minimum Standards Convention		
1955	Bandung conference			
1961	Establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement			
1964			Employment Injury Benefits	
1965		International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination		
1966		International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights		
1967			Invalidity, Old-Age and Survivors Benefits	
1968				
1969			Medical Care and Sickness Benefits	
1973	First oil-price shock End of fixed-exchange rate regime			1968-1981 Pre-Washington Consensus State coordination of large-scale investment projects ('big push') and elementary version of welfare
1974		Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO)		
1978		Declaration of Alma-Ata on Primary Health Care		
1979	Second oil-price shock	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women		
1981				1981-1997 Washington Consensus Neo-liberal ideology with strong commitment to the free market and lending for structural adjustment
1982	Start of debt crisis		Maintenance of Social Security Rights	
1987				

1988			Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment (1988)	
1989		Convention on the Rights of the Child		
1996		European Social Charter		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Berg Report</i> (1981) ▪ <i>WDR Poverty</i> – tentative moves to incorporate social safety nets (1990) ▪ ‘<i>East Asian Miracle</i>’ Report published casting doubt on
1997				Joseph Stiglitz appointed as Chief Economist and calls for a Post-Washington Consensus
1999			World Labour Report: “ <i>Income Security and Social Protection in a Changing World</i> ”	Comprehensive Development Framework Introduction of PRSP
2000		Millennium Development Goals	Maternity Protection	<i>WDR Attacking Poverty</i> – triggers pro-poor growth debates
2001			Global Campaign on Social Security and Coverage for All	Report on “ <i>Social Protection and Labour</i> ” – strong focus on social risk management
2003		Protocol to the African Charter on Human’s and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women		
2004		Ouagadougou Plan of Action		
2005				Report “ <i>Economic Growth in the 1990s: Learning from a Decade of Reforming</i> ”
2008	Onset of the Global Financial Crisis – triggered rapid extension in the global-level-attention to social protection	Social Policy Framework for Africa		“ <i>The Growth Report: Strategies for Sustainable Growth and Inclusive Development</i> ” elaborated by the World Bank’s newly established Commission on Growth and Development
2010			“ <i>Extending Social Security to All</i> ” “ <i>World Social Security Report</i> ”	
2012			Social Protection Floors Recommendation (No. 202)	“ <i>The Cash Dividend</i> ” – review of social protection in Africa 2012-2022 “ <i>Social Protection and Labour Strategy</i> ”

				IMF Fiscal feasibility assessment – commitment to increase social protection expenditure by 40 per cent
			Establishment of a Social Protection Inter-agency Coordination Board (chaired by the ILO and the World Bank; the IMF becomes member of the Board)	
2014			World Social Protection Report	Report on “State of Social Safety Nets”
2015		Sustainable Development Goals Addis Ababa Declaration on Transforming Africa Through Decent Work for Sustainable Development	Joint-statement of the ILO and the World Bank in favour of universal social protection	
2016			Establishment of a Global Partnership on Universal Social Protection	
2017			World Social Protection Report 2017-2019	
2018		Astana Declaration on Primary Health Care		
2019	Onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic	United Nations Declaration on UHC		

Source: Own compilation

