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Dr. Daniel R. Hammond

Affiliation:

Department of Politics
University of Glasgow

Contact details:

d.hammond79@bluebottle.com

+44 1333 311 93566

31 Viewforth Place,
Pittenweem,
Anstruther,
Fife,
KY10 2PZ
UK

Stream 8.1: Minimum Incomes in the Enlarged Europe

Title of paper:

Limited by design? An early comparison of China and new member's basic income policy response to the economic crisis 2007 - 2010

Abstract:

The economic crisis which initially engulfed the financial sector before bringing recession was global in origin and impact. The impact the current crisis has had on those subsisting on basic income schemes has similarly been global in nature. Whilst the impact on those urban poor in states with developed social assistance schemes has been significant these systems have mechanisms of adjustment and delivery which have been in operation for many years. In developing countries, like the People's Republic of China, and those states with newly developed basic income schemes, such as the new member states which have gone through the post-communist transition, such mechanisms of ensuring subsistence have been put to their first real test by the economic crisis.

This paper will outline and discuss an early comparison of China's basic income scheme for urban residents (the urban resident Minimum Livelihood Guarantee system) with similar policies produced by new members of the EU, focusing initially on Poland and Romania. Having established a comparison of the different systems the response in basic income policy to the economic crisis will be the departure point for discussion. The similarities or differences in response and outcomes will be examined and explained arguing that the design of policy, policy feedback and institutional arrangements, are the determining factor in how basic income policy has reacted to the economic crisis in all three states rather than the crisis itself.