Have Regional and Global Institutions Played a Role in Shaping a Renewed Social Agenda for the 21st Century? A Case Study of Latin America’s 'Pink Tide’

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Introduction

This paper aims at delivering empirically grounded analysis on how some of the most important intergovernmental organizations in Latin America have been developing political concepts and tools that helped diffuse policies which led to a renewed social agenda, now (being) implemented all across the region – i.e., the so-called ‘Pink Tide’. This paper places emphasis on the types of social policies each formal organization promotes, assuming as a working hypothesis that, as the Washington Consensus’ pillars have ruined, as they were rejected by millions of citizens through the ballots (that is, in their countries' presidential elections), it becomes trendy to speak of the emergence of ‘post-liberal politics’ in this continent, from the Río Bravo all the way to Patagónia. According to our judgment, a deliberate option for a comparative approach will allow for deepening our understanding of the phenomenon under analysis and coming up with a typology of the social policies intergovernmental organizations are entitled to foster in this early 21st century.

The “Pink Tide” and post-liberal regionalism in Latin America

Latin America’s left turn is now fifteen years old and shows no unquestionable signs of decay, even if some of its most charismatic leaders, such as Lula and Chávez, are nowadays out of business. For some analysts, such a widespread turn to the left was to a large extent unexpected. The rise of the left in the region has been portrayed as a “leftist tsunami” (Flores-Macías, 2010) and as a “pink tide” (marea rosa) (Panizza, 2006). If there is no disagreement that it was launched by the election of Chávez in Venezuela, in 1998, not only its causes and impacts are still under dispute, but even the best form to characterize the phenomenon.

The “two lefts” thesis, first divulged by Petkoff (2005) and Castañeda (2006), met both acid criticism (e.g. Cameron, 2009) and sophisticated supporters (e.g. Weyland, 2009). Quite briefly, the argument, that has been posed in both normative, ideological, descriptive and analytical fashions, goes as follows: the heterogeneity of what some recognize as the “third wave” of left wing governments in the region (Lanzaro, 2007) must be stressed, but despite the inevitable singularities of each national experiences, the different parties, leaders and movements could be seen as
clustering around two basic types, a more radical or populist left and a pragmatic, social democratic or reformist branch. The first type would be best illustrated by the governments of Venezuela, Bolivia and Equator, while the second by Chile (until 2010, when Sebastián Piñera took office) and Brazil. It is probably not surprising that the Manichaean dichotomy established by Castañeda (2006), who distinguishes a “right left” from a “wrong” one, became widely quoted. For him:

“One is modern, open-minded, reformist, and internationalist, and it springs, paradoxically, from the hard-core left of the past. The other, born of the great tradition of Latin American populism, is nationalist, strident, and close-minded. The first is well aware of its past mistakes (as well as those of its erstwhile role models in Cuba and the Soviet Union) and has changed accordingly. The second, unfortunately, has not” (Castañeda, 2006:1-2)

From more analytical and less normative standpoints, other authors stressed, in order to characterize the pink tide, to understand its upsurge, and to point out its diversity, factors such as: the distinct patterns of political competition in the countries involved and the kinds of parties and/or movements in government (Lanzaro, 2007); the peculiarities of Latin American representative democracy, the distinct social impact and scope of the economic reforms of the 1990s in the various countries, and the way the prescriptions of the Washington consensus were adopted, which were factors that gave rise do different opposition forces (Panizza, 2006); the impact of the region´s extremely high income inequality, the waning of United States´ influence in the region, and the fact that the military lost its capacity to exercise a veto power (Cleary, 2006; Cameron, 2009); the way the distinct degrees of party system institutionalization made possible the adoption of strikingly different economic policies (statist vs. pro-market), in spite of a “shared commitment to social justice and wealth distribution” (Flores-Macías, 2010, p.414); stressing that “[n]eoliberalism did not directly prompt leftist radicalism” and that the “institutions highlighted by contemporary political science do not seem to be the decisive independent variables either”, Weyland (2009:146), relying on cognitive psychology, tried to show that the “crucial factor [explaining the existence of two lefts] is the boom and bust cycle of rentier states, especially the natural resource bonanza”.

The emphasis on the phenomenon´s diversity, therefore, should also lead us to question the pertinence of its very denomination as a “pink tide”, since not all the governments under scrutiny are correctly characterized as moderate or “pink”. Left turn,
then, is perhaps the best denomination, one that is necessarily vague. But if one is interested, as we are, in accessing the way such a left turn gave rise to new forms of regionalism in Latin America, diversity is probably less important than homogeneity, since we can initially think of the post-liberal regionalism as a form of convergence in those countries’ foreign policy orientation.

If different taxonomies and explanations abound and if the “leftist” character of some of the policies adopted has been questioned, particularly regarding social and economic policies, implemented by both moderate and radical Latin American governments, there seems to be no controversy when it comes to pointing out what is common ground in the region’s left turn. Stokes (1999), for instance, suggests that a shared characteristic of those governments is the fact that they all try to balance their countries exposition to the global markets with more state activism. From a more general viewpoint, one should also recall, as common characteristics: the acceptance of the democratic “game”; an anti-neoliberal rhetoric (virulent in Venezuela and Bolivia, for example, and rather mild in Chile); a commitment to egalitarianism; a belief in the relevance of popular participation; and a willingness to create a more inclusive political system.

When it comes to foreign policy, there are also commonalities among diversity. Silva (2010) suggested that the left wing Latin American governments have tried to achieve greater autonomy with respect to some of the traditional international organizations, particularly, we could add, the big international financial institutions, such as the IMF. With respect to the biggest economies of the region, their search to shaping global regulations, especially by means of South-South alliances, has been widely recognized and documented. In their international relations, they have tried to balance the traditional US´s influence with new or renewed economic and political linkages, and not only in the global South. In their international relations, however, there has been less convergence than it was initially expected, which becomes evident, for example: in the sometimes harsh intra-regional negotiations carried out in several fora; in the resurgence of left sponsored nationalism (Veiga & Rios, 2007); in the competition between Brazil’s Lula and Venezuela’s Chávez for regional leadership (Burges, 2007); and when the biggest Latin American countries needed regional support in order to advance some or their global ambitions, which did not happen frequently.
Be that as it may, however, and if not all parties fully agreed with the intention to institutionalize a “consensus without Washington”, in the spirited expression used by Ecuador’s president Rafael Correa, the fact is that new regional institutions were created, such as ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas), Unasur (Union of South American Nations), and Celac (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), and old ones were reformed, which is clear in the establishment of Social Mercosur. Before we can, in the next section, analyze the role of international organizations in policy diffusion processes, let us briefly say a few words about the so-called post-liberal regionalism, in order to stress not only the change in such a realm, which certainly happened during the 2000s, but also its rationale.

Letting aside the reasons behind the emergence of what was them perceived as the “new regionalism” of the 1990s, we will first stress its main characteristics. The so-called “open regionalism” of the 1990s, recurrently sponsored by ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), it is worth recalling, had as its main instruments the free trade agreements (FTAs). In a context of triumphant globalization and market reforms, FTAs were meant to promote trade and to lock in the liberalization reforms that were been implemented with particular intensity in Latin America. In the region, open regionalism became a tool in the process of supplanting the previous development model of import substitution. It was also one of the main expressions of the new strategy of competitive insertion in a fast globalizing economy. The region was then thought of as a space of flux (Lima & Coutinho, 2006). The main features of open regionalism were liberalization of trade and investment fluxes and the search for convergence in regulatory patterns, in order to protect these fluxes and to make them predictable (Veiga & Rios, 2007).

In the 2000s, as Lima and Coutinho (2005; 2006) point out, the region resumes its traditional geographic outlines, which was due to its political and physical revalorization, as a result of systemic changes. On the one hand, 9/11 events led to a renewed concern with international security and with the “failed states”, as they could host and promote terrorism. On the other hand, and as a consequence, in order to keep them under control, state capacity started to be fostered in the peripheral regions, which became to be recognized as political actors.
In South America, the necessity to improve the regional integration by means of building infrastructure gained central stage even before 9/11, since IIRSA (South American Regional Infrastructure Integration Initiative) was created following a proposition discussed in the first ever meeting of South American presidents, that happened in Brasilia in August 2000. Such an emerging conception of physical and productive integration, where energy played a fundamental role, was distinct from the previous paradigm of open regionalism as the space of nations and the role of state activism were reinforced. The region started to be seen as a strategic actor.

“The 2000s were characterized by a paradigm change, from open regionalism to physical and productive integration, and from a model type of rule-driven to another that is policy-driven, in which the ideas of territoriality, identity and concrete building of a regional space come to the surface, inclusively with the comeback of the state to the center stage, now operating as an inductor – in greater partnership with private initiative – of a project of permanent integration.” (Lima & Coutinho, 2006:14, our translation)

To make short a long discussion, our characterization of the regionalism of the 2000s will put side by side another sympathetic interpretation of the authors just quoted and an influential liberal perspective:

Another sympathetic viewpoint:

“In the regional level, one of the most relevant effects [of physical integration] is the overcoming of colonial syndrome. One of the most perverse legacies of colonialism is the preponderance, even after formal independence, of the vertical linkages with the former metropolis, in detriment of horizontal ties between the countries of the same region. It is true that open regionalism prompted greater intraregional commercial exchange, but it did not necessarily diminish physical and cultural distance.” (Lima & Coutinho, 2006:5-6, our translation)

A concise liberal criticism:

“The resurgence of economic nationalism as the source of policies and the politicization of the foreign economic agendas of several countries in the region [South America] are direct consequences of that characteristic that makes singular the phenomenon of post liberal regionalism in South America. [This form of regionalism] oscillates between a developmentalist integration agenda – which has difficulties dealing with the trade liberation agenda – and an agenda that is clearly anti-liberal and that stress the formation of coalitions of countries that are ideological peers.” (Veiga & Rios, 2007:5)
It is then clear that the post-liberal regionalism expresses novel priorities and a new agenda that is directly related to the left turn phenomenon. As concisely stated by Veiga & Rios (2007), the basic hypothesis of post-liberal regionalism is that the liberalization of trade and investment fluxes and the signing of FTAs are both incapable of: (a) endogenously generating development; and (b) prone to diminish the space for the implementation of national development policies and policies aimed at reducing inequalities. As a consequence, post-liberal regionalism downplays the commercial dimension of integration and promotes the enlargement of the regional agenda to encompass, *inter alia*, social and cultural issues. The new regional organizations created and the reform of the old ones, as it will be showed, are both cause and consequence of such a paradigm change. Before we can try to access the point empirically, we should first recall, briefly, the role of IOs as agents and structures for policy diffusion.

**International organizations and policy diffusion**

The recognition that national policy choices have become increasingly interdependent is now commonsense. Interdependent in the sense that governments make policy decisions not in an isolated fashion, but through or after interaction not only with their counterparts in other countries, but also with a myriad of other actors, including international organizations (IOs). If this is an old process, which could be traced back, for example, to the Hellenistic period, when policy diffusion was also registered (Dolowitz, 2000), the increasingly voluminous literature on policy diffusion/transfer is unanimous in pointing out that, with the advent of globalization and with the “revolution” in information and communication technologies, policy diffusion processes became nearly omnipresent. Such virtual ubiquity is reflected by the great interest showed in these processes by scholars not only from political science and International Relations. In an interesting bibliometric study, Graham; Shipan & Volden (2008) showed that:

“Over the past half century, political science journals have published nearly 800 articles about the politics of public policies spreading from one government to another, a phenomenon commonly referred to as 'policy diffusion'. More than half of these articles have been published in the past decade, indicating a dramatic surge in interest in diffusion” (p.1).
Nevertheless, the role played by international organizations (IOs) in the processes of policy diffusion/transfer, which has been addressed by several authors, as well as the impact of their diffusion efforts, are still contested. This paper’s section aims at synthesizing such a discussion, in order to point out questions and clues that will help us to question the role played by the Latin American regional organizations, old and new, in shaping a renewed social agenda, one that is supposedly in harmony with the emerging post-liberal paradigm. With such an objective in mind, we may initially recall the four different mechanisms through which interdependent decision making may take place, as discussed by Simmons; Dobbin and Garret (2006): coercion, competition, learning, and emulation. As our interest lays upon the role played by IOs in policy diffusion, and they can, as we will see, promote and utilize all of the four mechanisms just listed, it seems to us important to recall that much of the literature on policy transfer/diffusion focuses on horizontal processes (Dion, 2008). Examples of these horizontal processes are: the diffusion that stems from economic competition, which can lead to functional convergence toward what is seem as the policy that is best suited for a globalized economy; the policy related learning that takes place among domestic policy makers from distinct countries (idem). It is evident that IOs may also play a role in processes that one could think of as essentially horizontal, for example actively promoting policies (“best practices”) they want to stress as the most suited. They can also, as they frequently do, organize seminars and workshops where government officials could meet and learn from each other (and from IOs’ technical staff).

Thinking of policy diffusion processes in which IOs take part as “vertical” is an exercise that has both analytical advantages and drawbacks. It is interesting to stress verticality because the question of asymmetry, in financial, technical and human capacities, is immediately posed. As a disadvantage, we can point out the danger that such an analytical perspective may reinforce certain traditions of regarding IOs’ role as primarily coercive, and that is probably the way a significant portion of traditional Latin American left wing parties may be expected to think, at least when it comes to

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1 One will find in the literature researches that came to the conclusion that in certain policies or in the case of certain countries the impact of IOs diffusion efforts is not significant (e.g. Hunter & Brown, 2000). In the opposite pole, Jakobi (2009), analyzing the global diffusion of lifelong learning, affirmed that "through continuous work on education, the introduction of new governance instruments, innovative policy proposals and important data, international organizations have shifted education policy from the national to the international level of policy making" (Jakobi, 2009, p.3).
international financial institutions (IFIs), particularly the World Bank and the IMF. That is why Lula da Silva’s government (2003-2010), for instance, advertised so emphatically the fact that Brazil managed not only to pay its debt with the IMF (as Argentina also did), but even to become one of the Fund’s creditors. An emphasis on verticality would also be problematic because it could induce a reductionist view that diffusion processes tend to be always intentional or coordinated. Simmons, Dobbin and Garret, for instance, suggest that “diffusion processes are characteristically uncoordinated processes, which cannot easily be subsumed under the umbrella of fully informed, rational decision making” (2006:789)\(^2\).

The most conventional appreciations of IOs’ role in policy diffusion, as it is widely recognized, either stress the use they make of coercion or the attention they give to the establishment of standards that countries could/should emulate\(^3\). Even if it is probably too obvious, we should note that IOs’ capacity to influence domestic policy adoption will vary not only depending on the organization and the country involved, but also on the policy field in question. Such an observation becomes relevant when we notice that, when it comes to social policy, which is a central part of the new political agenda of Latin American left, at least of its domestic agenda, some studies have stressed that IOs did not have a significant impact on the field since the 1980s (e.g. Hunter & Brown, 2000; and Brooks, 2005)\(^4\). Furthermore, the well known loan conditionality, a typical coercive instrument largely adopted by IFIs to impose the national adoption of certain policies, is not frequently used with regard to social policy (Dion, 2008; Brooks, 2004). One should also notice that IOs’ preferences, priorities and methods do vary in time. Queisser (2000), for instance, showed how IOs dealing with pension reform in the 1990s changed their approach to that reform from a previously dogmatic position to a predominantly pragmatic approach.

In this paper we are mainly interested in international diffusion, and only secondarily in policy convergence. As it is correctly noted by Fink (2012:1),

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\(^2\) Regarding the role of bounded rationality in the diffusion of social policy reforms (pension systems and health care) in Latin America, see Weyland, 2004 e 2006.

\(^3\) O’Brien (2002) comes to the point of suggesting the distinction between coercive and advisory international organizations, which is overly simplistic and problematic, as IOs usually play several distinct functions simultaneously and employ a wide range of instruments to advance their objectives. World Bank’s efforts to become a “knowledge bank”, for instance, are well known (Nelson, 2004).

\(^4\) For a discussion regarding the difficulties to see IOs’ influence on domestic social policy by means of cross-national comparisons of program lending and policy outcomes, see Dion (2008).
convergence “is an outcome, the increasing similarity of policies. Diffusion is a process in which policy choices are interdependent. Convergence may be due to diffusion, and diffusion may cause convergence, but convergence can also be due to other processes”.

The author also notes and demonstrates that the effect of transnational communication, in which IOs often play a central role, is stronger when governments face economic problems. As a matter of fact, the literature on policy diffusion is normally cautious in pointing out that these processes are mediated by domestic factors, actors and institutions. Furthermore, nations do not need to face economic problems at home to look for alternative policies abroad or to welcome them when they are proposed or imposed by IOs. As it was suggested by Simmons & Elkins, “governments systematically consider the lessons their cultural peers have to offer when fashioning their own economic policy choices” (2004:187). Weylands´ research, however, demonstrated that policy makers:

“do not proactively scan the international environment and engage in a wide-ranging search for promising external models. Instead, they are attracted to certain foreign experiences for more ‘accidental’, logically arbitrary reasons, including geographic and temporary proximity. And rather than evaluating the models that grab their attention through systematic, balanced cost/benefit analyses, they tend to assess the promise of foreign innovations more haphazardly.” (Weyland, 2006:6)

Leaving aside the reasons why IOs try to influence or impose the adoption of certain policies, we should instead pay attention to their instruments or to the mechanisms employed by them for that purpose. Dion (2008) distinguishes between hard and soft power mechanisms. This distinction is valid mainly for analytical purposes, as IOs often use a combination of methods, as it is widely recognized and documented (see, e.g., Weyland, 2004 and 2006). Dion (2008), recalling Keohane & Nye (1998), stresses that hard power is exerted not only by threats but also by rewards. Loan conditionality or withholding are examples of economic “sticks”, while loan promises and funding for technical or pilot projects or studies, used to stimulate reforms or to broaden the set of alternatives considered by policy makers in the domestic level, can be seen as economic “carrots”.

With regard to soft power, theorized by neoliberal institutionalists in International Relations and by constructivist studies of agenda setting, power is exercised by the ability to set the agenda and/or propose norms of behavior. It is the sort
of power that relies on persuasion to convince others to adopt a position or a policy. Constructivists point out that the adoption of norms or institutions happens through socialization, where networks of experts, epistemic communities, and norm entrepreneurs, including IOs, act as agents of socialization. Both informal norms and formal standards, such as international conventions or declarations, may play important roles. IOs frequently provide data that can inform policy making at the domestic level or provide training for national experts or even tools that make it easier for countries to consider new policy options. If technical assistance is often provided, informal policy discussions promoted by IOs also became frequent, as well as their effort to disseminate, by means of several distinct mechanisms, policy models that are perceived as success stories. Other way to potentially influencing policy outcomes at the national level is the establishment of international standards or conventions that may contribute to legitimize certain policy principles (Dion, 2008). Notice, however, that if even hard power instruments do not guarantee the adoption of certain policies, which is a process that will inevitably be mediated by domestic actors and institutions, soft power mechanisms may, at best, influence policy making, as it is widely recognized.

Jakobi (2009) proposed the following typology of general instruments by which IOs – “irrespective of a specific policy field or their standing as binding or less binding authorities – can influence national policy development” (p.33): discursive dissemination; standard-setting; financial means, coordinative functions; and technical assistance. According to the author, each one of the five types of instruments has a dominant function, which are, in parenthesis: discursive dissemination (establish ideas); standard-setting (prescribing behavior); financial means (transfer payment), coordinative functions (execute surveillance); and technical assistance (support structures).

So far, our discussion of the ways IOs promote policy diffusion has stressed the more frequently studied material-normative dimensions of power. To put it another way, these dimensions privilege the ways IOs seek to influence the states into adopting norms or policies based on rational calculations of functional benefits or/and the way they try to convince states of the rightfulness and appropriateness of particular international norms (Bauhr & Nasiritousi, 2012). These authors suggest the importance of also considering, in order to fully understand IOs power, what they called the “contestation-integration dimension”. This dimension expresses the way IOs exercise
power either by integrating countries into networks of cultural exchange or by contesting existing orders. The proposed dimension, as we will see, also intends to capture the way distinct developments within IOs influence the organizations’ effects on domestic orders. According to the authors, the traditional dimensions can be seen as mainly distinguishing the type of pressures that IOs put on governments, while the new dimension of power proposed “pertain more to the means [or “tactical powers”] used to put pressure on governments” (p. 542). As it is stressed, “both contestation and integration can involve processes of coercion, persuasion, learning, and mimicry” (p. 544).

Bauhr & Nasiritousi (2012) also try to classify the internal limits to IO power, which can be of three main types at least: motivational, ideational, and procedural. Motivational limits exist when an IO does not put priority or fully commit itself to the promotion of a cause, for example mobilizing scarce financial or personnel resources. The authors define ideational shortcomings in IOs strategies as limits in the knowledge and expertise that they possess, which may lead to low quality advice given to the states. Procedural limitations do not refer to what IOs do but to how they do it. Their power limitation is thus related to the procedure by which decisions are made within IOs and/or to their interaction with governments. Taking as a case study the ways IOs promote quality of government, the authors propose that:

“(…) when IOs contest existing orders using governance rankings and aid conditionality, they suffer from ideational shortcomings, including lack of objective data and contested policy advice. In contrast, measures based on integration, such as the membership process of IOs or interaction with IOs, are more likely to suffer from internal procedural shortcomings, such as IOs failing to internalize and mainstream the norms that they seek to promote.” (Bauhr & Nasiritousi, 2012:542)

Having briefly summarized the literature on the role of international organizations on policy diffusion, we now turn to Latin American regional organizations, both the new ones, which are the clear and unquestionable offsprings of

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5 One could also recall the way bureaucratic culture may cause IOs pathological behavior, as the organizations can start acting in a way that will undermine their own mandate and mission. Barnett and Finnemore (1999) focus upon the following five elements: (a) pursuing rules beyond the boundaries of rationality; (b) universalizing prescriptions that may be inappropriate to certain cases; (c) normalizing deviance; (d) fostering bureaucratic insulation; and (e) when the organization becomes divided by cultural disputes.
the pink tide, and the apparently renewed ones. The next section will just try to pose the theoretically informed questions that are guiding the fieldwork which is in progress.

**New and renewed Latin American regional organizations compared: agenda and diffusion efforts**

*Questions to guide fieldwork:*

**Case studies:**

ALBA, Unasur, Mercosur, and ECLAC

- 2 regional organizations founded in the 2000s: ALBA, created in 2004; and Unasur, founded in 2004 as CASA and transformed into Unasur in 2008;
- Mercosur: created in 1991; *Social Mercosur* instituted in 2001;
- ECLAC (*Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean*) (established in 1948, it is one of the 5 regional commissions of the UN, originally designed to foster regional development and later encompassing also social development).

Such a selection will allow us to compare regional organizations (ROs) that were created at different times, under various influences; which have distinct missions and mandates; IOs that have different levels of institutional maturity and bureaucratic consolidation; and distinct external links and commitments.

**Agenda questions:**

Taking into consideration the 4 ROs´ mandates and missions, as well as their history and institutional evolution, how can we understand their interests and positions regarding social development at the national level, which is a central question for the regions´ left turn governments? How and why were their social agendas constituted?

A central question is: was there a convergence in their social development agendas? Why?
How did the establishment of UNs´ Millennium Development Goals (2000) influenced those regional IOs´ social agendas?

What role did Pink Tide governments played in the definition of those IOs´ social agenda?

Do their present agendas meet the expectations of post-liberal regionalism? If not, why?

Is it still true that “redistributive or universal forms of social policy are disadvantaged by today’s [2002] international architecture” (O´Brien, 2002:146)?

O´Brien stated that "perhaps the most significant development to counter the neoclassical economic neglect of social policy is the idea that redistributive social policy and social cohesion foster economic growth” (2002:155). Is such a standing a central feature of today’s Latin American regional organizations, as it is, for instance, a central question in the domestic agenda of the latest leftist Brazilian governments?

**Questions related to Latin American ROs´ diffusion efforts:**

What kind of policies do our regional organizations try to diffuse to Latin American governments? Are they attuned to pink tide´s governments’ ideology and policies?

Are they trying to compete with other IOs in the regional market for the heart and soul of domestic policy makers?

Traditional IFIs (International Financial Institutions) were responsible in the near past for de diffusion of very liberal approaches to social policy. They are nowadays struggling in the world market of ideas as they diffuse a relatively new policy reduction paradigm, embodied in the Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs), which have been widely implemented in Latin America (see, e.g., Bastagli, 2009; and Osorio, 2012). CCTs are successful policy stories in both Mexico and Brazil. Are the new regional organizations also diffusing CCTs? Why?

After the profound world financial crisis of 2008, are traditional IFIs trying to regain legitimacy in the international system through their efforts to diffuse social
policy? After 2008 their social agenda came closer to the one endorsed by Latin American regional organizations?

What kind of instruments are ROs in Latin America using to diffuse social policy? Why?

Discussing the Mexican experience, Dion (2008) affirmed that the “real change has been the emergence since the 1990s of multiple IOs that seek to influence domestic social policy” (p.36). In such a competitive marketplace of ideas, how do Latin American organizations behave?

Comparing IOs influence in Mexico in the 1940s and 1990s, Dion (2008) discovered:

“(…) a shift from using international standards or conventions [typical ILO’s instruments] to using financial assistance to encourage countries to adopt certain policy reforms. This shift is associated with the declining influence of the ILO and ascendance of the World Bank. It is not obvious whether the mechanisms of influence explain the rise of the World Bank and decline of the ILO or vice versa. Alternatively, perhaps the paradigm shift from Keynesianism to economic neoliberalism explains both the changing of the guard and the means of persuasion.” (Dion, 2008, p.37)

Recognizing the fact that neokeynesianism got a stronger regional footing after the left turn and the 2008 financial crisis, to what extent is it correct to say that the diffusion means also changed?

It is widely recognized by the diffusion literature that IOs usually combine hard and soft power to influence domestic policy. Is it also true of the new Latin American regional organizations?

It is known that the Chilean government helped, in the 1990s, to promote the international diffusion of the country’s model of radical pension reform, that was based on privatization and was the central pillar of social reform diffusion in the region, a process also supported by several IOs (Weyland, 2004 and 2006). Brazilian government is now strongly supporting the international diffusion of “its” model of Conditional Cash Transfers (Bolsa Família Program) (Faria, 2012). Has such a process influenced the agenda and the diffusion efforts of the regional organizations?
The international diffusion of liberalism is widely studied (Simmons; Dobbin; Garret, 2006). Is it possible to talk about, at least in the regional level, an international diffusion of post-liberal social policies?

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