Networks and geographies of global social policy diffusion.

Culture, economy and colonial legacies.

Recommendations for theoretical framing:

The unique character of this publication relies on the comparison of influential factors across all policy fields. To establish a valid comparison between the policy fields, it is therefore advised, to include all networks as well as GDP and the democracy index as covariates, along with your own field relevant covariates. However, if you cannot find any theoretical indication why one of these networks should be influencing the implementation of policies within your field, you may eliminate these networks from your analysis. We recommend a step wise approach in adding the networks and other relevant independent variables to the models.

We wish to determine, if welfare policies are more likely to travel between culturally similar or geographically close countries, or if economical an historical relations have a stronger effect.

The diffusion of welfare policies is influenced by different indicators, depending on the policy field in question. However, certain influencing factors apply to all diffusion processes around the globe: geographical distance or proximity, trade, cultural similarity and shared (colonial) history. All these indicators can be represented in a network structure with ties between countries serving as possible "diffusion or influence pipelines". By applying an identical methodology to different fields of social policy, we wish to create an overview across all fields to determine which links have a particularly relevant explanatory power with regard to the diffusion of social policy. For this purpose, we apply the same methodology to all policy fields included in this publication. We test the influence of the aforementioned networks, spatial proximity, trade relations, cultural similarity and shared colonial past, on the introduction of welfare policies around the globe against each other.

Policy examples from neighboring or nearby countries for example, are ascribed a greater role model function for their own national policies, so that overall a higher degree of mutual influence is assumed due to geographical proximity (Schmitt and Obinger 2013). The proximity network in this publication therefore serves as a reference to determine whether the contacts shown in the three other network types exceed the breaking effect of distances, and are therefore more relevant to the diffusion of social policy (Simmons and Elkins 2004).

Trade is considered a classic pathway for policy diffusion, as the trade network expansion coincides with a general expansion of social policy (Cameron 1978). The significance of economic globalization and the associated intensification of trade linkages for the diffusion of social policy is based on the fundamental assumption that important trading partners influence a country's policies more strongly than subordinate trading partners. As a result of the globalization process, countries are becoming more closely aligned with one another.

Former colonial ties not only influence trade networks, but also the development of welfare policies. Regardless of the policies initial target, it still remains a strong indicator for welfare state development (Kuhlmann et al. 2020).

And while culture is a highly contested construct itself, it relates to the diffusion of welfare policies: As Emirbayer states, "cultural formations entail(s), not individual 'attitudes' or 'values,' much less disembodied 'systems,' but rather bundles of communications, relations, or transactions" (Emirbayer 1997; 300). Accordingly, culturally similar countries are potentially not only located geographically close to one another, but also share a perspective on human rights and the welfare of citizens. While most of the included networks in this publication influence each other, and all of them influence the field of welfare policy in their own way, we suspect different policy fields to be influenced in different ways.

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