Generation learning framework: Applying Margaret Mead's typology to agenda-setting stage of policy diffusion

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Abstract

The prompt development of the world's South and the stagnation in the evolution of the world's North altered the directions of policy diffusion. Up to date, the literature lacks a clear framework that captures these changes. This article contributes to research by offering a Generation Learning Framework to study the new paths of policy and technology dissemination around the globe. Anthropological propositions of Margaret Mead are adapted to capture a higher demand and popularity of the South-South transfers over the less frequent South-North transfers. Illustrating the framework with the examples of South-Korean lesson-drawing, the study concludes that the era of knowledge transfer exclusively from the North to South is over. The proposed framework can be further applied to the fast-growing experiences in the learning practices that take place in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa.

Keywords: lesson-drawing, benchmarking, knowledge transfer, institutional and organizational learning

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Ramy międzypokoleniowego uczenia się. Zastosowanie typologii Margaret Mead do etapu ustanawiania agendy w dyfuzji polityki publicznej

Streszczenie

Szybki rozwój globalnego Południa i stagnacja rozwoju na globalnej Północy zmieniły kierunki dyfuzji polityki publicznej. Do tej pory w literaturze przedmiotu brakuje jasnych tez, które wyjaśniałyby te zmiany. Niniejszy artykuł przyczynia się do rozwoju badań, oferując ramy międzypokoleniowego uczenia się do badania nowych ścieżek rozpowszechniania polityki publicznej i technologii na świecie. Propozycje antropologiczne Margaret Mead zostały dostosowane do większego popytu i popularności transferów na linii Południe–Południe w porównaniu z rzadszymi transferami na linii Południe–Północ. W artykule na przykładzie doświadczeń z Korei Południowej stwierdzono, że era transferu wiedzy wyłącznie z Północy na Południe dobiegła końca. Proponowane ramy można dalej zastosować do szybko rozwijających się doświadczeń i praktyk uczenia się w Ameryce Łacińskiej, Europie Wschodniej i Afryce.

Słowa kluczowe: uczenie się od przeszłości, analiza porównawcza, transfer wiedzy, uczenie się instytucjonalne i organizacyjne

Kody klasyfikacji JEL: D64, D83, O19, Z18

Numerous policy diffusion frameworks and typologies have been created to clarify the decision-making process, when a policy is implemented from abroad, either from another country or from a state within a federal system (Rose, 1991; Dolowitz, Marsh, 2000; Gilardi, 2016). Incomparably less attention has been paid to the agenda-setting stage of a policy diffusion with some notable exceptions of Karch (2007) and Pacheco and Boushey (2014). Namely, the literature lacks a developed theoretical account of why selected policies end up on the consideration list of the decision-makers and adopters. While almost every empirical study of policy diffusion contains some explanations of why a foreign example has been considered first-hand, to the best knowledge of the author, the literature lacks an established theoretical framework to assess such selections systematically.

The present article poses that, similarly to Weber's iron cages of bureaucracy, the iron channels of learning have been embracing public administrations all around the world (Desmarais et al., 2015). The weaker learns from the stronger; the silent learns from the louder; the loser learns from the winner. Through the decades and centuries, these channels of lesson-drawing and practice-learning have been resisting the fast speed of the world development, especially in its regions of the South (Evans,

2004). As a result, developed countries often pushed the developing ones to learn from them, and the latter served as their fields for experiments (Gomez-Mera, 2011).

Learning best practices from abroad became an integral part of globalization, which is no more than an unfolding of the capitalist system in today's historical conditions (Cardoso, 2009). Yet, the learning and benchmarking have usually occurred in the North-South[2] direction. Local Southern innovations or long-established Southern ways of practice were often neglected (Evans, 2004). They have often been regarded as faulty (Evans, 2004), if at all considered, before wiping them off from budgets and policy agendas with the help of development funds. Meanwhile, with the further advancements of the world's South, the list of destinations seen as benchmarkable has changed. The previously neglected practices of the South, as well as their newly developed innovations, are more often getting on the agendas of policy adopters.

Consider an example of childcare in today's Germany. There were far fewer working mothers in Western Germany (North) as compared to Eastern Germany (South) when the country went through the reunification in the 1990s, and the administration of the newly merged creature saw no need of free nursery spots for every child starting weeks after birth of the kind that were operating in the East. Nurseries and preschool education systems of Eastern Germany have been largely eliminated after the fall of the Berlin Wall, leaving behind thousands of unemployed educators. These institutions were looked upon with a nostalgic regret, when modern Germany lacked 120,000 nursery personnel, leaving alone the tremendous need for the childcare facilities themselves (Hockenos, 2014).

However, paying due respect to the innovations of the South does not necessarily translate into their keen adoption by the world's North. Consider the case of South Korea, which over the last few decades has become a benchmarkable example: "… in just 50 short years [Seoul has] become one of the world's top 10 economically powerful cities and a role model for other cities around the world to emulate" (SMG, 2010a: 7). Before reaching this point, Korean administrators had been thoroughly doing their development homework, adopting Northern practices at a tremendous speed. Only during the presidency of Lee Myung-bak (2008–2013) itself, the Seoul Metropolitan Government adopted more than two hundred cases of administrative policies from foreign countries. In addition, and similarly to China, Vietnam, or Malaysia, in terms of their rapid economic growth, institutional learning patterns

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[2]   The present article applies the North-South paradigm to label wealthy developed countries such as the North and the poor developing countries such as the South. The authors acknowledge that this is not the perfect divide as the gaps between the countries that have and those who have no access to some goods and services become smaller, while the gaps between the rich and poor become wider. See more in Thérien (1999).

of South Korea were not limited to the bold imposition of Anglo-American policy blueprints (Evans, 2004). They also included their own developments and innovations. Impressed by the South Korean prompt development, other countries and localities started to benchmark dozens of South Korean policies (SMG, 2014a). Yet, as the process of benchmarking from South Korea continues, it is worth noticing that most of the diffusions are happening along the South-South channel, and the novelties rarely reach the world's North.

So, what prevents a newly developed country from becoming an example for its Northern teachers and funders? What justifies the South-South diffusion of policy and technology? The present article offers a theoretical framework to conceptualize the learning patterns between the North-South, South-South, and South-North, as observed in the examples above. It enriches the field of international development by offering a tool that grasps the new directions of policy diffusion phenomena. As the diffusion literature requires a more focused theory (Gilardi, 2016), the presented framework addresses the nuances of the growing role of alternatives to North-South paths.

The Generation Learning Framework proposed in this article originates from a social learning theory developed in anthropology in the middle of the 20th century. The article claims its high utility to explain the agenda-setting stage in the policy and technology diffusion due to the similarity between organizations and human beings: once reaching a certain level of development, they are ready to give lessons to their peers and teachers. The framework provides a fresh perspective on the cross-country lesson-drawing in the 21st century and answers the call of Gilardi (2016) to theorize diffusion processes in different contexts better.

Some examples from South Korea illustrate the applicability of the framework. Most of the data were collected during the field trip to Seoul in 2011. It comes from the interviews with the governmental officials and university professors specializing in public administration. The present article does not aim to conduct a detailed analysis of benchmarking and benchmarkable practices of South Korea. Industry-specific studies have been already conducted for anti-corruption agencies (Quah, 2009), housing (Hong et al., 2014), healthcare (Min et al., 1997), local government (Prysmakova, 2016), information technology (Libaque-Saenz, 2016), tourism (Assaf, 2012), restaurant business (Min and Min, 2013), to name a few. The list of the examples used in the article is neither exhaustive nor fully detailed. It is also a subject to pro-innovation bias (Karch et al., 2016) because the article refers only to successfully completed transfers.[3]

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[3]   The study suffers from the pro-innovation bias, which is the common problem of policy diffusion research (Karch et al., 2016). The examples illustrated in the present article offer success stories of policy

At the same time, the article answers the call of Gilardi (2016) of how to improve the policy diffusion research. It uncovers the nuances of diffusion as a process rather than focusing on the outcome of any particular policy. It adopts Gilardi's (2016) definition of policy diffusion as a "consequence of interdependence (…) which is not defined exclusively (or even primarily) by the fact that something has spread" (p. 9). With the advancements of the methods used to study policy diffusion – cross-case analyses, within-case process tracing, and counterfactual reasoning (Starke, 2013) to name a few – the proposed theoretical framework can better explain the observed interdependences, as these methods require a more nuanced theoretical approach to the antecedents of the observed diffusions. While previous theorists developed several widely adopted models (Rose, 1991; Dolowitz, Marsh, 2000), they originate from some decades ago. The speed and globalization of policy and technology have significantly affected the diffusion process. Furthermore, the previous frameworks often ignore the reverse directions of learning and the alternative ways of policy selection for benchmarking purposes.

The article proceeds as follows. Firstly, it reviews the theoretical developments about organizational learning and international lesson-drawings to define a theory gap further. Secondly, it outlines the details of the proposed theoretical framework. Then, the framework is further supported by some empirical examples from South Korea, which, from being one of the poorest countries, has entered the circle of the most advanced economies in the world. The United States occur in the narrative as one of the key mentors of South Korea. The article concludes that the old-established channels of learning are hard to break if they are deeply rooted in both the South's and North's perspectives on the world's history and cultural superiority. The situation exacerbates when the North-South channels of learning are in line with the tastes of the electorate and the private preferences of governmental officials. The study, however, reckons that the era of the knowledge transfer exclusively from parents to children is over and invites to apply the proposed framework to explain the fast-growing experiences in the learning practices of Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe.

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and technology transfers, while unsuccessful attempts have been left behind the scenes. Considering the difficulty of collecting information about positive benchmarking as already mentioned in the text, collecting and analyzing the data regarding the failures remains an interesting, yet a daunting task.

Organizational learning

Organizational learning frameworks refer to the learning of a government analyzing the learning process (1) of government officials as the transporters of a policy from one country to another, or (2) that happens by ingesting new members into a government who have knowledge that the organization did not previously possess (Simon, 1991), or (3) obtained by government officials through professional intergovernmental networks (Füglister, 2012).

Organizational learning has interested researchers for a while. Yet, as a subject of the separate research, this topic was not in question till the mid-1970s. Even March and Simon's (1958) book *Organizations*, which was one of the first pieces of the modern philosophical schools looking into the social psychology of people living in an organizational environment, has little reference to the learning process. Even though a significant part of the book has been devoted to the cognitive limits of rationality and its effects on learning and solving problems, both are lumped together, and the organizational learning process is not addressed separately. In further attempts to contextualize and account for the unknown, March and Olsen (1975) proposed to understand the organizational learning process through the lens of the uncertainty of the past.

In his turn, Simon (1991) proposed to look at organizational learning as a social phenomenon that happens inside of organizations. He emphasized that internal learning is an important component of organizational learning. Thus, the choice of "the best" practice to emulate is strictly subjective as it is based on the shared opinion of the members of an organization (Simon, 1991). His framework of learning is helpful in explaining the short-sighted view of public administrators that prevents them from thinking out of the box. While being widely recognized by scholars across multiple disciplines, Simon's approach neither explained how organizations adopt new directions of international learning nor provided solutions to how and why the long-established iron channels of international learning could be modified, for example, through professional networks (Füglister, 2012).

The learning organization concept was further coined by Senge and his colleagues (Senge, 1990; 2006), where they referred to organizational learning as the fifth discipline of art and practice. In addition to the positive relationships between learning and desired performance (Moynihan, 2005), the literature further integrates cultural and structural perspectives into a discussion of organizational learning (Moynihan, Landuyt, 2009). Along the same lines, Common (2004) brought into the discussion a political environment in which organizational learning takes place.

Most of the earlier work in organizational learning literature would discuss international learning and policy transfer as the results of a top-down approach, where citizens have to deal with the adopted policies and technologies post factum, whether those decisions were rational or not. The citizens' preferences as a learning factor, even though touched upon, were not well developed, as they mostly focused on the cognitive processes of public administrators.

While shedding some light on the learning process of employees and, as a result, of their organizations, the exiting organizational theories and propositions are weak to explain learning processes that happen in-between political and administrative contexts. Thus, they do not fully address the international policy diffusion as a process, where the institutions play an important role as the cognitive processes of single administrators.

International learning

International learning theories offer many frameworks to study the learning process and borrowing practices of agencies and departments from abroad. Contrary to the propositions of the organizational theory reviewed above, they often pose that government officials are only the transporters of a policy from one country to another, while this policy has been ordered by the citizens. These propositions are built on the assumption that, in democratic societies, the citizens' demand is expected to drive the benchmarking process, because democracies, by definition, assume a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach. Thus, the choice of an international role model as a source of a new policy or technology is often made in unison by the government and the citizens (Rose, 1991). The factors taken into consideration during such adoptions are international contacts, language, fascination, and the ease of justification (Rose, 1991).

Rose's (1991) framework was originally designed to explain how policy and technology adoption happens in the developed Northern countries (Rose, 1993; Dolowitz, Marsh, 1996; 2000; Wolman, Page, 2002). Recently, the application of his framework has also been expanded to the learning South, for instance, Central and Eastern Europe (Randma-Liiv, Kruusenberg 2012; Ivanova, Evans, 2004; Busch, Jörgens, 2005; Randma-Liiv, 2005; 2007). Studies in both contexts proved that historical and economic dependencies and networks as the examples of international contacts explain the established channels of learning (Bennett 1997; Wolman, Page, 2002; Randma-Liiv, Kruusenberg, 2012). They also verified that the learning process, indeed, is most likely to occur among similar countries (Weyland, 2004). Language

has been proved to be an essential component of a policy diffusion process (Wolman 1992; Randma-Liiv, Kruusenberg, 2012); so has been the fascination of Southern countries with the North's development and their well-performing economies (Randma-Liiv, Kruusenberg, 2012; Randma-Liive, 2005; Ivanova, Evans, 2004). The ease of the justification of the source to the local population also played an important role in both North-North and North-South diffusions (Mosseberger, Wolman, 2003; Rose, 2002; 2005; Randma-Liiv, 2005).

While Rose's (1991) framework sheds a lot of light on the mechanics of policy transfers, it lacks deep explanations of why the learning process took its particular direction. For instance, while the adopters and the seeders were proven to have strong international contacts and to share some language backgrounds, which, among others, eased the process of fascination and policy justification, the propositions of Rose (1991) are weak to explain why the policy was diffused one way (usually the North-South direction) and not the reverse (South-North).

Rose's (1991) framework can explain the absence of reverse directions of learning when the countries of the North are slow in adopting Southern practices. Namely, there are complications with justification to the Northern population, which is also often unable to speak languages other than their mother tongue. Getting a good command of a foreign language has never been a priority because the country has always been a model rather than a student. Meanwhile, as this article also demonstrates, South-South or South-North policy and technology diffusion is common. Yet, Rose's (1991) framework is of little help to explain it.

Moreover, the existing learning frameworks omit the discussion of the simultaneous learning processes taking place in different directions when a country is a student, a colleague, and a teacher at the same time. They were created to describe one-direction learning when poor countries can use the set of ideas accumulated by the rich to skyrocket their development that, in practice, proves difficult (Evans, 2004). Being critical of the North-South direction of policy diffusion, Evans (2004) introduced the concept of "institutional monocropping" (metaphor of old-fashioned strategies of agricultural monocropping), which he defined as the imposition of the blueprints based on idealized versions of Anglo-American institutions, the applicability of which is assumed to be possible across all cultures and in all circumstances. This approach denies that institutional effectiveness of policies benchmarked from the North might depend on their fit with the local socio-cultural environment. While he comprehensively explained why Anglo-American countries do not always serve as the model, for instance, in primary education or healthcare, he did not develop his argument further by covering other than North-South directions of learning.

The existing frameworks cannot explain why developing countries can refuse to learn from the developed ones. For instance, Loveless (2009), in his study of five Central and Eastern European countries in the mid-1990s, failed to find persuasive evidence of the influence of international media diffusion on the development of Western political values in these countries. Rose's framework is neither helpful to explain successful South-South policy diffusions like, for example, in trade-related technology. In their empirical study, Schiff and Wang (2008) demonstrated that South-South trade-related research and development initiatives have a positive impact on productivity growth in the South. Neither can it explain why, after observing earlier democratic transitions elsewhere, later-democratizing countries chose to behave differently to improve their own well-being. Among others, Gasiorowski and Poptani (2006) proposed that this refusal of the established learning processes is based on the observation and rational calculation, rather than the hegemonic influence of the powerful third parties, competition with other countries, or "social emulation" based on incomplete knowledge. This contradicts the theoretical literature, which suggests that the latter factors drive international learning and diffusion processes (Weyland, 2004; Dobbin, Simmons, Garrett, 2007). The existing frameworks also lack explanations why investors from the advanced countries are not necessarily attracted to the countries that mimic their institutions (Pistor, 2000 as cited in Evans, 2004).

Summing up, despite the decades of research and theorizing, the existing frameworks of policy diffusion cannot provide a comprehensive explanation of the policy diffusion phenomenon (Gilardi, 2016). Therefore, new approaches are needed to properly capture alternative learning patterns that occur more often in the fast-changing world (Evans, 2004; Cardoso, 2009).

Proposed framework

The theoretical contribution of the current article is also of a benchmarking nature. This article draws some lessons from others, in this case, from other science disciplines. The article proposes to frame international learning practices in Margaret Mead's typology of learning cultures of different generations (Mead, 1970). As a cultural anthropologist, she theorized various directions of knowledge transfer between parents, peers, and children. She classified the directions of knowledge transfer among the generations as follows: Post-figurative – the knowledge is transferred from adults to children; Co-figurative – children and adults receive their knowledge mainly from their peers; and Pre-figurative – the knowledge transfers from children to adults.

Her typology fits well in the theoretical gaps currently present in the policy diffusion research. The Generation Learning Framework is especially applicable to the modern benchmarking and policy learning experiences between countries because it integrates the organizational theory of individual decision-making with the international development theory. Mead (1970) theorized her propositions on the broader institutional levels, emphasizing the role of the society in the processes of individual learning. She referred to the institutional and economic development levels of larger societal groups (tribe, country, region) to explain how, what and from whom individuals in these groups learn everyday knowledge and problem-solving.

Namely, post-figurative cultures are usually present in preindustrial societies. However, these cultures could be found in more developed societies that are characterized by the stability and lack of change, or where change happens at a very slow pace. In these cultures, the old generation cannot imagine a better life for the young than what they already have. In both situations, the younger generation learns the meanings of events, their own identity, and the ways of life from the older, taking them for granted. Professional authority allows individuals to think and decide for themselves about many aspects of their lives, which does not always lead to a better life. Consider the repelling fact that the North-South divide has persisted despite half a century of imposed development strategies and substantial industrialization in the South (Arrighi, Silver, Brewer, 2003).

In co-figurative societies, "the prevailing model for members (…) is the behavior of their contemporaries" (Mead, 1970: 25). While the older generation still establishes the rules and the main frameworks of how the society functions, the younger generation is expected to differ from the older and to function in a new technological order. A lot of socialization happens on the peer level of the same age. For example, Gasiorowski and Poptani (2006) made a proposition that economic actors in Eastern Europe and Africa were influenced by the earlier transitions in their own regions and also by those in other regions, mainly Latin America and East Asia. Along the same lines, Butler et al. (2017), in their experimental study, also acknowledged the importance of co-partisans in other communities that can promote the adoption of a policy even if this policy does not correspond to the main ideological streams at home. Füglister (2012), on the empirical example of health policy intergovernmental bodies, further demonstrated the importance of peers' exchange and cooperation through professional networks for policy diffusion.

Pre-figurative cultures are those where a new generation is brought up in the society that changes at an extremely high pace, and the surrounding problems are so different from those faced by the older generation that "there is a complete break between generations" (Borkman, 1999: 53). The younger generation knows more

than their predecessors and has better expertise. This expertise not only enhances a smoother and faster learning process from the outside (Shipan, Volden, 2014) but also builds the trust of the older to be led in "the direction of unknown" (Mead, 1970: 73). Thus, the success of the pre-figurative cultures depends on the dialogue between the generations.

The following empirical part of the article serves as an illustration of the Generation Learning Framework, where the "parents" are the developed countries that South Korea, as a "child," used to benchmark. The next section refers to the learning practices by various departments, such as transportation, sewage, or garbage disposal. Most of the examples highlighted come from the municipal level of Seoul.

Framework illustration: The case of South Korea

The empirical part of the article is based on the first-hand data obtained during a study tour to Seoul in 2011, where open-question interviews were conducted with the chairs of various departments of the Seoul Metropolitan Government. Moreover, to gain some further explanations and to verify the answers, the researcher followed up with an in-depth interview with a professor of public administration at Korea University. Most of the information obtained through the interviews corresponded to the post-figurative way of learning. The discussion of co- and pre-figurative learning paths, however, is built on the empirical observations and the secondary data available in open access resources and in the reports and publications of the South Korean governments. The reasoning behind such a division is also presented in the discussion below.

Post-figurative: North-South

The research revealed that the references about today's South Korean post-figurative learning are hard to find both in academic and in mass media publications, making any information about its current lesson-drawing from abroad hard to quantify (Prysmakova, 2016). In the public media, South Korean officials credit the South Korean success to the Korean innovation spirit. Policy adoptions from specific countries and foreign institutions are not widely acknowledged. Nevertheless, despite the lack of deep empirical research conducted on the policy and technology diffusion phenomena confirm that the process of copying foreign practices happens on every level of the South Korean society (Quah, 2009; Hong et al., 2014; Min et al., 1997; Prysmakova, 2016; Libaque-Saenz, 2016; Assaf, 2012; Min, Min, 2013).

The rapid development of South Korea was not solely based on the wisdom and the creativity of local politicians and administrators. The overall openness of the government to the best foreign practices created a unique situation that allowed for the absorption of the effective policies from both developed and developing countries. Benchmarking from overseas became an essential part of the reforms and transformations that occurred on a great scale (Kim, 2011).

Mass acceptance of foreign practices and policies has been a general trend on the Korean peninsula (Kim, 2011). The history of introducing Western culture goes back to the end of the 19th century when such novelties as railroads, electric trams, and telephones were brought to Korea from the West. Referring to advanced countries was also very prominent in the aftermath of the East Asian economic crises in the late 1990s. Through the last two centuries, various policies and practices form medical care to parks and recreation facilities have been drawn from abroad (SMG, 2010a). Western models served as examples for the Korean budgeting system and personnel management systems. The current political system of South Korea consists of many different elements from different foreign models. The political structure from the very beginning was based on the American model; the Korean Constitution originally emulated the German one, and then it was implemented through the Japanese model (Kim, 2011). The checks and balances between the three branches of government were founded on the grounds of the American presidency model, where the vice president (called the prime-minister in South Korea) interacts closely with the president (Kim, 2011).

Noticeably, today a lot in South Korea has been benchmarked from the United States. Such rigid learning patterns of South Korea are well explained by Dolowitz's model (2000) that treats civil servants as the main agents in policy transfer. Like in many other developing countries, South Korean civil servants are the ones who have been establishing contacts with foreign partners and selecting the role models (Randma-Liiv, Kruusenberg, 2012). Educating them about the benefits of benchmarking has been positively related to foreign policy adoption (Dolowitz, 2000). For administrators' good potential to learn from their own experiences (Callander, 2011), the South Korean governments integrated the educational component of the foreign practices as a necessary component for the professional growth of their employees. For example, the Human Resource Department of Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) has been recruiting its qualified staff for a study abroad program either in the form of a graduate degree or an internship, presenting it as an additional point for the promotional opportunity. On average, the SMG sends forty employees a year to study abroad (Prysmakova, 2016), with the majority of them working on their master's degrees. The list of the selected destinations has been rather unbalanced, with the

majority (73%) traveling to the United States. With the significant gap in shares, the second preferred destination has been the United Kingdom (10%). Only seldomly have employees been sent to other countries such as China, Japan, Canada, Germany, France, or Australia (*SMG Study Abroad*, 2011).

The reasoning behind this pattern further supports the applicability of Mead's typology of learning between generations. While the transmission of policy ideas among states is facilitated by geographical, linguistic, cultural, and historical ties (Castles, 1993), the Korean case expands this typology, emphasizing the importance of learning from the "parent" countries. Previous studies have demonstrated the key role of international contacts in policy transfer (Bennett, 1997; Wolman, Page, 2002). In particular, in addition to the improved levels of professionalism (Shipan, Volden, 2006) and expertise (Shipan, Volden, 2014), research points to both psychological and ideological proximity, which depend on history and culture, as determining factors in selecting the foreign models (Rose, 1991; Gilardi, 2010; Butler et al., 2017). The United States has become the main model for South Koreans to emulate. Conforming to their normative environment, Koreans have been accepting American policies and practices, regardless of whether they work or not (definition of emulation based on Gilardi, 2016).

As Randma-Liiv and Kruusenberg (2012) prove in their study, the first contacts made by a domestic actor with its international counterparts are of utmost importance when considering the models for benchmarking. Policy transfer is more than a mere political procedure; it includes the incorporation of political values and ideologies (Randma-Liiv, 2005; Butler et al., 2017). Militarily, politically, and economically, South Korea's recent developments were strongly influenced by the United States. The alliance of these countries was the most important during the Cold War period (Kim, 2011). Today, likewise, the United States remains the most important ally of the Republic of Korea. This strong connection explains the predisposition to emulate the United States rather than any other country: "policymakers who are ideologically predisposed against the described policy are relatively unwilling to learn from others" (Butler et al., 2017).

Several scholars have further suggested that benchmarking practices usually occur between countries that speak the same language (Wolman, 1992; Randma-Liiv, Kruusenberg, 2012). Unfortunately, the language factor is too weak to explain the skewedness in the patterns of the countries chosen for a study trip abroad: each year, from two to five employees of the Seoul Metropolitan Government go to the United Kingdom, and over thirty travel to the United States.

Previous research about international learning shows that fascination with the developed West plays a large role. There is the general willingness of the transition

countries to be or look "like the West" (Randma-Liiv, Kruusenberg, 2012; Randma-Liiv, 2005; Ivanova, Evans, 2004; Prysmakova, 2013). Indeed, South Koreans have a deep-routed fascination with American culture, which they equally call Western culture (Kim, 2011; Prysmakova, 2013). As noted on the field trip during the observations, South Koreans use the terms Western and American as synonyms in their everyday conversations. For them, if a policy or an institution is American made, it means that it must be beneficial. This phenomenon ties in well with the previous studies that have shown that states often look for inspiration from governments which have proven to be successful or attractive (Mosseberger, Wolman, 2003; Rose, 2002; 2005). Thus, Randma-Liiv (2005) argues that sometimes it is easier to "sell" a policy proposal in domestic political circles and to the public as a successful foreign experience than to argue for a "home-made" solution. For South Korean politicians, the easiest policy to "sell" would be one from the United States.

The last element of the lesson-drawing formula (Rose, 1991), which is also observed in the post-figurative learning, is a convenience factor. Consider selecting a destination for you and your family for a study abroad program: a foreign-friendly and open American environment that welcomes individuals without considering anybody a stranger makes it much easier to adjust to this type of location, as compared to the difficulties to merge with natives in a European country. Therefore, there are strong grounds to assume that personal life preferences, combined with the high quality of life, also become a significant reason why the SMG officials predominantly go to study in the United States.

Before discussing other elements of the Generation Learning Model, it should be emphasized that despite the overall popularity, not every policy, institution, or idea can be transferred from the United States (Prysmakova, 2016). This has also been realized by the Seoul officials who have been equally benchmarking from other developed countries. For instance, the conservators of Sang-am DMC landfill adopted German technologies (information gathered during the field trip); the utilization of idle spaces as urban parks that encourage kids to become familiar with the woods and nature was benchmarked from Northern European countries (SMG, 2015a); shared city bicycles were implemented on the basis of the VELIB system of Paris, France, and BIXI of Montreal, Canada (SMG, 2011). However, the origins of these projects are not widely discussed.

Co-figurative: South-South

The discussion of co-learning in the present section is mostly built on the empirical observations coming from the secondary data and refers to learning from other Southern countries and teaching them in the corresponding order. The information about co-figurative learning patterns is widely available in open access resources. Aggressive overseas marketing policy of South Korea suggests that the domestic good practices should be shared with others. In 2008, SMG significantly increased the budget for overseas marketing efforts to 40 billion won (US $ 35.6 million) from 5.3 billion won in 2007 (SMG, 2010b).

National preconditions like the wealth of a country ease the adoption of the polices from abroad (Jakobi, 2012). However, the debate continues whether the wealthiest nations of the world provide the best lessons for transition countries. In search of polices and technologies to emulate, Randma-Liiv (2007) and her colleague Kruusenberg (2012) advise to switch from the world's North to Latin America and Asia to search for benchmarkable examples. South Korea seems to be following that advice. Even though South Korea remains post-figuratively enthusiastic about everything "Western," there is a visible shift towards configurative learning from its peers. The mechanisms that justify this shift are similar to those observed by Butler et al. (2017) in the policy adoption experiment. The success of a foreign county's policy with or without strong ideological connections with this county makes it irresistibly attractive. The introduction of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system as an option for their urban transport, for instance, was inspired by the analogous one in Latin American cities of Curitiba and Bogota (Prysmakova, 2016). Other examples implemented at the national level are citizens' deliberative committees that came from Brazil, and the policy on banning prostitution and sex trafficking imported from Taiwan (Kim, 2011). In reference to the latter, the countries are constantly learning from each other: Taiwan imports policies and institutions from South Korea and vice versa.

Furthermore, the government of Seoul puts in considerable effort in gathering foreign practices through its system of the SMG Overseas Correspondents Program. This program allows a student from any country to serve as Seoul's overseas correspondent for a modest monetary compensation. Participants submit their reports on the best practices of overseas cities, typically related to housing, transport, and culture (Prysmakova, 2016). The government planned to increase the number of correspondents to three hundred (SMG Overseas Correspondent Program, 2015). Despite that the lion's share of correspondents are in the United States, if analyzed by regions, the majority of correspondents are located in Asian counties, which supports

the case of active co-figurative learning process. This also confirms the tendency observed in Butler et al. (2017) experiments, where a policy success in other communities wins the policymakers' support even if these communities are perceived by the policymakers as ideologically different.

Even though China and Japan are rarely referred to in the official proceedings, each of these two countries has been influencing Korean policy-transfer patterns for quite some time. Here, the similarity of the implementation environment plays an important role for policy learning and adoption (Nicholson-Crotty, Carley, 2016). The transfer of policies from Japan has been so overwhelming that there is no need to emphasize that some policies or institutions are transferred from that country (Kim, 2011). A modern Seoul-city and the fact that South Korea developed from one of the poorest to currently one of the most developed countries is totally predicated on emulating the Japanese model. In fact, South Korea's constant emulation of Japanese policy has some referring to it as "the Second Japan" (Amsden, 1989). Both institutionally and in terms of an industrializing strategy, South Korea has benchmarked Japan. However, the practice of sending government officials to Japan to improve their qualifications and degrees is not as popular due to the ideological considerations described earlier (Butler et al., 2017).

While the process of policy transfers from China has an age-old history (see more in Prysmakova, 2016), recently, policy transfers from that destination have not been as common. In contrast to ancient times, when the Chinese Empire influenced the Korean peninsula a lot, today, the population and the politicians do not perceive China as a policy model, favoring the lesson-drawing from the United States instead. Korean policymakers shy away from benchmarking China, as they face difficulties with justification and citizens' acceptance (Prysmakova, 2016). There are some noticeable exceptions: for example, Seoul followed the steps taken by Dujiangyan – a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Cultural Heritage site in Chengdu, Sichuan Province – when it received its acknowledgments by UNESCO (SMG, 2014b). This example further supports Butler's et al. (2017) propositions concerning the choice of the successful policy, regardless of the ideology of the policy seeder.

While drawing lessons from other South parts of the world, South Korea has become an attractive benchmarkable model itself. Developing countries eagerly draw their lessons from their recent developments and innovations. China has been benchmarking the SMG's "Park Won Soon Act" that sets out a number of anti-corruption measures and controls that track irregularities committed by public officials. The Act is considered a successful practice, as, after its implementation in Seoul, the number of crimes committed by public officials decreased significantly (SMG,

2015b). Singapore is learning its own ways to emulate the energy policy of the city of Seoul. Among other benchmarkable projects and policies, Singaporeans study environmentally friendly buildings such as the New Seoul City Hall and the Energy Dream Center in Sangam-dong (SMG, 2012). Learning practices are not only limited to the Asian and Pacific region, as developing countries from around the globe are equally eager to learn from Seoul. For example, Trinidad and Tobago have been actively benchmarking Seoul waterworks (SMG, 2014c).

South Korea also promotes actively its best practices, for instance, through a master's degree program for government officials from developing countries. The SMG organizes this educational activity as part of the Official Development Aid project (SMG 2010a), providing foreign officials with an insight into the urban South Korean administration. Despite the apparent one-direction learning from Seoul by foreign cities, co-figurative elements of learning are also present: through the participation in common projects, foreigners bring in their perspectives and insights from abroad.

Pre-figurative: South-North

The number of good practices that could and should be benchmarked from South Korea has been growing. However, the examples of policy diffusion in the North direction remain rare, and if they happen, they are often not properly acknowledged. Thus, most of this section is devoted to the discussion of the policy and technology diffusion that should take place, prescribing the countries of the North not only to pay closer attention to the developments of the South but also to ensure proper recognition once the policy transfer takes place. This last part of the empirical section primarily outlines the programs and instruments that can be benchmarked by a Northern agency.

The South Korean government openly advertises its major strengths: traffic management, intellectual technology, electronics, and water and sewage services. These developments have been recognized internationally. In 2009, the United Nations Human Settlements Program awarded the Seoul city for several projects: the Cheonggyecheon river restoration, the long-term housing rental system, and the transformation of a former dumping site into an eco-friendly park (UN-Habitat, 2015). With this award, this international organization recognized all three projects as the world models and encouraged others to learn from them.

The innovativeness of South Korean waterworks and sewage systems has drawn the attention of the developed world. For instance, the Cheonggyecheon river restoration project interested in several American cities. The riverbed had stayed covered

by concrete highway until 2001 when the river was opened up and restored into a park. At least two river restoration projects in the United States – Los Angeles River Revitalization and the restoration of the river zone in Chinatown of Honolulu, Hawaii – benchmark the Cheonggye Stream Project (City of Los Angeles, 2015; Honolulu Government, 2011). While the Honolulu project also drew lessons from similar American projects, it is worth noticing that the administration chose to officially refer to South Korea. This may be explained by a closer ideological proximity of Hawaii with Asia and, thus, an easier justification (Rose, 1991), than with the continental United States.

Another example of technology transfer to American Honolulu is the city bike system. While South Korea initially attained this practice from Europe, it is the improved Seoul city bike system that became a benchmarkable model for other developed countries. During the implementation of a similar system in Honolulu, the Seoul bicycle network in the Korean capital has been mentioned and acknowledged as a good example (Honolulu Government, 2015).

As the surrounding problems of a new generation are different from those faced by their parents, the pre-figurative model explains well the high-tech advancements of South Korea (Mead, 1970). The new generation of policymakers knows better how to integrate information technology in the fast-evolving operations of everyday public life. Thus, there are plenty of examples worth closer attention of the world's North. For instance, Prysmakova (2016) referred to such high-tech projects as M–Voting (voting on the local issues by the computer or mobile phone) and e-TAX (a smartphone application for tax payments and returns). The call center of Seoul, called 120 Dasan, has been widely benchmarked locally and also around the world. Tens of cities from more than 30 countries officially referred to this center to copy its services and operations (WeGo, 2014).

In addition to the IT innovations and advancements, the South Korean transit system can serve as a great model for the United States. Seoul's intelligent transportation system has constantly been improving since 2004, when the city began its major overhaul (SMG, 2013). Since then, the Transportation Operation and Information Service (TOPIS) has been visited by more than 1,200 foreign heads of state, ministers, and vice ministers of transportation departments and numerous transportation experts.

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The article introduced a new framework into the discussion of policy diffusion in the organizational and development literature. It identified a theoretical gap in the existing theories and frameworks, revealing several weak points in their capacity

to fully describe the emergence of new benchmarkable examples from the world's South on the agendas of the policy and technology adopters. To address this limitation, the article proposed adopting the theory of social learning developed by anthropologist Margaret Mead. Her theory of post-, co- and pre-figurative learning in the social groups of families can be applied as a metaphor to the benchmarking practices of the countries of the world's North and South. They play the roles of parents and children in the policy diffusion process, respectively. Mead's typology has a strong capacity to explain the agenda-setting stage of policy diffusion, which happens in various directions simultaneously.

The second part of the article empirically illustrated the application of Mead's typology to practice. It offered some examples of the policy and technology benchmarking between South Korea and the United States, as well as between South Korea and other emerging economies. The post- and pre-figurative examples illustrated the intensity of learning practices of South Koreans from the United States with the corresponding resistance of Koreans to acknowledge the help of "parents" as South Korea moves up the list of the advanced economies of the world. It also demonstrated the pre-figurative learning path when Americans as parents shy off to acknowledge that their child – South Korea – has reached the moment to serve as a model, and a number of policies and practices should be benchmarked into the American system of public administration. Mead's (1970) family learning theory explains both phenomena by the stability of the administrative context for any policy, which is much different for South Korea and the United States. Margaret Mead (1970) connects the extension of a pre-figurative type of learning to increasing uncertainty in a rapidly changing environment. Therefore, the conditions of a child maturing are different from those experienced by the parents. South Korea has made a fundamental breakthrough by becoming, in less than half a century, one of the most developed countries in the world.

The co-figurative examples of policy and technology diffusion between South Korea and other developing economies supported the strong potential of learning within peers, where South Korea obtains its knowledge from their peer-colleagues like Brazil or Thailand, to name a few. These countries have been sharing policies and technologies like in the experiment of Butler et al. (2017), who demonstrated a preference of the co-figurative learning from peers over post-figurative learning from parents when a policy is proven successful, even if the adopters do not share the same ideology with their peers. Meanwhile, South Korea's case proves that ideological connections rooted deeply in history and culture continue to determine many of the established channels of learning because they meet the tastes of both the electorate and the governmental officials. As also observed in other studies, the

convenience factor in policy and technology diffusion from one particular country could overshadow other crucial factors, such as the general applicability of the model itself (Randma-Liiv, 2005; Randma-Liiv, Kruusenberg, 2012).

Despite bringing in a fresh perspective on the relations between the world's North and South, the adaptation of the proposed framework to the field of international development and learning comes with certain limitations. The first of them concerns the level of analysis. The anthropological theory studies the phenomenon of learning on the individual level, while the international policy diffusion takes place on the level of a city or a nation-state. In addition, the examples of the present article are limited to the Korean context only. South Korea faces its unique challenges that are different from any other transitional country. For instance, for Central and Eastern Europe, Randma-Liiv (2005) names such constraints as the shortage of domestic know-how, weak experience in policymaking and administration, accompanied by general uncertainty. These factors are less important for South Korea. Possessing a great creativity potential and considerably high levels of experience in both policy-making and policy-transferring, the main challenges they face are the high speed of the urban growth, and the pressure from the population to westernize their approach to administration (Prysmakova, 2016).

In addition, the examples presented in the article are covered rather superficially, and most of them come from the times of Lee Myung-bak's (2008–2013) and Park Geun-hye's presidential regimes (2013–2017). The majority of them have been collected through in-person interviews with professors and government administrators. Information about policy diffusion and adoption available on-line in the form of news or official documents is rather limited. Adding more details and more recent examples would require a new field trip to South Korea and related countries.

This limitation, however, adds the value to the article, as the questions that occur while going through examples, clearly outline the new directions of research. It would be necessary to check how the proposed framework holds with the fast changes in the trends of policy diffusion. The researchers are invited to investigate whether the proposed typology can be applied to other diffusions observed in South-South and South-North directions. More detailed and fresher examples, including notable exceptions, would help to conceptualize further this model of the agenda-setting stage of policy diffusion and to test its applicability to different political regimes, cultural contexts, and historical time periods.

While Mead's generation learning framework is an established theory in the field of anthropology, it remains a theory proposition for public administration that needs to be further tested across the countries of the global South and the global North. Therefore, in conclusion, the article encourages scholars of international

development and comparative public administration to reflect on whether the policy diffusion projects that they are currently working on could be analyzed through the generation learning lens.

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