

Post-Colonial Dialogue or His Master's Voice?: Translating the Periphery in 'Global Social Policy' Studies

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1. Beyond 'Global Social Policy' Studies?

Recent years have seen a proliferation of studies focused on 'global social policy', opening up a rich vein of valuable and insightful work on the complexities of the relationship between globalisation and social policy. Most studies have, however, eschewed any interrogation of the multiple, contested and contentious meanings of the terms 'global', 'social' and 'policy', preferring to see global social policy as a realist enterprise concerned, in the words of one important proponent, with:

„... the social policy prescriptions for national social policy being articulated by global actors; ... the emerging supranational social policies and mechanisms of global redistribution, ... regulation and ... rights ... (and) ...the global social governance of these ... elements ...“ (Deacon, 2007; 1).

In fairness, Deacon has recognised some of the problems of his prescriptions for normative action, traceable to an earlier suggestion that sociological theory needs to escape both Marxism's 'cynical gaze' and post-modernism's 'paralysing gaze', „and utilize instead its substantive insights into how the world system works to better it in the future“ (Deacon, Hulse and Stubbs, 1997; 7). However, notwithstanding his useful attempt to go beyond welfare regime and comparative frameworks towards an understanding of “the multi-sited, multi-layered, multi-actored nature of the social policy-making process” (Deacon, 2007; 175), his response to critics tends to focus on the political implications rather than the theoretical and epistemological which are our central concerns here.

Much of what has now become the canon of work within 'global social policy studies', still lacks a critical transdisciplinary perspective capable of moving, both theoretically and empirically, beyond the boundaries of realist conceptions of 'globalisation' and of 'social policy'. Many texts tend to essentialise 'globalisation', on the one hand, and 'social policy', on the other, producing a realist epistemology of the interactions between the two in which the position of the observer/researcher is either never addressed or, at best, treated uncritically. Both 'globalisation' and 'social policy' are constructed as essences, with the latter referring to a fixed, universal set of themes and issues in the real world, and the former introducing profound and real transformations in the latter with equally profound effects in terms of human well-being. Globalisation is not completely undifferentiated in these formulations – sometimes it is 'neo-liberal globalisation', sometimes 'global restructurings',

sometimes ‘powerful global agencies’ - but these are always real and knowable, omnipresent, and, above all, new.

Whilst the ‘first wave’ of ‘global social policy’ studies tended to see these forces as omnipotent, a ‘new wave’ is more cautious, suggesting that national factors always intervene to temper and alter these processes. Here still, however, the notion of clear and distinct ‘levels’ remains in place. Indeed, the journal *Global Social Policy* frames its calls for articles which:

“... address the subject at one or more of the following levels of analysis: global and intergovernmental (e.g. UN, OECD, World Bank, IMF, G7/8, WTO); regional and intergovernmental (e.g. EU, NAFTA, ASEAN, MERCOSUR) and transregional (e.g. ASEM); global, trans-regional, and regional non-governmental (e.g. civil society/social/labour movements, NGOs, consultancy companies and think tanks, private sector welfare providers, TNCs); national and local (in terms of the impact on social welfare and well-being of international development assistance, international economic activity and other transnational and global processes).“ (Back cover, *Global Social Policy*)

Whilst hardly designed to produce clarity of analytical thinking, the notion of discrete levels represented by particular institutional forms and/or structural forces, is a further illustration of the methodological realism at the centre of the field. In our view, the very act of naming something as ‘global social policy’, especially given that ‘globalisation’ as a social scientific concept was almost unheard of fifteen years ago, serves to produce a profound ‘presentism’ in which history exists only in terms of the national space or in terms of particular organisations. Following Larner and Walters, we would suggest that this ‘naming’ misrepresents and invisibilises key historical patterns, since it “involves assembling singularities out of heterogeneous and diverse social processes” (Larner and Walters, 2004; 499) and precludes other discursive and historicised understandings. Crucially, this presentist realism minimises the possibility of seeing circuits of colonial social relations as, at least, homologous with some of the practices understood within a contemporary ‘global social policy’ frame. There is a noted silence in the literature on the ways in which prior ‘imaginings of world space’ (ibid; 500) precisely produced the kind of rational, evolutionary, civilising tendencies which extended into linked but separable practices of social welfare and social development, as codes, calculation, knowledge, techniques, and spatial practices

capable of being configured and reconfigured as ‘multiple forms of subjectification’ (ibid; 507).

The ‘anglo-european’ tradition of comparative social policy, noted in the call for papers, underpinned as it is by Marshallian notions of ‘citizenship’, appears profoundly unaware or uninterested in the historical relationship between citizens, colonial subjects and non-citizen others (Hindess, 2004) within the circuits of imperialism. It is as if a rich literature on the integral and inexorable relationship between practices in the colonial world and “the formation of law, public institutions, cultural identities and ideologies of rule in Europe” (Blom Hensen and Stepputat, 2005; 19) did not exist. Re-reading Timothy Mitchell’s brilliant study of the practices of British colonial rule in Egypt shows precisely how practices of control were inscribed in ‘civilising innovations’ (Mitchell, 1991; 175) such as public health and hygiene supervision, model villages, schooling, and army training as a kind of colonial social policy regime rarely addressed in the ‘global social policy’ field.

The argument that “the concept of social policy is intimately linked to the specific historical evolution of modern Western societies” (Baltodano, 1999; 20), and the way in which the binary between ‘social policy’ on the one hand, and ‘social development’ on the other is, itself, a product of colonialism, alert us to the danger of a realist epistemology in ‘global social policy studies’. Above all, it points to the need to deconstruct the taken-for-granted conceptual apparatuses around ‘social policy’ and ‘welfare regimes’ developed in the Global North (Midgley, 2004) and vigilance against Western imperialism (Gupta, 2006: 230). The transnationalisation of social policy, in Ferrera’s terms, results in “the redefinition of the boundaries of social sharing” (Ferrera, 2005). Not unlike its older sister ‘comparative social policy’, then, ‘global social policy studies’ remains “defined and shaped by scholars in the Global North” (Midgely, 2004; 217) in ways which impedes “the emergence of a multifaceted perspective that recognizes hybridity, incorporates diverse insights and promotes a truly global understanding of social welfare” (ibid).

Transnational frameworks de-centre state-oriented approaches and explicitly challenge the ‘methodological nationalism’ of much mainstream social policy which, in its ‘global social policy’ guise, involves little more than a realist refinement in terms of ‘levels’ (cf. Robinson, 2001). Rather than merely a ‘scaling up’ of objectivist knowledge, there is a need to emphasise the interactions, the complexity and the liminality of encounters between actors,

sites, scales and contexts (cf. Lendvai and Stubbs, 2006). In this sense, it is absurd to seek to implant theoretical frameworks derived from Western welfare regime theory to those parts of the world in which ‘modern states’ came into existence “as an expression of colonial rule” (Kabeer, 2004; 15), even when ‘post-colonial social contracts’ (ibid) were themselves modelled on Western frames. Crucially, policies are never transferred but, rather, translated, in the sense of policy meanings being constantly transformed, translated, distorted and modified (Latour, 2005). The notion of translation problematises policy, which is seen as a continuous process of ‘displacement’, ‘dislocation’, ‘transformation’ and ‘negotiation’ (Callon, 1986), again introducing a reflexivity missing from most of the ‘global social policy’ literature.

This lack of reflexivity is, perhaps, most pronounced in terms of the taken-for-granted nature of ‘positionality’ in most ‘global social policy’ texts, in which the author-observer, rather than locating themselves within the terrain being mapped, spatially, socially, and normatively (cf. Gould, 2004; 270), tends to pretend “a perspective from above or ‘nowhere’.” (Marcus, 1995). Peripheries lend themselves to being reflexive spaces. As such, the division between the ‘Global North’ and the ‘Global South’, as well as the division between the ‘developed’ and the ‘developing’ world, has always appeared troubling from an Eastern and South East European perspective. As much as these categories have been academically and theoretically separated, the Global North having welfare states, while the South was talked in terms of social development, Eastern and South East Europe got mish-mashed as an ‘in-between’ form, discussed in welfare regime terms (as the fourth or fifth world of welfare), in terms of theories of ‘Europeanisation’, and in terms of the social development discourse that dominated the 1990s through International Organisations, particularly the World Bank, the IMF, and the UN agencies.

Of course, it is not only Eastern and South East Europe which posed a fundamental challenge to the reified division between the North and South. As Therien (2002) points out, several countries from the South have ‘graduated’ to the North in recent years. Mexico and South Korea have become members of the OECD, while Turkey attained EU candidate status, for example. In the 1990s, the transition in Eastern Europe was extensively linked to the experience and policy choices of Latin America (cf. Greskowits, 1998), whilst, at the same time, the transition was, at a discursive level, driven by the notion of ‘back to Europe’. The flexible geographical morphology of transition is best exemplified by Jeffrey Sachs, the

personification of the reinvented flexible advisor (cf. Wedel, 2000), who once argued that the way to ‘return to Europe’ for Poland in 1988 lay in experience from the fiscal and monetary policy choices made in Bolivia, where Sachs had been working in 1987 (Sachs,).

Our suggestion is that ‘global social policy studies’, far from representing, in Midgeley’s terms “a truly global perspective on social policy” (Midgeley, 2004; 234) able to comprehend “the complex and heterogeneous realities of social welfare around the world” (ibid; 235), too often resorts to crude bipolar categorisations, in which a realist presentism traces a unitary path of neo-liberalism, arguing for lock-in effects and a kind of path dependency, in which vague, almost meaningless, terms such as ‘modernisation’ or ‘catch-up’ assume an almost magical significance. This is, of course, not merely a plea for a recognition of diverse contexts but, rather, for an account of social policy which, finally, brings ‘colonialism’ and, in particular post-colonial theory, into the frame.

2. Postcolonialism and global social policy

Postcolonial theory rarely features in global social policy studies, much less in discussions of contemporary social affairs in Europe, the decline of the Soviet Empire, nor in analyses of societies ‘in transition’. This absence is striking in the light of the explicit colonialism of the Soviet Empire, the subtler colonialism of the ‘new Europe’ and the core-periphery nature of the EU accession process, and the unprecedented, one might say neo-colonial, influence of International Organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank in Central and South Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although for most post-colonial scholars the geography of ‘non-European’ is central, others, most notably Spivak, see post-colonialism as a decentering of the normativity of 19th century European territorial expansion, and a re-centering of debates over neo-colonial relations, forms of racism, and the new international division of labour, itself seen as a “displacement of the divided field of nineteenth-century territorial imperialism” (Spivak, 1993; 83). For Slemon, the post-colonial is located at ‘a specifically anti- or *post*-colonial discursive purchase in culture, one which begins in the moment that colonial power inscribes itself onto the body and space of its Others and which continues as an often occulted tradition into the modern theatre of neo-colonialist international relations’ (Slemon, 1991, 3). The concept of ‘post-colonial’ is, thus, used:

“... as a way of ordering a critique of totalising forms of Western historicism; as a portmanteau term for a retooled notion of ‘class’, as a subset of both postmodernism and poststructuralism ... as the inevitable underside of a fractured and ambivalent discourse of colonialist power... The obvious tendency, in the face of this heterogeneity, is to understand ‘post-colonialism’ mostly as an object of desire for critical practice: a shimmering talisman that in itself has the power to confer political legitimacy onto specific forms of institutionalised labour... I think, however, that this heterogeneity in the concept of the ‘post-colonial’ comes about for much more pragmatic reasons, and these have to do with a very real problem in securing the concept of ‘colonialism’ itself, as Western theories of subjectification and its resistances continue to develop in sophistication and complexity” (Slemon, 1995; 45).

The post-colonial project, then, deconstructs the colonial project which sought, in Kiberd’s terms (1995) ‘to classify, record, represent and process’ non-European societies, thereby re-ordering worlds which seemed incomprehensible to the masters and make them more comprehensible and, hence, manageable, for imperial domination. As she continues:

“These attempts restructured, often violently, the worlds of the colonised, and birthed new concepts, images, words and practices that bear the testimony to the complexity of colonial ‘translations’” (Kiberd, 1995, 624).

Discursively, the post-colonial method explores how stereotypes, images, and, above all, ‘knowledge’ “of colonial subjects and cultures tie in with institutions of economic, administrative, judicial and bio-medical control” (Loomba, 1998, 54). The postcolonial project aims at understanding and unfolding the ‘alien scaffolding’ of economic, social, cultural and political structures and representations. In this, the sensitivities to the operation of power, domination, the formation of hegemonic practices and the technologies of maintaining relations of dependency and control are crucial. In pursuing our interest in how postcolonial approaches can be relevant to understand and unfold contemporary supranational practices by the World Bank and the EU in Eastern and South East European countries, we explore three key theoretical concepts: ‘displacement’, ‘disciplining’, and ‘depoliticisation’.

Displacement

Displacement is a key post-colonial concept, seeking to understand the complex interplay between languages, landscapes, environment, history and identities. Displacement refers, then, to the dislocation, the lack of ‘fit’, or dissociation between the constructions, namings and framings, which constitute post-colonial societies. In post-colonial writings, displacement is primarily used in the context of displacement of language and place, in terms of transnational and post-colonial migration (Ashcroft et al., 1995), and in relation to expatriation, exile, immigration and homelessness (Kaplan, 1996).

In terms of our concerns, displacement has two important implications. First and foremost, the notion of displacement fundamentally questions any holding on to ‘universality’. Indeed, post-colonial scholars argue that:

“The myth of universality is thus a primary strategy of imperial control..... (and) an assumption that ‘European’ equals ‘universal’. But even a brief analysis of the ‘universal human condition’ finds it disappearing into an endless network of provisional and specific determinations in which even the most apparently ‘essential’ features of human life becomes provisional and contingent.” (Ashcroft et. al 1992; 55)

In many ways, it is the sometimes explicit, often implicit universalism at the centre of global social policy studies, whether expressed in terms of ‘human needs theory’ as a universal normative framework (Gough, 2004), or international indices of well-being and poverty, such as the Human Development Index, which needs to be questioned. These frames appear as apolitical, ahistorical and acontextual, collapsing diverse locations in ways which blur, distort or, even, collapse, specificities.

Secondly, displacement also refers to the disembedding of various forms of local decision-making and policy-making, akin to a kind of depoliticisation, which we discuss further below. St. Clair, for instance, in one of the rare texts published in *Global Social Policy* which goes outside the dominant frame, refers to the World Bank as a ‘statelike expertised bureaucracy’:

“It is a statelike expertised bureaucracy on a subject matter that was earlier either in the hands of political decision makers or addressed through public debates. The directions in which societies are to develop, the goals and values that are to be traded, and the sectors of

societies that receive the benefits and those that pay the cost of modernisation are in themselves political decisions or matters to be debated with the participation of citizens. The Bank, among other institutions, took over these aspects of developing and less developed countries once they became the subject matter of the new discipline of development economics” (St. Clair, 2006; 85)

This echoes with an emerging literature on the ‘privatisation of policy-making’ (see for example Stone, 2003 for a comprehensive overview). International agencies such as the World Bank and the EU enact a displacement of policy formulation and agenda setting, perform practices of reinscribing institutionalisation and agencification, and reconfigure locally negotiated decision-making processes. This displacement in turn raises a set of questions around legitimacy, accountability, ownership and participation. For example it is worth noting the similarities between the operation of the World Bank and the EU, as in both cases while governments play essential roles, National Parliaments tend to be sidelined. For some scholars this process might be labelled ‘actor-animation’ (see Ferrera, 2005), but for post-colonial scholars the issue is more political, that is, who are the ‘subject-authors’ writing those scripts and what are the implications of the taken-for-grantedness of those scripts.

EU integration, and the process often referred to as Europeanisation, can itself be seen as working in terms of a series of displacements. As much as at a discursive level the EU advocates common goals in response to common economic, social and demographic challenges, the EU transmits and enacts a huge number of policy frameworks, statistical and other regulations and funding machineries. The scale and volume of those ‘transfers’ are well documented by critical institutionalist scholarship, which has pointed to the displacement of a wide range of social relations and institutional arrangements. Bruszt and Stark (2003) for example, argue that regulatory regimes are deeply embedded in domestic constellations. For the New Member States, however the challenge is how to govern the ‘externally mandated regulations’ of the EU, and how to balance this ‘alien scaffolding’ with their own diverse set of local interests.

Similarly, Watson argues that the displacement of the gender *acquis* of the EU from its socially, culturally, and politically bounded space makes us ask the following question: ‘To what extent is it legitimate – or effective – to apply policies and thinking that have developed in a liberal democratic setting to countries which are in transition from state socialism?’ (Watson, 2000; 370). The notion of ‘dissociation’ and displacement furthermore has echoes

with Cameron's (2003) argument about the EU Accession of Central and Eastern European Countries being a 're-creation of the state' in such a way that constituents are excluded from participation in the decision-making processes that 'shape every realm of their societies'. Normalisation, a term used by Bruszt and Stark that is associated with the EU integration, refers to the massive displacement of norms, ideas, regulations, rights and others, the dissociation between the EU's extralocal structures and local interests, and to the resultant disciplining practices of exclusion and inclusion, which bounds the scope and opportunities for participation. Normalisation, in that sense is not just a technical, legal or institutional adaptation process, but indeed is a deeply inscribed political and cultural process.

A sub-theme here is the notion of 'Global English' as a hegemonic language, which has been addressed by some social policy scholars. However, in our view, questions of language and translation have not had much attention paid to them in global social policy studies which, instead, tends to take language for granted. Again, the universalistic leanings and the lack of critical engagements with standpoint theories and their implications in classical social policy and indeed in global social policy studies have resulted in a number of research agendas completely vanishing from our sights. For example, we know almost nothing about the impact of World Bank and EU English on social policy schemes, ideas, discourses and institutions in Central and South Eastern Europe. The argument we propose here is not to say, however, that we talk about 'a' Global English'. It is not the singularity of 'Global English' that makes it hegemonic, not least because Global English is indeed plural and multiple, but rather that deeply local, specific and historic policy issues, such as poverty, for example needs to be expressed, framed, named and thought of in terms of the rules laid down implicitly by those different Global Englishes (Lendvai and Stubbs, 2007). Translation in this sense is not a neutral and linguistic process, but both a displacement and a disciplining practice at the same time.

Offering insights into the sensitivities of the subject, Widerberg (1998) tells of her struggles to translate her gender related work from English to Swedish, reflecting on the fact that not all languages have a word for gender - referring to 'social sex' as opposed to the biological sex. She argues that translation 'implies eliminating certain concepts and contextual understandings expressed in one language, and introducing instead, other language concepts expressing other (contextual) understandings' as well as 'implying changing the voice as well as the story'. She insightfully comments that:

“I saw, when rereading my Danish article, how influenced we Scandinavians have been by the debates and research in the US. Through the internationalisation of knowledge and the dominance of the English language as its mediator, we have been made to share understandings to a higher degree than we have been made to share social arrangements. We might live in countries and cultures that are quite differently organized, but our intellectual tools are very much the same” (ibid. 135)

Disciplining

For the colonial project of knowledge production, gathering, ordering and managing information, the export of Western administrative, economic, social, and political technologies, and the objectification of colonial subjects have been essential forms and processes of disciplining practices. These disciplining practices, while deeply interrupting and interfering with political and cultural structures, served to maintain relations of dependency and control. For post-colonial scholars, knowledge and power are intimately linked, and knowledge productions are key sites of colonial practices. The mapping of landscapes, peoples, and communities and the creation of ‘totalising systems of fixed knowledge’ (Childs and Williams, 1997) in order to occupy and administer other countries have been the primary means of ‘the violent annexation of the non-European world’ (Ashcroft et. al, 1992).

Knowledge production has always been central to the global operation of the World Bank, which is not only the single biggest lender of development assistance, but at the same time aspires to become the New Global ‘Knowledge Bank’ (see World Bank, 1999). The World Bank’s manifesto on knowledge represents very well its own institutional philosophy, which claims that:

“Knowledge is like light. Weightless and intangible, it can easily travel the world, enlightening the lives of people everywhere. Yet, billions of people still live in the darkness of poverty – unnecessarily” (World Bank, 1999; 1)

The knowledge that the World Bank offers is, usually, presented as disinterested, methodologically rigorous in its statistical and mathematical modelling, and comprehensive. As St. Clair (2006) argues:

“The assumption that scientific knowledge is a distinct and separate realm from the arena of politics – knowledge is linear – and the related premise that experts can, in fact, offer policymakers value-free and objective truth about completely messy and ill-structured issues such as global poverty and development, are the twin reasons for excluding as nonknowledge a substantial amount of possibly relevant views that could lead to more effective policymaking” (St. Clair, 2006; 81).

Importantly, for St. Clair, ‘the legitimacy and credibility of the Bank’s expertise is drawn through a circular process between the knowledge it produces and the audiences that legitimise that knowledge’ (St. Clair, 2006; 77). For Stone (2003) the Knowledge Bank discourse, which claims knowledge as a ‘global public good’, wrapped in an apolitical language of diffusing and sharing knowledge alongside technical, neutral terms, is seen as a political project of mastering the coordination between different global actors of development. Knowledge in this sense is not only a resource, but more like authority in structuring questions, issues, analysis and indeed solutions of global development.

The other critical technology of disciplining is objectification or object construction. Although this notion is very closely located to poststructuralist discussions, post-colonial scholars argue that subjectivities needs to be understood in a broader cultural sense, rather than just in a reductionist, discursive sense. In its violent constructions of ethnicity, the various practices of ‘Othering’, and their impact on identity formation and re-formation is central to understanding how the economic and the cultural intersect in colonial practices. Post-colonial critiques are sensitive to standpoints, subjectivities as authoring their scripts, and the fine fabric of power, which goes beyond a structuralist understanding of hegemony.

‘Depoliticisation’

The ‘depoliticisation’ of the ‘political’ is a central preoccupation for post-colonial theory. The ‘political’ is always featured in relational terms such as power/knowledge, domination/resistance, or speaking/silencing. At the same time the political is always intimately linked to economic, social, geographical, and cultural processes. In this conceptual architecture the notion of ‘ideology’ in a post-colonial understanding is not only a political, but also a cultural concept. The critical interrogation of the ‘political’ in post-colonial studies however is rarely visible in global social policy studies. For example, one of the renderings of the political in post-colonial studies is the sensitivity to standpoints, the question of who speaks, whose voices we hear, and who are the subject-authors of various scripts. The often

‘classificatory’ delineation of global social policy studies (Midgely, 2004) implies and reinforces an approach which ‘sees everything from nowhere’. Comparative studies on policy outcomes in terms of pensions, labour markets, health, and so on, the ‘sectoral shopping list’ of traditional social policy studies, focus on the ‘convergence’ of policy discourses in ways which still take these discourses for granted, thus failing to engage with the possible theorisation of not only the economic but the cultural as well, understanding the subtle processes of inclusion and exclusion, silencing practices, and the construction of social groups and the utilisations of political technologies. As we have argued elsewhere, critical, yet very influential actors and processes are neglected by social policy scholarship, when talking about transnationalisation and globalisation (for instance the role of policy consultants, the projectisation of social policy, agentification etc.). In many global social policy discussions, the ‘political’ is either narrowly defined, remains blurred and hidden behind the ‘technical’, or is very static in its understanding.

In a sense, this depoliticisation is reinforced by the use of ‘projects’ as a quasi hegemonic form of ‘development’ both in the context of the ‘developmental’ agenda of international organisations working in South East Europe as well as for EU funds. Kovach and Kucerova (2006) have argued recently that Central Europe is witnessing the emergence of a new ‘project class’. In riding the waves of the ‘projectification’ of development policies, in their case induced primarily by EU funds, this project class actively reconfigures local power structures, and transforms the policy space (in their case, the domain of ‘rural policy’) into an ‘open project market’ with far reaching consequences on local power, redistribution and actor configuration. As Kovach and Kucerova argue, projectification is far from being only a technical process - it is a deeply inscribed political process. Gasper (1999), taking the specific example of the widespread usage of a ‘logical framework’ approach to projects, argues that they are rather more like ‘logic-less frames’, ‘lack-frames’ and ‘lock-frames’ in that they are unable to grasp the complexity of local contexts, processes and developments. Indeed, inscriptions, formats, templates, toolkits, benchmarks, and time frames not only have cognitive, but political implications too. Here, crucial questions arise in terms of how then are ‘projects’, ‘projectisation’ and more broadly donor policies able to respect and embrace socio-cultural contexts, identities and historical memories (Stubbs, 2002).

3. A Crowded Periphery: translating the social in South East Europe

The site of our ‘field work’, parts of South Eastern Europe, is often depicted as a region ‘in post-communist transition’ which, translates, in our exploration, into a site of an extremely rich spatiality of ‘in-betweenness’, of emerging transnational governmentality, of international ‘development’ discourse, of EU influence, and of post-colonial geographies. Our focus on South East Europe must be set in the context of an understanding of regions as “relatively malleable entities contingent on various social practices” (Benchev, 2006; 5). In the case of SEE there is a complex dynamic between notions of identity, nationhood and above all, the spectre of (Western) Europe and its ‘Other’. SEE is ‘an emergent regional space’, marked by different kinds of experimental governance, whose identity is largely ascribed from outside rather than achieved within, in which political and institutional arrangements have been profoundly unsettled, and national spaces and their institutionalizations and interrelationships are still in the process of being worked out. In John Clarke’s terms, ‘governance and the subjects and objects of governing are in process of simultaneous and mutual invention or constitution’ (Clarke, 2007).

The role of the World Bank through its Poverty Reduction Strategy Processes, and the EU in its Open Method of Co-ordination on Social Inclusion, have barely been studied through a post-colonial lens in this, or any other, region. Here, we engage in broad brush stroke analysis which, of necessity, needs to be followed by more empirical work on processes on the ground.

Fraser’s argument on PRSPs appear valid for much of the World Bank’s projectised interventions in social welfare, suggesting that ‘PRSPs are designed for groups capable of expressing their project in terms of planning knowledge and poverty discourse (and) the problem of a lack of ‘capacity’ in civil society can, therefore, be understood as a lack of capacity to rehearse political arguments in the form of ‘planning knowledge’ (Fraser, 2005; 330). Hence, PRSPs are essential forms and processes of *ascribing identities* such as elderly, child, poor, excluded, female, disabled, etc, which describes people and countries as objects or victims, with an emphasis on the ‘lacks’ they suffer. This process not only stands in sharp opposition to notions of identities based on social interactions, memories, history, culture, religion, and place, but also raises questions around how the World Bank’s participatory regime facilitates the ‘unfreezing’, ‘changing’ and ‘re-freezing’ of personal identities (Fraser, 2005).

From the point of view of our conceptual framework and within it the utilisation of post-colonial theories, issues of the 'political', its explicit and tacit dimensions and discursive formulations, also features in critical scholarship on the World Bank. Craig and Porter (2003) argue that PRSPs have strong technical, depolitized orientations to governance and poverty, where complex and daunting auditing processes, public expenditures reviews, financial accountability reviews, and country procurement assessment reviews, not only present issues of governance and poverty in technical and not in political terms, but more importantly actively construct depolitized accountabilities.

Similarly, 'EU-isation' signifies a process where 'national social policy' frameworks are reconfigured, reframed and re-coupled. Social policy, through the OMC is framed as 'social inclusion', 'life-long learning', 'fiscal policy', 'gender equality and gender mainstreaming', or 'social protection' in terms of pensions and health care. Social policy becomes 'social cohesion' in the Structural Funds, 'social inclusion' in the OMC and 'social regulation' in the hard laws of the EU. In a number of contexts, social policy is uneasily framed within 'crime and security policy', 'regional policy', 'migration policy', and 'neighbourhood policies'. These different scripts for social policy necessarily stretch domestic understandings and framing of social policy. One strand of this holds to 'an inessential view of the EU' (Walters and Haahr, 2005;138), seeing it as a complex constitution in the making, 'locked in as it is between modernity and postmodernity'. Hence, the EU is ambiguous, multiple and contradictory, and innovative and experiential at the same time (Laffan, et. al, 2000, Rumford, 2003). It is also argued that the EU is located between the international and the domestic, between states and markets, between governments and governance, which constitute a contingent, ever-changing 'in-betweenness'. For this scholarship, governance arrangements are not so much about self-evident institutional systems, but more about critical and deconstructive investigation of political-cultural formations (Clarke, 2005) and ways of governing and being governed through language, practices and techniques (Haahr, 2004), and about exerting power by 'constituting interior (state) spaces of social, economic and political forces as knowable domains and utilizing technologies to manipulate these spaces and their processes' (Walters and Haahr, 2005; 137).

Another strand links EU-isation more directly with domination, resistance, objectification and marginality and represents a critical interrogation of EU practices on citizenship, economic relations, and production of subjectivities. The EU itself, and in

particular accession, is an encounter between the ‘coloniser’ and the ‘colonised’ (Böröcz and Kovács (eds.), 2001; Kuus, 2004; Rico, 2005). As Böröcz has argued:

“The essence of the European Union’s strategy vis-à-vis the central and eastern European applicants is *integration without inclusion*: participation in the production systems, and appendance to the consumption markets of EU corporations without the attendant political, economic, social and cultural rights conferred by European Union citizenship.” (Böröcz, 2001, 108)

The ‘EU-isation’ of South Eastern Europe takes place in a much more complex and hybrid way than the institutionalist literature on Europeanisation often seems to suggest. On the one hand, EU-isation represents a very uneven and incoherent process, in which the EU has a variety of external assistance agendas which do not correspond simply or unproblematically to its own internal agendas. On the other hand, EU-isation of South Eastern Europe has to be understood in the context of ‘multilateral donor tandem’ and in the context of an ambivalent competition/cooperation between the World Bank and the EU. While South Eastern Europe is the newest region of ‘Europe in waiting’ (Clarke, 2005), its contemporary policy debates are dominated, shaped and projected as much by the World Bank as the EU, with a complex competition/cooperation binary often played out through different ‘technologies of involvement’ and through chains of intermediaries and sub-contracted consultants.

In Romania, which became an EU member state, albeit within a cloak of ‘conditionality’, on 1 January 2007, a 47.2 m Euros World Bank loan for a Social Inclusion Project (SIP) explicitly draws on the EU integration process for its rationale, supporting the priorities set out in Romania’s Joint Inclusion memorandum and strengthening capacity to access EU funds (SIP Project Appraisal Document, 2006). The World Bank, at least discursively, then, has appropriated EU policy and financing frameworks, using EU integration as a legitimising concept for its own operations. The Bank’s lending in its ‘social portfolio’ is over three times as large as EU PHARE funding. Together, however, these two funding sources represent a significant total funding. The extent of collaboration and co-ordination, as opposed to competition, between the Bank and the EU delegation in Romania is a matter for empirical scrutiny. In addition, the attempt to enclose all issues of social inclusion within this frame will, inevitably, meet with a range of responses and resistances, in

which claims and counter-claims in terms of legitimacy, accountability and ownership will be multiplied.

In Croatia, emerging from war and authoritarian nationalism to becoming a stable democracy and an EU candidate country, the contours of World Bank and EU influence are somewhat different. The World Bank has a long-standing involvement in social welfare reform, predating any EU interest which only began in earnest in the process of negotiating the JIM for Croatia in autumn 2005. A joint World Bank/DFID project, utilising mostly UK and US consultants, had earlier shaped the contours of reform which, then, led to a loan agreement emphasising reductions of social expenditure, improved targeting, and improved social services. Interestingly, the JIM process has contributed to a degree of statistical alignment and a revisiting of themes which had been somewhat downplayed earlier, including processes of de-institutionalisation. At the time of writing, there is a degree of open competition between World Bank and EU perspectives although, interestingly, both are reliant on the same group of Croatian consultants (cf. Stubbs and Zrinščak, 2007).

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, a semi-protectorate which remains a fragmented state composed of two entities in which parallel power networks continue to operate, and in which the prospect of EU membership is very distant, the ability of the World Bank to implement any coherent social welfare reform agenda has been very limited. The PRSP process has been refined, in part at least, into an EU style national development strategy although heavily under the influence of donor agencies in terms of the creation of new, flexible, agencies at the central state level, deliberately delinked from everyday political processes (cf. Stubbs, 2007; Maglajlić Holiček and Rašidagić, 2007).

Through more in-depth ethnographic studies, the contours and impacts of diverse neo-colonial relations can be traced, in terms of complex, multiple and fluid processes of knowledge production, meaning-making, and claims-making. Instead of seeing the cases as conforming and moving towards different (yet universal) types of 'welfare regimes', cast by separable 'state' and 'non-state' actors of 'institutionalised politics', a post-colonial perspective would privilege a view of welfare reforms as an interactive, intensive, and liminal process. Structures, agents, and discourses all matter but in complex situationally and historically specific and contested ways.

Conclusions

In this paper we have taken postcolonialism as a theoretical endeavour to critically engage with global social policy studies and locate South East Europe in the space constructed by the 'global', the 'social' and 'policy'. So what do postcolonial studies and a South East European standpoint have to offer to the contemporary discussions of global social policy? While often postcolonialism is associated with the 'Global South', we have argued that postcolonialism as a critical theoretical stance can be used to understand not only the transition in Central and South East Europe, but also the contemporary neo-colonial practices of International Organisations such as the EU, or the World Bank. By bringing postcolonialism back to Europe, albeit to the margin of Europe, is to argue that postcolonialism is indeed not an extra-European phenomenon. Concepts such as displacement, translation, disciplining, knowledge production and depoliticisation have the potential to offer critical insights into the transformation of our understanding of the 'social' and of 'policy' that is created in the encounter between Europe and its periphery. In that sense, a postcolonial theoretical perspective breaks down the often binary opposition between the Global North and Global South, between 'welfare states' and 'social development'. However, while those distinct categories collapse in a postcolonial theoretical framework, importantly, postcolonial approaches fundamentally argue against any notion of universalism, leaving no doubt that claims cannot be made without an explicit positionality and their critical scrutiny. Postcolonialism is also calling our attention towards how knowledge, advice, aid, assistance, or policy transfers are not just necessary or essential technical commodities, but are political claims on the 'social' and on 'policy'. In that sense, global social policy studies faces at least three challenges - first to develop a more analytical understanding of the 'political' that goes beyond the grand narrative of neoliberalism to focus more on processes rather than outcomes, second to embrace methodological reflexivity in order both to unfold the complex interplay between scales and spaces, and to be more sensitive to standpoints and positionalities, and third to become more insightful and upfront about voices and silences and in that sense more de- and reconstructive.

This paper has sought to outline the first steps in this direction. To make postcolonialism a more meaningful theoretical framework, there is need to embark on empirical work in the form of transnational ethnography to find answers to the questions

made visible by this approach, such as how the EU's normalisation, or the World Bank's colonisation practices reconfigure the 'social', the 'political', the 'policy' in specific countries, how 'projects' constitute 'policies', and how we can understand decolonising practices in relation to concepts such as ownership, participation, legitimacy and authority. Above all, this approach seeks to foreground the complexity and the plurality of those questions and answers, in order to resist rather than reinforce claims of the inevitable.

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