

**Post-Doctorate Award on Central America and the Caribbean at St Antony's College:
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Introduction

The purpose of this project, a Post-Doctorate Award on Central America and the Caribbean at St Antony's College, has been to encourage the integration of Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America into the academic study of North America as a region. St Antony's College in the University of Oxford, a recognised centre of scholarship and expertise in the fields of international and area studies, established its North American Studies Programme in 2011, and the IDRC-funded post-doctorate award has been vital in helping to ensure that the continent's developing regions, including Mexico, the Central American isthmus, and the West Indies, are well represented in the research agenda of this new initiative. The general purpose of the broader Programme within which the post-doctoral position has been based is to examine the common problems and issues that transcend national boundaries in North America, the interrelationships among North American states and societies, and the relationship of the region to the wider world. Defining North America as the territory from the Arctic to Panama and including the islands of the Caribbean, the Programme aims to study the continent in a way that is integrated and cohesive, crossing disciplinary boundaries and providing new insights into the similarities and differences that characterise the region.

This report summarises the main activities carried out and describes the outputs produced by Dr Julián G. Salazar Domínguez, the post-doctorate award holder, since he took up his post in October 2011. In addition to developing his own research interests, which include decentralisation and service delivery, local governance, and social policy, Dr Salazar participated actively in seminars, conferences, and workshops; worked with the College's Senior Research Fellow in North American Studies in contributing to the development of the North American Studies Programme; held meetings with partner organisations in Mexico and Central America; and participated in other academic activities within the University of Oxford. These activities have contributed greatly to Dr Salazar's intellectual and professional development, to the early success of the North American Studies Programme, and to the scholarly life of St Antony's College over the past two years. The following sections will describe Dr Salazar's contributions and achievements in more detail.¹

We would like to direct your attention in particular to the very important and very promising research described below on social policy in North America, which Dr Salazar and the North American Studies Programme are continuing to develop and which is expected to result in a publication on recent trends in health care and other social service provision in Mexico, the United States, and Canada. As this project will be continuing through the next few months, we would like to ask that the end date of our IDRC project be extended from 23rd October 2013 to 31st December 2013, at no additional cost, to allow any remaining grant funds to be directed towards the completion of this initiative.

¹ The papers presented in seminars and conferences and a conference report have been appended to this report.

On-going Research Projects and Presentations in Conferences and Seminars

Decentralisation and Anti-Poverty Policy in Mexico

One of the research projects that Dr Salazar has been working on relates to the political factors that affect the allocation of anti-poverty funds in Mexican municipalities. Specifically, the project seeks to explore if a particular decentralised fiscal fund intended to reduce poverty did in fact help to improve the provision of services for the poor or if it was instead captured by local political interests. The findings of this research demonstrate that the three major political parties relied on antipoverty funds to obtain political benefits. Regarding the effects of democratic institutions, the work demonstrates that greater party competition increases the probability that antipoverty funds were used for public benefit. Similarly, there is a propensity towards clientelistic spending during elections.

This investigation is particularly important both because responsibility for the delivery of many public services in Mexico has in recent years been delegated to the country's historically weak and underfunded municipal governments and because the consolidation of a competitive, multi-party political system in Mexico has fundamentally altered the Mexican social policy environment. Understanding Mexico's experience with the decentralisation of anti-poverty efforts will therefore have important implications not just for the future of Mexican development policy but also for other countries around the world that have undergone processes of decentralisation and democratisation in recent decades.

Dr Salazar has had the opportunity to present his work at the Latin American Centre for Development Administration (CLAD) International Congress held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, and in seminars both at the university's Latin American Centre and at the Department of International Development. The papers presented in those seminars and at the conference are as follows:

- XVII International Congress of CLAD on State Reform and Public Administration, Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, 9th November 2012. Paper title: *Descentralización, Democracia y Desarrollo Local: una Exploración del FAISM en los Municipios de México.*
- University of Oxford, Latin American Centre Seminar Series, 9th March 2012. Paper title: *The Political Determinants of Resource Allocation in Mexican Municipalities.*
- University of Oxford, Graduate Seminar on Economics and Political Economy of Latin America and the Caribbean, 14th June 2012. Paper title: *The Politics of Social Spending in Mexican Municipalities.*

Comparative Social Policy in North America

A second on-going project that Dr Salazar has developed during the duration of the post-doctoral award focuses on the study of recent social policy developments in the region of North America in comparative perspective. Most of the literature on comparative social

policy still focuses on developed countries and little attention has been paid to the developing world. Moreover, comparative studies across income levels have also been absent in the literature. Through a study of the recent changes to the social policy regimes of two North American countries, Mexico and the United States, this research project aims to contribute to the comparative study of social policies between countries with different levels of development. Despite the similarities that one might encounter between these two countries, they have relied on an increasing diverse array of policy tools to address public policy issues in the last decades. For example, recent changes in the health sector of some countries of the region such as the creation of the *Seguro Popular* in Mexico and the approval of a more ambitious healthcare reform by the Obama administration in the United States have represented major transformations in the social sector of these two countries. Although it is too soon to assess whether these changes might represent a move towards more distributive and universal social policies, it is important to explore how similar these policies are; how has globalisation affected the two countries and what have been the determinants of those changes. By comparing recent reforms in Mexico and the United States the project seeks to better understand the main characteristics, drivers, and outcomes of social policies across development levels.

As part of this project, Dr Salazar has presented two papers. He presented the first paper at a conference that he organised at Oxford (see below) entitled, “International Conference on the Political Economy of Social Policy in North America: Convergence towards Universalism?” The second paper was presented at the Fundación Guillermo Manuel Ungo Seminar Series in El Salvador. Details of these two papers are as follows:

- University of Oxford, Conference: The Political Economy of Social Policy in North America: Convergence towards Universalism? 1st March 2013. Paper title: *Universalism and Social Policies in North America. Mexico and the United States Compared.*
- Fundación Guillermo Manuel Ungo Seminar Series, San Salvador, El Salvador, 25th June 2013. Paper title: *Universalismo y Política Social en México. El caso del Seguro Popular.*

Conference Organisation: Social Policy in North America

On 1st March 2013, the North American Studies Programme hosted an international conference entitled, “The Political Economy of Social Policy in North America: Convergence towards Universalism?” Dr Salazar played a leading role in planning and organising the conference, which was supported by grants from the International Development Research Centre, the Foundation for Canadian Studies, and the St Antony’s College Annual Fund. Dr Salazar convened the conference for the programme together with Dr Diego Sánchez Ancochea, University Lecturer in the Political Economy of Latin America and a fellow of St Antony’s College.

The conference aimed to contribute to a well-informed discussion on the political economy of welfare regimes in North America by (a) exploring welfare models in historical and comparative perspective, and (b) by examining the political and institutional dynamics of recent developments in North America's social policies. The conference brought together 15 scholars from Canada, Mexico, the United States, and the United Kingdom and was designed to generate discussions to explore systematically the similarities and differences in North America's social policy regimes and to start thinking about comparing social policy regimes across countries at different levels of development.

To ensure a fruitful discussion and debate, conference organisers commissioned a series of papers on the following topics: three papers on welfare models in historical and comparative perspective to help frame the discussion; three papers on the political economy of social policy in North America in comparative perspective; and three case study papers on recent social policy developments in Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

Publication Plans

Speakers and discussants were invited to participate in one extra session to talk about a collective publication project. We discussed the main themes from the conference, all suggestions on each other papers as well as the proposed calendar for the revision of papers. Below is a brief summary of the publication project:

Title: *The Political Economy of Social Policy in North America: Dualism and Change at Different Levels of Development*
Editors: Diego Sánchez-Ancochea and Julián Salazar-Domínguez

Summary

Although most of the literature on comparative social policy still focuses on developed countries, there is a growing attention to the developing world. Yet systematic comparisons across income levels are still rare, particularly in the case of the Americas. Do we see similarities between neighbouring countries even with different levels of development? Has globalisation affected developed and developing countries equally?

This volume offers an innovative exploration of social policy in North America. We compare recent reforms in Canada, Mexico and the United States in terms of their characteristics, drivers and outcomes. Like much of the political economy literature on welfare regimes and social policy, we follow a comparative institutional approach, placing recent changes in historical perspective and highlighting path dependence and policy and institutional continuities. Our volume has a triple aim: (a) to systematically explore similarities and differences in North America's social policy regimes, paying particular attention to healthcare and pensions but discussing social assistance as well; (b) to analyse the recent reforms and explain why they have taken place at this time and not before; and (c) to evaluate

the extent to which recent policy reforms have modified the enduring characteristics of social policy.

Training and other Academic Activities in the University of Oxford

Dr Salazar took full advantage of the training (“capacity-building”) opportunities available to him at Oxford. During his six terms at Saint Antony’s College, he regularly attended seminars in the fields of North American studies, Latin American studies, and development studies, and he took part in workshops and courses on statistics, publishing, and the politics of Brazil. His participation in these lectures, workshops and seminars helped him to develop practical skills that contributed to his professional development.

Moreover, he contributed to the academic life of the College and the University by participating in the marking of essays, dissertations and theses in the Latin American Centre and was assigned as a confirmation assessor of one DPhil dissertation from the Department of Politics and International Relations. He also served as chair of a panel on indigenous issues at the 2012 Postgraduates in Latin American Studies Annual Conference on “Cultures in Perspective: from Indigenous Politics to Street Dancing”, sponsored by the Department of International Development (QEH), University of Oxford.

Meetings in Mexico and Central America

Dr Salazar had the opportunity to establish contacts with institutions in Mexico that are active in the field of North American studies and that might in the future be good candidates for collaboration with the Programme at Saint Antony’s College. He also held productive meetings with researchers in two think tanks in two Central American countries, El Salvador and Guatemala. These meetings also served to establish contact with researchers working on and/or interested in one or several projects from Dr Salazar’s research agenda.

Mexico

In October 2012, Dr. Salazar held a meeting with Dr Isabel Studer, founding Director of the Centro de Diálogo y Análisis sobre América del Norte (Centre for Dialogue and Analysis on North America) at the Tecnológico de Monterrey, Campus Ciudad de México. The centre, which aims to be a forum for dialogue and analysis on strategic issues of the North American region, could become a strategic partner for the organization of future events of the North American Studies Programme.

In October 2012, Dr Salazar also had the opportunity to visit El Colegio de México and to meet with Dr Ilán Bizberg, Coordinator of the Inter-institutional Programme for the Study of the Region of North America, and who has been recently working on the study of the welfare

state and globalization in the region. The meeting served to have a fruitful discussion about the organization of the Conference on Social Policy in North America and to formally invite Dr Bizberg to participate in it with the paper: “The Welfare State and Globalisation. The Case of North America.”

In December 2011, Dr. Salazar met with the staff of the large and active Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte (Centre for Research on North America) at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in Mexico City to explore possible links with the North American Studies Programme. As a result of this meeting and apart from starting a closer relation with this institution, Dr José Luis Valdés Ugalde, researcher and former Director of the Centre, participated in one of the North American Studies Programme seminars during Michaelmas Term 2012. The title of his presentation was: “Changing Political Processes and Confronting Critical Issues: The US and Mexico, Election-Year Perspectives for a Common Agenda.”

In December 2011, Dr Salazar met with Dr Alejandro Madrazo Lajous, researcher and team leader of the Right to Health Programme at the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (Centre for Research and Teaching in Economics) in Mexico City. Dr Madrazo accepted our invitation to participate in one of the North American Studies Programme seminars during Hilary Term 2012. The title of his presentation was: “Drug Prohibition: Health Policy or Health Problem? Reflections from Mexico and Latin America.”

Central America

In June 2013, Dr Salazar traveled to El Salvador and Guatemala to meet with the staff of two think tanks that are part of the Think Tank Initiative from the IDRC. In El Salvador, Dr Salazar held productive meetings with Dr Ricardo Córdova, Executive Director, and with María Elena Rivera, Public Policy Programme Coordinator, from the Fundación Dr Guillermo Manuel Ungo (Fundaungo) where he talked about the possibility of working with them in understanding recent social policy changes in the pensions sector in El Salvador, an issue that can contribute to his ongoing research about mapping social policy transformations in the region of North America. He also was invited to present his work in the monthly held seminar series organised by Fundaungo where he talked about his most recent project on Social Policy and Universalism. His presentation focused on the case of Seguro Popular in Mexico.

In June 2013, Dr Salazar also visited the Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales in Guatemala. In a meeting with Dr Raquel Zelaya, Executive Director, and the research coordinators of the organisation, Dr Salazar explored possible links with the organisation and the North American Studies Programme and explored potential ways of collaborating with them in other research projects Dr Salazar has been working on, particularly on the issue of electoral politics, democracy, and development. In particular, Dr Salazar saw a potential way of collaboration with the Centre of Public Opinion Studies, a specialized unit of this

organization for the design and implementation of representative or qualitative scientific investigations.

Final Considerations

Dr Salazar has taken full advantage of his post-doctorate award at the North American Studies Programme in St Antony's College. In the remaining time of his award, Dr Salazar will be working on the scheduled post-conference publication plans: revising and sending comments to contributors to the edited volume, editing and organisation of the book, writing introduction and conclusion, etc. He will also continue working on his on-going research projects. In particular, for his project on social policy in Mexico and the United States, Dr Salazar will carry out a few interviews with key informants during his visit to Mexico in the second half of August. He expects to interview a few high-level officials in Mexico that have closely worked in the design and implementation of the *Seguro Popular* Programme.

In terms of future plans, Dr Salazar has already been in contact with an academic institution in Mexico that has expressed interest in his work and on the possibility of his being part of an on-going exchange programme with the University of Texas, Austin. Dr Salazar's experience in the public sector in Mexico means that he could also find opportunities in this area. Dr Salazar has already made contacts with Mexican officials at the municipal, state, and national level and expects to have more concrete proposals in the coming months. Dr Salazar is also looking for opportunities in the international development sector and he will look for and apply to jobs in this sector in the United Kingdom particularly, but also in other international organisations. In general Dr Salazar is looking forward to combining his academic background with more policy (research-based design and implementation) activities in the government or in other international organisation.

To conclude, this project has been tremendously valuable both for Dr Salazar and for the North American Studies Programme at St Antony's College, and we are proud of the results of Dr Salazar's research on anti-poverty and social policy issues in the North American region. We are confident that the outputs that he and the Programme are continuing to develop will make important contributions to the understanding of these topics, and we would like to close by registering our gratitude to the International Development Research Centre for making this project possible.