

THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC JUNCTURE IN BRAZIL AFTER THE LULA AND DILMA ADMINISTRATIONS: a step back in the direction of implantation of a Basic Income in Brazil¹

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ABSTRACT: The *Bolsa Família* Program has been implemented since 2003 as the main strategy to face poverty in Brazil. Its benefit is the transfer of income to poor and extremely poor families as well as to articulate the monetary income transfer with some structural policies, mainly education, health and work. The *Bolsa Família* has already reached almost 14 million of families and is implemented in all the 5,545 Brazilian municipalities, I e, about ¼ of the Brazilian population. The programs requires the fulfillment of some) conditionalities in the field of education and health, such as: enrollment and attendance of the children and adolescents in school; children must get basic health care and pregnant women must receive prenatal care. The *Bolsa Família* is considered in Brazil, according to Eduardo Suplicy's Law Bill 266/2001 sanctioned by President Lula in January 8 of 2004, as the first step toward creating a Citizenship Basic Income. The goal of this proposal is to present and to problematize the recent political and economic post Lula and Dilma Administrations situation in order to demonstrate the climate of regression in the social protection programs and the dismantling of the same social rights already conquered by the worker class and the poor population. Among the programs to be mentioned is the *Bolsa Família*. The intention is to highlight the economic situation of a long recession and rise in unemployment rates besides the decrease of the workers' income and the repression of social movements, in order to develop an analysis of the *Bolsa Família* in this context.

Keywords: Bolsa Família. Income Transfer Programs. Brazil.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The *Bolsa Família* Program is the largest income transfer program implemented in Latin America. It is part of the Brazilian Social Protection System and the main program dealing with extreme poverty in a country with a surface area of 8,547,403 km², divided into five regions, with 26 states and 5,570 municipalities, and the Federal District, Brasília. Projections by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE - Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística) indicate a population of (207,537,853 inhabitants in May 2017. According to censuses the Brazilian fertility index has been decreasing, reaching 1.86 child per family in 2010. In the same year, the number of private domiciles was 67.6 million, with an average of 3.3 residents per domicile. There is a marked tendency for the age structure of the population to converge towards aging, with a recorded participation of the population 60 years old or over as 11.3% per cent in 2010 (INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA, 2011).

The development of the Brazilian Social Protection System started in 1930. That year a profound economic and social transformation began, with the transition from an agricultural exporting development model to a model of urban-industrial development. In this context, the Brazilian social structure began to include a new working class, urban workers. Due to the dynamics of this situation new demands emerged to satisfy collective needs, as a consequence of the emerging industrial process, and with it, the increased relocation of the rural population to the city, generating a growing urbanization process, accompanied by its consequences and demands.

Brazilian economic development was intensified from 1970 onwards, in the context of a Military Dictatorship established in 1964, when the development of capitalism in Brazil took on a monopolistic perspective, with internationalization and centralization, requiring from the State that it support the infrastructure required by the new demands of capital. In this authoritarian and centralizing context, social protection advanced adopting social programs that ultimately functioned as a palliative to reduce the strong repression of the popular sectors and the working class, maintaining its function of reproducing the work force and seeking legitimation of the authoritarian regime.

In the 1980s there already was a significant organized movement of dissatisfaction with the military regime. Strong demands were presented by the social struggles, claiming the expansion of social rights and resolution of the social debt, especially as results of the wage squeeze and the increasing concentration of income. The struggles were manifested both in the field of production and consumption, with the emergence of what began to be called new trade unionism and new social movements.

The dynamics of political efervescence in the 1980s culminated with the Federal Constitution of 1988 which expanded social rights and established Social Security, consisting of the policies for Health, Social Assistance and Social Security, significantly expanding the System of Social Protection in Brazil, by extending the rights even to the Brazilians who were not in the formal labor market.

In this context with the expansion of rights and social protection, a debate began about income transfer programs whose first experiences are implemented in 1995, initially at a municipal level, followed by experiences adopted by several states, reaching a significant expansion from 2001 onwards by expanding national programs, culminating in the creation of the *Bolsa Família* in 2003. From then, the income transfer programs became central to the Brazilian Social Protection System (SILVA, YAZBEK; GIOVANNI, 2014).

In this text, the Bolsa Familia Program is located at the current economic and political juncture from 2016 onwards, when what we consider the dismantling of social rights achieved by Brazilian workers began to occur, with a significant regression of the social protection aimed at the segments of the population that live in a situation of poverty and extreme poverty. For this, we present a problematizing discussion about the current economic and political situation in Brazil, after the Lula and Dilma Administrations ((2003-2016), continuing with the presentation of a general characterization of the *Bolsa Família* and then highlighting possible pushbacks of the juncture presented in its configuration, development and perspectives. Thus, we attempt to size possible repercussions of the implementation of a Citizenship Basic Income directed at all Brazilians and foreigners who have lived in Brazil for five years or more, as determined by Law 10,835/2004, introduced by then Senator Eduardo Suplicy of the Workers' Party (PT - Partido dos Trabalhadores) and sanctioned by President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva on January 8, 2004. This is because the *Bolsa Família* is indicated as a first step in the process to implement the Citizenship Basic Income in Brazil, and the initial criterion to implement it is the inclusion of all who live in a state of poverty and extreme poverty, who are the target public of the *Bolsa Família*.

2 ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL JUNCTURE IN BRAZIL AFTER THE LULA AND DILMA ADMINISTRATIONS

At the beginning of 21st century, as in most of the countries of Latin America where progressive administrations came to power originating in the left wing parties, Brazil, under the presidency of Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, of the Workers' Party, underwent a major inflection in its economic and social scene, leading some scholars to glimpse a break with the development pattern that had occurred until then, towards a so-called *Neodevelopmentalism*. This inflection was expressed by the association between the

renewal of economic growth, furthered by a favorable international context, and the improvement of social indicators, above all those related to the labor market, poverty and inequality.

Indeed, following the context of a marked destructuring of the labor market in the 1990s, with negative effects on poverty and inequality, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP - Produto Interno Bruto - PIB) began to grow more vigorously, and reached a rate of 5.4% in 2007. According to Lima, Nascimento and Mochel (2009), based on data from the Annual Report on Social Information (RAIS - Relação Anual de Informações Sociais) of the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MTE- Ministério do Trabalho e Emprego), this generated 11.010 million formal jobs during the period from January 2003 to September 2008. Consequently, according to Ramos and Cavaleri (2009), the level of total employment, caused a drop in the degree of informality which, 2007, reached the lowest level of the decade, 50.9%.

As regards the extreme poverty and poverty rates, according to the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA - Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada), between 1995 and 2008 12.5 million people moved out of a situation of extreme poverty (per capita average domicile income of up to a quarter of the monthly minimum wage), reducing the percentage of people living under these conditions to almost half (from 20.9% to 10.5%) (INSTITUTO DE PESQUISA ECONÔMICA APLICADA, 2010). At the same time, the rate of absolute poverty (per capita average domicile income of up to half the monthly minimum wage) went down by 43.4%, in 1995, to 28.8%, in 2008. Besides the reduction of extreme poverty and absolute poverty, according to Barros and others (2009), between 2001 and 2007, the Gini coefficient, one of the most traditional measures of inequality, fell seven percentage points, although despite this Brazil continued to occupy one of the worst positions in the ranking of most unequal countries in the world.

In the second decade of the 21st century, already under the Dilma Rouseff administration, which was also of the PT, and faced with an international worsening of the capitalist crisis, a new inflection in the Brazilian economy was identified, with negative effects on the labor market. In fact, according to Holanda and Anchieta (2014), based on data from the General Registry of Employed and Unemployed (CAGED - Cadastro Geral de Empregados e Desempregados), while in 2010, in a context of GDP growth on the order of 7.5%, 3.1 million formal jobs were generated in the country, in 2013 this number dropped to 1.1. million, which was less than in 2009, the year when the international financial crisis occurred. On the other hand and paradoxically, according to the Monthly Survey of Jobs (PME - Pesquisa Mensal de Emprego) disseminated by IBGE, the rate of unemployment in 2013 reached the lowest level of the series begun in 2002, corresponding to 4.3%, approaching a situation of full employment.

However, since early 2015, during President Dilma Rousseff's second term in office, Brazil has undergone a profound political and institutional crisis, worsened by the advance of Operação Lava-Jato (Operation Car Wash)⁴, with a clear polarization of society around distinct political–ideological projects and a marked advance of conservatism. This crisis is further intensified by a situation of accelerated deterioration of macroeconomic conditions and fiscal adjustment which, according to data from CAGED, led to closing down 137 thousand formal jobs in the first four months of the year. Considering the last twelve months that ended in April 2015, the result was even worse with 263 thousand jobs closed down. (LIMA; ANCHIETA JÚNIOR; SOUSA, 2015).

Particularly as regards the macroeconomic conditions, indeed, the cycle of the rise in the rate of interest of the Special System for Liquidation and Custody (SELIC -Sistema Especial de Liquidação e de Custódia) which began in 2014, the readjustment of managed prices (electricity and fuels) consequently speeding up the inflation during the first quarter of 2015, added to the effects of the already mentioned Operation Car Wash, negatively affected the performance of the GDP with negative repercussions on the job market.

In this context, despite the already mentioned resiliency of the rate of unemployment at historically low levels against a recessive scenario, this, according to the PME (INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA, 2015a) reached the mean of 6.0% in the six main Brazilian metropolitan regions in the first four months of 2015, against 5.0% in the same four-month period of 2014.

According to Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua (PNAD Contínua - Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua) (INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA, 2015b), whose coverage is greater than that of the PME, the number of unemployed increased by almost 1.5 million people in passing from the last quarter of 2014 to the first one of 2015, raising the unemployment rate from 6.5 % to 7.9% during the same period. (LIMA; ANCHIETA JÚNIOR; SOUSA, 2015). Also, according to PNAD Contínua, the mean rate of unemployment in Brazil in 2015 was 8.5%. (INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA, 2015b).

In 2016, the worsening of the political-institutional crisis culminated in the approval of President Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, and the government was taken over

⁴Operation Car Wash is the biggest investigation of corruption and money laundering ever performed in Brazil. It is estimated that the volume of money diverted from the coffers of Petrobrás, the biggest State-owned company in Brazil, is around billions of reais. In addition, there is the economic and political importance of the suspects of participating in the corruption scheme that involves the company. The name *Lava Jato* (Car Wash) is due to the use of a network of gas stations and carwashes to move illicit funds belonging to one of the criminal organizations that were initially investigated. Although the investigation has moved on to other criminal organizations, the initial name has become widely accepted. (BRASIL [20--?]).

by Vice-President of Brazil Michel Temer who belongs to the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB - Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro). This meant the victory of a conservative project that jeopardizes major advances of the country, especially in the social sphere, during the first decade of 2000. This is because precisely these advances were considered to be the main causes of the worsening of the public deficit, the acceleration of inflation and the significant drop in the GDP growth rate which diminished from 2.7% to 0.1% between 2013 and 2014, reaching the negative indices of 3.8% in 2015 and 3.5% in 2016. (INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA, 2015b; INSTITUTO MARANHENSE DE ESTUDOS SOCIOECONÔMICOS E CARTOGRÁFICOS, 2017).

This said, according to the official version, the solution to the economic crisis would necessarily require furthering the fiscal adjustment that already began in President Dilma Rousseff's second term, by strict cutbacks of funds, especially in the social area, and the approval of reforms in the labor and social security areas, which is extremely regressive from the point of view of the working classes. This adjustment, however, did not question the misuse of funds with payments of interest on the public debt, which, according to Pochmann (2017)⁵, reached about 8.5% of the GDP in 2015, compared to 5.7% in 2014, besides the waste of subsidies and exemptions for privileged sectors. Furthermore, it did not even come close to the need for the reform of the Brazilian tax system which is extremely regressive, whose burden of taxes, rates and contributions ultimately favors the rich to the detriment of the poor.

To counter this context of sharpening the political institutional crisis, with tax adjustment and deterioration of the macroeconomic conditions in the labor market indicators, we have a significant elevation of the mean rate of unemployment which, according to PNAD Contínua (INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA, 2016), reached 11.5%, in 2016 against the previously mentioned index of 8.5% in 2015. (LIMA; MORAES; SILVA, 2017).

As regards formal employment, according to the data of the CAGED, the balance of jobs in the country (1.3 million net dismissals) was negative, marking the second year of retraction of the formal labor market so that between 2015 and 2016, there were twenty-two months in which there were more dismissals than admittances. (LIMA; MORAES; SILVA, 2017).

The marked worsening observed in the formal labor market also showed a deterioration in the quality of jobs. In fact, according to data from PNAD Contínua (INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA, 2016), successive drops were observed in the formal jobs obeying the employment legislation (Consolidation of Labor

⁵ Interview given to the Boletim do Observatório Social e do Trabalho, Ano 6, n. 2.

Laws - CLT - Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho) which accounted for 41.4% of the employed workers in Brazil in 2014, falling to 40.6% in 2015 and to 39.8% in 2016. On the other hand, the percentage of workers employed without a signed employment card jumped from 15.7% in 2014 to 16.3% in 2016. Likewise, there was an elevation of the percentage of self-employed workers, most of whom do not have rights according to labor laws and social security, and this percentage went from 23.4% in 2014 to 24.5% in 2016. (LIMA; MORAES; SILVA, 2017).

From the standpoint of rates of poverty and extreme poverty, although according to IPEA (2016), these have dropped significantly between 2004 and 2014, from a level of 20.0% to 6.0% and from 7.0% to 2.0%, respectively, this descending trajectory is threatened by the reversion of the economic scenario in 2014, accompanied by the political crisis that began in 2015. The same is applied to inequality, measured by the Gini coefficient which fell 9.7 percentage points during the same period, a tendency that is likewise threatened not only by the directions taken by the economy, but also by the doubts and uncertainties that currently are imposed on the institutionality of the social protection system and on the regulatory framework of work.

Indeed, within the strict fiscal adjustment implemented by the Temer Administration, the Proposal for Amendment to the Constitution nº 55 of 2016, called PEC (Proposta de Emenda Constitucional) of the Cap to Public Expenditures was approved. It institutes the New Fiscal Regime within the sphere of the Fiscal and Federal Social Security Budgets, to remain in force for twenty financial years, establishing individualized limits⁶ for the primary expenditures of each of the three Powers, the Federal Prosecutor's Office and the Attorney General's Office.

Furthermore, in this context of a crisis, with negative effects on the Brazilian labor market, there is a renewed debate regarding the need to flexibilize labor relations, culminating in the enactment of Law nº 13,429, of March 31, 2017, by the Federal Congress and sanctioned by the President of the Republic. This broadens and further flexibilizes the possibilities of outsourcing and employment of temporary employees, which will certainly impose marked and regressive changes on the structure of the Brazilian labor market.

Two proposals for reform are about to be voted and approved in National Congress to complement the package of regressive measures. They are an attack on major

⁶ The limits are as follows: I – for the financial year of 2017, to the primary expenditures paid for in the financial year of 2016, including the remains payable and other operations that affect the result, corrected by 7,2% and II – for the later financial years, to the value of the limit referring to the immediately previous financial year, corrected by the variation of the Broad National Consumer Price Index (IPCA - Índice Nacional de Preços ao Consumidor Amplo). The base for calculation and established limits do not include: I - constitutional transfer; II – extraordinary credits III – non-recurrent expenditures of the Electoral Courts for holding elections; and IV- expenditures due to increased capital of non-depedent state owned companies.

rights that were conquered with great effort by the working class: the CLT and Social Security (Previdência Social).

Regarding the first, the premises that support it are considered false. According to them the Brazilian labor market is very rigid, favored by *archaic* or *obsolete* laws that make the costs of employment contracts and dismissals of labor more expensive than in other countries. This is because high turnover (of employees) indicates that the Brazilian labor market is already very flexible. Moreover, there is no proof of a correlation between flexibilizing the labor market and generating jobs, and this is corroborated by studies performed by the International Labor Organization (ILO). (LIMA; MORAES; SILVA, 2017).

As to reforming Social Security, according to Pochman (2017), this proposes to subvert the current model of social security established by the Federal Constitution in 1988, which was to be funded, besides the direct contribution of workers and employers, by taxes (Contribution to Funding of Social Security - COFINS, for instance), paid for by the entire society, with the coverage of costs of retirement and pensions taking place concomitantly with health and social assistance.

It is, therefore, in this grave economic and political-institutional context, with the advance of conservatism in public policies and attack on social rights that we will now discuss the *Bolsa Família*.

3 THE BOLSA FAMÍLIA IN THE CURRENT BRAZILIAN JUNCTURE: challenges for the construction of a Citizenship Basic Income

This item initially presents a characterization of the *Bolsa Família* as the largest and broadest income transfer for poor and extremely poor families that is presently being implemented in Brazil. It continues to situate the *Bolsa Família* in the current Brazilian juncture, highlighting the context of dismantling social rights and regression of social protection to the poor and the repercussion of this reality on the *Bolsa Família*, as an initial strategy to implement a Citizenship Basic Income in Brazil.

3.1 The Bolsa Família⁷: an overview

The *Bolsa Família*, a program which guarantees a minimum income⁸, is the largest income transfer program implemented in Brazil. With other income transfer programs⁹, it is central to the Social Protection System in the country.

⁷ A broad discussion and problematization about the Bolsa Família are found in: SILVA, Maria Ozanira da Silva **O Bolsa Família: verso e reverso**. Campinas: Papel Social, 2016.

The *Bolsa Família*, according to its national managing agency, the Ministry of Social Development (MDS - Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome) proposes to help fight poverty and inequality in Brazil. Established in October 2003, it comprises three main axes: a complement of income represented by monetary transfers to the beneficiary families; conditionalities, considered commitments to be made by the families to support access to the rights to health, education and social assistance and articulation with other programs and actions.

The insertion of the families in the *Bolsa Família* occurs initially by enrollment in the Single Registry (CadÚnico - Cadastro Único)¹⁰, and later the families are selected by a computerized system based on the data they informed in the Single Registry and on the Program Rules, whose basic criterion is the classification of the family as poor, per capita family income up to R\$ 170.00 (US\$ 53,96)¹¹, and extremely poor, per capita family income of up to R\$ 85.00 (US\$ 26,98). However, the concession of the benefit occurs under the condition of the number of families that have already been helped, as related to the estimation of families that are requesting it, considering a fixed quota for each municipality. Its limit is the Program budget. Once the family has been selected, it receives a bank cash card called *Cartão Bolsa Família*, issued by the Caixa Econômica Federal, sent through the post to the homes of the families selected.

The development of the *Bolsa Família* has shown a broad geographic spread with a growing number of families served¹². In 2003, the first year of its implementation, 3,500,000 families were included. In 2006, it was already implemented in a decentralized manner, in all Brazilian municipalities and in the Federal District. In May 2009, there were already 11,611, 680 poor and extremely poor families served, and in March 2014, the total number of families served reached 14,053,368 families, with a total amount of \$ 2,112,724,614.00 (US\$ 670.706.226,66) paid in benefits to the families in that month. In May

⁸ The objective information and quantitative data presented in the characterization of the Bolsa Família are found in <www.mds.gov.br>. (BRASIL, 2016).

⁹ Besides the *Bolsa Família*, among other income transfer programs that are being implemented in Brazil, the Continuing Benefit Conveyance (BPC - Benefício de Prestação Continuada) which is non-contributive, directed at the elderly from 65 years of age upwards and to people with a handicap who cannot work, and live in families with a family per capita income less than ¼ of the minimum wage; Rural Social Security, which is a special retirement regime which does not require prior systematic contributions, and is directed at people who work in family farming. Both programs transfer a monthly monetary benefit of one minimum wage to the beneficiaries (R\$ 937.00, in 2017, approximately US\$ 297,46).

¹⁰ The Single Registry is a system to register information about Brazilian families with a per capita family income of up to half a minimum wage, and is a database used by the social programs of the Federal Government.

¹¹ The Dollar was calculated according to the day's quotation (July 18, 2017) when one dollar was equivalent to R\$ 3,15. (Disponível em:<<https://economia.uol.com.br/cotacoes/cambio/dolar-comercial-estados-unidos/>>).

¹² The process of increasing the number of families in the Program was interrupted in May 2016, when Michel Temer became President of Brazil after the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff. This is the central topic of the present text.

2017, the total number of families served was 13,313,779, receiving a mean amount, considering the different benefits, of R\$ 180.49 (U\$ 57,29). That same month the total amount transferred to the families was R\$ 2,402,987,404.00 (U\$ 762.853.114,12) (BRASIL, 2016).

Regarding the benefits, the *Bolsa Família* articulates two types: the monetary benefits, considered a complement of the families' income, and the non-monetary ones, resulting from the articulation with other actions. The former are direct monetary transfers, aimed at directly relieving the impoverishment of the beneficiary families. On the other hand, the non-monetary benefits, offer of actions and complementary programs aim at overcoming the vulnerabilities of the families, emphasizing the offer of professional qualification programs, insertion into the labor market and credit to stimulate entrepreneurialism, besides the insertion of members of the beneficiary families into other complementary actions and programs, especially those offered by the Social Assistance Policy. Mediating the benefits, there are the conditionalities considered by those who created the *Bolsa Família* as a reinforcement to the access to basic social rights in health, education and social assistance, so that the Program proposes to articulate a compensatory dimension (the monetary transfer) with a structuring dimension that involves programs and actions turned to the thus called overcoming of situations of vulnerability experienced by poor and extremely poor families, which are the target public of the *Bolsa Família*.

The amount of monetary benefits paid monthly to the families is calculated case by case according to the family income and the number of people in the family, so that the per capita family income is more than R\$ 85,00 (U\$ 26,98), the value indicating the extreme poverty line. On the other hand, the types and amount of benefits attributed to each family take into account the number of persons, ages, presence of pregnant women and beneficiary family income. Thus, there is the Basic Benefit paid only to extremely poor families, a monthly amount of R\$ 85,00 (U\$ 26,98), while the benefits called variable are identified in the Summary Table below:

Cadre - Variable Benefits (granted to up to five children and adolescents per family)

Variable Benefit linked to a Child or Adolescent aged 0 to 15 years. R\$ 39,00 (U\$ 12,38)	Paid to families with a monthly per capita income of up to R\$ 170,00 (U\$ 53,96) who have children or adolescents aged 0 to 15 years.
Variable Benefit linked to a pregnant woman R\$ 39,00 (U\$ 12,38)	Paid to the families with a monthly per capita income of up to R\$ 170,00 (U\$ 53,96) who include pregnant women, as long as the information is identified by the health system and inserted into the "Bolsa Familia" in Health System. It consists of 9 installments.
Variable benefit linked to breastfeeding women R\$ 39,00 (U\$ 12,38)	Paid to families with a monthly per capita income of up to R\$ 170,00 (U\$ 53,96) who include children aged 0 to 6 months, to a total of 6 installments, and the child's information must be included in the Cadastro Único until the sixth month of life.

Source: BRASIL. Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social. **Benefícios.** Brasília, DF, 2015. Disponível em: <www.mds.gov.br>. Access: may, 29, 2017.

Further benefits, also according to the same source, are:

- **Variable Benefit linked to Adolescents, to the amount of R\$ 46,00 (U\$ 14,60) (up to two per family)**, paid to the families with a monthly per capita income of up to R\$ 170,00 (U\$ 53,96) and that have adolescent children aged 16 and 17 years, with a requirement of 75% school attendance.
- **Benefit to Overcome Extreme Poverty**, paid to the families that continue to have a monthly per capita family income of less than R\$ 85,00 (U\$ 26,98), even after receiving the types of benefits to which they have a right. This aims at ensuring that the family will surpass this basic income per person. (BRASIL, 2015).

Considering access to the benefits mentioned, according to the criteria established by the program, the minimum monetary value of the *Bolsa Família* transferred monthly to each beneficiary family is R\$ 39,00 (U\$ 12,38) and the mean value per family in May 2017 was R\$ 180,49 (U\$ 57,29). No family served by the *Bolsa Família* can have a per capita family income of less than R\$ 85,00 (U\$ 26,98), considering the amount that places the families above the extreme poverty line.

It should be considered that the MDS does not direct nor restrict the way the money transfer received by the families is used, considering what it calls guarantee and stimulation of the citizen autonomy of each of the families.

Benefits are paid mainly through the *Bolsa Família Card*, used exclusively to draw the Program benefits, in which the Social Identification Number (NIS - Número de Identificação Social) is recorded, as well as the name of the person responsible for the family (RF - Responsável Familiar)¹³. For this the beneficiaries used a simplified bank account called *Conta Caixa Fácil*, regulated by the Central Bank of Brazil, with guaranteed access to banking services for the low income public.

¹³ The person preferentially responsible for the *Bolsa Família*, in the family, is the mother, or woman responsible for the family, and they are over 80% of the legal representatives.

Besides being low, with a diversity of values, the benefits do not have a defined system for readjustment, and therefore their values are reduced according to inflation¹⁴. However, the monthly periodicity of the money transfers and the scheduling that ensures that they will be regularly paid should be considered significant, and enable families to program the use of the resources received confidently.

Considering the forms of payment of the benefits, it should be emphasized that

The transformation of the beneficiaries into bank clients who have a magnetic card appears to transform them into citizens of contemporary society, considering the idea that becoming a client of a bank, has an entire symbolism displayed by consumer society, appearing to transform the beneficiaries of these programs into equals. This, no matter how desirable and positive it may seem, also has an ideological character, revealing belonging and integration. (SILVA, 2014a, p. 75, our translation).

As already mentioned, the *Bolsa Família* considers it relevant to carry out certain conditionalities in order to enable families to continue to be inserted into the Program. In education, the people responsible must enroll children and adolescents aged 6 to 17 years in school and maintain a monthly school attendance of 85% for children and adolescents aged 6 to 15 years, and of 75% for young people aged 16 to 17 years. Regarding health, the person responsible for the children must take those below the age of 7 years to have their vaccines as listed in the vaccination calendar by the health teams and to weigh, measure and follow up their growth and development, and pregnant women should undergo antenatal examination and visits to the Health Unit.

Compliance with these conditionalities is followed by the three levels of government (federal, state and municipal). Information about school attendance and fulfilling the health care agenda are recorded in specific information systems, and there is also individual monitoring of the families that do not comply with the conditionalities. Monitoring is justified to ensure the education and health services provided by the authorities; to identify situations of vulnerability of the families that find it difficult to access public services and to refer the families that are not complying with the conditionality to the social assistance network, seeking to overcome the vulnerabilities and return them to compliance with the conditionalities.

Since the *Bolsa Família* is a focused program and subject to conditionalities, the families that do not comply with the established commitments are subject to a punitive process that ranges from warning, blocked benefits, suspension of benefits, and may be dismissed from the Program when they repeatedly disobey the conditionalities even after they undergo a follow up by social assistance in the municipality where the Program is implemented

¹⁴ The nominal values of the monetary benefits of the *Bolsa Família* were only updated in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2016, with a new readjustment expected in July 2017.

The families are dismissed from the Program for two reasons: when they are no longer in a situation of poverty or extreme poverty because their monthly income has become higher than R\$ 185,00 (U\$ 58,73) or for repeated non-compliance with the conditionalities. It is required that the families update the information in the Single Registry of the Federal government every two years. However, there is a proviso called *Permanence Rule* that ensures that the families will remain in the program when their income rises to up to half a minimum wage per capita, as long as they voluntarily update the information in the Single Registry. The families can also voluntarily ask to leave the Program, and can be reinserted in a period of 36 months, through a mechanism called *Guaranteed Return* if they find themselves again in a situation in which they fit the criteria of entry to the Program.

From what has been presented above, the *Bolsa Família* is a program focusing on poor and extremely poor families, so that the concession of the minimum income requires complex verifications, follow ups and checking up on the family. This situation is worsened because the great majority of these families when inserted into the labor market, work informally, with low and unstable incomes and no right to social protection. How can one check on the constant variations in the family income? How to ensure the support necessary to vulnerable families that do not comply with the conditionalities? Law 10,835/2004, enacted by National Congress in 2003 and sanctioned by President Lula on January 8, 2004, proposes the implementation of a Citizenship Basic Income, whose initial stage would be to take care of the poor population and the *Bolsa Família* is considered the initial stage for the implementation of Basic Income in Brazil.

How feasible is this process?

What are the limits posed by the design of the proposal of the *Bolsa Família* itself, from the political conservative ideas of society, to which are added the limits established in the Brazilian juncture with the dismantling of rights and regression of social protection in the country for possible advances of this process?

That is what we intend to problematize below.

3.2 The Currentness of the Bolsa Família in a Juncture in which Social Rights are being Dismantled and Regression of Social Protection to the Poor

Considering the *Bolsa Família* in the current situation of Brazil after 2015, it is necessary to take into account the reality presented and problematized in item 2 of this text: socioeconomic and political juncture marked by a Coup d'Etat that occurred in May 2016, with the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff, replaced by her Vice-President Michel Temer.

In a context of further neoliberalism, a new configuration of State is inaugurated: conservative and authoritarian, profoundly subjected to the interests of international financial capitalism with real disregard for democratic principles that had ruled Brazilian society, whose main consequence is a large step backward of the social and labor rights, besides deactivating and reducing social programs that had prevailed in Brazilian society, whose main consequence is a broad backward step taken by social and labor rights, besides the deactivation and reduction of social programs that are relevant to the poor population.

We are living in a context of despoiling the national riches, and intensification of the overexploitation of the labor force, and priority is given to using the Public Fund to service the domestic debt and to support demands and projects that are of interest to capital.

This is a reality of a confrontation of corporate projects represented by a break in a conciliatory pact sustained by the Workers' Party Administrations of Lula and Dilma (2003-2016) who, although they did not break with a development model that favors capitalism, sought to maintain a pact with the masses. This pact allowed the insertion, although only at points, of the popular segments into the production and consumption system, by adopting policies to deal with poverty in the rural area and in the city, among which are the *Bolsa Família*, created by Lula (2003), and the *Brasil Sem Miséria* Plan (Brazil without Extreme Poverty) (2011)¹⁵, created by Dilma. According to this pact, capital, mainly financial capital, wins, but also the workers win because of the rise in the opportunities to enter the formal labor market, with technical training and to enter universities, and obtain greater access to housing. There is a significant growth in public expenditures on income transfer programs and the creation of the Single Social Assistance System (SUAS - Sistema Único de Assistência Social), increasing the social programs directed toward combating extreme poverty. Even more significant was the rise in the real value of the minimum wage by more than 70%, from 2003 to 2015 and the significant elevation in the income from work; refusal to

¹⁵ *Plano Brasil sem Miséria (Brazil without extreme poverty plan)*, created in 2011, was aimed at the 16.2 million Brazilians who lived with a monthly per capita income lower than the extreme poverty line (R\$ 70,00, U\$ 22,22), based on three program areas: a) *Guaranteed income*, incorporating the *Bolsa Família*, as the main program; Rural Social Security; Continued Benefit; and emergency income transfer programs: *Bolsa Verde*(Green Grant), *Bolsa Estiagem* (Drought Grant) and others; b) *Productive Inclusion*: National Program to Strengthen Family Farming (PRONAF - Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar); Urban and rural microcredit: Crédito Amigo do Banco do Nordeste (Friendly Credit from Banco do Nordeste); Programa Crescer (Growth Program) of the Federal Government); incentive to entrepreneurialism and incentive to solidarity economy; Professional Qualification: National Program for Access to Technical Education and Jobs (PRONATEC - Programa Nacional de Acesso ao Ensino Técnico e Emprego) to qualify the poorest segments; c) *Access to public services*: water (water for all), light (light for all), health (Strategy of Family Health, Smiling Brazil, offer of medications) education (Literate Brazil, Program More Education - complete education) and housing (My Home, My Life, My Better Home), Food (popular restaurants, school lunch)

dismantle the CLT; creation of the regulatory framework of the Pre-Salt¹⁶, giving funds to education and health, increasing policies of rights to the inclusion of historically discriminated segments, outstanding among which are the policies on racial equality; implementation of many programs in the rural area, enhancing the value of the rural worker who is responsible for the subsistence economy and for small production. (CARVALHO, 2017).

In the international sphere, Brazilian protagonism in the Latin American region and in its relations with the emerging countries (Russia, India, China and South Africa) that constitute the BRICS should be highlighted, with the significant leadership of Brazil, besides moving away from a policy of historical subordination to the United States.

Despite the positivity of the pact with the workers, and the undeniable advance of policies and social programs to deal with poverty, the Workers' Party Administrations did not bet on popular power and the capacity of social movements to mobilize as subjects of pressure on the Parliament to carry out essential reforms, such as political reform, the fiscal reform and land reform. On the contrary, they chose to take up a policy of alliances with conservative parties and politicians. (CARVALHO, 2017).

The pact with the workers' party administrations, favored installing a contradiction: on the one hand, a proposal to broaden social rights and generate jobs and income and distribute the wealth produced by the workers; on the other hand, to maintain a macroeconomic policy aimed at strengthening the financial capital and conservative political practices. Even worse: the use of traditional practices of corruption that destroyed the ideas of a Political Party that could have been different. Their policies directed at the poor ultimately further privileged consumption, with insufficient attention given to forming the consciousness of the classes that live from their work. The consumer was strengthened rather than the citizen.

This context ultimately favored the reversion of a popular, although fragile project, whose option is to intensify neoliberalism, favoring international capital. An offensive by the elites and conservative forces on the right that develop constitutional reforms to justify a profound economic adjustment and the counter-reform of labor and social security laws, historically achieved by the workers. This is a context which enhances the value of policies to restrict rights and despoil national riches, with the intensification of the overexploitation of the labor force, directing the Public Fund prioritarily to servicing the payment of the domestic debt and to support projects of interest to capital. The absolute priority is to guarantee the profit rates of capital, especially of financial capital. The poor are individualized, criminalized and considered responsible for their situation, although this is independent from their will. In addition, freedoms are curtailed, instituting a real state of emergency under the arbitrary rule

¹⁶ The pre-salt is an area of oil reserves discovered in 2006 under a thick layer of saline rock that is one of the several rock layers of the marine sub-soil.

of an Executive and a reactionary and corrupt Legislature with the support of the media and the Judiciary.

In this context, the *Bolsa Família* has been the subject of a contradictory onslaught. On the one hand, the Temer administration is unable to deactivate the Program. Knowing its popularity and its coverage because it is present in all 5,570 Brazilian municipalities, reaching a population of more than 50 million Brazilians who live in a situation of poverty, they have been using it even as a coin to counter the criticism and lack of popular support for their administration¹⁷, which includes readjusting the amount paid by the benefit, as was done in July 2016, with another readjustment expected for July 2017 that was not given. On the other hand, the families that benefit from *Bolsa Família* are seen in the current Brazilian context, basically, as dishonest and are subject to an obscure benefit review process. Thus, in March 2014, during the Dilma Administration, 14,053,368 families were helped, with funds to pay benefits in that month on the order of R\$ 2,112,724,614,00 (US\$ 670.706.226,66) and, in July 2017 (Temer Administration), just 12,740, 610 families were assisted, less 2,312,778 families. The moralizing discourse is that it is necessary to clean up the Program keeping only those who need it, in other words, an already conservative focus is taken further, and what is worse, it criminalizes, individualizes and renders the poor responsible. In these terms, the *Bolsa Família* is further away from effectively becoming an initial step to implement a Citizenship Basic Income, as already approved and sanctioned in 2004.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: constraints that limit the *Bolsa Família* as an initial step to implement the Citizenship Basic Income in Brazil

It should be considered that the change from a focused program to a universal one is a complex process, since it involves different interests and rationalities of the various subjects involved. Furthermore, focus and universalization are opposite perspectives.

When using the process of changing the *Bolsa Família* to construct the Citizenship Basic Income, as determined by Law 10.835/2004, enacted by the National Congress in 2003 and sanctioned by President Lula on January 8, 2004, whose implementation was to begin in 2005, several constraints should be considered that set limits to allowing the desired process. To provide a basic income to all Brazilians and foreigners who have been living in Brazil for at least five years, one must consider, besides the current context in which rights are being stripped, the deactivation of social programs and the reduction of resources meant for the programs and actions that became part of a policy to

¹⁷ The popularity of the Temer Administration is the lowest in history. In June, 2017 it reached an approval of only 3% of the Brazilian population.

deal with poverty in Brazil, several forms of constraints: some intrinsic to the Program itself, with a very low income cutoff; the requirement of conditionalities, with the widespread approval of the media and most of the segments of society; the use of a sophisticated system to follow and control the families and other constraints sustained by the dominant conservative ideology that permeates the Brazilian society and media.

Focus, as the main qualifier of the *Bolsa Família* is founded on a liberal concept developed in the context of neoliberalism, under the theoretical reference of economic liberalism and the conservative theoretical matrix, in opposition to the universalization of rights. It depoliticizes the beneficiaries transforming them from subject into object.

It is reduced to a merely operational matter, thus merely technical, whose objective is to separate, select and prioritize attention to the marginalized segments of the labor market. It is guided by the search for efficiency and reduces the content of the social policies of compensatory residualism. It guides the entire process of implementation of the social policies, attributing a disqualifying, reactionary character of universalization, transforming itself into an excluding and reductionist perspective. It is guided by the justice of the market, ignoring the social relations that generate poverty and wealth, centering poverty on the attributes of the individuals and their families. In this logic, it reduces the space of the State in supplying services and highlights the expansion of the market, even as a provider of services. (SILVA, 2016b, p. 137, our translation).

The conditionalities, another qualifying dimension of the *Bolsa Família*, are duly articulated to the conservative ideas regarding focus. It is the dimension of the proposal of the Program that is least consensual and most contradictory, incorporated as a structuring dimension, aiming to potentiate positive impacts on the autonomization of the beneficiary families. They are highly approved by the media and by majority segments of society, that consider that the poor should not receive anything without giving something in exchange. This is a moralistic and conservative concept that further worsens the situation of the more vulnerable families, those with a greater propensity to non-compliance with those conditionalities. (SILVA; GUILHON; LIMA, 2013). They ignore the precarious structural conditions of most of the Brazilian municipalities, on whom falls the greatest responsibility for the offer of services, to manage and follow up families that do not comply with conditionalities. This is a concept of conditionality based on an ideological perspective that transforms a right into a concession and as such should require a counterpart, above all if this concession is aimed at the poor *who need to learn to value what they receive*. It reproduces an ideology that ends by being incorporated by some of the technical people and even the beneficiaries, as found in a field study on the conditionalities and Index of Decentralized Management (IDM - Índice de Gestão Descentralizada - IGD) in the State of Maranhão. (SILVA; GUILHON; LIMA, 2013).

A constraint that limits the transformation of the *Bolsa Família* into the initial stage for the implementation of the Citizenship Basic Income, the use of sophisticated information systems, similarly to what happens with several income transfer programs currently being

implemented in Latin America and the Caribbean should also be highlighted (SILVA, 2014a). Regarding this aspect, we emphasize the inclusion of the families in the Single Registry of the federal government, that maintains a database of data on the poor families; the development of the selection process of beneficiary families based on the information of the Single Registry; the management actions of social programs as regards, specifically, the process of registering the families and updating the registry, which is done every two years, and the follow up and control of the conditionalities and families that are not complying with the conditionalities¹⁸. This reality has significantly transformed the social programs, especially as regards their management and the inclusion of new professionals, emphasizing economists and professionals in the field of informatics, contributing to raise the level of technicization of these programs, with the consequent supremacy of seeking efficiency to the detriment of efficacy and effectiveness.

Other constraints that should be highlighted result from the conservative ideology that permeates Brazilian society and media¹⁹, regarding the debate on the Basic Income that is being waged in several forums. Its main defender is the councilman of the Workers' Party in the city of São Paulo, Eduardo Suplicy. In this sense, often two unfavorable arguments are presented in the media, in the legislatures and among segments of society: a) a very great amount of funds is needed, which is an economic argument; b) a universal income transfer program has a strong potential to act as an incentive against work, an ideological argument. These are arguments that counter those constructed by the defenders of the Citizenship Basic Income, such as: elimination of the excessive bureaucracy required by the focused programs; it does away with the stigma and shame that mark the beneficiaries of focused programs; it eliminates the possibility of dependence; it raises the level of liberty and dignity; it is easy to understand; it is transparent and helps reduce inequality and eliminate poverty.

In a general appreciation on the implementation of a Citizenship Basic Income, based on our empirical approach to the reality of the income transfer in Brazil; the development of several research studies on these programs since 1995, when the first municipal experiences were implemented in Campinas/São Paulo and in Brasília/ Federal District; an also empirical approach and as researchers on social policies in Brazil, as well as the insertion and follow up of different moments in the juncture of Brazilian reality, we believe that the implementation of a Citizenship Basic Income in Brazil is still a process to be constructed and conquered. We consider that there is still a wide circulation of conservative arguments against a proposal of this nature, and among the outstanding protagonists are the media, segments of the legislative houses, and segments of Brazilian society itself.

¹⁸ About focusing and the conditionalities of *Bolsa Família*, see Silva (2016a).

¹⁹ A discussion on the limits of *Bolsa Família* considered the initial step to the implementation of the Citizenship Basic Income in Brazil is already being problematized by Maria Ozanira da Silva in papers presented at the 14th (SILVA, 2012) and 15th (SILVA, 2014b) BIEN Congresses.

Furthermore, we emphasize the very nature of the *Bolsa Família* as a focused program, although there has been a significant increment in the outreach of the target public: poor and extremely poor families. Moreover, the emphasis on conditionalities is a serious limitation to an unconditional Citizenship Basic Income. This is because focus, as a criterion to determine inclusion and conditionalities as obligations to be fulfilled by the families who would otherwise be subject to progressive punishments up to and including dismissal from the Program if they repeat their failure to comply, is in itself a structuring element that goes against those that characterize a Basic Income, which is, by nature, unconditional. In this sense, we consider it inappropriate to indicate that the *Bolsa Família* may be a first step in the implementation of the Citizenship Basic Income in Brazil. It would in fact be admissible to talk about transformation or extinction of the *Bolsa Família* to implement an unconditional Basic Income in Brazil. This is if we wish stop using a rhetoric that appears to actually express a political strategy to delay the implementation of the Citizenship Basic Income.

The arguments presented do not attempt to express pessimism or even give up the struggle to diminish inequality and eradicate poverty in our country, but to clarify the challenges to be faced to implement the Citizenship Basic Income in our country.

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