1 Clearing the Conceptual Ground: Social Policy in the North

This Bulletin is based on work undertaken in the initial stage of a three-year research programme on social policy in a number of transitional, emerging and poor countries.[1] Such a project is timely for several reasons – as elaborated in our original proposal to DFID:

> Worldwide changes in the context of social policy have been set in process by a combination of forces, including globalisation, economic liberalisation and transitions to democracy. These are leading to new patterns of inequality and insecurity which place increasing pressure on existing forms of public provision. There is growing recognition of the limitations of state-driven welfare systems and the need to involve other institutions in social provision. New opportunities for popular participation are reshaping the political context and agenda for social policy. Social policy needs rethinking to adjust to these new realities.... A new social policy agenda would retain a concern with meeting basic survival needs and promoting security of livelihoods as the essence of social welfare goals, but would recognise that the achievement of these goals is increasingly shared by a wider range of institutional actors than previously acknowledged, namely families, social networks, private sector or civil society organisations as well as bilateral and multilateral development agencies...

This article seeks to synthesise the main issues and findings which have emerged from the research to date. A necessary starting point is the persisting challenge of defining what constitutes social policy in the developing country context. The problem of establishing the boundaries of social policy within the overall development effort is a well-known one and it is worth reflecting on why this is the case. An important factor in *creating* the problem is that the idea of a 'social policy' originated in, and remains associated with, the advanced industrialised economies of the North.[2] Consequently, the shifting meanings given to the concept of the 'social' as a qualifier of development goals and policy[3] reflect the evolving relationship between social and economic issues in development thinking – from the early perception of social policy in a 'handmaiden'

Editorial Introduction

Re-visioning Social Policy in the South

Challenges and Concepts

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role, servicing the needs of the economy, to that of 'nurse', looking after casualties of economic growth, to more recent efforts to see the relationship as one of equal partners, both equally integral to the achievement of development goals. However, these shifts can be seen as the product of attempts by governments and international agencies to come to terms with the fact that the boundaries of 'the social', as defined in northern welfare paradigms, do not transfer easily to the different, and differentiated, conditions of the South.

As Baltodano (1999) argues, the very concept of social policy is intimately linked to the specific historical evolution of modern western societies and the perceived need for social strategies by which the modern state could ensure social order and social stability. These strategies evolved from residual models of welfare, rooted in nineteenth-century European Poor Laws, to a sectoral approach focusing on statutory provision of such services as medical care, education, housing and income security. Interpretations of the forces behind the emergence of social policy vary. Cornwall and Gaventa stress the struggles and movements of 'citizens' or members of civil society asserting their rights to certain forms of social provision by the state. Moore, while accepting that movements such as those of organised labour carried considerable weight in bringing about the emergence of welfare states in the industrialised economies of Europe and North America, points to the critical importance of the interests and strategies of state elites in this process.

Regardless of these differences in interpretation, there are certain common points worth drawing out in these articles. First, they remind us that the impetus for social policy came from an internal politics; it was a response to perceived local imperatives and designed accordingly. Secondly, these articles emphasise the importance of market-generated risks and insecurities in generating cross-class support for solidaristic social policies. Cornwall and Gaventa cite Mishra's point that 'universal social programmes are largely a product of the people's struggle against the insecurities and inequities of a free market society. They represent the values of community, solidarity, and the recognition, however imperfectly, of human need within the confines of a market economy' (1998: 483). Moore emphasises vulnerability to risk as a key factor driving the

development of welfarism in Western Europe and generating cross-class support for redistributive forms of social insurance.

Finally, implicit in these and other background articles, is the idea of social policy as a form of social contract between state and citizens entailing an acceptance by the majority of citizens, or at least by sufficiently powerful groups among them, that it is in the collective interest to ensure some form of generalised protection from the vagaries of the market; a recognition on their part that the state is best positioned to carry out this role; and a willingness to contribute to this effort. Beyond a minimum social insurance role, the welfare package adopted by different states has reflected specific configurations of interest groups. The conditions under which the idea of state responsibility emerged were those of the generalised spread of market relations and their increasing encroachment on the capacity of the institutions of family and community to assure the economic security of members.

Such an analysis is obviously relevant in societies where markets have become widespread enough to constitute the major source of goods, services and livelihoods for the population and where states are well established and sufficiently responsive to citizens' needs. However, the spread of markets, the effectiveness and accountability of states and the emergence of a coherent sense of citizenship vary considerably outside the context of the advanced industrial countries. At one end of the spectrum are countries like Russia and China which, while different from each other, did manage to build a fairly effective system of welfare for most of their citizens. At the other end are the poorer countries of Africa and Asia which have never provided for more than a minority of their citizens and where many of the necessary conditions for effective provision – including the spread of markets – are not in place. Where there has been selective importation of northern social policies, these have frequently served to reinforce pre-existing patterns of inclusion or exclusion.

More recently, however, the notion of state responsibility for social provisioning has come under considerable challenge across the world. Greater openness and increased trade has brought benefits in the form of improved productivity and economic

growth, but also costs in terms of growing inequality within and between countries, increased impoverishment, greater vulnerability to risks such as unemployment, with some categories of individuals, communities, countries and regions excluded from the benefits of globalisation. Along with the internationalisation of trade and capital flows, changes associated with the adoption of austere monetarist policies in the North and structural adjustment in the South have led to reductions in public expenditure, deregulation of national economies and the marketisation of public services, which in turn has led to some apparent convergence in the concerns dominating social policy discourses in North and South. These developments have opened up a new round of debates, marked by considerable pessimism, about the future of social policy and welfare states in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (for example, see Deacon).

2 The Problem of Transfer: the Transfer of Policy Agendas

These are valid concerns, but they reflect a particular perspective. A number of contributors to the research programme warn against the uncritical extension of the social policy agenda as defined in the OECD context to the rest of the world. Indeed, Moore takes issue with the way in which the problem is being defined. He rejects the 'grossly simplified vision of national welfare states under siege from the forces of footloose global capital' and points out that other kinds of change, such as the ageing of the population as well as changing technology, have also been at work in generating challenges to welfare states. He also notes that the widespread belief that the forces of privatisation and globalisation and the need to stay competitive have eroded the ability of the state to finance social spending is not borne out by the empirical data.

Devereux and Cook point to some of the problematic outcomes which have resulted from the often inappropriate transfer of fundamentally northern objectives and programmes to the very different conditions of the South. One is the import of a sectoral approach to policy which dominated in the North and which has now become deeply entrenched within government ministries and agencies, constituting a barrier to attempts to rethink

delivery mechanisms. Interventions which might have had greater relevance to the conditions of low income, predominantly rural economies were often ignored while those which were biased towards the urban, formal economy took priority. This was, of course, not entirely accidental. Such a bias mirrored the distribution of income, wealth and power in these societies. The unquestioning reliance on imported ideas and interventions also promoted a form of social policy which is top-down and state-led rather than responding to local priorities, local possibilities and local capacity. This has led to instruments and interventions which meet *assumed*, rather than *identified*, needs.

Several articles point to the wider array of actors involved in meeting social needs than can be accommodated within dualistic models of state versus market or state and community which have dominated social policy thinking in the past (Bloom and Standing 1999; Cornwall and Gaventa 1999). Although many post-colonial and newly established socialist states did commit substantial resources to social investments (Manji), in the period after independence the ability of states to maintain this level of commitment declined considerably, particularly with the public expenditure crises of the 1970s and the transition to the market economy among former socialist countries. While the dualistic model was always a simplification of a complex reality, it has become increasingly irrelevant as a way of thinking about social policy. The boundaries between public and private have become increasingly blurred as public sector salaries declined and public sector workers began to supplement their incomes through private provision. What exists now is a wide range of providers ranging through public, quasi-public, regulated private, unregulated private, informal community-based and finally households themselves.

There is also the problem of sustainability (Bloom 2000). Universalist forms of social provision in the North have developed over a considerable period of time in contexts characterised by high average incomes and low levels of absolute poverty, relative financial stability and efficient tax systems, a well-organised regulatory system and adequate numbers of trained personnel. While the political appeal of an approach which focuses on equal access on the basis of need explains the reluctance of many post-colonial

Table 1: Obstacles to a progressive North–South dialogue on social policy

SOUTH	NORTH
Targeting and safety nets	
• Could be better than nothing • Formal universal social security only available to a privileged working or civil service class • Given limited resources, necessary for distributional equity • INGOs have a role in implementation	• Direct challenge to universalism of European tradition by spread of US residualism • Middle class unwilling to be taxed if unlikely to benefit from social spending
Basic education and health	
• Resource limitations dictate priorities • Health and participation are basic human needs • Tertiary education and hospital health used only by elites	• Limiting state provision to basic services increases privatisation of provision • Feeds global market in private social welfare
The significance of NGO contribution	
• Many governments in the South have limited capacity or corrupt • Civil society underdeveloped • NGOs can mobilise new resources and involve the poor	• Governments have a responsibility to universalise good local initiatives • Key questions of social policy about resource priorities can only be settled by government

Adapted from Deacon 1999, Figure 1.

governments to abandon their early adherence to it, it was in fact precisely the politics of societies characterised by the elite capture of the state which stymied any attempt to fully implement such a policy. As Bloom points out, 'A national government, which accepts widespread poverty alongside private ownership of cars and major household goods is unlikely to prohibit the better-off from purchasing costly medical care' (2000: 7). Consequently, he suggests, attempts at the international level to replicate (idealised) versions of social arrangements should be abandoned and greater attention paid to 'nationalising' the social policy agenda, taking account of local constraints and opportunities.

The problems which stem from the unthinking transfer of policy agendas from one context which is deemed to be more advanced to another deemed less so are not new. They have dogged the relationship between powerful northern countries and the poorer southern ones in the colonial period (Manji). All this implies that, while social policy concerns about the desirability and capacity of the state to deliver on social goods may appear superficially similar between the North and South, they are

substantively different. This is evident when we look at Figure 1 from Deacon (1999). What he identifies as 'the main obstacles to a progressive north–south dialogue on social policy' (i.e. one that favours a universalist rather than residual or targeted policy measures) are essentially a summary of the differences in the objective material and institutional conditions in which social policy has to be formulated and implemented in the two contexts. The southern context is characterised by minimal levels of public provision, most of it monopolised by local elites, limited and unequally distributed resources, poor governance, further undermined by corruption, and an underdeveloped civil society. By contrast, the problems faced by northern countries, according to Deacon, include the need to protect universalist forms of social provision from trends towards residualism and hence to ensure that the middle class benefits from social spending and thus remains willing to be taxed to fund welfare provision, and the need for the state to take responsibility for universalising good initiatives.

These contrasts serve to demonstrate clearly that we are talking about different policy universes, and that

we should therefore be careful to argue on the right terrain (Moore). Northern concerns are dominated by the need to *defend* the considerable social achievements of the past, a concern that is shared by many of the former socialist countries. By contrast, in poorer southern countries the issue is not so much one of defending achievements and protecting the role of the state, as of *building* up structures of provision (often cut back from already inadequate levels by the adjustment programmes of the 1980s), and the state capacity to manage such provision.

3 The Problem of Transfer: the Transfer of Concepts

Along with caution about the ease with which policies, and the institutional arrangements which accompany them, can be transferred, caution also has to be exercised about the transferability of concepts. As Baltodano (1999) points out, there is a strong tendency within development studies to use concepts a-historically, as simple names or labels. Much of the academic literature dealing with social policy has focused on the experiences of the North. Ideas about the state and civil society, both concepts which feature a great deal in this discourse, were originally developed to capture the way in which territorial, economic, political and social life of the western world has evolved over the past 400 years or so. Yet the terms are often unreflectively applied to describe national structures of power and the organisation of social life across the world, regardless of the historically specific forms these institutions may have taken. With the exception of those parts of the world which adopted command rather than market economies, and some of the East Asian economies, the state in most of the poorer countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia has rarely achieved the sovereignty and regulatory capacity of the advanced economies. Nor were these countries characterised by the development of civil society organisations capable of either conditioning the role of the state or compensating for its failure.

Baltodano (op. cit.) suggests that this loose use of terminology and concepts affects the capacity of social scientists and policymakers to define the nature of the problem they have to address and the options available to them in articulating solutions. A similar point is made by Aina (1999) in his reflections on the meaning of social policy in the context of West and Central Africa. He notes the vagueness and ambiguity associated with the concept, even in the North where it originated, and the different theoretical traditions underlying the use of the concept, and points out that this ambiguity is also reflected in the African literature, with some writers using a more professionally oriented and restricted notion of social policy as social work or social welfare while others emphasise social service delivery and its effectiveness. However, attempts to transfer a set of ideas and strategies across widely differing contexts has meant 'that the wider notion of social policy is rarely used in a way that captures the unique challenges of African human development priorities and concerns' (Aina 1999: 73).

This need for caution at the conceptual level is also expressed in a number of the background articles. Moore emphasises the need for a more empirically-grounded understanding of the state in debates about social policy. One of the fundamental taken-for-granted assumptions underpinning debates within the OECD is the state's capacity to perform certain basic functions: those associated with 'rule' (regulation, law-and-order) and those with 'revenue' (the ability to tax populations and to make authoritative decisions about the allocation of public resources). These are acceptable assumptions in OECD states which are similar to each other in important ways: relatively effective but also relatively accountable – 'not despotic, rarely arbitrary, and substantially democratic'. This is not the case in much of the Third World where there is much greater diversity, as graphically illustrated by O'Donnell's (1993) attempt notionally to map Latin America according to the nature of the existing state – blue zones indicating the presence of an effective state, green zones a functioning state and brown zones where the state is effectively missing. Much of the poorer parts of the world belong to the brown zone. These are areas characterised by 'the barely instrumental' state where the debate about reforming the role of the state has little purchase. The challenge here may be to build up the capacity of the state, to 're-capacitate' rather than 'reform', or to search out the optimal configurations of public and private providers appropriate to the local context.

The problem of conceptualising the state is matched by the problem of conceptualising civil society. The

concept of civil society is closely linked to that of citizenship, the contractual rights and duties which define the relationships between individuals and the state. The concept of citizenship clearly presumes the presence of a neutral and effective state. Where such a state has not emerged, or has only partially emerged, individuals continue to rely on pre-existing community networks where their claims and obligations rest on norms and moral economy rather than legally guaranteed rights of citizenship. In some parts of the world there have been reverse processes of political involution as a result of wars, conflict and the militarisation of society. Elsewhere, as Moore points out, 'unprecedented pressures and incentives for poor countries to become more democratic are integral features of contemporary globalisation'. This recent wave of democratisation has been vigorous and sustained and is likely to intensify pressures on governments to provide citizens with some degree of protection against the increasing insecurities generated by globalisation.

All the above suggests the need for circumspection in drawing on concepts and models which were developed to capture the very different empirical realities and associated policy options relevant in the OECD context to inform a research programme which aims to address the problems of social provisioning in the widely differing conditions which prevail in the South. For instance, to cast the debate in terms of European universalism, on the one hand, and US residualism on the other, as it appears to have been in much of the global policy agenda (Deacon), tends to obscure the fact that these options merely represent two poles of a broad spectrum of possibilities which include the idea of state management of parallel systems (Bloom 1999), the use of private provision to supplement rather than supplant public provision, partnerships building on institutional synergism (Robinson and White 1997), or the incremental extension of social services through increases in budgetary allocations.

Similarly, Silver's (1994) three paradigms of social exclusion (the French 'solidarity paradigm', the American 'specialisation paradigm' and the British 'monopoly' paradigm), while clearly useful for capturing the ideological/institutional construction of social exclusion in particular contexts, nevertheless presume a stable and definable relationship between state and citizens, which may not apply elsewhere. The concept of exclusion needs to be considerably reworked to take account of forms which prevail in contexts where other institutional mechanisms may be at work (Kabeer). It could be argued that these paradigms of state–citizen relationships were imported into the developing country context by particular colonial authorities, and this might explain differences in the social policy regimes of these countries. However, we should also be mindful of Mamdani's (1996) point that the over-riding preoccupation of all colonial policy, lending them a certain degree of commonality, was the problem of how a small minority could retain control over a large majority whose culture and aspirations they did not share. As Manji reminds us, social welfare was extremely fragmented under colonial rule and designed essentially to preserve the integrity of the colonial state: 'Health services, for instance, were developed only in so far as it was necessary to prevent the spread of epidemics into colonial society'. And in India, education was designed and delivered in order to create the class of 'brown Englishmen' who would mediate the relationship between the minority in power and the disenfranchised masses. The paradigm of state–citizen relations which may have prevailed in the home country was replaced by a more complicated state–subject–citizen relationship in the colonial context.

4 What Do We Mean by Social Policy? The Question of Goals

If social policy concepts and discourses, as they have been developed in the wealthier countries of the North, do not transfer unproblematically to the South, how does social policy look when it is defined from the perspective of the poorer countries of the South?

A starting point is the question: why do we need social policy? The straightforward answer is that the need for a social policy arises out of the recognition that there exists a certain category of collective goals, which relate directly to the individual as a social actor rather than as a commodity, which are unlikely to be achieved through private initiative – whether such initiative is exercised through the self-activity of households, by community or non-profit organisations or by the market. The state is seen as

the only institution capable of rising above private interests and private limitations to ensure these goals are met. The goals in question may reflect the need to correct for forms of market failure or externalities of the kind conventionally highlighted by economists. They may also reflect social goals – correcting for distributional injustices or promoting 'merit' goods, in other words, goals which are often intrinsic rather than instrumental. The various social goals which are taken up by the state either directly or indirectly embody the vision that a society (or those who govern it) has of itself as a collectivity, rather than as a collection of individuals. It will immediately be apparent that different contexts will differ in how the collective good is defined, which intrinsic and instrumental goals are considered the responsibility of the state, and the extent to which notions of the collective good are considered to take precedence over individual goals. Such variation is likely to reflect differences in the resources available within a particular society, its cultural values, institutional diversity, social stratification and of course the interests of the regimes in power.

Drawing together points relating to the goals of social policy made by contributors to the programme allows us to reflect on their contribution to our understanding of social policy. Reviewing various attempts to define social policy in the literature, Devereux and Cook suggest that key objectives include an emphasis on improving the standard of living of those falling below an acceptable level, thus encompassing strategies for poverty reduction, as well as on enabling individuals to deal with forms of risk and insecurity which they are unable to do through private initiatives. The narrow version of social policy, which associates it with poverty alleviation or with specific social sectors such as health or education, fails to capture this wider remit. Unlike the urbanised and industrialised economies of the North, where the majority of the population depend on wage labour as their primary source of income, most people in poorer southern countries rely on complex livelihoods which straddle several sectors (urban–rural, formal–informal, agriculture–industry–trade–services), mobilise different resources (material, social and human) and take varied forms (wage employment, self-employment, subsistence production).

It is unlikely that the long-term security of livelihoods in these contexts is best achieved through a focus on poverty alleviation or sectoral interventions. Such approaches miss out on valuable opportunities to use intersectoral synergies to promote security. It is also unlikely that any attempt to delineate economic and social in these contexts will be anything but arbitrary, since livelihood strategies may be premised on using the same set of resources for 'economic' as well as 'social' uses. Devereux and Cook therefore argue for a holistic and integrated understanding of the complex livelihood strategies of the most vulnerable sectors of society to inform the design of social policy.

The need to disassociate the concept of social policy from a particular set of activities or sectors is also emphasised by Zhou in her attempt to establish its boundaries through a comparison of statutory social interventions in the US, Germany, the UK, Hong Kong and Singapore. She concludes that while the needs of industrialised capitalist societies partly explained some of the differences in social priorities observed in different contexts, it would be misleading to take any particular system of welfare as a model of social policy. Instead, policy priorities reflected the political, social and economic realities on the ground in these countries. Reliance on 'analysis by analogy' would lead the analyst to miss out on the fact that the low-rent public housing programme in Hong Kong, for example, served the same goals that industrial injury insurance and old age security had done in the early stages of industrialisation in the European countries.

Kabeer's article, seeking to link the understanding of social exclusion to social policy, stresses the intertemporal dimension of social policy. The processes of marginalisation and exclusion described in her article show up in the segmented delivery of social policy described, for instance, in Bloom and Standing (1999). Such processes may stem from primarily economic factors, and hence overlap with concerns about deprivation, or they may be primarily cultural, and overlap with concerns about discrimination. The problem of exclusion in its various forms extends the remit of social policy beyond one of meeting basic needs to tackling various forms of injustice in a society. Issues of hunger, poverty, insecurity, vulnerability and discrimination can be analysed in terms of how

individuals and households are positioned in relation to wider social collectivities which distribute resources and assign value. Within this view, social policy is seen as the efforts of a society to correct for past injustices, to address current problems of deprivation, discrimination and their manifestations and to take measures to place society on a sustainable and equitable growth trajectory. Social policy thus encompasses both efforts to address present needs as well as future interests.

A number of contributions offer views of social policy which linked it to the realisation of rights, and by extension to the notion of citizenship. Cornwall and Gaventa trace shifts in social policy thinking and practice from the notion of the beneficiary of social policy defined in terms of their needs to that of the consumer defined in terms of the exercise of choice by the citizen who seeks to make and shape social policy as a right. At the IDS conference on social policy (see n. 7), Andrzej Krassowski stressed the concept of a 'society for all' which features in the UN Charter, and was revived at the Social Summit, a concept which points in the direction of balance, tolerance, equity, accommodation of diversity, but also of shared values rooted in the idea of equality before the law and hence respect for the rights of the individual, the work they do and their ability to participate in the institutions of society. Social policy is the set of measures which seeks to promote such a society. Regardless of the fact that these concepts have been interpreted very differently in different countries, they remain commitments to which governments have signed on behalf of their citizens and which some governments seek to live up to.

These various attempts to define social policy by those who are largely concerned with southern realities suggests a view of social policy which is not recognisable in terms of specific sectoral moorings or packages of goods and services. Indeed, as Colclough pointed out at the conference, even health and education, the two sectors most commonly identified with social policy, do not necessarily constitute similar enough social goods to be met through similar means.

Instead, social policy has to be understood in terms of the rationale for policy intervention. The *rationale* which characterised the emergence of social policy in the industrialised countries was the need for social order and social stability. For social policy to be meaningful and relevant in the context of poorer countries, it has to take cognisance of the twin processes of poverty and underdevelopment. As Aina puts it, the rationale here derives from the goal of social development, the 'structural transformation of cultures, social structures, productive systems, and the quality of life' (1999: 73). Such a definition suggests a holistic, rather than a sectoral, approach in which social policy is defined as 'the set of systematic and deliberate interventions in the social life of a country to ensure the satisfaction of basic needs and the well-being of the majority of its citizens'. It is embodied in the ensemble of legislation, institutions, and administrative programs and practices through which societies seek to ensure and maintain social and human development. It is thus, in principle, broader than professional concerns with social work or sectoral concerns with service delivery. While not synonymous with social development, it is a primary means by which societies seek to ensure that the goals of social development are met.

5 What We Mean by Social Policy: the Question of Discourse

Returning then to our starting question of what we mean by social policy, it is clear that the problem of finding a generic definition arises out of the fact that it will encompass different things in different contexts. A useful starting point for comparative research might be the vision of the social good embedded in the aggregation of principles embodied in the various international conventions ratified and signed by the majority of countries in the world. These principles, which relate to poverty reduction, social security, economic, social, political rights and to social inclusion can be taken as embodying a consensus about the intrinsic goals of development which are shared by the international community. They represent the crystallisation of reflection, research and practical experience. They are also the product of struggles over identities and interests which have taken place in various arenas and in various forms within national and international contexts. And finally, they provide a framework to which activists on the ground can refer in their continued struggles to achieve social justice (Huq; Cornwall and Gaventa).

At the same time, it has to be recognised that not all countries have ratified all the various conventions. Furthermore, even where they have, these principles have not always found their way into practice on the ground. The gaps between different discourses about social policy and its actual practice can provide a unifying organising framework within which to locate comparative research. At this point, we have been able to identify a number of distinctions and divergences relating to the various ways in which *discourses* about social policy diverge from *actual* social policy.

The first distinction is between policy rhetoric and policy reality. On the one hand there is 'official' social policy, i.e. public declarations of intent as embodied in policy statements or in legislation and the global social conventions which countries sign up to; on the other hand there is 'actual' social policy – how governments seek to follow up on these commitments. The existence of a gap between official and actual social policies, and the explanation for this gap, is likely to provide revealing insights into the relative significance of political, economic, social and institutional constraints in achieving declared goals. As Firoze Manji pointed out at the conference, this gap is also revealed in the notion of rights as it has been struggled for in the context of struggles for national independence versus the notion of rights that has become embedded in development aid and is increasingly manifested in the form of conditionalities.

A second distinction to bear in mind relates to the conceptual level and links to some of the points made by Baltodano (1999) , Bloom and Standing (1999) and others. Attempts to analyse the social policy universe using inappropriate or outmoded theoretical apparatuses and conceptual models produce an 'imagined' reality which bears little relation to what is actually going on 'out there'. The gap between the imagined universe of social policy and the real one helps to explain many categories of policy failure since it means that policy is being designed and implemented on the basis of premises which have no relevance in the world that it is intended to change.

A thid area of divergence between discourse and reality relates to the distinction between the prescriptive and the descriptive, or between social policy as it ought to be, and social policy as it is. The preceding discussion has contained examples of both. It touched briefly on various ways in which the practice of social policy differs across the world, but particularly between rich northern and poor southern countries. It also pointed out how much the reality on the ground in the 'brown' areas of the world diverges from more idealised versions of social policy often contained in government rhetoric. At the same time, it summarised some of the normative principles that various actors in this field, including the researchers on our programme, believe *should* define social policy. These clearly need not necessarily bear any relation to the social policies which exist on the ground. However, in as much as social policies embody certain values in a society, there is clearly room for spelling out what those values might be if social policy were to address the interests of the society as a whole rather than just those of its powerful elites.

Finally, a fourth distinction we might also want to bear in mind – again a distinction between the way that social policy is talked about and how it operates – relates to *explicit* and *implicit* social policy. Explicit social policy refers to those specific activities through which the state seeks to implement its articulated social development goals while implicit social policy refers to all state activities which contribute to, or undermine, the achievement of these social goals. This distinction reminds us of the earlier point made about whether we should view social development as a separate, and usually residual, aspect of development or whether we see it as intrinsic to development. Macroeconomic policies, the provision of transport and infrastructure, the building of dams, in as much as they have social implications and influence patterns of deprivation and discrimination within a society, constitute implicit social policy. Hence coherence in pursuit of social development goals requires social policy considerations to be part of macroeconomic thinking. If this means that everything becomes social policy, then, as Devereux and Cook point out, in some sense that is a more accurate description of reality than attempts to treat economic and social policies as separate and distinct.

9

Notes

2. We use concepts of North and South in this article as a convenient short-hand for distinguishing between those countries which entered the post-war era with advanced industrialised economies and those which did not. Clearly, this is a crude classification and we will be noting various forms of differentiation in 'the South' and its implications for research into social policy.

3. Among the different meanings attached to social development policies, for instance, Good et al. (1998) lists residual, pathological, informal, welfarist, social capital, and social integration.

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