

## Public policies for transferring income in Latin America

### Hemerson Luiz Pase

Universidade Federal de Pelotas / Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciência Política, Núcleo de Estudos em Políticas Públicas  
Pelotas / RS — Brazil

### Claudio Corbo Melo

Universidade Federal de Pelotas / Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciência Política, Núcleo de Estudos em Políticas Públicas  
Pelotas / RS — Brazil

This article aims to analyze those public policies that address the social problems of poverty in six Latin American countries: Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia and Argentina. The research question posed here is: what motivated these countries to implement policies aimed at transferring income? In theory, we consider that such public policies are the result of a re-democratization process, and the rise to power of a reformist political elite and of political parties or political coalitions bent on the idea of implementing a Welfare State. To check this theory, we have adopted the compared policy methodology and the neo-institutionalism approach, as well as the “synthetic theories” and the “argumentative turn”, all of which value ideas, knowledge and discourse.

**Keywords:** social policy; welfare; poverty; the *Bolsa Familia* program; Latin America.

### Políticas públicas de transferência de renda na América Latina

Este artigo tem o objetivo de analisar as políticas públicas que enfrentam o problema social da pobreza em seis países da América Latina: México, Brasil, Uruguai, Paraguai, Bolívia e Argentina. O problema de pesquisa é: o que motivou esses países a empreenderem políticas públicas de transferência de renda? Em hipótese, afirmamos que tais políticas públicas são consequência da redemocratização, da assunção de elites políticas reformistas e de partidos ou coalizões políticas marcados pelo intuito de implementar o Welfare State. Para checar a hipótese, adotamos a metodologia de política comparada e da abordagem do neoinstitucionalismo, e das “teorias sintéticas” e da “virada argumentativa” que valorizam as ideias, o conhecimento e os discursos.

**Palavras chave:** política social; assistencialismo; pobreza; bolsa família; América Latina.

### Políticas públicas de transferencia de renta en América Latina

Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar las políticas públicas que aborden el problema social de la pobreza en seis países de América Latina: México, Brasil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia y Argentina. Como un problema de investigación, adoptamos la siguiente pregunta: ¿qué motivó a estos países para llevar a cabo las políticas de transferencia de ingresos? Bajo ninguna circunstancia, afirmamos que tales políticas son el resultado de la democratización, la asunción de las élites reformistas políticas y los partidos políticos o coaliciones marcados por la intención de aplicar el Bienestar State. Para comprobar la hipótesis, hemos adoptado la metodología de la política comparada, el enfoque neoinstitucionalismo, la “teoría sintética” y la teoría de lo “giro argumentativo” que valoran las ideas, el conocimiento y discursos.

**Palabras clave:** política social; assistencialismo; la pobreza; asignación familiar; América Latina.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The existence of large population groups in economic and social deprivation in the 21st century reveals inefficient political systems to incorporate the population as a whole into citizenship and, on the other hand, limits the possibility of vertical accountability, which is an essential element for Guarantee the quality of democracy.

According to information from the 2015 World Credit Report of the German bank Credit Suisse, 1% of the world's population accounts for half of all the world's wealth, revealing that poverty is a political problem and not a productive one. If in the seventeenth or eighteenth century the production of food and durable goods was insufficient to improve the lives of crowds who perished under hunger and poverty, this does not seem to be the main contemporary problem. The technological and industrial development of twentieth-century capitalism has multiplied the ability to produce durable and non-durable food and goods, that is, to produce wealth from work that is, however, unevenly concentrated.

Although there are no definitive solutions to the problem of concentration of wealth and inequality, from the twentieth century the capitalist countries develop social actions with different forms, foci, depths and amplitude, all with the objective of minimizing the problems caused by extreme poverty, defined under the concept of Welfare State (Esping-Andersen, 1991). The poorest countries have extra difficulties in implementing social policies, and most of the time they act in the perspective of poverty alleviation and guarantee of basic survival, which for Amartya Sen (2001) is quite relevant because "primary goods are things that every rational person presumably wants and includes income and wealth, therefore, means to any purpose for the pursuit of different conceptions of the good that individuals may have" (Sen, 1991:136).

In Latin America and the Caribbean, 18 are the countries which develop specific policies for poverty reduction through income transfer: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.

This article aims to analyze public policies that address poverty in six of the Latin American countries: Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia and Argentina. In these countries, poverty programs generally address the issue of poverty by contributing to the basic material survival of beneficiaries, that is, they transfer a cash value directly to the beneficiaries.

The problem that instigates us is what drives these countries to undertake redistributive public policies of income transfer. Although apparently predictable, the issue is relevant considering that Latin America has gone through hard and enduring dictatorial processes that have notably contributed to consolidate economic elites closely linked to the system of political representation and the bureaucratic apparatus of the state. That is, even considering the various theories that explain the development of Welfare State in developed capitalist countries, it does not seem clear that these processes have developed in the same way in Latin America (Esping-Andersen, 1991). Our hypothesis is that such public policies are a consequence of redemocratization, the assumption of reformist political elites and political parties or coalitions with programs marked by the conception of the Welfare State.

The comparative methodology allows the study of political phenomena in different countries (comparative politics) or the comparison of cases or experiences in the same country (comparison). In

this work we will compare the following programs: Bolsa Família Program (PBF) of Brazil, Cercanías, Uruguay, Tekoporã, Paraguay, Bono Juancito Pinto, from Bolivia, and Universal Child Allowance for Social Protection, Argentina. To do so, we will use descriptive variables to maximize the differences between countries and programs, such as population, poverty, beneficiaries, gross domestic product (GDP), gross domestic product for each citizen (GDP per capita), percentage of GDP invested in the program, as well as the history of redemocratization.

To test our hypotheses we use the following disaggregation of causal variables:

- i. Redemocratization: Is the country now a democracy? There are free and fair elections; Suffrage is universal, civil and political rights are respected; Governments govern and the military are under control (Maiwaring et al., 2001).
- ii. Government coalitions adherents of the Welfare State: presence of welfare items in the programmatic actions.
- iii. President belongs to left-wing party.

The outcome variable is the creation of the income transfer program and the congruence will come about if it occurred during the democratic period, under the administration of a coalition marked by Welfare State and left-wing party president.

The article is structured as follows: in the first section we present the theories we adopt to analyze Welfare State public policies in general, and income transfer in Latin America, in particular: the neoinstitutionalism approach and the approach to ideas, knowledge and discourse. In the second section we present the description of the income transfer programs of Brazil, Bolivia, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina. In the third section we make a comparative analysis of these policies in light of theories of neoinstitutionalism and theories of ideas, knowledge and discourse.

## 2. A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO THE ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC POLICY

The analysis of public policies is an academic and scientific area with a theoretical and methodological approach on public policy. It has undergone a tremendous expansion in the last decades, progressively acquiring its autonomy as a discipline within political science, and even becoming autonomous by inaugurating undergraduate and postgraduate courses at masters and doctoral levels, possessing a reasonable body of knowledge that allows an important support for interventions in social reality.

Public policies are the result (resource, or right) of power relations between state, society and market, a synthesis of the conflicts, consensus and coalitions of the social and political segments interested in realizing their preferences, in democratic regimes. They consider the continuous historical transformations and are permeated by mediations of varied nature. They are materialized through policies, programs, actions, strategies that imply coordination, administrative and bureaucratic capacity, and can be executed directly or through other agencies and even in partnership with private and third sector organizations. The analysis of public policies is the scientific reflection on public policies. The evaluation of public policies verifies the efficiency, efficacy and effectiveness of government actions.

From the recognition that it is possible to analyze scientifically what the government does or does not do, numerous explanatory models have emerged to elucidate the processes of formulation,

implementation and evaluation of the policies, as can be verified in abundant bibliography (Lasswell 1936; Lowi, 1972; Marques e Faria, 2013; Melo, 1999; Frey, 2000; Sabatier e Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Souza, 2006), as well as the process of defining the agenda setting, that is, the choice of the theme or problem to be dealt with by state action (Lowi, 1972; Kingdon, 2011; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Schattschneider, 1960; Wildawski, 1964), among others.

For this work it is important to incorporate two theories of neoinstitutionalism, a conception that gained great prestige in the area of American and Brazilian political science in the contemporary period, and the power of ideas and knowledge that has an important analytical contribution to the case under study.

The neoinstitutionalism can be subdivided into three internal, historical, sociological and rational choice chains, whose differences were well explored by Hall and Taylor (2003). The late use of this approach as a theoretical-analytical table is due to the fact that the analysis of state action arises originally in institutionally consolidated countries, in the case of the United States of America, which would exclude this treatment. However, when we look at contexts of institutional fragility, such as that of poor countries, particularly in Latin America, Africa and Asia, this perspective is quite adequate.

For neoinstitutionalists, government institutions are crucial to democratic consolidation (Mainwaring et al., 2001) and to the decision, formulation and implementation of public policies (Abrucio, 1998; Arretche, 1999). They acquire a remarkable role in the moment in which they are responsible for the maintenance of general rules and understandings that prevail over each society, exercising decisive influence in interpretations and in the very act of the people. They also have two main virtues: they reduce decision costs by making great efforts to map the possibilities of action and, on the other hand, stimulate and demand predictability of behavior by rewarding or sanctioning actions according to their suitability. In fact, political and social actors act according to their own interests; however, the rules, duties and rights stimulated and guaranteed by the formal institutions of the State, such as Congress, the Presidency, the Judiciary, state bureaucracies, influence the construction of preferences and, above all, allow predictability of the rules of the game. Important studies on the role of institutions can be found in March and Olsen (1983), Reich (2000) and Radaelli and colleagues (2012).

This means that political and social actors act not only according to their personal interests, but are governed by institutions that provide stability to the public policy process, by coordinating cognitive resources, mediating conflicts and providing incentives for certain political actions (Romano, 2009).

Thus, the neoinstitutionalist theory goes beyond the pluralist perspective in that it helps us to understand that it is not only individuals or social groups that have the strength to influence public policy, but institutions, rules and organizations have the potential to lead to a certain direction and define the object, focus and content of public policy.

The approach that considers ideas and knowledge for public policy analysis emerges from the work of Schattschneider (1960), for whom the comprehensive rational model (Deleon, 1997; Fischer, 2003) as well as the pluralistic model (Dahl and Lindblom, 1953) had limited ability to analyze government action, much less the formation of preferences that give public policy materiality. The understanding rational model originally formulated by Lasswell (1936) asserted that public policies

should be the task of specialists who through the scientific method and sophisticated statistical calculations would offer the best option for the government. On the other hand, from the advent of modern democracies, the pluralist model will identify a set of interest groups that will dispute the power to define the preference of the government, the result of which will very rarely be the most rational.

Reacting to these two perspectives, Schattschneider (1960) argues that the dispute for the definition of policies does not occur in a hermetic, open and equal manner, but, on the contrary, the dispute occurs among a few privileged groups, with much economic and political capital, which would limit the access of other sectors to the arena of dispute. From the expansion of conflict and the mobilization of bias, key categories for Schattschneider, it is possible to insert new themes in the decision arena, as well as to coordinate the debate on the bias of the segment with more power to lead it. Schattschneider lays the foundations of the one that will quickly become a model that considers the power of ideas and knowledge to analyze public policies and, particularly, to understand the formation of the agenda setting.

As well summarized by Barcelos (2015), in the late 1990s the theoretical perspective that values the “role of ideas and knowledge” to interpret public policies develops. The main names of this perspective are Peter John (1998), who states that politics is unthinkable without ideas and concepts that enable agents to construct their perceptions and arguments and to move in political disputes; John Kingdon (2011), who develops the theory of multiple flows; Baumgartner and Jones (2009), which lay the foundation for the theory of punctuated equilibrium; And Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993), who develop the model of defense coalitions.

These approaches are defined as synthetic by John (2003), since they articulate the most important traditions of the social sciences such as neoinstitutionalism itself, rational choice, network models, socioeconomic approaches and those that emphasize the role of ideas and knowledge. “These tables of analysis can be called synthetic because they articulate the knowledge produced by research in institutions, networks, socioeconomic processes, rational choice and ideas” (John, 2003:487). These “synthetic theories” have the virtue of articulating different elements to interpret the construction of public policies, with particular emphasis on the weight of ideas that, however, are not the only independent variable. Ideas, values, and principles define visions of the world that are naturally dynamic and constantly interact with institutions, social and economic processes, social networks, and individual rational choices.

Another important theoretical perspective that emerges from the strength of ideas for the formation of public policies is the one that emerges from the so-called “argumentative turnaround”, which considers the centrality of how actors articulate ideas and knowledge through discourses. Ficher and Forrester (1993) synthesize this conception by affirming that the formation of public policies occurs from ideas, discourses and arguments that are responsible for the construction of images and perceptions in relation to the most diverse themes or public problems.

From the systematization of Ficher and Forrester, the analysis of public policies undergoes an important inflection, forcing political science to overcome the interpretations that reduce the realization of the preferences to the disputes and games of power and interest. An example of overcoming is the theory of “causal narratives” by Debora Stone (1997), for whom individual interests, entwined in disputes and conflicts of power by the definition of preferences, are not given

but built socially. It is therefore central to understanding how and where individuals form their images and perceptions about the world and how these images influence preferences and define action strategies in public policy.

Synthetic approaches shift the focus of the public policy agenda by throwing light on the role of the actor, where ideas and knowledge are built. The approaches of the argumentative turn will give more importance to the discourse and its social contexts. This is because the discourse is produced in a given context and, in turn, contributes to the construction or reinforcement of this or other social, political and symbolic context.

The consideration of ideas, beliefs, arguments and discourses widened the interpretative possibility of public policies beyond institutions, economic relations, disputes of power and interest and management.

This small balance of neoinstitutionalist theoretical approaches and those that give credence to ideas, knowledge and discourse serves to evaluate the role of redemocratization, the structuring of a democratic rule of law and the access of sympathetic parties or coalitions to Welfare State and governing leaders (Presidents) from leftist parties, who are our independent variables that explain the formation of income transfer policies in Latin America in the XX century.

### 3. INCOME TRANSFER IN LATIN AMERICA

Poverty is a concern in the history of mankind, because it is the cause and consequence of civil wars, violence, morbidity, disease and incomplete citizenship (Marshall, 1967) or unfinished (Carvalho, 2007). For the United Nations, people living in extreme poverty are those with an average income of R\$ 2.36 per day, or R\$ 71.75 per month. According to data presented by the Millennium Development Goals Report 2013, the world reached the goal of reducing extreme poverty to half the level recorded in 1990, although the proportion of the world population considered to be extremely poor has fallen from 47% to 22%, More than 1.2 billion people continue to live in this condition, that is, every eight individuals, at least one does not have regular access to sufficient amounts of food to meet their energy needs. In addition, more than 100 million children remain malnourished, while 165 million are stunted (UNDP, 2015).

Individual and group initiatives to reduce hunger and poverty go back to the origin of humanity. However, according to Marshall (1967), the first systematic action by a state authority occurs for the first time in the twelfth century, when the English court instituted poor law. The law of the poor aimed to ease hunger; however, in order to gain access to this benefit, the individual needed to relinquish his status as a gentleman, declaring himself unable to subsist at his own expense. A completely different situation occurs in the twentieth century after the advent of democracy and the construction of citizenship, when individuals become holders of rights.

From the constitution of modern national states, actions to combat hunger and poverty are now part of the authorities' agenda, if not for social or programmatic commitment, at least as necessary to prevent conflagration and internal conflicts. From the advent of political citizenship and the extension of suffrage, such actions resulted in electoral support.

After the great world wars, two distinct conceptions of state virtually polarized the entire planet. On one hand, communism, formulated by Lenin and Stalin, which decisively influenced the Union

of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), defended the State's duty to decentralize all planning and economic production, as well as the need to equally distribute wealth for all citizens, regardless of their contribution. On the other hand, the Welfare State, formulated by Keynes, influenced Europe and the United States in a decisive way, defending a conception according to which the State is the main actor to impel and to manage the economic progress and, from the social perspective, the responsible for guaranteeing the minimum necessary for the survival of any individual, regardless of their contribution to build the national wealth.

In the second half of the twentieth century, these two conceptions begin to dispute the rest of the planet, that is, Africa and Latin America, with programs of economic development and international aid. On the Western side, the World Bank and the United Nations (UN), particularly the food and agriculture organizations (FAO), are developing a number of programs to support the governments of Latin America that still do not make much progress due to financial constraints, lack of priority, and mainly because they are mostly managed by dictatorships, where the electoral variable does not exist and the dispute of interests is completely controlled.

It is not for another reason that public policies created in the post-re-democratization period will have another character in Latin America that, even if often contradictory and even retrograde, represents the state of the art of the correlation of political power embodied in the authority of governments. Alongside this, at the beginning of the 20th century, several countries in Latin America will elect reformist presidents, some of them even clearly left-wing. This is the case of Venezuela, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia and Ecuador. It is at this time and environment that the countries of the region begin to face the diagnosis of great poverty and social exclusion with the development of specific public policies.

According to the World Bank, in 1997 only three countries had income transfer programs to reduce poverty and placate hunger: Mexico, Brazil and Bangladesh (World Bank, 2015). Eleven years later, in 2008, there were already 28 countries: Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Turkey, Pakistan, Yemen, Kenya, India, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Philippines, Indonesia, 17 in Latin America alone (Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Honduras, Nicaragua, Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay and Argentina).

The programs chosen for analysis will be described below.

### **3.1 PROSPERA PROGRAM (MEXICO)**

Mexico was the first country in Latin America to adopt measures to combat extreme poverty. In 1997, President Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000) of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) established *Progres*a as a strategy to support rural families living in extreme poverty.

In 2014, President Enrique Peña Nieto (2012) of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) renamed the program *Prospera*, which, according to the Secretariat for Social Development (Sedesol, 2015), offers benefits in the areas of Education, health and financial inclusion, and the labor market.

In education it offers scholarships for each of the children and young people of beneficiary families who attend and complete their studies of primary and secondary education, as well as support for the acquisition of school material. In addition, the program supports the emancipated to continue

to study through university scholarships, grants for young people with disabilities, scholarships for technical vocational training.

In the area of health it offers access to a basic package with self-care workshops, medical care, malnutrition prevention and treatment, support for the elderly, support for members from zero to nine years, supplementary food support, attachment of children under five to health insurance. In addition, it provides monthly monetary support to beneficiary families in order to contribute to the purchase and diversification of their food.

In the area of labor market inclusion, it provides support for beneficiary families to find work through the National Employment Service. In addition, it offers priority access to 15 federal programs to stimulate the creation of income in an autonomous and sustainable way.

The criterion of access to Prospera is daily per capita household income of less than U\$ 1.79 in rural areas and U\$ 2.34 in urban areas. The conditions are: (i) participation of mothers (beneficiaries) in government lectures on nutrition and health, (ii) regularity in medical appointments, (iii) compliance with the immunization schedule for children, (iv) regular school attendance of children, adolescents and young people, in primary, secondary and higher education.

### **3.2 BOLSA FAMÍLIA PROGRAM (BRAZIL)**

In 2003, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of the Workers' Party (PT) created the Bolsa Família Program (PBF) inspired by the Bolsa Escola Program (PBE), a pioneering idea proposed by Cristovam Buarque as rector and professor at the University of Brasília (UnB) in 1986. The idea of Buarque was based on the perception that very poor women could not work because they had to take care of their children. Thus, it was proposed a scholarship that would allow the maintenance of children at school so that their mothers could work.

The Bolsa Família Program (PBF) consisted of expanding this social program, with registration and administration centralized in the Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger (MDS), which increased its efficiency and expanded the number of beneficiary families (MDS, 2015c). According to Senna and partners (2007:86), the PBF was implemented by the Brazilian government in October 2003, "with the perspective of combating poverty and hunger in the country and promoting innovations in the historical pattern of public intervention in the social area."

The conditions of the PBF are: (i) to follow the schedule of vaccination and growth and development for children under seven years of age, (ii) to monitor the prenatal care of pregnant women and mothers in the 14-44 age group, (iii) Families with children between six and 15 years of age must prove enrollment and minimum attendance of 85% and 75% for adolescents between 16 and 17 years of age, (iv) children and adolescents up to the age of 15, at risk or withdrawn from child work, should participate in the services of coexistence and strengthening of bonds and obtain a minimum frequency of 85% of the monthly workload (MDS, 2015c).

The Bolsa Família Program (PBF) aims at the immediate reduction of poverty through the direct transfer of income, the incentive to access basic social rights through conditionalities in the fields of education, health and social assistance, and integration with complementary programs, which aim to supplement and qualify families so that beneficiaries can overcome the situation of insecurity and poverty.



The PBF is a direct income transfer program that benefits families living in poverty and extreme poverty throughout the country. It is part of the Brazil Without Poverty Plan, whose beneficiaries are citizens with a per capita family income of less than R\$ 77.00 per month and is based on guaranteed income, productive inclusion and access to public services. It has three main axes: income transfer promotes immediate poverty alleviation, conditionalities reinforce access to basic social rights in the areas of education, health and social assistance, and complementary actions and programs aim at the development of families to overcome the situation of vulnerability.

### **3.3 TEKOPORÁ (PARAGUAY)**

In 2005, Paraguayan President Nicanor Duarte Frutos (2003-08) of the Colorado Party created the Tekoporá income transfer program, which main objective is to break with the generational transmission chains of poverty through monetary transfers and conditionalities that provide to the beneficiary families the inclusion in other social rights. The program progress is a joint responsibility between beneficiaries and Tekoporá itself, being related to health care and education and the development of support activities (Ribas, Hirata and Soares, 2010:210-211).

The Tekoporá program, which means “to be well” in Guarani, is part of the National Poverty Reduction Program Semeando Oportunidades. Based on the Bolsa Família Program (PBF) in Brazil and the Oportunidades Program in Mexico, Tekoporá benefits more than 100,000 families in situations of vulnerability and social risk (SAS, 2015).

To identify beneficiary families, the Secretariat of Social Action (SAS) uses a quality of life quality index (IQV) which, according to Ribas, Hirata and Soares (2010), derives from an analysis of main components such as living conditions, access to public services, drinking water and telephone, education of family parents, education of children aged 6-24 years, occupation of the head of Family, possession of durable goods and family composition. The criteria for access to the program are low quality of life through the Quality of Life Index (ICV) and the existence of people with severe disabilities (physical, intellectual, sensorial, psychological or multiple).

The program provides family follow-up of social workers called the “family guide,” who are responsible for visiting homes to check that conditionalities are being met. They also provide guidance for improving the family environment and hygiene habits, provide ideas and actions to improve food and health quality, and guide families to access different public services to which they are entitled. In addition, beneficiaries choose a community representative who is responsible for gathering community concerns, supporting the work of family guides, and managing the delivery of public services (SAS, 2015).

### **3.4 BONO JUANCITO PINTO (BOLIVIA)**

In 2006, Bolivian President Evo Morales (2006) of the Movement for Socialism (MAS) party created the Bono Juancito Pinto (BJP), linked to the Bolivian Ministry of Education. The main objective of BJP was of improving the access to education, promote social mobility and reduce poverty for future generations (Yañez, Rojas and Silva, 2011) by supporting families in guaranteeing investments in school materials, transportation, food for children and adolescents (Navarro, 2012). Unlike the previous redistribution programs mentioned, the benefit is passed on annually.

Although primary school attendance rates are high, there are hard-to-study groups, such as girls, indigenous people and people living in rural areas.

Initially, the program was intended to serve elementary school children. However, from the year 2012, the benefit was expanded for high school students. Therefore, the families that became beneficiaries in 2006 and who kept their children in school did not stop receiving the BJP, a fact that resulted in the increase of the children attending the program (Romão, 2013:15).

One of the criticisms made to the BJP by Yañez, Rojas e Silva (2011) is that he could improve the supply of education more quickly by increasing levels of assistance and improving infrastructure. Moreover, for the authors, there is a lack of complementary programs that offer incentives to facilitate access for more people, as well as the creation of a more efficient registration mechanism that allows a more detailed evaluation of the BJP.

It is worth mentioning that “the BJP financing is promoted by the income of oil and gas exports to Brazil and Argentina” (Romão, 2013:15). In addition to the similarities between income transfer programs, it can be observed that such programs are of great importance to the economic relations between the countries surveyed for the integration of South America and the prosperity of the fight against hunger.

## ***2.5 PLAN FOR SOCIAL EMERGENCY CARE, CERCANIAS AND FAMILY ALLOWANCES (URUGUAY)***

In 2005, Uruguayan President Tabaré Vázquez (2005-10) of Frente Amplio Party (FA) created the Social Emergency Attention Plan (Panes), which was divided in several other programs. It originally consisted of a set of interventions, including Citizen Income (RC), consisting of a cash transfer of U\$ 54 per month, regardless of the number of members of the household, for a period of up to two years and nine months (Baráibar, 2012).

In the year 2012, President José Mujica (2010-15), Frente Amplio, created the Cercanias Program that develops a work to bring public power closer to families, promoting effective access to the social benefits to which they are entitled. Its main objective is the socialization of these families in a situation of poverty through education and development. It is aimed at families in situations of violation of rights and critical needs, especially with the presence of children and adolescents under 18 years.

The program is managed by the Ministry of Social Development and the Institute of Childhood and Adolescence of Uruguay (Mides) and is part of the Interinstitutional Strategy for Strengthening Family Capacities. It has the explicit objective of strengthening social capital as a bridge between the various social service providers and, through supervised interventions by NGOs, seeks to promote social capital (Gonçalves, 2013:27).

Beneficiaries are selected by an index that includes extreme poverty and the social vulnerability of the family. These families are identified by field teams of the National Department of Evaluation and Monitoring (Dinem) and a diagnosis made by social services in the territory (Inau, 2015).

Work with families is done through the Territorial Teams of Family Care (Etaf) which have the role of seeking families in situations of poverty or extreme poverty. Unlike other programs, the Cercanias does not expect the family to demand the benefit, but rather, search for those who need it. This strategy aims to improve the coordination of services at the local level, promoting networking and comprehensiveness in responses, overcoming fragmentation (Mides, 2015).

## 2.6 UNIVERSAL CHILD ALLOWANCE (ARGENTINA)

In 2009, the President of Argentina, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007), of the Justicialista Party (PJ), created the Universal Child Allowance for Social Protection (AUH) program to improve indicators related to four central dimensions of well-being of the population: poverty, homelessness, inequality and relative vulnerability (Eclac, 2015).

The AUH establishes a basic monthly payment for each child under the age of 18, corresponding to 80% of the total benefit, while the remaining 20% is passed on to families once a year, since they comply with the conditionality established by the program — the presentation of health certificates and educational assistance. Access requirements and conditionalities vary by age: (i) the school attendance of five-year-olds, (ii) the birth registration plan and the compulsory vaccination card for children under seven, and (iii) health monitoring for people over six years of age. The total amount of the allowance for children was set at \$ 340 (Argentine pesos) in 2012, which is equivalent to approximately R\$ 170 (Brazilian real) per capita (Anses, 2015).

According to Agis, Cañete and Panigo (2010), the most important result of the AUH in Argentina is not quantitative, but qualitative. For the first time in decades, social policy has reached historically vulnerable population groups such as children, single mothers and large families (Agis, Cañete and Panigo, 2010:36).

In the next section, the similarities and differences between these programs and their relationship to democracy and poverty will be analyzed.

## 3. REDEMOCRATIZATION AND PUBLIC POLICIES

The income transfer programs mentioned in this study have important differences, since they were developed in different countries and periods, with different economic situations, political systems, institutional structures and population compositions. However, there are some important similarities that, in our opinion, determine the constitution of the programs: the relevance of poverty, redemocratization and the access of reformist leaders to the posts of president.

Table 1 systematizes some important information to understand the relationship between poverty and the public policies of income transfer in the region.

**TABLE 1** GNP/INCOME TRANSFER PROGRAMS

|          | Program  | GNP (millions US\$) | GNP per capita (US\$) 2013 | % GNP in The program | Population 2014 (millions) | Beneficiary | % da pop. beneficiary | % da pop. Sub nourished |
|----------|----------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| MÉXICO   | Prospera | 1,259,201           | 10,293                     | 0.41%                | 124                        | 27,000,000  | 21.4%                 | <5%                     |
| BRAZIL   | PBF      | 2,243,804           | 11,199                     | 0.47%                | 202                        | 50,353,431  | 24.9%                 | < 5%                    |
| PARAGUAY | Tekoporã | 29,009              | 4,294                      | 0.23%                | 6.9                        | 565,020     | 8.2%                  | 11%                     |
| BOLÍVIA  | BJP      | 30,601              | 2,868                      | 0.64%                | 10.8                       | 1,824,577   | 16.9%                 | 19.5%                   |

*Continue*

|           | Program | GNP (millions US\$) | GNP per capita (US\$) 2013 | % GNP in The program | Population 2014 (millions) | Beneficiary | % da pop. beneficiary | % da pop. Sub nourished |
|-----------|---------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| URUGUAY   | PANES   | 55,708              | 16,351                     | 0.45%                | 3.4                        | 389,364     | 11.5%                 | < 5%                    |
| ARGENTINA | AUY     | 611,726             | 14,760                     | 0.54%                | 41.8                       | 3,327,583   | 8.0%                  | < 5%                    |
|           |         |                     |                            |                      | 388.9                      | 83,459,975  | 21%                   |                         |

Sources: IBGE (2015) and OIT (2014).

The data show that the countries of the region are very different in terms of population size and GNP and investment in income transfer programs. The country that invests the most in the income transfer program, proportionately, is Bolivia with 0.64% of GDP benefiting 16.9% of the population, 1,824,577 citizens. Nevertheless, Bolivia is also the country with the highest percentage of undernourished, 19.5%, that is, it attends a lower portion than the one in extreme poverty. The country that invests least is Paraguay with 0.23% of GNP benefiting 8.2% of the population, 565,020 citizens, however, it has the second highest percentage of undernourished, 11.5%, also attending a smaller portion than the one in extreme poverty.

The investments of Mexico and Brazil, which although they have a percentage of undernourished children under 5%, benefit the highest percentage of the population, 21.4%, 27 million and 24.9%, 50,353,431 citizens with GNP ratio of 0.41% and 0.47%, respectively. That is, the programs Prospera of Mexico and PBF of Brazil benefit a portion of the population above those in extreme poverty. The PBF of Brazil invests 0.47% of GNP benefiting more than 50 million people, that is, population greater than the sum of the population of Bolivia, Uruguay and Paraguay; Is also larger than the population of Argentina. Table 1 shows that none of the countries even invest 1% of GNP in these programs, and even so, four of them benefit a larger share than the one in extreme poverty. Still in the direction of investment, it seems clear that if 1% of GNP were invested, Bolivia and Paraguay would be able to serve the undernourished at a minimum, and other countries would be able to further increase beneficiaries, or qualify or increase their nominal value. But what about this relationship with democracy? This is what we will see next.

In the first section we defined public policies as the result of relations of political power that materialize in goods, resources or rights made available to society or to social groups in democratic regimes. It is important to emphasize the relevance of democracy to the conceptualization of public policies, to distinguish it from those that define it as the “state in action” without assigning decisive importance to the variable political regime. For this definition, every state action would be a public policy regardless of the regime under which it takes shape and materializes (Gobert and Muller, 1987 apud Höfling, 2001).

If it is agreed that public policies are State action, regardless of the political regime, it is accepted that states with totalitarian, authoritarian or theocratic regimes are in some way public, that is, they are subject to some type of evaluation from the public, from society. It is more than illogical, even if we use a minimalist definition of democracy, as Mainwaring and collaborators (2001) do, since one of the categories that define the democratic regime is the existence of free and fair elections, which guarantee at least vertical accountability with each new round of elections, an unthinkable situation

in any undemocratic regime. This is not to say that non-democratic governments do not act, but rather, that their actions are not public policy.

This perspective was already observable in the concerns of the founders of public policy analysis, such as Harold Lasswell (1936), who analyzed the possibility of planning state action in order to overcome the risks to peace and ensure the consolidation of democracy.

In this sense, it is argued that, after redemocratization, the Latin American states began to act through public policies. Income transfer programs are of the redistributive type, as Lowi (1972) defines, since they direct resources from society as a whole to a specific social group and, at least in its origins, are generated under strong conflicts. Chart 1 illustrates this statement.

**CHART 1 PARTY POLITICS AND INCOME TRANSFER PROGRAMS**

|           | Program  | Creation | President                           | Party                                   | Ideology     | Democratic since |
|-----------|----------|----------|-------------------------------------|---|--------------|------------------|
| MEXICO    | Prospera | 1997     | Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000)         | Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) | Center       | 1997             |
| BRAZIL    | PBF      | 2003     | Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-09) | Workers' Party (PT)                     | Center-left  | 1985             |
| PARAGUAY  | Tekoporã | 2005     | Nicanor Duarte Frutos (2003-08)     | Colorado Party                          | Center-Right | 1993             |
| BOLÍVIA   | BJP      | 2006     | Evo Morales (2006...)               | Movement to Socialism (MAS)             | Left         | 1982             |
| URUGUAY   | Panes    | 2005     | Tabaré Vázquez (2005-10)            | Front Wide (FA)                         | Center-left  | 1985             |
| ARGENTINA | AUY      | 2007     | Cristina Kirchner (2007...)         | Justicialista Party                     | Center-left  | 1983             |

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Chart 1 shows that all income transfer programs were created after the last wave of redemocratization in Latin America in the late 1990s and early 2000s when many presidents who lead reformers and / or leftists parties and coalitions. This is quite evident when you compare the “creation” column with the “democratic since” column, which shows that all countries have created their program after the emergence of democracy.

This information reveals the congruence of the use of neoinstitutionalist theory to interpret public policies of income transfer. Redemocratization in Latin America was structured on the basis of solid legal frameworks, national constitutions that, while not provoking major social transformations, established clear rules for the democratic game, signaling that the winner of the elections would take over the government. This situation clearly outline welfare initiatives such as income transfer policies.

Governments marked by characteristics of Welfare State will not have their possessions and ordered prevented or violated, thanks to institutional normality.

It is precisely for this reason that the relationship between public policy, democracy and accountability is completely congruent as a variable independent of the creation of income transfer programs, since the regime allows the whole society, including the most excluded or impoverished social groups, to participate in the dispute for power materialized in the electoral processes and, more usually, in the disputes between the interest and pressure groups in the Legislative, Executive and often between the two powers.

It is possible to incorporate the excluded social segments through the establishment of the rule of law, or institutional consolidation, which enables predictability for future action and guarantees the rules of the game for the definition of preferences, and the assurance that inappropriate behaviors will be discouraged.

The relationship between the creation of income transfer programs as a dependent variable and the power of reformist leadership also seems quite evident. As can be seen in table 1, only the Colorado Party of Paraguay is defined as center-right on the ideological spectrum when the creation of the Prospera in 1997; In the five other countries, all the political parties of the presidents are located in the spectrum of the center on the left.

This variable is very relevant when considering the fact that the period of re-democratization in Latin America coincided with the crisis of the State and with neoliberal adjustments and, on the other hand, with the resumption of the developmentalist and Welfare State approach, which focus on the intervention of the State in the economy and in the regulation of the distribution of socially produced wealth. Prospects of this nature greatly influence the programs of center-left parties and attract political and electoral support. This means that diagnoses of poverty and social exclusion will be dealt with prominently because of the electoral segments that support these governments, with important presence of union movements of urban and rural workers, indigenous movement and the middle class. In this sense, as the approach that values the role of ideas, knowledge and discourses suggests, reformist ideals and discourses will be constructed on the basis of evident poverty and misery and, in turn, will produce an inflection in the social and political context in order to succeed in forming some welfare agendas, such as income transfer programs.

In relation to the role of the actors, according to theories of the discursive turn (Stone, 1997), the role played by the ideas of elected presidents and the programs and discourses of their coalitions that are influenced by social policy initiatives is quite evident. Moreover, the social, political and economic contexts of poverty and exclusion build and legitimize ideas and discourses produced by presidents and their coalitions, and that influence the formation of public policy of income transfer that have, ultimately, the objective of transform those contexts. There is undeniable the prominence of the speeches given by Lula in Brazil, Evo Morales in Bolivia, Tabaré Vazquez in Uruguay and Kirchner in Argentina, in the inflection of the State in the sense of developing social policy.

#### 4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The public policies on income transfer in Latin America, particularly in Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia and Argentina, face the social problem of hunger and poverty, with a significant part of the population of these six countries in a situation of malnutrition.

The article shows the congruence between public policies of income transfer, as a consequent variable, and redemocratization. In addition, shows the emergence of reformist political elites and political parties or coalitions with programs marked by the conception of the Welfare State.

The divergences found are related to the countries themselves, which have a difference in terms of GNP, GNP/ per capita, population, undernourished population, as well as distinctions in their programs: creation period, influences, institutionality, targeting, conditionalities, access, emancipation, volume of invested resources, benefit format, number of beneficiaries.

On the other hand, it is understood that the most relevant similarities are those that are configured as independent variables: redemocratization and the ideas and speeches of the presidents and reformist parties.

All income transfer programs in Latin America are created after the redemocratization period of the 1990s and 2000s, which establishes the possibility of building public policies as a materialization of the correlation of political forces present in the national society. Based on that, the agenda setting of the policy cycle will have several periods and mechanisms of checks and balances of the opposition and of the various pressure and interest groups, as well as of the other democratic powers.

The access of reformist political elites coincides with the cooling of enthusiasm with neoliberalism as a panacea to solve the fiscal, financial, and hyperinflation crisis of the 1980s, and with the resurgence of programmatic perspectives of Welfare State and developmentalists, programmatic brands of Political spectrum from the center to the left in the region.

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### Hemerson Luiz Pase

Doctor in Political Science. Professor of the Post-Graduate Program in Political Science and coordinator of the Center for Public Policy Studies of the Federal University of Pelotas and Professor of the Federal University of Rio Grande. E-mail: hemerson.pase@gmail.com.

### Claudio Corbo Melo

Master in Political Science from the Post-Graduate Program in Political Science and a researcher at the Center for Public Policy Studies at the Federal University of Pelotas. E-mail: claudiocorbo13@yahoo.com.br.