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Social Policy and the Global Crisis: Consequences and Responses

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Stream 6.1 The Crisis and Social Citizenship

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Title: Old and new Divisions of Social Rights and Citizenship in Germany

Conservative-corporatist types of welfare states provided individual social rights according to class and labour market status with financial benefits dependent on income-related contributions to the social insurance systems. Non-working family members had derived social rights according to the status of the male breadwinner. Consequently, only those with no connection to the labour market or a male breadwinner were eligible for basic means tested benefits which provided lower levels of support than that enjoyed by those in a standard employment relationship. If we understand social citizenship not only as the provision of social rights to decommodification, but also as the right to commodification, limited access to the labour market for women, respectively mothers, has to be mentioned as well due to ongoing support of the male breadwinner model.

We will discuss how most recent reforms affected the existing divisions of social rights and citizenship in conservative welfare states.

Analysing the development of labour market policies in Germany since 2005, including adaptations due to the financial crisis, we can show that a dualisation of social rights has emerged: For the shrinking segment of the core workforce access to a privileged form of social citizenship within the unemployment insurance system was maintained. The increasing group of those 'dropping out' or 'never getting in' is directed to a single, tax financed, minimum income protection system, called unemployment benefit (UB) II. Here, clients are subject to means testing in order to get flat rate benefits, are directed to 'work for benefit' employment programmes and in precarious labour market segments which are growing due to the promotion of flexible forms of employment.

Hence, the dualisation of social citizenship in Germany is produced by the intertwining effects of the increasing segmentation of labour markets, a two tier income support system and unequal access to employment promotion measures.

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