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Institutionalization Trajectories of Cash Transfer Programs in Brazil: Renda Mínima, Bolsa Família, and Cartão Família Carioca

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Abstract: The article examines how municipal policy implementation arrangements, developed across different periods and contexts, interact with national policies within multilevel governance dynamics. To do so, it examines the institutionalization trajectories of three cash transfer programs in Brazil: Renda Mínima (SP, 1998), Cartão Família Carioca (RJ, 2010), and Bolsa Família (National, 2004). The study highlights the importance of theoretical debates, the circulation of actors across different levels of government and institutions, and the role of policy designs and instruments in shaping the formulation and implementation of these initiatives. The study examines how different scales intersect with the temporal dimension in shaping long-term trajectories. Renda Mínima contributed to the formulation of Bolsa Família by serving as a space for policy experimentation, while Cartão Família Carioca emerged within an institutional context already consolidated through earlier experiences. Based on a qualitative and comparative approach combining data triangulation, document analysis, and a review of the specialized literature, the article concludes that analyzing multilevel dynamics over time is essential to understanding processes of institutional change and the consolidation of public policies. Thus, the study underscores the importance of interactions across different levels of government and historical contexts in shaping public policies.

Keywords: Implementation arrangements; cash transfer; policy instruments; institutional change; institutionalization trajectories.

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Introduction

This article examines and discusses the institutionalization trajectories of conditional cash transfer policies in Brazil through a comparison of two municipal programs implemented in two of the country's major metropolitan areas – 'Renda Mínima' in São Paulo and 'Cartão Família Carioca' in Rio de Janeiro – and the national 'Bolsa Família' program. The article shows that policy design and formulation heavily rely on the circulation of actors involved in theoretical, conceptual, and policy design debates. It also highlights the importance of implementation arrangements and policy instruments for consolidating and implementing these policies.

The literature on Brazilian federalism has shown that federal transfers and the federative arrangements underlying social policies help reduce inequalities among municipalities (ARRETCHE, 2016). However, although social assistance policy is strongly regulated by the federal government, municipalities still retain some autonomy to adapt national regulations, thereby reshaping patterns of local governance (BICHIR et al., 2024). Thus, the article is motivated by the need to better understand how different levels of social assistance policy – especially in the area of cash transfer – interact over time across both vertical and horizontal dimensions. The aim, therefore, is to analyze the interplay among the implementation arrangements of different programs, highlighting the policy elements that structure this process and the resulting institutional changes.

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon that includes monetary deprivation as one of its dimensions (BRONZO and PRATES, 2012). The right to a basic income constitutes a social right guaranteed both by international human rights standards and by national legal frameworks, such as Brazil's 1988 Federal Constitution. However, poverty has a distinct geographical dimension that shapes lived experiences differently in rural and urban areas (SANTOS, 2009). These differences are especially visible in metropolitan regions marked by highly unequal patterns of urbanization, labor market formation, and income concentration (CARLOS, 2009). Thus, an income equivalent to half the minimum wage (R$706.00 in 2024) may be sufficient to ensure decent living conditions in small municipalities in Brazil's North, while the same amount is negligible in metropolitan areas such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, where it often fails to cover even a family's basic food needs. Therefore, poverty lines, diagnostic criteria, and cash transfer programs should be tailored to regional and local realities.

The 'Bolsa Família' program, the largest cash transfer program in Latin America and the flagship social policy of Workers' Party (PT) federal governments (BICHIR, 2010; BRONZO and PRATES, 2012), became nationally and internationally recognized as a fundamental and effective policy for reducing poverty and promoting citizenship and dignity (CAMPELLO and NERI, 2013; BARROS et al., 2010). It also encouraged

coordination among programs and policies across the three levels of government to expand opportunities for beneficiary families (COUTINHO, 2013). However, the initiative that now operates nationwide first emerged at the subnational level (LAVINAS, 1998), particularly through the 'Renda Mínima' program in São Paulo, which is often described as one of the 'antechambers' of 'Bolsa Família' (LEITE and PERES, 2015). The challenge of reaching potential beneficiaries not covered by the federal program remains particularly significant in metropolitan areas, leading to the creation of municipal programs such as 'Cartão Família Carioca' in Rio de Janeiro.

Considering the complexity of metropolitan areas, treated here as instrumental cases, and the organization of social assistance policy before and after the consolidation of the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS) (BICHIR et al., 2024), this article contributes to a research agenda focused on understanding how implementation arrangements shape the operation of public policies (SAGER and GOFEN, 2022). Based on an empirical study of the trajectories of 'Bolsa Família', 'Renda Mínima' (São Paulo), and 'Cartão Família Carioca' (Rio de Janeiro), this article addresses the following question: How do the implementation arrangements of cash transfer policies in two Brazilian metropolitan areas, created in different periods and contexts, interact with the implementation arrangements of 'Bolsa Família' at the federal level?

We conducted a qualitative comparative study using data collected between 2023 and 2024. Methodologically, the study combined data triangulation with an analysis of primary documents (laws, decrees, and government data accessed through the Access to Information Law) and secondary sources (evaluation reports and other official documents). It also drew on a review of specialized literature on the programs to complement their descriptions and map the circulation of actors. As each program has its own organizational structure and information on the same analytical dimension was spread across different document sources, we present a synthesis of the documents and literature used in the description and analysis of the programs (Chart 01). The documents were analyzed based on the following theoretical dimensions: implementation arrangements, policy instruments, circulation of actors, and temporalities.

This article is organized in four sections, in addition to this introduction and the conclusion. First, we present the theoretical framework underpinning the analysis, with emphasis on the concepts of implementation arrangements, policy instruments, and institutional change. Next, we present the findings based on the data collected on the three programs under study. We then discuss, in light of the relevant literature, the relationships between the programs, their arrangements, actors, and instruments, as well as the main processes of institutionalization and institutional change. In the conclusion, we outline the main contributions of this study.

Chart 01. Documents and literature consulted for each program

Sources of Documents Consulted	Renda Mínima	Bolsa Família	Cartão Família Carioca
Normative frameworks	Municipal laws, decrees, and bill proposals	Federal laws and provisional measures	Municipal decrees
Strategic plans	Plano Plurianual (Multi-Year Plan, 1989–2025); Programa de Metas (municipal administration's planning instrument, 2013–2024); Municipal Social Assistance Plan (2014–2025)	Plano Plurianual (2008-2023)	Plano Plurianual (2010-2025); Strategic Plans (2009-2024)
Total number of beneficiary families and average benefit amount	Data from the Benefits Management Coordination Office (SMADS) provided through the Access to Information Law	Vis Data[1]	Neri (2012); Management and Evaluation Report of the Plano Plurianual 2022–2025 – Fiscal Year 2023
Secondary literature	Hirata (2006), Leite and Peres (2015), and Paulics (2004)	Bichir (2016; 2010), Bronzo and Prates (2012), Campello and Mello (2014), Campello and Neri (2013), Costa et al. (2023), Licio (2020), Barros et al. (2010), Sordi (2023), Tomazini (2023)	Medeiros (2020), and Neri (2012; 2010a)

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Theoretical guidelines: contexts and temporalities in the formulation and implementation of public policies

Situating a public policy in time means "systematically situating particular moments (including the present) in a temporal sequence of events and processes stretching over extended periods" (PIERSON, 2004, p. 02), which involves distinguishing among processes, identifying relevant circumstances, and circumscribing temporal contexts, thereby enriching the understanding of complex social dynamics. However, it is not enough to simply claim that history matters; it is also necessary to explain why, where, how, and for what purposes temporal processes matter (PIERSON, 2004). Periodization refers to the definition of the temporal boundaries that mark the beginning and end of the context in which a process unfolds (FALLETI and LYNCH,

[1]Available at <https://aplicacoes.cidadania.gov.br/vis/data3/data-explorer.php>. Accessed on Janury 24, 2024.

2009). Sequence is also important, since the order in which events occur influences the outcomes of social processes. Thus, context provides crucial temporal, spatial, organizational, and institutional information for understanding and characterizing these processes (FALLETI and LYNCH, 2009; PIERSON, 2004). It is also important to note that an analysis may involve different contextual layers that interact with one another but do not necessarily share the same periodization, durations, or rhythms (FALLETI and LYNCH, 2009).

In Brazil, the redemocratization process was marked by the consolidation of public policies aimed at guaranteeing social rights. The model of federal state established at that time combined the responsibility of subnational governments for implementing policies with the federal government's responsibility for legislating in the most relevant policy areas (ARRETCHE, 2009). Thus, between the 1990s and the early 2000s, a broad normative framework was consolidated that restricted – though did not eliminate – the autonomy of subnational governments in formulating and implementing their own policies (ARRETCHE, 2009).

The period following the formulation of the National Policy of Social Assistance (PNAS, in 2004), and the regulation of the policy through the Basic Operational Norm of the Unified System of Social Assistance (NOB-SUAS, in 2005) was marked by the structuring of SUAS and the strengthening of induction mechanisms. Leading national policy regulation to place stronger limits on municipal autonomy (BICHIR et al., 2024). However, it is important to note that even nationally regulated and centralized policies and programs still leave room for decision-making autonomy at the subnational level (BICHIR et al., 2024; CORTEZ and LOTTA, 2022; LAVALLE et al., 2019; LOTTA et al., 2021). As Bichir et al. (2024) argue, "taking the local level seriously even when looking into social policies regulated at the macro level implies demonstrating how and why this policy-making game does not begin or end with the federal government" (BICHIR et al., 2024, p. 08).

The Brazilian literature has increasingly examined the role of interactions among different levels of government in processes of institutional change. The institutionalization of public policies, whether through the concept of multilevel governance (ARRETCHE, 2016; BICHIR et al., 2024, 2017; MARQUES and BICHIR, 2023) or through concepts within the federalism and decentralization scholarship (CORTEZ and LOTTA, 2022; LAVALLE et al., 2019; LICIO, 2020; LOTTA et al., 2021). These studies examine how such interactions shape the implementation of policies, programs, and even reforms, highlighting the prior trajectories of policies across different levels of government. In doing so, they reveal important elements of the theoretical debate. These studies highlight two relevant analytical dimensions. Temporality, which helps explain how the degree of subnational autonomy varies according to the moment and context in which national changes are introduced at the local level (BICHIR et al., 2024; LOTTA et al., 2021). And, the circulation of actors across different levels of government, through which ideas and projects are shared or contested in formal and

informal arenas, shaping the consolidation of particular policy designs (BICHIR et al., 2024; CORTEZ and LOTTA, 2022; MARQUES and BICHIR, 2023). It is further argued that the formal and informal instruments of federative coordination of national programs and policies shape municipal capacities and interests (LICIO, 2020). Thus, Bichir et al. (2024) propose organizing the relevant analytical dimensions along horizontal and vertical axes in order to develop 'explanatory configurations' for the production of policies (BICHIR et al., 2024).

We argue that these interaction processes also occur among programs developed at different levels of government to address the same policy issue. On the one hand, the design of municipal programs may influence the formulation of federal programs; on the other, the implementation of new federal programs may reshape the implementation arrangements and policy instruments of municipal programs. Thus, we draw on the concepts of implementation arrangements and policy instruments to understand processes of institutional change.

By defining implementation arrangements as the institutional context and organizational structure that distribute decision-making power and shape the roles of actors in implementation processes, Sager and Gofen (2022) highlight a gap in studies on the institutional and organizational dimensions of implementation, that is, the many ways in which implementation arrangements operationalize public policies. In Brazilian literature, particular attention has been given to characterizing implementation arrangements embedded in the political-institutional environment (PIRES and GOMIDE, 2021), especially the policy instruments that make up these arrangements (LASCOUMES and LE GALÈS, 2007).

Implementation arrangements are therefore understood as the combination of relational configurations in which multiple actors participate in the implementation of public policies and the instruments that define specific forms of coordination among them. Analyzing implementation arrangements makes it possible to identify the specific modes of governance underlying policies in complex institutional environments, as well as to make sense of policy implementation trajectories over time and across different contexts (PIRES and GOMIDE, 2021).

The concept of policy instruments, in turn, allows us to examine not only modes of governance and policy changes, but also the effects produced by the creation and use of specific instruments (LASCOUMES and LE GALÈS, 2007). The instrumentation approach to public action understands instruments as institutions in the sociological sense, insofar as they establish rules that influence the behaviors and interactions among actors, at times constraining their actions and at other times creating opportunities (LASCOUMES and LE GALÈS, 2007).

With regard to the effects of policy instruments, inertia helps explain resistance to external pressures, while the ways they represent social problems reveal the debates

and assumptions underlying public policy. Finally, problematization sheds light on the hierarchies and interconnections among the different dimensions of the public issue, thereby constituting its explanatory and interpretive framework (LASCOUMES and LE GALÈS, 2007). In this way, analyzing policies through the instruments that shape them over time offers a deeper understanding of dimensions that are not always immediately visible or accessible, while also identifying factors that drive both change and continuity in these policies.

Considering, on the one hand, implementation arrangements (PIRES and GOMIDE, 2021) and, on the other, policy instruments (LASCOUMES and LE GALÈS, 2007) allows us to understand the endogenous processes underlying gradual institutional change (MAHONEY and THELEN, 2009). These processes are driven by shifts in the balance of power resulting, among other factors, from changes in environmental conditions and from the effects of the interactions among actors linked to different institutions. Moreover, a certain degree of openness in the interpretation, contestation, and implementation of institutional rules creates room for change (MAHONEY and THELEN, 2009). Therefore, "What animates change is the power-distributional implications of institutions. However, where we expect incremental change to emerge is precisely in the "gaps" or "soft spots" between the rule and its interpretation or the rule and its enforcement (MAHONEY and THELEN, 2009, p. 14).

Different types of institutional change can be identified. And explained through the relationship between, the characteristics of the political context, and those of institutions. Agents of change may emerge and adopt different strategies to advance intended changes, such as rule displacement or the introduction of new layers of rules (layering) (MAHONEY and THELEN, 2009).

The historical processes through which social assistance and cash transfer policies have been built and consolidated in Brazil have evolved and deepened since the beginning of the country's redemocratization. These processes unfold across different temporal and institutional contexts, as well as multiple levels of government, and are marked both by periods of greater innovation in implementation arrangements and by periods of adjustment and readjustment of these arrangements to national norms and programs. Understanding how different actors, across various levels of government, mobilize policy ideas and instruments to promote, obstruct, or even circumvent change is relevant to understanding the processes of institutionalization and institutional change within these policies.

Cash transfer policies: between municipal and federal arrangements

Although debates on the right to income and poverty reduction had already become consolidated since the formation of the Welfare State in the mid-1950s in countries of

the Global North. They gained momentum in Brazil and Latin America at the end of the twentieth century with the proliferation of conditional cash transfer programs such as Oportunidades in Mexico and Bolsa Família in Brazil (BRONZO and PRATES, 2012; NERI, 2012). Before the adoption of the conditional cash transfer model, debates on minimum income in Brazil gained momentum through the efforts of Eduardo Suplicy and Aldaíza Sposati, both members of the Workers' Party (PT). Their work helped lead to Bill No. 80/1991[2], which later became Federal Law Nº 10.835/2004 establishing the Renda Básica de Cidadania (Citizen's Basic Income) program, although it was never implemented.

There is a distinction between the concepts of basic income and minimum income. The former refers to the payment of an income to an entire population, regardless of social class (SUPLICY, 2007; PARIJS, 2000), whereas the latter is limited to cash transfers targeted at people living in situations of high social vulnerability and extreme poverty (BRONZO and PRATES, 2012; LAVINAS, 1998). These proposals differ in terms of the tension between targeting and universalization in the design of social policies (KERSTENETZKY, 2009), as well as in their different conceptions of the role of conditionalities in these policies' arrangements (BRONZO and PRATES, 2012).

In Brazil, rather than the proposal for a citizen's basic income, the concept of minimum income associated with targeted and conditional cash transfer programs became prominent on the public agenda during the 1990s through decentralized municipal initiatives (HIRATA, 2006; LAVINAS, 1998; PAULICS, 2004). Among the various subnational experiences developed over recent decades, two municipal initiatives stand out: one created in São Paulo in 1995 and another in Rio de Janeiro in 2010, after the consolidation of 'Bolsa Família'. Both continue to operate alongside 'Bolsa Família', Latin America's largest cash transfer program, raising new questions about the relationship between municipal and federal arrangements in anti-poverty and social assistance policies (BICHIR et al., 2024). The trajectories of these three initiatives are presented below in two periods: 01. conception and 02. consolidation, with an emphasis on their actors, implementation arrangements, and policy instruments.

'Renda Mínima' Program: the antechamber of 'Bolsa Família'

The 'Renda Mínima' program, formulated and implemented in the city of São Paulo, is considered one of the 'antechambers' – a previous experimentation – of the 'Bolsa Família' program. This is because the team responsible for coordinating 'Renda

[2]The bill established that all residents of the country over the age of 25 with gross monthly incomes below 45,000 cruzados (based on April, 1991 values that would later be updated) would receive an income supplement through a transfer equivalent to 30% of the difference between their earnings and that threshold.

Mínima' during Marta Suplicy's administration (PT[3], 2001–2004) later held key positions in the formulation of 'Bolsa Família', especially Ana Fonseca (CAMPELLO and NERI, 2013; HIRATA, 2006; LEITE and PERES, 2015).

The idea behind 'Renda Mínima', however, predates the Suplicy administration. As early as 1995, Arselino Tatto (PT) drafted a bill to establish a municipal minimum income program, while then-mayor Paulo Maluf (PDS/PPR/PP, 1993–1996) proposed an alternative program called 'Projeto Sobrevivência – Programa de Complementação de Salário' (Wage Supplementation Program). Claiming that Tatto's bill was unconstitutional, the municipal administration of Celso Pitta (PPB/PTN, 1997–2000) did not sanction it. Even so, the bill was enacted in March 1998 during Pitta's absence, when vice-mayor Régis de Oliveira was serving as acting mayor (HIRATA, 2006). During the electoral campaign that led to Marta Suplicy's victory, a proposal for a minimum income program was commissioned from the Florestan Fernandes Institute (HIRATA, 2006; LEITE and PERES, 2015). Thus, the period between 1995 and 2000 can be understood as a 'period of conception'.

Law Nº 12.651/1998, later repealed by Law Nº 14.255/2006, and Decree Nº 40.400/2001 constituted the main regulations governing the conception and operationalization of 'Renda Mínima'. Between 2001 and 2004 – a (pre-'Bolsa Família') 'period of experimentation' – some changes were made to the eligibility criteria, including age range, income level, and length of residence in São Paulo. As a pilot initiative, the program was implemented in selected districts based on their levels of social exclusion (HIRATA, 2006; LEITE and PERES, 2015).

In January 2001, the Coordination Office for Priority Social Programs was created within the Secretariat of Finance and Economic Development, where the 'Renda Mínima' program was initially housed. Following changes in the governmental structure, the program became the responsibility of the Secretariat for Development, Labor, and Solidarity, led by Secretary Marcio Pochmann. Under his leadership, social action was organized into three programmatic pillars: redistributive[4] (which included 'Renda Mínima', created in 1998 but not yet implemented), emancipatory, and local development. The coordination of 'Renda Mínima' was entrusted to Ana Fonseca of the University of Campinas (Unicamp), who joined the team alongside other staff members affiliated with the Center for Public Policy Studies at Unicamp (HIRATA, 2006).

[3]Throughout the article, abbreviations in parentheses following the names of politicians denote their political party affiliation.

[4]Four programs were part of this pillar: the 'Programa de Garantia de Renda Familiar Mínima Municipal' (Municipal Minimum Family Income Guarantee Program – PGRFMM) – the object of this study – the 'Programa Bolsa Trabalho' (Work Grant Program – BT), the 'Programa Começar de Novo' (Starting Over Program – CN), and the 'Programa Ação Coletiva de Trabalho' (Collective Work Action Program – PACT), better known as 'Operação Trabalho' (Operation Work) (CESIT, 2003, p. 23).

In 2005, 'Renda Mínima' reached the highest number of beneficiary families in its history, serving approximately 133,000 families. However, with the implementation of 'Bolsa Família' that same year, the federal program gradually came to serve more families than the municipal program. The administration of Gilberto Kassab (PFL/DEM/PSD, 2006–2011), under the leadership of vice-mayor and Social Assistance Secretary Alda Marcoantonio, represented the 'moment of consolidation' of 'Renda Mínima' in terms of its scope, governance, and institutionalization. Law Nº 14.255/2006 introduced changes to the program's governance and design (including updates to benefit amounts) and repealed the previous regulations, remaining in force ever since. The challenge was implementing the newly created 'Bolsa Família' and, at the municipal level, updating registries and coordinating and integrating municipal social policies with those of other levels of government to ensure assistance to beneficiary families.

The 'Renda Mínima' program was transferred from the Secretariat of Labor to the Secretariat of Social Assistance and came to be prioritized as a social assistance benefit integrated into SUAS (SPOSATI, 2013). The creation of a Benefits Management Coordination Office within the Secretariat made it possible to centralize, define, and standardize rules and procedures (HIRATA, 2006). The program's main management instrument was the 'Banco de Dados do Cidadão' (Citizen Database – BDC), developed and operated by the São Paulo Municipal Data Processing Company, which processed information collected through registration forms and transmitted it to 'Banco do Brasil' for the payment of benefits to families. It is worth noting that, in 2011, efforts were made to adapt the registration methodology of 'Renda Mínima' to allow new 'Bolsa Família' beneficiaries to be included through the 'Cadastro Único'[5]. Until then, the municipal registration process had been conducted separately and was not primarily guided by the requirements of 'Bolsa Família'. Indeed, prior to this reform, the municipality of São Paulo at times deliberately chose not to complete fully the 'CadÚnico'[6]. This was likely due to the existence of the 'Banco de Dados do Cidadão' and the large amount of municipal funding directed to cash transfer programs, which reduced the municipality's dependence on meeting federal targets to secure intergovernmental transfers.

Since 2006, the program's legal guidelines, targeting and eligibility criteria, underlying conceptions, and benefit amounts have not been updated. In 2013, during the administration of Fernando Haddad (PT, 2013–2016), discussions began on a new framework for 'Renda Mínima'. However, the 'Programa de Metas' – the municipal administration's planning instrument – focused on the goal of 'benefiting 228,000 new families through Bolsa Família', without mentioning the municipal program. Studies

[5]Unified Registry for Social Programs (Cadastro Único para Programas Sociais – CadÚnico). CadÚnico is an instrument used to identify and characterize low-income families across the country. It is used to select and enroll these families in various federal programs and can also be used by state and municipal programs. Available at <https://www.gov.br/mds/pt-br/acoes-e-programas/cadastro-unico>. Accessed November 18, 2025.

[6]Information drawn from Interview 01.

were conducted, and new proposals and beneficiary profiles for the 'Renda Mínima' program were developed. However, throughout the administration's four years – including the creation of a task force to combat extreme poverty – it was not possible to move forward with updating the program[7]. During the Haddad administration, closer technical and political alignment with the federal government led to greater use of 'CadÚnico' as an instrument to monitor families and facilitated the expansion of 'Bolsa Família' in the municipality.

After reaching its peak during the Kassab administration, 'Renda Mínima' lost scope and funding, serving only 18,000 families in 2024 – less than 15% of its total in 2006 – while 'Bolsa Família' reached approximately 714,000 families during the same period, about 40 times as many. After 'Bolsa Família' was created in 2004, 'Renda Mínima' stopped receiving federal resources and remained funded only through the municipal budget until 2023. Priority under 'Renda Mínima' is given to families not covered by the federal program in order to expand coverage and strengthen the right to income as a social assistance benefit.

The municipal governance structure built around 'Renda Mínima' was maintained and, integrated with the new state capacities created to implement 'Bolsa Família' in São Paulo. Luiz Francisquini, who has served as coordinator of the Benefits Management Coordination Office since 2010, has helped ensure continuity, with the two arrangements continuing to operate in parallel: the 'Banco de Dados do Cidadão' remains in use alongside 'CadÚnico', benefits are paid through different banks ('Banco do Brasil' and 'Caixa Econômica Federal'), and budget allocations remain separate. Ultimately, 'Renda Mínima' continues to operate as a residual policy alongside 'Bolsa Família', while still maintaining its own governance and structure.

'Bolsa Família' Program: federal-level consolidation of cash transfer policy

The early years of the twenty-first century were decisive for the construction of the institutional arrangements of Brazil's national social assistance policy (BICHIR, 2010; BICHIR et al., 2024; PAULICS, 2004; SPOSATI, 2013). The first government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (PT) played a central role in shaping the structures and guidelines for social programs, especially 'Bolsa Família', established by Nº Law 10.836/2004[8]. 'Bolsa Família' is a targeted and conditional cash transfer program that became the flagship of the PT administrations (BICHIR, 2010) and one of the leading Latin American models of this type of policy (BARROS et al., 2010). Part of the technical team that consolidated 'Renda Mínima' in São Paulo, later assumed key roles in the design and implementation of 'Bolsa Família'. A process led by Ana Fonseca, who became

[7]Information drawn from Interview 01.

[8]The program was created by Provisional Measure Nº 132 of October 20, 2003, and became law in 2004.

coordinator of the 'Bolsa Família' program in 2003, and executive secretary of the Ministry of Social Development in 2004 (CAMPELLO and NERI, 2013; HIRATA, 2006; LEITE and PERES, 2015).

Before the creation of 'Bolsa Família', the second administration of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (PSDB) launched the 'Bolsa Escola' program to promote universal access to elementary education through cash transfers to families with children between 07 and 14 years old. The Ministry of Education centrally managed the transfers, and municipalities did not receive resources to implement the program, as they do under 'Bolsa Família' (BICHIR, 2010). At the same time, and without a centralized administrative structure, programs such as 'Bolsa Alimentação'[9] (Food Grant), 'Cartão Alimentação' (Food Card), and 'Auxílio Gás' (Gas Assistance) were implemented. These programs were later consolidated into 'Bolsa Família', and placed under the management of the Ministry of Social Development (BICHIR, 2010).

Thus, Law Nº 10.836/2004, which created 'Bolsa Família', established that families living in extreme poverty would be entitled to a fixed basic benefit and a variable benefit, the latter intended for families with children, adolescents, pregnant women, or breastfeeding women among their members. In this 'period of conception', the adoption of centralized management allowed conditionalities related to school attendance and vaccination monitoring to be established as requirements for receiving benefits – a model already used in 'Renda Mínima' and 'Bolsa Alimentação' and later expanded in 'Bolsa Família'. The 'Cadastro Único', which had been in operation since the early 2000s, became the main instrument for managing social information (BICHIR, 2016, 2010; BARROS et al., 2010). One of the main innovations was the policy's intergovernmental character and the division of responsibilities between the federal government and municipalities for distributing resources, monitoring the program, and managing registries and beneficiaries. In this context, the Decentralized Management Index (Índice de 'Gestão Descentralizada' – IGD)[10] became a key instrument for evaluating municipal performance and allocating federal transfers to support implementation of the policy (BICHIR, 2016; LICIO, 2020).

'CadÚnico' became an important source of information on beneficiary families, their profiles, and their main vulnerabilities, and it has been used by dozens of programs and initiatives across all three levels of government (LICIO, 2020). It became an

[9]'Bolsa Alimentação' was part of the National Minimum Income Strategy and aimed to promote access to basic health and food security for pregnant women and children between 0 and 12 years old. The program was managed by the Ministry of Health; it was established by Law Nº 10.458 of March 14, 2002, to assist family farmers affected by drought, dry spells, and other situations of public calamity and risk.

[10]The IGD measures the quality of 'Bolsa Família' and 'Cadastro Único' management. It is used to assess municipal performance and determine the amount of federal resources transferred to each municipality to support and improve services for beneficiary families. Available at <https://www.gov.br/mds/pt-br/acoes-e-programas/bolsa-familia/igd>. Accessed November 18, 2025.

indispensable database – a "census of the poor" (NERI, 2012, p. 62) – for designing and monitoring social policies. It also provides important information for understanding the multidimensional nature of poverty (BICHIR, 2016; BRONZO and PRATES, 2012; LICIO, 2020).

During the administrations of Dilma Rousseff (PT, 2011–2016), a 'period of consolidation', the 'Brasil Sem Miséria Plan' was launched to strengthen coordination among existing social policies and improve their effectiveness (CAMPELLO and MELLO, 2014). The initiative was led by Tereza Campello, Minister of Social Development; Ricardo Paes de Barros, a researcher at the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) and Undersecretary for Strategic Actions in the Secretariat of Strategic Affairs of the Presidency of the Republic (SAE/PR) from 2011 to 2015; and Marcelo Neri, a researcher at the Center for Social Policies of the Getulio Vargas Foundation (CPS-FGV), president of IPEA from 2012 to 2014, and Minister of the SAE/PR from 2013 to 2015. In this context, 'Bolsa Família' became the centerpiece of the government's poverty reduction strategy (CAMPELLO and NERI, 2013). Over the years, despite criticism of the program, 'Bolsa Família' has become consolidated as a social right, even though it is not constitutionally guaranteed.

Over the following administrations, however, the program entered a period of increasing uncertainty, as fiscal constraints and subsequent reforms altered its scope and institutional design. The Temer administration (MDB, 2016–2018) adopted a fiscal restraint policy, including cuts in social spending, which reduced the program's impact, although its rules remained unchanged (TOMAZINI, 2023). During the Jair Bolsonaro administration (PSL/PL, 2019–2022), 'Bolsa Família' was suspended and later replaced by the 'Auxílio Brasil' program through Law Nº 14.284/2021, accompanied by changes to key policy features, including the suspension of conditionalities and modifications to eligibility and benefit rules. Created in response to the end of 'Auxílio Emergencial' (Emergency Aid), which had been established during the COVID-19 pandemic, this new program provided R$600.00 to eligible beneficiaries and operated without coordination with SUAS structures (COSTA et al., 2023; SORDI, 2023)[11]. Targeting errors and the inclusion of separate registrations for members of the same family are reported to have reduced the effectiveness of the program's management (COSTA et al., 2023).

At the beginning of Lula's third administration, in 2023, the 'Auxílio Brasil' program was reformulated and renamed 'Bolsa Família'. From that point onward, priority was given to making the necessary corrections in 'CadÚnico', restoring governance structures and instruments such as the IGD, ensuring income support for young children, and strengthening both intersectoral coordination and SUAS itself. The reach of 'Bolsa Família' expanded considerably over time. While the program served 8.7 million

[11]For a more detailed analysis of the institutional and political processes underlying these changes, see Tomazini (2023).

families in 2005, by August 2023, after nearly two decades of implementation, it was serving 21.1 million beneficiary families.

'Cartão Família Carioca' Program: a municipal alternative for income supplementation

In 2010, Marcelo Neri coordinated the implementation of a conditional cash transfer initiative in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro at the request of then-Mayor Eduardo Paes (PMDB, 2009–2012) (NERI, 2010a). 'Cartão Família Carioca' was conceived as a complement to 'Bolsa Família' – which, at the time, was widely regarded as a successful model for promoting social inclusion and citizenship (CAMPELLO and NERI, 2013) – and as a '2.0' version of the federal program (NERI, 2012).

One of the program's main objectives was to expand 'Bolsa Família's' reach in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro, an effort that, from a historical perspective, paralleled the Haddad administration's emphasis in São Paulo on strengthening 'CadÚnico' and increasing enrollment in 'Bolsa Família'. In Rio de Janeiro, the expectation was to reduce poverty by approximately 80% among families already receiving 'Bolsa Família' benefits (NERI, 2012), while also reducing the so-called 'targeting exclusion errors' (KERSTENETZKY, 2009; BARROS et al., 2010). The program aimed to increase 'Bolsa Família's' reach by 95% by 2012, using 2008 as the baseline year. At this 'period of conception', there was extensive cooperation among various agencies of the Rio de Janeiro municipal government, including the Municipal Chief of Staff's Office, the Pereira Passos Institute, the Municipal Secretariat of Education, and the Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance; the responsibility for designing the program was assigned to the FGV Center for Social Policies (CPS-FGV) (NERI, 2010a).

As a result of discussions among these actors, Decree Nº 32,887/2010 was enacted, defining the program's objective and establishing as its target population families with a 'per capita' household income at or below the poverty line who were already beneficiaries of 'Bolsa Família'. With regard to its implementation arrangement, unlike 'Bolsa Família' and 'Renda Mínima', the program relied on the Municipal Secretariat of Education to distribute benefit cards to beneficiary families. Decree Nº 33,567/2011 established the Integrated Government Management Committee for Inclusive Development and Poverty Eradication, which was tasked with developing an action plan containing a diagnosis of poverty in the city of Rio de Janeiro and proposals for its reduction. Within this framework, 'Cartão Família Carioca' was presented as the principal strategy for achieving this objective (NERI, 2012).

Between 2011 and 2012, new municipal decrees modified the program's design, most notably by introducing double benefits for families with children with disabilities and incentives for young people. In 2013, Decree Nº 37,621 made enrollment in the 'Saúde Presente Program' a requirement for families receiving 'Cartão Família Carioca'

benefits, thereby introducing a new health-related conditionality. Between 2012 and 2017, the program underwent a series of incremental changes while its overall structure remained unchanged (MEDEIROS, 2020). The municipal program was thus gradually institutionalized, and that happened in a context in which the positive effects of cash transfer programs on poverty reduction – particularly those of 'Bolsa Família' – had already been documented. Moreover, debates over public acceptance of such initiatives had become less polarized within Brazilian society (CAMPELLO and NERI, 2013; KERSTENETZKY, 2009).

During Eduardo Paes's second term in office (2013–2016), which marked the program's 'period of consolidation', 'Cartão Família Carioca' was maintained and expanded. During this period, Decree Nº. 42,713/2016 established the 'Família Carioca Development Index' (IDF-C)[12], inspired by the Family Development Index (IDF)[13], developed by Ricardo Paes de Barros within the federal government. Based on data from 'CadÚnico', the IDF-C is an instrument created to follow up on families and support poverty and extreme poverty reduction efforts. Thus, in addition to using instruments already employed by 'Bolsa Família', such as 'CadÚnico', 'Cartão Família Carioca' refined the composite indicator used to track the trajectories of people living in poverty.

Marcelo Crivella's administration (Republicanos, 2017–2020), maintained the program, indicating that it had already become a consolidated policy. An important institutional change was the creation of the Cash Transfer Programs Coordination Office, replacing the Cash Transfer Programs Unit, mirroring a change introduced in 2012 within São Paulo's Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance.

During Eduardo Paes's (DEM/PSD, 2021–2024) third term in office, the program regained momentum, shifting its focus to early childhood and families with children up to two years of age, with a target of serving 79,000 families. It is worth noting that the program served 146,000 families in 2012, the highest number recorded in its history. In 2023, the program served 58,000 families. Thus, unlike 'Bolsa Família', which expanded over the past decade, 'Cartão Família Carioca' remained relatively stable in normative terms but experienced a decline in both the number of beneficiary families and the average real value of the benefit, mirroring the trajectory of 'Renda Mínima' (see Chart 02, in the next section).

[12]This index, based on the IDF, incorporates the dimensions of health and rights violations in addition to its six original dimensions (see note 16).

[13]This household-level composite indicator synthesizes information on six fundamental dimensions of living conditions – absence of vulnerability, access to knowledge, access to work, availability of resources, child development, and housing conditions – without incorporating the health dimension. It was inspired by the Human Development Index (HDI) developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (BARROS et al., 2003).

Policy arrangements and circulations of actors across time and levels of government

To propose an 'explanatory configuration' organized along vertical and horizontal axes (BICHIR et al., 2024) and across different institutional and temporal contexts (BICHIR et al., 2024; FALLETI and LYNCH, 2009; PIERSON, 2004). We begin by characterizing the implementation arrangements (PIRES and GOMIDE, 2021), their main actors (BICHIR et al., 2024; CORTEZ and LOTTA, 2022; MARQUES and BICHIR, 2023), and their instruments (LASCOUMES and LE GALÈS, 2007). We then examine how these analytical elements help explain the processes of institutional change (MAHONEY and THELEN, 2009) that unfolded over time in response to local and national dynamics.

The main actors involved in the formulation of these programs frequently moved between municipal and federal government positions (BICHIR et al., 2024; CORTEZ and LOTTA, 2022; MARQUES and BICHIR, 2023). In the period preceding the creation of 'Bolsa Família' (2001–2004), key actors in the municipality of São Paulo included Aldaíza Sposati, then Municipal Secretary of Social Assistance, and, above all, Ana Fonseca and the team responsible for coordinating the 'Renda Mínima' program. The experiences and practices developed during this period were later incorporated into the formulation of Bolsa Família (CAMPELLO and NERI, 2013; HIRATA, 2006; LEITE and PERES, 2015). In the period following the creation of 'Bolsa Família', two actors played a central role in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro: Mayor Eduardo Paes, who promoted the creation of a municipal cash transfer program, and Marcelo Neri, who led the team responsible for designing 'Cartão Família Carioca' (NERI, 2010a).

'Renda Mínima', 'Bolsa Família', and 'Cartão Família Carioca' followed distinct institutional trajectories within the structure of public administration. The 'Renda Mínima' program was created in the Coordination Office of Priority Social Programs within the Secretariat of Finance and Economic Development. And, later transferred to the Secretariat of Development, Labor, and Solidarity, which brought it closer to cash transfer and poverty reduction policies. From 2005 onward, it became established within the Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance. By contrast, 'Bolsa Família' and 'Cartão Família Carioca' were established within social assistance agencies – the Ministry of Social Development and the Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance of Rio de Janeiro, respectively.

In the formative phase – the 'antechamber' period – of cash transfer policies, particularly during the 1990s, these programs were more closely linked to the sector of economic development and labor. The consolidation of SUAS in the early 2000s, when 'Renda Mínima' was structured and transferred to the social assistance sector, contributed to framing poverty as a public problem to be addressed primarily through social assistance (BICHIR, 2010; BRONZO and PRATES, 2012; LAVINAS, 1998). Thus, because 'Cartão Família Carioca' was created at a time when poverty was already

widely associated with social assistance, it was established within that sector of the municipality's administrative structure.

Chart 02. Summary of the implementation arrangements of cash transfer programs

	Renda Mínima (Municipal level)	Bolsa Família (Federal level)	Cartão Família Carioca (Municipal level)
Stated objectives of the programs	I - ensure the improvement of the living conditions of the family group through the provision of a cash benefit II - promote the family group's access to the social assistance service network within the municipality; III - encourage school attendance IV - strengthen family ties and community life	I – combat hunger through the direct transfer of income to beneficiary families; II - contribute to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty; and III - promote the development and social protection of families.	Improve the quality of life of families living in poverty and extreme poverty, conditional upon compliance with social conditionalities.
Target population	Families with a monthly gross 'per capita' household income of less than or equal to R$175.00 (2006)	Families whose monthly 'per capita' household income is equal to or less than R$218.00 (2023)	Families whose estimated 'per capita' household income corresponds to the poverty line of R$108.00 (2010)
Average nominal benefit value (figures in parentheses are expressed in 2023 prices)	• 2005: R$109,67 (R$307,13) • 2012: R$123,06 (R$231,37) • 2023: R$71,50	• 2005: R$64,84 (R$173,22) • 2012: R$135,84 (R$255,40) • 2023: R$686,04	• – • 2012: R$105,00 (R$197,00) • 2023: R$88,11
Average annual real growth rate of the benefit	-7,7%	+7,9%	-5,3%
Governance Structure	Between 2001 and 2004: Secretariat of Development, Labor, and Solidarity After 2004: Benefits Management Coordination Office of the Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance and Social Development Municipal Secretariat of Finance Banco do Brasil	Ministry of Social Development (MDS) Municipal Secretariats of Social Assistance Caixa Econômica Federal	Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance Municipal Chief of Staff's Office Municipal Secretariat of Education (distribution of benefit cards and monitoring of conditionalities) Municipal Secretariat of Health (monitoring of conditionalities) Caixa Econômica Federal

	Renda Mínima (Municipal level)	Bolsa Família (Federal level)	Cartão Família Carioca (Municipal level)
Management instruments	Banco de Dados do Cidadão (Citizen Database) Cadastro Único (between 2013 and 2016)	Cadastro Único Decentralized Management Index (IGD)	Cadastro Único Família Carioca Development Index (IDF-C)
Main Actors	Conception Arselino Tatto Eduardo Suplicy Marta Suplicy Aldaíza Sposati Ana Fonseca (RM e BFP) Florestan Fernandes Institute Center for the Study of Public Policy at UNICAMP (NEPP) Operationalization and Monitoring PRODAM (São Paulo municipal government's public information technology company) Municipal Secretariat of Finance Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance under the leadership of Luiz Francisquini. Banco do Brasil Municipal Secretariat of Education Municipal Secretariat of Health	Conception Ana Fonseca (Renda Mínima and Bolsa Família) Ricardo Paes de Barros Tereza Campello Marcelo Neri (evaluation of Bolsa Família under the Brasil Sem Miséria framework and of Cartão Família Carioca) Operationalization Department of Social Assistance Benefits of the National Secretariat of Social Assistance within the Ministry of Social Development Caixa Econômica Federal	Conception Eduardo Paes Marcelo Neri (PBF and CFC) Center for Social Policies [(CPS-FGV)] Operationalization Pereira Passos Institute Caixa Econômica Federal Instituto de Planejamento (Planning Institute) Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance Municipal Information Technology Company (IPLANRIO) Municipal Secretariat of Education Audit Firm Municipal Secretariat of Health

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In terms of policy instruments (LASCOUMES and LE GALÈS, 2007), these programs can be analyzed along three dimensions: target population definition, conditionalities, and management instruments. The programs define their target populations as follows:

- 'Renda Mínima' (2001): families living in poverty, with priority given to families 'not' receiving 'Bolsa Família' benefits;
- 'Bolsa Família' (2004): families living in extreme poverty;
- 'Cartão Família Carioca' (2010): families 'already' receiving 'Bolsa Família' benefits but still living below the extreme poverty line adopted by the municipality of Rio de Janeiro.

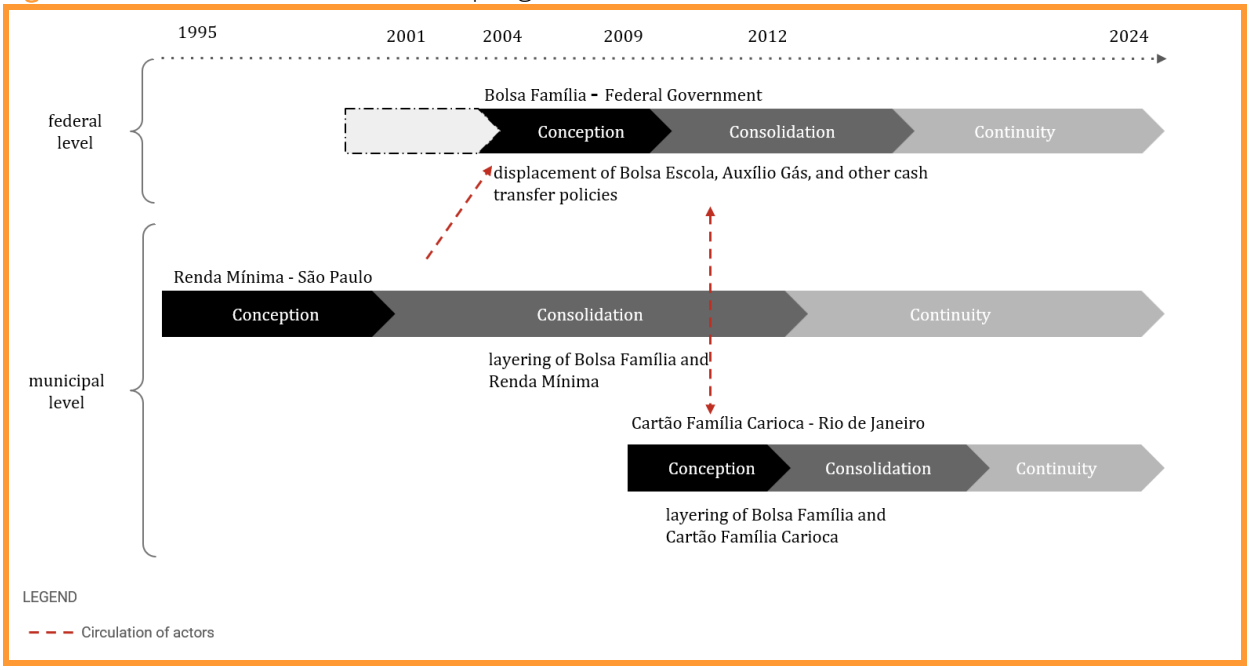
The three programs share a common social framing (LASCOUMES and LE GALÈS, 2007), centered on two main elements: 01. families and 02. situations of poverty and extreme poverty. All three programs include health- and education-related conditionalities, revealing a substantial degree of convergence despite the more stringent requirements imposed by 'Bolsa Família'. In all three cases, specific populations are targeted and conditionalities are imposed. These elements reflect the consolidation of a conception of targeted and conditional minimum income (BRONZO and PRATES, 2012), according to which resources should be directed to the poorest segments of the population, both to maximize fiscal and budgetary efficiency and to enhance poverty reduction outcomes. This conception helps shape poverty as a public issue and defines ways of interpreting and addressing it (LASCOUMES and LE GALÈS, 2007) through cash transfer policies in Brazil.

The analysis of management instruments, in turn, sheds light on the inertia effects of policy instruments (LASCOUMES and LE GALÈS, 2007). The case of 'Renda Mínima' illustrates this dynamic by revealing the persistence of the 'Banco de Dados do Cidadão' despite the pressures generated by the new federal institutional arrangement and the consolidation of the 'Cadastro Único' as the main instrument for managing social information in Brazil (BICHIR, 2016; 2010; BARROS et al., 2010). Although efforts have been made since 2013 to prioritize the inclusion of families in 'CadÚnico', driven by the Haddad administration's technical and political alignment with the federal government – a phenomenon also observed in other policy sectors (CORTEZ and LOTTA, 2022) – the two databases continue to be used simultaneously.

Created later as a complement to 'Bolsa Família', 'Cartão Família Carioca', in turn, relied on the informational infrastructure of 'CadÚnico' while developing its own instrument – the 'Família Carioca Development Index' –, thereby adapting the national instrument to local needs (BICHIR et al., 2024). It is thus worth noting that the autonomy of local governments to develop new instruments is shaped, to some extent, by the set of instruments already available within the policy domain (Figure 1).

In terms of governance arrangements (PIRES and GOMIDE, 2021), these programs are predominantly state-centered, with limited participation by social actors in their implementation. Even so, these arrangements involve multiple state actors. In addition to the agencies responsible for social assistance (the ministry or municipal secretariats), the health and education sectors monitor compliance with conditionalities, while public banks ('Banco do Brasil' and 'Caixa Econômica Federal') issue benefit cards and transfer benefits to participating families. In particular, it is noteworthy that, as with management instruments, the two programs in São Paulo operate in parallel: 'Renda Mínima' is administered through 'Banco do Brasil', whereas 'Bolsa Família' is administered through 'Caixa Econômica Federal'.

Figure 01. Timeline of cash transfer programs



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Finally, with regard to processes of institutional change[14], it is possible to identify both the layering of new rules and the displacement of existing ones, neither of which relies on exploiting ambiguities in preexisting rules and institutions (MAHONEY and THELEN, 2009). We argue that the creation of 'Bolsa Família' represents a process of institutional change through displacement, as it replaced the preexisting federal programs – 'Bolsa Escola', 'Bolsa Alimentação', 'Cartão Alimentação', and 'Auxílio Gás' – under a single, unified structure.

Because 'Renda Mínima' and 'Bolsa Família' in São Paulo, and 'Bolsa Família' and 'Cartão Família Carioca' in Rio de Janeiro, are implemented simultaneously, we argue that these cases represent processes of institutional change through layering. However, the processes of layering differ across the two cases. In Rio de Janeiro, the new institutions were built upon preexisting ones: 'Cartão Família Carioca' operates as a complement to 'Bolsa Família' and relies on the same instruments. In São Paulo, by contrast, the new institutions coexist side by side with the previous ones. 'Bolsa Família' can be understood as an additional institutional layer superimposed on 'Renda Mínima', since the two programs rely on different instruments ('CadÚnico' and 'Banco de Dados do Cidadão', as well as 'Caixa Econômica Federal' and 'Banco do Brasil', respectively) and because 'Renda Mínima' gives priority to families not covered by 'Bolsa Família'.

[14]The creation of 'Auxílio Emergencial' and the 'Auxílio Brasil' program, which replaced 'Bolsa Família', falls outside the scope of this article. Tomazini (2023) characterizes this process as a case of institutional change through the mechanism of drift (MAHONEY and THELEN, 2009).

Conclusion

Conditional cash transfer policies became consolidated in Brazil and contributed to reducing poverty in the country. However, this consolidation was the outcome of a long-term process spanning the past three decades. Although 'Renda Mínima' was formulated in a context marked by the expansion of debates on cash transfer policies in municipal governments during the 1990s, this was also a period of intense experimentation and political and theoretical debate. As a result, from its conception to its consolidation, the program was the subject of partisan political disputes and repeatedly transferred across different municipal secretariats. 'Cartão Família Carioca', in turn, was formulated in a context marked by the consolidation of cash transfer policies within the social assistance sector – particularly after the success of 'Bolsa Família' – and therefore was developed in a more stable institutional and political environment, without facing the same level of controversy and debate that characterized the trajectory of São Paulo's program.

Drawing on the characterization of implementation arrangements, their main actors, and policy instruments, the article has shown how local policies become connected over time to a highly regulated national policy such as 'Bolsa Família'. In some cases, they contribute to its formulation through experimentation and the consolidation of theoretical and political frameworks, as occurred with 'Renda Mínima'; in others, they build on existing institutional structures, seeking to complement and adapt them to local conditions, as in the case of 'Cartão Família Carioca'.

The article also showed that the temporal sequencing of policies matters because it influences the processes of incremental change in the implementation arrangements of each program. The analysis identified a series of gradual institutional changes involving both the institutional layering through the coexistence of different programs over time and the displacement of institutional rules through the consolidation of distinct federal programs into 'Bolsa Família'.

With regard to the explanatory configurations organized along the vertical and horizontal axes, as well as across different institutional and temporal contexts, the article highlights the importance of the circulation of actors across different levels of government in policy design and formulation, as this circulation facilitates the diffusion of theoretical and conceptual debates, as well as policy designs. In the period of consolidation and implementation of these policies, the article highlights the importance of implementation arrangements and policy instruments in institutionalizing particular conceptions and modes of policy operation at both the federal and municipal levels.

Understanding the institutionalization of public policies requires examining their long-term trajectories, which are shaped by interactions among different levels of government and by the circulation of actors carrying distinct theoretical and political

repertoires, as well as different worldviews. The institutionalization of conditional cash transfer programs in Brazil did not begin with 'Bolsa Família'. The 1990s saw the emergence of several municipal initiatives, some of which remain in operation today, such as 'Renda Mínima'. Nor did this trajectory end with 'Bolsa Família', as shown both by attempts to replace it – as occurred with the 'Auxílio Brasil' program – and by efforts to build on and expand existing policies, as illustrated by the experience of 'Cartão Família Carioca'.

Translated by Karin Blikstad

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Appendix

Detailed Methodology for Data Collection and Analysis

The article "Institutionalization Trajectories of Cash Transfer Programs in Brazil: Renda Mínima, Bolsa Família, and Cartão Família Carioca" is based on a broader research project[15] that employed standardized instruments for data collection and analysis. An extensive analysis was conducted of documents collected from municipal archives, public agency websites (including Transparency Portals, the Municipal Official Gazette, among others), and requests submitted under the Access to Information Law[16]. A review of news coverage on cash transfer programs was also conducted, along with a literature review of the municipal programs Renda Mínima and Cartão Família Carioca and the federal Bolsa Família program. As part of the research project "Public Policy Trajectories in Contemporary Brazil (1989-2023)", data collection, analysis, and the preparation of research reports were carried out between July 2023 and February 2024.

Given the project's temporal scope, which spans the period from 1989 to 2023 and begins with the first municipal administrations following Brazil's redemocratization, the following documents were collected: Planos Plurianuais (Multi-Year Plans); annual budget laws; budget execution reports; Programas de Metas (municipal administrations' planning instrument); laws, decrees, ordinances, and normative instructions; policy documents, sectoral plans, guidance manuals, and technical guidelines; implementation guides and manuals; monitoring and evaluation reports; and data on program beneficiaries, coverage, and reach.

The information requested under the Access to Information Law included:

- Program-specific budget allocations.
- Main objectives, guidelines, publications, and monitoring and evaluation reports for each program.
- Number of beneficiaries of each program.
- The administrative structure and institutional arrangements of each program.
- A list of the principal officials responsible for each program.

For the municipal programs (Renda Mínima and Cartão Família Carioca), data collection covered the period from each program's inception (1995 and 2010,

15"Trajetórias de políticas públicas no Brasil recente (1989-2023)". Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (Fapesp). Process 2013/07616-7.

16Data collection also included semi-structured interviews conducted using a common interview guide. However, these interviews are not analyzed in the present article.

respectively) through July 2023. For the federal program (Bolsa Família), data collection covered the federal administrations from 2015[17] through July 2023.

The literature review on the municipal cases identified the following articles, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations:

- Renda Mínima: Fabbri & Ribeiro (2007), Hirata (2006), Leite & Peres (2015), and Paulics (2003; 2004).
- Cartão Família Carioca: Dias (2023), Medeiros (2020), Moraes & Machado (2017), Neri (2010a; 2010b; 2011a; 2011b; 2012; 2015), and Silva (2015).

The collected data were organized into research reports covering the following dimensions: objectives, goals, and target population; institutional arrangements; financing structure, budgetary and expenditure decisions, and the evolution of financial resources; key actors, decision-makers, and managers; principal regulations; program design and implementation; major political developments; and outcomes achieved.

Finally, the programs were analyzed in this article according to the following theoretical dimensions:

- Implementation arrangements (PIRES and GOMIDE, 2021);
- Policy instruments (LASCOUMES and LE GALÈS, 2007);
- The circulation of actors across levels of government (BICHIR et al., 2024; CORTEZ and LOTTA, 2022; MARQUES and BICHIR, 2023);
- Time (FALLETI and LYNCH, 2009; PIERSON, 2004).

[17] Methodological decisions of the broader research project.