

## Stream #22

# The Political Economy of the Welfare State across Time and Space

### Conveners:

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Welfare institutions are cumulative: early policy choices, institutional complementarities, administrative capacities, and distributional coalitions shape what later becomes politically feasible and socially legitimate, while policy feedback reconfigure interests, identities, and political demands. At the same time, welfare trajectories are spatially embedded. They are conditioned by territorial politics, state structures and multilevel governance, regional inequalities, and cross-border interdependence, including diffusion, policy learning, and constraint through markets and supranational rules. In this regard, welfare state formation, recalibration and retrenchment are temporal and spatial processes, that path dependence and critical junctures help shaping.

Welfare state research has a long tradition of examining welfare state systems and institutional complementarities employing cross-national comparative perspectives. The core theoretical explanations of welfare state developments—modernization (Wilensky 1975; Flora and Heidenheimer 1981), class politics (Baldwin 1990; Esping-Andersen 1985; Kuhnle and Sander 2010), religion (Morgan 2003; Kersbergen 1995), and war (Obinger and Schmitt 2020)—gained salience when applied across time and space. Moreover, institutional complementarities gained prominence through their application in the Varieties of Capitalism (Hall and Soskice 2001) and French *École de la Régulation* frameworks (Aglietta 1976; Amable 2003; Boyer 2004). Complementarities refer to the idea that welfare states institutions shape economic and social outcomes through their interaction and co-evolution. A wide array of approaches and methods have been used to explore these issues, such as comparative historical analysis, process tracing, QCA/Fuzzy-set and various types of quantitative and qualitative analyses. Recently,

advancements in digitization and online access to archival materials, have established new opportunities for advanced and innovative historical analysis for comparative welfare scholars.

We invite papers that examine how welfare state institutions and policies emerged, have restructured and recalibrated in response to shocks in international political economy, war and demographic change across the 20th and 21st century in the Global South and North. We are interested in accounts of temporal and cross-national variation that foreground partisan politics, institutional complementarities, organised interests, institutional legacies, and the timing and intensity of crises. Contributions are welcome across all domains of social policy, using interdisciplinary approaches—e.g. comparative historical sociology, historical political economy and international political economy—and fostering dialogue among history, economics, political science, sociology, demography and comparative welfare research.

We welcome a wide range of methodological approaches, including comparative studies (large-N and small-N), case studies, process tracing, text analysis, quantitative and mixed-methods research. Our aim is to deepen our understanding of welfare systems across time and space, examining their path dependencies and comparing historical and contemporary strategies for addressing welfare challenges. Through a long-term lens and/or spatially broad lens, we want to analyse the conditions under which welfare state change occurs.