



Travelling ideas and domestic policy change: The transnational politics of reproductive rights/health in Argentina

Global Social Policy

12(2) 109–128

© The Author(s) 2012

Reprints and permission:

sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/1468018112443685

gsp.sagepub.com



Debora Lopreite

Carleton University, Canada

Abstract

This article examines the transnational flow of social policy ideas, in particular their importance in advancing gender equality policies in countries with strong conservative gender norms that have a history of neglecting reproductive rights. Focusing on the case of Argentina, it illustrates how internationally sanctioned ideas contributed to these important policy changes helping in the adoption of a federal programme of contraception; yet abortion remains illegal. New policies have been adopted, but important elements of the old regime have been preserved. While the study demonstrates the importance of travelling policy ideas, it is also a reminder of the continued importance of national politics and policy legacies.

Keywords

Argentina, global gender policies, Latin America, reproductive health, reproductive rights

Introduction

This article examines the transnational flow of social policy ideas, in particular their importance in advancing gender equality policies in countries with strong conservative gender norms that have a history of neglecting reproductive rights, like those of Latin America. Argentina is a good example of this. In addition to its longstanding pro-natalist position, the country was isolated from international politics and policies during its authoritarian past. This changed dramatically with democratization (1983), when Argentina was influenced by the global politics of human rights. Moreover, its close relationship with international financial institutions since the 1990s has facilitated the adoption of a gender and development approach as part of its poverty reduction strategy.

Corresponding author:

Debora Lopreite, Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, K1S 5B6, Canada

Email: dcloprei@connect.carleton.ca

These developments have had an impact on Argentina's gender equality policies. In 2003, the National Congress broke with tradition and passed a federal plan for the distribution of contraception and health counselling to improve women's access to reproductive health services. Although abortion remains restricted, contraceptive surgery and other new programmes have been introduced. This article illustrates how internationally sanctioned ideas contributed to these important policy changes in Argentina; it examines the particular conditions under which international ideas penetrate domestic discourses, and the extent of policy reform. International ideas may not automatically translate into national politics, however. In Argentina they were better received in Buenos Aires city (henceforth the City), whose political autonomy (1996) opened a new political opportunity structure for the discussion of women's issues at the subnational level. These alternative scales of action (global and subnational) were critical, particularly while the national state remained resistant. While the study demonstrates the importance of travelling policy ideas, it is also a reminder of the continued importance of national politics and policy legacies. Thus, while the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development helped to frame fertility regulation as a women's rights issue, although abortion was excluded due to the pressure of conservative transnational groups, in Argentina it was the combination of institutional democratic changes, and the 2001–2002 financial crises, which shaped government preferences and created an opening for the translation of international ideas into domestic policy. Even then, the policy legacies of familialism and maternalism continued to limit the extent of policy change.

The article begins with an overview of the relevance of global ideas and discourses to domestic gender policy change. To provide an interpretation of the nature and extent of changes in reproductive policies in Argentina, I briefly develop the relevance of international norms and their appropriation by domestic actors to advance policy change. In addition, concepts of institutional change theories, with an emphasis on path-dependency and turning point crisis are introduced. The second section focuses on domestic legacies of maternalist ideologies as a path-dependent development, and the international framework of reproductive rights and its influence in Argentina's case. The remainder of the article examines the impact on Argentina; it focuses on the politics of reproductive rights that resulted in the important, though limited changes, in local and national scale. The empirical analysis is based on qualitative analysis of documents, in particular parliamentary debates and newspapers articles, and personal interviews conducted with key informants in Buenos Aires between 2005 and 2011.

This article contributes to the study of the role of transnational ideas in affecting change in gender policies, especially as it involves the adoption of *more* liberal notions and components of reproductive rights in conservative regimes like those of Latin America. The article concludes that – while crisis can generate conditions for breaking with tradition and provides opportunities for the opening up of conservative gender regimes – the extent of such reforms must be understood cautiously, as substantial aspects of old gender regimes will persist, representing a degree of continuity within change. This is exemplified in Argentina, where the long-term persistence of familialistic and maternalist discourses gave support to the reframing of gender policies. Implications of these changes are discussed in the conclusions.

Global ideas and domestic gender policy change

The increasing global flow of ideas in human rights and social policies has prompted constructivist international relations scholars to examine how international ideas can become drivers of domestic change. Their work highlights the roles of transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink, 1998), social movements (Della Porta et al., 1999) and non-governmental organizations as carriers of principled ideas (Keck and Sikkink, 1998) and norms (Khagram et al., 2002).

Extensive research has focused on the role that activists play in gathering new information, developing narratives and constructing frameworks. Indeed, given new global opportunities, weaker domestic actors can use alliances with external supporters to advance claims against their governments (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). In gender policies in particular, transnational women's groups and domestic actors have worked together to advance policy change by framing international discourses on women's rights (Alvarez, 1999). They helped to construct the global gender equality regime, compounded by norms, conventions and common discourses about gender equality (Kardam, 2004).

In this article, I suggest that while global norms and policies can be an important driver of policy change, they are, however, not enough to promote domestic policy change, since actors seeking reform at the national level must deal with entrenched domestic political legacies. In the field of biological reproduction, international organizations and transnational reproductive rights advocates have moved beyond the national state in their efforts to challenge traditional policies. As a result, ideas about biological reproduction and body rights have been increasingly globalized (Dodgson, 2000). Abortion raises questions concerning different beliefs about gender roles, the meaning of parenthood and human nature and they are part of the realm of private morality (Luker, 1984). Thus, public policies of biological reproduction are highly influenced by beliefs and principles about religion and morality, thereby creating strong constituencies that sustain existing policies over time. This is not to suggest that conservative gender regimes cannot be transformed. As the literature of historical-institutionalism maintains, persistent policies and institutions can be challenged by moments (*critical junctures*) that emerged after a crisis or a shock. Critical junctures represent a short period of fundamental change that allows for choosing a path, that is, selecting a certain political option among others (Collier and Collier, 2002; Mahoney, 2000). Thus, the choice of a path produces a *legacy* that entails the production and reproduction of institutional arrangements. The chosen path lasts until a major discontinuity ends the *legacy* and another *critical juncture* emerges (Collier and Collier, 2002).

Critical moments of political opportunity can provide the context where new and more radical formulations find resonance and, as such, penetrate into domestic politics (Béland, 2005). Such moments are of particular importance, since they can create the conditions that facilitate the construction of 'the need of reform' (Cox, 2001). Here the emergence and spread of global norms can challenge highly resistant regimes, in part by helping to reframe issues (Béland, 2005). Briefly defined, discourse framing is the process of constructing meaning through reference to ideational positions (Snow and Benford, 1988). Moreover, discourse serves as a weapon in an ideological struggle (Fisher, 2003). How issues are framed plays a critical role in the diffusion of ideas; for

example, advocates must employ strategies to persuade sceptics of the importance (or need) of reform (Cox, 2001). One such strategy would be to frame discourses in ways acceptable to those who resist the idea of change, even if it means limiting the boundaries of the debate and excluding certain alternatives from the constellation of possible problems and solutions (Jenson, 1986).

Transnational ideas and the historical legacies of pro-natalism and maternalism in Argentina

In this article it is argued that the emerging global reproductive rights discourse developed at Cairo (1994) clashed with entrenched maternalistic and familialistic ideas that were deeply rooted in the national culture. Maternalism was largely the result of population concerns, which had been a central 'social issue' in Argentina since the formation of the national state, circa 1880. It was believed that slow population growth would have a negative impact on Argentina becoming a fully modern and competitive country. Infant mortality and public health also became major social concerns, linked to the new labour force requirements and national security issues (i.e. the need to protect Argentinean territory from the neighbouring countries). In the postwar decades, pro-natalism continued to be part of the legacy of the Argentinean state. After a long period of institutional and democratic instability however, the national state's involvement in this issue was more evident, due to strong authoritarian views on population policies. In 1974, President Isabel Perón issued decree 659/74, which prohibited any activity related to reproductive control, such as the commercialization of contraception in pharmacies, and launched national campaigns 'to publicize the risks' associated with medical contraception. This prohibition was most apparent during the military dictatorship (1976–1983), when the number of human rights violations was unprecedented in Argentina's history. In 1977, the military dictatorship issued decree 3.938, 'Objetivos y Políticas Nacionales de Población', which included elimination of all activities involving the promotion of fertility control. Following the recommendations of the National Council of Demographic Policies (Consejo Nacional de Políticas Demográficas), the military regime of President Videla issued another executive decree prohibiting any practice related to medical contraception. Activities related to family planning were cancelled 'for reasons of national security' based on geopolitical diagnoses of hypothetical military conflicts with neighbouring countries, and the need to increase the Argentinean population (Torrado, 2004).

At a time when Malthusian ideas associated the reduction of fertility with higher levels of development, several Latin American countries, including Brazil, Colombia and Mexico, were selected by US government security agenda and UN agencies to be supported in their family planning policies. Although Argentina was not one of these countries, it refused to take part in international surveys of fertility and the use of contraception. Moreover, in 1974, at the Bucharest Conference on Population, Argentine representatives denounced international interventions in domestic affairs, principally those of the United States. Thus, Argentina was essentially following the politics of isolation vis-à-vis international standards and procedures. These decisions had a significant impact on the poor, increasing the socioeconomic disparities in the fertility rate and access to health services. The suppression of reproductive rights during the military dictatorship may

explain why contraception became such a political and contested issue in the following years, especially after democratization.

The emerging transnational gender equality regime fuelled local activists with discourses to make contraception rights a high political priority bolstered by high maternal mortality rates and unsafe abortions. Indeed, the adoption of a health perspective on reproductive policies, and the globalization of health sector reforms helped to reframe the issue of reproductive rights as a health issue. This reframing was due to the Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994), which articulated a broader concept of family planning by including it in the larger context of comprehensive reproductive health services, instead of demographic policies. Moreover, and in order to broaden the range of potential support, pro-choice groups lead by UN officials framed abortion as a health problem (the position was that abortion should be 'legal, safe, and rare') with less emphasis on women's privacy rights. Accordingly, proponents highlighted the significant number of maternal deaths due to unsafe abortions. Despite this, conservative groups were successful in eliminating abortion from the final document (McIntosh and Finkle, 1995). The emphasis on maternal mortality as a key reproductive health indicator facilitated the spread of a discourse on reproductive rights throughout the world, with important ramifications for Argentina.

At the time, however, the Menem administration (1989–1999) adopted neoliberal economic policies and social conservatism, and became a strong opponent to the international framework of reproductive rights. Indeed, Argentina was one of the few Latin American countries¹ to support the Vatican's position, which invokes the principles of national sovereignty and cultural differences to counter the global framework on women's reproductive rights. The Vatican and its allies eventually signed the official document, although with reservations, one of which was that the official Cairo document includes the need to respect the different cultural backgrounds of the countries represented. While opponents managed to limit recognition of the right to abortion, the Cairo Conference made important steps towards establishing the concept of reproductive rights. These gains had an impact in Latin America, as women's groups used related UN-regional conferences to advance the Cairo resolutions, and push for domestic reforms (Alvarez, 1999). Although these conferences provided a regional opportunity structure to help advance claims, they did not have the authority to require national states to adopt global policies. However, they provided women's groups with ideas and discourses to reframe reproductive rights domestically.

Beyond the UN system of women's rights, the World Bank has been an enthusiastic adopter of the reproductive health perspective as part of its poverty reduction strategy; the reduction of fertility rates and improved maternal health are now seen as important ways of providing 'equality of opportunities' for the poor, while complying with the Bank's interests in addressing economic growth, poverty reduction and reproductive health (Bedford, 2009; Deacon, 2007; Rousseau, 2007). As we shall see, the Bank's promotion of the issue became significant in Argentina in a time of crisis and impoverishment, which caused the need for international financial help to overcome an unprecedented economic situation in the country.

To summarize, in this article it is argued that these ideas became acceptable as they provided a venue to find consensus around the need to address the reproductive health of

poor women. While this implied a significant advancement, it also limited the boundaries of policy debate in two directions: (1) reproductive rights were framed loosely as a matter of body rights, instead the social question of poor women dominated the political debate; and (2) the legalization of abortion was excluded as a potential solution to maternal mortality as conservative groups operative at the transnational level were successful in stopping its explicit inclusion in international agreements. Despite the boundaries already established in the international framework, in Argentina, global debates were perceived for some as a threat to family values and traditions. Moreover, as we shall see, in the legislative arena, female legislators declined to pursue abortion rights, and concentrated on contraception, which was also a sensitive political issue.

Democratization and a new political opportunity structure for women's rights

The literature on historical institutionalism suggests that domestic institutional changes, such as those associated with democratization, can provide the necessary opportunities for actors to mobilize and import ideas (Sikkink, 2008). For example, De la Deheza (2007) finds that democratization and the emergence of electoral politics contributed to frame human rights discourses in the field of sexual minorities' rights in Latin America. The analysis of Argentina's politics of reproductive rights since the 1980s denotes that democracy provided spaces for framing activity at several scales (local and national). Despite some initial steps in the direction of change being adopted by the first democratic president, democracy per se would not induce domestic change.

The new democratic government of President Alfonsín (1983–1987) abolished the two 1970s decrees, and restored the right of couples to decide the number of children they would have and the period of time between them. Family planning services were also established during this time. In 1987, a process to promote responsible parenthood by providing families with relevant information was established by the Ministry of Social Security, under the aegis of the Secretary of Health, Human Development and Family (Zaratuza, 1998). In 1988, the first Responsible Parenthood Programme (Programa de Procreación Responsable) to provide contraception and counselling services by the public hospitals was implemented in the city of Buenos Aires. Nonetheless, as international discourses were not distinct from demographic concerns until the Cairo Conference of 1994, claims for women's reproductive rights were limited to a few groups of feminists, including Mabel Bianco, current leader of FEIM (Fundación para el Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer), who served as Sub-secretary of Health in the Alfonsín government.²

Indeed, the concept of reproductive rights did not exist until it became part of the international agenda during the Cairo Conference (1994), and was supported by the women's movement in Beijing (1995) and others; but they were absent in Argentinean debates. Nevertheless, Argentina's commitment to human rights in general was so significant that it was considered 'a global champion' of human rights. The country was the source of unprecedented levels of human rights innovations and discussion, and was also an exporter of human rights ideas, tactics and experts (Sikkink, 2008).³ However, while democratization and Argentina's new commitment to human rights provided a new

opportunity structure for women, and all citizens, with respect to reproductive rights, the changes were limited to the elimination of the previous authoritarian norms.

It was not until 1994, when the concept of reproductive rights emerged in transnational politics, that body rights discourse became a national priority in Argentina. After 1994, however, the new global agenda was resisted by the government. Though President Menem (1989–1999) adopted neoliberal economic policies, he had a strong leaning towards social conservatism. At both the Cairo Conference (1994) and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), the Argentine state introduced reservations to the final version of documents intended to protect the traditional nuclear family, and rejected the concept of reproductive rights. In its reservations, the Menem government argued that Argentina only supported the original CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) text, which had been adopted by Congress in 1985. This document did not explicitly use the term reproductive rights, but rather noted that individuals have the right to decide on the number of children and the space between them (CEDAW Article 16), without specifying who in the family should make decisions concerning family planning. The Menem government considered the concept of reproductive rights a euphemism for legitimating abortion and abortive methods of contraception.^{4,5}

At the same time that the Menem administration was attempting to obstruct global norms, Argentinean women's groups, encouraged by the adoption of international conventions on human and women's rights and operating at global and regional levels, contributed to expanding the global movement for reproductive rights domestically.⁶ In particular, the implementation of the women's legislative quota in 1991 enabled promotion of the issue in the legislative arena. In 1995, with the support of feminist activists outside parliament, feminist legislators introduced a bill to establish a family planning programme to the National Congress. Although the bill passed in the Deputy Chamber, it was never debated in the Senate, and thus expired in 1997 (Blofield, 2006; Htun, 2003).

Many Argentinean feminist activists and academics agree that Cairo (1994) and Beijing (1995) provided the political opportunity to make reproduction a sensitive political issue (Zaratuza, 1998: 55).⁷ In the words of Mabel Bianco, 'Our participation in International Conferences helped us a lot to diffuse our work about reproductive rights and to gain attention from legislators and the national [Argentinean] media. We greatly value our participation in the United Nations.'⁸

The relevant Argentinean NGOs involved in reproductive rights are: ADEUEM (Asociación de Especialistas Universitarias en Estudios de la Mujer), CLADEM Argentina (Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer) and FEIM. There are other grassroots organizations that cooperate with these main NGOs.⁹ All these organizations offer a feminist perspective, which clearly considers reproductive rights central to achieving gender equality. Yet, there are important differences between them with respect to access to international and domestic funding, as well as links to international experts and UN officials. Some of the organizations are comprised of highly professional staff, and have good access to international systems and strong links with other international activists. Others involve women with double militancy (i.e. in political parties and grassroots level associations).

Despite the hostile environment created by Menem's opposition to international standards, women's groups did not abandon their efforts. Though the state continued to be unreceptive to women's claims at the national level, there were opportunities at the sub-national level. Governments in several provinces, encouraged by international developments, began implementing family planning programmes after 1995. Although the provinces of Patagonia (the southern region) were pioneers in the area of contraception services, the most effective challenge to the existing regime came from the new Buenos Aires City Legislature, after Buenos Aires became an autonomous electoral district in 1996.

Challenging from below: Buenos Aires politics on reproductive rights

The relevance of the city of Buenos Aires in contributing to the translation of global norms and the promotion of domestic policy change is explained by three related events/factors: first, the autonomy of the city, which provided a new opportunity for advancing women's rights due to the approval of a city's constitution and the creation of the new legislature; second, the massive incorporation of female representatives as a result of the implementation of the legislative quota, some of whom developed strong links with women's groups; and third the election in 1996 of a progressive alliance strongly opposed to President Menem's social conservatism.^{10,11}

These institutional/political changes since 1996, however, were the result of a long tradition of Buenos Aires (hereafter the city) as the political and cultural centre of the country (Gibson, 1996). The City has always been associated with liberal and progressive ideas, and played an important role in the origins of a feminist movement led by middle-class women (Lavrin, 1995). Thus, the City can be considered a virtual laboratory of policy innovation, open to the flow of ideas and a battleground for opposing forces, particularly in the area of women's and sexual minorities' rights. The City was both an arena for discourse framing and the formation of shared understanding among women, and a venue in the struggle for reproductive rights.

Mobilization with respect to gender equality went beyond reproductive rights. In 1996, the City developed a new constitution that established a set of women's rights, and it was the first national district to include gender equality goals in its constitution. Chapter 9, Article 37 of the City's Constitution states, 'The recognition of sexual reproductive rights, free of coercion and violence, as basic human rights, especially to decide responsibly on the procreation and the number of children and the space between them. [The Constitution] guarantees equal rights and responsibilities of women and men as progenitors and promotes the integral protection of the family' (Buenos Aires Constitution 1996). In addition, the Constitution includes a chapter specifically related to parity between women and men in the private sphere (Article 16), and also covers responsible parenthood and reproductive rights (Article 21), sex education (Article 24) and gender equality policies (i.e. mainstreaming) (Article 38). Reproductive rights were central to the concept of gender equality that was being debated and, to some extent, institutionalized in the City. In 2000, two laws were passed (418 and 439) establishing a programme of reproductive health to be implemented in public hospitals and health centres.

The City became a critical player in promoting/adopting international ideas. All women's groups with strong international ties are located there, and the autonomy of the City provided them with an alternative platform for advancing reform. Links with an increasing number of female legislators helped these organizations frame discourses in the City legislature, for example legislator Martha Oyhanarte was an active member of FEIM and legislator Dora Barrancos is an internationally recognized feminist academic; both participated enthusiastically in the debate.

Developments related to reproductive rights in the City would not have been possible, however, without the emergence of the global gender regime, of which conventions, norms, behaviours and common discourses were intended to promote gender equality (Kardam, 2004). The spirit of the Cairo (1994) and Beijing (1995) platforms were prominent in legislature debates, in particular supporters of change highlighted issues of high maternal mortality rates due to unsafe abortions, the problem of poverty and limited women's access to health services. More importantly, the idea of women's empowerment through the concept of reproductive rights downplayed previous demographic rationales that were sensitive to Argentinean history (see parliamentary debates, Buenos Aires Legislature Debate, 2000).¹² This is not to suggest that international debates were automatically included in legislative politics. Instead, the debates divided the legislature into two camps: those who promoted Argentina's adoption of global norms, and those who were attached to national legacies.

Legislator Lucila Colombo was one of the leading voices of the most social conservative position. Her involvement reflected a maternalist position, as well as a focus on demographic concerns.¹³ Colombo's proposed programme comprised a comprehensive approach to women's reproductive health, including a requirement to support humanized birth and breast-feeding. While she supported an extensive maternal and reproductive health programme, she did not consider this a question of women's rights. Rather, she emphasized that families are the basic social unit, and was critical of 'foreign' models of society.

Colombo was highly critical of the international definition of reproductive rights, and argued that defining them as permission to choose the desired number of children was an abstract idea, unless the socioeconomic conditions under which such choices are made were improved. She felt that discrimination as a consequence of maternity, the need to value women's maternal role and respect for cultural and religious values should all be addressed. Thus, reproductive rights must reflect maternity as the principal value, and not as an instrument of demographic and eugenic policies that affect human dignity (Buenos Aires Legislature Debate, 2000: 38). She was primarily concerned with the demographic rationale of these programmes, despite the fact that the country did not have population/fertility problems. Stressing the demographic rationale of international directives, Colombo invoked the UNFPA 1998 Report, arguing that the report suggests that, 'the extension of reproductive health will reduce fertility, bring families to the desired size and, eventually, reduce the size of the family'.¹⁴

To emphasize the contrast between Argentinean ideological and historical legacies and the new international standards, Colombo asked the legislature to explicitly define reproductive rights in the Argentinean context. To her, 'Argentina does not have to accept all the international recommendations when they go against the principles and values of

our society.¹⁵ Accordingly, she proposed the introduction of a specific anti-abortion clause in the law and, referring to the 'morning after' pill, stressed that contraceptive methods must not be abortive.

For those who supported the adoption of new global standards, namely the Alianza (UCR-Frepaso) and Justicialista political parties, the focus was on poverty, in particular the rights of poor women to reproductive rights as understood according to Cairo (1994) and Beijing (1995). While the parties had links with feminist groups and articulated a rights discourse in which women's autonomy was essential, they avoided provocative topics such as abortion, and instead addressed health indicators and poverty, thus clearly aligned to international discourses. This meant they focused on the need to prevent abortions through implementation of the law. Attempting to frame the issue in an acceptable way, legislator Liliana Chiernajovsky highlighted 'the need to ensure reproductive rights for the poor without access to reproductive services' (Buenos Aires Legislature Debate, 2000: 72). High abortion rates and maternal mortality were framed as public health problems due to unsafe practices. Chiernajovsky argued, 'What we are doing is something that aims to prevent abortion . . . this law attempts to deal with social equity' (p. 73).

An analysis of parliamentary debates, however, reveals the history of past policies and the values underpinning them. Two longstanding legacies of the political discourse are evident. The first was the relevance of family planning considerations, which overshadowed discourse based on women's privacy rights. With respect to this, Argentina still considered the family the primary unit of society, and needing to be strengthened and protected. The second legacy relates to the rejection of the demographic rationale (population growth control) that was predominant in the international reproductive policies of the 1970s. These two legacies narrowed the scope of the debate, by excluding abortion and focusing on contraception. Although international developments in reproductive rights provided women advocates with new strategic narratives that could help foster change, historical legacies remained important and discourses were framed according to tradition, thereby setting the direction of new adopted policies. Certainly, they had to promote domestic resistance to old traditions of maternalism and familialism, and find ways to frame discourses that do not radically oppose these conventions.

Nevertheless, debate over these bills in Buenos Aires served to advance international concern, and that would create alternative legacies for debate at the national level. The political centrality of the City in these debates was noted by several legislators interviewed for this article, who agreed that these 'local' debates would later have resonance at the national level.¹⁶ In fact, the debates were considered foundational by some legislators, including Ruiz Moreno, who argued, 'The goal that some of us follow is that a similar law will be adopted in Buenos Aires province, at the Federal level and in all other provinces that have the responsibility to provide reproductive health services' (speech before the City legislature).

The local political opportunity structure did not provide a uniform claim but did contribute to exposing the different views and filtering international ideas on reproductive rights, particularly at a time when the national state was reluctant to adopt international norms. Limits were in consensual discourses that framed policies in an acceptable way, however, and this allowed women legislators to gain support from their colleagues.¹⁷

The 2001–2002 economic crises and the need of reform

The debates in the City legislature established the range of acceptable preferences and proposals, particularly with respect to issues of health, poverty and inequality. While the parameters of the City debates would have an impact on debate at the national level, the impact depended on a change in the social and political conditions that could push reproductive rights to the centre of the political debate. The 2001–2002 financial crises, and the associated rapid increase in poverty, reinvigorated the debate and legitimized the need for reform. The rise in poverty contributed to a major political crisis, culminating in a government shift, which ended a period of adoption of neoliberalism in the country as part of the so-called Washington Consensus. The poverty affected a growing number of women, who in turn helped change the opinions of political representatives and government leaders to agreeing with new reproductive policies. Argentina then adopted broader policies to combat poverty, justified by the need to strengthen impoverished families.

This new social agenda was also part of the post-Washington Consensus. The PROFAM-Argentina: Family Strengthening and Social Capital Promotion Project focused on the need to strengthen the role of the family in the context of economic and social fragmentation, as part of the reformulation of traditional gender roles. Rather than focusing on individual actors (child, woman, poor, etc.), the new approach attempted to include these actors in a comprehensive and integrative perspective within the family (PROFAM, 2001). The circumstances after the financial crisis of 2001 were rife with conflict, and this accelerated the need to reform social assistance programmes, this time with a focus on reconstituting the ‘family’ as the primary social unit. From the perspective of this strategy, the new focus of targeted benefits became not just the child or the poor, but rather, poor families. PROFAM required a focus on reproductive health and rights, while another Bank’s loan funded the sexual health and responsible procreation programme that was debated and passed in the National Congress between 2002 and 2003.¹⁸

Interestingly, the national state was more accepting of international ideas due to the availability of the Bank’s loan in the environment of massive impoverishment. The new provisional government that emerged from the crisis was led by President Eduardo Duhalde (2002–2003), a devout Catholic, who adhered to a Christian social doctrine. However, President Duhalde appointed an international health expert, Dr Ginés González García, who conducted a vigorous campaign to implement family planning, maternal health care and the distribution of generic drugs to poverty-stricken families. González García’s policy priorities included reducing child and maternal mortality and providing access to contraception services. His appointment as Health Minister put him in a position to deal with the issues at the federal level, and he was key to promoting the need for reform, particularly to senators. Due to his technical expertise, and encouraged by the international discourse on reproductive rights and health, González García effectively prevailed over the state bureaucracy. The role of Minister of Health was so important that González García’s presence, along with the First Lady, Hilda Duhalde, at the Senate session in which the law was finally passed helped convince many senators to adopt the law.¹⁹ As they promoted pro-poor policies, however, they clearly expressed moral limitations to legalized abortion.

Thus, consensus to pass the law in the National Congress would only be reached if the following criteria were included: contraception methods must be non-abortive, transitive and reversible; patria potestas must be respected; both parents must have the right to intervene in the reproductive health of minors; there must be recognition of the objection of conscience; the law that regulates the medical profession must be altered in order to establish under what conditions doctors can invoke personal beliefs to avoid the practice; and the principles and ideas of every educative and health institution must be respected.²⁰

Analysis of the parliamentary debates reveals that abortion was excluded as an acceptable choice for women, due to the fact that anti-abortion positions in the National Congress were stronger than those in the City, even among legislators who actively supported the programme. Conservative ideas about the significance of motherhood and women's natural role were reflected in several speeches (see Deputy Ferrero, in *Cámara de Diputados*, 2001: 14). For example, the emergency pill was considered abortive, and thus was excluded from the debate. Some senators also noted the need to make the law acceptable to the Catholic Church (see Giannetasio's speech before the Senate [*Cámara de Senadores*, 2002]).

The position of a close ally of First Lady Hilda Duhalde, Senator Mabel Müller, was interesting. In her speech, while not making particular reference to gender equality, Müller clearly emphasized the importance of family planning, as in, 'We, the senators of the Justicialista Party, came from a political group that, from its origins, due to our doctrine and actions, has had a commitment to life since the conception, in all its forms' (*Cámara de Senadores*, 2002: 4). Müller argued, 'Human rights are expressed as the obligation of the State to guarantee the population the right to health, giving priority to infant and maternal health, to the condition of the pregnant women, but also helping families decide freely and responsibly their own conformation' (p. 5). For example, she said, 'Our country has not confused the right to health with projects aimed to solve the problem of poverty by limiting the number of children of our poor families . . . this was expressed by the Argentinean Delegation in Cairo (1994), Beijing (1995) and Copenhagen (1995)' (p. 5).

The demographic rationale was even present in the most conservative views, though in a relatively minor way. In the words of the MP Lix Klett (Fuerza Republicana Party), 'this type of anti-natalist policy was functional to the interests of the imperialist interests of the North. . . . The culture of life and the idea that "to govern is to populate" is part of our legacy and the building of our nation.'²¹ He quoted Isabel Perón's 1974 decree, which warned of depopulation in the developed world. In the same vein, the MP Disaldi argued, 'Our country, with its natural resources intact and 35,000,000 people, must develop pro-natalist policies rather than anti-natalist policies' (*Cámara de Diputados*, 2001: 37). These opinions reveal past worldviews that were no longer hegemonic, and thus were not significant enough to stop change.

Outside Congress, however, change did not come without resistance. The reformation efforts broadened the rift between the national government and the Catholic Church, and political tension escalated in 2006 and 2007, in particular when the need to legalize abortion was mentioned by public officials (*La Nación*, 2006). However, this situation did not last long.

Early in 2006, a committee of experts from the Ministry of Justice drafted a bill to reform the penal code, and it included a change to the controversial Article 86 on abortion. The change stated, ‘woman will not be punished when abortion is practised with her consent and within the three first months of pregnancy, if the circumstances are excusable’ (*La Nación*, 2007). The dissemination of this amendment by the media generated strong reaction from conservative groups, and prompted the Minister of the Interior, Aníbal Fernández, to declare that the national government did not unilaterally promote the decriminalization of abortion. He also stated, ‘This is, however, an issue that the [Argentinean] society must debate’ (*La Nación*, 2007). González García mounted a vigorous campaign to spread reproductive rights, and expanded it during the Kirchner government, but the battle still continued on two distinct fronts: contraception and abortion. In fact, the Health Minister was very active in what he called an anti-abortion campaign to combat maternal mortality and unsafe abortion.

President Cristina Kirchner, who succeeded her husband Néstor Kirchner in 2007, has explicitly opposed abortion, and defended her stance by arguing that she is a Catholic. Since then, and despite legislative initiatives to foster discussion in the National Congress, no significant advances in the liberalization of abortion rights have been made in the country. In 2011 a bill to legalize abortion on demand within the 12 weeks of pregnancy was debated in the committee of justice of the lower house. Despite women’s groups and female legislators’ mobilization, and significant media coverage, the bill was not approved in the lower house committee and its debate is still pending. Discourses to advance the legalization of abortion are still primarily concerned with women’s health and the need to reduce unsafe abortions and maternal mortality. In explaining the limits to advance the issue in the National Congress, a female legislator of the government party FPV (Frente para la Victoria) argued, ‘There is no way that abortion would be passed in Congress using the argument of privacy rights. This is not something that would help us to gain support from other legislators.’²²

The dissemination of global views on gender equality and reproductive rights was difficult, and they could not bring about policy change in isolation. Instead, they gained momentum due to political opportunity created by the economic crises of 2001–2002. In the context of increasing impoverishment, addressing the needs of poor women became significant for policy-makers willing now to adopt international recommendations like those of Cairo 1994. Even then, familialism and maternalism still shaped discourses that pushed for policy change, but in limited ways. While important advances have been made, notably the adoption of a federal programme of contraception, abortion remains illegal and criminalized.

Conclusions

This article is concerned with the domestic conditions that – in particular in the field of reproductive rights – can facilitate the adoption of new policies. It is argued that transnationalized ideas had a significant impact in a country like Argentina, with a long tradition of neglecting reproductive rights. Although emerging international norms and conventions cannot oblige national states to adopt homogeneous standards, they may provide local activists with ideas and narratives to push for policy reform.

Much of the international relations literature assumes that domestic activists draw on existing ideas, norms and discourses; Argentina's case suggests that domestic actors are not merely recipients of foreign ideas. They can influence, yes, but they also contribute to shaping broader ideational trends; struggles between conservatives and reformers at different scales – from the global to the local – are an example of this. In addition, the analysis of the case suggests that transnational repertoires are not translated directly. Instead there is a process of reframing (or reinvention) in national settings (De la Deheza, 2007) and contextualized interpretations of international norms (Zwingel, 2005). In Argentina ideas were reframed to conform to the longstanding maternalist traditions embedded in history, and then they were able to widen the basis of support. I conclude that international ideas might be able to trigger change, if they can be framed in ways that resonate with the national historical legacies that shape the worldview of domestic actors. Although these strategies would facilitate change, they would also set boundaries to radically transform the old regime, establishing a path of continuity within change.

In comparison with earlier reforms in North America and Europe, however, changes in Argentina remain limited. As in the rest of Latin America, abortion is still prohibited and criminalized. The only advances thus far are in the area of contraception with the sexual health law of 2003, followed by an additional law of contraceptive surgery in 2006. While changes in North America and Europe forged widely accepted norms for modern and democratic countries, helping to establish international standards compatible with women's rights, earlier abortion reformers also prompted a counter-mobilization, especially among the Vatican and other evangelical religious groups (Htun, 2003). Moreover, conservative religious groups became increasingly globalized since the 1990s. Active participants in international forums, they were able to veto initiatives in the field of reproductive rights, especially at Cairo (1994) (Hausman, 2005; McIntosh and Finkle, 1995). It is thus not surprising that – in search of agreements between progressive reformers and conservative forces – reproductive rights were framed loosely as a matter of body rights, with the stress put on reproductive health. They also became linked with emerging discourses on poverty reduction and the right to health. Accordingly reproductive rights are not only the right to have an abortion, but are also linked with maternal health care and women's health more generally.

Despite the boundaries established by the international framework, in Argentina, global debates were perceived by some as a threat to family values and traditions. Indeed, Argentina was one of the few Latin American countries (along with Nicaragua) to oppose global conventions at Cairo and several other international conferences. Moreover, in Argentina female legislators agreed to put aside further claims to abortion in order to secure the contraception programme. A combination of transnational influences and domestic legacies shaped the policies adopted and left contraception a highly sensitive political issue. At a time when other Latin American countries were prepared to abandon pro-natalism and/or were the target of international agencies for reducing population, Argentina's military dictatorship had prohibited contraception and remained isolated from international forums. This created a legacy for women activists after the end of the dictatorship when contraception emerged as a highly sensitive issue in Argentina.

Despite these limits, internationally sanctioned ideas provided strategic framing for local activists pushing for reforms in the wake of democratic consolidation and

the opening to adoption of international human rights norms and conventions. These transnational frames were more acceptable to those who opposed abortion but were prepared to accept contraception. Indeed, democratization constituted an unprecedented opportunity structure as it developed institutional conditions – including a growing number of women in Congress – to advance reforms.

Some scholars are not so optimistic. Focusing on countries of the Southern Cone, Htun (2003) suggests that while democratic restoration opened up opportunities for progressive forces, it also provided opportunities for conservative groups to contest reforms and veto policy change. Findings of this study are consistent with that interpretation. I argue, however, that democratic persistence and deepening has created important opportunities to discuss gender equality policies and to advance civil rights. In addition to the breakthrough re: access to contraception, in 2010 the National Congress passed same-sex marriage legislation, and in 2011 the lower house passed progressive legislation on gender identity, assisted fertilization and euthanasia. This suggests that rather than radical transformation, changes might be better explained as the result of a series of incremental shifts. The Argentinean experience thus opens up hope for other Latin American countries where democratic persistence and political activism have also opened the way for seemingly partial reforms. In particular, in Latin America, women's presence in government increased concerns with gender equality policies like contraception, gender-based violence and family laws (Schwindt-Bayer, 2006).

In addition, democratization affects not only politics at the national scale, it can also create openings at subnational scales (Gibson, 2008). In this article, I have argued that the political autonomy of the city of Buenos Aires provided an additional opportunity to challenge existing policies. Indeed, events that happened at both scales (international and local) contributed to the reframing of policies, and led to the introduction of important, if partial, reforms. In addition to the Argentine example, the political autonomy of Mexico City opened up a new political opportunity for feminist mobilization, as the only place in the nation to liberalize abortion within the 12 weeks of pregnancy.

While neither international ideas nor democracy are sufficient to explain policy change, historical-institutional literature has emphasized the occurrence of major events, ruptures and/or crisis as drivers of paradigmatic changes, especially in highly resistant regimes. In this article I suggested that the financial crisis of 2001 created conditions to revisit old policies. In particular, impoverishment and economic crisis collided with international ideas and policies to reduce poverty, creating an opportunity for policy change that could open the door for further reforms. I suggest this is a paradox, because other scholars have assumed that the lack of abortion reforms in countries of South America can be explained largely by reference to the high degree of inequality in these societies at the time of political mobilization. While socioeconomic inequality allows conservative wealthy elites to influence morality politics through media and political campaigns, it also undermines cross-class solidarity necessary to advance policy reform; the lack of access to abortion disproportionately affects poor women, while middle- and upper-class women would find abortion services in private clinics (Blofield, 2006). While Argentina's crisis implied a rupture

with pro-natalist values, the rationale for adopting the new contraceptive policies was framed primarily as a way to help poor women. Thus, crisis contributed to the adoption of internationally sanctioned ideas, but in a way that was oriented to giving poor women means to fertility control as this provided an acceptable framework for those who would tolerate contraception but not abortion; less emphasis was put on women's privacy rights. In contrast to other countries of the region like Chile, however, the Argentinean reform created 'rights' to contraception, because the programme was approved through Congressional legislation. Moreover, women's activism over the last two decades has brought the issue to the public agenda, and several bills to liberalize abortion are being discussed in the National Congress. In countries with a weak tradition of civil rights, the focus on health, poverty and inequality may provide a strategic option for those seeking reforms, especially as they face strong organized opposition.

In stressing crisis as a potential driver of gender policy change, other scholars have suggested that crisis can be a double-edged sword, as it could open up opportunities for mobilization by women and sexual minorities while at the same time revitalizing conservative values (Bedford, 2009; Borland and Sutton, 2007). Moreover, the Bank's introduction of the post-Washington Consensus in Argentina resulted in an ambivalent gender policy that created spaces for both: one perspective focused on the need to restore families that were disintegrated by a decade of neoliberal policies, and another that pushed for progressive seizure (Bedford, 2009). The analysis of parliamentary debates has showed this conflictive and – at times – juxtaposed discourses of reconstituting families and promoting gender equality. Still, the case of Argentina suggests that new ideas can help to reframe old narratives and contribute to significant although incremental changes.

Funding

Part of the research included in this article was funded through a doctoral award to develop fieldwork in Buenos Aires between May and December 2005, by the International Development Research Centre of Canada.

Notes

1. The other Latin American countries were Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru and Venezuela. Muslim countries like Iran also became unexpected allies of the Vatican.
2. As an example of the persistence of demographic perspectives on fertility, see Torrado's intervention in a workshop on public policies after democratization (Fundación Illia/Plural, 1987: 57–67).
3. Among institutional innovations made by the Argentinean government headed by Raúl Alfonsín (1983–1989) Sikkink (2008) mentions the creation of the truth commission (CONADEP) (to investigate crimes against humanity) and the trial of the juntas. In addition, the government created the Subsecretariat of Human Rights in the Ministry of Interior to supervise human rights policy and to manage the CONADEP files. This was one of the early examples of human rights machineries that would become increasingly common in the Americas and around the world. In addition, Argentina was the only developing country to be a protagonist in the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and appointed the

President Luis Moreno Ocampo, who was the assistant fiscal attorney during the trial of the juntas.

4. Along with these reservations, during the 1990s Argentina resisted ratifying the Optional Protocol of CEDAW, which allows an international body of experts to follow investigations of substantial abuses of women's human rights. The Optional Protocol was finally passed in the National Congress in 2006, and its effects are still to be evaluated. MPs Juliana Marino and Juliana Di Tulio, supported by women's groups, promoted the initiative.
5. Argentine reservations in Cairo (1994) and Beijing (1995) can be viewed at the official web-sites of those conferences.
6. Interviews in Buenos Aires with Virginia Franganillo, 27 October 2005 and Juliana Marino, 15 June 2007.
7. Interviews with Cristina Zurutuza (CLADEM), 22 November 2005 and Monica Petracci (CEDES), 30 November 2005.
8. Mabel Bianco (FEIM), 24 November 2005.
9. Interview with leader of grassroots organization in Buenos Aires, 23 October 2005.
10. When the laws were passed women's representation in the legislature had reached 40%.
11. Up to 1996, when the first City governor was elected, the President had the right to appoint the City's Mayor, and citizens' rights were limited to electing a council to manage municipal duties. This was the state of affairs after the City was granted political autonomy under the constitutional reform of 1994. Gibson (2008) calls subnational processes of this kind, territorial democratization, which he defines as the granting of rights to citizens that were previously available to other citizens on a national state.
12. Interviews with Mónica Petracci in Buenos Aires, 30 November 2005 and Mabel Bianco, Director of FEIM, in Buenos Aires, 24 November 2005. Interview with FREPASO city legislator, 7 November 2005.
13. Colombo later became the President of the CNM, the Argentine women's policy machinery (2003–2008).
14. This is not exactly what the UNFPA argues in the report. In the 1998 report the emphasis is on maternal mortality, reproductive health, HIV prevention and women's empowerment as established in Cairo (1994). However, the report develops a section on reproductive health and population indicators, like growing population due to past fertility increases in the developing regions. Available at: www.unfpa.org/public/publications/pid/2576.
15. Interview with Lucila Colombo, former President of the women's policy machinery, 25 October 2005.
16. Interview with FPV legislator, 7 May 2007; interview with FPV legislator, 22 May 2007.
17. Interview with FPV legislator, 15 June 2007.
18. Interview with leading member of women's group, 22 November 2005.
19. Interview with former Vice-minister of Health Graciela Rosso, 7 May 2007.
20. Interview with Monica Petracci in Buenos Aires, 30 November 2005.
21. The phrase 'To govern is to populate' (Gobernar es poblar) is attributed to Juan Bautista Alberdi, writer of the Argentinean Constitution sanctioned in 1853.
22. Interview with FPV legislator in Buenos Aires, 22 June 2011.

References

- Alvarez SE (1999) Advocating feminism: The Latin American feminist NGO 'boom'. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 1(2): 181–209.
- Bedford K (2009) Gender and institutional strengthening: The World Bank's policy record in Latin America. *Contemporary Politics* 15(2): 197–214.

- Beijing (1995) Fourth World Conference on Women. Platform for Action. Available at: www.unesco.org/education/information/nfsunesco/pdf/BEIJIN_E.PDF.
- Béland D (2005) Ideas and social policy: An institutionalist perspective. *Social Policy and Administration* 39(1): 1–18.
- Blofield M (2006) *The Politics of Moral Sin: Abortion and Divorce in Spain, Chile and Argentina*. New York: Routledge.
- Borland E and Sutton B (2007) Quotidian disruption and women's activism in times of crisis, Argentina 2002–3. *Gender and Society* 21(5): 700–722.
- Buenos Aires Legislature Debate (2000) Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires. Legislatura. Acta de la 15 Sesión Ordinaria del 22 de Junio de 2000. Versión taquigráfica.
- Cairo (1994) Programme of Action of the United International Conference on Population and Development. Available at: www.iisd.ca/cairo/program/p00000.html.
- Cámara de Diputados de la Nación, Honorable Congreso de la Nación Argentina (2001) 18 de Abril de 2001. Versión taquigráfica.
- Cámara de Senadores de la Nación, Honorable Congreso de la Nación Argentina (2002) 31 Reunión – 16 Sesión Ordinaria, 30 de Octubre de 2002. Versión taquigráfica.
- CEDAW (1979) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. United Nations.
- Collier RB and Collier D (2002) *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America*, 2nd edn. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Cox R (2001) The social construction of an imperative: Why welfare reform happened in Denmark and the Netherlands but not in Germany. *World Politics* 53(3): 463–498.
- Deacon B (2007) *Global Social Policy and Governance*. London: Sage.
- De la Deheza R (2007) Global communities and hybrid cultures: Early gay and lesbian electoral activism in Brazil and Mexico. *Latin American Research Review* 42(1): 29–51.
- Della Porta D, Kriesi H and Rucht D (eds) (1999) *Social Movements in a Globalizing World*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- Dodgson R (2000) Contesting neoliberal globalization at UN global conferences: The women's health movement, United Nations and the International Conference on Population and Development. *Global Society* 14(3): 443–463.
- Fisher F (2003) *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fundación Illia/Plural (1987) *Políticas Públicas Dirigidas a la Mujer. Fundación Arturo Illia para la Democracia y la Paz and Fundación Plural para la Participación Democrática*. Buenos Aires: Gráfica Yanina.
- Gibson E (1996) *Class and Conservative Parties: Argentina in Comparative Perspective*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Gibson E (2008) Sub-national authoritarianism and territorial politics: Charting the theoretical landscape. In: *2008 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association*, Boston, MA, 28–31 August.
- Hausman M (2005) *Abortion Politics in North America*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Htun M (2003) *Sex and the State: Abortion, Divorce, and the Family under Latin American Dictatorships and Democracies*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jenson J (1986) Gender and reproduction or babies and the state. *Studies in Political Economy* 20(1): 9–45.
- Kardam K (2004) The emerging global gender equality regime from neoliberal and constructivist perspectives in international relations. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 6(1): 85–109.
- Keck M and Sikkink K (1998) *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. New York: Cornell University Press.

- Khagram S, Riker J and Sikkink K (eds) (2002) *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks, and Norms*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- La Nación* (2006) Aborto. Un debate sesgado. 6 August. Available at: www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=829316.
- La Nación* (2007) Insiste González García en despenalizar el aborto. 24 March. Available at: www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=894208.
- Lavrin A (1995) *Women, Feminism and Social Change in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay (1890–1940)*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Luker K (1984) *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- McIntosh CA and Finkle JL (1995) The Cairo Conference on Population and Development: A new paradigm? *Population and Development Review* 21(2): 223–260.
- Mahoney J (2000) Path dependence in historical sociology. *Theory and Society* 29(4): 507–548.
- PROFAM (2001) Argentina: Family strengthening and social capital promotion project. World Bank Document.
- Rousseau S (2007) The politics of reproductive health in Peru: Gender and social policy in the global south. *Social Politics* Spring: 93–125.
- Schwindt-Bayer L (2006) Still supermadres? Gender and the policy priorities of Latin American legislators. *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 570–585.
- Sikkink K (2008) From pariah state to global protagonist: Argentina and the struggle for international human rights. *Latin American Politics and Society* 50(1): 1–29.
- Snow D and Benford R (1988) Ideology, frame resonance, and participant mobilization. *International Social Movement Research* 1: 197–217
- Torrado S (2004) *La Herencia del Ajuste: Cambios en la Sociedad y la Familia. Claves Para Todos*. Buenos Aires: Capital Intelectual.
- Zaratuza C (1998) El derecho como garantía: de los derechos sexuales y reproductivos: ¿Utopía o estrategia?. In: Bianco M, Durand T, Gutierrez MA and Feim CZ (eds) *Mujeres Sanas, Ciudadanas Libres (o el Poder para Decidir)*. Cladem and FNUAP, pp. 45–72.
- Zwingle S (2005) From intergovernmental negotiations to (sub)national change: A transnational perspective on the impact of CEDAW. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 7(3): 400–424.

Résumé

Idées de voyage et changement de politique intérieure: La politique transnationale des droits génésiques/santé en Argentine

Ce document examine le flux transnational des idées de politique sociale, notamment leur importance dans la promotion des politiques en matière d'égalité des genres dans les pays ayant des normes de genre très conservatrices et qui ont, historiquement, se sont très peu intéressés aux droits génésiques. En se focalisant sur le cas de l'Argentine, il est ici illustré comment les idées internationalement sanctionnées ont contribué à ces changements majeurs de politique, contribuant à l'adoption d'un Programme fédéral sur la contraception, ce, nonobstant que l'avortement demeure illégal. Si de nouvelles politiques ont été adoptées, des éléments importants de l'ancien régime ont, par contre, été préservés. Bien que l'étude démontre l'importance de des idées sur les politiques de voyage, il est aussi un rappel quant à l'importance continue de la politique nationale et de l'héritage politique.

Mots-clés

Amérique latine, Argentine, droits génésiques, politiques de genre mondiales, santé reproductive

Resumen

Flujo de ideas y cambios en políticas locales: La política transnacional de derechos reproductivos y salud en Argentina

Este artículo examina el flujo transnacional de ideas de política social, y, en particular, el papel que cumplieron en promover políticas de igualdad de género en países donde prevalecen normas de género fuertemente conservadoras y que históricamente han ignorado los derechos reproductivos. Centrándose en el caso de Argentina, ilustra cómo las ideas avaladas a nivel internacional han contribuido a producir importantes cambios en las políticas, incidiendo en la adopción de un programa federal de anticoncepción, si bien el aborto continúa siendo ilegal. Se han adoptado nuevas políticas aunque aún persisten importantes componentes del antiguo régimen. Si bien el estudio demuestra la importancia del flujo internacional de ideas, también es un llamado de atención sobre la persistencia de las políticas nacionales y de los legados políticos.

Palabras claves

América Latina, Argentina, derechos reproductivos, políticas globales de género, salud reproductiva

Biographical note

Debora Lopreite is Adjunct Research Professor in the Institute of Political Economy at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. She completed her PhD in Public Policy in 2009 at Carleton, and did her BA in Political Science and MA in Public Administration at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Currently, Professor Lopreite is the recipient of a research grant of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and of a postdoctoral research fellowship in the University of Québec at Montréal. Her current research deals with the transformations of Latin American gender and welfare regimes. She studies the path of public policies in the cases of sexual and reproductive rights, childcare and social assistance for women and families.