Mexico’s Targeted and Conditional Transfers: Between Oportunidades and Rights

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Oportunidades, Mexico’s conditional cash transfer programme, which is linked to the education of children of a certain age and provision of health services, is often described as an outstanding success. In 2011 it will cover 5.8 million families. But Oportunidades warrants a critical analysis for its “conditions” deny any autonomy to the poor and the scheme is based on a system of rewards and punishment which assumes that the poor do not know what they want. Its record in reducing income poverty has also been limited. More can be learnt from recent modifications that cover the hitherto excluded, the very young children and the senior citizens. However, it is new proposals of a basic income transfer – universal, to individuals and without conditions – that hold out more promise.

Since the 1980s there has been a profound change in Latin America not only in the characteristics of the regime of accumulation but also in the social regime. That is, both economic and social policy are being transformed. In a way, the turn towards pro-market policies has corresponded with a turn towards targeted and conditional cash transfer programmes (TCCTP) in social policy.

Regime of Accumulation and Social Regime

“What are we talking about when we refer to the neo-liberal regime of accumulation?”1 Some authors, such as Luis Arizmendi, would rather speak about cynical capitalism, recovering the profoundly anti-liberal and freedom restricting sense of the current model. Others such as Toni Domenech refer to the model as counter-reformed capitalism, putting the emphasis on its intention to rebuild the relations of accumulation, eliminating all of the de-commodifying factors that characterised the Fordist-Keynesian regime, particularly in the welfare state in Europe. Regardless of whether it is called cynical, counter-reformed or de-regulated, all of which it is, the current regime, which we can call neo-liberal for the sake of simplicity, has been the dominant form of reproduction of the capital system in the last 30 years.

The genesis of this regime is the crisis of the Fordist-Keynesian model and the growing loss of functionality of the model after 30 years of unquestioned dominance in the western world. The global ascent of neo-liberalism, which was even called the only thought, was possible because it provided a coherent response to the crisis that accumulation was undergoing at the time.

Keynesianism had been an articulated response to a gigantic crisis of over-production of merchandise and insufficient demand, while neo-liberalism was the response to a crisis characterised by a drop in incomes and insufficient stimuli for capital investments. Keynesianism solved the fundamental problems that at the time stopped the sustained growth of the world economy – the lack of dynamism of internal demand. Because of this, in the Fordist-Keynesian model mass production and mass consumption were articulated in the framework of the so-called mass society. Its central characteristic was work as a demand factor and its exploitation was based on sustained increases in productivity in a context of full employment and social networks for security, protection and social inclusion.

However, a time arrived when the Fordist-Keynesian model lost functionality. The unions became very strong and full employment allowed them to negotiate advantageous conditions; social conquests became institutionalised and expanded to other social groups within a perspective of universality; a strong fiscal load was maintained to finance the welfare state and the share of salaries and wages in the structure of income distribution in society increased. It is no coincidence that the call to replace the Fordist-Keynesian regime happened during the discussion on the fiscal crisis of the State and the need to reduce taxes on businesses as well as any obstacle that inhibited investment. Work, in consequence, no longer had to be seen mainly as a factor of demand but as a production cost. Unlike demand that had to be strengthened and encouraged, work as a production cost had to be reduced systematically.

Just as there was a very radical shift in the regime of accumulation in the last 30 years, the same happened with the social policy model. If, using the Esping-Andersen terminology, the Fordist-Keynesian model was matched with a welfare state that oscillated between the social-democrat model, and the corporate model, then the neo-liberal regime is matched by a residual-liberal social policy model.

The central features of the social policy model of the neo-liberal regime of accumulation have been privatisation and re-commodification to varying degrees and scales, of social rights, particularly education, healthcare, housing and pension and...
retirement benefits; the abandonment of the universality logic of rights and the elevation of targeting from a tool to a structuring principle, the search for the supremacy within the regime of the market over the State and of private over public, along with the growing shift (both active and passive) of public responsibilities to families. Likewise, there has been a reduction in the field of social policy, separating it from rights and inscribing it into targeted and conditional programmes aimed at eradicating poverty.

Poverty and Targeted and Conditional Transfers

Within this context of a paradigm shift for the creation and execution of social policy, the subject of income distribution stopped being mentioned and social policy was reduced to a single objective, the so-called “fight against poverty”. There was a virtual displacement of the subject of inequality and everything was focused on poverty and, in particular on extreme poverty.

Since the 1980s, at least in Latin America, debates have sprung up on how to measure poverty, including on the minimalistic threshold of the World Bank, $1.25 per day. Beyond the World Bank, poverty has been measured predominantly by unidimensional criteria, as poverty of monetary income, that is also set at a very low level. When the measurements have been made from a multidimensional perspective, incorporating unmet basic needs, there has been a strong debate on the thresholds to determine when those needs have been met. Finally, only in exceptional cases has the lack of time been incorporated in the dimensions of income and basic needs as an element of poverty.²

The wave of measurements in Latin America has been based on low satisfaction thresholds that imply in terms of policies, that with relatively little public intervention and a small shift in resources there could be important reductions in poverty. Poverty measured with limited criteria would correspond to a low intensity social policy with a small fiscal impact.

Here, the TCCTP that proliferated during the decade of the 1990s in Latin America, helped by promotion form the multilateral lending organisations, particularly the World Bank and the Inter American Development Bank (IADB), made their appearance, making them the desirable policy model for the region.³ It is no coincidence that today in Latin America, in accordance with the non-contributing social programme database created by the Social Development Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean,⁴ there are TCCTP in 18 countries which cover 25 million families (around 113 million people), or around 10% of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean.⁵

However, it is very interesting to note that according to the same sources despite their large coverage, spending on TCCTP represents only 0.40% of the GDP of the countries in the region. According to the proponents of these programmes, it seems that there is a major achievement in being able to cover a large number of poor people, by spending few resources and yet obtaining big results. It would be possible, according to this logic, to fight poverty with very few public resources.

It is important to clarify, however, that between the different TCCTP, in the region there are differences both in coverage and in design for the fulfilment of the conditions (strong in Mexico and flexible in Brazil), but they all share common traits:

• They are targeted with the known problems of both inclusion and exclusion errors.
• They demand that the beneficiaries adhere to certain conditions.
• They are transfers to families, not people.
• The transfers are small and there is an income ceiling that cannot be crossed.
• Their behaviour is pro-cyclical and the transfers are strongly determined by the evolution of economic growth.
• They lack a preventive dimension with regard to insufficient income.
• They favour childhood as a subject of attention (particularly those in the schoolgoing ages).
• They are not conceived and designed as rights.
• They are not permanent or stable, but rather transitory.

With these characteristics, TCCTP are structured around an anthropology of poverty, the poor, and a set of social representations about them that lead to the inclusion in these programmes of the idea of conditions. The World Bank sponsored a study (Fiszbein and Schady 2009) that includes a strong defence of the idea of conditions in the chapter “The Economic Rationale for Conditional Cash Transfers”. There, the authors formulate the idea of the “microfoundations of paternalism” (ibid: 50). According to the study, a reason to justify the introduction of conditions is that the poor do not always behave exactly as could be expected from rational agents with perfect information.

What imperfect information, myopia, and incomplete altruism have in common, for our purposes, is that they may cause a family’s privately chosen level of investment in human capital to be too low, compared with its own ‘true’ private optimal. If they are pervasive, then these distortions in private decision-making provide some contemporary support to the time-honoured notions that governments may ‘know better’ what is privately good for poor people than do the poor themselves, at least in some realms (Fiszbein and Schady 2009: 50).

Another reason stated is that conditioning the transfers to ‘good behaviour’ practices supports the cooperation of taxpayers and the more affluent members of society in funding these programmes. Again:

The second main conceptual argument for conditioning a cash transfer is that governments typically do not behave like textbook benevolent dictators. Policy decisions generally result from decision-making processes that involve voting, lobbying, bureaucratic and interagency bargaining, and a variety of other forms of what one broadly might call political economy. Under some circumstances, conditioning cash transfers on ‘good behaviour’ may increase public support for them, making the programme either feasible or better-endowed (ibid: 50).

After decades of hammering home the theory of rational expectations or the school of public choice, of designing economic and social policies on the hypothesis of homo economicus and considering that individual economic decisions are based on rational decisions for cost minimisation and benefit maximisation, the 2009 World Bank study and the design of the TCCTP established an exception. The poor do not behave in a rational manner, cannot make correct decisions, do not know what they really need, and must thus be guided. Should they fail to meet the conditions set forth for their own
benefit, they must be punished with exclusion from the cash transfer programme.

Since the dominant social mentality is that the poor make bad decisions and tend towards vagrancy, irresponsibility, laziness and vice, it is necessary in order to keep taxpayers from complaining about these programmes to include conditions for political and argumentative reasons. There should be no confusion, TCCTP are not part of welfare, they are part of workfare. The proponents of TCCTP, however, have failed to demonstrate that the improvements that are observed in some programmes in school attendance or attendance to health clinics are derived from the conditions rather than the improved income of the family due to the transfers.

In the studies about the conditions there is no evidence for the supposed link between the transfer and the associated conditions. The introduction of conditions seems much more linked to political reasons, of the punitive perspective and of the logic that binds together aid and control (see also Lo Vuolo 2010).

As Hanlon, Barrientos and Hulme (2010) have noted in their comparative study on conditional transfers in the world.

Despite the importance of conditions, their effectiveness has not been studied separately from the programmes that include them, and it tends simply to be assumed that they work. In fact, there is almost no evidence that conditions make any major difference (p 131).

Likewise, they highlight the worrying fact that in Latin America, governments assign millions of dollars to the administration of the conditions without rigorously analysing how much they contribute to programmes and if the said contributions match the cost involved. Additionally, conditions cannot be considered neutral: in studies regarding Mexico (Hanlon et al 2010: 133), it has been noted that punitive conditions penalise those who most need the transfers, as those in the most desperate situations are those who cannot meet the conditions, and thus lose out on the transfers.

As has been pointed out elsewhere (Yanes 2010), behind the technical reasons there is a political reason that sees the poor from a colonialist logic of poor Indians who are ignorant and burdened with many children, and the logic of domination that sees the poor as part of the so-called dangerous classes. Thus, with the introduction of conditions and their theoretical justification, the logic of a citizenry with demandable rights and a state forced to materialise them is shifted towards a logic of a state with programmes that demand that the “beneficiaries” fulfil so-called co-responsibilities, as the conditions are called.

**Oportunidades, a Model to Follow?**

Oportunidades is the federal government’s main social programme; its predecessor was Progresa. Oportunidades consists of a conditional cash transfer that includes scholarships for children as well as a small amount of financial support for food and energy. It also has a nutritional supplement for small children and pregnant women. The scholarships increase proportionately with school advancement and they are larger for girls than for boys. The conditions to get the cash transfer are school attendance, regular medical check-ups and participation at self-care courses. The majority of the beneficiaries live in rural areas but the urban component has been growing rapidly. Currently, Oportunidades covers 5.8 million households in Mexico.

The Oportunidades programme in Mexico has been promoted by the World Bank and the Inter American Development Bank as the emblematic example of poverty fighting programmes and both institutions, have suggested to the governments in the region that they recreate the programme in their own countries. As we previously mentioned, regarding the ECLAC data there are currently 18 countries with such programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean. It can be said that, with Oportunidades, Mexico became an exporter of social technology.

It is not about denying that the programme, previously called Progresa, that has been progressively applied in Mexico during the last 11 years does not have positive effects on the incomes of families especially in the short term, and that it does not help in improving some social indicators. Because of its continuity, coverage and the outlay of resources, it would be impossible for this not to be the case.

It is about deciding whether Oportunidades or TCCTP are the right way to overcome poverty in a sustained manner. It is about deciding if their central hypothesis that poverty is a consequence of a lack of human capital in people is correct; if it is true that the poor require conditions and a system of rewards and punishment in order to go to school and take care of their health; if the instrumentation and operation of the programme extends the enjoyment of social rights and builds citizenship.

For 2011 the programme has a register of 5.8 million families and a budget of $4.8 billion. On an average, each household receives a transfer equivalent to $827 annually or $69 monthly. The amount of support for families varies heavily, but the ceiling, when there are scholarships involved for high school studies, is $203 a month per household. Regardless of the fact that its budget is meaningful, Oportunidades represents a very small fraction of the federal budget, only around 1.68%.

The programme has been modified in recent years, with new components that have partially altered its initial design. In 2005, a monthly $20 transfer for people aged 70 or above in the context of the “The Countryside Can’t Take Any More” mobilisation and the impact of the introduction in Mexico City of the Universal Senior Citizen Pension programme.

The introduction of the senior citizen dimension was a large shift (even as it maintained targeting and conditionality), and a product of social and political pressure. It represented an adjustment in the objective of breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty – the heart of the Oportunidades programme consists of scholarships for children aged between 9 and 21 years. The new programme was no longer about addressing the poverty of today’s children but about today’s senior citizens. However, this aspect of the programme is almost closed due to the existence of a programme of transfers for senior citizens called Setenta y Más (“Seventy and Over”).

Likewise there have been two new modifications in recent years. In 2007 the so-called energy component was added, which consists of a cash transfer to homes in order to compensate for spending on energy sources (power, coal, wood, fuel or...
candles) which, although it could be included in the nutritional dimension of the programme, goes beyond it.

The most important change, however, happened in 2010. A new transfer was added, called Apoyo Infantil Vivir Mejor (“Live Better Child Support”) which consists of a small monthly transfer of little over $8 for every child under 9, with a ceiling of three transfers per family. This transfer, even if it is very small, alters the idea of a programme built on a logic of increasing human capital, understood fundamentally as an increase in school enrolment.

Until 2010, the cash incentives in Oportunidades began in the third grade and at nine years of age. This had been strongly criticised as it was noted that the families with the youngest children, those under 5, are those most in need of support, but the response was that the programme could not be built on incentives for increasing birth rates, assuming that a cash incentive, the poor would have more children in order to get more transfers.

There is no serious evidence that supports this belief and, to the contrary, there are historical examples that point in the opposite direction, as are the union conquests in South American countries called Asignaciones Familiares, in which workers have additional economic support per child until the child reaches adult age, 18 years and this has not had an impact on birth rates.

It can be said that the refusal to support families with very young children is based more on prejudice than on scientific evidence. But with the manifestation of the world crisis in 2008 as a food crisis amongst poor families, the federal government in Mexico decided to alter the policy and added transfers for children under 9.

Oportunidades, without renouncing its nature of conditional and targeted transfers, has had to introduce adjustments that modify its initial concept of catering only to children of school age, of having as its strategic objective only the breaking of intergenerational transmission of poverty and of only granting transfers for children from 9 to 22. Because of the social and political dynamic, the programme now involves children under 9 and adults over 70, first within Oportunidades and later through Setenta y Más. And we are not talking about small budgets. In the case of Apoyo Infantil Vivir Mejor, the budget exceeded $649 million and for senior citizens, through Setenta y Más, the budget reaches $1.1 billion. Both new components, small children and senior citizens, make up about 25% of the programme’s budget.

Setenta y Más

The case of Setenta y Más is very interesting because it expresses the transition from an individually targeted and conditional programme to a territorially targeted one that has no conditions. By 2010, the programme had incorporated a little over 2.3 million people in rural areas and small cities. Strictly speaking, Setenta y Más was not a programme designed by the federal government, but decided from within Congress as a response to peasant mobilisations that demanded a rural pension. It is a programme with universal coverage for all people over 70 residing in localities of up to 30,000 inhabitants and, contrary to Oportunidades it has no co-responsibilities or conditions.

Setenta y Más is a large programme in both coverage and resources whose purpose is to keep growing by increasing the size of the locations where it applies, but which does not receive either the attention or the publicity that Oportunidades does. In Mexico, the country offered as an example of successful programmes such as Oportunidades, there are also schemes built with a different logic (with territorial targeting and no conditions), which shows that there are different paths for transfer policies, and also that it is possible to go from a model of individual targeting to territorial targeting as a halfway point towards universality, and from conditional transfers to unconditional transfers. All of this within the same country, Mexico, and within the same government agency, the Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (Ministry of Social Development).

It cannot be a coincidence then that policymakers worldwide have widespread knowledge about Oportunidades but little to no idea about Setenta y Más.

The reading of the operational rules (Diario Oficial de la Federacion 2010) for the programme permits one to also dissect, in the chapter on the obligations of beneficiary families, the logic of transmission of responsibilities towards families, particularly women. Some obligations of families: “Support the scholarship holders in primary education so that they regularly attend class and take better advantage of their education” (ibid: 30). It is a very vague meaning, to support them so that they attend class, but it is a very delicate thing to make families (understood to be the mother), responsible for the improvement of schooling, which should be the objective and sole responsibility of the school system and not the mother’s obligation.

Likewise, it is stated in the same chapter that another obligation is to “receive and consume nutritional supplements delivered at the healthcare unit for children and pregnant women” (ibid: 30). This establishes the amazing obligation of having to consume the supplements that are delivered regardless of will, taste or flavour. There is also an obligation with respect to senior citizens that remain in Oportunidades rather than in Setenta y Más. The obligation is of “delivering to the senior citizens the monetary support intended for them” (ibid: 30). As the mother of small children in the home is usually the titular receiver of the transfers in Oportunidades, the absurd situation of the money intended for the senior citizens being delivered to the daughter who, in turn, must deliver it to the senior citizen, ensues. This introduces a lamentable relationship of power within the family nucleus in which the senior citizen is rendered child-like and has no direct access to resources that are his by right, and so depends completely on the intervention of the daughter.

Even worse, according to the same operational rules, the support is terminated when “the senior citizen leaves the household” (ibid: 33). So, the possibility of an
independent life or at least a separate house is negated. The senior citizen under Oportunidades must get her support from the daughter and will lose it should she live in a different home.

This serves to illustrate the contrast between being a senior citizen under Oportunidades and under Setenta y Más, two federal transfer programmes aimed at the same group of people. In the first case, the citizen receives a $25 monthly transfer, in the second, it is $40. In the first programme there are conditions, in the second there are none. In the first he must get the money through his daughter, in the second he gets it directly. In the first programme she loses her income if she leaves the household, in the second she only loses it if she moves to a location with over 30,000 inhabitants.

But the deeper debate on Oportunidades and the TCCTP resides in the sturdiness of the central hypothesis which states that to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty in order to access better employment, the accumulation of so-called human capital is required, mainly through the educational system.

Or if, for example, the correct starting point is that education is a positional asset in which everyone moves and, thus, even if the poorer sectors have access to more years of education, the more favoured also have more schooling which maintains the gap between the two groups in quantity and also in terms of quality.

In the same manner in the central hypothesis in Oportunidades that more schooling is equated with better income is the supposition that the labour market functions in a quasi-perfect manner and that there is a high positive correlation between schooling and income. Likewise, it is assumed that compensation is established fundamentally in individual negotiations between an employer and the holder of different capabilities and the market will adequately reward the skills and knowledge obtained during the educational period. So labour markets are fundamentally exchanges between individuals, and not large social conglomerates in which state regulation (via a salary policy, for example) or collective bargaining (via the pressure exerted by unions) are not relevant issues.

In his analysis of the link between educational poverty and income poverty as a central hypothesis of the Progresa and Oportunidades programmes, Julio Boltvinik (2004) analyses the evolution of both poverty rates in Mexico and highlights the argument that:

Several issues must be raised. First, while educational poverty in adults declined rapidly during these 30 years (1969-2000), poverty of income was basically constant (from 72.6% in 1968 to 68.5% in 2000). Comparing only the end-points, the hypothesis that a low educational level is the main cause of income poverty (which is behind the design of Progresa) should be rejected. In the period 1980-2000, we found that while equivalent educational poverty declined by 60% from 43.7% to 26.3%, income poverty increased by 41% from 48.5% in 1981 to 68.5% in 2000.

At least in the recent history of Mexico we can state that the evolution of income in homes (and thus income poverty) is not associated with the educational level of the adults. Thus, if Oportunidades had been created in 1980 it would have lost its central bet: the children and youths who were studying in 1980 and in subsequent years would not have been able to access productive activities and well remunerated employment (Boltvinik 2004: 345).

In addition to the central matter of the link between schooling, education and income, the TCCTP also suffer from very important vulnerabilities in their aim to combat poverty and break its intergenerational transmission. Amongst them are the exclusion errors that are part of all targeted programmes, ex post intervention only for the identified poor and thus a lack of a preventive dimension to keep the at risk population from becoming poor. It assumes that the fight against poverty is a straight-line and those who leave it never come back and thus the policies and programmes ignore those who go over the line or threshold of poverty.

However, one of the largest vulnerabilities is the dependence on the effect and impact of these programmes on the evolution of the economic cycle. They are pro-cyclical programmes that get results, mostly modest ones, in the growth phase of the economic cycle and lose, in one or two years of crisis, all that was gained in the previous years. Seen as midterm trends we cannot say that in Mexico and Oportunidades, we have reached a firm and sustained tendency that has found points of no return in the fight against poverty.

There is, on the contrary, more of a roller-coaster dynamic, with slow ascents and sudden falls that negate a firm and sustained diminution of poverty. It seems more to head in the direction of a more sustained diminution in the intensity of poverty. The lasting effect is that the poor are less poor, but there are no fewer poor, and the fall into poverty is an ever present danger that is highly dependent on the economic cycle.

**Income as a Right of Citizenship: An Alternative View**

I have highlighted the fact that in Mexico, at the federal level there are two coexisting models for cash transfers – two programmes – in terms of the size of the funds they administer and their coverage: Oportunidades and Setenta y Más. But these alternatives are present not only in Mexico City and not only at the federal level.

In Mexico, the Mexico City government has a law, signed in 2003 and reformed in 2008, that establishes as a right a universal pension for all citizens over the age of 68 who have lived in the city for the previous three years. It is an unconditional transfer that by law cannot be less than half a monthly minimum wage. Currently, the pension is equivalent to $75 per person and covers 520,000 people.

Likewise in Bolivia, the government of Evo Morales built the Renta Dignidad which is also a universal unconditional pension for those over 60 years of age and which is financed partly from the income from hydrocarbon sales. In Argentina, Cristina Fernandez’s government practically made the asignaciones familiares universal by establishing them for the children of those outside the formal labour market as well as the unemployed. It consists of a monthly transfer of $50 per child until she is 18 years old and even if it has a small conditional component (which affects 20% of the transfer) it can be said that it leans much more towards the logic of universality and unconditionality than towards TCCTP logic.

This means that in Latin America not all programmes are of the Oportunidades or TCCTP type. It is relevant that ECLAC, in its 2010 report, *Time for Equality: Closing Gaps – Opening Trails*, proposes the need to advance towards a system of redistributive citizen cash transfers with an...
emphasis on homes with small children, senior citizens and the unemployed.

ECLAC (2010b) argues:

There are, on the other hand, good reasons to defend a basic system of partial guaranteed incomes. The first, as has been previously mentioned, is the equality of social rights that concerns the citizens. The homes that face situations of exogenous shock or biographical changes and that are affected by poverty and vulnerability tend to be de-capitalised beyond the effect of the shock, precisely because they lack guaranteed minimums, or at least instruments that soften the flow of income in the face of adverse situations. In practical terms, and even more in ethical terms, avoiding the collapse of the economies of homes that represent a good part of the population and Latin American production is as necessary as avoiding the collapse of the financial systems (by subsidising its deficiencies) (p 208).

Because of all of this it is urgently needed to question the underlying anthropology of the conditional cash transfer programmes. It is necessary to make the existence of a point of view with a strong classist and racist content regarding the poor and poverty that is evident in conditional programmes.

**Poor as Citizens with Rights**

It is fundamental to centre the discussion in other terms so that a logic of emancipation that does not burden the poor with obligations but rather sees them as citizens with rights and free of poverty can be opened. Social policy – and particularly cash transfers – will then cease to be an instrument of social control and become an instrument of citizenship building merely a mediation for the materialisation of demandable rights. It is thus evident that the debate regarding the best way to carry out income transfers to the population is, at its heart, political and axiomatic – and not technical as it is often presented. More precisely, it is a debate regarding the content and manner of executing the rights of the citizenry.

It is this dispute regarding the content where the Basic Income (BI) proposal, which is starting to make inroads in Latin America and other regions, separates itself from the TCCTP. The BI initiative, by being unconditional, universal, guaranteed, individual and lifelong is shown to be a powerful alternative as it overcomes the problems derived from inclusion and exclusion errors common to targeting; it centres on the person and not on the family and it permits a reordering of social relations based on the expansion of autonomy and individual freedoms.

By implying an important movement of resources, BI would force progressive fiscal reforms that would imply important redistributive processes. Likewise, BI constitutes a way to overcome poverty, not just to contain it or diminish it in small or transitory proportions, and, above all, it creates a preventive dimension so that those that cease to be poor do not fall back into poverty. Because of the amounts that BI would involve, it would provide an effective material support that will permit people to meet basic needs and make life projects. Because it would be a right and a social guarantee, the dimension of citizenship would be broadened and people could escape the vices of patronage, insecurity and uncertainty that are common in TCCTP.

Beyond all of this, the BI initiative there is a proposal for a society and a concept of rights of citizenship that is different from that of the TCCTP. It is not only a technically powerful proposal in effects and results, it is not only an alternative course of action for current social policies and poverty fighting policies (although it is also that), but rather it is part of an emancipation project that seeks to end the social subordination derived from material dependence and the incapability of having a guaranteed material existence. It is because of this that the BI initiative is inscribed within the movement of emergent human rights and is proposed as a freeing process which, if it materialises, would represent for human society a civilising leap, a break point in which the fear and lash of hunger would cease to be the glue of daily life, the invisible hand of social order.

### Notes

1. Several of the ideas mentioned here can be found in Yanes (2010).
2. Such is the case of the “Método de Medición Integral de la Pobreza” (“Integrated Poverty Measurement Method”) developed in Mexico by Julio Boltvinik Kalinka.
3. Several of the ideas in this section have also been developed in an unedited text by Lo Vuolo et al (2011).
4. ECLAC (2010a).
5. The programmes with the largest number of beneficiaries in absolute terms are the Bolsa Familia in Brazil (52 million people, around 50% of all TCCTP beneficiaries in the region), Oportunidades in Mexico (27 million) and Familias en Acción in Colombia (12 million). By the way, according to the ECLAC database, El Bono de Desarrollo Humano in Ecuador covers the largest percentage of a country’s population (44%) ECLAC (2010b).
6. All calculations are based on an exchange rate of 12 Mexican pesos for one US dollar.
7. On November 2007, within the framework of the Forum of Cultures held in Monterrey, Mexico, a declaration titled “Declaración universal de derechos humanos emergentes” was approved. In the third point of its first article one can read: “The right to basic income, which assures all individuals, independently of their age, sex, sexual orientation, civil status or employment status, the right to live under worthy material conditions. To such end, the right to an unconditional, regular, monetary income paid by the state and financed by fiscal reforms, is recognised as a right of citizenship, to each resident member of society, independently of their other sources of income, and being adequate to allow them to cover their basic needs.”

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