

# Globalisation, memory and welfare regimes in transition: towards an anthropology of transnational policy transfers

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**Abstract**

Processes of transnational policy transfers are of immense importance in understanding new forms of the reproduction of relations and discourses of power, and of memory and forgetfulness, within particular social welfare regimes. Transnational advice and policy transfers appear particularly unsuited to the need to address the complexities of the ways in which welfare subjects interact with welfare regimes which seek to organise their lives, a theme which touches complex issues of culture, identity, and resistance, at the interface of local, national, regional and global social relations. Utilising ethnographic material from post-Yugoslav countries, particularly Bosnia-Herzegovina, the article addresses international consultancy, transnational policy advice, and project and programme documents as a specific 'genre' with its own language and power, including the power of silence. The article is based on an explicit erosion of the border between 'research' and 'consultancy'. Theoretically and empirically, a literature on 'global social policy' has paid too little attention to an emerging 'cultural' perspective on welfare which focuses much more on the social relations of welfare; the role of biographies, subjectivities, and memories; and the need for forms of reflexivity and attention to the minutiae of everyday life constructed within, and itself constructive of, 'welfare' as a lived experience. Rendering the practice of policy-making as a subject for ethnographic or anthropological research may be the basis for a new action research and policy agendas for a democratic welfare, envisioning forms of access, voice, and empowerment which much current transnational policy advice militates against.

## Introduction

If the new ethnography, or ‘NGOgraphy’ as Schwartz would have, is informed by a ‘reflexivity’ which involves “looking into the mirrors in the toilets of jetplanes, airports, hotels and offices” (Schwartz, 1998), and if ‘fieldwork’ is best understood as a ‘travel encounter’ (Clifford, 1997: 67), then the following was almost the classic case. I had arrived at Sarajevo airport to take part in a conference on ‘International Assistance Policies for South Eastern Europe: Lessons (Not) Learnt from Bosnia-Herzegovina’ funded, as ever, by the Open Society Institute (or the Soros Foundation as it is known more widely, after its billionaire founder and inspiration). The conference drew participants from all over ‘the region’ (a Soros construction recently adopted by other international agencies) to discuss a collection of fifteen essays, of which my text on Social Policy reform was the only one not written by someone born in and/or a citizen of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Bojičić-Dzelilović et al, 2001). Waiting for transport to the hotel, I struck up conversation with a participant from Macedonia, representing his Government’s Department for European Integration. I responded to his inevitable question; “What do you do?”, as follows: “I live in Zagreb, I research the role of international agencies, and I consider myself an activist/supporter of a number of local peace-building NGOs. Increasingly, I have become involved in work on developing and evaluating programmes for international agencies, particularly DFID (the UK Government’s Department for International Development)”. Finally, recognition flashed across the colleague’s face: “Ah”, he replied, “You’re one of those consultants”.

Trying to make sense of this encounter, and the fact that, increasingly, ‘consultants’ are known as ‘insultants’ by many on the receiving end of their advice in post-Yugoslav countries, was a key inspiration for this essay. It is both a *mea culpa* and an attempt to describe the possibility of different forms of transnational encounters, less insulting and more democratic than the norm. The article seeks to argue that processes of globalisation, especially those involving transnational policy transfers, are of immense importance in understanding new forms of the reproduction of relations and discourses of power, and of memory and forgetfulness, within particular social welfare regimes.

Transnational advice and policy transfers appear particularly unsuited to the need to address the complexities of the ways in which welfare subjects interact with welfare regimes which seek to organise their lives, a theme which touches complex issues of culture, identity, and resistance, at the interface of local, national, regional and global social relations. Whilst many of the other essays in this volume are concerned directly with the impacts of specific violences, collective or individual, this essay is more concerned with an overall notion of ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu, 1977: 191) which is unrecognisable, social, and increasingly constitutive of the emerging field of welfare regimes themselves.

The essay seeks to pose some questions about how it is that a new cadre of ‘consultants’ or ‘transnational advisors’, whose memories are of a particular place, can and do have impacts on other places and spaces with which they are, more or less, unfamiliar. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a ‘consultant’ as someone who gives expert advice. ‘Advice’ is defined as an opinion about what to do. The essential trappings of consultants was revealed in an email from a colleague prior to participation in a review for DFID: “Please advise ... should I bring a suit and a laptop?”. Given that transnational consultancies are increasingly important discursive and practice forms, and are often based on assumptions of the possibility of achieving sufficient cross-cultural understanding within very narrow time frames (consultancies are measured in days, not years), the implications of these processes for a denial of certain memories within welfare systems, especially of those at the receiving end,

welfare subjects in effect, whose identities are often blurred and rendered technical by being defined as ‘service users’, ‘beneficiaries’, or ‘clients’, may be becoming profound. This article seeks to address how this occurs and what can be done about it. Whilst there are no objective figures on the number of consultants involved in transnational advice and policy transfers, an emerging literature does show how pervasive this mode of social practice has become (de la Porte & Deacon, 2002).

The suggestion in this essay is that these policy transfers, when understood through new kinds of ethnographic and anthropological approaches, are much more multi-dimensional, confusing, and contradictory, than is sometimes portrayed in an emerging literature on the imposition of ‘external’ forces on local populations, powerless to resist. On the other hand, the bland, technicist assumption of equality in some recent notions of these transfers as essentially partnerships between administrators, policy makers, and professionals from two or more different countries, cannot and should not be accepted as more than the ideology in use which it so obviously is. The ‘success’ of such transfers, in part at least, always rests on the construction or invention of particular kinds of commonalities of memory, the construction of ‘grand narratives’ as it were, across time and space for administrators and professionals. Consultancy, insofar as it ‘takes abstract models’ and seeks to ‘implant them elsewhere’, has a vested interest in a ‘push towards abstraction’ in the form of ‘globally applicable knowledge’ (Sampson, 2000). Yet this has to be rendered meaningful in specific local settings through a series of ‘interpretative encounters’, revealed through critical ethnographic research.

The essay begins with a note on methodology arguing that such a complex, reflexive, critical ethnography must interrogate the research-consultancy nexus and erode the border between the two. It then confronts the minutiae of policy transfers in post-Yugoslav countries, and especially Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), with which the author has been involved, seeking to raise a set of issues of wider significance, in post-conflict, ‘transition’, and development contexts. It goes on to address a number of theoretical issues in terms of the relationship between globalisation and welfare regimes in more general terms. The essay ends by outlining elements of an emerging anthropological or ethnographic research agenda which offer possibilities for promoting new democratic welfare regimes and, returning to the specific context of social policy advice, sketches elements of what this might have meant in terms of different processes, outcomes, and overall understandings of ‘reform’.

### **A note on methodology: the research-consultancy nexus**

The bedrock of the claim to scientificity in this text, or rather the attribution of scientificity insofar as it is published in a ‘scientific’ journal, rests upon a methodological and practical assertion that the previous hard and fast boundary between ‘consultancy’ and ‘research’ is being eroded, and can and should be eroded further. This involves an inversion of a scientific common-sense which suggests that consultancies are fundamentally different from ethnographic research in a number of important dimensions. Firstly, consultancies tend to be short-term and maintain a ‘distance’ from respondents, whereas by its very essence, ethnographic research is long-term and absorbed in the realities of respondents. Secondly, consultancies are ‘problem-taking’ and responsive to a policy-making commissioning constituency, whereas ethnographic research is ‘problem-making’ and responsive to an academic community and its norms. The interests of different commissioning bodies, such as an international aid agency and an international research council, are very different and demand very different kinds of loyalties and standards from those commissioned. Thirdly, within consultancies many concepts, precisely those which Sampson (2000) has termed ‘global’ and ‘abstract’, are taken for granted and unquestioned, whereas, at the heart of the

ethnographic research project is the rendering of all taken-for-granted concepts as problematic and as contested social constructions. Fourthly, in their writing up, consultancy reports and research reports are very different. Consultancy reports tend to be more persuasive and circular in logic, with no problems from the 'terms of reference' left unanswered, and all placed within a 'logical framework'. Research reports are more explanatory, informative and linear in logic, opening up new lines of enquiry and new problems not foreseen in the research proposal, if only to secure the next research grant.

Beyond these methodological differences, there are ethical, legal, and practical issues which also reinforce the construction of an impermeable border. Consultancies are framed by 'terms of reference' and, crucially, the 'consultancy contract' which invariably contains clauses which bind the consultant to confidentiality. The consultant is legally required, often, not to reveal anything s/he finds out in the course of the consultancy in other arenas, to outsiders, or in other written material. Indeed, the contract sometimes asserts explicitly that intellectual property rights rest with those commissioning the consultancy. Presenting oneself as a 'consultant' as opposed to a 'researcher' implies very different relationships with respondents and utilising material gathered during a consultancy for research purposes would seem to be unethical. Indeed, to survive as a consultant and/or a researcher often involves the person themselves keeping this division clear and intact so as not to appear unreliable, untrustworthy, or just plain difficult.

The counter-intuitive case for a more complex relationship between research and consultancy can and should be made, however. It is a fact that academics and researchers are engaged increasingly as consultants because of their expertise and knowledge. It is possible to envisage a new persona of a 'consultant anthropologist' (Sampson, 2000), whose knowledge derives from participation in a system rather than, or as well as, the external study of it. Indeed, the notion of reflexive ethnography is based on precisely the importance of this kind of internally-generated knowledge. A 'new' ethnography, perhaps most associated with writers such as James Clifford who question classic notions of 'the field' (Clifford, 1997) is much more open to, and comfortable with, what might best be termed more flexible entrees and less 'pure' notions of ethnography as academic science. In this sense, all practices in which the person participates, whether in the guise of researcher or consultant, or inhabiting some other identity (policy maker, NGO activist, welfare user, and so on), become available to be interrogated for the purpose of generating knowledge, theoretical and practical. Reflexive ethnography is increasingly concerned with the ruptures and disjunctures between these identities, and questions hard and fast boundaries. Indeed, with the erosion of classical models of 'fieldwork', the question of time becomes much less important – some consultancies or, certainly, a series of consultancies, can last much longer, and involve more 'saturated' experiences, than those of the ethnographer who, in the age of cost effectiveness, is encouraged increasingly to truncate her/his fieldwork through understanding the techniques of 'rapid' appraisal and assessment which originated in an earlier encounter between social development research and consultancy. Indeed, many research proposal forms, in their use of logical frameworks, for example, resemble application forms for social development projects.

There is an emerging ethnographic research tradition which utilises biography, and a wider range of lived encounters, so that 'consultancies' which are relevant to wider research interests have to be valid as material in the exploration of scientific research issues. Conversely, scientific knowledge is frequently utilised in consultancies so that the consultancies themselves become forms of practice in a dialectical relationship with theoretical knowledge. Indeed, process oriented consultancies, in which those with particular

knowledge are utilised to promote new forms of understanding of an issue are increasingly common. A more practical point is that, in stratified societies, consultancies can provide access to persons and data which researchers cannot achieve, yet also involve traditional research techniques of interviews, observations, structured workshop discussions, and so on. In any case, confidentiality clauses are often more flexible than they first appear, with commissioning agencies willing to negotiate on specific scientific papers, and interested in the furtherance of scientific knowledge. Issues of disguising sources and of seeking permission are no less important in more traditional ethnographic research, of course.

In the context of contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina, from which the particular material in this text is derived, I would argue that those who study social policy are highly likely to be personally and professionally involved in the processes they study. The role of the freelance academic-researcher-consultant is increasingly important, frequently asked by a range of agencies to offer 'advice' in preparing and developing projects and programmes; evaluating them; and sometimes even implementing and running them. In a post-Fordist academic labour market, many scholars do not have permanent, well-paid, jobs and so are increasingly drawn into consultancies, with inevitable conflicts of interest. This suggests the need for new forms of ethics, accountability and trust. Here, I am not suggesting that consultancies *are* themselves ethnographies, but that an ethnography of consultancy work can be derived from experiences as a consultant and interacting with other consultants. This is no more than another breach of the myth of 'objective', 'impartial' and 'neutral' research, requiring new forms of evidence which steer a path between dry objectivism, on the one hand, and decontextualised anecdotes on the other. The path to scientificity in reflexive ethnography is not, however, equidistant between these two poles, since "(classic) anthropology and (classic) anecdotes from the field" have always been "loving partners" (Schwartz, 1998). In this text, a range of experiences and observations are utilised to develop both a reflexive self criticism and a wider set of theoretical, research and policy issues. The test of the claims made here is, perhaps, less that of scientific validity than of whether the material is interesting and persuasive of the need to generate new ways of thinking about an emerging, increasingly important, and little discussed, field of practice.

### **Welfare paradigms and policy advice in transition in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

In this section, based on the methodological parameters discussed above, I seek to utilise a range of ethnographic material to show how the everyday realities of consultancies in post-Yugoslav countries, and in particular in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the broad field of social welfare, particularly those which focus on 'systemic reform', whilst complex and contradictory, reproduce certain kinds of power relations. My own work in this field, including four different assignments in BiH covering 140 days in total: for CARE to organise a conference on Social Protection in BiH (Stubbs & Gregson, 1998); for the Finnish Government for two social welfare projects in 1998 and 2001; and for DFID planning a major programme on social welfare reform in 1999-2000, has a number of threads to it which I seek to re-assemble here in a coherent narrative.

Even in this form, it is clear that the realities of 'user perspectives' have rarely been addressed – discussions are held with Ministers and their officials; with academic experts; with staff of major international agencies; and sometimes, with professionals on the ground. Workshops are held for diverse 'stakeholders', including newer and older non-Governmental organisations. But rarely is there any meaningful interaction with welfare subjects, who are rendered silent by the consultancy mode. There are exceptions, of course, but these are often highly problematic in the context of the highly mediated and controlled environment of

consultancy ‘missions’, a term which seems to force explicit comparison with colonial ‘missionary’ activities.

Certainly, an early experience, as part of a UN Mission on Developmental Social Issues in Macedonia, of being driven in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ black BMW, through a Roma settlement on the outskirts of Skopje, before holding discussions with two families, unstructured, and unprepared, in which only our embarrassment was obvious, whilst not typical, is an illustration of the problems. It could be argued, in fact, that the rise of ‘consultancies’ alongside what Mark Duffield (2001) has termed the ‘new wars’, in which the need to protect the developed world from creeping ‘dangerousness’, is played out at the micro-level in terms of the protection afforded consultants by the white Jeep which meets them at the airport. Indeed, it may not be insignificant that Malinowski’s white suit is now worn by EU monitors, UN officials, and the like, symbolising both ‘purity’ and ‘otherness’. It is useful to conceive of international consultancy, transnational policy advice, and project and programme documents as a specific ‘genre’ (Apthorpe, 1997: 43), with its own language and power, including the power of silence. The anecdote from Macedonia, for example, cannot be found in the ‘official report’ (Deacon, Heikkila, Kraan, Stubbs, and Taipale, 1996).

The author’s work on programme development in BiH, reconstituted as a coherent narrative, contains at least four areas of, hopefully defensible, connections with academic and political commitments. Firstly, over a long period of time, the author was involved in a series of actions designed to have social policy and social welfare taken seriously within an international aid agenda. The critique was that, by systematically ignoring this issue in the context of wider reconstruction agendas, international assistance efforts had, in fact, supported an implicit, residual, privatised social policy which, essentially, reduced social policy to the level of ‘humanitarian assistance’, and in which International NGOs, in a very *ad hoc* and incoherent way, played the major role. As the author became involved in a number of programme development activities in BiH, this tension continued to re-assert itself, with considerable pressure to focus not on structures of welfare governance, but on aid to specific vulnerable groups. In a sense, this juxtaposition itself reinforced the tendency to marginalise the voice of welfare subjects, because to focus on this at all appeared to give space to promote residual humanitarianism again.

Secondly, and crucially, in terms of the theme of this text, the programmes which the author was involved in planning sought to take seriously the pre-war welfare regime in BiH. Usually, international agencies paid little attention to the historical context, or misread it as ‘state socialist’ or ‘just like the rest of Eastern Europe’, the latter also being a misreading of ‘Eastern Europe’, of course. It was clear that external reform efforts were in danger of minimising the importance of deep seated memories of welfare inscribed within the cultural practices of long-standing institutions such as Centres for Social Work, the pillar of statutory social work in former Yugoslavia, existing for more than forty years, of which some 98 still existed in BiH in 1998, employing almost 400 qualified social workers (IBHI 1998a and b). A telling quote from the then Deputy Director of the World Bank Resident Mission in BiH Saumya Mitra that “the fact that in some senses we are beginning from the beginning here in a post-war period allows us to think radically and make radical proposals” (in Stubbs & Gregson, 1998: 290), shows the depth of this thinking in which war is itself an ‘opportunity’ for radical reform in which what went before is rendered, explicitly, useless. Hence there was a clear need for an approach which suggested that whilst certain institutional structures could be dismantled in this way, the memories, and cultural values placed upon those structures, felt not as separable (and therefore reformable) forms, but usually experienced as a whole, are

much more resistant to change. The author's work on systematising welfare memories, which addressed the wider 'patchwork' of care provision, the importance of personal 'connections' (*veze*), and stressed the importance of professional autonomy post-1974 which had developed at the expense of community-based approaches, still paid much less attention to the memory of welfare by users, however.

Thirdly, there was a clear attempt to promote an explicit value commitment in BiH and in other post-Yugoslav countries to a 'welfare mix' or partnership approach, which sought to link Centres for Social Work with emerging forms of local non-governmental organisations and, indeed, to promote a new relationship between public, private and non-profit activities in social welfare, beginning at the local level, but with lessons learnt permeating through the whole system. In many ways, this was explicitly presented as an emerging European model of welfare, in opposition to, both, the residual, privatised, neo-liberal approach and also a traditional social democratic statist approach. Again, in retrospect, this was a somewhat technicist solution which downplayed the whole issue of the social relations of welfare and the lived experiences of welfare subjects. Indeed, in the process of programme development, even when encounters with 'beneficiaries' were requested, these tended to be highly contrived occasions, no more than snapshots and used, if at all, to make judgements about the particular organisation concerned.

Fourthly, the author was involved in an explicit move from 'projects', short-term and trend-based, to 'programmes', longer term and more holistic. Much of the underpinnings of this came from a critique of the over-emphasis on professionalised psycho-social approaches to 'war trauma' which medicalised suffering and led to a strengthening of the psy-complex (Ingleby, 1985) over social and community approaches. BiH and Croatia were sites of all manner of professional-led, Western-based trauma interventions, many of which formed alliances with local psychologists and other professions. Again, however, this shift tended to evacuate the terrain of the lived experience of welfare recipients, and failed, just as the dominant approaches did, to excavate the lived realities and the multiple coping strategies developed by people in their everyday lives.

Even as stated in this coherent fashion, the problems with systems-based thinking as an external reform lever, should be clear. Indeed, the denial of memories and the misunderstanding of place are all too common in short-term consultancies which need to 'show results' – this was clearest when, over dinner, two World Bank consultants, on the first day of their 'mission', redesigned Bosnia's higher education system or when a Finnish consultant, confused by the charm of Sarajevo and Travnik, appeared more confident in Prijedor ('at last, now I know where I am, it could be the former Soviet Union'). Indeed, the importance of interpersonal relationships is crucial to the success of consultancy work, even more so in a society such as BiH where 'trust' is built up over time and where loyalty to friends outweighs loyalty to ideas. Consultants are remembered less for their ideas than for their jokes, their idiosyncracies, their manners, and so on. At a more structural level, there is a danger of misrepresenting reality, in terms of a denial of the levels of corruption, the absence of a state (or the development of virtual or 'neo-feudal' state structures), and the deep significance of systematic oppression and power relations. Making sense of all of this, theoretically, is even more complex.

### **Globalisation, welfare regimes and discourses of power**

It is certainly the case that a literature on globalisation and social policy (cf. Deacon, Hulse & Stubbs, 1997) has focused little on the interconnections between the different levels at which



policy is made; much less the impacts on, and interactions with, welfare subjects. In retrospect, the work fails to address fundamental debates about how global social policy analysis should be conducted which remained unresolved at national and comparative levels. The book, and much of the work of the Globalism and Social Policy Programme (<http://www.stakes.fi/gaspp>) which followed it, is in danger of an uncritical ‘scaling up’ of some of the narrower foci of mainstream British social policy analysis, obsessed with administrative details; constructing typologies of welfare regimes; and underpinned by a fundamental belief that such analysis, particularly when supported by ‘hard facts’, can and will make things better. Within this positivistic approach, there is little room for an emerging ‘cultural’ perspective on welfare which focuses much more on the social relations of welfare; the role of biographies, subjectivities, and memories; and the need for forms of reflexivity and attention to the minutiae of everyday life constructed within, and itself constructive of, ‘welfare’ as a lived experience (Freeman, Chamberlayne, Cooper, and Rustin, 1999). Indeed, it is, more often, International NGOs who raise these issues, albeit in ways which do not connect with local meanings.

There is clearly a need, therefore, for consultancy models to be based on a study of social welfare in which any *prescriptions* are based on rigorous, thick, ethnographic *description*; favouring policies where *universal* entitlements co-exist with a recognition of *diversity* and a commitment to a *plurality* of provision; in which *material* needs and the non-material need for *voice* – ‘enabling ... people to develop their own ... social scripts’ (ibid: 279) – are both treated as important; and in which due weight is placed on both the *content* and the *process* of reform measures and policy advice. This suggests a revised ‘Third Way’, not between capitalism and socialism, but between *absolutist* and *relativist* approaches to human needs in which outcomes matter – ‘poverty’ may well be a ‘discourse’, but people still die from it (Clarke, 1998: 183) – but in which these outcomes are seen as always more complex, contradictory, and contested than the mere imposition, in local fields, of ‘global scripts’. Whilst it is certainly true that one particular historical and spatial form - ‘the welfare state’ - has been attacked ‘from above’ (through neo-liberalism) and ‘from below’ (as ‘statist’; as failing to address ethnicised and gender-based inequalities; insufficiently responsive to users’ demands; and so on), the lesson from this cannot be a return to old certainties or, indeed, a naïve, decontextualised and ahistorical view of the possibility of an ‘international welfare state’ (Townsend, quoted in Deacon, Hulse and Stubbs, op. cit., 1997: 9). In other words, a ‘global social reformist project’ (Deacon, Hulse and Stubbs, op. cit., 1997: 25-27) is in danger of a peculiar silence about the social relations of welfare, and the implications of a global expert-led social reformist project for welfare subjects, no less silenced by it than by other powerful gazes.

There is a need to interrogate recent work on ‘welfare regimes’ as the basis for an attempt to outline a new theoretical paradigm for the study of social welfare and social policy of more value in understanding the process of welfare reform and transnational policy transfers. The concept of ‘welfare regimes’, at first glance, does not look to be particularly appropriate for the task in hand, with its origins in mainstream Anglo-Saxon social administration, albeit as refined by Esping-Anderson’s classic analysis of the clustering of welfare states into three regime types (Esping-Anderson, 1990). Subsequently, the approach has been adapted to embrace societies in transition and developing countries, with a fundamental break from the study only of “the mix of social policy measures carried out by the state” (Davis, 2001: 80) to focus on “the interdependent way in which welfare is produced and allocated between the state, market, civil society and the family” (DFID, 2000). This notion of the ‘welfare mix’ has become the dominant way of conceptualising global welfare, underpinned by a recognition of

the importance of a wider range of actors and organisations, and more attention to informal strategies, as key determinants of livelihoods. This prefigures a ‘political economy approach’ which “embeds welfare institutions in the ‘deep structures’ of social reproduction”, forcing researchers “to analyse social policy not merely in technical but in power terms” (Gough, 2001: 169), and outlining essential components of an ‘extended welfare mix’, thus:

Table 1. Components of the extended welfare mix (Gough, 2001: 169)

	<i>Domestic</i>	<i>Supra-national</i>
State	Domestic governance	International organisations, national donors
Market	Domestic markets	Global Markets, MNCs (multi-national corporations)
Community	Civil Society, NGOs	International NGOs
Household	Households	International household strategies

Even expressed in this form, a number of serious problems remain unresolved. Of the four spheres and eight components, that of ‘community’ seems insufficiently theoretically rigorous – a case could be made for placing ‘civil society’ as a core concept, even though there are as many conceptual difficulties here as with ‘community’. In this case, a wider range of non-state domestic and supra-national actors would need to be included, as the conflation of ‘civil society’ with ‘NGOs’ is a product of a very narrow understanding of this sphere (cf. Stubbs, 1999), neglecting Community-based Organisations (CBOs), social movements, and other local initiatives. In addition, some of the components are ‘structures’ (global markets), some are ‘strategies’ (international household strategies), and most others are ‘agents’ (MNCs, for example). Even here, many agents are left out, notably international consultancy companies.

Crucially, the approach needs to be adapted further to see welfare regimes as ‘generative cultures’, crucial for understanding “the generation and operation of professional/power regimes” (Knowles, 1999: 240). Seeing welfare regimes and their target populations as “composed through the various discourses which converge around them” (ibid: 245) which are “the product of shifting meanings, priorities and professional responsibilities” (ibid: 246), shifts the focus onto ‘disciplinarity’ in all its dimensions, so that “the local micro-operations of welfare” (ibid: 249) are as important, and constantly cut across, macro-reform projects and programmes, often in unexpected ways. Seeing the complex interactions between three broad groups of agents: ‘policy makers’, ‘professionals’ and ‘welfare subjects’, framed within particular discourses and practices (cf. Hansen, 1997), adds another dimension to an ‘extended welfare regime approach’, thus:

Table 2. Discourses and practices in the extended welfare regime.

	<i>Discourse</i>	<i>Domestic</i>	<i>Supra-national</i>
Policy makers	Admin. Efficiency/ System Effectiveness	State/ Civil Society/ Private Sector	Global Governance Institutions./ INGOs/ Donors/Consultancy Companies
Professionals	Care/Control	Professional Associations	International Associations
Welfare Subjects	Need/Rights	User Groups	Transnational User Groups

Notwithstanding similar conceptual problems to those in Table 1, this addition serves to focus attention on the ‘comparative advantage’ of globalised policy-making over international professional associations and transnational solidarities amongst welfare subjects. Both of these exist, of course, but tend to be subordinated in global arenas in which policy actors claim discourses of both Care and Control and of Needs and Rights, speaking for

professionals and even more so, for welfare subjects, rather than dialoguing with and listening to them. If policy-making agents dominate, then professionals are often co-opted, with social workers, doctors, and so on, often incorporated in multi-disciplinary policy reform teams, which rarely, if ever, include any representation of users of services. Again, the precise contours of these configurations will vary considerably – it is not unusual, for example, to find alliances between local and international professionals and international policy makers to force system change on local policy actors. The table shows the need to address agents, discourses and practices in more sophisticated ways.

### **New directions: a political economy of memory and welfare regimes**

Most importantly, this extended notion of welfare regimes and discourses of power introduces a level of indeterminacy to welfare systems, by which is meant that it is becoming increasingly difficult to predict the real meanings of welfare systems from a modelling of their components, however sophisticated this becomes. This calls into question two dominant strands within the political-theoretical literature, one of which introduces a ‘magical’ notion of ‘civil society’ provision as preferable to state-based approaches and the other, inverting this, reproduces an uncritical support for public provision regardless of the lived experience of welfare subjects. In fact, a much more fundamental distinction can and should be drawn between professionally-based state and civil society approaches, and approaches which are primarily user-led and driven by the demands of oppressed groups. The social relations of what might best be described as ‘welfare paradigms’ turn out to be much looser and incomplete than even the most nuanced ‘welfare regime’ approach can describe. One searches, in vain, in some of the most recent work on ‘welfare regimes’ in development contexts to hear the voice of service users and the everyday lives of the poorest groups in particular societies. In addition, there is a need to restore notions of historical and spatial specificity, so that these concepts never mean the same thing in different places at different times, even though a global policy discourse pretends exactly this. Reformist programmes tend to miss the need to focus on the study of welfare paradigms ‘from the bottom up’ (Freeman et al., 1999: 276), and there is little reflexive examination of how policy makers and advisors, professionals and service users meet, or more often miss each other, discursively and in practice, in local settings framed within global meanings.

Within this, recent work on the politics of memory is of major importance in restoring notions of temporal and spatial specificity, and of bringing user perspectives in social welfare from margin to centre. Seeing memory as socially-constructed suggests that different collective memories, in the sense of ‘versions of the past’ (Zaviršek, 1999: 71), are always struggling for dominance within welfare paradigms, and that recovering (literally re-membering), and giving space to, the memories of devalued social groups, or even recognising the importance of these groups’ self-imposed silences, are crucial to any progressive project (cf. hooks, 1989). In a sense, this introduces a more profound set of questions of “how the past is dealt with in transitional moments” (Barahona de Brito, Gonzalez-Enriquez & Aguilar, 2001: 19). Conceiving of ‘transition’ as involving both ‘enormous changes’ and ‘significant continuities’ (Lampland, 2000: 209), shows how important collective memories are in societies undergoing rapid social change and suggests the need for ethnographic work to counter a ‘transitology’ literature which “explains little about how people have actually experienced ... dramatic political, economic and sociocultural changes” (Berdahl, 2000: 3).

In the sphere of social welfare, there is a dearth of ethnographic accounts of the reform process. Deacon et al.’s study of the role of global agencies and their personnel is sensitive to debates and disagreements within and between supra-national actors, but is focused on the

content of reform at the expense of process (especially Deacon, Hulse and Stubbs, 1997: Chap. 4), and so preoccupied with systems studies of social policy and social protection that the impact of social service reforms on welfare users is neglected completely. Conversely, Haney's important study of welfare reform in Hungary combines a nuanced account of the impact of reforms on professionals and their clients, and a plea for 'ethnohistories' to support contemporary ethnographies, with a crude suggestion that "in the newly 'democratized' state sphere, global experts met up with 'needy' local experts – with the former using the latter to ground their poverty discourse, and the latter using the former to secure and promote their own professional ascendancy" (Haney, 2000: 57). The absence of any ethnographic detailing of the 'men in expensive suits' from the IMF and the World Bank, supposedly 'armed with neoliberal economic theory' (ibid: 50), meeting local experts, diminishes this account in terms of its stated intention to explore how "discursive exchanges translated into institutional changes that altered the terms, the organization, and the connotations of welfare" (ibid: 50).

Janine Wedel's pioneering study of US aid to Russia, in which a group of consultants best defined as 'transactors' with an illusive status, working in 'flexi organisations' able to switch identity situationally (Wedel, 1999), is important, providing it is not at the expense of an understanding that there is, still, institutional memory and relatively stable organisational culture in some supranational agencies such as the World Bank and that, in many cases, the advice of consultants can be predicted as a result of their country of origin and/or donor agency for whom they work. Hence, global welfare can be seen as much more a question of trans-national than post-national meanings. The need to address global welfare reform as complex and contradictory is outlined further in call for an ethnography of welfare reform underpinned by an anthropology of policy.

### **Conclusions: new anthropology/new welfare?**

Recent work on new anthropology and global ethnography may be crucial in a number of respects. An emerging anthropological approach to policy "treats the models and language of decision-makers as ethnographic data to be analysed" (Shore & Wright, 1997: xiii). This is part of an increasingly important attempt by ethnographers to 'study up' (Clifford, 1997: 29), by focusing on elite institutions in the same, or similar, way, as subordinate groups were studied. Of course, just as the older connections between anthropologists and missionaries forced a need for the former to make clear that they seek 'to understand and not to govern, to collaborate and not to exploit' (Clifford, 1997: 65), newer links between ethnographers and consultants, particularly as 'fieldwork' becomes 'travel', and "vignettes replace theory" (Burawoy, 2000: 341), are also problematic.

The possibilities of a theoretically-routed ethnography and ethnohistory of welfare, focusing on the interface between regimes and subjects, is both necessary and complex. It requires a 'multi-voiced' account of diverse practices and discourses, through a multiplication of research sites. Above all, these ethnographic accounts, whilst seeking to reveal the micro-dimensions of power relationships, would need to adopt classical ethnography's concern to 'appreciate' the life-worlds of all of the different groups studied – the World Bank 'men in suits' as much as the drug user client of a welfare agency. Perhaps even more importantly, the linkages between diverse welfare worlds would need to be traced, analysed, and rendered problematic, rather than asserted as inevitable. The lengthening chains of interactions within welfare reform, so that it is never clear, exactly how and where policy is made, renders this even more difficult. In addition, the need to be 'surprised' by what ethnography reveals, must remain a central feature of the approach adopted.

In and of itself, rendering the practice of policy-making as a subject for ethnographic or anthropological research only goes part way towards a new action research agenda for a democratic welfare. Without accounts of the biographies and subjective experiences of welfare subjects, particularly those most stigmatised, labeled, and alienated by the processes of welfare regimes, then there remains a continued democratic deficit in much of the extant research. Ultimately, bridging gaps between these worlds, allows for envisaging forms of access, voice, and empowerment, which much current transnational policy advice militates against.

If we were to apply these frameworks to the specifics of social policy reform, a number of issues and themes present themselves relating to a different set of processes, outcomes and, perhaps, most significantly, of understandings of 'reform' itself. Firstly, there is a need to advocate for a radical transformation of local-international relationships in all forms of advice and assistance programmes. Currently, transnational advice regimes pay insufficient attention to locally-derived knowledge and expertise. In any case the 'traffic' of expertise is one way – rarely are Bosnian consultants asked to advise on key policy questions in the United States for example. The assumption that 'locals' know only about 'the local', itself devalued, and that 'internationals' know about the 'global', of greater importance, needs to be questioned and structures and processes created in which occasional inputs from external actors are more appropriately utilised because they are respectful of, and increasingly attempt to understand, the internal dynamics of existing systems.

Secondly, the value base of 'reform' needs to be addressed explicitly, with a model of reform as involving political choices and conflicts replacing a model of reform as a technocratic imperative. Thirdly, reform must be understood as a very long term process, in which agreed goals may not be met, have unintended consequences, or be subverted, so that international agencies 'in a hurry' are replaced by more dynamic links between action research and policy development, based on an explicit awareness of the role of different elites in the policy reform process, and the need to explicitly confront power relations. Within all of this, basing reform on the voice of welfare subjects would seem to be a much more democratic, socially just and inclusive approach than that which dominates currently.

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