

Social Policy and Inequality in the Polycrisis

Developed welfare states are currently affected by multiple crises that are not only related to social inequalities but are also likely to shape the social structure of modern societies in the long run. These include developments such as international conflicts and wars, the climate crisis, pandemics, demographic ageing, the heterogeneous perception of (refugee) migration and how to deal with it, and the increasing popularity of extremist parties. Although modern welfare states have the means to respond to crisis-induced inequalities in the short term and provide to compensatory mechanisms (e.g., short-time work benefits during the Covid-19 pandemic), the current confluence of crises poses greater challenges for social policy and may at the same time call into question the basis of its political legitimacy. While some argue that these challenges can only be met with welfare state compensation that addresses citizens’ urgent problems and reduces inequalities, others claim that overly generous spending and social benefits that seem to be used by only a few pose a threat to the welfare state and its support among citizens. Still others argue that in times of multiple crisis social policy should re-focus on the welfare and living conditions of future generations, investing more in education or measures to mitigate global warming to avoid future increases in social inequality.

At the joint conference we want to reflect these current developments from an inequality and a social policy perspective, asking (1) which consequences current crises as well as their policy responses have for social inequality and individuals’ socio-economic well-being, behaviour, and attitudes, and (2) how today’s social inequalities as well as their individual-level perceptions and consequences are reflected in policy and politics. Do crises and reforms alter citizens’ attitudes towards inequality and related policies, and if yes, why is this so? Are current reforms a consequence of crises, or do these rather serve as rationale for reforms with other purposes?

Submissions may cover a broad scope of topics such as income and wealth, family, housing, attitudes, political discourse, social policy design, and apply both quantitative and qualitative methods. Comparative and theoretical perspectives are welcome as well. **Please submit an abstract in German or English language not longer than 500 words until 1st November 2024** to conference.sfa@uni-bamberg.de. Notification of the selection will be made by 1st December 2024. Presentations may be in English or German. The conference fee is 30 Euro.

Both sections would like to draw attention of young researchers to the possibility to apply for travel allowances for accepted abstracts, should no other funding be possible. The Section “Social Inequality and Social Stratification” awards an allowance of up to 400 euros for travel and accommodation (see [homepage of the Section](#)). The Section “Social Policy” likewise invites PhD researchers who are members of the Section to apply for travel subsidy (contact see [homepage of the Section](#)).

The organisers:

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