Call for multi-disciplinary submissions on “Social protection and emerging countries” for issue no. 2-2014

This call for submissions is of interest to researchers in the fields of law, economy, history, geography, sociology and political science.

Papers must be submitted before 28th March 2014.

Emerging countries now play an increasingly greater role in the world economy: in addition to the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), which today account for 27% of the world's gross domestic product (GDP), other smaller countries have been taking a similar route over the last 20 years. These can also be considered to be “emerging countries” as they have the following points in common:

- a high GDP and investment growth rate
- full commitment to free trade
- foreign capital investment, particularly in agricultural and energy resources
- an emerging middle class enjoying a standard of living similar to that of developed countries
- a move – albeit at varying rates – towards democracy
- highly active in fostering strategic relations at international level and within international organisations.

In summary, emerging countries' roles in the international economy and, more generally, on the international scene has become essential.

Social protection in these countries has become a key issue due to the numerous consequences of globalization. These specifically include:

- the acceleration of the industrialisation process and subsequent urbanisation
- the emergence of new living conditions and family structures
- the creation of new social groups – sometimes claiming social positions, rights or benefits
- the development of “international social benchmarking”
- the increased level of involvement of international organisations and the steady development of their role in this area over the past 20 years.

The societies and economies of these countries are now faced with a new challenge, namely providing social welfare for their inhabitants. Furthermore, it is a recognized fact that in the highly competitive economic environment currently prevailing, industrialised countries are directly concerned by the movements affecting social protection of their challengers. Labour cost is one of
the major competitive factors for the different players on different markets, thereby raising the question of potential “social dumping”. On the other hand, industrial countries may also benefit from the improved social coverage provided by their emerging partner countries (in terms of the quality and productivity of the labour force).

All emerging countries have been obliged to implement large-scale reforms, as a response to problems generated by social and economic change. However, each of these emerging countries also has its own set of challenges: ageing of the population, percentage of the population living off an undeclared or “informal economy”, persistent unemployment, varying income inequalities between groups of population. These countries also have a legacy of social welfare systems that can vary widely depending on the country concerned: China and Russia had a Communist welfare system in which companies played a key role; others countries adopted Bismarckian welfare systems (Brazil, Chile and Mexico - until the reforms in the 1980s); other countries such as South Africa were influenced by the Anglo-Saxon model ...

This brings up the question: can we find an equivalent to this economic, financial and international “emergence” in the field of social protection? We can indeed conclude at least that a significant number of creative solutions have been developed in this respect. Let us look at some of the “innovative” programme models introduced in many countries: different forms of monetary transfer schemes “with conditions” (Conditional Cash Transfer Programmes), privatisation of public systems or conversely, the creation of new social regimes... Certain countries created or adapted such models while at the same time reforming their “legacy” social welfare systems. Others started by dismantling their welfare systems when liberalisation rocketed in the 1990s only to build them up again from scratch afterwards. Other countries tried to finalise the implementation of measures that were just taking shape at the time their economies took off.

The objective of this issue of the RFAS is to assess existing data on the subject. Priority will be given to articles providing in-depth analysis of reforms implemented in a single country as well to articles approaching this issue from a comparative or transversal standpoint.

As can be seen in the above description, the term “emerging country” is not overly restrictive. By definition, so-called “developed” countries and the less developed countries (LDC) are excluded. Furthermore, to focus on the question as closely as possible, we have also decided to exclude “Eastern European countries in transition”, which are new EU members countries (the development of these countries might be covered in a call for contributions at a later date). Please note that the present call for contributions intends to focus on recent development (over the last fifteen years). Of course, this does not mean that the root causes and origins of current movements and situations should not be taken into account

The RFAS is calling for original contributions on a variety of topics spanning disciplines such as economy, sociology, political science, law and contemporary history.

**Topic 1: the move towards new social welfare regimes.**

How did emerging countries manage to adapt to the new world economy? The following points can be explored:
- how do they manage their social welfare legacy? What changes were made? What type of situation are they moving towards? How have they redistributed roles and collaboration between the family (restrictions or lineage), communities, the corporate world or the State? To what extent do the new directions chosen represent a move towards or a breakaway from old or so-called traditional “models” used in the developed world?

- what role did the different categories of social groups, unions and employers, local and national authorities, churches and other influential bodies, play in this process? What position did they take?

- with particular regard to the acceleration or the slowing down of the pace of reforms, what were the respective effects of the following: different short and long-term economic arguments (competitiveness, meeting demand, balancing public finances, social investment …) on one hand, and certain recent changes to contemporary society: demographic changes, for example (ageing) or territorial changes (urbanisation), on the other?

- what is the situation today as regards the development of movements predominant in many countries – privatisation of pension systems for example: how did pension funds weather the crisis in 2008 and the following years (considerable work was done on this subject from 1990 to the beginning of 2000 but does not appear to have been followed up).

**Topic 2: impact and effectiveness of the new social welfare schemes**

The social and economic impact of the development of social welfare and protection may be analysed in the light of several factors. They are as follows:

- competitiveness of companies and the national economy – either from a global point of view or in some sectors where there is some degree of competition. For example, have there been differences between sectors depending on whether they have entered into the cycle of new reforms? Can we identify a phenomenon of social dumping vis-à-vis the OECD countries?

- social inequality (including castes, etc.)

- the position of women in society and their living conditions

- how social and solidarity networks operate (family, inter-generational relations and relations within the territory …)

- the fight against extreme poverty.

Even if all the data is not available to assess the effectiveness of certain reforms, we now have the benefit of hindsight. For assessing the efficiency of these reforms, the most “rustic” criteria should not be omitted: what do we know of the number of people benefiting from coverage for different social risks today? Which categories are “winners” in the end? Are categories defined by professional or statutory situations (here the Mingong and Hukou in China come to mind)? Or does this depend on the amount of resources (since poorer categories of the population receive benefits from government schemes, the real “winning” categories might be part of the “middle class”, for instance)?

All in all, we wish to enhance existing knowledge on:

- firstly, what is covered and what is not. Who is covered by what and how? Which social groups are covered by which institutional structures? Is it always possible to compare and contrast “a formal economy” (which offers good coverage) and “an informal economy” (with no or poor coverage of social risks)?
- secondly, how do social welfare systems operate? What can be said about the governance of such systems in these countries? What happens when the funding bodies that helped set up such systems pull out?

**Topic 3: Importance, scope and limits of social investment policies**

Since the end of the 90’s, the view of social welfare as a form of “social investment” started to gain momentum at international level. The most emblematic programs are Opportunidades/Progresá (since 1996) and the Bolsa Familia (2003) and today these are widespread in Latin America and Asia. This approach, originating at a time when deregulation of economies was legion, grants supplementary income to households living below the breadline, provided that their children attend school and that basic preventive health care requirements for mothers and children are met. This approach encourages reduction of inter-generational poverty whereas so-called “regular” programs have been criticised for acting ex-post (a.i. after social issues have been settled). Much has been written about the emergence of this specific approach to social welfare.

For the theoretical and practical purposes, it would be useful to review the contributions of these programs in practical terms, their results and any difficulties or questions arising during their implementation.

Further information on the contents of this call for submissions may be obtained by contacting Marianne Berthod-Wurmser (marianne.berthod@wanadoo.fr) or François-Xavier Merrien (Francoisxavier.Merrien@unil.ch) who are responsible for coordinating this issue.

Articles may be written in either French or English.

If you wish to submit a paper on this question you are requested to send it, together with a résumé and presentation of the author c.f. “instructions for authors”) to the following address: rfas-drees@sante.gouv.fr

**Before 28th March 2014.**

Instructions for authors (including editorial standards) are available at: http://www.drees.sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/recommand_articles_uk.pdf