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# **The Politics of Conditionality in Latin America's Cash Transfer Reforms<sup>1</sup>**

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## Abstract

The extent to which Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) are aligned with the social investment paradigm is still a contested issue. In this chapter, we offer new evidence to understand the conditions under which CCTs should be considered social investment reforms. To do so, we analyze the heterogeneity of 24 CCTs in 12 Latin American countries. We find that not all CCTs are created equal, but instead vary in the design and stringency of their conditionalities. We then turn to understanding this variation, arguing that the type of conditionality is driven by the political dynamics of reform. By analyzing the trajectory of four cases, we argue that ideological preferences are important to shape governments' choices regarding conditionalities. When strong preferences are not present, though, there is room for conditionalities' designs to be used by governments in an effort of coalition-building or to gain support from the opposition or specific constituencies.

**Keywords:** conditionalities, social investment, sanctions, Latin America, political dynamic

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## 1. Introduction

Latin American Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) programs give cash to poor families conditional on compliance with requirements mainly linked to mainly children's school attendance and health checkups and vaccination. CCTs are targeted social investment policies that pursue the short-term objective of poverty relief through cash benefits, but also aim to achieve a long-term goal of breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty, via conditionalities that link monetary transfers to families' investments in the future productive capacity of their children. While the poverty relief objective is considered unavoidable for social assistance and a precondition for social investment (Fenwick, 2017), it is because of its combination with the second goal of human capital creation through conditionalities that CCTs are usually identified as one of the main steps taken by Latin America towards social investment in the last decades (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009; Bastagli, 2009; Jenson, 2010; Nelson and Sandberg, 2016; Fenwick, 2017; Barrientos in volume I).

However, the extent to which CCTs are aligned with the social investment paradigm is still a contested issue. First, although CCTs have been considered as a Latin American product of a set of global ideas around social investment (Jenson, 2010), they are essentially cash transfer policies -which are usually considered classic compensatory social assistance policies (Hemerijck, 2015)- conditioned to behavioral requirements. They are far from being enough to be considered as the sign of a Latin American “turn” to social investment analogous to the process experienced in more developed regions. This is so not only because of their scope, but also because they do not rival but complement social consumption policies (see Huber et al in volume I). Second, there is a concern about the role played by these programs in a context of broader welfare investments. Several scholars claim that CCTs for themselves cannot be considered as social investment if not linked to accessible high quality education and health services (Nelson and Sandberg, 2016; Fenwick, 2017; Huber, Dunn, and Stephens, volume I), a goal still unmet in most countries. Third, the extent to which conditionalities are enough to make these programs a tool for social investment is debated. In fact, although an extensive literature confirms the effects of CCTs on multiple ‘social investment’ dimensions such as education and health, the evidence regarding the specific roles of conditionalities in these achievements is inconclusive.

In this chapter we follow two main goals. First, we seek to offer new evidence for a better understanding of the conditions under which CCTs should be considered social investment reforms. To do so, we analyze the heterogeneity of Latin America’s CCTs and propose a classification into three types based on two main dimensions: the level of specificity of programs regarding conditionalities and the level of stringency of sanctions. We find that not all CCTs are created equal, since the role played by conditionalities varies across programs and across time. Some programs put a strong emphasis in *sanctioning* recipients if they do not comply with conditionalities (i.e. conditions are specific and sanctions-oriented), others tend to be more *tolerant*, sometimes including devices to enable people’s access to basic services (i.e. they are specific but not sanctions-oriented), and yet

others adopt conditionalities as a mere *formality* (i.e. they are non-specific). We contend that understanding the differences between these types is important to determine how far different CCTs go, at least in their designs, in the road to social investment: we show that while the first two types ('sanctioning', 'tolerant (enabling)') present features that explicitly link them to the goals and functions of social investment, the third one ('formal') reveals weak links to social investment, and is actually closer to social assistance or basic income schemes.

Second, we aim to gain understanding on the drivers that led governments to adopt one approach to conditionalities or the other. We argue that the type of conditionality is driven by the political dynamics of reform. To do this, we develop a theory that explains why governments adopted different types of conditionalities in four countries that represent the region's spectrum of variation (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Uruguay).

We find that ideological preferences are important to shape governments' choices regarding conditionalities. However, when strong preferences are not present, there is room for conditionalities' designs to be used by governments in an effort of coalition-building, to gain support from the opposition or by specific constituencies. This trade-off between preferences and political game produces different scenarios for the legitimacy and sustainability of CCTs.

## **2. Social investment through CCTs and conditionalities**

A distinctive feature of Latin American CCTs is that they all transfer cash to poor families conditional on requirements such as children's educational attendance and regular medical care. The underlying assumption to justify conditionalities is that they promote investment in human capital in the younger generations (Rawlings, 2004). Since the poorest often face obstacles to make this investment, the conditionalities attached to the transfer create the necessary incentive to stimulate it.

It is well known that conditionalities mean different things in different countries, both in terms of design and implementation (Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011; Pellerano and Barca, 2014). Nevertheless, previous classifications tend to conflate design features with implementation and enforcement practices and even claim that real differences between subtypes can be ‘blurred in practice’ (Pellerano and Barca, 2014: 6), but they have not been tested systematically.

To overcome these limitations, we analyze 24 CCTs in 12 Latin American countries for the 1997-2016 period and provide an overview of how conditionalities are distinctly included and developed in programs’ designs in the region<sup>2</sup>.

Based on information from official documents -mainly laws, decrees, and operational rules and regulations- we classify each program according to two main dimensions: specificity regarding programs’ designs and stringency of sanctions to be applied in case of noncompliance with conditionalities<sup>3</sup>.

Programs with specific norms regarding conditionalities, procedures for their verification, and sanctions on noncompliance are interpreted as being inclined towards social investment (Graph 16.1, upper panel). Within this category we identify two types of programs. On the one hand, there are programs in which the transfer is a way to provide incentives to families. Monitoring and sanctioning noncompliance through payment suspensions are central parts of designs (Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011). Some of these programs -which we classify as those having a ‘*sanctioning*’ approach to conditionalities- present all these features (Mexico’s Progresa in 1997), while others are incomplete or diminished versions of this type. On the other hand, we identify programs that also offer guidelines and procedures about conditionalities, but in which monitoring and sanctions to non-compliance are carried out

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<sup>2</sup> Borges (2018) builds a similar index, though considering different dimensions: target population, eligibility requirements, how stipends vary, and the strictness of conditionalities.

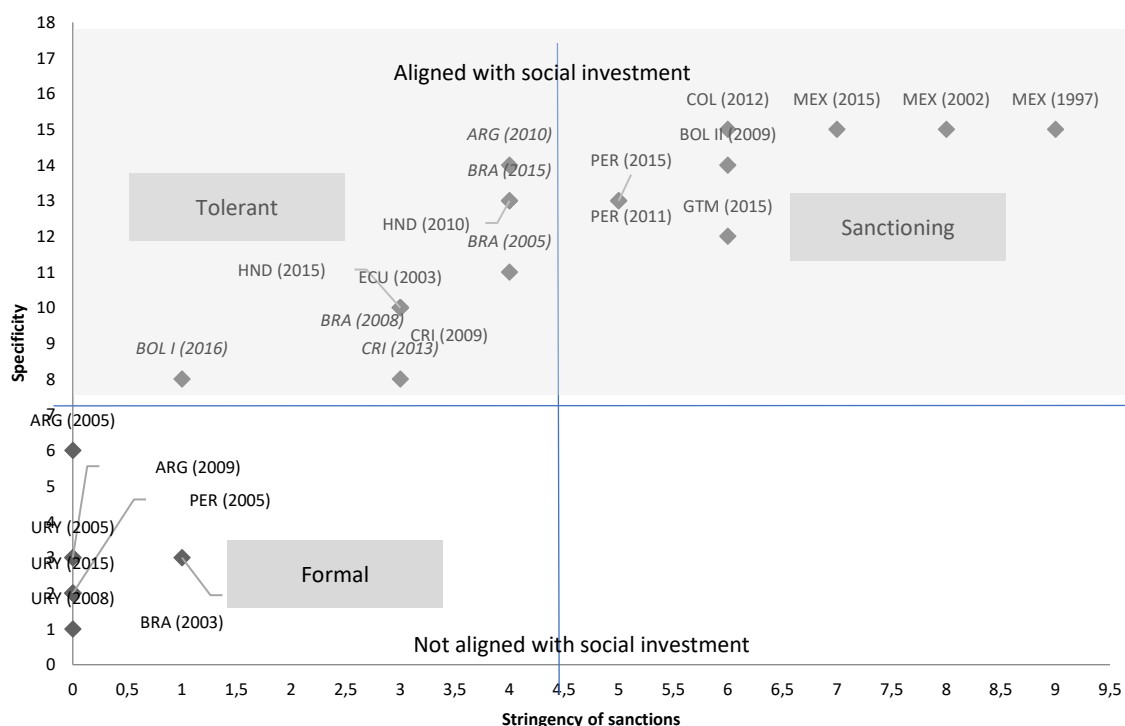
<sup>3</sup> The ‘specificity index’ captures five dimensions of conditionalities: whether the objectives mention social investment, the level of detail regarding the type of actions required, the control procedures, the frequency of verification and the detail on sanctions. It varies from 0 to 3, where the lowest value represents no detail or specific information and 3 the most specificity. The ‘stringency of sanction index’ refers to the frequency of verification and the number of noncompliances before temporary and definitive suspension. It varies from 0 to 9, where the lowest value represents the least stringent sanctions and 9 the most stringent ones. We collected information for all the moments in which we identify relevant changes in programs’ designs. See details in appendix.

with more flexible criteria (Schüring, 2010). In these cases -which we name *'tolerant'*- non-compliance is not always punished with payments' suspensions and, if it is, sanctions tend to be softer or applied later in the process. Within this group, some programs work with recipients around the obstacles they face to access services, a goal that can be directly related to the social investment framework. We define these programs as those having an *'enabling'* approach to conditionalities, because they present a clear emphasis on promoting recipients' basic rights regarding social services (Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011).

Programs classified in the lower panel of graph 16.1 are those with vague or no information about conditionalities. As expected, their rules regarding conditionality compliance are less stringent. In these programs, there are neither established procedures for monitoring conditionalities nor are sanctions established. Uruguay's *Ingreso Ciudadano* and Bolivia's *Bono Juancito Pinto* (2005), for example, are cases where the official regulations have few or no norms on conditionalities. We classify these programs as having a mere *'formal'* approach to conditionalities, since this device seems to be included more as a formality in policy designs than as an effective instrument to achieve social investment.

Graph 16.1 confirms that looking into variation in designs is relevant to assess CCTs' alignment with social investment goals. Programs with a *'sanctioning'* or a *'tolerant'* approach to conditionalities represent two different paths for designing a CCT within the social investment paradigm. By contrast, CCTs with a *'formal'* approach to conditionalities represent policies that although in theory are inscribed in the social investment paradigm, in reality are much closer to social protectionism or basic income policies (as conceptualized in the introductory chapter to this volume) seeking to address poverty in the present rather than investing in human capital. Interestingly, we also find that despite all CCT programs being targeted by definition, *'sanctioning'* CCTs are more narrowly targeted to the poor or extremely poor, meanwhile *'tolerant'* or *'formal'* CCTs have less narrow targeting criteria (see also Borges, 2018). Our exploration reveals that, with the exception of Mexico's CCT, designs tend to move towards more stringent conditionalities or clearer sanctions as time goes by.

Graph 16.1 Conditionality approach in CCTs designs in selected countries (\*)



Source: Authors' elaboration basing on official program documents.

(\*) Programs in *Italic* identified as the 'enabling' variant within the 'tolerant' type. The 'enabling' approach is a subcategory within the tolerant subtype (a concept 'with adjectives') that reflects programs that establish specific devices to use conditionalities to favor recipients' access to social services, through different channels: social workers' visits, meetings, actions inside social service providers.

### 3. Why do governments choose to adopt different conditionalities' approaches when designing CCTs?

What explains why governments choose a particular design when adopting a CCT? Why do they adopt an approach to conditionalities over another? Are these choices related to governments' ideological preferences around pursuing specific social investment goals? Do they depend on political economy dynamics of actors and preferences or on policy legacies prevailing in each country? Are they the result of international influences?

While scholarly work on social welfare in Latin America has provided some explanations about the variations in the design of CCTs as well as on why governments adopted these policies (Brooks, 2015; De la O, 2015; Garay, 2016; Sugiyama, 2011), most studies have neither dealt with the heterogeneity these programs present in their approaches to conditionalities nor attempted to explain it.

However, both the literature on CCTs and on social investment reforms provide numerous hints to explain governments' decisions regarding conditionalities.

At a general level, prior work reveals that the ideological cleavage does not explain CCT adoption (Sugiyama, 2011; Brooks, 2015)<sup>4</sup>. This finding is consistent with the idea of social investment as a rather ambiguous concept (Nelson and Sandberg, 2017) with the potential to appeal to political actors with different preferences (Busemeyer, et al, 2018). However, this does not tell us much on whether governments are guided by specific, more 'subtle' ideas regarding social investment when adopting a particular approach to conditionalities. It also does not allow us to identify if governments use different policy framings (Häusermann and Kübler, 2010) to justify their choice about conditionalities.

In line with Borges (2018), we hypothesize that right wing governments will be more likely to believe in the idea that attaching conditionalities to the transfer provides an incentive for families to invest in their children, giving them responsibilities and obligations to comply with in order to 'deserve' the benefit. Therefore, they will be willing to establish clear conditionalities' procedures when designing CCTs. Also, the more this idea is embedded among government officials, the more detailed will the policy design be regarding what is expected from recipients and what the consequences for noncompliance are. In sum, programs adopted by right wing governments will most likely see a 'sanctioning' approach.

By contrast, left wing governments will be more willing to prioritize poverty relief with a more flexible approach to monitoring and sanctioning noncompliance.

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<sup>4</sup> Borges (2018), however, has recently questioned this statement, claiming that ideology was in fact relevant to explain CCT adoption during the pink tide through a diffusion mechanism of Brazil's 'basic income' approach in contrast with the 'human capital' approach present in Mexico's *Progres.a*.



This approach could be accompanied by an explicit valorization of the importance of recipients receiving the transfer, the negative effects of suspending, and/or the benefits of developing a basic income. It could also be accompanied -but not necessarily- by a widespread view of the importance of promoting the use of basic services through conditionalities.

Finally, if the government does not have strong preferences around conditionalities, either type of government might intentionally include conditionalities and frame a CCT within a social investment discourse as a way to merely justify cash benefits for the poor. However, we argue that it is more likely that left-wing governments use this strategy, since it is more compatible with a basic income ideology.

While this hypothesis does provide a guide to explain why governments adopt different approaches to conditionalities when building CCTs, preferences around conditionalities might go beyond the left-right spectrum, making the story more complex.

It is no news that CCTs are part of the redistributive conflict and the political dynamic of Latin American countries. Increasing evidence is showing that CCTs are salient social programs that offer governments potential electoral benefits (Díaz-Cayeros, et al, 2009; Manacorda, et al, 2011; Zucco, 2013; De la O, 2013), fostering incumbency effects mainly through their high visibility and characteristics rather than by clientelistic vote-buying (De la O, 2013; Zucco, 2013). Also, the adoption of certain CCTs policy designs –basically those that establish clear operational rules and suppress politician’s discretion- is more likely to happen when governments face antagonistic legislatures (De la O, 2015). Although this argument does not refer to why governments adopt a particular approach to conditionalities, it is reasonable to expect the pressure from the opposition towards governments to play a significant role in this issue.

Including conditionalities in programs could be crucial to convince middle and upper middle classes -which in many countries are constituencies of the main opposition parties- to

consent CCTs (Zucco, et al, 2016)<sup>5</sup>. However, since all Latin American CCTs have conditionalities, the question is whether governments adopted a particular approach to conditionalities to make initially antagonist actors (mainly opposition parties and their main constituencies) becoming consenters of these programs.

As we stated before, a ‘sanctioning’ approach to conditionalities may reflect the preferences of right-wing governments since the transfer is linked to concrete efforts that recipients need to comply with (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009; Pritchett, 2012; Myamba and Ulriksen, 2016). But a stringent approach could be a good ally for a left-wing government to ‘buy’ support for CCTs from opponent actors, especially when it faces harsh opposition or an antagonistic legislature.

A ‘sanctioning’ approach with stringent conditionalities could weaken support for a left government among recipients (de Janvry, et al, 2010; Schüring, 2010; Brollo, et al, 2015). Therefore, in contexts where the poor are the ruling party’s main constituency, governments might be prevented from adopting a ‘sanctioning’ perspective, opting for a ‘tolerant’ approach to conditionalities with substantive justification or for a ‘formal’ strategy were conditionalities are a mere label, with no specific implications for the policy design.

### **3.1 Alternative explanations**

Although we believe our theory adequately explains why Latin American governments adopted different approaches to conditionalities, there are two alternative explanations that should be taken into account.

First, legacies from existing welfare policies are important to explain CCTs’ adoption in several countries (Fenwick, 2013; Pribble, 2013). Countries’ previous experiences with similar social (conditioned) policies probably influenced the type of conditionality they adopted in their CCT. These previous policies can have several feedback effects, either reinforcing

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<sup>5</sup> There are signs that conditional transfers are generally more popular than similar unconditional ones, and also that when included in the policy design, conditionality increases support for these programs, especially among the better-off (Zucco et al, 2016).

previous models (CCTs adopting the same type of conditionality as before) or preventing governments from adopting the same path.<sup>6</sup>

Second, scholars have suggested several mechanisms through which diffusion takes place in CCTs (Fenwick, 2013; Sugiyama, 2011; Osorio Gonnet, 2014). Governments might follow a ‘sanctioning’ approach if they are influenced by the ideas of some international organizations, such as the World Bank (de Janvry and Sadoulet, 2006; Fiszbein and Schady, 2009) or the IDB (Ibarrarán, et al, 2017). By contrast, they would choose a ‘tolerant’ approach if they were exposed to other positions, as ECLAC’s publications that claim there is an inconclusive debate around the role and results achieved by conditional vs. unconditional transfers (Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011). There could also be a diffusion causation based on direct relationships of governments with each other. In particular, the pioneers Mexico’s *Progresa* and Brazil *Bolsa Familia* have been taken as a model for other countries when designing their own CCTs (Borges, 2018; Sugiyama, 2011).

#### **4. Method and data**

To test our hypothesis as well as rival explanations, we develop a two-step strategy with both within-case and cross-case analysis of four cases: Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay.

According to our exploration, these cases represent an interesting variation in terms of the approach to conditionalities adopted in their CCTs (dependent variable). Mexico’s *Progresa/Oportunidades/Prospera* is the clearest example of a CCT with a ‘sanctioning’ approach. Despite changes in certain rules over time, the design clearly highlights the importance of conditionalities (monitoring and sanctioning) as the main instrument to overcome poverty. Sanctions are carefully established, with stringent rules in cases of

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<sup>6</sup> It could also be argued that state capacity is a factor that governments might consider when adopting a conditionality approach. However, in line with De la O (2015), we argue that state capacity is endogenous to the political process that accounts for the processes behind the adoption of different approaches to conditionalities.

noncompliance. Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* is the typical CCT with a 'tolerant' approach with 'enabling' features. Although conditionalities are explicit and sanctions for noncompliance are clearly established, the program also defines several phases before a family can be completely removed from the program and it incorporates family support to understand the reasons for not complying. Families' permanence in the program is prioritized from a non-punitive perspective, but still with an explicit recognition of social investment ideas. Argentina's *Asignación Universal por Hijo (AUH)* is a 'tolerant' CCT. The program has specific regulations and procedures for conditionalities. Regarding sanctions, although it retains a percentage of the transfer until compliance is verified, it is lax since it verifies compliance with less assiduity. Finally, Uruguay's *Ingreso Ciudadano* and *Asignaciones Familiares – Plan de Equidad (AFAM\_PE)* started as typical policies with a 'formal' approach, since they do not have clear procedures and regulations regarding conditionalities. Conditionalities are stated very vaguely and sanctions were only mentioned eight years after the program creation, in a 2015 decree<sup>7</sup> (see details in table 16.1).

**Table 16.1 Main features of CCT designs in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay**

<b>Mexico</b> <i>(Progresa/Oportunidades/Prospera)</i> 'sanctioning'	Conditionalities: school enrollment and maximum 4 absences per month; registration at health center and attendance of corresponding health check-ups; participate in workshop on health care. Process: Compliance is verified every two months or every month in the case of health conditionalities in rural areas. Sanctions: 1 <sup>st</sup> incompliance with education or health = transfer is suspended for that month; 3 noncompliances (education) = suspension for the rest of school calendar of education component; incompliance for 4 consecutive months (rural) or 2 consecutive bimesters (urban)=indefinite suspension of transfer's health component.
<b>Brazil (<i>Bolsa Familia</i>)</b> 'tolerant (enabling)'	Conditionalities: 85% assistance (children under 16), 75% assistance for 16 and 17-year-olds; health check-ups and vaccination according to calendar. Process: Compliance with education is monitored 5 times a year; compliance with health is verified twice a year. Sanctions: 1 <sup>st</sup> incompliance= warning; 2nd incompliance= transfer is blocked for one month but can be recovered in the following month; 3rd incompliance= suspension; families receive notifications if noncompliance continues and are suspended after 12 months of noncompliance (period during which they should have received social assistance)
<b>Argentina (<i>AUH</i>)</b> 'tolerant'	Conditionalities: regular student certification and medical/vaccine certification according to age. Process: certification of compliance with behavioral conditions must be presented at the beginning of each year in order to receive the 20% of the transfer that is retained each month.

<sup>7</sup> This decree states that a list of in-compliant beneficiaries will be published twice a year and they have 30 days to revert this situation or else the transfer is suspended, but any other information on rules and procedures continues to be incomplete or missing.

	Sanctions: if beneficiaries fail to present the certification in the stipulated period, but do so in the extended 90-day period, they still receive their 20%. If they present the certification in the 90 days following the grace period, they do not receive the 20% but are still active beneficiaries of the program. If a beneficiary never presents certification, they no longer receive the transfer.
<b>Uruguay (Ingreso Ciudadano/AFAM_PE) 'formal'</b>	Conditionalities: school enrollment and "assiduous assistance" (unclear), periodic health controls (unclear). Process (2015 decree): incompliant beneficiaries are published twice a year (unclear what exactly is being monitored). Sanctions: Beneficiaries have 30 days to revert situation or else transfer is suspended until beneficiaries begin complying again

Source: Authors' elaboration basing on official program documents.

*Within-case analysis:* We carry out a congruence analysis based on in-depth exploration of the politics of conditionalities in the four cases.<sup>8</sup> We test for the congruence of each case with our two hypotheses (and also the alternative ones) to the adoption of different approaches to conditionalities. In order to do this, we develop the deductive logic through which we do the testing from a Bayesian perspective. Inductive updates to our theories are explained in our narrative.

*Cross-case analysis:* Based on our congruence analysis' results, we make a systematic comparison to tests the hypotheses through the examination of similarities and contrasts among the four countries.

We build on different sources of evidence: legislative records -particularly, Congress' debates-, program official documents and evaluations, and press corresponding to the period in which programs were being designed. In the case of Uruguay, we also conducted six in-depth personal interviews to key government officials and other relevant actors in the design process of the policies. These interviews took place between November-December 2016.

<sup>8</sup> See George and Bennett (2005), Beach and Pedersen (2016).

## 5. The politics of conditionality in four Latin America's CCTs

### 5.1 Mexico

*Progres*a was created in the mid/1990s, during the government of the PRI, the traditional hegemonic party that had veered to the center-right with the implementation of neoliberal reforms. Emerging from a deep economic crisis, Zedillo's government required a new proposal for combating poverty (Yaschine, 1999). Santiago Levy, his undersecretary of Finance, had long been researching on the alternative to the existing social programs, mainly *Pronasol* and food subsidies<sup>9</sup>. His research -and his personal convictions- concluded that the best way to combat and break the intergenerational transmission of poverty was to increase human capital (Levy, 1991; Levy and Rodríguez, 2005). He argued that by simply transferring cash or by giving out food stamps or other subsidies, the underlying conditions of poverty would not truly change. Instead, by conditioning transfers to certain behaviors, structural conditions behind poverty would change (Levy, 2017; Levy and Rodríguez, 2005).

After a while, he was able to convince key government officials of the promises of this strategy and gained full support of President Zedillo, who paved the way to *Progres*a's implementation (Levy and Rodríguez, 2005). Even though *Progres*a was created by a decree, the annual budget had to be approved in Congress. Despite facing opposition from the PAN (right-winged) and PRD (left-winged)<sup>10</sup>, the PRI had a majority in Congress, and so the budget was approved.

The importance of conditionalities was not only theoretical but also noticeable in the design of the program. As Levy stated, the verification process 'is critical to avoid *Progres*a from becoming a mere cash transfer mechanism and losing its impact on human capital formation' (Levy and Rodríguez, 2005: 100; own translation).

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<sup>9</sup> *Pronasol*, President's Salinas flagship social policy, was relatively unpopular since it was heavily criticized for its electoral use. Levy provided evidence that these programs were inefficient, both in budgetary terms and regarding the poor results on welfare indicators.

<sup>10</sup> The opposition's main arguments against *Progres*a regarded its centralized nature and the fear of its possible electoral use (De la O, 2015); they were not particularly focused on conditionalities.

Though the following elections were won by Vicente Fox, who belonged to a different party (PAN), *Progresa* was not only kept (renamed *Oportunidades*) but also expanded significantly. This administration shared the idea of the importance of human capital investment, and of strongly applying conditionalities as a mean to do so (Levy, 2006; Tomazini, 2017). As President Fox justified the new program's name: '(...) speaking of opportunities describes much better a sense of corresponsibility and not of a program of assistance or public charity' (El Proceso, 2002). In sum, there is considerable evidence that the 'sanctioning' approach adopted by this CCT reflects preferences of center-right and right politicians and technocrats in charge of designing the policy.

There is also evidence that international organizations influenced the design of *Progresa*, though the extent of this influence is debated. *Progresa*'s creators deny that this was a direct imposition and refer instead to a close relationship with officials from these organizations, who provided technical support and guidance during its inception (Levy, 2006). As one author puts it, the influence of international organizations is undeniable, but it was more a result of 'the confluence of ideology between the actors dictating the international trend and the technocratic political elite that has ruled Mexico since 1982' (Yaschine, 1999: 58).

The public debate around *Progresa/Oportunidades/Prospera* has not really referred to conditionalities<sup>11</sup>, except for a couple of isolated events (Yanes, 2013). Public references to this issue were short-lasting and rules on conditionalities and compliance remained unchanged for the most part<sup>12</sup>. In other words, no clear political debate seems to reflect Mexico's choice for a 'sanctioning' approach to conditionalities. We also do not find evidence that this particular choice was influenced by possible electoral consequences. Although there was a dispute around the potential electoral use of *Progresa*, given Mexico's history of clientelistic policies (and, particularly, the political use of *Pronasol*, its predecessor), this was not related to

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<sup>11</sup> There is, though, a group of left-wing politicians and academics who supported unconditional cash transfers and universal social policies. There is a particular divide between the federal government and the City of Mexico, which has been under PRD rule since 1997, and has implemented more universalistic social policies.

<sup>12</sup> The more recent versions of the regulation, though, include the possibility of an audience for those families whose transfers have been suspended.

the conditioning component of the transfer (Monroy Gómez, 1997; Yanes, 2013), which has maintained a ‘sanctioning’ approach since the beginning of *Progresá*.

Lastly, the conditioning component of *Progresá’s* design was new in Mexico. Although its general formulation did receive some influence from *Pronasol*, the flagship social program from 1988-1994 under President Salinas, there is no evidence that conditions were applied because of influence from previous policies.

## 5.2 Brazil

Starting with several municipal experiences since 1995, Brazil’s CCTs were nationalized in 2001 under the leadership of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, from the centrist Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB), through the creation of *Bolsa Escola Federal*. In 2003, the program was eventually transformed into *Bolsa Família*, during the center-left government of Luis Inácio *Lula* da Silva by combining four pre-existent CCT programs<sup>13</sup>.

The adoption of *Bolsa Família’s* ‘tolerant-enabling’ approach to conditionalities took place in the context of three sets of policy ideas that circulated among Brazilian decision-makers and academics. The debate revolved around a ‘human capital investment’ perspective, which proposed the combination of cash transfers conditional on school attendance<sup>14</sup>; an ‘unconditional income’ policy, that advocated for an universal and unconditional distribution of a basic income; and a ‘food security’ policy, that defended a cash-for-food transfer (Tomazini, 2017; Veras Soares, 2011). Even when the first perspective resulted to be the most influential, the program’s non-punitive approach to conditionalities reflects the impact of the debate about basic income promoted by Senator Eduardo Suplicy (Tomazini, 2017; Veras

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<sup>13</sup> *Bolsa Escola* (a cash transfer oriented to families with children between 6 and 15 years old, conditioned to school attendance), *Bolsa Alimentação* (required the participation on preventive health activities), *Auxílio Gas* (an unconditional cash transfer oriented to poor families) and *Cartão Alimentação* (a cash transfer created as a pilot program during first year of *Lula’s* term).

<sup>14</sup> According to Aguiar and Araujo (2002: 39-41) this idea originated with the proposal of Cristovam Buarque in 1987. Camargo (1993) also early elaborated around the idea of conditional cash transfers. In 1994 the project of a CCT was eventually included in the PT’s electoral program (Aguiar and Araujo, 2002: 41).



Soares, 2011), that even led to the approval of a citizen's basic income law in January 2004<sup>15</sup>. As a result, *Bolsa Família* was framed within the human capital investment discourse but, at the same time, was conceived as an instrument to reinforce the right to have access to basic income, education and healthcare<sup>16</sup>.

It is also important to note that while the 'tolerant-enabling' approach to conditionalities adopted since 2004 seems to have been the result of an agreement reached inside the government between different preferences on the role of conditionalities, the government strategy experienced some changes over the years. In 2004, during the first year of the implementation of *Bolsa Família*, Lula's government did not prioritize the control of conditionalities. The Ministry of Social Development even argued those controls were unnecessary (Draibe, 2006; Constantino, 2004). Nevertheless, the absence of monitoring and sanction of conditionalities provoked a strong media reaction, as there were published multiple critical articles in the press (Lindert and Vincensini, 2010). In response, the government approved a set of regulations aimed at designing the monitoring and control of conditionalities (Britto and Veras Soares, 2010; Folha online, 2004; Lindert and Vincensini, 2010). There were set out sanctions for noncompliance, but different from the Mexican case, the policy established a 'tolerant' process that escalates from a warning, to blocking of the transfer, to suspension, and finally to a definite cancellation of the benefit. Although we do not find strong evidence pointing to fear of losing votes or support from specific portions of the electorate, our findings do confirm a public pressure (mainly the media) to introduce changes regarding conditionalities.

As an early adopter of CCT, *Bolsa Família*'s development was mostly domestic, but it was also informed by the circulation of ideas of the new policy paradigm of poverty relief that was consolidating at the international level (Fenwick, 2013; Lindert, et al, 2007). Moreover, the development of the program was supported financially and technically by international

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<sup>15</sup> Basic income would be implemented gradually, prioritizing poor people and taking into account the degree of development of the country and its economic possibilities (Law 10.835). Nevertheless, this policy has not been implemented. See Lavinás (2013) and Britto and Veras Soares (2010).

<sup>16</sup> See for example, Rosani Cunha, in Constantino (2006) and Campos Filho (2007: 49).

organizations, such as the World Bank and the IDB (Hall, 2008: 806; Lindert et al., 2007). However, beyond these elements, we do not have evidence of international influence on the specific shape of *Bolsa Família's* conditionalities.

### 5.3 Argentina

The *Asignación Universal por Hijo* (AUH) was created in 2009 during the presidency of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner from the Justicialist Party (PJ), which under her leadership had a center-left orientation. *AUH* is a hybrid program that combines aspects typical of CCTs with a non-contributory family allowance program (Lo Vuolo, 2013). The program aimed at protecting the children of informal and unemployed workers, not covered by existing family allowances oriented to formal workers, while also promoting the investment in human capital development through conditionalities.

CCTs were not new in Argentina, since for two decades different programs were proposed by different political actors and implemented by successive governments, which mostly had a 'tolerant' approach to conditionalities (Straschnoy, 2015). Most of them nourished by two main ideas. The first was the universal basic income, promoted since the mid-nineties mainly from the *Centro para el Estudio de las Políticas Públicas* (CIEP) which, as in the Brazilian experience, advocated for a universal and not conditional income oriented towards children. The second set of ideas referred to conditional cash transfers as a human development policy (Straschnoy, 2015; Hintze and Costa, 2011).

In a context of intense political debate, the PJ government established a decree on October 2009 that created *AUH*<sup>17</sup>, bypassing parliamentary debates and shadowing similar proposals made by the opposition. Even when *AUH* had a 'tolerant' approach to conditionalities, following the path of previous CCTs in the country, it established a more stringent approach in comparison with the antecedent and abandoned the support devices.

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<sup>17</sup> Decree 1602/2009.

There is some evidence that the government could have opted for this approach because it thought that it would help to legitimize the policy (Straschnoy, 2015)<sup>18</sup>. Also, in 2009's midterm elections, President Fernández de Kirchner lost the majority in the lower chamber. This new antagonistic legislature could have led the government to establish a stricter approach to conditionalities (De la O, 2015). However, we did not find strong evidence to support this claim.

Finally, there is also no evidence that international organizations influenced the design of *AUF*'s conditionalities. Although the government received funding from the World Bank to implement the policy, is not clear how this translated into particular decisions regarding the design of conditionalities.

#### 5.4 Uruguay

Uruguay's *Ingreso Ciudadano* was one of the main components of a broader social emergency policy implemented by the first Uruguayan center-left wing government (*Frente Amplio*). In the early stages, conditionalities existed merely as a formality, which is why the policy would not qualify as social investment. No controls were carried out to comply with conditions and, therefore, no sanctions for non-compliance were applied (Svalestuen, 2007). In 2008, *Ingreso Ciudadano* was replaced by *Asignaciones Familiares (AFAM-PE)* with a law<sup>19</sup> that has even less detail on the distinct aspects of the program.

Interviews with politicians and academics close to the design and implementation of *Ingreso Ciudadano* sustain that there were no strong ideological preferences around conditionalities when designing the policy. Moreover, the idea that conditionalities never had a very preponderant role and were not designed to be rigid is quite unanimous. A ministry official involved directly in the policy design declares that from the beginning conditionalities were thought as a device to encourage the use of basic services rather than as a requirement to

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<sup>18</sup> Diego Bossio, director of the institution in charge of *AHU*, stated that: 'If you do not control [conditionalities], people say [recipients] are lazy' (Straschnoy, 2015: 108).

<sup>19</sup> Law 18.277

maintain the transfer. An academic representative advising the government for the design of *Ingreso Ciudadano* states that the policy was designed by its redistributive mechanism and income transfer, rather than by the real potential to improve educational performance. This vision was publicly stated by Minister Marina Arismendi, who in April 2005 said that conditionalities were ‘not to remove the one who does not comply, but to fulfill the mutual commitments’<sup>20</sup>.

Regarding the diffusion hypothesis, several interviewees claim that conditionalities were somehow unavoidable; they were not really discussed, because international organizations (IDB, WB) considered them necessary. Some even suggest that the regional experiences (*Chile Solidario*, *Bolsa Familia*, *Programa Familias*) with this kind of policies were decisive for the formulation of *Ingreso Ciudadano*. However, we do not find strong evidence to support this explanation.

A few officials from the Ministry of Social Development who were involved in the creation of *Ingreso Ciudadano* emphasized the need to implement unconditional transfers to obtain a basic income, but they also pointed that the ideological, cultural and political conditions of the moment were not appropriate to adopt a policy of that sort, so moderate alternatives were sought to begin with<sup>21</sup>. In fact, when designing both *Ingreso Ciudadano* and *AFAM-PE*, the issue of conditionalities was debated publicly. Representatives from the opposition parties were concerned that the plan did not strongly establish control and monitoring mechanisms for the conditionalities<sup>22</sup>. Also, opposition parties brought to the discussion the issue of the ‘undeserving poor’, and that these practices could generate negative habits in the future<sup>23</sup>. Responding to this, legislators from the *Frente Amplio* also emphasized the importance of conditionalities to differentiate these programs from ‘mere social assistance’.

By the end of the day, the *Frente Amplio* had majority in Congress and both programs were approved. The opposition partly supported *Ingreso Ciudadano* and unanimously supported

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<sup>20</sup> Meeting of the Population, Development and Inclusion Commission, Uruguayan Parliament.

<sup>21</sup> Also Sandberg (2016).

<sup>22</sup> Parliamentary Debate, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005; December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007; Traibel (2007).

<sup>23</sup> Parliamentary Debate, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005.

AFAM-PE<sup>24</sup>. With time, however, opposition parties and the media began calling attention on the fact that conditionalities were not being effectively monitored<sup>25</sup>. These pressures, and the fact that key officials of the *Frente Amplio* were also in favor of verifying compliance (Sandberg, 2016), eventually led to the monitoring of conditionalities. In 2013, the government executed the first suspensions of those beneficiaries who were not complying with the education conditionality. This practice was formalized with a 2015 decree, stating that conditionalities would be verified twice a year.

Finally, although conditionalities were present in family allowances that were granted to children of formal workers since 1943, we do not find evidence that this experience permeated the issues discussed in the formulation of *Ingreso Ciudadano*, though it was present in the 2007 discussion of *AFAM-PE*. More specifically, *AFAM-PE* was partly presented as a continuation and extension of the traditional family allowances program. Even so, given that verification was not systematic in the traditional family allowances, legislators and members of the official party highlighted that one of the program's advantages was its improvement in the monitoring of conditionalities<sup>26</sup>.

## 6. Discussion and concluding remarks

In this chapter we show that the differences that Latin America's CCTs have regarding conditionalities are relevant to understand these programs' alignment to the social investment paradigm. While programs with 'sanctioning' or 'tolerant' approaches pursue social investment differing in their punitive component as well as in the importance given to access to basic services as a right, programs with a 'formal' approach resemble more targeted

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<sup>24</sup> Support for AFAM-PE was stronger since the program was framed as an extension of the traditional family allowances existing in Uruguay for decades.

<sup>25</sup> Representative of the government were regularly questioned at the Special Commission of Population and Social Development (19/4/2007, 12/7/2007; 13/9/2010; 15/8/2011; 13/12/2012; 20/6/2013; 27/2/2014). One of the most important newspapers published several articles on this as well (eg. Traibel, 2007 and Capurro, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> Parliamentary Debate, Session 48, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

social protection or basic income programs and do not seem to seriously pursue human capital investment goals through conditionalities.

The comparative analysis between cases reveals interesting hints to identify causal explanations behind different approaches to conditionalities. We find that ideological preferences are important to shape governments' choices regarding conditionalities. Mexico's center-right governments adopted sanctioning CCT, while governments of the other countries, which had center-left orientation, opted for tolerant or formal conditionalities. In Mexico, the main drivers to the 'sanctioning' approach seem to be related to a widespread and majoritarian consensus about 'mobilizing human capital investment'. The case of Brazil is also indicative of a design that results from competing ideas ('basic income' vs. 'human capital') and, in a way, different power resources of actors within the government. The 'enabling' outcome is a mixed category that combines a political stand as right to access to services with the technical justification of social investment. In Argentina and Uruguay, we do not find evidence of clear and strong preferences regarding conditionalities, hence there is room for alternative explanations to why governments adopted a 'tolerant' and a 'formal' approach to conditionalities respectively.

The political dynamic of protagonists, antagonists and consenters appears as a particularly strong factor in the case of Uruguay, since its 'formal' approach seems to be the result of the government's vague discourse towards a basic income combined with the perception that it was not politically feasible to develop an unconditional transfer when the *Frente Amplio* arrived to power. Vague conditionalities seem to have been included in the law as a way to neutralize critics from the opposition but, at least when designing the policy, the government had no serious intention to monitor or sanction noncompliance. Political opposition was also a key determinant of the 2015 decree that formalized the verification of conditionalities. Similarly, though to a lesser extent, changes in *Bolsa Familia's* monitoring and sanctioning occurred after a public debate on this topic, suggesting that this pressure could have influenced the governments' decisions. In Argentina there is some (weak) evidence that the government adopted 'tolerant' approach in order to gain legitimacy among the public.

Finally, in Mexico there is no evidence of political calculations regarding conditionalities as the political opposition of *Progresista* was centered on other issues.

In short, in the Mexican and the Brazilian case we find that there were strong preferences regarding the importance of conditionalities to promote social investment. The predominant idea in Mexico was a punitive approach to conditionalities, which received strong support within the right-wing government and from international organizations -and little political opposition-, all which allowed the government to adopt this model with ease. In Brazil, there were also strong preferences on conditionalities, though these were mixed, resulting in a hybrid model after a weak left-wing government had to settle for a consensus among opposing views. In Uruguay, the absence of strong ideological preferences led to a policy only formally framed within the social investment paradigm, where conditionalities are used to gain approval from the political opposition. At the time it designed its CCT, the Uruguayan center-left government had enough political strength to merely place conditionalities decoratively but, with time, a change in political conditions pressured the government to begin enforcing them. In the Argentinean case, there were no strong preferences of how to approach conditionalities, even though the country had a trajectory with conditional policies, generally characterized as having an ‘enabling’ approach. However, AUH - designed by a center-leftist government with weakening political support- was created with more stringent sanctions, an expected outcome given the circumstances.

These findings suggest that there could be a trade-off between preferences and the political game of protagonists, antagonists and consenters. If reforms are based in strong preferences (consensual or not), there is only limited room for a political dynamic. By contrast, although including conditionalities as a formality could set the basis for future steps towards social investment, it could also open the door for the need to move towards a ‘sanctioning’ approach, since different actors may pressure for them to be applied. Instead, designing conditionalities explicitly inscribed in the social investment paradigm could be crucial to guarantee sustainability of these policies. If this framework is not developed, CCTs might lose political support and governments might use conditionalities to avoid it.

Therefore, changes in how they are implemented -and their designs are modified over time- are subject to political circumstances. Establishing a social investment approach, then, can provide legitimacy, support and political sustainability to CCTs.

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