THE WORLD POLITICS OF SOCIAL INVESTMENT

Recent research on the development and implementation of social investment (i.e., policies that aim at creating, preserving, and mobilizing human skills and capabilities) has shown that there is some level of implementation of social investment policies not only in different regions of Europe, but also in North America, Latin America, and East Asia. However, one cannot speak of a general development of a social investment welfare state, as the phase but also-and especially-the specific substance of the social investment policies varies strongly between these regions. Why have social investment ideas and policies been more developed in some regions and countries than in others? Why do they differ in their forms, being inclusive in some regions, but stratified or targeted in others? Going beyond different structural pressure, the project aims at theorizing the politics of social investment and testing different explanations empirically. The aim is to assess what the political conditions for the development of social investment policies are. Given that similar governments in different contexts have adopted different strategies with regard to social investment, the project investigates the institutional and socio-structural factors that enable or prevent political support coalitions for (different kinds of) social investment.

Research Problem

This project assesses the political conditions for the development of social investment policies, investigates the politics of Social Investment in Europe, North and Latin America, and Asia along the following three questions:

1) What explains the content of the social investment agenda? To what degree and in what form is social investment politicized? (empirically: identify framing and the effect of institutional legacies – constraints, economic conditions – on the social investment agenda in different regions of the world)?

2) How does political conflict over social investment map onto other conflict lines and cleavages? (empirically: identify actor positions, dimensionality, links between actor positions on different issues).

3) What political coalitions support or prevent a social investment turn? Why do policies in some areas taken an inclusive form, while they are stratified or targeted elsewhere? (empirically: identify reform coalitions and the institutional and structural conditions that produce them).

Program of the WOPSI Conference

The first WOPSI Conference was held from March 9th to March 11th, 2017, in Sciences Po, gathering 48 participants and where 28 papers were presented, organized in different sessions. In Spring 2018, three more conference have been organized, in order to discuss further the draft chapters that will be gathered into two books. Since then, the editors and authors have continued to work on the chapters and the coherence of the volumes, which are forthcoming with Oxford University Press in 2021. Here are the table of content of these two books:

To learn more about the project


Partnerships :

University of Zurich

Socio-fiscal Policies Research Group