

REVIEW

“Social Movements, Institutionalization and Public Policies” (2019), by Gurza Lavalle, Carlos, Dowbor, & Szwako

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The 1990s and 2000s marked the consecration of participatory experiments undertaken in Brazil, such as participatory budget and public policy councils, which drew the attention of international cooperation agencies and scholars around the world, and gained a new dimension with the PT experience in national level (2003-2016). The development of empirical research on participatory institutions, social movements and public policies in recent years has contributed to shedding light on the varied and complex interactions established over decades between social movements and state institutions, and to highlight the insufficiency of perspectives that analytically separate social movements and State. The absence of analytical tools to understanding the recent

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transformations in the relations between State and society in Brazil in its complexity has imposed on scholars the challenge of revising theoretical assumptions and innovating conceptually and analytically.

An indispensable contribution to the debate is the book “Social movements and institutionalization: social policies, race and gender in post-transition Brazil”, released in August 2019, organized by Adrian Gurza Lavalle, Euzeneia Carlos, Monika Dowbor and José Szwako. Product of ten years of research and reflection by the Democracy and Collective Action Research Group (NDAC), the work proposes the domain of agency approach to analyze the processes of institutionalization of demands, values, interests and resources of action by social movements and civil society organizations in the State, guided by the assumption of the mutual constitution between State and society, in a radically relational perspective. Although motivated by contextual concerns in the post-transition Brazilian scenario, the proposal aims to build a useful conceptual framework for understanding medium-range institutionalization processes in different contexts.

The book is organized in presentation, preface, opening and eight chapters divided into two parts. In these brief lines, we will go through the work with special attention to the theoretical-conceptual approach proposed by the organizers in the book's presentation section, and its application in empirical analyzes in the following eight chapters.

In the opening chapter of the book, the authors start from the diagnosis that the analytical assumptions that support the main theories oriented to illuminate the relationship between collective organization of interests and values and the State and its institutions, namely: pluralism, neo-corporatism and theories of social movements, ended up making invisible or inducing restrictive readings of institutionalization processes. In the case of pluralism, conceiving the institutionalization of the social actors' capacity for action in the State and the permanent access of certain actors or interests to the State's decisions, they argue, would compromise its character as a disputed arena - a fundamental assumption of this theoretical current. Neo-corporatism, on the other hand, despite dedicating itself to the analysis of institutionalization processes of structures of intermediation of interests, privileges monopolistic structures and concentrators of power, in highly crystallized configurations and operating at high levels of authority. Thus, the authors point to its inadequacy to the analysis of heterogeneous actors and interests, and less stable representation arrangements, located in regions of medium political altitude (that is, intermediate level of authority) and with medium-range institutionalization.

Finally, the theories of social movements, used as a conceptual framework by much of Brazilian literature, in part identified processes of institutionalization with demobilization and co-optation, by assuming a separation between movements and the State in a dichotomous and contentious key. Recent advances in this literature have challenged this analytical separation and sought to expand the instruments to deal with institutionalization processes, recognizing the expansion and complexification of forms of action and organization, but, they point out, insufficiently theorized such processes. The authors argue that it is necessary to establish analytical lenses that focus at the interaction processes of social movements with State institutions, and to detect degrees of institutionalization and influence of these actors in decision-making processes, as well as their effects for the actors themselves.

The path proposed by the authors to establish this analytical lens is a review of the historical neoinstitutionalist debate to understand the nature and functioning of state institutions and, more specifically, of works that theorized about the mutual constitution between State and society and about state capacities, including authors such as Charles Tilly, Michael Mann, Peter Evans and Theda Skocpol. Therefore, they seek to establish a balance between State-centered and society-centered perspectives.

The core of the domain of agency approach is the review and expansion of the polity approach, and the adaptation of the concept of institutional fit elaborated by Skocpol (1992). The polity approach, developed by Skocpol, is dedicated to analyzing State-society interaction processes and their results regarding the possibilities of the adaptation of the actors and their capacity of mobilizing the institutional context for engineering fit within the State, making State institutional selectivity operate continuously in favor of their interests.

The authors seek to advance the analytical specification of the concept of institutional settings in terms of variations in their nature and the level of authority in which they operate, and the effects on the propensity for action by the actors and on the results of interactions, especially when they are articulated in configurations, being able to establish domains of agency. Defined by the authors as institutional settlements resulting from processes of State-society interaction in continuous construction, which gain their own density and allow the actors to direct the selectivity of political institutions in their favor, expanding their capacity for action and granting them the power of agency, the institutional settings have variable durability and influence depending on the level of

authority in which they operate (vertical or horizontal). Institutional fit constituted at different hierarchical levels can be articulated horizontally and vertically in configurations of greater or lesser reach, constituting domains of agency - spheres of competence related to the actors' capacity for action in a public policy context. The establishment of domains of agency favors the capacity of agency and decision of certain actors to the detriment of others.

The reconstruction of the processes of interaction that result in fit and domains of agency and the verification of the effective agency capacity of the actors in these configurations constitutes, according to the authors, an empirical research agenda. The capacity of action by social and state actors is built in the interaction process and is conditioned by the results of previous interactions.

The definitions of fit and domains of agency reflect the methodological strategy of centrally addressing endogenous factors to the interaction processes and the actors involved in it, and the relational process-oriented character of the approach. The authors present three types of interdependent and complementary mechanisms in the processes of engineering fit and their consolidation in domains of agency - institutional, relational and social, whose presence and relevance should be identified in the empirical analyzes.

In line with the assumption of mutual constitution, the concept of state capacities gain centrality in the model proposed by the authors, in interlocution with the neoinstitutionalist debate and with Brazilian debate, notably Abers & Keck (2013), Pereira (2014), Pires & Gomide (2016) and Bichir et al. (2017). The authors argue that the accumulated state capacities (or their lack) structure the ways in which the State is challenged and the chances of influence of social actors in the decision-making process of a given public policy. And, conversely, the state instruments of action and intervention and, therefore, the state capacities, have socio-political genesis and are structured by State-society interactions. Thus, public policy instruments may have an endogenous origin and be interactively forged within institutionalization processes, constituting, in some cases, as institutional fit. Understanding instruments as plug-ins has the potential to reveal variations in the chances of access to the State by certain actors over time. The authors seek, therefore, to cover in the analytical model the “other side” of the relationship - the institutional conditions of the interaction processes, and the effects of these in the State institutions and in the public policy process, in a radically relational and promising way for a wide range of research interests.

The chapters that follow the presentation, organized in two parts, apply the analytical model in systematic studies of institutionalization processes in a variety of sectoral policies, federative levels and regional contexts. The first, entitled “Social movements and policies in post-transition Brazil”, comprises four chapters focused on in-depth analysis of the historical construction of institutional settings and domains of agency in processes of State-society interaction in social policies.

In her chapter, Monika Dowbor explores how the Municipal Health Movement sought, over 35 years, to create institutional fit and configurations such as the National Health Council and the Bipartite and Tripartite Commissions, institutionalized by law, to guarantee their achievements and make their influence more stable on the decision-making processes in the face of uncertainties generated by the alternation of power, and how the movement itself has been transformed into organizational terms and repertoires of action, which did not mean the extinction of collective action.

Patrícia Tavares de Freitas' chapter deals with transformations in the immigration policy in the city of São Paulo from the reconfiguration in the field of collective actors with the growing immigration of Bolivian origin, and from the party dispute in the city between PT and PSDB, from 1980 to 2012. Analyzing three cycles of State-society interactions, the research demonstrates the construction of an internally polarized domain of agency, crystallized into two configurations with different profiles in terms of institutional settings, policy conceptions, specific institutions, parties and civil society organizations.

In the third chapter, Euzeneia Carlos analyzes the process of engineering fit and domain of agency by the urban popular movement in the state of Espírito Santo from 1980 to 2010. The author identifies important mechanisms for the construction of institutional fit in the case studied: the relationship with “institutional incubators” made up of religious organizations, and with party coalitions in municipal elections. She also shows that the relationship with religious organizations and parties since the movement foundation has favored the construction of organizational capacities to engineering new institutional fit.

The fourth chapter, by Maria do Carmo Albuquerque, analyzes cycles of mobilization of the movement of children and adolescents and the formation of defense coalitions around the so-called guarantor paradigm, which forged institutional insertions

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in the socio-educational policy in the city of São Paulo, achieving changes institutions in politics according to this paradigm.

The chapters in the first part of the book feature the richness of the contribution of systematic longitudinal studies that capture changes in the configurations of actors and institutional fit over time. Furthermore, they show that the construction of institutional fit within the State is enhanced by the construction of broader coalitions of actors, with emphasis on religious organizations and political parties.

The second part of the book, “Movements, race, gender and public policies”, consists of four chapters aimed at applying the domain of agency approach to the analysis of the institutionalization of demands of the black and feminist movements in public policies. In these, issues of race and gender are central and tension the universalist character prevalent in social policies. The inclusive effects of the institutionalization of universalist demands may, according to the authors, make the institutionalization of demands for inclusion of marginalized groups invisible and precluded. The reflection on the particularities and challenges involved in the process of building institutional fit by these movements and groups encourages the authors to apply the domain of agency approach in the following chapters.

In her chapter, Flavia Rios reconstructs the institutionalization process of the Brazilian black movement from 1985 to 2016, in a double sense: in its institutionalization and reconfiguration of its organizational structure and in the construction of institutional fit in the State. The author identifies that, in this process, the institutionalization of the racial equality agenda in Brazil is more directly associated with the dynamics of interaction between political activism and the executive, participatory and bureaucratic spheres of the State than with representation in the legislative sphere.

Layla Carvalho, in the sixth chapter of the book, analyzes the interactions of the Feminist Health Network, the Articulation of Black Brazilian Women and the Network for the Humanization of Childbirth and Birth with the National Policy for Integral Attention to Women's Health and the Rede Cegonha Program of Ministry of Health between 2004 and 2011. The analysis sheds light on the interactions between activists and the State, their effects on policies, the heterogeneity of activism networks and their capacity for agency in complex dynamics of cooperation and disputes.

In the seventh chapter of the book, Vera Schattan Coelho and Adrian Gurza Lavalle deal with the challenges for the vocalization and institutionalization of demands

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of the black feminist movement and organizations linked to the Wajãpi indigenous people, focused on the health sector, and for the reception of these demands by the authorities and professionals. The authors demonstrate that the formulation and reception of demands are not the product of the actors’ will, but capacities produced in interactive processes that, in turn, have different reach in terms of institutionalization in the two cases analyzed.

In the eighth chapter, José Szwako and Renato Perissinotto analyze the construction of the idea of gender by militants and Paraguayan feminist organizations and their institutionalization in sexual and reproductive health policies and in the fight against violence against women. In dialogue with the “ideational turn” of public policy literature and discursive neoinstitutionalism, the authors propose the notion of cognitive capacity to understand the meaning disputes around public policies and as a state capacity dimension, operating as a link between relational and administrative dimensions.

In the second part of the book, we highlight the aim at the disputes of ideas and meanings in State-society interactions, and the treatment of the vocalization of demands and their inclusion in public policies as capacities forged in the interactive process over time, which condition the construction of institutional fit.

Essential reading for students of State-society interactions in the production of public policies, the work offers a promising analytical model and substantial empirical studies, raising the level of the debate and offering clues for overcoming reductionist and dichotomous models.

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