

Social Policy in Development Contexts

Drivers, Mechanisms and Outcomes

Sebastian Sirén



Social Policy in Development Contexts

Drivers, Mechanisms and Outcomes

Sebastian Sirén

Academic dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology at Stockholm University to be publicly defended on Friday 13 January 2023 at 13.00 in Nordenskiöldsalen, Geovetenskapens hus, Svante Arrhenius väg 12.

Abstract

Economic growth amidst staggering inequality in many low- and middle-income countries makes the quest to end global poverty more topical than ever. Calls to leave no one behind in the course of development underscores the need to reconsider the role of policy frameworks in emerging economies. Social policies have been expanded across the Global South during the last decades, and social protection is increasingly highlighted as a fundamental component of the global sustainable development agenda. This thesis, comprising three self-contained studies, analyses the drivers, mechanisms and outcomes of social policy reform in development contexts, asking which economic institutions could enable more rapid advancement towards ending poverty and reducing inequalities, and what conditions promote the expansion of such institutions?

Study I investigates the driving forces of changes in social spending across 46 more recent democracies, with particular attention to the role of partisan politics. Using data from 1995 to 2015, multivariate fixed effect regressions reveal a positive association between left government and public social expenditures, also when controlling for structural and institutional factors. This finding indicates that interests and ideologies, articulated through partisan politics, matter for the evolution of social policy, also in development contexts.

In light of the findings from this quantitative analysis, Study II investigates the mechanisms driving, and hampering, progress towards social policy expansion in a specific case. The politics surrounding a healthcare reform with the ambition to universalise access to public healthcare in Bolivia is examined using theory-guided process tracing methods. The study highlights how policy is shaped through an interaction between societal and state actors as well as how interests and ideas are intertwined in the process, but also how policy legacies give rise to reactive sequences militating against change.

In Study III, the focus is on the outcomes of social policy. The study presents analyses of how government cash transfer systems moderate the effect of economic growth in both absolute and relative child poverty. Longitudinal data from 16 low- and middle-income countries included in the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) are analysed by means of descriptive statistics and multivariate regression techniques. Findings show that both economic growth and the expansions of transfer schemes are associated with declining absolute poverty. Meanwhile, growth is found to be related to reductions in relative child poverty primarily when combined with sufficiently extensive systems of government transfers, thus pointing to the relevance of social protection for inclusive growth.

The findings from the three studies illustrate that central concepts from comparative welfare state research can be employed also in development contexts, converging on an analytical approach where changes in poverty and inequality are influenced by politics. Continued comparative analyses of social policies and their determinants in development contexts can accordingly generate much-needed insights into the causes of global poverty and inequality. Future research should further explore feedback effects of policy on politics and consider the potential synergies between social policy, equality, and economic growth.

Keywords: *social policy, social protection, political economy, welfare state, comparative politics, causal mechanisms, development, poverty, inequality, inclusive growth, partisan politics, sustainable development goals, global studies.*

Stockholm 2022

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-211735>

ISBN 978-91-8014-112-3

ISBN 978-91-8014-113-0

ISSN 0283-8222



Stockholm
University

Department of Sociology

Stockholm University, 106 91 Stockholm

SOCIAL POLICY IN DEVELOPMENT CONTEXTS

Sebastian Sirén

Social Policy in Development Contexts

Drivers, Mechanisms and Outcomes

Sebastian Sirén

©Sebastian Sirén, Stockholm University 2022

ISBN print 978-91-8014-112-3

ISBN PDF 978-91-8014-113-0

ISSN 0283-8222

Printed in Sweden by Universitetsservice US-AB, Stockholm 2022

Front cover image: "Globetrotter (in der Zeit)" by El Lissitzky

Till
Nathan, Elis och Norea.

“I search without finding, I write alone,
there’s no one here, and the day falls,
the year falls, I fall with the moment,
I fall to the depths, invisible path
over mirrors repeating my shattered image,
I walk through the days, the trampled moments,
I walk through all the thoughts of my shadow,
I walk through my shadow in search of a moment,”

- Octavio Paz
(translation by Eliot Weinberger)

List of studies

- I. Sirén, S. (2021). Is There Anything Left? The Politics of Social Spending in New Democracies. *Governance* 34(1): 67–86.
- II. Sirén, S. (2022). The Politics of Universal Health Coverage: Mechanisms in the Process of Healthcare Reform in Bolivia. In J. Kuhlmann & F. Nullmeier (eds.), *Causal Mechanisms in the Global Development of Social Policies*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- III. Sirén, S. (2022). Making Growth Inclusive? Do Government Transfers Moderate the Effect of Economic Growth on Absolute and Relative Child Poverty? *Submitted manuscript*.

Acknowledgments

This was not what I had planned. Arriving at a milestone like delivering your PhD thesis inescapably inspires one to consider the path leading up to this point. Coming from a non-academic family background, venturing into higher education has been an exercise in exploration. Yet, in hindsight and with some good will, the seeds to this thesis, its comparative orientation, global perspective and moral foundation in a search for social justice, have been with me for a long time. From that perspective I am humbled to have had the privilege to pursue this project.

I am thankful for my friends who paved the way for me to study at the university in Uppsala. Although I was still indecisive, I felt compelled join you in Uppsala, and at the last minute I found that open slot in a course in human geography. I eventually came to the decision to pursue studies in political science. I am thankful to Joakim Palme at the Department of Government in Uppsala for accepting to be my supervisor, not just once, but twice. I am also most thankful to you for subsequently guiding me onwards to the position as assistant in the project on social protection policies in Vietnam at the Institute for Future Studies, and eventually also to the position as research assistant within the Social Policy Indicators (SPIN) project at the Swedish Institute for Social Research (SOFI).

I am grateful to Kenneth Nelson and Tommy Ferrarini for taking me on as a research assistant, for believing in me and supporting me along the way towards a PhD position, and beyond. When I first started at SOFI as a research assistant I had no intention of pursuing a PhD, and would probably not had considered going down this path if it had not be for your encouragement.

I would also like to thank all the colleagues at SOFI. I am happy for the group of research assistants and PhD candidates, with whom I have shared much of this journey. I am also grateful for the friendly environment within the SOCPOL unit and I am especially glad to have had such great fellow PhD candidates within the unit, thank you for all the friendliness and solidarity! I would also like to thank the administrative staff for the kind support that I have received, no matter what issue I have approached you with, and also for approaching me when there have been issues that I have lost sight of.

At this stage, I am particularly grateful for my team of supervisors who have been guiding me through this process. Ann-Zofie Duvander, thank you

for all the constructive criticism and for encouraging me to continuously improve on the work that I have presented you with. Olof Bäckman, for all the kind support, methodological insights and attentiveness to grammar (any remaining mistakes in that regard, are of course, my own). And to Kenneth Nelson, for believing in the usefulness of what I have been doing and for continuously engaging with my drafts, always seeking to help me extract the most relevant story from my analyses. I would also like to thank Jens Rydgren for acting as opponent at my half-time seminar, and I would like to extend my gratitude to Sunnee Billingsley for the close reading and thoughtful comments in association with my final seminar at the Department of Sociology. I am thankful also to Daniel Ritter for taking the time to discuss comparative historical analysis with me as I was writing the *kappa*.

When working with different parts of the thesis, I have also benefited from venturing into uncharted terrain in terms of other academic networks. When working on Study I, I was very fortunate to be invited to participate in the workshop on “The New Politics of Welfare in Emerging Market Economies”, held at Koç University in Istanbul, in March 2018. I very much appreciate the discussions we had and the comments I received on the draft I presented on that occasion. I am also grateful to Erdem Yörük and Stein Kuhnle for further support and constructive feedback on subsequent drafts and for eventually guiding the paper towards publication.

The orientation of Study II was in similar ways inspired by discussions emanating from the conference on “Causal Mechanisms in the Analysis of Social Policy Dynamics” organised by the Collaborative Research Centre 1342 in Bremen in November 2019. I am very thankful to Johanna Kuhlmann and Frank Nullmeier for seeing the potential in my preliminary analyses and for including me in your book project. Many thanks to both of you for encouraging me to develop my analyses further in terms of mechanisms, and for all the constructive feedback on earlier drafts. I look forward to continued collaboration on the historical dynamics of social policy.

I am also thankful for the friends who have been there along the way, sometimes despite mental and/or geographical distances. To my mother for all the caring support. To Monica for always looking out for us. And to you Jenny, thank you for being there with me, every step of the way from that first semester at university, via the West Midlands and Andalusia to the Bolivian Altiplano, through parenthood and proofreading. You are the apple of my eye!

Finally, the accomplishment of completing a PhD shrinks in comparison to that of becoming a parent. Yes, the achievement of writing three academic papers is greatly overshadowed by the three fantastic new human beings that have come into this world and made us the family we are, all during my time as a PhD candidate. Nathan, Elis, and Norea, I am so grateful to be your father and to get to share the joys and challenges of everyday life with you.

Uppsala, December 2022

Sammanfattning

Många låg- och medelinkomstländer har under de senaste decennierna uppvisat en betydande ekonomisk tillväxt, sida vid sida med iögonfallande ojämlikhet. Detta har betytt att kampen för att utrota den globala fattigdomen i allt större utsträckning har kommit att bli en fråga om resursfördelning inom, snarare än mellan, länder. Inom den globala utvecklingsdiskursen, med Förenta Nationernas *Agenda 2030* som ett centralt exempel, betonas också alltmer vikten av att bekämpa ojämlikhet och social exkludering, i kombination med ett tydligare fokus på utformningen av nationell politik i dessa avseenden. Således väcks frågor kring vilka ekonomiska institutioner som skulle kunna möjliggöra snabbare framsteg vad gäller att utrota fattigdom och minska ojämlikheten i en utvecklingskontext, och vilka förhållanden som gynnar framväxten av sådana institutioner.

Under senare decennier har socialpolitiken kommit att byggas ut i många utvecklingsländer, och de offentliga trygghetssystemen har kommit att framhållas som centrala verktyg inom den globala agendan för hållbar utveckling. Men utvecklingen av välfärdspolitiska institutioner skiljer sig åt mellan olika låg- och medelinkomstländer, både vad gäller politikens omfattning och utformning. Samtidigt saknar stora grupper fortfarande tillgång till de offentliga trygghetssystemen. Detta gäller särskilt de mest utsatta i dessa länder, vilket lett till frågetecken kring huruvida socialpolitiken i dessa fall bidrar till minska fattigdom och ojämlikhet. På samma gång har frågor väckts kring vad som orsakar förändringar av socialpolitiken i dessa länder, och i vilken grad dessa speglar motsättningar mellan olika socio-ekonomiska intressen, strukturella förändringar eller förskjutningar av normer och idéer. Inte minst har dessa frågor aktualiserats i ljuset av den omfattande expansion av socialpolitiska åtgärder inriktade på fattigdomsbekämpning som skett i många länder under senare decennier. Mot denna bakgrund syftar den här avhandlingen, bestående av tre fristående studier, till att analysera drivkrafter, mekanismer och konsekvenser av socialpolitiska reformer i en utvecklingskontext.

I Studie I undersöks drivkrafterna bakom förändringar i de offentliga sociala utgifterna i 46 nyare demokratier, under perioden 1995 till 2015, med särskilt fokus på partipolitikens roll. Makronivådata från Internationella arbetsorganisationen (ILO) och Världsbanken analyseras med hjälp av regressionsanalys inriktad på förändringar över tid inom länder. Resultaten visar på ett samband mellan starkare vänsterpartier och högre offentliga sociala utgifter,

också när hänsyn tagits till strukturella och institutionella faktorer. Ytterligare analyser pekar samtidigt på att de partipolitiska skillnaderna i första hand verkar framträda under perioder av uppgång i den ekonomiska konjunkturen. Dessa resultat pekar således på att intressebetsättningar och ideologier, artikuleraa genom partipolitiken, spelar en avgörande roll för socialpolitikens utveckling, också i en utvecklingskontext, men att mekanismerna bakom dessa samband behöver utredas ytterligare.

Mot bakgrund av dessa resultat undersöks i Studie II de mekanismer som driver fram och hindrar socialpolitisk expansion genom en fallstudie. Genom processpåring studeras politiken kring en socialpolitisk reform i Bolivia, som syftat till att göra det offentliga sjukvårdssystemet tillgängligt för alla. Baserat på tidigare forskning samt en genomgång av lagstiftning, nyhetsartiklar och andra textkällor kartläggs policyprocessen och olika aktörers hållning och agerande i relation till reformen. Studien lyfter fram hur reformprocessen drivits framåt genom ett samspel mellan statliga och icke-statliga aktörer, där intressen och idéer flätats samman, men också hur processen formats av institutioner och historiska faktorer. Tre specifika mekanismer framhålls som avgörande för att driva sjukvårdssystemet i en mer universell riktning: klassbaserad social mobilisering, interaktionen mellan sociala rörelser och offentlig förvaltning, och teoretisering. Medelklassens oro, motstånd bland utförare, och läkarkårens autonomi lyfts fram mekanismer som istället motverkat genomförandet av den tänkta reformen. Studien pekar slutligen på att förståelse för vad som påverkar om dessa mekanismer aktiveras eller inte är avgörande för att förklara socialpolitiska förändringsprocesser. Genom att lyfta fram underliggande mekanismer, bidrar studien med byggstenar till ett teoretiskt ramverk för att analysera socialpolitiska reformer i en utvecklingskontext.

I Studie III riktas fokus mot socialpolitikens konsekvenser. Studien utgår från tidigare utvecklingsekonomisk forskning som visat på betydande skillnader mellan olika fall gällande sambandet mellan tillväxt och fattigdomsreducing. Socialpolitiska faktorer har dock ofta saknats i dessa analyser. I ljuset av detta presenteras i denna studie resultat från analyser av hur offentliga transfereringssystem modererar effekten av ekonomisk tillväxt på absolut såväl som relativ barnfattigdom i en utvecklingskontext. Longitudinell data baserad på upprepade hushållsundersökningar i 16 låg- och medelinkomstländer, analyseras med hjälp av deskriptiv statistik och regressionsanalys. Resultaten visar på att absolut barnfattigdom samvarierar såväl med ekonomisk tillväxt, som med utbyggda transfereringssystem. Vad gäller relativ barnfattigdom, pekar resultaten på att samtidigt som varken utbyggda transfereringssystem eller ekonomisk tillväxt var för sig är förknippat med sjunkande nivåer, minskar den relativa barnfattigdomen i större utsträckning när ekonomisk tillväxt sker i en kontext av mer omfattande offentliga transfereringar. Studien pekar således på vikten av de socialpolitiska institutionerna för möjligheten att nå en mer inkluderande ekonomisk tillväxt, men väcker också frågor om transfereringssystemens utformning och deras betydelse för olika inkomstgrupper.

Studierna i avhandlingen illustrerar ur olika perspektiv att flera av de centrala begreppen inom den jämförande välfärdsforskningen kan appliceras också i en utvecklingskontext. De pekar tillsammans på nyttan med en analytisk ansats som betonar inkomstfördelningens politiska bestämningsfaktorer, där fattigdomens utbredning och graden av ekonomisk ojämlikhet påverkas av socialpolitiken, som i sin tur formas av politiska processer i ett samspel mellan intressen, idéer och institutioner. Fortsatta jämförande analyser av de socialpolitiska institutionerna och deras bakomliggande drivkrafter i en utvecklingskontext, kan således bidra till välbehövlig kunskap om orsakerna till fattigdom och ojämlikhet. Särskilt skulle framtida forskning kunna anta ett perspektiv på välfärdspolitik och ekonomisk utveckling som belyser samspelet mellan socialpolitik, resursfördelning och ekonomisk tillväxt, samt beaktar de politiska konsekvenserna av välfärdssystemens utformning.

Contents

List of studies	xi
Acknowledgments	xii
Sammanfattning	xiv
Introduction	1
Background	5
Poverty and inequality in a global perspective.....	5
Poverty amidst economic growth	7
Social protection across the Global South.....	10
Social policy institutions and redistribution	14
Explaining policy variation and change	18
Structural pressures	19
External influences.....	19
Democratisation and the state.....	20
Power resources and political parties	21
Institutions and policy feedback	23
Methodological approach	24
Combining difference-based and mechanistic approaches	24
Statistical analyses.....	26
Case study approach	29
Ethical considerations	31
Summary of empirical studies.....	33
Discussion	35
Limitations.....	39
The way ahead	40
Final remarks	43
References	44

Introduction

Eliminating poverty and reducing social and economic inequalities are emblematic goals of the global development agenda. Through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the international community proclaimed the quest to “end poverty in all its forms and dimensions” by 2030 (UN, 2015, p. 7). What is more, reflecting a renewed attention to the downsides associated with social and economic inequality, and an reappraisal of the fundamental role of social policy, the SDGs also include a target to “adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality” (UN, 2015, p. 21). Current developments are however less than encouraging regarding the potential for actually ending global poverty within this decade, and several countries have seen rising income inequality also in the wake of strong aggregate growth (Chancel et al., 2021; Christopher Hoy & Sumner, 2020; Kanbur, 2019; Lakner et al., 2020).

This situation prompts the question which economic institutions could enable more rapid advancement towards ending poverty and reducing inequalities in development contexts, and what conditions foment the expansion of such institutions? These are also the overarching questions inspiring the studies comprising this thesis. In particular, this thesis highlights the role of social protection systems in this respect, while acknowledging that institutions governing social interactions in diverse spheres of society are of relevance for the complex distributional processes that generates poverty and shapes distributional outcomes. Comprising policies regulating the delivery of healthcare, social services and income protection, social protection programs are arguably central to the distribution of welfare in society, particularly for more vulnerable households.

In sociology, and in the social sciences more generally, there is a long tradition of research on the causes and consequences of welfare state institutions in the advanced political economies of the Global North (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Huber & Stephens, 2001; Korpi, 1983; Wilensky, 1975). Much of this research has been cross-national and interdisciplinary, forming a literature that is variably labelled comparative social policy, political economy or welfare state research. This literature has highlighted differences in the configuration of social policies as consequential for the degree to which the industrialised nations were able to translate economic growth into poverty reduction and

improved living conditions also for the less affluent in these societies (D. Brady, 2009; Kenworthy, 2011; Korpi & Palme, 1998; Moller et al., 2003).

This thesis seeks to make use of insights gained from comparative welfare state analyses in affluent countries to study the changing social policy landscape in the Global South. Through a combination of large-N statistical methods and case study analysis, the three empirical studies presented here explore causes, mechanisms and outcomes of social policy institutions in development contexts. While drawing on theoretical concepts from comparative welfare state research, the analytical framework also incorporates insights from the emerging literature on social protection systems across the Global South.

Scholars have used different approaches to explain the divergence between affluent countries with regard to the configuration of social policy institutions (Myles & Quadagno, 2002). Given the centrality of welfare state policies for distributional outcomes, understanding the drivers of policy change in development contexts is arguably fundamental to a broader understanding of how poverty and inequality can be effectively addressed in the longer term. Not least as policies, and their related outcomes, might have feedback effects on political processes by precluding or enabling certain paths of future institutional change (cf. Korpi & Palme, 1998; Pierson, 2004; Yerkes et al., 2022).

The comparative welfare state literature has been focused on a canonical set of longstanding welfare states in Western Europe, the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. This focus has been widened during recent decades, as there has been an increasing interest in how social policy institutions can foster inclusive social development across the globe. This thesis adjoins with this global perspective, focusing on developments in countries other than the set of rich democracies traditionally studied in comparative welfare state research. While Study I restricts the sample of countries to democracies other than the longstanding members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Study III focuses on low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The terms development contexts, developing countries, LMICs and ‘the Global South’ will be used loosely throughout the thesis to refer to countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia as well as the post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). This is admittedly a heterogeneous set of countries, with some Southern countries, such as Chile and Uruguay, now considered high-income countries according to the World Bank’s classification. CEE countries on the other hand, are not part of the South in geographic terms, and many are considered high-income countries, but are of interest due to their comparatively recent (and sometimes incomplete) transition to multiparty democracy and market economy.

While economic growth has widely been considered the main thrust of global social development, recent decades has been characterised by growing concerns about widening social inequalities and a reappraisal of the role of governments in making sure growing prosperity is shared by all (Cook, 2018; Mahon, 2019; OECD, 2018; World Bank, 2018). During the last couple of

decades, governments across the Global South have also actively been rolling out novel social protection programs, including Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) schemes, social pensions and employment guarantees, as means to tackle poverty and social exclusion (Hanlon et al., 2010; Leisering, 2018).

Until recently there was little in the way of comparative research on social policy in developing countries. In their seminal article in the *Annual Review of Political Science*, Isabela Mares and Matthew Carnes noted that our grasp of the variation in the design and economic consequences of social policies in developing economies were at the time “sketchy and preliminary” and that we were “far from understanding the variation in the character of social protection and the political factors that have caused these outcomes” (Mares & Carnes, 2009, p. 94). Some years later, around the time that the work on this doctoral thesis had just been initiated, Nita Rudra, another pioneering scholar in the field, referred to the evolution of social protection in developing countries as a “vastly understudied topic” (Rudra, 2015, p. 464). In a more recent book about cash transfers in the Global South, Lutz Leisering lamented the lack of studies with an academic ambition in this field, the absence of theory and the poor availability of comparative data (Leisering, 2018, p. 4).

However, the literature on social policy in developing countries has undoubtedly taken off in the last decade. One strand of this research has been devoted to analysing the evolution of new non-contributory social assistance schemes across the Global South (Barrientos, 2013; Brooks, 2015; M.E. Carnes & Mares, 2014; Leisering, 2018). Some have sought explanations for the historical introduction of social insurance in developing countries (Kangas, 2012; Schmitt et al., 2015), while others have focused on various aspects of social policy expansion in these contexts (Desai & Rudra, 2018; Dorlach, 2021; Ha, 2015; Huber & Stephens, 2012; Lavers & Hickey, 2016). Researchers have also inquired about the distributional impacts of fiscal policy in LMICs (Fiszbein & Schady, 2009; Goñi et al., 2011; Lustig, 2016). Still, the comparative literature on the causes and consequences of social policy in development contexts is still emerging and debates on the appropriateness of different concepts and analytical frameworks is a topic of ongoing debate.

This thesis aims to contribute to this debate. Besides this introductory chapter, it comprises three sole authored empirical studies, of which the first two have been published in other outlets. Focusing on the evolution of social protection in the Global South during recent decades, the three studies address some of the remaining gaps in the emerging literature on the drivers and outcomes of social policy in development contexts. The empirical analyses are guided by three specific research questions, each one addressed in a respective study. Can party politics contribute to an explanation of social policy expansion in democratic development contexts? Which mechanisms underpin the making of a universal orientation of social policy? And lastly, can differences in social protection systems help to explain heterogeneity regarding the impact of economic growth on child poverty?

While a number of studies have analysed the drivers of social policy expansion in the Global South (see Dorlach, 2021 for recent overview), previous studies have often lacked data on the ideological orientation of governments, or focused on historical developments, also spanning non-democratic settings. Against this background, Study I contributes to this emerging literature with an assessment of the role of partisan politics for social spending in democratic non-OECD countries during the more recent decades. The second study of the thesis, a within-case analysis of the process of healthcare reform in Bolivia, further explores the mechanisms underpinning the links between political changes and social policy reform, in a case where an universalisation of health coverage was eventually legislated under a left party government. Finally, study III focuses on the distributional outcomes of social protection in LMICs. Previous studies on the impact of transfers have mostly been cross-sectional, while studies on the impact of growth on poverty has mostly overlooked the role of social protection. Study III addresses this gap in the literature by analysing whether more extensive social protection schemes strengthen the impact of economic growth on poverty, using statistical analyses of child poverty rates, government transfers and economic growth, based on data from repeated household surveys from a sample of LMICs.

The subsequent section gives a background to the three studies, introducing the reader to the conceptual and methodological issues associated with the study of poverty and inequality in a comparative perspective. A second section present recent trends in global poverty and inequality and discusses the prospects of achieving the related SDGs. The changing configuration of social protection systems in developing countries is examined in the next section, followed by a section addressing how features of social policies are related to distributional outcomes. The subsequent section reviews theoretical approaches to explaining cross-country variation in social policy, thus setting up the edifice for the theoretical framework of the thesis. The section after that contains a discussion of methodological issues associated with the statistical and case study analyses carried out in this thesis, as well as ethical considerations. This introductory essay is then rounded off with a discussion of the findings from the empirical analyses and possible avenues for future research. The three empirical studies make up the remainder of the thesis.

Background

Poverty and inequality in a global perspective

While the fight against poverty attracts broad-based support, poverty is still a contested concept (Anand et al., 2010). Common to most measures is the definition of poverty as an inability to meet basic needs (Atkinson, 2019). Most studies of global poverty use money-metric measures of income or expenditure to assess the level of resources available to households, and from there deduce a value representing the welfare of its individual members (Ravallion, 2020). This method is often contrasted with ‘direct’ measures of deprivation, whereby poverty is defined as a failure to meet minimum standards related to core needs or ‘functionings’, such as access to adequate food, clothing or housing (Erikson, 1993; Sen, 1983).

Irrespective of whether poverty is measured as deprivation or indirectly through income or expenditure, the issue of where to draw the line below which one is to be considered poor will need addressing. Central to this debate is the link between poverty and inequality, with some considering these to be separate phenomena while others tend to define poverty with reference to wider social inequalities. A common distinction is often made between absolute and relative approaches, with poverty defined with reference to the means necessary for subsistence in the former case, whereas relative approaches see poverty as falling behind customary living standards and an inability to participate in society.

While absolute definitions have been most prevalent when measuring poverty in developing countries, as well as on a global scale, a tendency towards a stronger focus on inequality and ‘inclusiveness’ has been discernible in global debates on sustainable development during more recent times. Not least is this illustrated by the call to ‘leave no one behind’ and the incorporation of goal 10 in the SDG agenda, taking aim at the “social, economic and political inclusion of all” (UN, 2015, p. 21). The renewed attention to inequality is also reflected in debates on economic growth, where the detrimental effects of inequality on economic development is increasingly recognised (Cerra et al., 2021). Moreover, there has been a notable shift in the discourses of international organisations, reflected in calls for “inclusive growth” and “shared prosperity” (OECD, 2018; World Bank, 2018; see also Cerra et al., 2021; Christopher Hoy & Sumner, 2020; Saad-Filho, 2010). In debates about the meas-

urement of global poverty, there have likewise been growing demands for putting greater emphasis on relative poverty (Garroway & de Laiglesia, 2012; Klasen et al., 2016). Several “weakly relative” poverty lines, have in this spirit been suggested as alternatives for monitoring global poverty (Atkinson, 2017; Jolliffe & Prydz, 2021; Ravallion & Chen, 2011), including the “societal poverty line” now used by the World Bank (2022).¹

Absolute poverty lines, commonly used for measuring poverty in developing countries, are typically defined with reference to the cost of purchasing a basket of essential goods, comprising food to meet minimal nutritional requirements, adding an allowance for non-food expenditures on items such as housing and clothing (Atkinson, 2019, p. 37). This is also how the international line, launched by the World Bank to monitor global extreme poverty is constructed. The international poverty line is derived from the median of the poverty lines in fifteen of the world’s poorest countries. The line is then adjusted using Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs) to reflect a constant real value across countries as well as over time. At the time of the adoption of the SDGs, this line was set at \$1.25, but was subsequently updated to \$1.90 in 2015, and recently to \$2.15, following the release of the 2017 PPPs (World Bank, 2022).

In contrast, relative poverty is linked to inequality and social inclusion, taking into account the expenditures needed to uphold typical living standards in society. Defining poverty in relative terms aligns with an emphasis on the importance of social participation in society for human well-being. The British sociologist Peter Townsend is commonly associated with this perspective, famously stating that “[i]ndividuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong” (1979, p. 31). While disagreeing with Townsend on other aspects of the definition of poverty, Amartya Sen (1983) seemingly agreed on the social nature of needs, suggesting that while poverty should be defined with reference to an “absolute approach in the space of capabilities”, this “translates into a relative approach in the space of commodities, resources and incomes” (Sen, 1983, p. 168). Following Sen’s reasoning, Atkinson and Bourguignon (2001) suggested that poverty should be defined with reference to the dual capabilities of physical survival and social inclusion, thus arguing that both absolute and relative poverty matter (Atkinson, 2019). When operationalising relative poverty, the poverty line is commonly set at 50 or 60 per cent of median disposable household income. This is common practice in

¹ These lines changes along with economic growth with an elasticity of the poverty line to mean expenditure or consumption that is less than one while simultaneously incorporating a floor set at the level of the international poverty line. This approach is accordingly somewhat different from “strongly relative” measures used by several high-income countries whereby the poverty line is defined solely with reference to median disposable household income.

many high-income countries, with a 60 percent line used by the European Union for the headline “at-risk-of-poverty” indicator.

However, the dichotomy between absolute and relative lines obscures important nuances. Empirically, also absolute lines tend in practice to follow changing perceptions about the definition of poverty as economies grow and average living standards improve (Jolliffe & Prydz, 2021; Ravallion & Chen, 2019). Acknowledging this tendency, the World Bank introduced two additional thresholds, recently updated to \$3.65 and \$6.85 per day, defined with reference to national poverty lines in lower-middle-income-countries and upper-middle-income-countries respectively (World Bank, 2022).

The introduction of these new poverty lines is arguably reflective of the wider recognition of the need for poverty concepts to be responsive to changing standards and requirements for social participation as societies evolve. How a social problem is defined has important implications for how it is perceived, and for prescriptions about potential remedies. Empirically, relative poverty measures mirror the degree of inequality, with the consequence that economic growth will not lead to lower poverty rates unless incomes are shared more equally in the process. Absolute poverty on the other hand, will fall with ‘distribution neutral’ economic growth. As discussed in the following section, the choice of measurement accordingly influences our evaluation of the progress made during later decades and of the role played by economic growth in this respect. How poverty is defined will thus also impinge on perceptions about the role of social protection in the quest to end global poverty.

Poverty amidst economic growth

The question of whether economic growth, or “modernisation” more generally, is conducive towards poverty reduction has attracted much scholarly attention. Early debates often followed Simon Kuznets’ (1955) prediction that inequality would increase in the early stages of development, suggesting that little if any reduction in poverty would follow from economic growth in the developing world, while later stages of development would imply greater equality.² Successively, based on improved data that allowed researchers to follow developments over time, studies found growth to be, on average, unrelated to changes in the income distribution (Goudie & Ladd, 1999; Kanbur, 2019; Ravallion & Chen, 1997). If relative incomes remain constant as average income increases, this means that the incomes of the poor grow in proportion to average income, and that absolute poverty accordingly declines as a result of economic growth (Adams, 2004; Bourguignon, 2003; Dollar &

² This assumption is however nuanced by recent literature focusing on how such factors as globalisation and technological change influence the relationship between growth and inequality over the course of history (see e.g. Milanovic 2016).

Kraay, 2002; Ravallion, 2001). Robust evidence of this pattern has bolstered the widespread idea that “growth is good for the poor” (Dollar & Kraay, 2002), and that increasing economic output is the most effective strategy to improve living conditions also for those at the bottom of the income distribution.

Looking beyond average effects, empirical studies point to a substantial heterogeneity across countries and time periods in the growth elasticity of poverty, i.e. the change in the poverty rate associated with a concomitant change in economic output (Adams, 2004; Bourguignon, 2003; Ferreira et al., 2010; Ravallion, 2001). Meanwhile, in line with the lack of an overall association between growth and inequality, recent studies have found growth to be, on average, unrelated to reductions of relative poverty rates (e.g Margitic & Ravallion, 2019; Ravallion, 2020). As with absolute poverty however, the lack of an overall association obscures a significant heterogeneity in effects across countries and time-periods, so that “during periods of economic growth we have seen falling inequality within developing countries about as often as we have seen rising inequality” (Kanbur, 2019, p. 435).

Research on the determinants of what makes some growth processes more pro-poor than others is still only emerging. Despite advancements regarding the characterization of the relationship between growth, inequality and poverty, the literature “is relatively silent regarding the specific factors that could foster a larger impact of economic growth on poverty” (Alvaredo & Gasparini, 2015, p. 785; see also Kraay, 2006 for a similar statement). Research within development economics have focused on two main sources of this variation, the sector composition of growth on the one hand, and initial conditions related to human capital, technology, urbanisation and the distribution of assets, on the other (Ferreira et al., 2010). More recently, there is also stronger recognition of the role of redistributive policies, and especially social protection (Barrientos & Hulme, 2009; Ferrarini et al., 2016; Ferreira et al., 2010; Fiszbein et al., 2014; Leisering, 2018; Margitic & Ravallion, 2019; Skoufias et al., 2010).

Industrialization in the Global North brought with it widening inequalities between rich and poor countries from the 19th and throughout much of the 20th century. By the end of the last century, rapid economic growth in China, and also in India and other large emerging economies in the Global South, meant that the gap between these countries and the advanced economies in the global North started to decline. As a result, 75 percent of the global population now live in middle-income-countries (MICs), compared to only nine percent in low-income-countries (LICs). However, economic growth has been accompanied by widening within-country inequalities, with the consequence that global inequality has declined only slightly (Chancel et al., 2021). Accordingly, reducing global poverty and income inequality increasingly implies confronting inequalities within emerging economies, with the consequence

that poverty is increasingly regarded a domestic issue of distribution and political economy (Dagdeviren et al., 2002; Chris Hoy & Sumner, 2016; Kalwij & Verschoor, 2007).

The last decades have widely been regarded a success in terms of poverty reduction, as the share of the global population estimated to live below the World Bank's threshold for extreme poverty fell from 38 percent in 1990 to below 10 percent in 2019. However, the rate of this decline slowed down around 2014, and the COVID-19 pandemic furthermore meant that millions were pushed back into poverty, causing what is probably the steepest rise in global extreme poverty since World War II, and the first rise in between-country inequality in a generation (UN, 2022, p. 47). Extreme poverty is today heavily concentrated to Sub-Saharan Africa, with particularly high incidence among households living in rural areas, working in agriculture, and households with more children (World Bank, 2022). The currently unfolding cost-of-living-crisis that was catalysed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine puts further stress on already poor households in developing countries, and the accompanying hikes in interest rates on global financial markets pressure governments in the Global South facing already high levels of sovereign debt (UNDP, 2022).

Turning from extreme poverty to poverty defined with reference to higher thresholds, almost a quarter of the global population lives on incomes below the line adapted to lower-middle-income countries, with the share reaching almost half of the global population with reference to the poverty line for upper-middle-income-countries (World Bank, 2022, p. 41). By these higher standards, poverty is also more geographically dispersed, with disquieting rates of poverty not only in Sub-Saharan Africa, but also in Asia, Latin America, and North Africa. What is more, while extreme poverty rates have been declining at a pace deemed insufficient to comply with the SDGs, poverty rates based on higher thresholds have been decreasing even more slowly, and from much higher levels (Alvaredo & Gasparini, 2015; World Bank, 2022). Illustratively, when extreme poverty is said to have been more than halved between 1990 and 2010, this refers to the extreme poverty measured using the threshold set at \$1.25 a day. Using a poverty line fixed at \$2.00 a day, the headcount ratio in 2010 was still about two-thirds of the value in 1990, and even higher if a \$4 threshold is applied (Alvaredo & Gasparini, 2015).

Poverty measures incorporating a relative component also point towards a more moderate decline in the global poverty rate compared to when a strictly absolute measure is used. The World Bank's concept of *societal poverty*, is one such measure that incorporates a relative component. While the rate of poverty according to the societal poverty line has declined slowly over the last decades, the number of poor people in the world has remained almost constant since 1990 according to this definition (Jolliffe & Prydz, 2021; World Bank, 2022). "Strongly" relative measures, that change along with median incomes in each country, even suggests that poverty rates have risen over the same

period (Ravallion, 2020). Accordingly, even provided that the levels of economic growth observed before the pandemic are resumed, it will seemingly take decades to eliminate even the most extreme forms of poverty, not to mention definitions of poverty that rely on higher or relative thresholds (Chris Hoy & Sumner, 2016; Lakner et al., 2020).

Nor is the incidence of poverty similar across groups in society. Poverty is particularly prevalent in rural areas and among children, and particularly among larger households with more children (Castañeda et al., 2018). The UNICEF-WHO-Lancet Commission recently issued a statement arguing forcefully for putting children at the centre of the Sustainable Development agenda (Clark et al., 2020). From a normative viewpoint, inequality with regard to the life chances of children are incompatible with most notions of social justice, as it runs counter to the idea about equality of opportunity (Rawls, 1971; Roemer, 1998). Research from affluent countries has found austere living conditions during childhood and adolescence to be detrimental to life-chances in adulthood, with the consequent risk that such conditions are transmitted across generations, through perpetual intergenerational cycles of poverty and disadvantage (Björklund & Jäntti, 2009; Black et al., 2017). In light of these insights, the current situation should be a source of deep concern, with 17.5 percent of children in the world recently estimated to have lived in extreme poverty in 2017, representing only a moderate improvement of two percentage points compared to the situation four years earlier. Child poverty rates calculated with reference to the higher lines adapted to the situation in the two categories of MICs was in turn estimated at devastating levels of 41.5 and 66.7 percent respectively (Silwal et al., 2020). These figures, seen in the light of moral considerations and our knowledge of the longer-term consequences of child poverty, should serve as strong motivations for investigating policies capable of reducing the economic hardship of children in developing countries. However, studies seeking to explain variation in child poverty across developing countries are still rare (but see Ekbrand & Halleröd, 2018; and Halleröd et al., 2013 for studies of child deprivation in a comparative perspective). Understanding the role of social protection should be central in this respect, motivating the analyses of the consequences as well as the determinants of such policies undertaken for this doctoral thesis.

Social protection across the Global South

Universal social protection became a central element to ensure social integration in the industrialized countries during the post-war era (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Huber & Stephens, 2001). On the global arena, the universal right of everyone to social security and an adequate standard of living, including food, housing, clothing and medical care, was during the same period enshrined in

the Declaration of Human Rights, and reinforced by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The actual protection of these rights is however weak in many parts of the world, and over half of the world's population still lack access to any kind of income security (ILO, 2021).

The existing social protection landscape in non-western countries is the result of layered institutional changes unfolding over extended periods of time. Several former colonies carry legacies from institutions introduced during the colonial era (Kangas, 2012). But social insurance legislation has a long history also in sovereign nations of the Global South, and countries such as Uruguay and Argentina were actually early adopters of modern social insurance legislation (Schmitt et al., 2015). Indeed, throughout the 20th century, public welfare provision became a core task of emerging nation states, making old-age pensions, sickness, and work injury insurance legislation widespread, also in less affluent countries. These schemes offered income protection, and sometimes also in-kind benefits, on the basis of previous contributions. However, weak state capacity in combination with highly variegated livelihood strategies among the population, and with social insurance schemes focused on a limited segment of the workforce, coverage rates have typically been low. Benefits are mostly accessed by workers in privileged sectors, including the public sector and particular industries deemed to be of national interest, while excluding large segments of the rural population as well as all those in informal employment (Rudra, 2008; Wood & Gough, 2006).

The time-period in focus in this thesis, roughly from early 1990s and onwards, was preceded by a decade characterised by broad social, economic, and political changes that to different degree affected all developing countries and their social protection systems. The economic thinking during this time was permeated with ideas celebrating the superiority of market-based solutions, seeing state intervention and government spending as inimical to economic prosperity (Jenson, 2010). Structural adjustment programs were promoted by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These programs often included the eradication of barriers to trade and foreign direct investment, deregulation of monetary policies, and the withdrawal of the state from interfering in internal markets, partly through the privatisation of state-owned enterprises. Simultaneously, the share of workers employed in agriculture and manufacturing was in a steady decline. Together with rapid urbanisation, this process has resulted in an increase in the share of informal and vulnerable employment in most regions of the world, further exacerbating the pre-existing difficulties for the poor to access contributory social protection (Barrientos & Hulme, 2009; Haggard & Kaufman, 2008).

At the same time, processes of transition towards democracy took place in many non-western countries. This surge of political transitions, starting with the overthrow of military regimes in Southern Europe during the 1970s, followed by the abandonments of authoritarian forms of government in Latin

America and East Asia during the 1980s, the fall of communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe around 1990, as well as the introduction of multiparty elections in many African countries during the early 1990s, have been labelled “the third wave of democratisation” (Huntington, 1991). However, the idea that transnational processes of democratisation can fruitfully be divided into separable waves is highly contested, and the extent to which this particular wave of transitions can be meaningfully distinguished from previous waves have been questioned. Moreover, the wave metaphor effectively conceals the diversity of causes and processes that characterises the plethora of transitions that have been lumped together under this banner. One can also question how democratic this wave actually has been given the restricted nature of democracy, its scant consolidation in many of the transitioning countries, with several countries even reverting to authoritarian forms of government (Grugel, 2002). Thus, despite the surge of the number of elected governments around the world, many non-OECD democracies have not consolidated and many formally democratic or semi-democratic regimes, especially in Africa, the Middle-East and Asia retain poorly functioning political institutions (Lehoucq, 2012).

Although the wave metaphor as well as the quality of democracy installed by several of these transitions can be rightfully questioned, the replacement of authoritarian forms of governments with multiple parties contesting elections, resulting in formally democratically elected governments in many parts of the world represented an undeniable sea change. Also, democratisation and the associated strengthening of civil and political rights have made it possible for groups that were previously excluded from the political system to organise. Democratisation has thus arguably facilitated the incorporation of those with lower incomes and fewer resources into the political decision-making process. Occasionally, this has manifested itself in the rise of parties with egalitarian and redistributive agendas (Levitsky & Roberts, 2011).

Incipient democratisation, happening in a context of social and economic changes associated with increased vulnerability and insecurity, has arguably posed novel challenges to previously installed social policy institutions. These developments have played out differently in the regions across the Global South, interacting with existing institutional frameworks (Barrientos & Hulme, 2009; Gough et al., 2004; Haggard & Kaufman, 2008). Following the deep debt crisis and the subsequent strengthening of the influence of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) in Latin America, countries in this region dismantled their previous import-substitution policies and embarked on a path of structural adjustments of their economies during the 1980s, shifting the orientation of social policies in a more liberal direction (Barrientos, 2004; Huber & Stephens, 2012).

Countries in Northern Africa and the Middle East also exhibited incipient welfare states but here, as in many parts of Latin America, informality, clientelism and weak state institutions represent important impediments to the functioning of social protection policies. In much of Sub-Saharan Africa, and partly also in South Asia, social protection has mostly taken the form of a patchwork of aid-funded interventions and remains of colonial relief programs. These have often been poorly funded and implemented, in a context of weak, or sometimes even collapsed, states. Many African countries faced surmounting levels of government debt and subsequent adjustment programs in the 1980s, a period that also meant the end of a number of socialist experiments on the continent (Bevan, 2004; Niño-Zarazúa et al., 2012).

The East Asian model of development has been labelled *productivistic*, due to its emphasis on economic growth and the leading role of the state in this pursuit. Accordingly, social policies have been subsumed under this general ambition, leading to an emphasis on investments in education and health rather than income protection. However, employment-related social insurance has an important place in the more economically advanced countries of the region. The severe financial crisis that hit East Asia in 1997-1998 moreover triggered a series of reforms to the social protection systems in the region, moving these in a more inclusive direction in countries such as Korea, Taiwan and Thailand (Gough, 2004; Kwon, 2009).

As the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries entered into the process of transition to market-based economies many were thrown into recessions, with varying rates of recuperation from the end of the 1990s and onwards. The social protection systems in the region exhibit features of the universalist legacy, inherited from the socialist period, combined with pre-soviet-era occupational social insurance, imprinted by market-oriented reforms during the last decades (Careja & Emmenegger, 2009; Haggard & Kaufman, 2008).

The perceivably adverse social consequences of the initiatives taken during the 1980s to privatise and dismantle social protection, has since brought about partial reversals of these reforms, paving the way for an alleged “return of the state” across middle-income countries (M. Carnes & Mares, 2015). This renewed emphasis on the positive role of government in general, and social protection in particular, is also mirrored in the global political discourse (Cook, 2018; Jenson, 2010; Mahon, 2019), and is intertwined with the rise to prominence of the social investment paradigm in global debates on development (Jenson, 2010; M. Nelson & Sandberg, 2016). Not least is this recognized in the Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the UN, which contains several references to the importance of social protection for inclusion and poverty reduction (UN, 2015). Also international institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the OECD have become increasingly supportive of social protection as a tool to foster inclusive growth and poverty reduction (Mahon, 2019; OECD, 2018; World Bank, 2018).

This renewed appreciation for the role of social policy can also be seen in introduction of new anti-poverty policies, particularly tax-financed social assistance programs, combined with improved access of the poor to basic services, in countries across the Global South (Barrientos, 2013; Hanlon et al., 2010; Leisering, 2018). Latin American countries pioneered the introduction of conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs targeting families with children, often with technical and financial assistance from international organisations (Béland et al., 2018; Fiszbein & Schady, 2009; M. Nelson & Sandberg, 2016; Valencia Lomelí, 2008). Examples of large-scale social assistance programs can now also be found in countries such as South Africa, Indonesia, and China. With regards to the elderly, basic pension programs of varying sorts have been implemented in countries around the globe (Böger & Leisering, 2018). In other policy areas there are similar signs of expansion. Health care programs are extended in many countries, animated by aspirations to move towards universal health coverage (Reich et al., 2016). While previously rare in developing countries, many governments have introduced unemployment protection schemes (Obinger & Schmitt, 2022). As a result, “[t]he contours of the social protection landscape in the developing world have become far broader and more fluid than would have been expected even a decade ago” (Carnes & Mares, 2015, p. 526).

As a consequence of these extensions, the coverage of social protection has been broadened, especially with regards to the poorest segments of the populations in the Global South (Leisering & Barrientos, 2013). However, implementation is sometimes weak and benefit programs often lack proper institutionalisation and sustainable funding mechanisms. Moreover, expansion has often been segmented (Arza et al., 2022), and coverage of social insurance remains biased towards formal sector workers while social assistance benefits do not always reach the intended population groups (Devereux et al., 2017). The next section briefly addresses some of the questions about the distributional consequences of social policies in developing countries invoked by these observations.

Social policy institutions and redistribution

The expansion of social policy associated with the emergence of welfare states in the Global North during the twentieth century has been seen as a gradual realisation of ‘social citizenship’ (Marshall, 1950). In terms of policies, this process involved replacing old ‘poor laws’ by more universal forms of social protection, contributory as well as non-contributory (Korpi, 2001). The development of universal social protection meant moving from means-tests and narrow low-income targeting towards the inclusion of broader segments of the population into the welfare state, thus forming a community of individual right-holders of equal status (Leisering & Barrientos, 2013).

Meanwhile, the association between the size of the welfare state and various measures of inequality and poverty has been dubbed “one of the more robust findings of comparative poverty research over the past decades” (Marx et al., 2015, p. 2081). A host of studies have contributed to the cementation of the view that a more encompassing welfare state is associated with lower poverty and inequality in affluent countries (D. Brady, 2009; Kenworthy, 2011; Korpi & Palme, 1998; Moller et al., 2003).

In LMICs, social insurance has generally failed to ‘universalise’ the right to social protection as these schemes were sometimes selective, often privileging groups that were central in processes of nation-building (Barrientos, 2019; Martínez Franzoni & Sánchez-Ancochea, 2016; Schmitt et al., 2015). Not seldom where they introduced under authoritarian governments (Mares & Carnes, 2009). Also when coverage was formally inclusive, few countries saw the growth of formal labour markets through which workers could qualify for entitlements, giving rise to ‘truncated’ welfare states (Holland, 2018), with vulnerable groups in practice lacking access to social protection. Some scholars have come to highlight that these features of social protection systems across the Global South limits their relevance for poverty reduction, and that social transfers in some instances may even contribute to aggravating already high levels of income inequality (Huber & Stephens, 2012; Lindert et al., 2006; Rudra, 2008).

This legacy implies that a core challenge for countries across the Global South is associated with a need to move from exclusionary contributory systems to more inclusive forms of social protection. Introducing new forms of social assistance that serve to include the less affluent, have by some scholars been regarded a realistic approach to extending social citizenship and reduce segmentation with existing social protection systems across the Global South (Leisering & Barrientos, 2013; Martínez Franzoni & Sánchez-Ancochea, 2016).

These novel forms of non-contributory cash transfer schemes involve various mechanisms for selecting beneficiaries. Most social assistance programs introduced during the last decades use some form of *proxy means test*, employing information regarding easily observable characteristics of the household, to identify eligible beneficiaries (Brown et al., 2018). As an alternative, or a complement, some countries rely on geographical targeting, whereby territories are ranked by their social and demographic characteristics, selecting areas with the highest concentration of poverty (Devereux et al., 2017; White, 2017). Conditional cash transfer programs (CCTs), particularly prevalent in Latin America, additionally ties the receipt of benefits to behavioural requirements, meant to stimulate human capital investments (Barrientos & DeJong, 2006; Fiszbein & Schady, 2009; Gentilini & Omamo, 2011), by conditioning eligibility on requirements such as school attendance or regular health check-ups for children (Barrientos & DeJong, 2006; M. Nelson & Sandberg, 2016;

Papadopoulos & Leyer, 2016; Valencia Lomelí, 2008). Another type of program ties cash transfers to participation in public works programs (Barrientos & Hulme, 2009). Examples of this kind of schemes are the Employment Guarantee Scheme in India and the Productive Safety Net Program in Ethiopia. Participation in these programs are accordingly to a higher degree based on self-selection, given that enrolment in supported employment is a prerequisite for receiving cash benefits, as a way for participants to demonstrated deservingness both regarding the need for assistance as well as their willingness to contribute (Devereux et al., 2017).

The narrow targeting employed within these schemes is however not without critics. It is often asserted that programs involving more demanding requirements on recipients tend to require higher administrative capacity, thus limiting their feasibility in less affluent countries (Schubert & Slater, 2006). Moreover, the conditionalities may come at the prize of potential exclusion of rightful beneficiaries, due to difficulties of the poor to comply with the requirements (Coady et al., 2004). Also, the expected long-term benefits of human investments among vulnerable households are contingent on the accessibility of services of sufficient quality, thus requiring adequate investments in supply-side policies (Fenwick, 2017; M. Nelson & Sandberg, 2016). From a political economy perspective, it is also doubtful whether extending low-income targeted social assistance can contribute to fostering the broad coalitions necessary to also raise revenues needed to improve the quality of social rights and move towards more encompassing social policies (Ferrarini et al., 2016; cf. Korpi & Palme, 1998). Accordingly, worries have been raised that a shift in emphasis from universal provision of public goods and services towards a more selective orientation of social protection systems and demand-side subsidies to the poorest, would fail to confront existing inequalities (Lavinás, 2015).

From this overview it is clear that issues of institutional design are central to questions about distributional outcomes. In addition to effects on the distribution of welfare in society, institutional features of social policies also have consequences for political dynamics. Although issues of institutional design are not studied empirically in this thesis, these debates about distributional consequences of social policies in the Global South provide an important background against which presented studies should be viewed. As highlighted in Study I, discussions about who benefits from social policy expansion are fundamental to theoretical approaches that emphasise distributional conflict as central to understanding actors' motivations for engaging in the pursuit of social policy expansion. Study II explores the politics surrounding these issues by focusing on an instance of institutional reform with universalist ambitions, and by bringing to the fore how the existing and emerging institutional configurations influences actors' perceived interests in this process. Study III in turn, directly addresses the issue of distributional outcomes by focusing on whether social protection contribute to making economic growth conducive to

poverty reduction across LMICs, but without exploring the institutional features of these schemes. Common to the conclusions in all three studies is a recognition of the potential for social protection schemes to benefit the less privileged, with consequences not only for the material well-being of the poor, but also for democratic politics and the political economy in the emerging welfare states across the Global South. Which factors foment the expansion and retrenchment of these schemes in development contexts? The next section reviews the main theoretical approaches by which institutional changes in social policy are commonly explained.

Explaining policy variation and change

Occupying a position between driving forces of social change and the distribution of welfare in society, social policy has been conceived of as a central ‘intervening variable’, in a causal chain between wider societal shifts and distributional outcomes (Korpi & Palme, 1998). Comparative research on rich countries has come to highlight how politics and institutions shape the distribution of resources in society, with consequences for the cross-country variation in the incidence of poverty (Bäckman, 2009; D. Brady, 2009; Moller et al., 2003). Differences in welfare institutions have in turn been explained using a range of theoretical approaches.

Some of these have seen on social policies as functional responses to changing social risks, driven by broad demographic or economic shifts (Wilensky, 1975; see also Taylor-Gooby, 2004). Pressures on welfare states from economic globalisation have similarly been considered (D. Brady et al., 2005; Garrett, 1998; Rodrik, 1998). Others have employed an actor-centred perspective, seeing institutions as “structuration’s of power and residues of conflict” (Korpi, 2001, p. 247), with policy configurations and resulting distributional outcomes depending on the relative power of collective actors (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Huber & Stephens, 2001; Korpi, 1983). A third strand has given prominence to the role of state structures and policy legacies, and how these structure interests and shape opportunities for reform (Evans et al., 1985; Pierson, 1996). Transnational factors have been cast as particularly important to the politics of social protection in development contexts (Lavers & Hickey, 2016; Wood & Gough, 2006), and an emerging strand of the literature emphasises the ways in which ideas and policy scripts are transferred across countries, with more recent contributions drawing extensively on experiences from the Global South (Béland, 2009; Collier & Messick, 1975; Dobbin et al., 2007; Kuhlmann et al., 2020; Strang & Meyer, 1993; Weyland, 2005).

A variety of methods have been employed in empirical research, with methodological considerations reflecting differences in theoretical approaches. Accordingly, studies emphasising the role of state structures and policy legacies have tended to rely on comparative-historical analyses, while studies emphasising economic factors have primarily employed statistical tools. Choices regarding research design and methods will inevitably have consequences for the kind of questions that can be addressed within a given study, and which

results that are most likely to emerge. The following sections briefly discuss the abovementioned approaches to explaining differences in welfare institutions, and reflect on their applicability to the processes unfolding in LMICs.

Structural pressures

Early studies of welfare state development commonly saw the development of social security programs as an outcome of a broader movement towards modernisation, often proceeding by comparing societies at different developmental stages in order to test their hypotheses. This literature emphasised the tendency of states to respond to changing risks and needs arising from the processes unleashed by industrialisation, including urbanisation and the withering of traditional social ties (Cutright, 1965; Wilensky, 1975). More recent scholarship has similarly suggested that the evolution of ‘new social risks, typical for post-industrial society, drives the emergence of new welfare policies addressing changing gender roles, population ageing and more unstable employment patterns (Taylor-Gooby, 2004).

Research ocused on explaining the timing of the introduction of social protection schemes in developing countries has found that economic development indeed had a positive impact, but mainly for the early adopters of social insurance legislation (Kangas, 2012; Schmitt et al., 2015). Others have argued that modernisation is associated with increased government size, albeit mainly in democratic societies (Charles Boix, 2001). More recent research on the impact of structural change on social policy reform has highlighted the impact of de-industrialisation and the associated proliferation of more unstable forms of employment. Increases in economic insecurity can according to this view explain the concomitant increase in the demand for tax-financed social protection in Latin America (M. Carnes & Mares, 2015).

External influences

In broad terms, two rival hypotheses are often depicted against each other regarding the impact of globalisation on social policy. A first strand of research embarks from the assumption that states need to increase efficiency and minimize labour costs in order to compete on global markets, and that increasing openness and exposure to global markets therefore should imply a “race-to-the-bottom” in terms of welfare state policy (Rudra, 2008). Meanwhile, a second strand view social policy as a way to shelter citizens in exposed economies from some of the insecurities associated with dependence on a volatile global economy. Also, government spending on investment in human capital can in this view be seen as functional for the enhancement of competitiveness. In accordance with this latter view, much research on OECD countries has

tended to find stronger support for a compensatory role of government in face of exposure to external markets (Cameron, 1978; Garrett, 1998; Katzenstein, 1985; Rodrik, 1998).

While some studies focusing specifically on developing countries corroborates the tendency for governments to take on a compensatory role (Adserà & Boix, 2002; Avelino et al., 2005), others have found that factors associated with globalisation exerted a downward pressure on social spending (Kaufman & Segura-Ubiergo, 2001; Rudra & Haggard, 2005). In polemic with the compensation hypothesis Wibbels and Ahlquist (2011) argue that the size of the domestic market, abundance of labour, and land inequality condition the development strategy of developing countries, inducing inwardly oriented economies to promote social spending.

Apart from these factors pertaining to the insertion of nation-states into the global economy, other scholars have highlighted aspects of globalisation, especially the transnational diffusion of ideas and policy scripts (Béland, 2009; Dobbin et al., 2007; Jenson, 2010; Leisering, 2018). Schmitt et al. (2015) found that transnational relations, both regionally and via the ILO, was of importance for the timing of the introduction of social insurance legislation across 177 nations. Diffusion processes have also been suggested to account for the spread of pension reform in Latin America and elsewhere (Brooks, 2002; Weyland, 2005), as well as for the adoption of CCTs (Béland et al., 2018; Brooks, 2015). Recent research has also come to put renewed emphasis on the instrumental role of international institutions in transferring ideas and policy scripts across borders (Leisering, 2018; Mahon, 2019). Particularly in the case of aid dependent low-income countries, donor agencies will moreover be influential actors in this respect (Lavers & Hickey, 2016).

Democratisation and the state

In T.H Marshall's classical account, the extension of social citizenship within capitalist democracies, was a consequence of the previous extension of political rights which heightened the tensions between the unequal market allocation of resources and the equal rights of all citizens in a democratic society to participate in political decision-making (Marshall, 1950). Democratic politics could according to this view serve to de-couple economic and political power, facilitating for “the many” to unite against “the few” (Lenski, 1966). Indeed, democratisation itself has been regarded an outcome of popular demands for the equalisation of political power (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2005; Rueschemeyer et al., 1992). Within economics, the ‘median voter theorem’ implies that an extension of the franchise that leads to the inclusion of less affluent groups means shifting preferences of the electorate towards greater redistribution (Meltzer & Richard, 1981). From these viewpoints, the proliferation of electoral democracy across the world during the last decades of the

20th century has set the stage for new demands for redistribution in these often highly unequal societies.

Research on developing countries largely agrees on the supportive role of democracy for social policy expansion (Avelino et al., 2005; Charles Boix, 2001; Cronert & Hadenius, 2021; Przeworski et al., 2000), and that democracies are less likely to retrench social protection in face of external pressures (Rudra and Haggard 2005). Some have moreover associated the spread of more inclusive political regimes with the rise to power of parties with leftist appeals, especially in Latin America (Levitsky & Roberts, 2011), but also in East Asia (Kwon, 2009). Other have modified these theories highlighting that whether these effects are likely arise will depend on the quality and maturity of democratic institutions (Huber & Stephens, 2012).

Another aspect of the role of state institutions for redistributive policies is the development of well-functioning impartial bureaucracies, free from corruption. Findings from OECD countries indicate a positive effect of such institutional features on the size of the welfare state, as well as on the efficacy of working class mobilisation for social policy expansion (Rothstein et al., 2012). Halleröd et al. (2013) found that impartiality and the absence of corruption, rather than the level of democracy, explain variation in material deprivation among children in a sample of LMICs. Mares (2005), analysing a global set of countries, highlight that the impact of external openness on the nature of social protection is conditional on the strength of state institutions and on the ability of governments to enforce existing laws.

Power resources and political parties

In studies of welfare states in affluent countries, successful working class mobilisation through labour unions and left parties, is commonly seen as the main mechanism whereby democratisation has led to the emergence of encompassing social policy institutions (Cameron, 1978; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Hicks, 1999; Huber & Stephens, 2001; Korpi, 1983). During the era of austerity, research has also found leftist governments to have been more prone to resist cutbacks (Allan & Scruggs, 2004; Korpi & Palme, 2003).

Meanwhile, research around the role of political parties in non-OECD countries, and their impact on social policies and distributional outcomes, is not as developed. The classification of political parties, whether on the basis of ideological orientation (Budge et al., 1987; Lipset & Rokkan, 1967; Mair & Mudde, 1998) or organisational characteristics (Duverger, 1954; Katz & Mair, 1995; Kirchheimer, 1966) have been largely confined to analyses of the experience of industrialised democracies. The analytical tools to analyse political parties across the Global South are still weakly developed, and it is often assumed that party systems in younger democracies will differ in substantive ways from their more mature counterparts.

A number of factors are thought to contribute to this. First, when democracy was eventually installed in the 'old' democracies, this followed an earlier process of industrialisation and national unification (Randall, 2006). Secondly, the transition to democracy in the third wave has often been a much more sudden event than the gradual extension of political rights that characterised the developments around the beginning of the 20th century. This fact has left third wave parties without close connection to specific social groups, unless they originate in previous democratic periods and have survived under autocratic rule as more or less clandestine movements (Van Biezen, 2003). Thirdly, some have claimed that widespread poverty and inequality is conducive towards clientelistic strategies on behalf of political parties, because of the relatively low cost of such a strategy for elite groups seeking to maintain their position. Low degree of urbanisation and educational attainment is also thought to favour clientelistic relations (Stokes 2007). On the basis of such observations, the cleavages that have shaped partisan competition in the first wave democracies are thought to be of scant relevance to the analyses of partisan politics in third wave democracies. The discussion about the nature of political parties in developing countries has instead centred on the salience of ethnicity as the main source of political cleavages, especially in Africa and Asia (Horowitz, 1985), but also in Latin America (Van Cott, 2007). Also, some have contended that unions and left parties are unlikely champions of redistributive policies in developing countries as these organisations tend to represent labour market 'insiders', while providing limited support for the expansion of social policies to the more vulnerable groups (McGuire, 1999; Rudra, 2008; Rudra & Tobin, 2017).

On the other hand, existing studies of the politics of distributional conflict in non-OECD countries commonly find that stronger unions and left parties have been conducive to more universal and redistributive policies in also in the Global South (Dorlach, 2021). Studies of social policy reform in Latin America have come to emphasise the relevance of left parties for social policy expansion (Arza et al., 2022; Huber & Stephens, 2012; Kaufman & Segura-Ubiergo, 2001; Pribble, 2013). Labour unions have also been associated with higher social spending in the region (Niedzwiecki, 2015). Partisan effects and the salience of social class is also discernible in studies of other regions of the world, including East Asia (Kwon, 2009) and Central and Eastern Europe (Carrera & Emmenegger, 2009). Also in party systems generally characterised as conservative and regionalist, like that in South Korea, social class might still be a salient factor influencing voting behaviour (Kim, 2010). Ethnicity is often seen as prevailing in the African context. Still, analysing the programmatic content of party programs in an African context Elischer (2012) finds that ethnic and class positions might intersect and represent overlapping interests, reflected in the programmatic orientations of some political parties. Moreover, research has emphasised the multitude of social bases of political parties in

the African context, with substantial cross-country variation (Basedau et al., 2011; Elischer, 2013).

Institutions and policy feedback

In reaction to ‘society-centred’ theories, Theda Skocpol and her colleagues launched a research program focusing on the role of state structures for welfare policy (Evans et al., 1985). Relying primarily on comparative-historical methods, this approach to welfare state analysis have come to highlight how features of political institutions, such as the number of veto-points, the degree of decentralization, and corporatism influence the likelihood of social policy reforms, empowering certain actors vis-à-vis others (Huber & Stephens, 2001; Immergut, 1990). Historical institutionalists have moreover emphasised how decision about institutional design at ‘critical junctures’ shapes the politics of institutional change a later stages, giving rise to ‘path dependent’ patterns of policy development, or even inertia (Mahoney, 2000; Pierson, 2004). Emphasising the role of institutions, the notion of ‘production regimes’ suggests that the degree of coordination of financial and industrial relations structure the preferences of employers and employees with regard to social policies that promote investment in different types of skills (Hall & Soskice, 2001).

In developing their typology of welfare regimes in the Global South, Wood and Gough (2006) acknowledges path dependency, whereby patterns of stratification are reproduced through interventions of state and non-state actors, with societies maintaining different welfare mixes as a result. In their comparative historical analysis, Martínez Franzoni and Sánchez-Ancochea (2016) recognize that policy architectures have long-term effects on policy trajectories by empowering some actors and creating incentives for later reforms, as well as by constraining the number of policy alternatives. Also Carnes and Mares (2014) use institutional theory to analyse how individual preferences of workers in Latin America are influenced by the dominant policy design.

The approaches to explaining social policy variation reviewed above make up the foundations of the thesis’ theoretical framework. While seeking to assess the role of a multitude of potential driving forces, methodological limitations inescapably affects how concepts can be operationalised and shapes which factors appear as particularly salient. The following section present the methodological approach of the thesis, and discusses some of its benefits and challenges.

Methodological approach

Combining difference-based and mechanistic approaches

The methodological approach adopted in this thesis acknowledges the merits of combining large-N quantitative analyses with in-depth contextualised analysis of a single case. Multimethod designs have become increasingly popular within social science research (Beach, 2020; Goertz, 2017; Seawright, 2016), but also characterise some of the most prominent contributions to comparative welfare state analysis (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Huber & Stephens, 2001; Korpi, 1983). Combining a comparative logic with in-depth historical analyses is also a hallmark of the comparative-historical research tradition in the social sciences (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003; Mahoney & Thelen, 2015).

When discussing ontological and epistemological underpinnings of social science research, Beach and Pedersen (2016) distinguish between *difference-based* evidence, emanating from variance based designs involving multiple cases, and *mechanistic* evidence, retrieved from case studies. Mechanisms in this respect “explain how and why a hypothesized cause, in a given context, contributes to a particular outcome” (Falleti & Lynch, 2009, p. 1143), and are integral to most theorizing in the social sciences. Arguably, causal arguments depend not only on measuring causal effects, but also on the identification of causal mechanisms, with statistical analysis apt for the former, and process-tracing case studies particularly suited for the latter (Beach & Pedersen, 2016; Gerring, 2004; Goertz, 2017).

A general challenge in social sciences is the question about how to approach the issue of causality. Most theorising in the social sciences involves causal arguments, with the comparative social policy literature being no exception. Still our perceptions are often vague regarding the ontological question about what we actually mean by ‘cause’ and ‘effect’. Furthermore, the epistemological questions about how we can recognize causality when we see it is a subject of ongoing scholarly disputes (H.E. Brady, 2008). Sociologists inclined towards statistical analyses tend to adhere to a counterfactual view of causality whereby a cause is seen to have produced an outcome because the absence of that cause would result in the absence of the outcome, all other things being held equal. Such causal effects are best measured in experiments where subjects are randomly selected into treatment and control groups and causes can be manipulated by the researcher, and where assumptions of unit

homogeneity and independence of units can be sustained. Although increasingly common, experiments are however rarely viable in social science research. Instead, most studies in the social sciences, including sociology, rely on observational data. In this case, causal effects are preferably assessed through ‘natural experiments’, where one can assume that treatment and control groups are homogenous. In studies based on observational data, as those presented in this thesis, holding ‘everything else’ constant is a however rarely possible, making it hard to rule out influence from unobserved confounding factors. Also, potential causal heterogeneity makes it difficult to know whether an estimated average effect holds in individual cases. As well, studies based on counterfactual difference-making are susceptible to the critique that the question of *how* cause and effect are linked is kept within a black box (Beach, 2020).

Uncovering the latter, that is the processes that link causes and outcomes in actual cases, is the focus of mechanistic explanations. Mechanisms “are entities and activities organized such that they are productive of regular changes from start or setup to finish or termination conditions” (Machamer et al., 2000, p. 3), and typically explain regularities with reference to processes operating at lower levels (Hedström & Ylikoski, 2010). Methodologically, such processes are most typically traced using case-based approaches, where the operation of mechanisms can be observed (Beach & Pedersen, 2016; Falleti & Lynch, 2009; Goertz, 2017). While case studies are advantageous in this respect, in-depth analyses of one or a smaller number of cases rarely allow us to draw conclusions about a wider universe of cases, causing some to question the usefulness of findings from case-based approaches for theorizing.

Combining quantitative cross-case analysis with intensive study of one or a few cases, with both types of analyses firmly grounded in relevant theories, can thus serve as a fruitful strategy. To Goertz (2017), the combination of case studies, cross-case analysis, and an attention to casual mechanisms constitute what he denotes as the *research triad*. The combination of the three studies compiled here commits to this approach, by combining efforts to find ‘empirical regularities’ through cross-case statistical analysis, with an exploration of mechanisms through within-case analysis. Study I and III in this way employs multivariate regression techniques to test hypothesis using data from a wider (although admittedly still limited) number of cases, whereas Study II explores mechanisms by means of process tracing in a single case.

The distribution of welfare in society is shaped by interactions of processes operating at different levels. Behaviours and risk factors observed at the individual level are of central concern in poverty research (Rainwater & Smeeding, 2005). Much of the existing research on the effects of cash transfers on poverty and inequality have had such a focus on the micro-level (Carraro & Marzi, 2021). Variation between sub-national units may also be of high relevance (e.g. Niedzwiecki, 2018). Common to all three studies in this thesis is a focus on the country level. This focus is motivated by a recognition of the

importance of incorporating political theories of poverty and inequality, also when studying developing countries (cf. D. Brady, 2019). The methods pursued in the studies comprising this thesis ultimately reflect this choice, building on earlier work using comparative statistical and historical methods to explain policy variation and related outcomes.

By drawing on the strengths of cross-case and within-case methods respectively, the ambition is to improve the possibilities to make valid inferences, taking into account the weaknesses inescapably associated with each respective approach. The following sections delineate the methodological approaches employed in the three studies and discusses some of the associated challenges.

Statistical analyses

Macro-comparative statistical analyses are commonly hampered by a lack of valid and reliable data. This is not least the case with regard to LMICs (Atkinson, 2019; Yörük et al., 2019). However, major advancements have been made over the last decades to collect and harmonize both policy indicators as well as data on living conditions from countries across the globe. The data used for analyses in this thesis are drawn from a number of different sources, reflecting these advancements in various ways. Still, as evident from the empirical analyses presented below, finding reliable measures of main concepts within comparative social policy research continues to be a challenge, particularly when focusing on countries in the Global South. In Study I, the aim is to explain diverging trends in social policy expansion, and the construction of a valid indicator of this expansion thus inescapably implies facing ‘the dependent variable problem’ in welfare state research (Green-Pedersen, 2004). Given the data restrictions regarding more qualitative aspects of social policy in developing countries (Bolukbasi et al., 2021), the study uses an indicator of social expenditures, while recognizing the well-known limitations of this measure. The indicator was constructed by combining data published by the International Labour Organisation as part of their *World Social Protection Report* and the *Social Security Inquiry*. Other independent variables were obtained from the World Bank’s *World Development Indicators*.

Also with regard to the role of partisan politics, data limitations have been a perennial problem in the literature on the Global South, with studies on the development of social policy in developing countries often lacking indicators on this crucial dimension (Leisering, 2018; Rudra & Haggard, 2005; Schmitt et al., 2015). Here, data the ideology and relative strength of parties in government were taken from the *Database of Political Institutions* (DPI). Admittedly, the DPI offers a crude categorisation of parties as belonging either to the left, right, or centre, and does not contain measures on cabinet composition

nor the parliamentary representation of all parties in parliaments. Still, the devised measure, capturing broad ideological orientations and share of seats held in parliament by the main government parties, represents a step forward compared to most previous studies on the political economy of social policy expansion across the Global South (cf. Brooks, 2015; Ha, 2015; Rudra, 2008; Schmitt et al., 2015).

For Study III a novel dataset was constructed using the harmonised survey data published by the LIS cross-national datacentre in Luxembourg, again using data on changes in GDP from the World Bank to capture the role of economic growth. While the harmonisation of national survey data performed by LIS greatly facilitates cross-country comparisons, this study faces challenges associated with the conceptualisation and measurement of poverty, as discussed above. Another challenge is the devising of a valid indicator of social policy to gauge its role in moderating the poverty reducing impact of economic growth. Given the availability of data on the amounts of government transfers received by households in the LIS datafiles, a measurement of the 'transfer share' was constructed, following the methodology in several previous studies on the link between welfare states and poverty in affluent countries (e.g. D. Brady, 2005; Korpi & Palme, 1998; Moller et al., 2003).

The data used for the analyses in Study I and III comprise repeated measurements of macro-level indicators from different countries over time, commonly referred to as time-series cross-sectional data (Beck & Katz, 1995). As observations are drawn from units observed on several occasions, this type of dataset can be seen as hierarchically structured, with lower level units (country-years) clustered within higher level units (countries). A growing methodological literature, discussing the opportunities and challenges associated with analyses of such datasets, has emerged over the last decades (Allison, 2009; Bell et al., 2018; Wilson & Butler, 2007). Early on, the pitfalls of using OLS regression to analyse pooled data with repeated observations from several countries were highlighted (Beck & Katz, 1995). Much of this discussion has since revolved around issues related to unit heterogeneity and the related non-equivalence of cross-sectional and within-unit variance (Shalev, 2007). These debates have led to improved tools for analysing time-series cross-sectional data, such as between-within models and other multilevel-regression techniques (Bell et al., 2018; Schmidt-Catran & Fairbrother, 2016), but have also raised awareness in the scholarly community regarding the limitations of available methods, especially with regard to causal inference.

Given both methodological considerations and that the substantial issues of interest in the analyses performed are related to social change, the analyses presented in Study I and III focus mainly on longitudinal within-unit variance. Study III additionally seeks to assess how more enduring aspects of the social protection system interact with economic growth. The substantive focus of both studies is on the role of particular factors in driving change within LMICs

during this period of time. The aim of these studies is accordingly not to present evidence on the causes of cross-country differences in levels of social spending (Study I) or in child poverty rates (Study III), as these differences most likely have historical roots that lay beyond the scope of these particular studies. Rather, in both studies an effort has been made to put the processes under study into context, emphasising the broader socio-political background against which the trends under study occur, and to study the drivers of change under these particular circumstances.

From a methodological viewpoint, focusing on the longitudinal dimension limits the influence of unobserved time invariant differences between units (Allison, 2009). Cross-sectional and longitudinal association might well differ starkly, which has led scholars interested in explanatory analysis to rely only on estimates based on within-unit effects, often through the use of the fixed-effects model. It should be acknowledged that an obvious downside of this approach is that all between-unit variance is lost, and with it potentially important information (Bell et al., 2018), which is particularly troublesome for studies aiming to explore effects of institutions and other factors that are inherently stable over time. This has led some scholars studying welfare state dynamics to turn to models where variance is measured in levels, not change, adjusting results using panel-corrected standard errors and first-order autoregressive corrections (Huber & Stephens, 2001), or random effects models (D. Brady, 2005). Still, the analyses in Studies I and III provide estimates relying primarily on within-unit variance, considering the large cross-country heterogeneity of contextual factors in the countries under study here, alongside the studies' substantive focus on explaining change in institutions and outcomes.

Accordingly, in Study I data are analysed using fixed effects models, whereas in Study III the analysed dataset contains indicators on the annualised change in the log of each variable, turning it into what is sometimes called a first difference model. However, the latter study also seeks to explain part of the variance in the estimated growth elasticity of poverty with reference to whether or not growth takes place in a context of more comprehensive social protection systems. While a preliminary exploration of this issue is made by dividing the sample in two groups based on the observed levels of social transfers; probing the question further by means of multivariate regression techniques requires the incorporation into the statistical models of an interaction between indicators measuring change over time with contextual variables measured in levels at the time of observation. As discussed above, basing estimates on indicators measured in levels prompts the risk that the resulting estimates will be biased due to unobserved unit heterogeneity. In order to, at least partly, account for this risk, the analyses in Study III incorporate appropriate controls associated with cross-sectional differences, and explores whether using alternative model specifications, including between-within models (Bell et al., 2018), have implications for the patterns observed.

Considering data limitations and the methods applied, and despite the efforts to handle the various challenges associated with analyses of cross-sectional time-series data, there is reason to interpret the results obtained from the presented analyses with care. The findings should not be interpreted as evidence of any causal relationships between variables. Rather, the analyses shed light on salient patterns in terms of empirical associations between theoretically related factors.

Case study approach

By focusing on explanations of outcomes, taking seriously the unfolding of processes over time, and by seeking to contribute to theory development and engagement in dialogue with findings from other cases, Study II can be situated within a longstanding tradition of comparative historical analysis in the social sciences (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003; Mahoney & Thelen, 2015). The usefulness of in-depth within-case analysis has been increasingly recognised as the opportunities for investigating causal pathways are generally most apparent in a case study format. Relatedly, the term process tracing have increasingly been used to label efforts to explore social phenomena through the identification of mechanisms (Falleti, 2016; George & Bennett, 2005; Gerring, 2004; Goertz, 2017).

In case study research, case selection is a central topic (Gerring & Cojocaru, 2016). In this thesis, the identification of an association between left party strength and social spending in Study I, is further elucidated through the investigation of a process of social protection reform unfolding under a leftist government in a middle-income country democratised during the “third wave”. The transition towards a universal healthcare system in Bolivia can in this light be seen as a *pathway case*, with regard to the link between politics and policy observed in Study I. The mechanisms underpinning the empirical regularities observed in cross-case analysis can accordingly be explored in more detail through in-depth analysis of this single case.

The analyses in Study II involved tracing the reform process, including the related activities by relevant actors, in order to construct a theoretically guided historical account of the mechanisms that served to propel, or impede, the process towards a universal healthcare system in Bolivia. The purpose of this approach is dual, as it can contribute both with corroborating evidence for a causal argument, as well as with components for a mid-range theory regarding social policy reform in development contexts.

The process-tracing method can be seen as involving three basic steps: data gathering, analysis, and narrative presentation (Lange, 2013), of which the two latter stages are inescapably intertwined. The material on which Study II builds was gathered from a variety of sources. The identification of relevant sources was guided by theory in the sense that the role of theoretically relevant

actors and processes should, to the extent possible, be mirrored in the material. Like other works in the comparative-historical tradition, the study draws heavily on secondary sources, while recognizing that historiography inevitably presents competing interpretations of events (Mahoney & Villegas, 2009; Ritter, 2014). The study builds on accounts from a previous study by the author (Sirén, 2011), describing the historical evolution of healthcare policies in Bolivia, and the position of various actors vis-à-vis the government's attempts to push through a comprehensive reform of the healthcare system. Also, other academic publications, including monographs by leading scholars as well as peer-reviewed journal articles, feature among the secondary sources used in the analyses. Quantitative indicators on the development of the Bolivian healthcare system were furthermore gathered from the World Bank and national authorities, as complementary evidence of the more gradual developments with regard to policy outputs.

These secondary sources were furthermore complemented with a set of primary sources. The analyses incorporated written sources in the form of legislative documents, news articles and policy reports, not least with regard to developments during more recent years. To track the legislative process, laws modifying the right to healthcare during the Morales government were reviewed, including the new constitution enacted in 2009, as were statements about the reform process issued by the Ministry of Health. News articles describing the reform process, and the reactions it provoked, were gathered from digital archives of the main Bolivian dailies.

These data were subsequently analysed to identify the relevant mechanisms. For this purpose, pieces of evidence were compared to each other, as a means of triangulation, but also to identify particularly important branching points in the evolution of the Bolivian healthcare system. The analyses proceeded by unpacking the causal process into a series of “interlocking and interacting parts” (Beach & Pedersen, 2018, p. 841), whereby the study's theoretical framework was used to select, order and interpret the observations made from the material at hand (Stryker, 1996). For this purpose a “modular, process-oriented and actor-centred conception of causal mechanisms” was adopted (Kuhlmann & Nullmeier, 2022). The conception is modular in the sense that the mechanisms can be combined to produce more complex explanations (cf. Scharpf, 1997). The process orientation is founded on the tradition within qualitative analyses, where tracing mechanisms is a way of unveiling the intermediate steps linking cause and outcome. The focus on actors is based on an understanding of causation in the social sciences based on the activities of entities with causal capacities (Beach & Pedersen, 2016), and a will to engage in dialogue with actor-based sociological theories. Such a strategy can contribute to a modular approach to explanation, whereby more specific mechanisms can be combined into an explanation of typical chains of events, making the study of individual cases a fruitful exercise for theory development (Nullmeier & Kuhlmann, 2022, p. 13).

The analysis was furthermore guided by the notion that ‘history matters’, highlighting temporal aspects such as duration, timing and sequence in explanations of observed outcomes (Pierson, 2004). This not least underscored in explanations emphasising *path dependence*, whereby events early in the process have lasting effects, through self-reinforcing or reactive sequences of events (Mahoney, 2000). The mode of explanation employed in Study II situates the events under study within broader historical trajectories, tracing processes to unravel the linkages between events, and ordering these into sequences. The lasting effects of the historical incorporation of the labour movement in the management of Bolivian health insurance is a case in point. The Bolivian case also highlights the usefulness of *conjunctural* analysis, whereby the intersection between separate sequences matter for the kind of outcome that eventually emerge (Mahoney & Villegas, 2009). The linking between progressive medical professionals and the emerging popular movements taking place following the expansion of primary health care in rural areas on the one hand, and processes of democratisation and decentralisation on the other, exemplifies this mode of explanation in Study II.

However, case study analysis inevitably comes with a number of caveats. The most common critique is that it is hard to generalise based on evidence from a single case. The combination of in-depth within-case methods and large-N statistical analysis is a conscious strategy to, at least partly, address this issue. Still, given the heterogeneity of cases within the universe of countries in the Global South, it is difficult to firmly state the contextual conditions necessary for the mechanisms identified in the case study to result in similar outcomes, or to be triggered in the first place (Beach & Pedersen, 2018; Falleti & Lynch, 2009). Further analyses would thus need to verify the relevance of the identified mechanisms also in other cases, in order to assess what the requisite scope conditions are. This is also one of the aims of the edited volume of which Study II also forms a part (Kuhlmann & Nullmeier, 2022).

Ethical considerations

Doing research comes with important responsibilities on part of the researcher. Good research practices are based on principles of honesty, respect and accountability. Ethical considerations concern the treatment of the subjects of research as well as questions related to ensuring the integrity, quality and robustness of research. Failing to abide with such principles risks exposing research subjects to unnecessary harm and can damage the public’s trust in the credibility of research.

Fundamentally, individuals participating in research should be protected from harms and wrongs. Conducting research based on information about real persons must be carried out with respect for human dignity, human rights and basic freedoms of those involved (Vetenskapskapsrådet [Swedish Research

Council], 2017). In the Swedish context, the Act (SFS 2003:460) concerning the Ethical Review of Research Involving Humans stipulates that certain types of research are required to go through an ethical review. This is required in particular when research is carried out using methods that affect the research subject physically or psychologically. However, a research project shall also be reviewed if it entails the handling of sensitive personal data according to Sections 13 and 21 of the Personal Data Act (SFS 1998:204). Such personal data include information on race, ethnic origin, political views and religious conviction, as well as information on judgements in criminal cases (Vetenskapsrådet [Swedish Research Council], 2017, p. 30).

No personal data have been collected for this thesis, but studies I and III are based on already existing quantitative datasets. However, none of the analyses carried out for these studies have involved the handling of any sensitive personal data. In Study I, aggregate indicators are used, some of which are based on non-personal information, instead referring to government bodies or political parties. Others are based on personal, but non-sensitive, information. Study III makes use of data from the Luxembourg Income Study, containing anonymised information on income, employment, household characteristics and expenditures from harmonised household surveys. The LIS database is stored on secure servers and is made accessible to registered users via a remote-execution system. Neither in this case do the analyses include any indicators based on data that are considered sensitive according to Swedish legislation. The analysis carried out for Study II is in turn based on textual sources, including legal documents, news articles, policy reports and research articles, and has accordingly not involved the handling of any personal data. None of the three studies has thus prompted the need for an ethical review.

Summary of empirical studies

Study I investigates the driving forces behind changes in social expenditure across a global sample of non-OECD countries, against a background of divergent trends in social spending. While previous research has linked changes in social protection policies in developing countries to processes of structural change, globalisation and democratisation, this exploratory article argues that in order to understand the sources of divergence in social spending across developing countries, structural and institutional explanations should be complemented with an actor-oriented approach. In particular, the study highlights the role of political parties and analyses the association between government party ideology and public social expenditures through multivariate fixed-effect regressions, using data from 46 non-OECD democracies between 1995 and 2015. Findings reveal a robust positive association between shifts towards left party government and increases in public social spending, also when controlling for structural and institutional factors. This association however seems potentially conditional on sufficient levels of economic growth. While indicating an impact of partisanship on the evolution of social protection in the aftermath of the third wave of democratisation, further research is arguably needed regarding the origins, organisation and programmatic standpoints of parties in more recently democratised countries, as well as regarding the conditions under which partisan politics emerge as a central explanatory factor for social policy reform in development contexts.

Study II explores the mechanisms shaping the progress towards universal health coverage in Bolivia. The Bolivian healthcare system has been characterised by fragmentation, segmentation and low coverage, making it a subject of contestation as democratisation and popular mobilisation brings the demands of previously excluded groups onto the political agenda. These features are common to social insurance schemes across the Global South and by investigating this process the study casts light on mechanisms that are also of broader relevance for the comparative literature on the political economy of social protection in development contexts. The politics surrounding this healthcare reform with the ambition to universalise access to public healthcare in Bolivia is examined using theory-guided process tracing methods. Findings highlight that policy is shaped through an interaction between societal and state actors, and illustrate how interests and ideas are intertwined in the pro-

cess, but also show how policy legacies give rise to reactive sequences militating against change. The analyses point towards expert theorisation, class-based mobilisation, and social movement–state interaction as mechanisms promoting a more universal orientation of healthcare policy. In contrast alarmed middle classes, provider resistance and professional autonomy are found to be mechanisms that impede progress in this direction. Understanding the triggers of these mechanisms, as well as the contextual factors shaping their outcomes, are arguably central avenues for future research.

In light of an emerging attention to redistribution and social protection in promoting ‘inclusive’ growth, **Study III** analyses how government cash transfer systems moderate the effect of economic growth on both relative and absolute child poverty across LMICs. Economic growth is commonly seen as the main driver of child poverty reduction, but its impact varies substantially across cases, even when poverty is measured in absolute terms. Regarding relative poverty, previous research has found growth and poverty reduction to be unrelated on average, but again with substantial variation across cases. However, the literature has been relatively silent regarding the role of social policy in explaining this variation. While an emerging literature on social protection in developing countries demonstrates the role of social policy in reducing poverty and inequality, comparative research using longitudinal data from LMICs are largely lacking, and relative poverty is rarely considered in these contexts, despite a growing emphasis on social inclusion and equity in policy debates. This study addresses these gaps and compares trends over time in both absolute and relative child poverty rates in 16 LMICs, using data from LIS. The analyses are carried out by means of descriptive statistics and multivariate regression techniques. Findings show that while growth is associated with falling absolute child poverty, this tendency is more pronounced in face of more elaborate, and expanding, government transfer schemes. Furthermore, while neither growth nor changes in the levels of government transfers were found to be independently related to relative child poverty, the study finds an association between growth and relative child poverty, conditional on sufficient levels of government transfers. While pointing to questions regarding the mechanisms whereby transfers are related to child poverty, the findings highlight the fruitfulness of including indicators on social protection policies when inquiring about enabling conditions for inclusive growth in development contexts.

Discussion

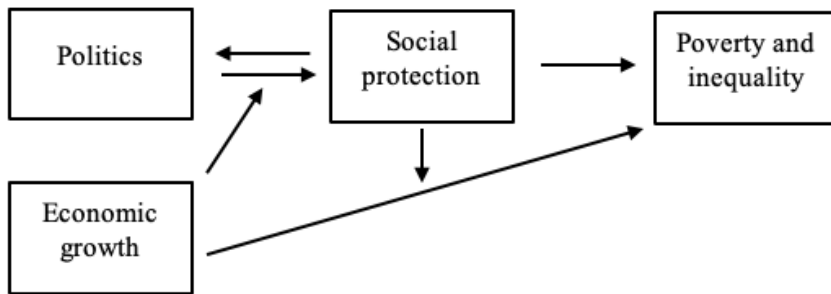
This thesis embarked from the question of which economic institutions could enable more rapid advancement towards ending poverty and reducing inequalities in development contexts, and what conditions could foment the expansion of such institutions. The findings from the three empirical studies presented here have from different perspectives highlighted the role of social protection policy for reducing poverty and inequality. They also point to the impact of politics; in turn shaped by power, ideas, and institutions; on the development of these policies. The findings adjoins with political theories of poverty, suggesting that “power and institutions cause policy, which causes poverty and moderates the behaviour poverty link” (D. Brady, 2019, p. 164) This perspective invokes the image of social policy institutions as intervening variables in a causal chain; between the driving forces of institutional changes on the one hand, and distributive outcomes on the other (Korpi & Palme, 1998). A mechanistic perspective furthermore requires theorising about the ‘entities and activities’ that drive change for each of the links in this chain (Machamer et al., 2000).

Figure 1 situates the findings from the thesis within a framework built around this general approach, with the arrows indicating empirical relationships addressed in the thesis. The suggested causal chain illustrated in the figure can be broken down into parts, with the studies in the thesis focusing on different parts in this model. Study I concentrates on the left-hand side of the figure; using statistical analyses to establish links between partisan politics, economic growth, and social protection expenditures. Study III, in turn, explore statistical associations between economic growth, social protection, and poverty; with an emphasis on the right-hand side of the figure. Study II, then zooms in on one ‘intensive process’ (Falleti, 2016) in this chain, using theory-guided process-tracing to explore the path between politics and policy.

This image should be seen as a map of the thesis rather than a complete theoretical model, as it deliberately leaves out several potentially important factors. A number of additional arrows could have been added illustrating potential causal paths which it has not been possible to explore within the scope of this thesis, but which have been highlighted elsewhere in the literature. Examples include the impact of poverty and inequality on economic growth (Cerra et al., 2021), the effect of inequality on demands for redistribution as well as on the distribution of power in society (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2005),

and the role of structural change as an underlying cause of differences in power resources (Alber & Flora, 1981). Related to this last point, poverty and inequality could also have potentially important feedback effects on the power resources of important actors (e.g. Erling & Moene, 2016), in addition to the impact on economic growth. The figure also emits the ubiquitous role of ideas, admittedly a crucial factor shaping actors' perceptions about the world around them. From a constructivist perspective, ideas can be seen as constitutive of other factors including interests, institutions and social problems (Leisering, 2018). While ideas, discourses and normative frames are difficult to position within this model, their influence of the process of policy formulation should still be recognized.

Figure 1. Graphical illustration of linkages suggested by findings in the three empirical studies.



Beginning in the upper left corner of the figure, the main finding in Study I is an association between left party government and social spending. Given that left parties seek to represent the interests of the working classes and the less affluent, and tend to espouse egalitarian ideals, this result suggests that interests and ideology contributes to shaping social policy in development contexts. The rise of left parties should accordingly be part of the explanation of why social policy has been expanding throughout non-OECD democracies in later decades.

Study I furthermore highlights one mechanism whereby economic growth might affect the expansion of social policy. The finding of an interaction effect between growth and left party governments indicates that left parties' ability to pursue redistributive social policy might be related to the business cycle, with parties on both the left and the right being more restricted to increase spending during economic downturns. Accordingly, the proclivity of left parties to increase spending, and thus also partisan differences in this respect, may appear most saliently in periods of economic upswings.

From this statistical analysis it is not possible to infer that the association between partisan politics and social policy expansion is brought about by the

same mechanisms as suggested by theories developed based on research from the Global North. While Study I identifies an association between the strength of left parties and social expenditures, the social base, organisation, ideological underpinning and more precise programmatic standpoints of these parties are not well established, nor are the ways in which elected officials design actual policy. Neither are we very knowledgeable about how context influences the triggering of specific mechanisms (cf. Falleti & Lynch, 2009). By identifying the mechanisms at work in a single case, we gain a deeper understanding of the social processes driving social protection reform in the specific context of that case. By situating the findings from this case in a wider theoretical framework and comparing it with the evidence provided by statistical analyses, as well as to other theoretically guided case studies, we can gain better understanding of the social processes at work.

In order to explore the mechanisms underpinning the expansion and universalisation of social policy during under a left party government, Study II focuses on the unfolding of a healthcare reform in Bolivia. The case study illustrates the role of the left party *Movimiento al Socialismo* [Movement towards Socialism] (MAS); a movement-based party that grew out of the indigenous peoples struggles for recognition and social justice. The party has been the focal point of broad reform coalition, also including the labour unions and other actors from civil society. This example stand in contrast to widely held beliefs that “democratic procedures of interest articulation are often less important or even absent in the developing world” (Böger & Leisering, 2018; see also Wood & Gough, 2006). The results from Studies I and II thus underscores that we need to better understand what these procedures look like in development contexts. Indeed, ‘development’ in LMICs have not always entailed industrialisation and thus neither the pattern of ‘proletarianisation’, commonly associated with the rise of the labour movement in Western Europe. The analyses presented in this thesis suggests that interest-based mobilisation is nevertheless a central factor for explaining social policy expansion in development contexts. Future research should explore various ways in which social policy is made ‘from below’, paying attention to the diverse forms of interest articulation taking place in these contexts, including movement-party linkages (cf. Anria, 2018).

Study II further nuances the story about interests and conflict as determinants of social policy, by also pointing to the complementary role of ideologically motivated policy experts and social movements in this process. The Bolivian healthcare reformers were strongly influenced by understandings of medicine and society rooted in the social medicine tradition, and especially its Latin American manifestation (Laurell, 2003). This finding can be seen as suggestive of the importance of ‘theorisation’, also highlighted by Leisering (2018), for processes of policy diffusion and adoption. Future research should pay attention to how models “make the transition from theoretical formulation to social movement to institutional imperative” (Strang & Meyer, 1993, p.

495). Study II makes two particular contributions to a framework for such analyses. First, by highlighting the role of networks operating in a particular geographical and epistemic context, functioning as ‘epistemic communities’ (Haas, 1992). Secondly, by emphasising the importance of sites of interaction between these communities and social movements in order for models to ‘transition’.

Another finding from Study II with relevance for the link between power resources and social protection regards the role of policy feedback and how institutional legacies shapes political action by organised interest groups. In Study II, unions representing workers covered by social health insurance were alarmed by the initiative to universalise access to healthcare services, as they perceived such a reform as a threat to the quality of their hard-fought social rights. Similar reactive sequences were activated also with regard to the employees of the existing social health insurance funds and the professional organisations of medical doctors. However, the study also shows that support from ‘alarmed middle-classes’, at least when coordinated through a confederation of labour unions, can be negotiated. Further, research should be attentive to the conditions enabling consent to policies that lessen segmentation within social protection systems (cf. Arza et al., 2022). Suggestive evidence emerging from Study II points to the potential role of trust and historical patterns of state-society relations in this respect (cf. Rothstein, 1998).

Turning to the right-hand side of the figure and the consequences of social policy, Study III finds that the scope of social transfers is associated with the degree to which economic growth reduces child poverty. In terms of absolute poverty, the finding that increases in the average transfer share in household income was associated falling rates of child poverty, is suggestive of a positive impact of the more recent expansion of cash transfer schemes on the incomes of vulnerable households in LMICs. Alongside the absence of a negative impact of transfers on employment documented elsewhere (Bastagli et al., 2019), this suggests that the expansion of anti-poverty cash transfer schemes can be an important strategy to accelerate the process of ending global poverty.

Unlike absolute poverty, relative poverty has not been found to fall as economies grow (e.g. Ravallion, 2020). But this lack of an overall association masks important heterogeneity between countries, with relative poverty and inequality decreasing alongside growth in some cases and falling in others. Understanding the causes of this variation is arguably central in order to craft effective policy responses. The analyses presented in Study III reveal that while there is no overall association between growth and relative child poverty neither in this sample, it is clearly more common for relative child poverty to fall when the economy grows in countries with sufficient levels of government transfers, compared to when growth takes place in a context of limited transfers. Given the increased emphasis on inclusive growth and the importance attached to leaving no one behind as societies develop, the finding of a signif-

icant role of government transfers in bringing down relative poverty contributes to strengthening the case for putting social protection at the centre of the quest for inclusive social development.

Limitations

At this point there are good reasons to highlight some of the main limitations of this thesis, most of which have already been alluded to in previous sections. Regarding the statistical analyses a general problem facing all scholars in the field is a lack of reliable and valid data concerning central theoretical concepts. The statistical analysis in Study I and II reflect these difficulties, with relatively few countries contributing to unbalanced panels. With countries contributing with varying numbers of observations, and sometimes spanning different time-periods, interpretation of results also become more challenging.

How to measure social policy has been a topic of ongoing debate in the comparative welfare state literature, and the studies presented here are by no means able to overcome this issue. Accordingly, the measures of social spending and ‘transfer shares’ used in this thesis are at best approximations of more qualitative aspects of the social rights institutionalised by public policies. Thus, while these indicators to some degree reflect temporal and cross-country variation in the scope of social policy, aspects related to the design and administration of policies are not captured. Unlike the statistical analyses, Study II highlights this aspect, by focusing particularly on the universal character of the government’s reform; giving credence to a link between left partisanship and universalism, while also providing further contextualised nuances to the theoretical assumptions regarding this link.

The measurement of power resources is also associated with serious difficulties, especially when studying these issues in development contexts. While the studies on social policy in Western Europe have emphasised the role of social-democratic parties and labour unions, conceptual frameworks for classifying parties and social movements of relevance for social policy in other contexts are much less developed. While a literature is emerging, especially with regards to Latin America (Anria, 2018; Levitsky & Roberts, 2011; Pribble, 2013), heterogeneity between parties in terms of their origins, ideologies and organisational structures poses serious challenges to any attempt towards crafting clear typologies. With regards to data, the DPI has for long been the only source of indicators on the strengths and ideologies of parties with a global reach, and is therefore used in Study I. The crude classification of parties within this database, alongside the lack of information on minor parties, still make it a less than perfect source for analyses of the role of power resources for the global evolution of social protection. The inclusion of a data on the policy positions and organizational structures of political parties within

the V-Dem database represents an important advancement in this respect, enabling more refined analyses in the future (Düpont et al., 2022).

Relatedly, the global perspective taken in this thesis implies that comparisons are made across samples of societies that are very heterogeneous on a range of aspects. While the ambition of this thesis has been to move beyond more narrow comparisons, for example of countries from a specific world-region; including such a wide sample of countries in the same analysis inescapably raises questions about comparability. While both Study I and III excludes the most affluent countries, and Study I focuses on democracies; countries are still very different when it comes to economic structures, levels of affluence, and culture. The use of fixed-effects models and first difference regressions ameliorates some of the bias stemming from stable unobserved cross-country heterogeneity. Other time-variant features are captured by controls included in the statistical models, but the risk of bias stemming from unobserved unit heterogeneity must still be taken into consideration.

The inability to make causal inferences based on the empirical analyses is another limitation, as the studies nonetheless speak to a theoretical framework permeated with causal arguments. This is however not a drawback particular to this thesis but is arguably characteristic of macro-comparative social science research in general. Still, the studies have been designed to provide evidence of patterns and empirical regularities that cast some light on the validity of related theories. The coupling of statistical and single case analyses is one strategy adopted to ameliorate the weaknesses associated with each respective method. The use of longitudinal data in the statistical analyses furthermore moves these closer to a counterfactual ideal. Still, causality cannot be inferred on the basis of these analyses, pointing to a challenge for future research.

Another limitation is that the studies do not cover the entire causal chain between drivers and outcomes in terms of mechanisms. Study II highlights mechanisms at work in the process of institutional change, but the mechanisms whereby social protection reforms might influence distributional outcomes are not studied empirically. Beyond the direct effect of income transfers on household budgets, such mechanisms could involve behavioural effects, the functioning of labour markets as well as processes related to the implementation and operation of specific social protection programs. Addressing such questions within the political economy framework suggested in this thesis could provide further insights about the ways in which power and politics potentially shapes poverty and inequality in development contexts.

The way ahead

Since scholars started to use comparative methods to study social policy in development contexts, there have been perennial debates about whether a gen-

eral theory of social policy, applicable also to social policy expansion in developing countries, can be devised on the basis of existing welfare state theories (Barrientos, 2019; Gough & Therborn, 2010; Leisering, 2009; Mares & Carnes, 2009; Rudra, 2008; Wood & Gough, 2006). This thesis has demonstrated that many elements of these theories are worth salvaging for the purpose of analysing the ongoing expansion of social protection throughout the Global South. At the same time, the studies have also demonstrated the need for further conceptual and empirical work to elaborate this theoretical framework in order to make it more attentive to the historical experiences and contemporary contexts of developing countries.

As noted above, there is a need to develop relevant concepts and understandings of democratic procedures of interest articulation in development contexts. This includes refined theories regarding the influence of unions and political parties on social policies. Meanwhile, as exemplified by the indigenous peoples' organisations and neighbourhood committees in Bolivia, other social movements also enhance the power resources of less advantaged classes in developing countries. As these movements engage in institutionalised politics and starts to influence the making of social policy, our theories need to be able to account for their role. The heterogeneity of political parties, including left parties, is another case in point. The development of new data infrastructures creates opportunities to study the identities and organisational structures (Düpont et al., 2022), as well as programmatic standpoints (Elischer, 2012) of political parties from across the globe.

Another avenue for future research concerns the measurement of social policy institutions. Expenditure data is often employed in comparative analyses of social policy for reasons of availability. However, scholars interested in causal analyses of drivers and consequences of social policies have highlighted the importance of indicators that reflect institutional structure of social policy. Indicators on legislated social rights are arguably better suited for analysing distributional consequences of policies, while also reflecting actual policy more closely than expenditures, thus enabling analyses of expansion and retrenchment. While advancements have been made to provide such data with respect to affluent countries (K. Nelson et al., 2020), data of this kind is mostly lacking for countries in the Global South (Bolukbasi et al., 2021). Accordingly, a core challenge ahead is elaborating data on the quality of social rights for a wider sample of LMICs, in order to enable more refined analyses of the causes and consequences of changing social policies in these countries. Such an exercise could also inform, and take inspiration from, the emerging debate on the application of concepts such as universalism and social citizenship in development contexts (Leisering, 2018; Leisering & Barrientos, 2013; Martínez Franzoni & Sánchez-Ancochea, 2016).

Comparative welfare state analysis has broadly come to recognize the gendered consequences of social policies (Orloff, 2009). Future research on developing countries should also, to a greater extent than what has hitherto been

the case, examine the impact of social policies on gender equality. The link between social policy, women's empowerment and child poverty in development contexts also deserves further attention (cf. Ekbrand & Halleröd, 2018). The degree to which social policies in development contexts contribute to lessen social exclusion on the basis of factors such as ethnicity or disability, as well as the extent to which social protection ameliorates the consequences of social risks such as illness or unemployment, should also be subjects of future research. The improved availability of data based on harmonised household surveys from a growing number of countries from across the globe make it increasingly viable to explore these issues using multilevel regression techniques.

Another avenue for future research concerns the conceptualisation and measurement of poverty. While this thesis has advocated for incorporating relative notions of poverty in studies of developing countries, comparative analyses of the consequences of social policy will also need to consider the multidimensional character of poverty, and seek to assess the impact of social policy on relevant measures of deprivation (Halleröd et al., 2013). As livelihood strategies are variegated in developing countries, with large groups earning a living through informal or agricultural employment (Wood & Gough, 2006), non-monetary measures are arguably needed in order to better grasp the impact of social policies on actual living conditions in these contexts. The initiatives such as the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) program (Khan & Hancioglu, 2019) and the work with the Multidimensional Poverty Index (Alkire & Santos, 2014) provide foundations for pursuing empirical analyses in this direction. Future research should also integrate a life-course perspective when analysing the impact of social policy on poverty, and preferably seek to trace long-term consequences of social protection systems for individuals as well as for societies (Black et al., 2017; Clark et al., 2020; cf. Barrientos & DeJong, 2006; M. Nelson & Sandberg, 2016).

Lastly, by influencing poverty and inequality, social policy also has consequences for power resources as well as for future economic growth. Future research should adopt a dynamic perspective on social protection and development that recognises the significant feedback effects of policy on politics; as well as the long-term implications of policy outcomes for labour relations, coalition formation and the economy. Such an approach could lead to renewed appreciation of the potential synergies between social policy, equality, and economic growth for inclusive social development in countries across the globe.

Final remarks

Social protection is increasingly recognised as a critical instrument for ending global poverty and achieving greater equality and social cohesion. The necessity for new institutional frameworks is underscored by growing inequalities and lingering extreme poverty, amidst economic growth and increasing average living standards in many developing countries. The expansion of social protection across the Global South has moreover put the spotlight on the transformative potential of social policy in development contexts. The introduction of new policy instruments has showed that institutional frameworks are malleable and susceptible to changing political priorities, at national as well as global levels. Still, a political economy perspective directs our attention to how distributional outcomes of existing institutional arrangements influences the formation of interests and shape political coalitions. Institutionalist perspectives highlighted in this thesis have emphasised how policy legacies, rooted in decisions taken at critical junctures in the development of social policies, have lasting effects on the evolution of social protection systems. Ideas and institutions moreover influence perceptions about social problems and appropriate solutions. Encouragingly, in light of the current challenges this thesis has also demonstrated the efficacy of collective actors mobilising to expand social policies, making social protection increasingly accessible to all. Improving our understanding of the driving forces of institutional change, as well as the factors militating against such changes, will give us a more comprehensive understanding of the enabling conditions for ending poverty and building more inclusive societies across the globe.

References

- Acemoglu, D. & Robinson, J.A. (2005). *Economic origins of dictatorship and democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Adams, R.H. (2004). Economic Growth, Inequality and Poverty: Estimating the Growth Elasticity of Poverty. *World Development* 32(12): 1989–2014.
- Adserà, A. & Boix, C. (2002). Trade, Democracy, and the Size of the Public Sector: The Political Underpinnings of Openness. *International Organization* 56(2): 229–262.
- Alber, J. & Flora, P. (1981). Modernization, democratization and the development of welfare states in Western Europe. In *The Development of Welfare States in Europe and America*. London: Transaction Books.
- Alkire, S. & Santos, M.E. (2014). Measuring Acute Poverty in the Developing World: Robustness and Scope of the Multidimensional Poverty Index. *World Development* 59: 251–274.
- Allan, J.P. & Scruggs, L. (2004). Political partisanship and welfare state reform in advanced industrial societies. *American Journal of Political Science* 48(3): 496–512.
- Allison, P. (2009). *Fixed Effects Regression Models*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Alvaredo, F. & Gasparini, L. (2015). Recent Trends in Inequality and Poverty in Developing Countries. In A. B. Atkinson & F. Bourguignon (eds.), *Handbook of Income Distribution* (Vol. 2). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Anand, S., Segal, P. & Stiglitz, J.E. (eds.). (2010). *Debates on the Measurement of Global Poverty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Anria, S. (2018). *When Movements Become Parties: The Bolivian MAS in Comparative Perspective* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Arza, C., Castiglioni, R., Franzoni, J.M., Niedzwiecki, S., Pribble, J. & Sánchez-Ancochea, D. (2022). The Political Economy of Segmented Expansion: Latin American Social Policy in the 2000s. *Elements in Politics and Society in Latin America*.
- Atkinson, A.B. (2017). *Monitoring global poverty: Report of the commission on global poverty*. Washington D.C.: The World Bank.
- Atkinson, A.B. (2019). *Measuring Poverty around the World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Atkinson, A.B. & Bourguignon, F. (2001). Poverty and inclusion from a world perspective. In J. E. Stiglitz & P.-A. Muet (eds.), *Governance, equity, and global markets*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Avelino, G., Brown, D.S. & Hunter, W. (2005). The Effects of Capital Mobility, Trade Openness, and Democracy on Social Spending in Latin America, 1980–1999. *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3): 625–641.
- Bäckman, O. (2009). Institutions, Structures and Poverty — A Comparative Study of 16 Countries, 1980–2000. *European Sociological Review* 25(2): 251–264.

- Barrientos, A. (2004). Latin America: towards a liberal-informal welfare regime. In I. Gough, G. Wood, A. Barrientos, P. Bevan, P. Davis & G. Room (eds.), *Insecurity and Welfare Regimes in Asia, Africa and Latin America: Social Policy in Development Contexts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barrientos, A. (2013). *Social Assistance in Developing Countries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barrientos, A. (2019). *Does a general theory of welfare institutions explain the expansion of social assistance in low and middle income countries?* (Working Paper No. 1). Bremen: SOCIUM.
- Barrientos, A. & DeJong, J. (2006). Reducing Child Poverty with Cash Transfers: A Sure Thing? *Development Policy Review* 24(5): 537–552.
- Barrientos, A. & Hulme, D. (2009). Social Protection for the Poor and Poorest in Developing Countries: Reflections on a Quiet Revolution. *Oxford Development Studies* 37(4): 439–456.
- Basedau, M., Erdmann, G., Lay, J. & Stroh, A. (2011). Ethnicity and party preference in sub-Saharan Africa. *Democratization* 18(2): 462–489.
- Bastagli, F., Hagen-Zanker, J., Harman, L., Barca, V., Sturge, G. & Schmidt, T. (2019). The Impact of Cash Transfers: A Review of the Evidence from Low- and Middle-income Countries. *Journal of Social Policy* 48(3): 569–594.
- Beach, D. (2020). Multi-Method Research in the Social Sciences: A Review of Recent Frameworks and a Way Forward. *Government and Opposition* 55(1): 163–182.
- Beach, D. & Pedersen, R.B. (2016). *Causal case study methods: Foundations and guidelines for comparing, matching, and tracing*. University of Michigan Press.
- Beach, D. & Pedersen, R.B. (2018). Selecting appropriate cases when tracing causal mechanisms. *Sociological Methods & Research* 47(4): 837–871.
- Beck, N. & Katz, J.N. (1995). What to do (and not to do) with Time-Series Cross-Section Data. *American Political Science Review* 89(3): 634–647.
- Béland, D. (2009). Ideas, institutions, and policy change. *Journal of European Public Policy* 16(5): 701–718.
- Béland, D., Foli, R., Howlett, M., Ramesh, M. & Woo, J.J. (2018). Instrument consti-
tuencies and transnational policy diffusion: the case of conditional cash transfers. *Review of International Political Economy* 25(4): 463–482.
- Bell, A., Fairbrother, M. & Jones, K. (2018). Fixed and random effects models: making an informed choice. *Quality & Quantity*.
- Bevan, P. (2004). The dynamics of Africa’s in/security regimes. In I. Gough, G. Wood, A. Barrientos, P. Bevan, P. Davis & G. Room (eds.), *Insecurity and Welfare Regimes in Asia, Africa and Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Björklund, A. & Jäntti, M. (2009). Intergenerational Income Mobility and the Role of Family Background. In B. Nolan, W. Salverda & T. M. Smeeding (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Economic Inequality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Black, M.M., Walker, S.P., Fernald, L.C.H., Andersen, C.T., DiGirolamo, A.M., Lu, C., ... Grantham-McGregor, S. (2017). Early childhood development coming of age: science through the life course. *The Lancet* 389(10064): 77–90.
- Böger, T. & Leisering, L. (2018). A new pathway to universalism? Explaining the spread of ‘social’ pensions in the global South, 1967–2011. *Journal of International Relations and Development* 23: 308–338.
- Boix, Charles. (2001). Democracy, Development, and the Public Sector. *American Journal of Political Science* 45(1): 1–17.

- Bolukbasi, H.T., Öktem, K.G. & Savaş, E. (2021). Measuring welfare states beyond the three worlds: Refining state-of-the-art tools. *Social Policy & Administration* 55(7): 1181–1196.
- Bourguignon, F. (2003). The growth elasticity of poverty reduction: explaining heterogeneity across countries and time periods. In T. S. Eicher & S. J. Turnovsky (eds.), *Inequality and growth: Theory and policy implications*. Cambridge: MIT press.
- Brady, D. (2005). The Welfare State and Relative Poverty in Rich Western Democracies, 1967-1997. *Social Forces* 83(4): 1329–1364.
- Brady, D. (2009). *Rich democracies, poor people: How politics explain poverty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brady, D. (2019). Theories of the Causes of Poverty. *Annual Review of Sociology* 45(1): 155–175.
- Brady, D., Seeleib-Kaiser, M. & Beckfield, J. (2005). Economic Globalization and the Welfare State in Affluent Democracies, 1975-2001. *American Sociological Review* 70(6): 921–948.
- Brady, H.E. (2008). Causation and Explanation in Social Science. In J. M. Box-Steffensmeier, H. E. Brady & D. Collier (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brooks, S.M. (2002). Social Protection and Economic Integration: The Politics of Pension Reform in an Era of Capital Mobility. *Comparative Political Studies* 35(5): 491–523.
- Brooks, S.M. (2015). Social Protection for the Poorest: The Adoption of Antipoverty Cash Transfer Programs in the Global South. *Politics & Society* 43(434): 551–582.
- Brown, C., Ravallion, M. & van de Walle, D. (2018). A poor means test? Econometric targeting in Africa. *Journal of Development Economics* 134: 109–124.
- Budge, I., Robertson, D. & Hearl, D. (1987). *Ideology, Strategy and Party Change: Spatial Analyses of Post-War Election Programmes in 19 Democracies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cameron, D.R. (1978). The Expansion of the Public Economy: A Comparative Analysis*. *American Political Science Review* 72(4): 1243–1261.
- Careja, R. & Emmenegger, P. (2009). The Politics of Public Spending in Post-Communist Countries. *East European Politics and Societies* 23(2): 165–184.
- Carnes, M. & Mares, I. (2015). Explaining the ‘Return of the State’ in Middle-Income Countries: Employment Vulnerability, Income, and Preferences for Social Protection in Latin America. *Politics & Society* 43(4).
- Carnes, M.E. & Mares, I. (2014). Coalitional realignment and the adoption of non-contributory social insurance programmes in Latin America. *Socio-Economic Review* 12(4): 695–722.
- Carraro, L. & Marzi, M.S.L. (2021). Effects of social protection on poverty and inequality. In *Handbook on Social Protection Systems*. Edward Elgar.
- Castañeda, A., Doan, D., Newhouse, D., Nguyen, M.C., Uematsu, H. & Azevedo, J.P. (2018). A New Profile of the Global Poor. *World Development* 101: 250–267.
- Cerra, V., Eichengreen, B., El-Ganainy, A. & Schindler, M. (eds.). (2021). *How to Achieve Inclusive Growth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chancel, L., Piketty, T., Saez, E. & Zucman, G. (2021). World inequality report 2022.

- Clark, H., Coll-Seck, A.M., Banerjee, A., Peterson, S., Dalglish, S.L., Ameratunga, S., ... Costello, A. (2020). A future for the world's children? A WHO–UNICEF–Lancet Commission. *The Lancet* 395(10224): 605–658.
- Coady, D., Grosh, M. & Hoddinott, J. (2004). *Targeting of Transfers in Developing Countries*. Washington D.C.: The World Bank.
- Collier, D. & Messick, R.E. (1975). Prerequisites Versus Diffusion: Testing Alternative Explanations of Social Security Adoption. *American Political Science Review* 69(04): 1299–1315.
- Cook, S. (2018). Making growth inclusive: perspectives on the role of social policy in developing economies. *Reframing Global Social Policy: Social Investment for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth* 77–99.
- Cronert, A. & Hadenius, A. (2021). Institutional foundations of global well-being: Democracy, state capacity and social protection. *International Political Science Review* 42(5): 705–724.
- Cutright, P. (1965). Political Structure, Economic Development, and National Social Security Programs. *American Journal of Sociology* 70(5): 537–550.
- Dagdeviren, H., van der Hoeven, R. & Weeks, J. (2002). Poverty Reduction with Growth and Redistribution. *Development & Change* 33(3): 383.
- Desai, R.M. & Rudra, N. (2018). Trade, poverty, and social protection in developing countries. *European Journal of Political Economy*.
- Devereux, S., Masset, E., Sabates-Wheeler, R., Samson, M., Rivas, A.-M. & Lintelo, D. te. (2017). The targeting effectiveness of social transfers. *Journal of Development Effectiveness* 9(2): 162–211.
- Dobbin, F., Simmons, B. & Garrett, G. (2007). The global diffusion of public policies: Social construction, coercion, competition, or learning? *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* 33: 449–472.
- Dollar, D. & Kraay, A. (2002). Growth is Good for the Poor. *Journal of economic growth* 7(3): 195–225.
- Dorlach, T. (2021). The causes of welfare state expansion in democratic middle-income countries: A literature review. *Social Policy & Administration Early view*.
- Düpont, N., Kavasoglu, Y.B., Lührmann, A. & Reuter, O.J. (2022). A global perspective on party organizations. Validating the Varieties of Party Identity and Organization Dataset (V-Party). *Electoral Studies* 75: 102423.
- Duverger, M. (1954). *Political parties: Their organization and activity in the modern state*. London: Methuen & Co.
- Ekbrand, H. & Halleröd, B. (2018). The more gender equity, the less child poverty? A multilevel analysis of malnutrition and health deprivation in 49 low- and middle-income countries. *World Development* 108: 221–230.
- Elischer, S. (2012). Measuring and comparing party ideology in nonindustrialized societies: taking party manifesto research to Africa. *Democratization* 19(4): 642–667.
- Elischer, S. (2013). *Political Parties in Africa: Ethnicity and Party Formation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Erikson, R. (1993). Descriptions of Inequality: The Swedish Approach to Welfare Research 145. *The quality of life* 67.
- Erling, B. & Moene, K.O. (2016). The Equality Multiplier: How Wage Compression and Welfare Empowerment Interact. *Journal of the European Economic Association* 14(5): 1011–1037.

- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Evans, P.B., Rueschemeyer, D. & Skocpol, T. (eds.). (1985). *Bringing the State Back In*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Falleti, T.G. (2016). Process tracing of extensive and intensive processes. *New Political Economy* 21(5): 455–462.
- Falleti, T.G. & Lynch, J.F. (2009). Context and Causal Mechanisms in Political Analysis. *Comparative Political Studies* 42(9): 1143–1166.
- Fenwick, T.B. (2017). From CCTs to a social investment welfare state? Brazil's 'new' pro-poor strategy. *Development Policy Review* 35(5): 659–674.
- Ferrarini, T., Nelson, K. & Palme, J. (2016). Social transfers and poverty in middle- and high-income countries – A global perspective. *Global Social Policy* 16(1): 22–46.
- Ferreira, F.H.G., Leite, P.G. & Ravallion, M. (2010). Poverty reduction without economic growth? *Journal of Development Economics* 93(1): 20–36.
- Fiszbein, A., Kanbur, R. & Yemtsov, R. (2014). Social Protection and Poverty Reduction: Global Patterns and Some Targets. *World Development* 61: 167–177.
- Fiszbein, A. & Schady, N. (2009). *Conditional Cash Transfers: Reducing Present and Future Poverty*. Washington D.C.: The World Bank.
- Garrett, G. (1998). *Partisan politics in the global economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Garroway, C. & de Laiglesia, J.R. (2012). *On the Relevance of Relative Poverty for Developing Countries* (OECD Development Centre Working Papers No. 314) (Vol. 314). Paris: OECD.
- Gentilini, U. & Omamo, S.W. (2011). Social protection 2.0: Exploring issues, evidence and debates in a globalizing world. *Food Policy* 36(3): 329–340.
- George, A.L. & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT press.
- Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for? *American political science review* 98(2): 341–354.
- Gerring, J. & Cojocar, L. (2016). Selecting cases for intensive analysis: A diversity of goals and methods. *Sociological Methods & Research* 45(3): 392–423.
- Goertz, G. (2017). *Multimethod Research, Causal Mechanisms, and Case Studies: An Integrated Approach*. *Multimethod Research, Causal Mechanisms, and Case Studies*. Princeton University Press.
- Goñi, E., Humberto López, J. & Servén, L. (2011). Fiscal Redistribution and Income Inequality in Latin America. *World Development* 39: 1558–1569.
- Goudie, A. & Ladd, P. (1999). Economic growth, poverty and inequality. *Journal of International Development* 11(2): 177.
- Gough, I. (2004). East Asia: the limits of productivist regimes. In I. Gough, G. Wood, A. Barrientos, P. Bevan, P. Davis & G. Room (eds.), *Insecurity and Welfare Regimes in Asia, Africa and Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gough, I. & Therborn, G. (2010). The Global Future of Welfare States. In F. G. Castles, S. Leibfried, J. Lewis, H. Obinger & C. Pierson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gough, I., Wood, G., Barrientos, A., Bevan, P., Davis, P. & Room, G. (2004). *Insecurity and Welfare Regimes in Asia, Africa and Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Green-Pedersen, C. (2004). The Dependent Variable Problem within the Study of Welfare State Retrenchment: Defining the Problem and Looking for Solutions. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice* 6(1): 3–14.
- Grugel, J. (2002). *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*. Houndmills: Palgrave.
- Ha, E. (2015). The impact of democracy, government ideology, and globalization on social spending in less developed countries. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 56(5): 338–365.
- Haas, P.M. (1992). Introduction: epistemic communities and international policy coordination. *International Organization* 46(1): 1–35.
- Haggard, S. & Kaufman, R.R. (2008). *Development, Democracy, and Welfare States: Latin America, East Asia, and Eastern Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hall, P.A. & Soskice, D. (2001). *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*. International Relations. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Halleröd, B., Rothstein, B., Daoud, A. & Nandy, S. (2013). Bad Governance and Poor Children: A Comparative Analysis of Government Efficiency and Severe Child Deprivation in 68 Low- and Middle-income Countries. *World Development* 48: 19–31.
- Hanlon, J., Barrientos, A. & Hulme, D. (2010). *Just Give Money to the Poor: The Development Revolution from the Global South*. Sterling: Kumarian Press.
- Hedström, P. & Ylikoski, P. (2010). Causal mechanisms in the social sciences. *Annual review of sociology* 36: 49–67.
- Hicks, A.M. (1999). *Social democracy & welfare capitalism: a century of income security politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Holland, A.C. (2018). Diminished Expectations: Redistributive Preferences in Truncated Welfare States. *World Politics* 70(4): 555–594.
- Horowitz, D.L. (1985). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. University of California Press.
- Hoy, Chris & Sumner, A. (2016). Global Poverty and Inequality: Is There New Capacity for Redistribution in Developing Countries? *Journal of Globalization and Development* 7(1).
- Hoy, Christopher & Sumner, A. (2020). *Growth with Adjectives: Global Poverty and Inequality after the Pandemic* (Vol. 537). Center for Global Development.
- Huber, E. & Stephens, J.D. (2001). *Development and crisis of the welfare state: parties and policies in global markets*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Huber, E. & Stephens, J.D. (2012). *Democracy and the Left: Social Policy and Inequality in Latin America*. University of Chicago Press.
- Huntington, S.P. (1991). *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. University of Oklahoma Press.
- ILO. (2021). *World Social Protection Report 2020-2022: Social protection at the crossroads – in pursuit of a better future*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- Immergut, E.M. (1990). Institutions, Veto Points, and Policy Results: A Comparative Analysis of Health Care. *Journal of Public Policy* 10: 391–391.
- Jenson, J. (2010). Diffusing Ideas for After Neoliberalism: The Social Investment Perspective in Europe and Latin America. *Global Social Policy* 10(1): 59–84.
- Jolliffe, D. & Prydz, E.B. (2021). Societal Poverty: A Relative and Relevant Measure. *The World Bank Economic Review* 35(1): 180–206.

- Kalwij, A. & Verschoor, A. (2007). Not by growth alone: The role of the distribution of income in regional diversity in poverty reduction. *European Economic Review* 51(4): 805–829.
- Kanbur, R. (2019). Inequality in a global perspective. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 35(3): 431–444.
- Kangas, O.E. (2012). Testing old theories in new surroundings: The timing of first social security laws in Africa. *International Social Security Review* 65(1): 73–97.
- Katz, R.S. & Mair, P. (1995). Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party. *Party Politics* 1(1): 5–28.
- Katzenstein, P.J. (1985). *Small States in World Markets: Industrial Policy in Europe. Cornell studies in political economy.*
- Kaufman, R.R. & Segura-Ubiergo, A. (2001). Globalization, Domestic Politics, and Social Spending in Latin America: A Time-Series Cross-Section Analysis. *World Politics* 53(4).
- Kenworthy, L. (2011). *Progress for the Poor*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Khan, S. & Hancioglu, A. (2019). Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys: Delivering Robust Data on Children and Women across the Globe. *Studies in Family Planning* 50(3): 279–286.
- Kim, W. (2010). Does Class Matter? Social Cleavages in South Korea’s Electoral Politics in the Era of Neoliberalism. *Review of Political Economy* 22(4): 589–616.
- Kirchheimer, O. (1966). The transformation of the Western European party systems. In L. Joseph & W. Myron (eds.), *Political parties and political development*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Klasen, S., Krivobokova, T., Greb, F., Lahoti, R., Pasaribu, S.H. & Wiesenfarth, M. (2016). International income poverty measurement: which way now? *The Journal of Economic Inequality* 14(2): 199–225.
- Korpi, W. (1983). *The democratic class struggle*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Korpi, W. (2001). Contentious Institutions: An Augmented Rational-Action Analysis of the Origins and Path Dependency of Welfare State Institutions in Western Countries. *Rationality and Society* 13(2): 235–283.
- Korpi, W. & Palme, J. (1998). The paradox of redistribution and strategies of equality: Welfare state institutions, inequality, and poverty in the Western countries. *American sociological review* 63(5): 661–687.
- Korpi, W. & Palme, J. (2003). New Politics and Class Politics in the Context of Austerity and Globalization: Welfare State Regress in 18 Countries, 1975–95. *American Political Science Review* 97(3): 425–446.
- Kraay, A. (2006). When is growth pro-poor? Evidence from a panel of countries. *Journal of Development Economics* 80(1): 198–227.
- Kuhlmann, J., González de Reufels, D., Schlichte, K. & Nullmeier, F. (2020). How social policy travels: A refined model of diffusion. *Global Social Policy* 20(1): 80–96.
- Kuhlmann, J. & Nullmeier, F. (2022). *Causal Mechanisms in the Global Development of Social Policies*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kwon, H. (2009). The reform of the developmental welfare state in East Asia. *International Journal of Social Welfare* 18: S12–S21.
- Lakner, C., Mahler, D.G., Negre, M. & Prydz, E.B. (2020). *How much does reducing inequality matter for global poverty?* (Global Poverty Monitoring Technical Note No. 13). Washington DC: World Bank.

- Lange, M. (2013). *Comparative-Historical Methods*. London: SAGE publications. Retrieved from <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/comparative-historical-methods>
- Laurell, A.C. (2003). What Does Latin American Social Medicine Do When It Governs? The Case of the Mexico City Government. *American Journal of Public Health* 93(12): 2028–2031.
- Lavers, T. & Hickey, S. (2016). Conceptualising the politics of social protection expansion in low income countries: The intersection of transnational ideas and domestic politics. *International Journal of Social Welfare* 25(4): 388–398.
- Lavinas, L. (2015). Latin America: Anti-Poverty Schemes instead of Social Protection. *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice* 7: 112–171.
- Lehoucq, F. (2012). The third and fourth waves of democracy. In J. Haynes (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Democratization* (Vol. 4).
- Leisering, L. (2009). Extending Social Security to the Excluded: Are Social Cash Transfers to the Poor an Appropriate Way of Fighting Poverty in Developing Countries? *Global Social Policy* 9(2): 246–272.
- Leisering, L. (2018). *The Global Rise of Social Cash Transfers: How States and International Organizations Constructed a New Instrument for Combating Poverty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leisering, L. & Barrientos, A. (2013). Social citizenship for the global poor? The worldwide spread of social assistance. *International Journal of Social Welfare* 22(S1): S50–S67.
- Lenski, G. (1966). *Power and privilege : a theory of social stratification*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Levitsky, S. & Roberts, K.M. (2011). *The resurgence of the Latin American left*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Lindert, K., Skoufias, E. & Shapiro, J. (2006). *Redistributing Income to the Poor and the Rich: Public Transfers in Latin America and the Caribbean* (No. 0605). Washington D.C.: World Bank.
- Lipset, S. & Rokkan, S. (1967). Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction. In S. Lipset & S. Rokkan (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*. Free Press.
- Lustig, N. (2016). Inequality and Fiscal Redistribution in Middle Income Countries: Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Indonesia, Mexico, Peru and South Africa. *Journal of Globalization and Development* 7(1): 17–60.
- Machamer, P., Darden, L. & Craver, C.F. (2000). Thinking about Mechanisms. *Philosophy of Science* 67(1): 1–25.
- Mahon, R. (2019). Broadening the social investment agenda: The OECD, the World Bank and inclusive growth. *Global Social Policy* 19(1–2): 121–138.
- Mahoney, J. (2000). Path dependence in historical sociology. *Theory & Society* 29(4): 507.
- Mahoney, J. & Rueschemeyer, D. (eds.). (2003). *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mahoney, J. & Thelen, K. (eds.). (2015). *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mahoney, J. & Villegas, C.M. (2009). Historical Enquiry and Comparative Politics. In Carles Boix & S. C. Stokes (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford University Press.

- Mair, P. & Mudde, C. (1998). The Party Family and Its Study. *Annual Review of Political Science* 1(1): 211.
- Mares, I. (2005). Social Protection Around the World: External Insecurity, State Capacity, and Domestic Political Cleavages. *Comparative Political Studies* 38(6): 623–651.
- Mares, I. & Carnes, M.E. (2009). Social Policy in Developing Countries. *Annual Review of Political Science* 12(1): 93–113.
- Margitic, J. & Ravallion, M. (2019). Lifting the floor? Economic development, social protection and the developing World's poorest. *Journal of Development Economics*.
- Marshall, T.H. (1950). *Citizenship and Social Class*. Cambridge University Press.
- Martínez Franzoni, J. & Sánchez-Ancochea, D. (2016). *The Quest for Universal Social Policy in the South: Actors, Ideas and Architectures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Marx, I., Nolan, B. & Olivera, J. (2015). The Welfare State and Antipoverty Policy in Rich Countries. In A. B. Atkinson & F. Bourguignon (eds.), *Handbook of Income Distribution* (Vol. 2). Elsevier.
- McGuire, J.W. (1999). Labor union strength and human development in East Asia and Latin America. *Studies in Comparative International Development* 33(4): 3–34.
- Meltzer, A.H. & Richard, S.F. (1981). A Rational Theory of the Size of Government. *Journal of Political Economy* 89(5): 914–927.
- Moller, S., Huber, E., Stephens, J.D., Bradley, D. & Nielsen, F.F. (2003). Determinants of Relative Poverty in Advanced Capitalist Democracies. *American Sociological Review* 68(1): 22–51.
- Myles, J. & Quadagno, J. (2002). Political Theories of the Welfare State. *Social Service Review* 76(1): 34–57.
- Nelson, K., Fredriksson, D., Korpi, T., Korpi, W., Palme, J. & Sjöberg, O. (2020). The Social Policy Indicators (SPIN) database. *International Journal of Social Welfare* 29(3): 285–289.
- Nelson, M. & Sandberg, J. (2016). From perspectives to policy contingencies: Conditional cash transfers as social investments. *Global Social Policy* 21–37.
- Niedzwiecki, S. (2015). Social Policy Commitment in South America. The Effect of Organized Labor on Social Spending from 1980 to 2010. *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 7(2): 3–42.
- Niedzwiecki, S. (2018). *Uneven social policies: The politics of subnational variation in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Niño-Zarazúa, M., Barrientos, A., Hickey, S. & Hulme, D. (2012). Social Protection in Sub-Saharan Africa: Getting the Politics Right. *World Development* 40(1): 163–176.
- Nullmeier, F. & Kuhlmann, J. (2022). Introduction: A Mechanism-Based Approach to Social Policy Research. In J. Kuhlmann & F. Nullmeier (eds.), *Causal Mechanisms in the Global Development of Social Policies*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Obinger, H. & Schmitt, C. (2022). Unemployment insurance in the Global South since 1950: Drivers of policy adoption. *Global Social Policy* 22(1): 67–83.
- OECD. (2018). *Opportunities for All: A Framework for Policy Action on Inclusive Growth*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Orloff, A.S. (2009). Gendering the Comparative Analysis of Welfare States: An Unfinished Agenda. *Sociological Theory* 27: 317–343.

- Papadopoulos, T. & Leyer, R.V. (2016). Two Decades of Social Investment in Latin America: Outcomes, Shortcomings and Achievements of Conditional Cash Transfers. *Social Policy and Society* 15(3): 435–449.
- Pierson, P. (1996). The New Politics of the Welfare State. *World Politics* 48(2): 143–179.
- Pierson, P. (2004). *Politics in time: history, institutions, and social analysis*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Pribble, J. (2013). *Welfare and Party Politics in Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Przeworski, A., Alvarez, M., Cheibub, J.A. & Limongi, F. (2000). *Democracy and development: political institutions and material well-being in the world, 1950–1990*. Cambridge studies in the theory of democracy.
- Rainwater, L. & Smeeding, T.M. (2005). *Poor Kids in a Rich Country: America's Children in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Randall, V. (2006). Political parties and social structure in the developing world. In R. S. Katz & W. J. Crotty (eds.), *Handbook of Party Politics*. London: SAGE.
- Ravallion, M. (2001). Growth, Inequality and Poverty: Looking Beyond Averages. *World Development* 29(11): 1803–1815.
- Ravallion, M. (2020). On Measuring Global Poverty. *Annual Review of Economics* 12(1): 167–188.
- Ravallion, M. & Chen, S. (1997). What Can New Survey Data Tell Us about Recent Changes in Distribution and Poverty? *The World Bank Economic Review* 11(2): 357–382.
- Ravallion, M. & Chen, S. (2011). Weakly relative poverty. *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 93(4): 1251–1261.
- Ravallion, M. & Chen, S. (2019). Global poverty measurement when relative income matters. *Journal of Public Economics* 177: 104046.
- Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Reich, M.R., Harris, J., Ikegami, N., Maeda, A., Cashin, C., Araujo, E.C., ... Evans, T.G. (2016). Moving towards universal health coverage: lessons from 11 country studies. *The Lancet* 387(10020): 811–816.
- Ritter, D.P. (2014). Comparative Historical Analysis. In D. della Porta (ed.), *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research*. Oxford University Press.
- Rodrik, D. (1998). Why Do More Open Economies Have Bigger Governments? *Journal of Political Economy* 106(5): 997.
- Roemer, J.E. (1998). *Theories of Distributive Justice*. Harvard University Press.
- Rothstein, B. (1998). *Just Institutions Matter: The Moral and Political Logic of the Universal Welfare State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rothstein, B., Samanni, M. & Teorell, J. (2012). Explaining the welfare state: power resources vs. the Quality of Government. *European Political Science Review* 4(1): 1–28.
- Rudra, N. (2008). *Globalization and the Race to the Bottom in Developing Countries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rudra, N. (2015). Social Protection in the Developing World: Challenges, Continuity, and Change. *Politics & Society* 43(4): 463–470.
- Rudra, N. & Haggard, S. (2005). Globalization, Democracy, and Effective Welfare Spending in the Developing World. *Comparative Political Studies* 38(9): 1015–1049.

- Rudra, N. & Tobin, J. (2017). When Does Globalization Help the Poor? *Annual Review of Political Science* 20(1): 287–307.
- Rueschemeyer, D., Huber, E. & Stephens, J.D. (1992). Capitalist Development and Democracy. *Caribbean Studies* (0): 387.
- Saad-Filho, A. (2010). *Growth, Poverty and Inequality: From Washington Consensus to Inclusive Growth* (No. 100). UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
- Scharpf, F.W. (1997). *Games Real Actors Play: Actor-Centered Institutionalism in Policy Research*. New York: Routledge.
- Schmidt-Catran, A.W. & Fairbrother, M. (2016). The Random Effects in Multilevel Models: Getting Them Wrong and Getting Them Right. *European Sociological Review* 32(1): 23–38.
- Schmitt, C., Lierse, H., Obinger, H. & Seelkopf, L. (2015). The Global Emergence of Social Protection: Explaining Social Security Legislation 1820–2013. *Politics & Society* 43(4): 503–524.
- Schubert, B. & Slater, R. (2006). Social Cash Transfers in Low-Income African Countries: Conditional or Unconditional? *Development Policy Review* 24(5): 571–578.
- Seawright, J. (2016). *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sen, A. (1983). Poor, relatively speaking. *Oxford economic papers* 35(2): 153–169.
- Shalev, M. (2007). Limits and Alternatives to Multiple Regression in Comparative Research. In L. Mjøset & T. H. Clausen (eds.), *Capitalisms Compared* (Vol. 24). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Silwal, A.R., Engilbertsdottir, S., Cuesta, J., Newhouse, D. & Stewart, D. (2020). *Global Estimate of Children in Monetary Poverty: An Update*. Washington D.C.: World Bank Group & UNICEF.
- Sirén, S. (2011). *Towards universalism? The obstructed process of healthcare reform in Bolivia* (Development Research Working Paper Series No. 12/2011). La Paz: INESAD.
- Skoufias, E., Lindert, K. & Shapiro, J. (2010). Globalization and the Role of Public Transfers in Redistributing Income in Latin America and the Caribbean. *World Development* 38(6): 895–907.
- Strang, D. & Meyer, J.W. (1993). Institutional conditions for diffusion. *Theory and society* 22(4): 487–511.
- Stryker, R. (1996). Beyond History Versus Theory: Strategic Narrative and Sociological Explanation. *Sociological Methods & Research* 24(3): 304–352.
- Taylor-Gooby, P. (ed.). (2004). *New Risks, New Welfare: The Transformation of the European Welfare State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- UN. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York: United Nations.
- UN. (2022). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*. New York: United Nations.
- UNDP. (2022). *Addressing the cost-of-living crisis in developing countries: Poverty and vulnerability projections and policy responses*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.
- Valencia Lomelí, E. (2008). Conditional Cash Transfers as Social Policy in Latin America: An Assessment of their Contributions and Limitations. *Annual Review of Sociology* 34(1): 475–499.

- Van Biezen, I. (2003). *Political parties in new democracies: Party organization in Southern and East-Central Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Van Cott, D.L. (2007). *From Movements to Parties in Latin America: The Evolution of Ethnic Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Vetenskapskapsrådet [Swedish Research Council]. (2017). *Good Research Practice*. Stockholm: Vetenskapskapsrådet.
- Weyland, K. (2005). Theories of Policy Diffusion Lessons from Latin American Pension Reform. *World Politics* 57(02): 262–295.
- White, H. (2017). Effective targeting of social programmes: an overview of issues. *Journal of Development Effectiveness* 9(2): 145–161.
- Wibbels, E. & Ahlquist, J.S. (2011). Development, Trade, and Social Insurance. *International Studies Quarterly* 55(1): 125–149.
- Wilensky, H.L. (1975). *The Welfare State and Equality: Structural and Ideological Roots of Public Expenditure*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Wilson, S.E. & Butler, D.M. (2007). A Lot More to Do: The Sensitivity of Time-Series Cross-Section Analyses to Simple. *Political Analysis* 15(2): 101–123.
- Wood, G. & Gough, I. (2006). A Comparative Welfare Regime Approach to Global Social Policy. *World Development* 34(10): 1696–1712.
- World Bank. (2018). *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018 : Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle* (No. 132029). Washington D.C.: The World Bank.
- World Bank. (2022). *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2022: Correcting Course*. Washington D.C.: The World Bank.
- Yerkes, M.A., Nelson, K. & Nieuwenhuis, R. (2022). Where to from here? Social policy research in future European societies. In *Social Policy in Changing European Societies*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Yörük, E., Öker, İ., Yıldırım, K. & Yakut-Çakar, B. (2019). The Variable Selection Problem in the Three Worlds of Welfare Literature. *Social Indicators Research* 144(2): 625–646.