

GLOBALISATION, POST-COMMUNISM, AND SOCIAL POLICY: Issues in Croatia

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SUMMARY

This article reports on work in progress in Croatia concerning the globalisation of social policy, related to wider research on the development of social policy in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In the context of wars and forced migration, a number of specific issues have emerged in Croatia. The authors identify ten areas for further research: The intervention of the international community; The role of foreign NGO's; The effects of humanitarian aid; Funding by foreign partners; Distortions in employment patterns; The problems of Croatian NGO's; The priorities of the Croatian government; The religious and ethnic basis of provision; Globalisation from below; and After the crisis.

INTRODUCTION

Croatia faces the transition to a post-communist or post-socialist society at the same time as it attempts to deal with the aftermath of territorial aggression against it, the occupation of parts of its territory, and the continued effects of the war in Bosnia and Hercegovina. The crisis posed by accommodating large numbers of refugees and displaced persons within Croatia as a result of these wars shows little prospect of an imminent resolution. This combination of war, refugee emergency, and post-communist transition is an unusual one in a European context, although it is one which is being faced in many of the states which make up the former Soviet Union. The conjunction poses a number of important questions for the intellectual study, and political development of, social policy in Croatia.

We believe that there are four main reasons why it is vital to avoid an approach which simply focuses on what might be termed 'social policy in one country'. Firstly, there is the complex historic legacy of social policy in former-Yugoslavia, including the attempts to develop a decentralised, self-managing, welfare system and, subsequently, tensions between this and the development of a centralising Croatian state. Secondly, war itself, and the large-scale forced migration consequent upon it, have produced many changes in formal and informal welfare networks which continue to involve family and friendship obligations between people in Croatia and people in other countries. Thirdly, citizenship, a key issue in social policy, remains a contested and contentious issue, so that it is far from clear what kind of citizenship rights will be conferred on different people in an independent Croatia. Fourthly, social policy is acutely globalised as a result of the massive involvement of foreign, international and supranational agencies.

GLOBALISATION

It is the fourth issue, the question of globalisation, which we want to concentrate on in this article. This is a major concern of scholars working at Leeds Metropolitan University's International Social Policy Research Unit with regard to the development of social policy in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Two researchers, Baljit Soroya and Paul Stubbs, have been undertaking research in Croatia, funded by ISPRU, in which the issue of globalisation has also been a major theme.

In terms of a definition, when we talk of the globalisation of social policy we mean the ways in which the traditional concerns of the discipline of social policy, such as social justice, social citizenship, and the diverse ways in which income maintenance provision, health care and other services might be provided, are taking on a supranational character. This supranationalisation takes at least three forms, regulation, redistribution and provision (Deacon and Hulse (1994)). All three elements are present in Croatia.

The role of supranational regulatory bodies is an under-researched issue, although there is some suggestion that the impact of such bodies, given the different assumptions they make, has been contradictory (Deacon (1994)). International social agencies are increasingly affecting policies within states and, certainly in the involvement of foreign humanitarian aid agencies, we are seeing the development of a transnational redistributive social policy from rich nations to poor nations although, again, the effects of this within societies is a complex issue. Global agencies are assuming greater power in the shaping of social policy in Eastern Europe where a debate is taking place about the nature of the economic and social system best able to replace the old command structures. The outcome of this debate in terms of the place of social policy and social protection, and the extent to which markets become institutionally regulated to provide a social safety net and prevent economic collapse could well shape the future form of capitalism, at least regionally if not globally. In addition, global agencies may be involved in provision in terms of giving people an entitlement to service or developing social citizenship rights. There is also the linked question of internationalisation where foreign organisations, or organisations based in more than one country, directly provide services.

CROATIA: SPECIFIC CONCERNS AND ISSUES

There are a number of issues relating to globalisation in Croatia which we have addressed in the research. At the moment, it is only possible to list these rather than to present them as a fully worked out theoretical and empirical statement. The typology of issues we present here should be seen as a very tentative statement of questions which need to be addressed in greater detail.

i. The intervention of the international community.

In many of the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe the intervention by international agencies, such as The World Bank, The International Monetary Fund, and the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe, whilst

having profound importance, is not particularly visible to the general population. The involvement of agencies such as the United Nations, through UNPROFOR and UNHCR, and the European Union, in Croatia, and elsewhere in the region affected by the wars of the Yugoslav succession, is much more dramatic and visible. In some ways, the presence of these agencies, and their role, is also more contested and more of an issue within Croatian politics. The major question concerns the implications of interventions for questions of Croatian sovereignty and independence given its unambiguous recognition by the international community. The ways in which key personnel from these agencies sometimes, publicly, refer to 'former-Yugoslavia' rather than to Croatia fuels suspicion. It is a major research question as to how far the specific contestations as a result of these interventions will affect the acceptance or otherwise of other supranational institutions which will, inevitably, seek to play a key role in the development of economic and social policy in Croatia. Indeed, the links between particular packages of support for Croatia from 'the international community' and specific political objectives in terms of the conflicts is an important question.

ii. The Role of Foreign NGO's.

Large numbers of foreign NGO's currently operate in Croatia, mainly in the fields of health, mental health, and psychological and social services. When needs were massive at the beginning of the aggression against Croatia, any such help was likely to be of value and tended to be welcomed. However, as the situation within Croatia has become more stable,

A number of foreign organisations have provided opportunities for training for Croatian professionals, either within Croatia or abroad. Again, however, this training may be at the expense of the development of a training and educational infrastructure within Croatia. Often, the training is very specific and short-term; quite often it is again culturally specific; and it gives no formal educational qualifications to people who receive it. Indeed, there is a danger, in over-training professionals in a large number of approaches which, normally, are in opposition to each other, of facilitating confusion rather than professional development and, hence, improvements in service delivery. Similar issues arise in the training of non-professionals, semi-professionals and para professionals who deserve the opportunity to demonstrate their competences in specific work and gain useful qualifications.

iii. The Effects of Humanitarian Aid

The importance of humanitarian aid as a form of transnational redistribution, and in terms of the development of a post communist economy should not be underestimated. However, the relationships which this requires between donor and recipient can be problematic, at the macro-level (between states); at the meso-level (between specific organisations and recipient centres); and at the micro-level (between personnel of organisations and specific people receiving aid). The key question is whether humanitarian aid promotes dependency rather than independence. At the macro-level this can involve a distortion of the national economy, unfavourable terms of trade, and so on. At the meso-level it may be unrelated to real needs but, rather, be distributed according to

criteria which fit the needs of the donor organisation. In this way, for example, there may be a religious or ethnic basis to entitlement to aid, or the distinctions between refugees, displaced people, and local communities, may be accentuated and made worse. At the micro-level, the distribution of humanitarian aid is often demeaning and fails to convey respect for individuals' dignity and worth.

iv. Funding by Foreign Partners.

A number of Croatian NGO's receive much of their financial support from partner organisations abroad. Indeed, this is a specific criteria for some funding, for example that from the European Union Task Force. Much of the funding is short-term, unpredictable, and tied to specific projects and issues. These agencies may prioritise projects which serve those people which they have identified as target groups whilst this may not relate to real needs. In addition, criteria for funding may be distorted by an emphasis on 'emergency projects' with no plans for continuity or the development of 'social reconstruction' work. The danger is, therefore, that the nature of this funding distorts the priorities of NGO's and mitigates against needs-based planning for the medium- and longer-terms. The demands of funders may be based on different priorities from those which workers in the NGO may deem to be important. Most importantly, projects tend to be funded which can, most easily and quickly, demonstrate some tangible results. These may not, however, be the most important or most needed. In addition, the diversion of resources within NGO's into securing and keeping funding, and keeping the funders happy, may be inefficient. NGO activity can become funding-driven, in which most of the activity is related more to maintaining funding than to the development of clear priorities, planning, and continuity of service provision. The danger is that a competitive marketplace for foreign funding will emerge between NGO's which again mitigates against efficient services reaching those most in need. There is some evidence that this is already occurring in Croatia.

v. Distortions in Employment Patterns.

This is a very complex issue about which a great deal more research and information is needed. However, it cannot be denied that there are a large number of foreign 'experts' working in Croatia, often receiving large salaries in relation to local conditions and the local population. There are issues about whether these 'experts' are, necessarily the best people for the jobs which they perform or whether, in fact, they are denying opportunities to Croatian 'experts'. More importantly, many such experts are unaccountable in terms of the democratic process or, indeed, in terms of professional regulation.

On the other hand, and partly in response to criticism such as this, foreign organisations are desperate and somewhat reckless in their wish to gain credibility by employing local professionals. Whilst it is certainly true that Croatia was, and is, a modern, developed, industrial society with a normal proportion of trained professionals, some of those employed by foreign NGO's have experienced accelerated promotion, and may be placed in positions for which they do not have proper experience or training, and left unsupported within them. A number of people find themselves being asked to work, part-time, for a large number of foreign NGO's which, also, mitigates against professional

development and growth. In addition, foreign NGO's attract some of the best staff because they are able to pay salaries far above those which can be paid by the state or by Croatian NGO's. This, again, produces professional rivalry and competition which may have deleterious effects in terms of social policy planning.

vi. The Problems of Croatian NGO's.

There are now a large number of Croatian NGO's as a result of the wars and refugee crisis in Croatia. However, many of these cannot be seen as true non-governmental organisations, partly because they utilise staff, equipment, and resources, from within the governmental sector. They may better be described as quasi-governmental organisations. Many other NGO's are small scale initiatives which can be seen as existing largely because of the availability of donor funds, largely from abroad.

Many of the most effective and most developed NGO's in Croatia derive from the small sector of oppositional and independent citizens initiatives which began in the late 1980's before the collapse of the communist system. These often derive from traditions of women's organisations which, whilst not replicating western feminist organisations, do, often, involve foreign women in their work. Other organisations have grown out of the anti-war movement in Croatia. There are issues about the professional competence of some of these NGO's to do that which they claim to be doing and there are, also, questions of accountability and responsibility. However, the development of organisations which define their role beyond purely professional, technical, psycho-social assistance, in terms of a more social agenda, is an interesting development (Pečnik, Soroya and Stubbs (1994)). The role of these social NGO's, in the context of a centralising Croatian state, and in the context of foreign aid, remains an open question.

vii. The priorities of the Croatian government.

Whilst wishing to make a clear distinction between the state, the government, and the ruling party, the issues which this raises are incredibly complex. It is certainly the case that, in recent times, messages have been given that the government sees great problems with the ways in which foreign agencies have operated in Croatia. Many of the concerns expressed are similar to those we outline above. However, the tone in which they are expressed tends to suggest the wish of government not only to co-ordinate, and help to set priorities, but to control the NGO sector as a whole. Instead of arguing that foreign NGO's are in danger of setting up a parallel structure, and seeking to obtain their co-operation with government, the argument tends to be one of "we can do the job ourselves". Major questions about resources, given the after effects of war and the continued refugee crisis, can be ignored in such a formulation.

viii. The religious and ethnic basis of provision.

In the context of wars which, to some extent at least, are based around particular constructions of antagonistic religious and ethnic identities, it is impossible to ignore the possibilities of provision being religiously or ethnically based. Of course, this is not, in itself, a problem unless such provision is, actually, discriminatory. Without much more research and systematic collection and analysis of data it is impossible to draw any

conclusions about this. A number of issues are important, however. Firstly, the involvement of international agencies, and the delivery of international aid, may favour one group at the expense of others. Sometimes, this also distorts the significance of religion or ethnicity within the group in question when, for example, aid is made conditional upon attending the church or mosque. Some NGO's specifically target certain groups within the population, often arguing that their target group would not feel 'safe' if the service was offered to members of other ethnic groups. In addition, entitlement to services, mediated through citizenship, can be ethnically or religiously specific. Indeed, even those organisations who explicitly state that they are open to all nationalities, ethnicities, and religions, are likely to find that, in effect, they serve one group disproportionately. Religious organisations, within Croatia and outside, are likely to play an increasing role in the provision of social policy. The role of state and supranational agencies in ensuring that there is "no national or racial basis to provision, but with diverse ethnic forms of provision" (Deacon 1992) is a difficult question and one which must be a priority for research.

ix. Globalisation from below.

The development of a "non-exclusionary civil society" (Deacon 1992) has been seen as one of the most important factors in the development of a humanistic, and just, social policy in post-communist societies. In many ways, the development of this civil society is more advanced in Croatia than in other states. Some of this is a result of social movements, particularly the women's movement and independent media, which were active before the collapse of communism. A great deal derives from the development of an anti-war movement in Croatia and the establishment of a network of peace and human rights centres throughout Croatia. The role of international labour networks, based on the trade union movement, should also be noted. The role of this active civil society in terms of the development of alternative conceptions of social policy is a complex question. What should not be underestimated is the links that, for example, women's organisations, and peace and human rights centres, have with organisations and personnel from abroad. This globalisation from below has not been sufficiently addressed thus far in research on globalisation. The development of an alternatively politicised social policy, emphasising questions of gender, ethnicity, and human rights, may be seen as challenging to models developed both by supranational and national agencies.

x. After the crisis.

"Who will carry on your programme after you leave?" is a very important question which has been asked, by the Croatian government, of foreign NGO's. The question relates to fears that, after the crisis ends, or at least after the attention of the international community has been diverted elsewhere, there will be a large number of Croatian professionals and other workers, and significant client groups, left with nothing. The development of a post-communist social policy will continue to be dominated by questions of how to promote reconstruction, social renewal, and peace-building, as well as how to re-integrate those refugees and displaced persons who return, for the foreseeable future. This will take place in the context of exclusionary immigration and refugee policies in Western Europe, framed in terms of "Fortress Europe' (Festung

Europa in German), combined with the development of growing inequalities. The impact of these on the development of social tensions should, also, not be underestimated.

CONCLUSIONS

Our concern in this article has been to outline, in crude summary form, some of the issues which we see as vital for scholars of social policy to address. The greater the power of supranational agencies to shape the parameters of national social policy, the more important becomes the need for a debate about how to measure, monitor and secure sustainable social progress. This debate must involve a co-ordinated approach by scholars from different countries able to exchange information, and undertake research, on the phenomenon of the globalisation of social policy. For this reason, a network of scholars interested in 'Global Agencies and Local Responses' has been initiated by one of us (Deacon) in association with two other British scholars. The network can be contacted at the address given below. We welcome the opportunity to share our thoughts on these issues with readers of *Revija za Socijalnu Politiku* and look forward to others continuing this debate with regard to Croatia.

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