

Project 3

Institution Building in East Asia – Towards a South Korean Welfare State? (2001-2007)

The project inquires whether a 'welfare state' is developing in South Korea, that is, a type of state hitherto only known in Western countries. The project aims to contribute to the debate on 'new welfare states' and 'global social policy' which has been emerging in the social sciences since the 1990s. For a long time East Asian countries have mainly been seen as 'emerging markets'. Since the 1990s, however, it has become apparent that East Asian and other transitional societies – like Western countries in their earlier history – are facing the rise of state social policy along with the expansion of markets.

The project investigates institution building and social ideas in the – as we hypothesize – emerging South Korean welfare state, set against the comparative background of Western welfare states. The focus is on the rise of social rights (T. H. Marshall) in two key policy fields, old-age pensions and social assistance, between 1987 and 2002, based on expert interviews and the analysis of documents. In a comparative perspective the project aims to highlight the socio-cultural singularity of the South Korean welfare state, to be traced to the relationship between 'state' and 'society' and the 'state tradition' (K. Dyson, F.-X. Kaufmann) in South Korea. The project also aims to contribute to the debate on East Asian 'welfare regimes'.

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Publications:

Kim, Won Sub, 2005: Wandel der Sozialpolitik nach der Wirtschaftskrise 1997 in Südkorea, SocialWorld Working Paper 10, Universität Bielefeld

Kim, Won Sub, 2006: Institutionalisierung eines neuen Wohlfahrtsstaates in Ostasien? Eine Fallstudie über Südkorea. Dissertation Bielefeld.

Kim, Won Sub, 2008: Die Entstehung "neuer Wohlfahrtsstaaten" und globale Policy-Diffusion - das Beispiel Südkorea, in: Zeitschrift für Soziologie 37: 186-205.