Mapping Welfare State Development in (post) Neoliberal Latin America

Cruz-Martínez, G.

Abstract
Why have some countries in Latin America and the Caribbean developed more comprehensive welfare systems than others? Do political and economic factors help us signal the (un) favourable paths taken by countries with different degrees of welfare state development in the XXI century? This paper addresses limitations of previous comparative research to continue (re) searching the conditions of welfare state development. A composite multidimensional welfare state development index (WeSDI) is constructed for 18 countries between 2000–2015. The four dimensions are the magnitude of social expenditure, the scope of coverage of welfare programmes, quality of the coverage of welfare programmes and outcomes of welfare institutions. The WeSDI uses goalposts (i.e. natural zeros and aspirational targets) to normalise individual indices and avoid the “relativity problems” of results. We use crisp-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis to test how necessary and/or sufficient eight political and economic conditions are (alone or in combination) to foster multidimensional welfare state development in the region. The causal conditions are openness to external shocks, debt obligations, revenue-collection capabilities, labour movement strength, strength of the left, policy legacies of welfare institutions, size of the outsider population and quality of democracy. The paper confirms the relevance of democratic strength, revenue-collection capabilities (and to a lesser degree policy legacy of welfare institutions) as sufficient conditions of high and medium levels of welfare state development in the (post) neoliberal era. In addition to labour movement strength, these same economic and political factors are relevant to understand the conditions behind very low levels of welfare state development.

Author keywords
Comparative social policy
QCA
Social policy regimes
Social protection
Social spending
Welfare regimes