

Democracy, Social Security and Income Transfer in Brazil

This special issue focuses on an analysis of Brazilian social policy by publishing a series of original works on the protection of disabled persons. The articles provide public health with a comprehensive view of the institutional arrangement that underpins the Continuous Cash Benefit (BPC) program created by the Federal Constitution in 1988. The BPC was instituted to transfer income to people with disabilities and the elderly, being part of the social security project of the democratic regime, which was re-instated in 1985.

At that juncture, the social situation of the country showed that to promote collective welfare it was not enough for economic policy to concentrate on growth alone. It was necessary to institutionalize social protection with the clear objective of transferring income and ensuring universal access to public goods and services. It was also accepted that the creation of social security was not a threat to the capacity for adjustment and growth of the economy, as proven during the decades that followed. The BPC thus emerged as part of the social pact for development with inclusion and the eradication of inequality. Although they do not mesh with the decentralized standard of implementation of social services provision policies, the effects of the BPC transcend the strict scope of care by including users of the Unified Health System with serious and total functional limitations and restrictions.

What is especially notable in this publication is that Brazil has consolidated within the federal government a unique institutional capacity to transfer income to people in vulnerable conditions, thereby minimizing the need for philanthropic actions to help the poor. In the 1990s, the BPC also inaugurated the model of a broad-scale income transfer policy, even enabling institutional learning for the implementation of the *Bolsa Família* Program in 2004. Despite this marked institutional step forward, the articles in this thematic issue do not refrain from reflecting critically on the constraints that the Social Security decision-making process impose on the eligibility of beneficiaries, impeding access to the BPC and favoring judicialization. In this respect, the articles list the evidence and the arguments that justify the operational improvement of the innovative Brazilian experience for protecting disabled persons.

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