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## 20. Policy transfer research in the rural sector

*Eric Sabourin and Carolina Milhorance*

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### INTRODUCTION

Rural development and agricultural policies have traditionally been the subject of policy transfer, diffusion, and circulation studies. Some European research has examined the influence of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) reforms on policy diffusion and the adoption of policy models in the European Community member countries (Daugbjerg, 2003; Gorton et al., 2009; Lovec, 2016). The global governance research agenda has clarified the role of international organizations in the design and circulation of policy models – particularly in the field of food security (Duncan, 2015; Milhorance, 2018; Peck and Theodore, 2015). The development aid and cooperation communities looked initially into the ability of traditional donor agencies to influence the organization of the agricultural sectors in countries receiving international funds (Manji, 2006; Mehta et al., 2017). Recently, a growing body of literature focused on the mechanisms and consequences of transfer and diffusion among countries from the Global South, including strategies of resistance and translation of the rural development models (Chichava et al., 2013; Gabas and Goulet, 2013; Milhorance, 2018).

The variety of case studies and angles of analysis make the rural sector a field of transfer analysis in itself and a fertile ground for theory-building and comparative studies. On the other hand, the rural sector also presents some particularities to the transfer/diffusion debates. For instance, this sector is central to a number of economies in the Global South and is featured as a common sector of development projects. Likewise, land policies have been at the heart of both neoliberal and socialist development models, and these remain a highly politicized issue, currently subject of land grabbing and financialization movements (Anseeuw et al., 2015). Moreover, the similarity of agro-climatic conditions among countries from the Global South has been used as a recurrent argument of the potential of South–South policy transfer (Chichava et al., 2013). Finally, territorial development strategies brought challenges to the transfer/diffusion debate as they are, by definition, context-sensitive (Sabourin et al., 2016).

Given the interest of a more detailed review of the field, this chapter summarizes the main theoretical and empirical contributions of policy transfer and diffusion studies in the rural sector. Drawing on recent studies developed in European, Latin American and African countries, this work provides an outlook of transfer agents, mechanisms, and processes with regard to their effects on food security, territorial development, agricultural and land policies. The analysis follows a cross-cutting approach as it explains the dynamics of North–South, South–South, and South–North policy transfers. It builds on both bibliographic and primary data and it engages with the literature concerning international governance, regionalism, and political sociology. Accordingly, its focus is on four main issues: (i) the role of civil society organizations and development cooperation in the transfer of family farming policy instruments and paradigms in Africa and Latin America; (ii) the process of knowledge framing and diffusion through international organizations and multilateral forums; (iii) the particularities of North–South and South–South transfers of rural policy instruments

in Africa and Latin America; and (iv) examples of South–North transfers and future research agendas in the field.

Our objective is not only to contribute to the overall debate on the old and emerging ‘directions of policy transfer’ (Porto de Oliveira and Pal, 2018), but also to highlight the particularities of the literature in the field from a regional point of view, namely the power of domestic actors in Africa (‘African agency’) and the processes of regional integration from a policy perspective in Latin America. The first section of this chapter presents recent approaches to an old debate regarding Europeanization and North–South transfers. The second section provides an overview of a flourishing body of literature of policy-sharing among countries from the Global South. This includes transregional transfers between Brazil or China and African countries as well as regional convergences within both Latin American and African continents. The third section delves into the dynamics of multilateral arenas and forums, including global international organizations and regional and transregional communities. Finally, the last section highlights some of the persisting questions and new issues for further developing research in the field.

## 1. OLD AND NEW READINGS OF POLICY TRANSFER FROM THE GLOBAL NORTH

### 1.1 The Europeanization of Territorial and Agricultural Policies

The Europeanization studies have significantly contributed to policy transfer/diffusion literature, as these researches have been concerned about the development of policy frameworks, laws, regulations, and standards which apply – at variable forms – to several member states. At the core of this literature is the analysis of policy transfer to Central and Eastern European states after the collapse of communism (Hadjiisky et al., 2017b). The chapter by Coman and Tulmets in this volume shows how the concept has also been extended to the field of foreign policy, through the enlargement and neighbourhood policies. A recurrent conclusion in this stream is that of an ‘active reception’, by national actors, of the transferred policy models. This argument has also been put forward by studies of the rural sector (Maurel et al., 2014). The decisive material, cognitive, and normative influence of domestic, compared to the European institutions, in the magnitude of transfer has been highlighted. Hence, these studies argue for the inclusion of actors and their interactions at supranational, national, and subnational levels (Maurel et al., 2014).

Studies regarding the processes of transfer and learning of territorial development policies across European countries have been insightful. Created in Western Europe, the LEADER (‘Links between actions for the development of the rural economy’) programme was shaped as an initiative of support to rural development projects initiated at the local level. The model was first established in the 1990s as a result of a long history of theoretical development around the principles of endogenous and sustainable development of rural territories. This programme promoted instruments such as regional planning, territorial zoning, territorial participatory committees, integrated management (combined strategies of rural development, poverty alleviation, public health, education, etc.), and funds for collective projects (Sabourin et al., 2016). Different sets of these instruments were actively transferred towards several Central Europe

countries (Maurel et al., 2014) and became a source of inspiration to Latin American countries since the late 1990s (Champetier, 2003; Massardier and Sabourin, 2013).

Maurel et al. (2014) discussed this policy-learning process among European countries, based on a comparative analysis of the mechanisms of adaptation, transformation, and refusal of certain aspects of the territorial development approach. Drawing on experimentation, the study challenges some of the historical ideas of Europeanization driven by political conditionalities and external pressure. For instance, the empowerment of local actors and the reinforcement of new forms of participative democracy in rural territories of post-socialist countries were only possible in contexts where new modes of the exercise of power were able to transfer local governance. In some cases, formal governance structures were challenged by other levels of territorial identities. Additionally, the pressure formally exerted by the European Union (EU) has been asymmetrically received in each territory, according to the mobilization of local elites and their perception of the utility of territorial approach instruments. Hence, the heterogeneity of responses and degrees of appropriation of foreign reforms were the key factors of this process experienced in rural territories of the member states that were initially recognized to form a relatively homogeneous bloc.

Policy transfer was also studied with consideration to the reform of the CAP. Gorton et al. (2009) argued that, despite the CAP's reformation being considered relevant to meeting the structural challenges confronting the rural areas of the Central and Eastern Europe, it has been insufficient in meeting the task of accommodating the accession of these new members. In contrast with the territorial development approach, these studies emphasized the role of the EU and its inability to adapt the administrative requirements to different capacities characterizing the European rural contexts. This would have shaped a process of policy penetration, driven by political conditionalities, which would then lead to a poor match between the CAP and the rural development needs of the new member countries (Gorton et al., 2009). However, this idea of a mismatch of certain policy models to local contexts was challenged by recent Europeanization studies which were more concerned with the micro-dynamics of transfer (Hadjiisky et al., 2017a, 2017b).

## **1.2 Conditionalities, Resistance, and Transfer in the African Rural Sector**

Policy transfer studies in Africa have been closely connected to those of international aid and international cooperation. Like in the Europeanization studies, a main point of this debate is the relation between political conditionalities set by 'traditional' donors – particularly European countries and the United States – and the adoption of policies and reforms in African countries. This leads to extensive literature regarding the mechanisms of resistance of domestic actors in defining their policies (Brown and Harman, 2013; Lyons, 2014). These studies that focused on the mechanisms of resistance gained more relevance by the end of the 2000s as a result of the increasing presence of China and Brazil in the international cooperation system (Alden et al., 2013; Milhorange, 2018). The development cooperation lens has become useful to shed light on the processes of knowledge diffusion and policy transfer from policy perimeters, among those outside political power in opposition groups, and bottom-up from policy implementers (Stone et al., 2020). This will be detailed in the next section.

First, regarding traditional international cooperation, a common issue which has been raised is the impact of conditionalities and neoliberal economic reforms on the rural sector. Traditional donors, particularly the USAID agency, the World Bank, and the International

Monetary Fund (IMF) promoted economic structural adjustments in several African countries from the 1980s through the 1990s. In Mozambique, for instance, the results of these reforms on the rural sector have been strongly criticized for their inability to foster agricultural productivity or to reduce rural poverty (Cunguara and Hanlon, 2012; Mosca, 2010). Given these adverse results, several authors analysed the mechanisms of the adoption of these reforms. In Mozambique, light was shed on the domestic politics behind aid ownership. Studies showed how the national government has followed a pragmatic foreign policy and developed skills in managing complex relationships with various international agencies while maintaining domestic political support (De Renzio and Hanlon, 2007; Lalbahadur and Otto, 2013).

Thus, on the one hand, dependence on foreign aid puts the state in a vulnerable position as pressure to adopt particular policy measures is often high. On the other hand, budget support is responsible for funding public services and contributes to the consolidation of the state's political legitimacy. It also allows for the government to hold donors accountable for less popular policies. Hence, ownership and policy adoption related to transfer is understood as the result of competitive dynamics and conflict for national development strategies (Castel-Branco, 2008).

Second, land policies have been widely analysed in this literature and a common claim is that neoliberal land reforms were imposed by international donors (Manji, 2006). In this approach, land-titling instruments and land markets were promoted to increase private investments and boost agricultural productivity. Nevertheless, another form of analysis argues that these claims may be challenged empirically (Wolford et al., 2013) and that domestic governments are more in control of policymaking than is usually alleged. According to these authors, in Tanzania, donors were involved in the reforms – financing activities in particular – but their influence was less decisive on their reforms' design (Pedersen, 2016). The same argument is made for Mozambique where, contrary to the donors' opinions, government chose to keep land under state control. The goals of promoting private investment and consolidating a market economy were combined with state ownership of land and the recognition of the customary rights of traditional communities. The state has therefore ensured its power in the distribution of benefits from land acquisitions and its authority over traditional communities while retaining its centralizing nature in certain areas (Boche, 2014).

Third, the role of international donors in influencing domestic policies was also analysed in the fields of territorial and water management. Donors are considered to have had a key role in the emergence and consolidation of the integrated water resource management approach (IWRM) in Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Uganda and Mozambique (Mehta et al., 2017). The IWRM was also diffused by northern agencies in the Western and North African regions (Barone and Mayaux, 2019). Studies analysing this process focused not only on the role of domestic actors in adopting this approach, but also the reasons for its widespread adoption. According to these authors, policy diffusion relied on the socialization processes of technical staff being trained in Western countries – but it was also strategic. These strategic reasons include being able to benefit from international financing (e.g., the World Bank, regional development banks, German, Japanese, French cooperation agencies, etc.), which brings international attention towards certain territories as well as the leveraging of power in sectoral disputes. One typical dispute is between the Ministry of Environment, with limited capacity for action, and a hydraulic bureaucracy in another ministry. In Morocco, the Souss-Massa River Basin is known to have been the first to set up management tools based on IWRM. This enabled this territory, which is marked by powerful export agriculture, to appear internationally as virtu-

ous in the use of their resources, despite the continuous overexploitation of its groundwater (Barone and Mayaux, 2019).

### **1.3 Overlapping Mechanisms of Transfer in Latin America**

In Latin America, international aid and cooperation has also been a main driver of North–South policy transfer. Latin American agricultural research and extension public systems have been traditionally influenced by northern models, either American ones (Biggs, 1990; Echeverria et al., 1996) or European ones (Sabourin et al., 2016) whose development benefited from US public and non-profit funds, as well as funds from the Rockefeller Foundation in the 1960s and 1970s (Malamud, 1992; Szymanski, 1973). Today, in terms of rural development strategies, the Ford Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation are quite influential in the region (Canan, 2017). The role of private consultants, foundations, and policy advisory organizations has also been analysed in the chapter by Stone, Pal, and Porto de Oliveira in this book. The authors found that private actors often partner with counterparts to amplify messages, best practices, benchmarks and international standards, the result being a convergence among policy models.

In the 1960s and 1970s, American agricultural academics and US development foundations highly promoted the transfer of the US rural extension model to Latin American countries to be utilized as an engine of economic growth. This was done with the support of UN institutions such as the World Bank, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO); the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and the Organization of American States (OAS). Nevertheless, it has coincided to support the diffusion of the green revolution model, which promotes specific crop specialized technical assistance, associated with credits to finance the acquisition of industrialized inputs. However, this is a model that was not well received by peasants and smallholders of Latin America (Otero and Selis, 2016).

Sabourin et al. (2016) examined the dissemination of the rural territorial development frames of reference and instruments in Latin American countries starting from the late 1990s. The transfer of the above-mentioned LEADER approach was supported by international agencies such as the FAO, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Regional organizations also contributed to the transfer process, particularly the IICA, which assumed leadership in the field through its support of several projects and networks. Guided by the objectives of promotion of regional development and administrative decentralization, these organizations have contributed to the adaptation of the narratives and to some elements of the territorial development approach implemented in European and Latin American contexts. The work of scholars and researchers concerned with the territorial approaches has also contributed to the diffusion of the European models of territorial policies in Latin America (Champetier, 2003; Massardier and Sabourin, 2013).

These have been followed by bilateral cooperation projects, particularly with the French and Spanish governments. Several countries in Latin America established policies drawing lessons from this model (Colombia in 1997; Brazil in 1999–2001; Chile and Argentina in 2004). However, the process led by international organizations intertwined with broader political dynamics, such as the democratic transitions experienced in Latin American countries, which opened windows of opportunity to the participation of local social movements in public policies. Therefore, governments in Latin America attempted to satisfy, almost concomitantly,

in the 1990s and 2000s, both the recommendations of international agencies and the growing demands from rural social movements by creating hybrid forms of territorial development policies (Lopes Filho, 2018; Sabourin et al., 2016). Complexity was added to these policies as the transfer process also took place across Latin American countries in the late 2000s, resulting in feedback processes. This will be discussed in the next section.

Drawing on Risse-Kappen's work (1995), the territorial policy diffusion studies showed the overlapping of national, intergovernmental, inter/transnational, regional, and territorial political processes. The complexity of this policymaking dynamic brought contributions to the international relations theory by proposing to go beyond the binary logics of national/international, national/global, among others. This was made possible by adopting theoretical and empirical tools that combined domestic and international politics theories and looked into the degrees of international institutionalism – for instance, sectoral regulation through bilateral agreements, multilateral regimes, or international organizations (Moravcsik, 1997). Under the influence of an innovative Brazil, a large number of Latin American countries have tried out territory development policies, especially in areas affected by poverty and the rural exodus. This type of transfer seems to correspond to what the literature on policy transfers qualifies as 'bandwagoning', which is a phenomenon of imitating neighbouring countries' policies by tagging along (Waltz, 2010).

A recent and innovative process of rural policy transfer/diffusion has increasingly relied on South–South cooperation. This includes sharing experiences not only among countries of the same continent, but also among different regions of the Global South. The next section reviews some of these studies analysing these processes in Africa and Latin America.

## 2. EMERGING CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE SOUTH–SOUTH RURAL POLICY TRANSFER LITERATURE

### 2.1 Africa and the Global South: Ideas, Power, and Translators

In the late 2000s, an extensive body of literature on transfer studies was assembled regarding the presence of non-traditional donors – particularly Brazil and China – in African politics. The theoretical contributions of this literature focused on the rural sector which included a growing interest in the 'African agency' and on the role of policy networks shaped by distinct development ideas and power asymmetries in transfer processes (Alden et al., 2013; Alden and Chichava, 2014; Milhorange, 2018). In parallel, scholars from multiple sectors looked into the distinctions of South–South cooperation in relation to traditional cooperation in a context of the absence of political conditionalities (Mawdsley et al., 2014). Moreover, part of the literature was underpinned via structuralist political economy approaches which were used to explain the relations between African governments and the so-called emerging economies. According to these authors, South–South capitalism was marked by 'subimperialist' relations (Flynn, 2007; Garcia et al., 2013). An additional point is the diffusion of instruments of public policies through the African continent.

Drawing particularly on policy transfer and diffusion, Alden et al. (2014) noted that 'African agency' has been increasingly recognized. This concept refers to the degree of freedom (flexibility) and influence (power) exercised by African political actors within the international system and the resources mobilized by them, despite their structural constraints (Brown and

Harman, 2013). Emerging countries' diplomacy would have allowed for African governments to assume a more assertive role in negotiations with the Western world by 'breaking the donor cartel', not only on certain practices, but also on their monopoly of development ideas (Alden et al., 2014). These ideas paved the way for a body of literature concerned with the role of different groups of domestic players – both in African and 'emerging' countries – on the circulation of policy ideas (Alden and Chichava, 2014; Amanor and Chichava, 2016; Cabral, 2015; Cabral et al., 2016; Milhorange, 2017, 2018; Pierri, 2013; Scoones et al., 2016).

Empirical analyses were conducted in Angola, Tanzania, Ghana, Mozambique, South Africa and several other countries. Nevertheless, Mozambique became an emblematic case of study, owing to the substantial presence of Brazil and China in its rural sector. Furthermore, the strong relationship established between Maputo and traditional donors and the large presence of Western non-profit organizations (NGOs) shaped their relations with emerging economies through caution, compromise, and collaboration, which stood in contrast with their relations with other African countries (Alden et al., 2014). The Chinese government promoted the involvement of private companies with the establishment of agricultural demonstration centres in the south of Mozambique, which was then followed by funding for agro-processing plants. These were expected to promote Chinese agricultural companies and to share their experiences with Mozambican private and public actors (Chichava et al., 2013).

Although South–South cooperation has been historically built on the narrative that countries from the Global South share development challenges so they could also share 'development solutions', Brazilian diplomacy is probably the one which predominantly guided its cooperation strategy by this understanding. Hence, most of Brazil's development cooperation with African countries has aimed at sharing its experience in designing and implementing social and agricultural policies. In this context, literature then focused on identifying the political groups that were either promoting or hindering the internationalization of particular policy strategies as well as their mechanisms. The results often showed that interventions are renegotiated during development processes in Africa (Cabral et al., 2016; Milhorange, 2018; Scoones et al., 2016).

A methodological contribution of these studies consisted of combining the advocacy coalition framework (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014) and the notion of 'translation' (Stone, 2012). As stated in the chapter by Hassenteufel and Zeigermann in this book, translation differs from transfer, on the one side, because it is focused on the role of specific actors in the transformation process of policy orientations and design; and on the other side, because it grasps the effects of the policy transfer in order to understand not only the policy formulation process, but also policy implementation. By combining both notions in transfer studies, Milhorange (2017) highlights power relations, conflicts over policy ideas, and the reconfiguration of policy issues in the adoption of transferred policy models as well as the negotiation between different actors involved in the process. A second point of these studies refers to the resources and strategies of translating agents that mobilize and negotiate with other participants to either undertake or block policy transfer. The role of translating agents is distinctive in South–South transfers as these are recognized as a method to create rules to preserve their autonomy in the face of foreign interference. This implies that simply adopting policy instruments designed in other political systems does not indicate policy change related to international transfer (Acharya, 2014; Milhorange, 2018).



Therefore, it is important to look into the implementation process of ‘transferred’ policies and not only their adoption (Dolowitz et al., 2020) and take the features of South–South relations into account. The institutionalization of transferred policies does not represent policy change, as demonstrated in the Brazil–Mozambique policy transfer of school feeding initiatives. The adoption in Mozambique of a model inspired by the Brazilian policies did not result in a change of vision regarding social protection instruments and the promotion of family farming. This process represented a response of the Mozambican elites to international expectations, by not empowering the country’s administration in the continuity of reforms (Milhorange, 2018).

Policy transfer in this perspective is not just about the circulation of neutral policy instruments, but it is also a projection of the domestic coalitions which collaborate with international actors who support these instruments. This explains why distinct transferred policy models can be contradictory in some cases. For instance, a coalition of public and private actors has emerged through the process of international integration of the Brazilian economy, and strengthened through increased economic relations with African countries. At the same time, a distinct coalition has promoted a ‘progressive strategy’ to fight food insecurity, based on a proactive state and on the integration between social protection measures and those of productive inclusion. Finally, a third coalition composed mainly of NGOs and social movements pursued a critical approach to the projection of Brazilian capital and state (Milhorange, 2017, 2018).

Moreover, in the case of multiple models being transferred, some may align better than others in distinct political systems, and different aspects of each model may be reinforced by transfer agents in order to gain political support (Cabral et al., 2016; Milhorange, 2018). For instance, Milhorange (2018) described how ideas supported by the different policy coalitions in Mozambique were placed in a competitive situation. Initiatives related to agribusiness and mining development (e.g., ProSavana and Vale’s infrastructure investments) have helped put into practice the governmental political strategies. Thus, despite the model being contested by a network of activists, the dominant coalition of the Mozambican rural sector has benefited from Brazilian support to strengthen its political and economic project. On the other hand, the initiatives of public food procurement and school feeding (e.g., Pronae or PAA) highlighted the role of the state in deploying agricultural services and structuring markets. Both perspectives agreed on productivity objectives and the creation of markets for small farmers. However, they did not agree on the means of implementation and the farmers’ place in national development. This is why an additional technical assistance programme (the More Food Programme) has been translated by Mozambican actors through its mechanization component and not as a public technical assistance system (Cabral et al., 2016). Furthermore, the adoption process of Brazil’s instruments of public food procurement from family farmers and home-grown school feeding at the local level showed that, despite political and institutional constraints at the national level to adopting the initiatives in Mozambique, local actors managed to adapt them to their contexts (Milhorange et al., 2019).

Lastly, in striking contrast with the Latin American case that will soon be discussed, policy transfer and diffusion studies among African countries are still underdeveloped. One such example involves private South African actors. Anseeuw et al. (2015) analysed how the country’s agricultural production models have been exported all over the continent with support of the national government. The modalities of transfer first relied on the movement of independent South African farmers who have established themselves in other countries after the end of

apartheid. These farmers acquired land in order to develop a production model based on the South African commercial farm model. Accordingly, South African commercial farmers were very much in demand for their expertise in farm management by investors acquiring land in Africa. As a result, the farmers established consulting firms to do so (Hall, 2012). These firms have also helped organize agricultural sectors of other African countries, like the Republic of Congo, in collaboration with national governments. Subsequently, the South African government set several bilateral agreements to promote trade, investments and the export of the country's agricultural expertise (Anseeuw et al., 2015). These examples were not read through the policy transfer lens, but they can add to this literature by elucidating the private actors and commercial dynamics.

## **2.2 Diffusion of Rural Policies across Latin America: Convergence and Hybridization**

Latin American countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Costa Rica, and more recently Colombia have increasingly become policy exporters. They have been active in experimenting and developing policy models, sometimes becoming actual laboratories of social, environmental, or rural public policies (Zurbruggen, 2014). The chapter by Osorio Gonnet in this volume discusses the flow of social policies instruments focused on poverty reduction across Latin American countries. In this section, we discuss how Brazil became one of the main players in the diffusion of rural policies inspired by the country's development models, particularly policies of support to family farmers (Sabourin and Grisa, 2018). This process holds parallels and differences regarding the dynamics observed in Africa, as will be discussed hereafter. Additionally, Mexico and Costa Rica became examples of the diffusion of rural environmental policies namely in terms of payment for environmental services in Latin America and even in Europe (Sabourin, 2013).

First, policies of payment for environmental services appeared in Mexico with collective paying to rural communities in order to preserve hydric sources and reserves used for population water supply (Perevochtchikova, 2014). Then the model was transferred to Peru also to preserve Andean water community systems (Quintero and Pareja, 2015) and to Costa Rica where it was used to finance individual payments for the preservation of big forest plantation areas within a context of national green tourism interest (Ezzine de Blas et al., 2017).

Second, the influence of Brazilian family farming policy models on Latin American policies affected several countries at distinct levels. Sabourin et al. (2020) described a confluence of several mechanisms which informed the debate on public food procurement from family farming in Colombia, Haiti, and Paraguay. Like in the African case, Brazil's influence did not occur directly, but through the intermediation of international organizations and technical recommendations via reports, documents, declarations, regional regulations, and the internet – particularly through the FAO (Caldas and Avila, 2018). The FAO staff have also mediated negotiations between national governments. In the cases of Colombia and Haiti, such influence permeates the development cooperation agreements with Brazil having the FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP) as key mediators. This case exemplifies one of the forms that marked the initial studies on public policy transfer, characterized by the predominance of relations between nation-states (McCann and Ward, 2013; Stone, 2004).

In Paraguay, in addition to the role of international organizations, the Congress and the Mercosur Specialized Meeting on Family Farming (REAF) became privileged spaces for

exchange around public food procurement from family farming. The Parliamentary Front against Hunger discussed the relevance of this policy instrument, reflecting some of the debates held at the REAF. This is a transnational forum composed of multiple participants and will be detailed in the next section (Caldas and Avila, 2018). An additional contribution of these studies relies on the role of civil society organizations on policy transfer and learning, shaping a bottom-to-top process of disseminating policy instruments and experience sharing. This will also be further developed in the next section and the role of non-state actors in South–South policy transfer is also discussed in the chapter in this volume by Laura Waisbich, Melissa Pomeroy, and Iara Leite. In all of these case studies, the idea of policy translation, which involves several processes of mutation, interpretation, bricolage, and experimentation (Stone, 2017), was privileged over that of policy transfer. Therefore, even in cases that were referenced to the Brazilian model, there was a great capacity for reinterpretation or adaptation with regard to the national context.

Third, the diffusion of territorial policies is also an interesting case study. Initially inspired by European models, the territorial development approach underpinned bilateral and regional dialogue between Latin American countries. Its contribution to transfer studies depends on the fact that territorial policies are context-sensitive by nature. They require the establishment of a development strategy that adapts sectoral policies to local constraints or particularities and reinforces governance mechanisms that include the territorial level. This approach presupposes a relationship between the ‘project of the territory’ and a construction of identity by different actors at various levels, with an impact on the decision-making and the allocation of public services. In Latin America it has become common to promote administrative decentralization and social participation under this approach (Sabourin et al., 2016).

Unlike in the case of public food procurement, Brazil did not appear as a key exporting country of territorial development policies. However, this was the case in El Salvador, where the government established a programme closely similar to Brazil’s Citizenship Territories Programme. Despite the analogous institutional framework, the participatory ideas behind the territorial development approach were not the main drivers of transfer. On the contrary, there was an interest to instrumentalize the spaces of local participation, whose creation was an election commitment of the President of El Salvador. The alignment of political parties in the presidential offices of both countries (Workers’ Party in Brazil; FLMN in El Salvador), including personal relations between their leaders, contributed to this straightforward policy transfer process.

This process was very different in other countries. For instance, in Uruguay, despite multiple influences, the managers of the Rural Development Directorate of the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture, and Fishing asserted learning about the Brazilian experience of territorial development by the Brazil’s Ministry of Agrarian Development, from various exchanges, primarily via the REAF, academia, and IICA. The Rural Development Boards in Uruguay corresponded to a double process of decentralization and a participatory approach. In Argentina, the national rural territorial development programme under the National Institute of Agriculture and Livestock Technology began almost at the same time as the Brazilian national programme. Indeed, since the 1990s, there has been cooperation and mutual influence between institutions of the two countries on the subject of family farming, through agronomic research cooperation, discussions within Mercosur, and the creation of REAF through the decision and support of Brazil and Argentina. However, while Argentinian staff recognized the Brazilian influence

in other family farming supporting mechanisms, this was not so for the territorial development programme, which is considered endogenous to their institution (Sabourin and Grisa, 2018).

Therefore, given the need of the deep cognitive, governance, and institutional changes required to promote the territorialization of development policies, most of the studies conducted in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay observed high degrees of hybridization of territorial development frameworks and the existing institutions, with a particular emphasis on the agricultural sector (Sabourin et al., 2016). Despite the differences across the countries, hybridization in these cases regards the models and vectors of policy diffusion, but also the objectives, functions, and instruments, in a form of incrementalism that refers to mechanisms of aggregation (Favareto, 2010). This hybridization is also derived from the weight of institutional factors: administrative structures and routines, constitutions (federal or central), and various forms of path dependence of the national institutional model (Mahoney, 2001).

Despite the asymmetrical influence of Brazil's institutional frameworks on the development of territorial policies in Latin American countries, the role of Brazilian scholars and researchers in the dissemination of concepts, interpretations, and analyses of Brazilian public policies was particularly acknowledged (Champetier, 2003; Massardier and Sabourin, 2013). Furthermore, the UN agencies' offices located in the region offered central positions for Brazilian scholars, who commonly circulated from universities to government spaces or vice versa, and from these to international agencies. In Haiti, for example, Brazilian officers coordinated the two WFP and FAO South–South cooperation projects. At the FAO regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean, in Chile, several Brazilian scholars or officers from the Brazilian government have alternated as policy coordinators or advisers since the FAO's Director General José Graziano da Silva took office, leaving his legacy to regional representation. This relation between national actors and the multilateral arenas and their role in policy transfer will be further discussed in the next section.

### 3. MULTILATERAL ARENAS, REGIONAL INTEGRATION, AND CIRCULATION OF SOFT NORMS

#### 3.1 Design and Circulation of International 'Best Practices'

Multilateral institutions are key in transfer studies as they have a role in policy design and in diffusion of 'best practices'. Yet, the literature endeavours to shed light on the negotiation and decision-making processes behind global policymaking as they are becoming more mobile and elusive (Legrand, 2016). In the rural sector, international organizations such as the FAO and the WFP played a major role in shaping and diffusing norms related to food policies (Milhorange, 2018; Milhorange and Soulé-Kohndou, 2017).

A common ground for these analyses is the concern about the power of certain ideas, their advocates coordinated in networks, and their translators (Stone, 2002, 2012). In this approach, part of the literature draws on the argument that the development of policy models within international organizations and arenas and their diffusion through policy recommendations and cooperation projects is a political process (Milhorange, 2018; Stone, 2002). Studies describe, for instance, how a network of political actors involved in the design and implementation of food policies in Brazil strongly advocated for the recognition within the FAO, WFP, Portuguese-speaking Community of Countries (CPLP), and the Mercosur REAF of the 'family

farming' category in the design of food policies (Milhorange, 2018; Nierdele, 2016). The same network succeeded in promoting and diffusing social protection instruments inspired by Brazil's Zero Hunger strategy amongst several UN agencies by influencing their development projects and policy guidelines (Fraundorfer, 2013; Peck and Theodore, 2015).

The Brazilian government, together with the FAO and the WFP, established South–South cooperation projects in Latin America and Africa, commonly resembling policy transfer strategies. It is also worth mentioning that Brazilian diplomacy played an active role in the reform of the UN's Committee on World Food Security (CFS). This established, within the UN system, an unprecedented mechanism for allowing social participation in the Committee – the so-called civil society mechanism – and for enabling the work of an advisory body, the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) in charge of promoting studies and proposing strategies on topics chosen by the CFS. These two innovations added strength to the CFS as a valuable tool for producing and disseminating international soft norms related to food and nutritional security and to family farming, which favoured the diffusion of Brazilian public policies and programmes in these areas (Lopes Filho, 2018; Milhorange, 2018; Zanella and Duncan, 2015).

This movement benefited from the opportunity structure that arose from the 2007–2008 world food crisis and the necessity faced by the international community to find new practical solutions to global challenges. The crisis defied some of the crystallized development solutions and power of particular groups of actors. This created an opportunity for the reinforcement of alternative ideas in global governance and local politics. It was also the subject of political efforts by the above-mentioned network, which participated in the transformation of a number of domestic policy instruments into international 'best practices' (Milhorange, 2018). In addition to the political process underpinning conceptual changes in international soft norms and their diffusion to other countries, the studies discussed the ability of staff and bureaucrats within these international organizations to resist, negotiate, and translate the normative and operational changes (Milhorange and Soulé-Kohndou, 2017).

Additionally, drawing on constructivist works of international organizations (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004), the ability of international bureaucracies to resist external pressures was described in several sectors (Soulé-Kohndou, 2014). However, extensive empirical research made of the rural sector a strong case. For instance, studies showed that, depending on the attributes of the arenas of debate (such as porosity, bureaucratization, fragmentation, and cognitive convergence), the outcomes of knowledge framing and diffusion and the ability of international staff to resist – and to inscribe their bureaucratic and technical principles in the design of international soft norms – may vary (Milhorange, 2020). Therefore, on one hand, Brazilian actors have gradually become involved in an effort to influence the procedures of decision-making and project implementation within the FAO (like promoting social participation and diplomatic influence on the implementation); on the other one, these norms have been translated by staff in order to ensure their 'efficiency' and 'neutrality' (Milhorange, 2020).

The diplomatic orientation of these knowledge framing and circulation processes was highlighted as a means of recasting policy transfer not only as a policy process but as a foreign policy tool (Stone et al., 2020). However, foreign policy in these cases combines distinct interests and beliefs which reflect dynamic interactions among domestic and intermediary actors rather than a unified 'national interest' that is defined unilaterally by the national state. Also, the increasing interaction of these international organizations and regional institutions became

an additional path for policy transfer and diffusion at the regional levels. This will be discussed in the sections below.

### **3.2 Regional Arenas, Policy Networks, and Integration**

The international organizations mentioned above have closely interacted with regional groupings and communities such as the CPLP, REAF, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) (Lopes Filho, 2018; Milhorange, 2018; Nierdele, 2016). In these cases, rather than tight issue-specific epistemic communities, the role of regional civil society networks benefiting from the support of their domestic governments was noted in the diffusion of food and nutritional security instruments. An innovative process of regional integration resulting from the interactions of these civil society and governmental individuals is an interesting contribution to transfer literature. In the biofuel sector, technical and bureaucratic participants in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the India, Brazil, South Africa (IBSA) working groups have also contributed to diffuse policy instruments and technical standards across African countries (Hancock, 2015; Milhorange, 2016).

An important contribution of the first mentioned studies refers to the role of civil society organizations in policy transfer and learning, shaping a bottom-up process of transfer and experience sharing. As analysed by Lopes Filho (2018) and Niederle (2016), social and union movements promoting family and peasant agriculture, inspired by the results of Brazilian experiences with public food procurement, sought to influence decision-making processes of regional integration spaces, such as the Ministerial meeting on Family Agriculture of the CELAC, advocating for the adoption of regional regulations and similar policy instruments in their member countries. On the other hand, in Haiti, since 2007, organizations connected through the *La Via Campesina* have exchanged experiences with Brazilian social movements. The process based on dialogue between state, social movements, and farmers' organizations contributed to politically 'legitimize' the public food procurement from family farming policy instruments.

Likewise, the Mercosur REAF emerged from the demands of social movements which were organized at the regional and international levels. Since its creation, REAF has operated as a space for dissemination and convergence of themes, agendas, methodologies, instruments, and public policies for family farming across the Mercosur countries. Although government agencies (particularly from Brazil) have played a significant role in its creation, one of the main points of dialogue in the meeting was the promotion of social participation in the design and implementation of family farming policies. At the same time, the REAF consisted of a model in itself by showcasing how social participation could also contribute to deepening regional integration (Grisa and Nierdele, 2018; Nierdele, 2016; Sabourin et al., 2020).

This process built around the REAF was displayed as a model for the integration process taking place within the CPLP member countries, particularly from the African continent (Milhorange, 2018). This case study benefited from the regionalism and transgovernmental policy networks literature, which suggest that shared ideas, identity, values, norms, and language prevail over geographical closeness in the establishment of a favourable architecture for policy diffusion (Legrand, 2016; Rose, 1993). Despite low cultural integration among the CPLP members compared to the REAF members, the CPLP has become the favoured arena for Brazilian diplomacy and for the diffusion of food policies in Africa. Furthermore, less bureaucratic than the FAO and lacking material and technical resources to implement devel-

opment projects, the CPLP was more porous to Brazil's influence in its governance procedures and official positions. The common language also enabled exchanges between Brazilian actors and the wider Lusophone community (Milhorance, 2020).

Lastly, an additional case regarding shared identities of the Global South was made for the development of the biofuel sector in IBSA member countries. The diffusion of biofuel technical standards and policy instruments benefited from IBSA working groups, involving diplomatic, technocratic, and private actors from India, Brazil, and South Africa. Technocratic dialogue regarding biofuel development has encouraged the adoption of common standards, techniques, and institutional frameworks on the basis of Brazil's experience (Milhorance, 2016). An underlying result of this process was the potential of these networks to internationally reinforce Brazil's agribusiness. Technocratic actors were also relevant in the dialogue concerning biofuel standards which involved the ECOWAS members (Hancock, 2015).

The ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE) was created in 2010. It is responsible for the design of regional work and business plans as well as for the institutionalization of regional cooperation regarding the issue of renewable energy (Frank, 2015). Extra-regional countries like Austria, Brazil, and Spain, which are recognized to be leaders in renewable energy policies, participated in the creation and support of the Centre (Hancock, 2015). Brazil had a key role the initial diffusion of biofuel standards in the ECOWAS. For instance, in 2011, the Sahel and West Africa Club and ECREEE organized a forum dedicated to renewable energies in West Africa that were particularly focused on a partnership with Brazil in the biofuel sector. After the forum, several experience-sharing activities were held between these countries. Nevertheless, the adoption, implementation, and outcomes of these processes of diffusion were ambiguous, with ups and downs, depending on the country (Nygaard and Bolwig, 2018).

Therefore, both civil society and private and technocratic actors have integrated policy networks that became relevant spaces for policy transfers and diffusion at the regional and trans-regional levels.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

This chapter delved into the main contributions of studies focused on the rural sector to the literature on policy transfer and diffusion. Rather than a fragmented or predominantly specialized approach, it was possible to distinguish a variety of case studies, geographical focus, and theoretical contributions. The interest of this work is not to encourage further research in this particular sector, but to expose the bridges – sometimes hidden – between these studies. On the one hand, the emphasis on a particular issue such as rural development allows for comparative analysis and broader theoretical developments, which was possible in the two main books sustaining this chapter (Milhorance, 2018; Sabourin and Grisa, 2018). On the other hand, the particularities of this issue provides ground for further development of some blind spots of the research, for instance, the process of territorialization and actual implementation of 'imported' policies subsequent to their formal adoption (Dolowitz et al., 2020).

Furthermore, a primary lesson of international aid, international cooperation, and policy transfer studies on rural development is that the similarity of agroclimatic conditions – as displayed in the South–South cooperation narrative – matters much less than the power relations, intermediary actors, arenas, and mechanisms of transfer and translation. Nevertheless, the

South–South cooperation is featured as a singular field for the development of these studies. Brazil earned wide international recognition in the early 2000s for its agricultural modernization and food policies and its increasing influence illustrated the specific political interests of coalitions that are embedded in domestic and international struggles. The country’s South–South diplomacy is probably that which benefited the most from the narrative of similarity of conditions with countries from the Global South (particularly in Latin America and Africa) and the potential to share its development experiences.

However, questions centred on the reproducibility of domestic trajectories, which are present not only in Brazilian diplomacy. These questions have proved to be simplistic as they tend to envisage the ‘success’ of the transfer in terms of the degree of similarity to the ‘original’ model – the transfer in turn being considered as a final and accomplished product. Most of the studies presented in this chapter highlighted how the unifying side of these policy models actually covered heterogeneous projects, led by diverse actors and in the name of often divergent interests and ideas. The role of domestic coalitions in international arenas and transfer processes was then highlighted. The same idea may be applied to the process of adoption of policies in domestic contexts. It is not a surprise that the notion of *translation* has been commonly mobilized to describe this adoption process and to analyse the role of domestic actors in the reinterpretation of the transferred models.

The dialogue between policy transfer/diffusion and the design and circulation of international and regional soft norms has also been discussed. The design of best practices to globally tackle food and nutritional security has increasingly benefited from domestic experiences. Hence, the power of ideas and knowledge in the transfer/diffusion process remains central, but the studies of this chapter chose to clarify the hybridization, bricolage, and prevalence of certain ideas over others in the processes of knowledge framing and policy diffusion.

Finally, an innovative process of bottom-to-top regional integration based on policy diffusion led by the interactions among Latin American civil society organizations and public managers opened a new field for transfer/diffusion studies, which requires further analysis. The Central American Strategy for Rural Area-based Development Project, which was created to assure a regional diffusion of rural territorial development policies in the Central American Integration System has shown the limits of intergovernmental integration to promote policy transfer. It has a specific symbolic importance in the case of frontier territories, but it was quite difficult to harmonize institutional and methodological frameworks in the six countries (Sabourin et al., 2015). It contrasts with the positive effect of grassroots regional integration in Latin America, regarding the capacity of *La Via Campesina* and the Alliance of People for Food Sovereignty to promote agroecology policy diffusion or REAF for family farming policy transfer and convergence. Further research will also be welcome on the mechanisms of policy diffusion in other regions, particularly across African states, where research is still underdeveloped.

To conclude, the literature is no longer centred on the Western world, and it has been progressively expanded to new perspectives and cases from the Global South. However, new ‘directions’ in this research field would imply further exploring South–North transfers. Some examples are already available, for instance, regarding payment of farmers for their environmental services, participatory budgets, and local food purchases from Latin America to Europe. Also, recent studies on environmental and rural policy diffusion have highlighted the role of multi-positioned institutional and individual actors’ trajectories and circulation, as



strategic intermediaries in the process of policy transfer and especially of policy translation (Dumoulin, 2010; Hassenteufel et al., 2017).

Moreover, new policy fields will likely require further development. In particular, the adaptation to climate change in rural areas opens new possibilities to transfer/diffusion studies as they are increasingly combined with other policy process mechanisms like layering, recycling, and integration. Finally, many of the policies analysed in this chapter are going through decline or dismantling both on the importing (Argentina, El Salvador, and Paraguay) and on the exporting (Brazil) sides, owing to shifts in the government coalition. Transnational fronts of development solutions are constantly being renewed and reinvented. Will this configure the ‘emergence of a new politico-economic “consensus” that rebuilds on the neoliberal democratic project or a quicker and more regionalized replacement of established agendas?’ (Milhorance, 2018, p. 217). Future and complementary research could seek a better understanding of evolution of the implementation of these policies at the global, regional and local levels.

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