**Some first ideas for the theoretical background**

The aim of this workshop is that each a project is able to statistically analyse the diffusion process in a discrete time event history analysis framework. The diffusion process will depend on relevant control variables, but basically the research question will be whether involvement in ***transnational trade*** ***networks, geographical proximity*** on the one hand or membership in a fuzzy set typology of ***cultural spheres*** – which we derive from two-mode networks – on the other hand drive the process of diffusion of social policy.

*Trade networks* might be important because countries mutually involved in trade often share the same standards of safety at work, labour security, skill requirements and standards of general social policy.

However, we know that there are dense subnetworks of global trade between countries with

considerably *different* regulations in these respects, e.g. between the European Union and China. It is thus an open question whether the network of global trade actually is an underlying structure for the diffusion of social policy.

In contrast, membership in different *‘cultural spheres’* might result in different subnetworks where

particular regulations of social policy internally diffuse at a particular speed. This might be important

not only in the fields of family and education policy, but also on employment regulations, health and

general Social Security.

A focus on ‘cultural spheres’ should take into account two different mechanisms: first, countries that

are linked in a two mode network of cultural characteristics might thereby establish *channels for*

*diffusion* via network ties. Secondly, the *average rate of adoption* might considerably differ between these cultural spheres. As a result, the analysis should also control for in which sphere a country is most likely member when analysing the weighted network of cultural similarity as a pipe structure for diffusion.

Another channel for diffusion, especially before the increase in commercial air travel, might simply be geographical proximity. The assumption here is that geographical proximity might trump the influence of cultural spheres due to collinearity. In addition, trade is much easier done between counties sharing a border.

Similarly, analyses of diffusion via transnational trade networks should also control for a countries GDP to account for differences in levels of economic performance.