***One-way thread or bricolage? Diffusion and entangled international influences in the early development of the interwar Romanian welfare state***

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When analyzing the emulation of social insurance outside the “North-Western European Core” existing literature has unsystematically accounted for the mediating effect of travel. In a consistently top-down fashion, existing studies have mostly relied on rates of ratification to analyze policy transfer, with only sparse attention paid to causal mechanisms.

The paper offers a case-study of policy transfer in interwar Romania, a country representative of its cluster of late industrializers, arguing that policy transfer is not unilateral, but unfolds through contestation and an interweaving of strands, some reaching implementation, while others being rejected. The paper contributes to the bourgeoning literature on welfare expansion in developing countries by highlighting the short-comings of conventional modernization-functionalist theories. The paper centralizes the roles of agency and ideas, trying to tease out causal mechanisms specific to welfare development in late industrializing countries. Dealing *en passant* with transfers from Western countries in general, and in depth with transfers from the International Labor Organization the paper maps how Romanian state-makers juggled the pan-European “worker question”, with the distinct flavor of a late industrializing country. The paper analyzes the ideological and legislative collaboration between Romania and the ILO towards harmonizing national developments with international ones, as well as completing gaps in existing legislation by interweaving international norms with local approaches. Drawing on Parliamentary debates and Ministry of Labor archives the focus is on the mechanisms and motivations of policy transfers.