

Eberhard Raitelhuber, University of Trier

Exploring Social Protection across Borders. A Review of Conceptual Approaches and Empirical Findings

The development of "Western" societies in the last one and a half centuries has been characterized by a gradual upscaling of concerns and policies around social security as well as concomitant aspects of solidarity and collective memberships, e.g. moving towards the level of the nation state with its evolving institutions of welfare. Uni-local communities, associations and other small-scale collectivities/ groups maintain a crucial function for social integration on the level of everyday life, e.g. as mechanisms of social support. Nevertheless, universalizing, systemic integration evolved in the advent of industrialization as a reaction towards the social changes and related disturbances which effected a social detachment or "liberation" of the individual from traditional, local bonds. Historically, social citizenship, in particular, has been conceived as an institutionalization of solidarity within a territorially defined nation state, in which crucial elements of social security and social protection are organized. This institution of national citizenship is grounded on the idea of both a lifelong membership within a national society/ community and an exclusive, stable relationship between a citizen and one state. It is built upon the image of the nation-state as a container space in which solidarity can be organized through membership in general or special-purpose communities, with related commitments of membership, norms, regulations and procedures.

This concept has been criticized by scholars in feminist and migration studies, as well as by related social movements, for its particularistic bias and inbuilt promotion of social inequalities. Nevertheless, it is only recently that research, in particular in transnational studies, has focused on the varied means and forms of social organizing through which highly mobile and trans-located people address their concerns and needs regarding social security or social protection across borders. According to a number of scholars, what is still missing is a profound empirical, actor-oriented investigation into the social security arrangements of individuals who are located in more than one nation-state, as well as into corresponding social protection mechanisms that relate to different localities, span borders (e.g. in the context of ethnic or trans-local communities, religious groups, etc.) and connect various levels of social organization (local, regional, national, transnational etc.). Equally, a theoretical consolidation of these forms of social security or protection is still needed.

The proposed presentation aims at reviewing existing research and concepts in this field, thus providing an overview for the future development of empirical projects on cross-border mobility, solidarity and community. It draws on preliminary theoretical work for an empirical research project on "Social Agency across Borders: A Lifecourse Perspective on Social Protection, Citizenship and Migration", which is under review.

Contact details:

Eberhard Raitelhuber, PhD (Mr)
University of Trier
Pädagogik – Abteilung Sozialpädagogik I
54286 Trier
Germany

Office:
Abteilung Sozialpädagogik I
Universitätsring 15
Building B, Room B 447 (4th floor)
54296 Trier, Germany

Phone: +49 651 201-2372 (E. Raitelhuber)
Phone: +49 651 201-2368 (Secretary Mrs. N. Freyher)
Email: raitelhuber@uni-trier.de
Website: <http://www.uni-trier.de/index.php?id=47846>