

# The Brazilian pension system in the context of social security: an analysis of policy agenda-setting

RAQUEL ANDRADE SILVA DE OLIVEIRA <sup>1</sup>

BRUNO TAVARES <sup>2</sup>

THIAGO DE MELO TEIXEIRA DA COSTA <sup>3</sup>

SUELY DE FÁTIMA RAMOS SILVEIRA <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE VIÇOSA (UFV) / PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM ADMINISTRAÇÃO, VIÇOSA – MG, BRAZIL

<sup>2</sup> UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE VIÇOSA (UFV) / DEPARTAMENTO DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO, VIÇOSA – MG, BRAZIL

<sup>3</sup> UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE VIÇOSA (UFV) / DEPARTAMENTO DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO E CONTABILIDADE, VIÇOSA – MG, BRAZIL

## Abstract

This study considers the current agenda of reforms in the Brazilian pension system and aims to understand how the pension system became an element of social security in the 1988 Brazilian Federal Constitution. The methodology is qualitative, predominantly documentary and bibliographical. The research uses content analysis, determining the coding categories before the data analysis, based on John Kingdon's (1984, 2003) multiple stream framework (problems, policies, and politics), including the category "international influence." The study showed that the pension system was a public problem tied to economic and management factors in the 1980s. When the problem entered the public agenda, different policies were formulated, including expanding social welfare through creating a social security system.

**Keywords:** Brazilian pension system. Social security. Policy agenda-setting.

## *A formação da previdência no contexto da seguridade social: uma análise da policy agenda-setting*

### Resumo

Este trabalho está inserido no contexto da atual agenda de reformas que envolve a Previdência Social no Brasil. O objetivo geral visou compreender, por meio da Teoria dos Múltiplos Fluxos, de John Kingdon (1984, 2003), como a Previdência tornou-se um elemento da Seguridade no âmbito das políticas públicas na Constituição Federal de 1988 (CF/88). Em termos metodológicos, a pesquisa é predominantemente documental e bibliográfica, com abordagem qualitativa e utilização da técnica de análise de conteúdo categorial de grade fechada. A análise dos fluxos (problemas, soluções, política) com a inserção da influência internacional como um fluxo analítico indicou que a Previdência Social enquanto um problema público da década de 1980 estava atrelada a fatores econômicos e de gestão. Quando esse problema tocou a agenda pública, distintas alternativas foram formuladas, incluindo a ideia de expansão da cobertura social por meio da criação da Seguridade Social.

**Palavras-chave:** Previdência social. Seguridade social. Agenda pública.

## *La formación de la previsión social en el contexto de la seguridad social: un análisis de la configuración de la agenda de políticas*

### Resumen

Este trabajo se inserta en el contexto de la agenda actual de reformas que involucra la previsión social en Brasil. El objetivo general era comprender cómo la previsión se convirtió en un elemento de la seguridad en el ámbito de las políticas públicas de la Constitución Federal de 1988, a través de la teoría de múltiples corrientes de John Kingdon (1984, 2003). En términos metodológicos, la investigación es predominantemente documental y bibliográfica, con un enfoque cualitativo, se utilizó la técnica de análisis de contenido categórico de rejilla cerrada. El análisis de los flujos (problemas, soluciones, política) con la inserción de influencia internacional indicó que la previsión social como un problema público de la década de 1980 estaba vinculada a factores económicos y de gestión. Cuando este problema llegó a la agenda pública, se formularon diferentes alternativas, incluida la idea de ampliar la cobertura social a través de la creación de la seguridad social.

**Palabras clave:** Previsión social. Seguridad social. Agenda pública.

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## INTRODUCTION

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Social Security, in different governments, was presented within a reform agenda in the National Congress. Therefore, it is important to understand the meaning and the trajectory of this theme as a public problem. The study presented in this article can help to understand the complexity of Social Security public policy, highlighting the formation of the public agenda in the 1980s, which culminated with the creation of Social Security in the Federal Constitution of 1988 (CF/88).

The theories and studies on public policy analysis come from different fields of knowledge, such as political science, social sciences, sociology, economics, public administration, and also law. Approaching Social Welfare as a public policy requires the exposition of the conditions and concepts proper to this perspective. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze it as a public problem related to the social agreement on rights concerning citizenship and not restricted to punctual aspects, such as the management of public organizations.

Within the field of public policy, studies on problems and agendas are aimed at understanding how the set of issues attracts the attention of policymakers and becomes a priority on the government agenda. Authors such as Cobb and Elder (1972), John Kingdon (1984, 2003), and Baumgartner and Jones (1993) are references in these topics and present fundamental concepts in the understanding of policy agenda-setting. Kingdon (1984, 2003) delineates significant categories in the study of public policy agenda-setting, including problems, alternatives, and the dynamics of the policy process. These three components are like streams, conditionally linked by their process, carrying complex and variable content, but operating independently of each other.

According to the above, Social Security is essentially a policy of inclusion, since it recognizes the citizens' right to social protection based on other universalizable criteria than just the individual contribution capacity of those who are formally linked to the labor market. Thus, Welfare was advocated as a social right by CF/88 and reformed since then under the financial perspective, but it should be emphasized that it is related to the concept of citizenship and human dignity.

In the scope of this research, we intend to answer the following research problem: how did the public agenda form a consensus that led CF/88 to include Social Security policies in the field of Social Security?

The general objective of this work is to understand, through the Multiple Streams Theory by Kingdon (1984, 2003), how Social Security becomes an element of Welfare in the scope of public policies in the CF/88.

To this end, it was necessary to adapt the Multiple Stream model by Kingdon (1984, 2003) to the reality of Brazilian public policy, resulting in an analytical model appropriate for the study of Social Security that allows us to understand the evolution of this theme in the 1980s through the problems, solutions, and policy streams, as well as to identify the policy entrepreneurs, characterizing the National Constituent Assembly (ANC) of 1987 as a window of opportunity. Therefore, the theoretical challenge proposed by this study is the interpretation of policy agenda-setting under the theoretical lens of the Multiple Flows model adapted to the reality of Brazilian national politics, especially regarding the international influence on agenda-setting in the 1980s. As a result, it is expected to bring a theoretical and empirical contribution to the formation of Social Security in Brazil.

The work is the result of theoretical and empirical research, of qualitative approach, predominantly documental and bibliographic. Data collection was carried out in the institutional website of the National Congress; the bibliographical research was carried out employing literature review, using the closed grid categorical content analysis technique. The minutes of the meetings that deliberated on the future of social security policies of the Work Group for the Restructuring of Social Security (GRPS – *Grupo de Trabalho para a Reestruturação da Previdência Social*) and the minutes of the public hearings that deliberated on Social Security in the Subcommittee of Health, Security, and Environment/Social Order Commission of the 1987 National Constituent Assembly were analyzed.

This paper is composed of the present introduction, a theoretical framework, in which the historical and theoretical aspects of the formation of public policy agendas are presented, and then the introduction of agenda analysis models, especially Kingdon's Multiple Streams model. The trajectory of Brazilian Social Security is addressed in a descriptive way to illustrate the main moments of this public policy. Next, the methodological outlines are presented, followed by the results and discussions.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

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For the theoretical considerations of the article, this section presents the genesis of the Multiple Streams approach. Found in Kingdon's works from 1984 and 2003, it was further refined with the texts and critiques of Baumgartner and Jones (1993), Sabatier (1999, 2007), Sabatier and Weible (2014), and Zahariadis (1999, 2007, 2014). Indeed, national authors such as Capella (2007), Rua (2009), Secchi (2014), Souza (2006), and others have enriched the understanding of the Multiple Streams model. Wishing to advance this debate, we argue for the use and adaptation of the Multiple Stream model in Brazil, given the different configurations of the political system and the legal models adopted.

### Kingdon's Multiple Streams approach: evolution, characteristics, adaptations, and criticisms

In the 1980s and 1990s, studies on policy agenda-setting were intensified with the research of Kingdon (2003) and Baumgartner and Jones (1993), who empirically explored the theories that such studies have developed on the formation of different agendas.

Kingdon (2003) analyzes agenda-setting through the Multiple Streams model. He considers that public policy can be understood according to a process that encompasses four stages: agenda setting, alternatives for policy formulation, the choice of this alternative, and its implementation.

The Multiple Streams model was developed by Kingdon (2003) based on the Garbage Can model by Cohen, March, and Olsen (1972). The Multiple Streams approach was firstly developed to analyze public policies in the areas of health and transportation in the U.S. government. Later, Kingdon's model became a reference in studies on government policymaking, explaining why certain issues arouse interest and become part of the government's policy agenda, and why some other solutions to the problems gain relevance. This theoretical model is adequate to study the insertion of the Social Security system in the 1988 Constitution since it represents a rupture with the previous configuration, requiring the need to clarify the conditioning factors for such an event, that is, by the analytical concepts proposed in the model: the streams that shaped Social Security as a public policy from then on.

According to Kingdon (2003), the policy agenda is a process with three stages or flows. In the first, called the problem stream, problems are identified and differentiated from the issues. Issues are not necessarily problems that should be put on the agenda, that is, there are more complex problems compared to others.

Certain problems receive more attention from politicians to the detriment of others. This fact is explained by the way the actors become aware of these situations and, also, how the authorities recognize the public issues and start treating them as a priority (Kingdon, 2003).

The different ways in which authorities recognize problems are: a) indicators, which can either point to a particularly problematic situation or its magnitude; b) a focus event, such as a disaster or a crisis, which draws attention to some situations more than others – in this case, it is necessary that such an event be accompanied by more precise indication, so that it does not receive passing attention; and c) feedback from existing programs, either formal, such as evaluation, or informal, such as complaints that reach governments (Kingdon, 2003).

The second stream (policy stream) comprises the set of possible solutions. In this process, there is a selection of ideas that are feasible in the context of public policy. Although not always consensual, this selection elevates ideas to proposals that will have more robustness in the next stages.

The policy or solution stream, as it is known, also called "idea soup", is the stage in which, after the recognition of the public problem, the different visible and invisible actors will propose measures to address the problem. These alternatives or solutions often occur in a process of combination, or exclusion, in which several possibilities arise, but only some will gain priority at the political level (Rua, 2009).

Proposals, as a rule, are propagated by researchers, consultants, advisors, and bureaucrats who have recognition in the political community. Selecting possible alternatives in the political world involves technical feasibility studies; possible congruence with the values of the community of experts in the area; public acceptability; receptivity of politicians; and others (Capella, 2007; Rua, 2009).

Therefore, after being discussed, the alternatives go through a process of diffusion so that they are recognized and accepted by both society and the political body. According to much of the literature, this flow represents the dynamics of public policies.

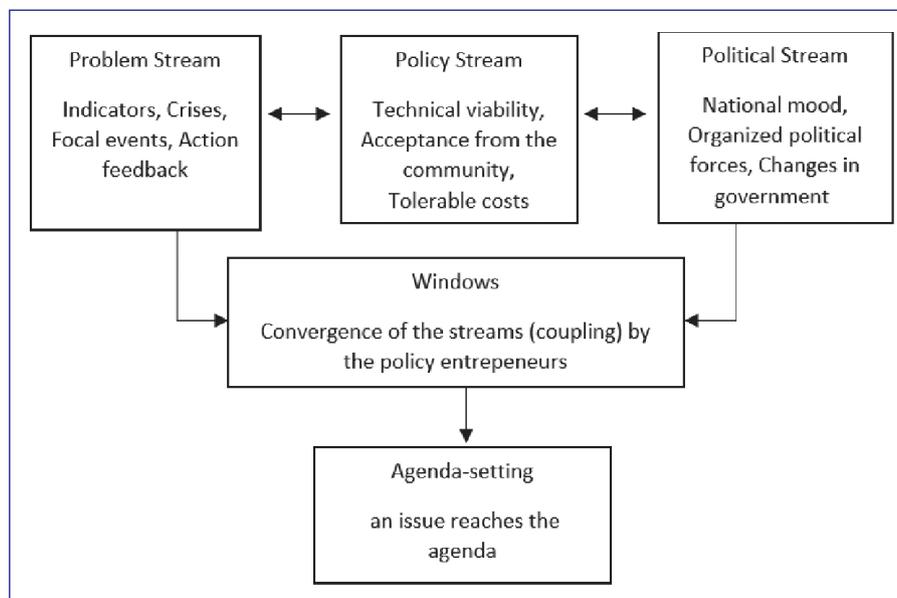
The last stage, which is the political stream, has its own dimensions and rules, independent of the previous ones since it concerns the influences of the national mood, political environment, and the internal changes in the government. When these last elements come together, they can generate an opportunity to change the agenda (Capella, 2007).

For Kingdon (2003), the window of opportunity (policy window) occurs when a problem is recognized, a solution is presented, and the policy is likely to be addressed by entering the agenda. Therefore, a change in the agenda is possible when the three streams meet, but it is worth noting that the opening of the agenda is both provisional and transitory. The moment when the window is open is considered a key circumstance, which is identified by the policy entrepreneurs.

According to the theoretical model, the window of opportunity from Kingdon's (2003) Multiple Streams Model has different interpretations. Wu, Ramesh, Howlett and Fritzen (2014) make analogies to the windows of opportunity by problematizing the circumstances in which they occur. According to these authors, there are four types of windows: routine, discretionary, random, and induced. The routine ones occur like the budget cycles, which are already expected; the discretionary ones vary according to the behavior of politicians; the random ones are not expected and in fact surprise managers; and the induced ones are deliberately created for policy changes.

Following this understanding, some actors have a relevant role in the agenda-setting process and the formulation of public policies. There are visible actors: the President of the Republic (the main one), bureaucrats, congressmen, ministers, political parties, interest groups, and the media. There are also invisible actors, such as civil servants, academics, researchers, and consultants. In short, the visible ones are more influential while the invisible ones are active in the decision agenda through the choice of alternatives (Capella, 2007).

**Figure 1**  
**Multiple Stream Model**



Source: Capella (2007, p. 32).

The critical analysis of the Multiple Streams model concerns Zahariadis' (2007) appreciation of the model's structure and abstraction, especially in relation to its contingent logic. In this sense, Zahariadis (2007) analyzes this model according to the public policies of other countries, and deepens the examination of public policy up to the formulation stage, focusing mainly on the issue of privatization. For this author, Kingdon (2003) creates a uniform model in a reality where ambiguity is very intense, mainly because legislators and bureaucrats have a high turnover, which would compromise the empirical analysis of the policy.

In addition to these aspects, Zahariadis (2007) questions the conduct of policymakers. While for Kingdon (2003), the policymakers already know in advance what they want and what decisions they will make, for the first author the desires and wishes of the policymakers change all the time, which makes the analysis through the Multiple Streams even more complex.

However, Weick (2001), in opposition to Zahariadis (2007), reports that the Multiple Streams model creates an efficient way to explain how political systems and organizations make sense of a predominantly ambiguous world. In other words, Kingdon's (2003) real contribution to policy analysis is exactly to be able to create theoretical lenses and empirical tools to understand this complex and confusing reality.

Jones et al. (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of scientific studies from 2000 to 2013 that used the Multiple Streams model to show the consistency and coherence of the concepts created by Kingdon used by researchers around the world.

Jones et al. (2016) found that 65 countries have already made use of this theory. Most contemporary research comes from the United States of America (USA) and the European Union. The research is distributed at the city, state, federal, and international levels. Analyzing all the studies, it was found that the authors predominantly applied the qualitative methodology, and some concepts, by academic necessity, were adapted overtime to capture the different nuances of the research. Therefore, the concepts derived from the model were refined according to the reality of the research.

Four major divisions observed in the wake of this research help to understand the adaptations of the model to the concrete case: those that are faithful to Kingdon's (2003) concepts and add other authors in the field; those that use the streams as abstract concepts and do not procedurally organize the research; qualitative case studies that were governed by this theory; and, finally, adaptations to the theory that occurred over time and launched new concepts that are still unfinished.

The present study is part of the group that has adapted the theory by inserting the analysis of the international environment, without necessarily being allied to any of the streams, considering the idea that the Multiple Stream model is open to adaptations. The insertion of the international stream is justified by the potential similarity of challenges that governments and societies face, manifested by international pressure from global organizations, encouraging or legitimizing demands from local interest groups. Although studies such as the Oliveira (2008) and Pelarez, Invernizzi, Fuck, Bagatolli and Oliveira (2017) consider the international environment in the analysis of national policy. The first author analyzes specifically, environmental, science, and technology policy, and the second authors investigate financial education policy. This stream is absent in the original model and relevant for understanding the agenda, especially in peripheral countries.

Given the above, the choice of Kingdon's Multiple Streams model is because it has a theoretical and methodological framework capable of elucidating how policy was created in the context of Social Security in 1988, emphasizing that some adaptations were made to the model to bring it closer to the reality of Brazilian public policies.

## The trajectory of Social Security public policies in Brazil

The formation of Brazilian Social Security can be divided into five distinct moments. From 1923 to 1930: the promulgation of the Eloy Chaves Law and the creation of the Retirement and Pension Funds (CAPs); from 1931 to 1945: improvement of the CAPs and creation of the Retirement and Pension Institutes (IAPs); from 1946 to 1963: the period of the country's re-democratization, end of the capitalization model and beginning of the distribution model; from 1964 to 1987: authoritarianism, conservative restructuring and creation of the National Institute of Social Security (INPS) and the Rural Workers' Assistance Fund (Funrural); and from 1988 to 2017: enactment of the Federal Constitution of 1988 and consequent implementation of the democratic rule of law and contemporary pension reforms (Silva, 2014).

The emergence of Social Welfare as an institutionalized social policy occurs in a historical moment of heightened struggles and conflicts among different social forces. On one hand, Social Security is presented as an important achievement, through social legislation (Eloy Chaves Law, 1923), since it can cover, reduce or prevent social risks and vulnerabilities. On the other hand, the institutionalization of Social Security was an efficient mechanism coined by the State and the employer class to promote the destabilization of the union movement by only including in the social protection system the formal working class – the urban workers with signed work papers. Therefore, when the reasons for the creation of Social Security are analyzed, it is clear that it is a state-employer measure of class cooptation, exclusionary, and manipulative of organized workers' movements (Boschetti, 2009; Vianna, 1998).

After the promulgation of the Eloy Chaves Law (Decree No. 4682, 1923), which contemplated retirement plans and other benefits for the working class of railroad workers (CAPs), Social Security became a national trend and soon proliferated throughout the country. In three years, 183 CAPs were created and later improved, giving rise to the IAPs. On one side, the CAPs had state intervention; on the other, the IAPs were independent of the state, consisting of mobilization of employees and employers (Zanirato, 2003).

Another relevant moment for Social Welfare (1931 to 1945) was the context of the Vargas Era, when, after the Revolution of 1930, education, health, welfare, housing, and labor policies were intensified. For some authors, they are considered policies of "regulated citizenship", since their apex is found in the non-democratic period of the Vargas government. The enactment of the Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT) occurred in 1943 and, since then, formal work has been treated in parallel to the evolution of social security laws, since Social Security created an environment conducive to the regulation of work, and also as a source of revenue and demand from the working class (Silva, 2014).

During the New Republic (1945 to 1964), the country went through different heads of state, such as Juscelino Kubitschek, Jânio Quadros, and João Goulart, until a new period of authoritarianism with the civil-military dictatorship. During this time, changes occurred in the social security field, such as the promulgation of the Organic Law of Social Security (LOPS) (Law No. 3,807, 1960) and the approval of the unique Rules of IAPs in 1963 (Lanzara, 2016; Zanirato, 2003).

During the civil-military dictatorship (1964 to 1985), Social Security was already becoming more robust, with more contributors and collections. It came to be seen as a source of wealth to fund the country's development at that time, configuring itself as a pact between the State and the bureaucracy. The increase in the concession of benefits was a tactical social policy to legitimize the military government of that time. A major event in 1966 was the unification of social insurance benefits through the INPS (Lanzara, 2016; Silva, 2014).

Thus, the regime added to social rights based on precarious universalism, to the detriment of political rights, to sustain the legitimacy of the dictatorial government among the people, although it still constituted a segmented State, incapable of articulating the innumerable emerging interests (Vianna, 1998).

The redemocratization context (1985 to 1988) was of great value for Social Security since, in the elaboration of CF/88, citizenship was prioritized through the universalization of access to the various public welfare policies. CF/88 is, thus, a legal landmark for the protection of social rights, among them Social Security. In this sense, the social protection policies aim at protecting Health, Social Assistance, and Social Security. Social Security emerged with this tripod (Health, Assistance, and Welfare) after the CF/88, whose protective character tried to ensure as many rights as possible to the citizen (Baptista, 1998).

It is worth noting that Social Assistance would be responsible for protecting the individual and the family against the adversities of life, while Social Security, as an integral part of Security in the context of the welfare state, would be responsible for protecting workers from the misfortunes that could keep them away from the labor market (Costa, 2009).

Social protection policies were intensified with the enactment of the CF/88 through the creation of principles and guidelines that direct policies toward social welfare, equity, solidarity, and human dignity. In this way, the CF/88 framed the right to Social Security as a fundamental right that aims to contribute to eliminating poverty and reducing social inequalities (Lobato, 2016).

In opposition to the 1988 context at the height of social rights protection with the promulgation of the “Citizen Constitution”, the 1990s started a wave of reforms, especially with Constitutional Amendments No. 20, 41, and 47, under the auspices of containing the Social Welfare deficit, creating true retrocession mechanisms in social protection. In the 2000s, Social Welfare suffered structural and non-structural changes in the rules for the concession of benefits, establishing more difficult criteria for retirement. However, several categories of workers were included, such as domestic workers, housewives, and micro and small entrepreneurs (Silva, 2014).

From the brief analysis, it is possible to see that there are relevant simultaneous historical moments in the context of the evolution of the State and of Social Welfare in the country, which can be understood in five phases, as has been discussed. However, these historical, social, political, economic, and cultural elements are not capable of understanding Social Welfare as a public policy. In this case, the importance of this research stands out, since it aims to understand this theme allied to the field of public policies.

## METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

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Concerning the research process, in general terms, this is theoretical and empirical research, with a qualitative approach to the proposed objective, predominantly documental and bibliographic.

Concerning the theoretical research, a literature review was conducted. Among the nine types of literature review categorized in the research of Paré, Trudel, Jaana and Kitsiou (2015), the present work resorted to the narrative review, which aims to identify what has been broadly written in a subject or topic, presenting the review as a narrative synthesis.

In this research, it was necessary to resort to specialized literature in the area to illuminate the analysis of the empirical data, such as articles, books, dissertations, and theses that were used as bibliographic data. The following themes were researched: the political and social context of the military regime, re-democratization process (Bresser-Pereira 2009; Schwarcz & Starling, 2015); the dynamics of the 1987 ANC vote (Backer, Azevedo & Araújo, 2009; Oliveira, Beltrão & Ferreira, 1997; Sampaio, 2009); and the understanding of political forces in the creation of Social Security (Baptista, 1998; Sampaio, 2009).

For the execution of the empirical research, initially, the primary data were collected from Congress’ institutional website, subsequently, the categorical content analysis technique was used. This method consists of a set of communication techniques to find the meanings of messages through systematic procedures. Among the different phases of content analysis, we highlight 1) pre-analysis, 2) exploration of the material and 3) treatment of the results (Bardin, 2009).

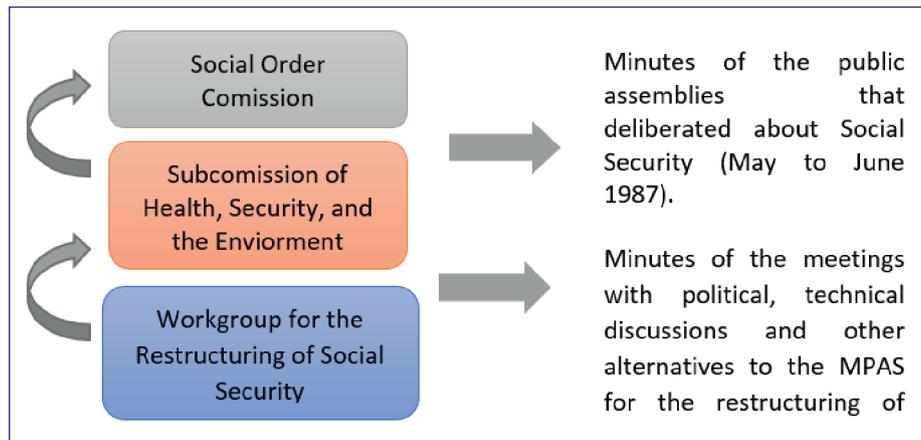
In the pre-analysis, primary data were selected and then read through to analyze whether they were consistent with the research hypotheses. The voting dynamics of the 1987 ANC produced the set of primary data: preliminary drafts, minutes of the public hearings, acts of the ANC Bureau, highlights, amendments, opinions, drafts (of the Constitution, of the Decision), pronouncements, questions of order, reports, requests and suggestions (from citizens, entities, constituents). Even before the Constituent was officially institutionalized, study and/or workgroups were created to assist in the elaboration of the constitutional text, such as the GRPS (1986; Oliveira et al., 1997).

The criterion for choosing the primary data that made up the corpus was completeness and representativeness, based on the assumption that the minutes of the meetings of the GRPS (1986) and the minutes of the public hearings would be sufficient to understand the dynamics of public policy, especially recognizing the public problem and creating the agenda in the context of the 1987 Constituent Assembly (ANC). The other primary data were excluded because they were predominantly formal documents for the fulfillment of the ANC stages, without discussion and reflection by the actors involved, constituting only the transcription of specific political moments. According to Backer et al. (2009), the public hearings were especially relevant in the ANC votes, because even if they did not define the final text of the constitution, they established the level of the debates, generated ideas, many of which were ultimately accepted by the constituents.

In the material exploration stage, the minutes of the meetings and hearings were read, from which reports were made that facilitated the preparation of the next phase of data interpretation. The results treatment and interpretation stage consisted of joining the exploration of the material with the previously chosen theory. This union allowed interpreting the data according to the reality of the Social Security background.

The minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> meetings, which deliberated on the future of social security policies in the Working Group for the Restructuring of Social Security (GRPS, 1986), were analyzed. In a second step, the minutes of the public hearings which deliberated on Social Security in the Sub-Commission of Health, Security, and Environment of the 1987 ANC were analyzed. All primary data are in the public domain and can be consulted in the institutional site of the National Congress. The data from the 6<sup>th</sup> public hearing, on the other hand, came from the Social Order Commission; 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup> meetings of the Subcommittee on Health, Security, and the Environment.

**Figure 2**  
**Primary data outline**



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

For the documental analysis of the primary data, the categorical content analysis technique was used. In the definition of the analytical categories, the closed grid categorization model was used, considering that the categories are selected at the beginning of the analysis (Laville & Dione, 1999).

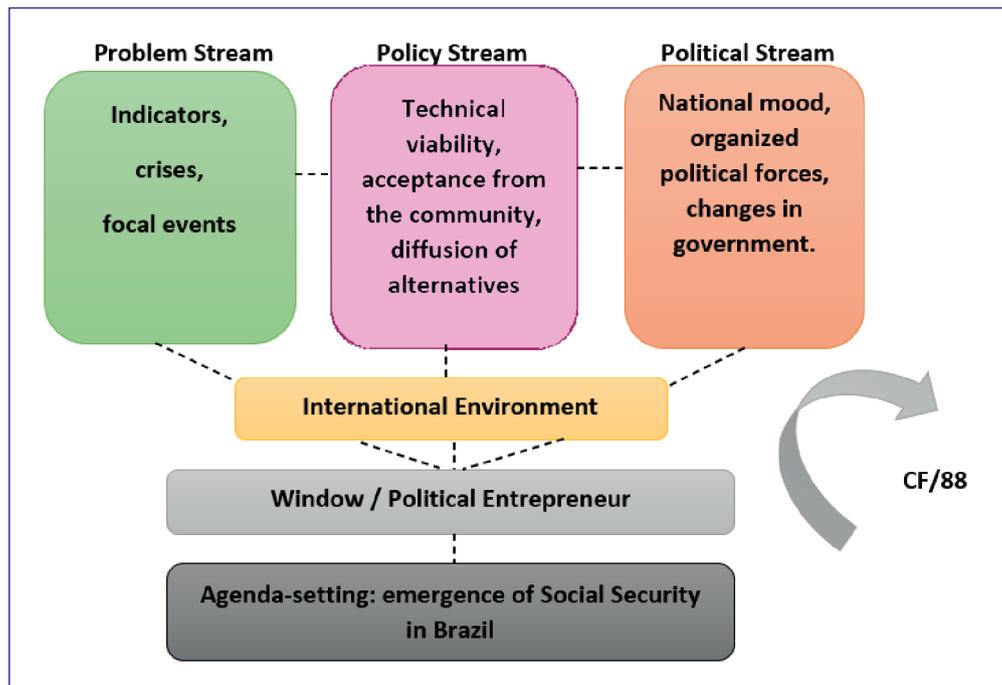
**Box 1**  
**Summary of the analysis categories and subcategories**

Categories	Subcategories
PROBLEM STREAM	Crises, indicators, focal events and action feedback.
POLICY STREAM	Technical viability, acceptance from the scientific community, tolerable costs, economic viability, public policy dynamics.
INTERNATIONAL ENVIORNMENT	Influence of international public policies or of other countries' agendas.
POLITICAL STREAM	National mood, organized political forces, changes in government.
WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY	Policy entrepreneurs that make the streams converge.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The categories and subcategories of analysis were at first extracted in their entirety from Kingdon's (1984, 2003) Multiple Streams model. Due to the need to adapt it to the reality of Brazilian public policy dynamics, the category of "international environment" analysis was created, which does not come from Kingdon's (1984) original model and is not directly linked to any of the streams.

Figure 3  
 Kingdon's multiple streams analytical outline



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

## DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

### The Problem stream

The indicators, the focus events, and the different crises that comprise the problem stream involve understanding of the literature review of the historical, political, and social context of the 1960s to 1980s (Bresser-Pereira, 2009; Schwarcz & Starling, 2015), the empirical analysis of primary documental data from the 1987 ANC, more precisely the discussions of the GRPS (1986), and the analysis of the minutes of the Public Hearings of the Subcommittee on Health, Environment, and Social Security, which are part of the Annals of the ANC (Assembleia Nacional Constituinte [ANC], 1987).

The analysis of the problem stream requires the understanding that Social Security was recognized as a public problem by the government because of the historical evolution of its policy management and the influence of the international oil crisis of the 1970s, in the context of the military dictatorship, which impacted the financing of social policies, especially Social Security policies.

The military intervention of 1964 brought significant changes to the Brazilian reality since, for more than twenty years, a new political system concentrated in the hands of the Armed Forces took control of the presidency of the Republic. The military remained in power by maintaining a development model based on obtaining international loans to finance internal policies. However, the oil crisis in the US led to the dollar's appreciation, impacting import and export policies throughout the 1980s. In the Brazilian reality, the imbalance of external accounts and inflation became a chronic crisis of the national economy (Bresser-Pereira, 2009).

Thus, the economic crisis of the 1980s in Brazil was a remnant of the international crisis of the 1970s and directly impacted the financing of social policies, which had negative consequences for social security accounts. Social Security finances became a major public problem and, in 1980, the then president João Figueiredo decreed the "bankruptcy" of the agency with the creation of a social security package to remedy the deficits. The measures that stood out were the beginning of contributions by retirees and pensioners, an increase in the percentage of contributions by public servants, and an increase in the contribution on payrolls (GRPS, 1986).

From another aspect, it is known that, since its origin, the Brazilian welfare system had successive changes and, consequently, phases in its management: initially the company's link with the CAPs, from 1923 to 1930; the professional category's link with the IAPs, from 1930 to 1960; institutional unification with the Organic Law of Social Welfare (LOPS) in 1966 and the creation of the INPS (Oliveira et al., 1997).

The empirical analysis showed that Social Security went through cyclical management and financing crises, caused by fraud, errors, and mismanagement. These problems were eventually overcome by economic growth, in which the salary mass and the number of employees increased, masking the public accounts. However, during the good phase, few measures were adopted to rationalize and order the system, which remained hostage to financial problems (ANC, 1987).

Thus, the problem stream correlates economic indicators of the social security deficit, the financial crisis of the Brazilian economy in a broad way, and the crisis of Brazilian Social Security itself, in addition to focal events such as the recognition of Social Security's bankruptcy, which mobilized the political sphere to look for possible alternatives to reformulate this policy.

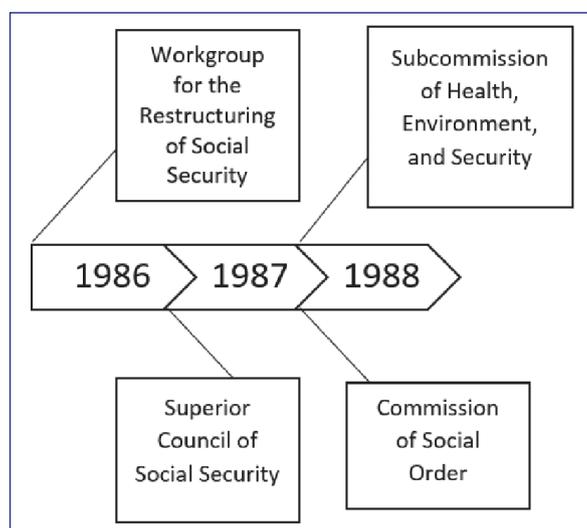
### The Solution stream

It is important to analyze the alternatives and solutions through the analysis of the primary data collected in the proposals formulated by the GRPS (1986), the possible solutions originating from the minutes of the Public Hearings of the Sub-commission of Health, Environment, and Social Security, and the Commission of Social Order, which are part of the Journal of the 1987 National Constituent Assembly (ANC, 1987). These are discussions and/or alternatives proposed by representatives of unions, retirees, the scientific community, and members of the government, who were chosen to propose solutions on the future of Social Security in the CF/88.

With the recognition of the public problem, different alternatives emerged based on technical and economic feasibility studies carried out at the GRPS, such as: the establishment of new guidelines for financing Social Welfare; the restructuring of rural workers' welfare; the need to create a bureaucratic and/or administrative body focused on the management of the different administrative organs; the creation of mechanisms for the participation of the civil society in the formulation and follow-up of policies; as well as the proposal for the creation of a Ministry of Social Security (GRPS, 1986).

Different alternatives were propagated in different arenas: in the GRPS of 1986, in the Superior Council of Social Security, in the Commission of Social Order, and the Subcommission of Health, Environment, and Security inserted in the ANC of 1987.

**Figure 4**  
**Relationship between the data analyzed and the dynamics of social security public policies**



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

After analysis of the data from the GRPS (1986), Ministry members present in this group, such as Sulamis Daim, Dorothea Werneck, and Eleutério Neto defended the proposal of creating Social Security. In opposition, the representatives of the Civil Cabinet were against the creation of a Ministry of Social Security, foreseeing that the creation of a single agency managing the three areas could form a very strong social structure in face of the other areas of State protection.

Besides the government members, specialists were invited to form a group made up of experts in social and welfare issues, as well as academics and researchers from the University Research Institute of Rio de Janeiro (IUPERJ), the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP), the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the Welfare Information and Technology Company (DATAPREV), and the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (FIOCRUZ). The presence of such people aimed to contribute technically with proposals that were analyzed and their feasibility discussed in the Brazilian reality. It was, therefore, a group that in principle had not defined a position contrary or favorable to the proposals, but that indicated technical studies and contributed with relevant discussions in the meetings.

Besides the previous representatives, there was the workers' group formed by representatives of the General Workers Command (CGT), the Central Workers Union (CUT), the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (CONTAG), the rural workers, the National Federation and Union of Dockers, and representatives of retirees and pensioners. One of the main characteristics of this group was its resistance to the creation of Social Security, especially to the proposals offered by the government group.

According to the minutes of the 6<sup>th</sup> GRPS meeting (1986), Moacyr Oliveira (representative of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Assistance [MPAS]) mentions, in different passages, the deliberations in Convention 102 of the International Labor Organization [ILO] on the need for parity participation, universalism, and other concepts extracted from the international convention to serve as a basis for the Brazilian Social Security. Still in this meeting, the member Luiz Viegas Lima (representative of the retirees and pensioners) pointed out that the ILO decision should not be contradicted, since it advised the creation of a Social Security network in the world.

On the other hand, Annibal Fernandes (workers' representative) pointed out that the ILO recommendation for the creation of Social Security had not been made public by the actors who deliberated in the GRPS, nor had it been contradicted and analyzed according to the Brazilian reality:

However, to these elements of progress there are of course difficulties, otherwise there would be no need to come to the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. The first one is that, in a certain way, the Commission has limited itself to previous studies that have not been fully revealed; some have been delivered to us but there is an open secret of an ILO study that is circulating from hand to hand and is being kept as if it were a state secret, a project of the Brazilian atomic bomb, but in truth parts of these limitations and difficulties we are having to reach a consensus, since we are in consensus about a great amount, are due to an ILO study which may have incomplete elements about the Brazilian reality. Perhaps or certainly (GRPS, 1986, p. 987).

The emergence of the ideals of Social Security in Brazil is peculiar, given that in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Europe and the U.S., after a long period of crisis, were experiencing the height of economic liberalism with the policies of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Regan, who gradually created policies that minimized the welfare state (Rocha, 2013).

Therefore, according to the literature and the empirical analysis, the ILO influence in pressuring Latin American governments to create Social Security is to some extent undeniable. Even if this influence was not fully shared by the community and to some extent not very well received by the members of the GRPS, one cannot deny the ILO stance and its influence as an international organization on the policy decisions of several countries around the world in promoting the spread of social welfare policies materialized by Social Security. Perhaps this organization was the major precursor of this network of integrated policies that started to be created aiming at social protection universally and indiscriminately.

The GRPS was a democratic arena in which there was ample participation from different representatives of civil society. Throughout the discussions, many technical studies and new proposals for the restructuring of Social Welfare were presented. Its relevance becomes evident when we notice that the final report was directed to the debate in the ANC and that some participants were invited to make expositions in the Public Hearings of the Sub-commissions and the Commission of Social Order.

In the debates held in these institutional environments, different technical and economic studies were presented, mainly aiming at solving, at first, the public problem of the social security deficit through the proposals of new benefit plans and Social Security funding. There was no consensus in these areas about the creation of Social Security, only the government representatives stimulated the creation of this integrated policy. However, as time went by, due to the maturing of the studies and the GRPS deliberations, the creation of Social Security became unanimous among the members and in the scope of the public audiences. Since it was a political deliberation, Social Security began to be defended by different social actors (constituents and guests).

Added to these factors is the influence of the international environment on the growth of the welfare state with the creation of Social Security policies that were strengthened by the 1948 Charter of Human Rights and by ILO Convention 102. These ideals arrived in Brazil in the same period of re-democratization and reconstruction of the bases of social policies, which caused a strong clamor in the institutional arenas such as the GRPS and the 1987 ACN.

## The Political stream

After understanding the problem and solution streams, it is important to know that the political stream has its own dynamics. The national mood, the change of government, and the organized political forces allow us to understand the dynamics that occurred in the context of the formation of the bases of Welfare policy, in particular the political behavior before and during the 1987 ANC.

The national mood experienced in the re-democratization period and the social mobilizations, especially the *Diretas Já* movement, show the exhaustion of autocracy in the Brazilian society and hope in democratic ideals that could change the direction of Brazil (Sampaio, 2009). In the case of the creation of Social Security policies, the international (influence of the ILO) and national environments were favorable. Even though it was headed by government representatives, the proposal of integrating the three policies (Health, Assistance, and Welfare) gained strength with the other social actors who were willing to create the new bases for the construction of this policy.

The change of government with the first indirect election for president of the Republic after the military period was a moment of great tension and contradiction, since, despite Tancredo Neves' victory, it was vice-president José Sarney who took office due to the death of the elected president, which caused more political instability.

In this scope, the organized political forces can be observed in distinct arenas. In the GRPS, there was a bureaucratic and technical body gathered to outline new plans for Social Welfare. The GRPS was a democratic arena, since the ample participation of different representatives of civil society was observed. Throughout the discussions, many technical studies and new proposals for the restructuring of Social Welfare were presented. Its relevance becomes evident as the final report was directed to the debate in the 1987 ANC and some members were invited to make expositions in the Public Hearings of the Sub-commissions and the Social Order Commission (ANC, 1987; GRPS, 1986).

The ANC was a very rich stage in Brazilian political life since it was organized in Public Hearings whose attention is aroused both by the diversity of participants and by the countless proposals that emerged throughout the debates. According to the genesis of CF/88, exposed by Oliveira et al. (1997), the commissions consisted of assemblies composed of the political parties in proportion to their political forces and alliances. The commissions had to follow the rules and general protocol created by the House of Representatives, thus, the commissions could dispose of some of their attributions. In the end, the commissions should submit reports for collective deliberation and vote on the constitutional text (Schwarcz & Starling, 2015).

The subcommissions, in turn, were an offshoot of the commissions and could deepen the study and debate on any subject recognized as relevant by the constituents. Specifically, the Social Order Commission had three subcommissions: Workers' Rights and Public Servants; Health, Security and Environment Subcommittee; and Blacks, Indigenous Population, Disabled People and Minorities Subcommittee. Each subcommission organized its own agenda of hearings and invited its own participants (Backer et al., 2009).

The analysis of the subcommittee's audiences allows us to conclude that the discussions about Social Security and Social Welfare reflected moments of little deliberation and a lot of exposition. The occurrence of few deliberations is due to the reduced number of meetings - only six -, among which only one was exclusively about Social Security and one about Social Security. This fact reinforces the hypothesis that the creation of Social Security was, in fact, a mobilization of the government (MPAS), which, throughout the GRPS meetings, convinced the members that it would be the best way out. By the time of the Assembly's deliberation, the idea had already been formed, all that remained was to share with the other representatives what the government's plan for its implementation would be.

## The window of opportunity and the policy entrepreneur

In the context of this research, the ANC of 1987 can be analyzed according to the concept of the induced window, since historical, social, and political circumstances were brought together and induced this moment, i.e. the opportunity to build new constitutional bases for Brazil. Through it, it was possible to restructure the entire Brazilian political, legal, and institutional model. The ANC was the opportune moment for different parties and politicians of distinct ideologies to build a new constitutional panorama in the political field.

The main social actors involved with Social Welfare and Security were: representatives of the bureaucratic technical staff of MPAS represented by Márcia Mazolli, Maria Emília Azevedo, Obed Dornellas, and, at the top, the manager Reinhold Stephanes. The former Minister Raphael de Almeida Magalhães and Representative Eduardo Jorge were the main political actors. The former minister was the one who stood out the most as the policy entrepreneur, having been responsible for directing MPAS policies to create a favorable environment for the creation of Social Security. In the political arenas in which he participated, he was the biggest advocate of integrating Health, Assistance, and Social Security policies.

## The convergence of streams and reflections

The Federal Constitution of 1988 was promulgated on October 5, 1988, and recently celebrated its 32nd anniversary. Despite the obstacles to its effectiveness, the CF/88 represented the consolidation of the Democratic State of Law, strengthened democracy, citizenship, instituted the promotion of human dignity, and significantly increased the social scope of the Brazilian State's policies. It was responsible for the constitutional innovation of creating Social Security in Brazil.

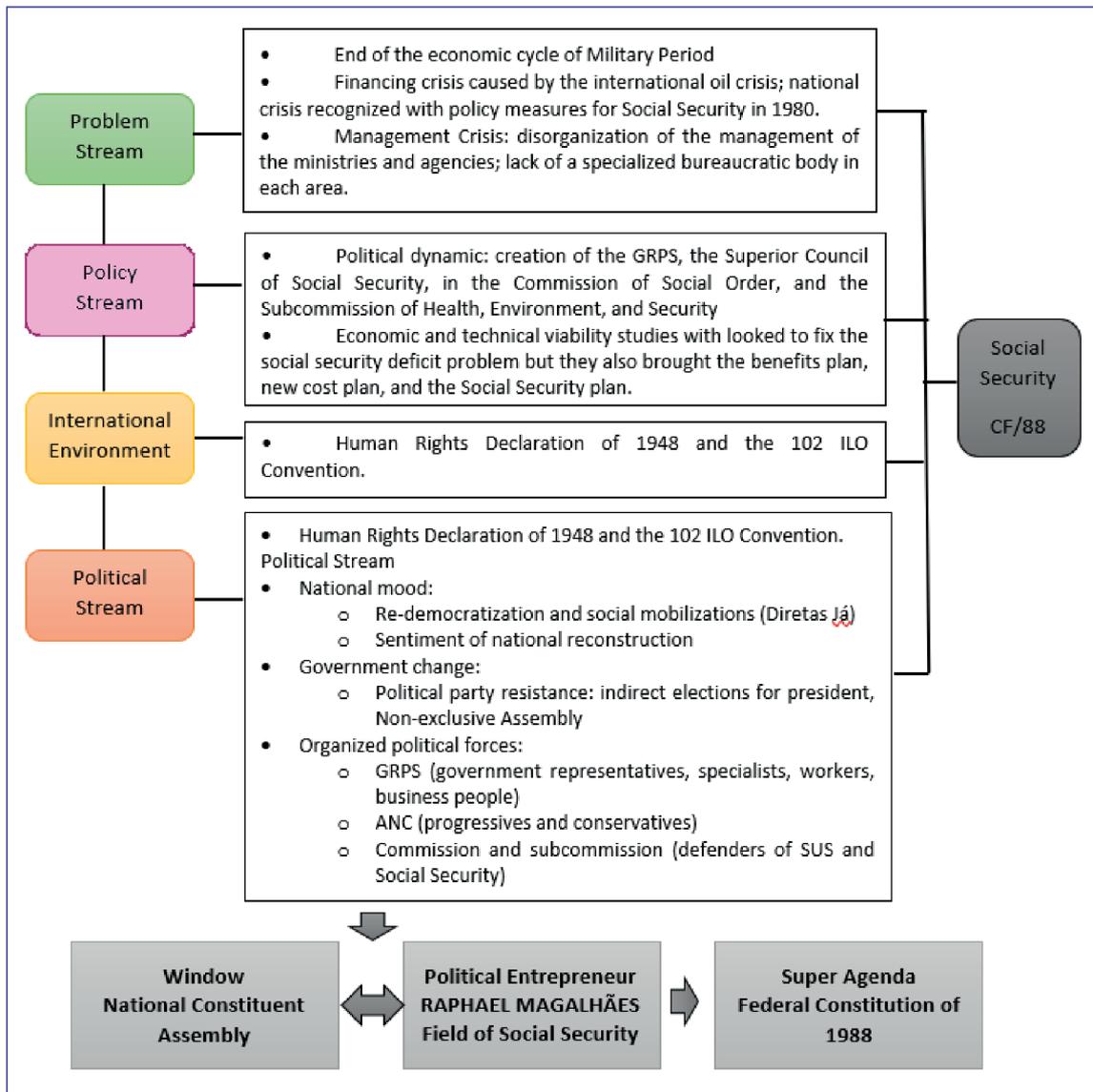
The convergence of streams helps to understand how the public policy agenda in the 1980s was formed, especially how Social Security becomes an element of Public Welfare in the scope of public policies in CF/88. The elements go through political, social, and economic factors at national and international levels. These elements brought together in the historical context of re-democratization have enabled the construction of a universal, democratic, and egalitarian constitutional design. The union of these flows through the window of opportunities was possible thanks to the policy's entrepreneur, MPAS Minister Raphael Magalhães, who, since the creation of the GRPS in 1986, was the great articulator of this policy in the different political arenas.

Given the analysis, it is important to reflect on the context of the creation of Social Security and possible similarities between the creation of Social Security in 1988 and the recent Social Security reform of 2019.

The formation of Social Security is a constitutional product originating from a previous moment of great economic and management crisis that provided the possibility of changes. Social Security presented signs of rupture with chaotic and disorganized management, evidenced by the creation of successive ministries and public organs, adding to all this the absence of a specialized bureaucratic body in each area (Health, Welfare, and Assistance).

Moreover, there was little mobilization and social participation of the people directly affected by the Social Security policies. Contrary to Health policies, which historically present their defenders, the studies did not show Social Security and/or Social Welfare as a welfare policy for the worker. On the contrary, most of the actors involved were concerned with public finances and the economic and actuarial balance of Social Security. Curiously, the international influence (creation of a Social Security system) at the appropriate historical moment, that is, the re-democratization of the country, was the fuel the Brazilian policy needed to expand its social protection network. All this was only possible thanks to the policy entrepreneurs, as said, Raphael Magalhães, in the field of Social Security, and Ulysses Guimarães, who proved to be a great articulator and also a defender of the social aspect assumed by the constitutional text that was being voted in the ANC.

**Figure 5**  
**Applied theoretical model**



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Thus, Social Security could be envisioned with the goal of social protection through broad Health, Assistance, and Welfare policies that would need to be implemented after the constitutional text. However, Social Security was born amidst a historical management crisis: bureaucrats dissatisfied with the ministries and agencies to which they were assigned. The new constitutional text inaugurated a new front of benefits and financing that would need to be properly implemented to avoid future ruptures. In other words, it was necessary to fulfill the social agreement signed by CF/88.

However, after the enactment of the Constitution, it was observed that the fiscal imbalance and the lack of the articulators in favor of a social protection model have caused Social Security to suffer numerous parametric reforms since its creation 30 years ago. As analyzed by Silva, Teixeira, and Costa (2019), some reforms were interpreted as incremental (Constitutional Amendments 20/1998; 41/2003; 47/2005; Law No. 13,183, 2015; Law No. 12,618, 2012), since they tried to keep up with demographic and economic changes. In the short term, these changes have increased the slowness and bureaucratization of the system, leading to judicialization and increased public spending under the current pension management, even generating more input for narratives justifying other, deeper reforms.

All of these factors together indicate that the current arguments in favor of pension reforms are the same as those made more than thirty years ago: financial and actuarial imbalance, the solvency of public accounts, and the need to reformulate the granting of pension benefits, as already seen throughout this paper. Constitutional Amendment Bill n. 286 (rejected in 2016) and Constitutional Amendment Bill n. 6 of 2019 (approved as Amendment to the Constitution No. 103 of 2019) have more robust and less incremental changes than the previous reforms, both present rigid rules for the concession of pension benefits, changing very little regarding the financing of the pension system. However, the recent reform had the potential to put at risk the constitutional safety net as approved in the ANC, especially the idea of a collective pension system, aiming to protect the whole society; guided, above all, in the perspective of social rather than contractual protection.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

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This article was built on the theoretical basis of policy agenda-setting with the necessary adaptations to the reality of Brazilian public policy dynamics. Through the theoretical discussion, it was possible to verify that the field of public policy analysis in Brazil is rapidly expanding, especially the understanding of the formation of public agendas, despite the lack of studies that address the relationship between the Constitution of 1988 and the political cycle.

The stream analysis (problems, policy, politics) created by Kingdon (1984) with the insertion of international influence indicated that Social Security as a public problem in the 1970s and 1980s was linked to economic and management factors. However, when this problem touched the public agenda, different alternatives were formulated, including the idea of expanding social coverage through the creation of Social Security.

In the political field, the social protection network called “Seguridade” gained strength at the window of opportunity (ANC) from the policy entrepreneurs, that is, social actors (politicians and the state bureaucratic body), who were influenced by the international dynamics (welfare state and ILO) and by the ideals of social democracy that arrived in Brazil during the re-democratization period.

It is important to highlight the studies on agenda-setting and Social Security, such as those by Menezes (2012) and Cruz (2015), who portray the formation of Social Assistance and Health policies as an integral part of Social Security in the CF/88. The theoretical approach of the academic production in Public Administration on the specific theme of Social Security is linked to the welfare state, economic factors, legal factors, and reformist themes of Social Security (Silva, Tavares & Lopes, 2018). Therefore, the importance of new studies that unite the themes: public policies, public agenda, and Social Security is reiterated; especially because reforms in this field continue to be proposed, often influencing the policy outcome and the constitutional pact.

Finally, we hope this study has contributed to different areas of knowledge, especially the fields of Public Administration and Political Science, both with the theoretical analysis of adapting Kingdon’s Multiple Stream model to the Brazilian reality and with the empirical analysis of the formation of Social Security as a public policy in the 1980s and CF/88.

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**Raquel Andrade Silva de Oliveira**

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2611-7285>

Master's degree in Administration from the Graduate Program in Administration (PPGAdm) at the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV).  
E-mail: [raquel.a.andrade@ufv.br](mailto:raquel.a.andrade@ufv.br)

**Bruno Tavares**

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5140-7359>

Ph.D. in Administration from Universidade Federal de Lavras (UFLA); Associate Professor from the Department of Administration at the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV). E-mail: [btavares@ufv.br](mailto:btavares@ufv.br)

**Thiago de Melo Teixeira da Costa**

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0521-3799>

Ph.D. in Applied Economics from the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV); Associate Professor from the Administration and Accounting Department at the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV). E-mail: [thiagocosta@ufv.br](mailto:thiagocosta@ufv.br)

**Suely de Fátima Ramos Silveira**

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1303-7190>

Ph.D. in Applied Economics from the University of São Paulo (Esalq/USP); Professor from the Graduate Program in Administration at the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV). E-mail: [sramos@ufv.br](mailto:sramos@ufv.br)