

Special Session 3: Circulating Policy in/to/from Latin America: Actors, Practices, Spaces

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During the past three decades, questions about how policy ideas travel (and with what consequences for national, regional and international governing arrangements) have received widespread attention from scholars in Political Science, Geography, International Relations, Public Policy and Administration, and Sociology alike. The literatures on policy diffusion (Shipan and Volden, 2008; Simmons et al., 2008), policy transfer (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000; Stone, 2001), policy learning (Radaelli, 2004; Meseguer, 2005), policy mobilities (Peck & Theodore, 2010; McCann & Ward, 2011) and policy circulation (Baker & Walker, 2019) have all grown significantly in recent years. Indeed, there is now a plethora of analytical frameworks, methodological strategies and case studies. These provide useful insights and rich examples about how policy actors exchange information and knowledge across borders, and thus shape local, regional and national policies and institutions making use of global models and “best practices.”

However, we still know little about how these processes of policy circulation take place in Latin America. In the context of decentralization, democratization and neoliberalization of the state in Latin America, many non-state actors, including global think tanks and NGOs, have become increasingly important actors in the circulation of policy knowledge to effect policy change (Pacheco-Vega, 2015; Sosa-López y Montero, 2018). In recent years, Latin America has also become not only an importer of policies but also an exporter, particularly in the areas of participation, social policy and urban mobility (Porto de Oliveira, 2019). And while the number of contributions to the literature from Latin America has increased in recent years, using diffusion (Osorio, 2015; Porto de Oliveira, 2017), transfer (Dussauge-Laguna, 2012) and mobilities (Jajamovich, 2015; Montero, 2019) approaches, theoretical, methodological and empirical developments remain heavily influenced by scholarship from Anglo-American debates.

This special session seeks to broaden the debate in this area from a Latin American perspective by addressing the following questions: How does the international scholarship on policy diffusion, transfer, mobilities and circulation help us (or not) explain political and administrative developments in Latin America? How does certain Latin American public administration features (e.g. corruption, fragile governance, informality, clientelism, patronage), social concerns (violence, insecurity, drug trafficking) as well as recent political trends (e.g. populism, militarization) influence the circulation and adoption of policy ideas? What are the key actors, practices and spaces that are contributing to the construction and circulation of Latin American policy knowledge in other parts of the world? How is the increasing policy knowledge circulation changing policymaking, policy advocacy and activism in Latin America? Can we find some specific regional policy diffusion or policy mobilities waves, or particular cases of crossnational policy transfer? We welcome papers that address these or related questions from a national, regional, local or comparative perspective. While the session will mainly focus on the Latin American region, papers from other regions will also be considered.

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