World Regional Social Policy and Global Governance

Sheffield International Development Network Seminar
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www.gaspp.org www.cris.unu.edu www.shef.ac.uk
Overview

- Global political and scholarly context
- Regional Social Policy in Principle
- Regional Social Policy in Practice
- The upside
- The downside
- The drivers and obstacles
- An assessment: regionalism’s place now
The Context

- The social reformist challenge to neo-liberal globalisation (1990’s). The ILO’s WCSDG.
- The Southern opposition to any northern driven globalisation. Walden Bello
- The stalemated global governance reform agenda. UNCTAD/G77 don’t agree.
- UNESCO’s Feb 2006 High-Level Symposium.
Regional Social Policy in Principle

- Regional Redistribution
- Regional Social and Labour Regulation
- Regional Social and Labour Rights
- Cross border inter-governmental co-operation in Health, Education, Social Security, Food Security and Utilities
- Cross border lesson learning (best practice)
The Book

- Stages of Regional Integration. Langenhove
- Globalization and case for RSP. Yeates
- RSP from above. Deacon
- RSP from below. Olivet and Brennan (TNI)
- RSP in Europe (EU and C of E). Threlfall
- RSP in Latin America. Manuel Riesco
- RSP in Asia. Joy Chavez
- RSP in Africa. Bob Deacon
- Mega regions and bilateralism. Yeates
- Conclusions. Editors

# Regional Social Policy in Practice

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The Upside

- ECOWAS court of justice (releases slave)
- UEMOA customs duties address inequity
- AU explicates a regional social policy 2008
- SAARC addresses trafficking of w and c
- MERCOSUR fund for convergence 2007
- ALBA’s use of Cuban Doctors
- ASEAN charter of Human Rights 2009?
- ASEAN and SAARC food security
The Downside

- Very limited resources committed
- Donor driven and supported (EU and AU)
- SADC failure to address cross border labour issues
- Exhortations and Declarations lack clout
- ASEAN and SAARC weak on social security mutual recognition
The drivers

- Trade integration but not only that
- Cross border social movements. Anti-globalisation CSOs in Latin America (HSA), SE and S Asia (ACSC), Africa (SAPSN).
- UN social agencies weak except ILO and UNESCO and UNICEF in SAARC
- UN Economic Commissions focus only on countries
- EU as model and supporter
The obstacles

- Bilateral deals and mega inter-regionalism (APEC)
- EU as obstacle (EPAs) or irrelevance (China)
- UN ECOSOC does not push regions (Chapter 8 of UN charter and EU refusal)
- G20 and BRICS with regional add-ons
Assessments

- LABOUR STANDARDS

- STATE LEAD DEVELOPMENT
  - UNCTAD (2009:11). Least Developed Country Report: “ODA could be more effective if neighbouring countries were to implement their programmes simultaneously, with a view to developing regional infrastructure projects…..peer review of programmes and experiences in a regional context can stimulate the process of learning.”

- GLOBAL GOVERNANCE
  - Marx Saxer (2009) for the Friedrich Ebhert Stiftung Dialogue on Globalization project argues:” While regional integration processes are making reasonable progress in some regions (e.g. West Africa, Southeast Asia), there is no reason to expect this situation to materialize in every region. It is thus unrealistic to speak, for the medium term, of a global governance architecture building on regional integration processes. ……. The regions in which integration processes are not making headway – South Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, – will have to be integrated into the global architecture by other means”. 
To conclude, whether the focus is on global discourses and governance, regional discourses and governance or national discourses and governance the world economic crisis only reinforces the urgency of the common political task that still faces us as was expressed quite cogently by Cox (1999:26) in assessing the tasks facing Gramsci’s organic intellectuals in today’s world:

“Theyir task now is to bridge the differences among the variety of groups disadvantaged by globalisation so as to bring about a common understanding of the nature and consequences of globalisation, and to devise a common strategy towards subordinating the world economy to a regime of social equity. This means the building of a counter-hegemonic historic bloc that could confront the hegemonic forces of globalisation in a long term ‘war of position’…….Their task now is to be able to work simultaneously on local, regional and world levels”. 