

The hidden face of income transfer programs for young people in Brazil

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ABSTRACT

Based on a broader analysis of the nature of recent public policies directed at youths in Brazil and on the conflicting orientations inherent in this field, this paper discusses the presuppositions contained in three public programs currently being implemented in the country: the Young Agent Project, the Voluntary Civil Service Program and the Work-Income Allowance Program. After an overview of each of these programs, including various aspects where they diverge, the analysis focuses on the paradoxes and ambiguities underlining their common format: the transfer of income linked to some kind of return commitment by the youngsters, usually a return to or continuation of schooling and the realization of socioeducational or community-type activities. While acknowledging the beneficial side of access to income, the paper warns of the possibility of disseminating new forms of domination based on the adoption of this model in public policies directed at youngsters.

Keywords: Youth; Public policies; Socioeducational programs; Income transfer.

This article looks to analyze some of the guiding premises of public social programs targeted at impoverished young people in Brazil and involving income transfer that include, as a consequence, the demand for a compulsory *return commitment*.¹ The choice of the type of initiative stems from a number of common features of these actions, irrespective of the diversity of approaches and actors involved, which raise new analytic issues for the field of youth studies. These programs look to provide *some kind of remuneration* directly to the youth sectors that comprise the focus of the actions; this income is generally referred to as an 'allowance.' This is provided for a variable period of time, but its main sense does not reside simply in the financial benefit – the transferred income – but in the set of targets and actions anticipated in this allowance, configured in the idea of a '*contrapartida*' or return commitment.

Young people and public policies

Over the last ten years, clear differences can be seen to have arisen in the public debate surrounding the theme of young people in Brazil. Not only has a fresh interest emerged in investigating the topic in the human sciences, initiatives aimed at this sector have spread on the part of all kinds of government and civil society actors. In 1995, in a survey of young people in Brazil, Rua claimed that youth policies were located in the field of “the state of things,” meaning that this segment was not the object of specific actions from governments, particularly at federal level (see Rua 1998). However, even at this time it was recognized that non-governmental organizations were busy working with young people, especially in the culture area, despite the fragmented and discontinuous nature of the projects (Castro & Abramovay 1998; Sola 1998).

At federal level, the presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002) marked an important shift through the initiatives coming out of a ministries, though without any coordination of these actions towards developing an array of public policies targeted at youngsters (see Sposito & Carrano 2003; Castro & Abramovay 2003). At the end of his mandate and during the period of transition to the new administration, the theme’s public profile was further amplified with an intense debate undertaken in particular by civil society organizations whose work was directed towards young people.

The Lula government that took office in 2003 also recognized the importance of the issue by setting up an inter-ministerial group to discuss youth policies, designed to formulate a set of directives for action (Novaes 2005). A number of initiatives were seen at the start of the Lula mandate, such as the First Job Program and, more recently, the creation of the Pro-Youth Program,² along with the institution of the National Youth Office and the National Youth Council.³

At municipal government level during the same period, principally in centre-left administrations from 1997 onwards, actions began to be implemented that went as far as to propose new institutional designs, as an expression of two approaches: a better coordination of initiatives, which had generally remained isolated, and a proposal bring the municipal executives closer to the young residents of local towns through the creation of new channels of dialogue (see Sposito & Carrano 2003; Sposito 2003).

The contact and impact of these initiatives – federal and municipal – vary across the country and do not necessarily reflect significant changes within a public agenda that takes young people and their rights as a theme. They signalize, however, important shifts that may comprise new arenas within the public sphere, as a locus for disputes concerning the new normative models that guide the representations of the condition of young people in Brazil, as well as the expectations for their entrance into the adult world.⁴

On the other hand, the apparent unanimity concerning the legitimacy of this new field of actions in the realm of public policies especially directed towards young people is deceptive, since it hides the existence of a series of underlying conflicts that are not always evident. In other words, the visibility of the theme has tended to highlight elements of consensus that should not be allowed to obscure potential disputes.

A more visible focus of dissent can be found in the dispute over scarce resources directed towards social policies, increasingly expanding the scope of the demand and need for new investments by including new kinds of public covered by these actions. This situation traverses the various levels

of government – federal, state and municipal – just as it is also pervasive within the governments, with big disputes occurring over grants or funds to implement actions that very often overlapped due to a failure to adopt a clear strategy for formulating public policies (see Rua 1998). However, the issue of obtaining funds where these are scarce is not the most relevant topic in terms of understanding the elements in play in this dispute.

From the viewpoint of the analysis pursued in the present article, an initial step involves recognizing the existence of *a conflict over the approaches* that inform the actions directed towards youth sectors, including a set of representations within this field that, at an extreme, may even oppose any kind of specific intervention targeted at young people.⁵

In terms of these approaches, one of the axes of conflict concerns the very *need* for specific policies for young people: are the demands of youths necessarily included in terms of access to universal policies in areas such as healthcare, education, transportation, sports and so on? For many of the key actors, the principal demands of young people are already covered by these sector-based policies, making any special targeting as recipients of specific public or governmental actions unnecessary. At the other extreme, we find entrenched positions that defend the implementation of unique youth policies, targeted solely at young people in “a situation of social exclusion” or in conditions of ‘vulnerability.’

A second axis of conflict involves the lack of consensus surrounding the very *definition* of public youth policies. For some Latin American authors (see Bango 2003; Dávila 2003), youth policies are not inscribed in sector-based policies, but directly relate to other levels of action that are not covered by the mainstream policies in the area of healthcare, employment, housing and education. Hence, they are closer to areas linked to cultural demands, free time, leisure and, above all, actions that enable the real participation of young people, expanding the sphere of citizenship. In his analyses, Ernesto Rodríguez proposes that the demands of young people in relation to policies are actually confined to the symbolic and expressive field (see Rodríguez 2001).

These first two axes of conflict relate to a number of important questions concerning the public interventions made by governments in various countries, privileging specific action targeted towards youths. There has been an increase in government action directed towards young people both in Latin America and in various European countries, but it needs to be recognized that these policies appear as a “diffuse object when compared with domains more consolidated through ministerial structures that possess clearly delimited powers of intervention,” as Loncle analyzes on the basis of the French situation (2003:24).

Thus, from their outset, youth-oriented policies comprise a *transversal and peripheral* space of public intervention (see *ibid*:25). The French experience – the longest in this area – suggests that youth policies are unlikely to originate from the sector-based logic. This is largely due to the difficulties encountered in basing public intervention on different age categories. For Loncle, two other factors further complicate this problem: the first relates to the strong symbolic dimension of youth policies, since in general they are not given an autonomous basis, meaning that in periods of crisis they may disappear as a public problem; the second derives from their transversal ‘nature’ – that is, by aiming to “integrate young people into society,” they potentially concern almost all the State’s actions (*ibid*:27).

In a sense, historical experience indicates that approaches explicitly directed towards youths demand acceptance of the premise of transversality, but also adoption of a logic that transcends sector-based actions and is capable of somehow incorporating distinct age categories within its

approaches. This type of practice implies an expansion in the concept of citizenship rights, introducing the idea of “regimes of citizenship” as noted by Loncle-Moriceau (2001).⁶

In Brazil, the adoption of approaches that define youth demands within a symbolic or expressive universe is extremely complicated, even when its fragility as a pressure group in the public sphere is recognized. Recent research confirms that the needs and expectations made explicit by young people are not confined to the area of culture, but include improved access to the job market, education and transportation, and so on⁷ (see Sposito 2005, Guimarães 2005).⁸

The proposal to develop transversal approaches in public actions appears to be linked to the demands of young people in the area of ‘mainstream policies,’ not only introducing gender and ethnic perspectives, but also recognition of the specific demands of the different moments and issues experienced during the lifecycle. However, these approaches need not pose a barrier to the opening of new modalities of public action, especially those directed towards youths.

A third axis of conflict concerns the type of institutional framework most suited to the action within the various spheres of government. The debates that took place before the presidential elections in 2002, and during the first two years of the Lula government, absorbed the experience of Latin American countries by avoiding the precipitate creation of bodies that, lacking any legitimacy within the government machine, would amount to primarily bureaucratic agencies without the power to influence the formulation, integration and follow-up of actions.⁹ At local government level, specific bodies – such as the youth advisory services, coordinating offices and departments – comprise a varied range of powers and degrees of recognition outside or inside the government machine, making it very difficult to generalize on the possible benefits of their creation.

In the area of the dominant images of young people, we can identify a certain shared set of conceptions present in the original formulation of the actions. Many of them operated with the image of a dangerous and potentially violent youth population, which demanded wide-ranging intervention from society in order to ensure their passage to adult life did not threaten certain dominant approaches. For these reasons, the main theme involved in forming the public opinion of young people in Brazil always had its origins in violence, especially in the urban centres. The issue of unemployment, which became stronger at the end of the 1990s, does not essentially rupture the previous symbolic field, where it emerges as a social problem by forcing young people to become idle, providing dangerous free time that inevitably leads them into criminal activities, particularly those linked to illegal drugs trafficking (see Corrochano & Gouvêa 2003). Analyzing the youth employment programs, Felicia Madeira observes that the initiatives are marked by the debates surrounding the theme of juvenile violence, including a strong media influence, where public proposals are depicted as an antidote to be used to protect society from contagious violence (Madeira, 2004).

It is essential to recognize that youth policies are normative: they prescribe or emphasize norms, meanings or symbolic contents that underlie the promotion of the kinds of juvenile behaviour deemed suitable for a particular time and space. For Loncle, analyzing one hundred years of youth policies in France, such initiatives are invariably based on three ideas: citizenship, social protection and social pacification. The idea of citizenship prevalent in these initiatives is mainly rooted, she argues, in ‘compulsory citizenship,’ that is, the notion of transforming young people into active citizens – individuals who take part in national society, willing to defend it during times of war or renew it during peace time. Thus, descriptions of the social relations underpinning public actions are dominated by symbolic meanings that primarily enable the “identification of

the State's global projects" and make effectively solving the problems of young people more tenuous (see Loncle 2003:15).

Keeping in mind the wide variety of approaches found in Brazil, the analysis needs to consider the tensions and ambiguities that shape the programs adopted in the country, transformed into a field of symbolic dispute at all levels of the state apparatus and civil society, including the youth segments themselves in all their diversity. If we compound these conceptual questions with the difficulties of mapping the actions and approaches making up what is still an extremely new field, a number of delimitations become necessary.

The constitution of a model of action for impoverished youths¹⁰

The initiatives involving some kind of income transfer include a range of problematics relevant to the analysis of the symbolic and political status attained by the youth issue in the country. The first concerns a new field of professional work enabled by the demands involved in their implementation – that is, the need to involve new professionals, not yet allocated a definitive technical profile, responsible for implementing the relevant activities: people labelled as trainees, cultural workers, social educators or workshop organizers. These modes of recruitment are linked to trainee and service provision activities, marked by a high degree of informality, which mostly attract young people, many from the lower socioeconomic classes who have succeeded in continuing their studies and entered higher education without a fixed job, or who present a history of activism in collective sociocultural initiatives in their neighbourhoods. This situation can be found both in municipal bodies, which have transformed into agents that recruit this type of workforce or function merely as bodies responsible for the financial resources, and in partner non-governmental organizations, associations or foundations in the execution of projects, which, through the access to public funds, become responsible for their recruitment. This is a little studied aspect, since it appears to be creating employment alternatives for more educated sectors of both the middle and lower classes, who are involved in actions similarly targeted at young people, albeit those most affected by the processes of exclusion.¹¹

A second problematic also deserves to be explored as an axis for analyzing the *young users of these actions* that ensure *some kind of financial assistance*. In the midst of the diversity of prevailing approaches, their impacts remain to a large extent unknown, both in their conception and their forms of implementation via a shared conceptual base. Here, the issue concerning us is not related to their evaluation, since one dimension of the initiatives involves their own mechanisms for this, meaning the theme is more adequately covered by the studies on public policies in the social sciences (cf. Madeira 2004). Instead, the aim here is to sketch a framework for analyzing the formats assumed by these initiatives, which, despite the range of approaches, forms of execution and actors involved, reveal various common aspects that tend to configure a new and fairly challenging reality.

The most visible initiatives were first launched at federal level during the second mandate of the Cardoso government and spread to various cities;¹² others arose within municipal government. Among the list of actions, three have been selected as examples for analyzing this problematic: the Young Agent for Social and Human Development Project and the Voluntary Civil Service (SCV), both began at the end of the 1990s at federal level, and the Work-Income Allowance Program of the city of São Paulo (2001-2004).¹³ These are programs undertaken both by the federal government and by municipal authorities and demanding partnerships for their

implementation; they were constituted on the basis of variety of premises, but, curiously, present some important similarities in their mode of operation, which is why they are used here as examples. On the other hand, these proposals were also selected due to their geographical range and the scope of the activities carried out, since they concern national experiences that have so far attained more than 100,000 young people, as well as an already completed program run by the government of a large municipality, the city of São Paulo, which involved around 50,000 youngsters.

Young Agent for Social and Human Development Project

Created in 2000 under the responsibility of the State Social Welfare Department (see MPAS 2001a), the project was linked to the National Public Safety Plan, more specifically to one of its commitments, related to the intensification of the actions for combating violence included in the National Human Rights Program. The project reached 110,000 during the Cardoso government and, although it plans to supersede the numbers achieved by the previous government, the current administration had attained 57,038 young people by July 2005. At present, the project is no longer linked to the area of public safety, responsibility having been transferred to the Ministry of Social Development and Combating Hunger (MDS 2005a), though without significant alterations in terms of its objectives and target public.

The three spheres of government – federal, state and municipal – are involved in their implementation. While the first two levels assume responsibility for conception, monitoring, advice and evaluation, the municipal level executes the project, either directly or through partnerships with universities or non-governmental organizations. Funds are guaranteed by the federal government, counting on the participation of the other two spheres and partnerships with the private sector (MPAS 2001b).

The target public are young people aged between 15 and 17, with priority given to those no longer at school, who participate or have participated in other government social programs, and who are in a situation of personal and social vulnerability and risk, ex-students or youths under socioeducational guidance, coming from programs dealing with sexual and commercial exploitation of minors. Adolescents with some kind of deficiency have the right to 10% of the places (MDS 2005a). Previously, this public was chosen by the municipalities themselves or the organizations responsible for the project, allowing room for different forms of clientelism. Under the current administration, although the problem persists,¹⁴ modifications were made to the youth selection process based on the introduction of a unified registration process,¹⁵ evaluated according to income criteria.

When it was being formulated, the project established the challenge of constructing a proposal aimed at a particular juvenile public that, under the formal age for entering the job market and for whom there was a recognized scarcity of programs, was consequently seen to be more at risk of ‘marginality’ (MPAS 2001b).¹⁶

This formulation implied the need to construct a program that could ‘occupy’ these young people, removing them from the ‘risk’ situation in which they were found. The specific objectives have remained the same since its formal introduction:¹⁷ to create the conditions for the inclusion, reinclusion and permanence of young people within the education system; to promote their integration with the family, the community and society; to prepare them to act as an agent for the

transformation and development of their community; to contribute to reducing the levels of violence, the use of drugs, STDs and unplanned pregnancies; and to develop actions that enable their integration and interaction when they join the work market (MDS 2005a).

At first for a period of six months and after 2001 for a period of up to twelve months, the youths, as well as continuing or returning to school, must attend training courses (six months) and implement intervention projects in their communities (six months), with priority given to the areas of healthcare, culture, the environment, citizenship, sport and tourism. Throughout the entire period, they receive a monthly allowance of R\$ 65.00 (US\$ 32)¹⁸ and are accompanied by 'instructors' – professionals from different areas who run the classes – and 'social guides' – preferably university students – who must possess experience of working with young people, taking responsibility for facilitating the youth social action.

Following this brief description, two representations of young people emerge: the source and victims of social problems and, simultaneously, 'protagonists' in the development of their 'communities.' The first image involves the design of projects for those considered to be weakly integrated in social terms, especially in relation to the more traditional institutions (family and schools), making them strongly subject to social risk from the project's point of view. At the same time, the young people are given a task: once suitably trained – over a fairly short period and without many alterations to the environment in which they live, they can and should be encouraged to contribute to improving the living conditions of their community based on a specific form of social intervention for which they will be instructed.

Although a degree of juvenile potential is recognized in these elements, their limits are visible: firstly, the emphasis on certain behavioural aspects – as though each and every young person at any historical and social moment was naturally predisposed to provoke changes; and secondly, this change will take place only if the adult world recognizes and creates the conditions for this, which allows us to grasp young people's difficulties in making themselves heard and acting by themselves. Finally, it assigns young people with an extremely difficult task – that of transforming their 'community,' in general lacking any public equipment and services that ensure a minimum living standard. Involvement in actions and training programs aimed towards the 'community,' as well as continued school education, are the 'return commitments' (*contrapartidas*) demanded as a condition for receiving the allowance. The training is also expected to allow the young person to prepare, to a certain extent, for some kind of future incorporation into the job market. However, neither the number of hours assigned to training, nor the profile of the professionals working with the young people appear to ensure this possibility. An assessment undertaken by the Federal Court of Auditors in three hundred municipalities in 2004 (TCU 2004), highlights the profile of the so-called instructors and social guides as one of the weakest aspects of the project: the technical team only had an adequate profile in 19% of cases.

In addition, according to this assessment, young people in many municipalities were performing tasks that had little or no relation to the project's objectives, such as cleaning and typing, among other work. Despite the perceived benefits in terms of the personal, social and community development of the agents, the lack of continuity is emphasized as one of the obstacles preventing the project from fulfilling its objectives of social inclusion. In this sense, some of the main recommendations of the FCA (2004) concerned the need, in addition to monitoring, to connect the project with the National First Job Program and other work and income generation initiatives. A more recent evaluation conducted by the MDS itself also revealed the limits of the majority of

municipalities in relation to these aspects, but failed to present any proposal for overcoming them (MDS 2005b).

A qualitative study carried out by Camacho (2004) observed a strong tension between the technical teams and youngsters, especially in relation to the young people's social situation and living conditions. Either the technical teams saw the youths almost as children, incapable of assuming responsibilities (as one of the young women declares), imputing them with a kind of 'social moratorium,' or as adults, when they demanded from them "appropriate conduct as a young agent" (Camacho 2004).

The continuity of the project under federal management may signal at least an attempt to avoid interrupting actions without any justification at public level. But keeping them running without change alongside the creation of new youth-oriented programs still reveals the negligible incorporation of the on-going assessments and the potential fragmentation of actions directed towards young people.

Voluntary Civil Service Program

As part of the National Human Rights Program, the Voluntary Civil Service Program was created in 1996 and began its activities in 1998 on an experimental basis in Rio de Janeiro state and the Federal District. The result of a combined initiative of the former Ministry of Justice/State Office of Human Rights and the Ministry of Labour/Office for Public Employment Policies, it was initially implemented in a decentralized form via the State Qualification Plans (PEQS) and partnerships with civil society entities. Consequently, those responsible for executing these actions were training institutions (NGOs, System S, unions and universities) contracted by the state Labour offices.¹⁹

Under the current government, the VCS Program is located within the Ministry of Labour and Employment as one of the projects of the National First Job Program. Although some of its objectives have changed, its format remains identical.

In its original conception, priority was given to teenagers around 18 years old excluded and exempted from compulsory military service, although some studies show that these criteria seem to have been gradually abandoned (see Leão 2004). Under the present government, mention of military service has disappeared completely, corroborating a trend observed in the previous administration; the age range widened and youths with complete Primary Education and incomplete Secondary Education can also take part. The current requirements are: age between 16 and 24, low family income (less than half the minimum salary per person), unemployed, poor school attendance and schooling below Secondary Education level. Black (*negro*) and brown (*pardo*) people, disabled people and children of families headed by women should be given priority during the selection processes undertaken by the entities running the program, along the lines of the Young Agent Program during its initial phases (MTE 2005).

Initially, the program was presented as a 'rite of passage' from adolescence to adulthood, emphasizing two aspects in particular: 'awakening' young people to 'citizenship' – understood as social solidarity and the development of concrete actions in the community – and the preparation for entrance into the labour market. More specifically, it established as objectives in the work with teenagers the improvement in schooling, the development of the values of citizenship,

participation, solidarity, non-discrimination, respect for social diversity and the environment, qualification and preparation for concrete work opportunities and income generation. Currently, the fact that the program is part of the National First Job Program emphasizes the intention to contribute to young people's entry into employment, including the demand on the institutions involved to ensure the incorporation of at least 20% of them into the formal job market. But the objectives of an increase in schooling, training for citizenship and providing community service remain. Again, here, the return commitment for receiving the allowance is the completion of complementary courses and 'community services.'

All these objectives must be fulfilled over a six month period comprising a total of six hundred hours, covering three fundamental activities: an increase in schooling (three hundred hours), professional qualification (one hundred hours) and training in human rights and citizenship (two hundred hours), including carrying out community services through campaigns and social services, among other actions. The value of the grant was changed from R\$ 100.00 (US\$ 49) at the end of the previous government to R\$ 150.00 (US\$ 74) during the current government.

As of 2002, the program had been implemented in the 27 Brazilian states, benefiting approximately 47,000 young people with an investment of approximately R\$ 47.2 million.²⁰ Since the year of the program's creation, the former National Office for Public Employment Policies (1995-1998 and 1999-2002 governments) conducted three in-depth evaluations in which problems and difficulties were documented, as well as positive and innovative aspects. The last assessment, conducted in 2001 by public universities and research institutes on the basis of 27 case studies, presents some suggestive information with an emphasis on the criteria of the 'efficiency' and 'efficacy' of the actions.

Overall, the study revealed high levels of efficiency and efficacy – around 90% to 95% in terms of meeting the targets – and went as far as to emphasize the program's potential as a youth policy: "The VCS Program 'seems' expensive given its duration (an average of over eight hundred hours, with a minimum recommendation of six hundred). However, it is undoubtedly much cheaper than any other alternative for containing or suppressing young people – without mentioning the benefits registered by the trainees" (National Office for Public Employment Policies 2002:19). Nonetheless, here once again a discrepancy emerges from the viewpoint of rights. In this study, the program is evaluated as good primarily because it keeps young people busy, impeding their involvement in the world of crime. The potential benefits recorded by the 'trainees' are pushed into the background. Indeed, despite this 'optimism,' the study also recorded some difficulties faced by the program in ensuring 50% of places for women, the inclusion of disabled people, partnerships for assisting entry into the job market and the application of additional funds to the former FAT.

From the viewpoint of the benefits for young people, the research reveals that, on average, 95% of the cases present positive effects, especially in relation to the following aspects: the incentive to qualify for work, a greater participation/integration in the community, an improvement in social and family relations, the stimulus to return to or conclude schooling. However, at the same time, low indices were also observed in relation to qualifying for the job market, the continuity and later incorporation in the market and the increase in schooling levels.

On this point, the evaluation itself recommends integration with other programs that reinforce qualifications and widen the chances of young people joining the work market, as well as the effective search to ensure the continuation or return to basic level studies for 100% of those

taking part. In other words, the evaluation clearly showed that the program's impacts in terms of inserting young people in the labour market are below expectations.

A similar conclusion in terms of the last aspect was also obtained in a research study carried out by Leão (2004) with ex-members of two classes of the program in the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte.²¹ In a more in-depth analysis, the author emphasizes the predominance of what he calls the 'pedagogy of precariousness.' Observing the spaces, listening to young people, educators and coordinators from the program, he concludes that the offered courses were seen by the educators as presents given to an impoverished group of youngsters living in a situation of social risk. Aspects such as unsuitable classrooms, a lack of material, frequent absenteeism among the educators, an excess of general training classes instead of those directed towards professional qualification – which was seen by the young people as 'time wasting,' were evidence of situations marked by precariousness, which for the author revealed a particular logic, namely that for "poor people, anything will do apparently."

The allowance offered to the young people in exchange for attending the courses and pursuing some kind of community work also ended up transforming into a topic of considerable polemic. As Leão also notes, although the young people became frustrated with the courses, they continued on the program in large part because of the allowance, the transport tickets and the free lunch – or, in other words, the material benefits received (Leão 2004:246). At the same time, without paying attention to the precariousness of the offered activities, educators and coordinators ended up alleging that the youngsters only wanted the allowance, which led them to create innumerable mechanisms for controlling their use and the criteria for receiving the grant.

Leão also reveals other failures: some youths wanted to enter the formal job market, while the courses were aimed towards training for autonomous occupations; the expectations of undertaking traineeships were frustrated, since a total of just twenty hours was guaranteed and when a better opportunity appeared, the better 'behaved' youngsters were preferred. In relation to other targets, while educators and coordinators emphasized the rise in self-esteem as one of the project's most important outcomes, the young people did not perceive themselves as people with low self-esteem and were not concerned about this issue, a fact revealing another disparity between the youngsters and the body of educators or technical staff, signalling problems in terms of their interaction.

The realization of community work in the case studied by Leão was impeded by problems with the organization and functioning of the classes, but also the lack of consideration given to the desires and interests of the youngsters and their communities.

Following a trend already observed in the Young Agent Project, the new format of this program was maintained practically unaltered. In relation to the commitment of the entities responsible for the incorporation of at least 20% of the youths in the formal job market, one of the differential factors of the program under the current administration, there is as yet no data on its impact.

Work-Income Allowance Program²²

The Work-Income Allowance Program was implemented by the Development, Labour and Solidarity Office (SDTS) of the municipality of São Paulo (2001-2004 administration), and made up part of a set of so-called redistributive programs directed towards different age groups. As well

as reaching a relatively high number of young people in just a single municipality, taking into account the total amount of beneficiaries (57,397 between July 2001 and September 2004), this initiative from its very outset presented a clear strategy, in marked contrast to those described earlier. Faced with high levels of youth unemployment, instead of stimulating entry into formal employment, the program was designed to expand the level of schooling and training, following the logic of experiments undertaken in developed countries and delaying the entry of youths into the work market (PMSP/SDTS 2001:6).

Poorer young people would find it more difficult to postpone this entry given the centrality of generating income through work, including in terms of finishing basic schooling. The public authorities called attention to the fact that the growing difficulties faced by young people in joining and remaining in the job market would only be solved through “the constitution of an economic scenario of sustained development,” overcoming the low generation of employment opportunities in Brazil. Notwithstanding this broader challenge at federal level, the municipality could help them to extend their schooling through an income transfer program – this being the overall aim of the Work Allowance Program, despite its name.²⁴ Hence, it was targeted towards young people between 16 and 20, secondary level students or ex-students, unemployed or otherwise, performing any kind of remunerated activity, residents of the city of São Paulo for at least two years and living in families with a family income equal to or below two minimum wages per person. All the participants of the program were to receive an allowance corresponding to 45% of the minimum wage, transport vouchers and collective life insurance for a period varying from six months to two years.²⁵ At the same time, they were obliged to undertake some kind of supplementary training, which did not need to be directed towards formal employment.

The program’s specific objectives were concentrated on the provision of additional training, not necessarily linked to the job market; it looked to enable the integration of young people in their neighbourhoods through the development of community activities and aimed to improve the living conditions of the youths and their families. But the dominant logic surrounding the danger of violence also affected some of the approaches, a fact observable in its preventative objectives: “To offer the means for young people to persist in their studies and to avoid, in the absence of places in the job market, resorting to dangerously easy strategies for making a living” (Pochmann 2002:103).

At the outset, the Work-Income Allowance Program was implemented in partnership with other SDTS programs, some municipal offices and companies that assumed responsibility for training the young people in community activities. Given the diversity of partners, the training activities were varied, ranging from young people who effectively worked as traffic wardens or clerks at health posts, to those who only received training in a variety of themes: cooperativism, theatre and computing, for example.

At the end of the first year of implementation, evaluations conducted by the SDTS itself led to a number of changes in its set of programs, especially in the Work-Income Allowance Program. A technical cooperation agreement was signed with the United Nations (UN), through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with the aim of developing a suitable methodology. In addition, the establishment of agreements with other civil society entities was enabled, since UNESCO, along with the PMSP/SDTS, became responsible for the selection of institutions to offer courses and projects through a process of tendering whose basic criteria for evaluation were quality and the lowest price.

It is important to observe that inscription remained open to any young person, while selection, conducted by technical staff from the state office, followed the criteria established by the program without being approved by the executive bodies.²⁶ Within the Work-Income Allowance Program, the SDTS made an increasingly clear attempt to incorporate NGOs with experience in working with the youth sector. Its hypothesis was that this strategy would enable the development of new methodologies and improve the work with young people, since evaluations conducted during the first two years of the project had indicated some problems in this area.

Another change was the elaboration of a reference document for the organization of the courses. This allowed the offered courses to be structured into two modules: a basic module in citizenship training, lasting up to 480 hours, and another, specific module, without a set total number of hours, focusing on 'activities of collective utility' (PMSP/SDTS 2002).

Although the courses offered on the specific module could contribute in the future to some type of entry into the job market, this was not its central objective. There was a concern to offer training that enabled the constitution of what the team called 'new market niches,' such as mounting and taking down exhibitions, including graffiti shows, without necessarily developing strategies that enabled the generation of income or work on the basis of this training. At the same time – and this was one of the ambiguities of the program – these new approaches were accompanied by practices considered to be more conventional and aimed towards professional work, such as the job of office assistant or X-ray attendant. Evaluations conducted later indicated the tendency for young people to desire this kind of training, although the level of appreciation for the courses seemed to depend less on the theme covered and more on the quality of the training provided. Young people were rarely allowed to choose the courses they would take, but the few times this occurred, there was a clear preference for career-oriented courses or for engagement in some kind of work (see DIEESE 2003, CEDEC 2003).

Other changes made to the program during its implementation deserve to be highlighted. In relation to schooling, early on during the first months of registration and the first surveys into the profile of the beneficiaries, the team perceived that the young people seeking out the program diverged from the profile of the target public: most had already completed or were completing secondary education; in other words, there was only a minority presence of youngsters with low levels of schooling. Many were working in precarious jobs. As a result, young people with this profile became eligible to join the program. Even young people in paid work were encouraged to join the Work-Income Allowance Program, since they would be made better use of, individually and collectively, if, as well as continuing with their studies (including higher education), they developed social and community activities, removing them from the 'front line' of the work market (see Pochmann 2003:88). This discovery was coupled with the observation of what the SDTS called a 'new poverty' or a 'new form of exclusion,' which was affecting young people who were non-migrants with higher levels of education and members of relatively small-sized families.²⁷

To a certain extent, these changes, especially the expansion of the program, also appear to have been guided by the results of assessments conducted by outside institutions hired for this purpose, as well as those conducted by the team itself.

In one of the districts where the DIEESE (2003) held focus groups among youngsters completing the program, the allowance emerged as the main motivation for joining the program and many had learned about the initiative through their families and teachers. The qualities emphasized were the possibility of pursuing an occupation outside the home, the contact with elderly people

and the quality of the instructors, more life and personal openings and an improvement in the relationship with the family and the community. In terms of the main negative aspects, the youngsters highlighted the excessive number of absences and delays of students and monitors, the lack of a fixed location for carrying out the activities and the failure to comply with the timetable on the part of those receiving the allowance. The main suggestions also elucidate important aspects of the program: “More organization, supervision to ensure frequent attendance, punctuality and the effective realization of tasks on the part of students, an opportunity for the young people who were unable to register on the program or who left, and a set location for the activities” (DIEESE 2003:150).

To an extent, the obstacles and characteristics of the federal programs were also reproduced in many situations within the municipal initiative. However, in the case of the Work-Income Allowance Program, these results ended up reinforcing the need to pay attention to the actual process of training the youths, since many of the complaints referred to the lack of training and experience on the part of educators, the unsuitability of the spaces used and even the seriousness involved in implementing the process.

In relation to the world of work, the youngsters asked for ‘vouchers’ for the jobs and activities undertaken, since these could potentially help in their search for employment, a fact which illustrates the centrality that the question of work seems to occupy among those receiving the allowance, reiterated by the anguish they express over the concrete difficulty in finding work and the incessant search for ‘any job’ during and after the program. As well as repeating many of the observations listed by the DIEESE (2003), the latter aspect came even more to the fore in the assessment carried out by CEDEC (2003) on the basis of an ethnographic study conducted in one of the districts of the municipality. Highlighting a strong ethic valorizing work, the study observes that participation in the program did not prevent many young people from continuing to work in precarious jobs or from worrying intensely about the job during their involvement on the Work-Income Allowance Program. Other important aspects reported by CEDEC were: the fact that beneficiaries perceived the programs to be important but at the same time palliative; the centrality of the role of school education, rather than the programs, in terms of breaking the poverty trap, a perception present among the adults interviewed; and the various problems in the flow of information and communication among the different actors involved.

Although it possessed a more clearly defined strategy, confronting the young person’s situation within the job market by delaying their entry, and a significant capacity to introduce changes throughout the implementation process, the general format of the Work-Income Allowance Program continued to be very close to the other programs described here. Receiving the income remained tied both to returning to or continuing studies, and to the pursuit of training activities, taken to be compulsory. As part of these activities, the development of an intervention project in the community was indicated as desirable rather than compulsory, in contrast to the Young Agent and VCS programs. However, the demand for a return commitment for receiving the allowance was the same: the return to school and the realization of supplementary training activities. Meeting the intense youth demand for work was not considered a project target, focused on other modalities of the program that failed to reach a significant number of young people, a fact which ended up frustrating many of their expectations.

Points of convergence

Although undertaken within different types of approach, the programs analyzed here share a common format, indicating their collusion with various premises that not only tend to be accepted, but also tend to be widespread.²⁸

One key point of convergence in these actions is the possibility of transferring some kind of income to the youths in the form of an allowance, a policy operated on redistributive principles. Some evaluations already undertaken indicate how important this income is for these youngsters, principally as a source of support and, at the same, independence in relation to their families.²⁹ Although the amount provided is perceived more as a 'privilege' than a right, it comprises one of the main motives for the continuance of young people on the programs, although not the only one. For many, the small amount received, the uncertainty over the continuation of the initiative and over their remaining as beneficiaries, and the desire not to be 'dependent' on the State reiterated the need and the practice of continuing to look for work or undertaking precarious activities (see CEDEC 2003, Camacho 2004, Leão 2004).

Another premise, also recurrent in all the actions, resides in the idea of the *return commitment* needed for the transfer of funds to escape a 'merely welfarist' bias, including, therefore, a potential rupture with the logic of philanthropy. This aspect tends to be assumed practically as a legitimate and almost natural approach of the programs targeted at young people, although this should not obscure the existence of divergent approaches, stimulating the debate concerning the different prevailing views of the relations between the State and the users of programs that involve some kind of income redistribution in Brazil.

Many of the public managers believe that in order to break with the idea of philanthropy or welfarism, the income transfer initiatives demand actions from the individual that encourage their active engagement, eliminating risks of subjection or attitudes of 'dependence' in relation to the State.³⁰ However, for some decades now, the idea of citizens receiving a guaranteed income from the State has involved a range of different premises and approaches, these different versions constituting distinct ways of conceiving the system of protection and rights focused on the fundamental role of the State in fostering justice and diminishing the social injustices accentuated by the crisis in the job market and full-time employment.

An important version of the idea of a *contrapartida*, or return commitment, has been formulated in response to the crisis in the State Welfare system and the wage regime. The measure aims to re-establish social solidarity through public action, thereby producing, as well as income transfer, a kind of distribution of responsibilities that mobilize citizens towards their effective integration into the nation. Zaluar neatly summarizes these approaches:

Here there are no more needy to save, but people with different social uses, whose capacity should always be exploited. It [the Active Welfare State] also includes a radical socialization of assets and responsibilities. A new conception of solidarity is mobilized in the ideology of this State: it is neither private charity, nor welfare deriving from social rights, nor the mutuality of 19th century solidarism. Remaking the nation, the slogan of this ideology, means fostering the solidarity that comes from belonging to the same national community, in which security is national – the new meaning of the social, given that the social issue is national; a solidarity that translates into a *right and duty* to integrate.

(Zaluar 1997:32)³¹

In the opposite direction, debates surrounding a minimum *universal and unconditional* income have united various supporters, including the formation of BIEN – The Basic Income Earth Network, founded in 1986.³² Here, the premises behind income transfer are redistributive without distinction according to ethnic origin, race, sex, age, marital status or even socioeconomic situation, and without any idea of a return commitment (see Silva *et al.* 2004).

Adopted as a naturalized premise of the programs directed towards young people, the idea of a return commitment is multifaceted. In its most restricted sense, it can be comprehended as simply compulsory attendance of school, but it may also include an obligatory presence in socioeducational activities and participation in community-based actions, generally initiatives proposed by the partner institutions responsible for executing the program at local level.

In this shared format, the educational proposals are generally executed on the basis of a precarious infrastructure and a corpus of project members – social educators, cultural workers, etc. – with low technical training or even low schooling. With rare exceptions, they demand few material resources in terms of equipment and can be carried out with low operational costs.³³ Hence, in spite of a discourse of engagement and the promotion of social participation, these practices can accentuate negative mechanisms that reproduce a precarious human and material base to the social programs, reiterating the idea that it is unnecessary to offer very much to people in poverty.

However, the proposals involve a varied field of socioeducational actions that can be grouped in the idea of non-school or non-conventional education in the acceptance of Luiza Camacho (2004),³⁴ composing a set of very similar practices: lectures, courses and workshops. As we have already observed, in most cases the program/project presumes a general training focused on the theme of citizenship and in some cases includes a module linked to learning work place skills without comprising professional training in any rigorous sense. The socioeducational activities presume, as well as their compulsory nature (for young people, their margins of choice, when these exist, are limited to the suggestion of themes), some kind of orientation towards providing services to the community and developing voluntary activities taken to be useful and important for the neighbourhoods where these young people live.

Despite some variations, we can observe the trend towards the configuration of a new field of problems that demand analysis irrespective of the success or potential failure of the initiatives. These questions concern the formation of a field of normative approaches that work to define what needs to be targeted towards impoverished Brazilian youths, who come into interact with public authorities or sectors of civil society on the basis of their involvement in this set of actions.

Target group and schooling

Generally speaking, the programs aimed towards low income sectors presume compulsory enrolment at a public school as the basic factor of inclusion. In this case, as Silva *et al.* (2004) claim, the return commitment is, in hypothesis, a means of promoting the user since the lack of access to school is taken as an aggravating factor in the process of social exclusion. If we consider the importance of mass schooling for children, this return commitment may signal real inclusive effects. Even so, many studies stress the need to transform the conditions and quality of public education, since the abandoning of school early very often arises from factors within the

teaching system, which in effect often proves incapable of responding to the needs of less privileged sectors of the Brazilian population.

Nonetheless, by being extended to adolescents and youths, the policy of simply making school attendance compulsory accentuates various ambiguities even further. The young users targeted by the programs – invariably defined by their increased ‘vulnerability’ – are located among the groups precociously excluded from school, with a significant discrepancy in terms of class/age or with serious difficulties already entrenched in terms of building a positive relationship with the school institution. The *requirement of returning to the same school* that was previously unable to deal with these situations merely signals the permanence of the same processes of exclusion. In many cases, the return to school is computed in the program in a bureaucratic form, functioning only as one more control to be established over young people with little impact in terms of the real interaction between these sectors and the school institution.

Another common situation, observed for example in the VCS Program or the Work-Income Allowance Program, involves the fact that many young people seek out these programs after concluding their schooling, since the material conditions of poverty do not always impede regular attendance at school, which cannot in isolation guarantee overcoming the precarious living conditions in which they are immersed. Many users of the Work-Income Allowance Program had already finished secondary education (see Pochmann 2003), while in the VCS Program some ended up altering their school level, lowering it, in order to adapt to the requirements set by the existing regulations (Leão 2004). In the program ran by the São Paulo City Council, the administrators perceived the new conditions in which the expansion in school education is occurring, even within the poorest sectors, and did not create obstacles to the attendance of young people who had concluded their basic schooling. This initial data on the increase in schooling in situations of poverty has contributed to consolidating the idea of a new exclusion. According to Pochmann’s analyses,

[...] during the period after 1980, Brazilian economic growth stagnated, worsening the country’s social problems, especially in relation to the new exclusion (those disinherited from economic growth). In other words, the neoliberal policies implemented during these years, by having a strong impact on the nation’s economy, generated a new contingent of excluded people with a different profile to the traditional groups. While in the past the excluded population generally had a low level of education, came from large families, migrated from the rural world and was in badly paid work, today, in the new exclusion, the people affected are not illiterate but rather have some level of schooling, come from small families, were already urban citizens, but were unemployed. (Pochmann 2003:19).

However, other consequences can be derived from this situation: one of them is the parallel between the non-conventional socioeducational activities and the school practices properly speaking. Disconnected from school systems, this set of actions begins to create a non-conventional parallel network, aimed at young people, which very often is a down-graded and more precarious version of the educational practice of the public school. Little of value is learnt and there is no appropriation of the tools needed to intervene in the conditions in which the relationship between these youngsters and the school system unfolds.

When more successful, the non-conventional practices can boost certain personal skills among the youths in terms of their social interactions (overcoming shyness, becoming better at working in groups, and so on), but in general these effects are little absorbed by the approaches dominant

in the school world. While the activities are innovative, young people tend to make comparisons with school education, probably increasing their reflection on and criticism of school, very often without being offset by structures that would strengthen their capacity to intervene in the educational practices within the public educational network. Paradoxically, stimulating criticism without enabling positive action may encourage a greater distancing from school life, intensifying a merely instrumental relation that reinforces the meritocratic and qualification-based nature of school education.³⁵

Why socioeducational programs?

The immense majority of programs and projects targeted towards young people include and valorize socioeducational initiatives without, though, making explicit the premises inducing them to support such actions in the first place. This is a generalized acceptance that apparently does not impinge on the schooling deficiencies found within the educational system, since at no point are the initiatives intended to replace or complement school-based actions, in terms of teaching skills or transmitting systematized knowledge. Ensuring that young people are better qualified for entry into the work place has not been a priority, the activities for the most part involving short or intermittent experiences of professionalization, without rigorously assuming this approach as a structuring axis of the initiatives.

Two analytic paths can be taken, each of which deserves further exploration. The first concerns the conceptions of citizenship emerging from these socioeducational actions, while the second, less explicit, relates to managing the free time of poor youths.

All the indications are that the deficiencies identified in the teaching systems are rooted not only in its pedagogical aspects, but in the actual socializing mission of the school, which on evidence is failing to train future citizens.³⁶ The emphasis on this dimension ends up producing a concept of citizenship more closely linked to the idea of an intentional educational activity, marked by civism or, in a milder version, by the absorption of values linked to civility, which amounts to the expression of a civilizing program unrealized by the school institution. This is more a question of teaching than practicing the virtues of citizenship, shifting the focus from practices to intentional and systematic action, enabled primarily by the transmission of certain ideas.

As well as producing a diagnosis of the failure of school and privileging the socializing dimension of the idea of citizenship, the meaning contained in the idea of rights becomes emptied or at least diluted. Thus, the premise may become predominant that impoverished young people and adolescents need to be targeted by an initiative that teaches them something about collective life, pushing into the background the notion of citizenship as a right and a practice (see Loncle-Mouriceau 2001). If citizenship was conceived principally in terms of rights, these adolescents and youths would be priority targets of public actions for promoting the equality of access to resources from which they are systematically excluded: education, healthcare, culture, leisure and work, among others. The realization of rights would imply the extension of public equipment and services, absent in the neighbourhoods where these young people live, with the aim of democratizing the access to culture and leisure, going beyond the formulation of programs that, in isolation, become synonymous with public youth policies and the promotion of citizenship.

The paradox of compulsory voluntary action

The focus of the programs means that they reach a segment of young people that live in areas deprived of basic services and where the public authorities are almost completely absent. The expectation is that this population will *return* to public school to conclude their studies (we know there are considerable difficulties involved in achieving this aim), *participate* almost daily in educational activities at the offices of a local association and, in addition to this, *promote* the development of their neighbourhood – despite the fact that the State and other institutions have failed to do so. Why is this set of demands and expectations directed solely towards impoverished youths? Why are young people from the middle and upper classes, some of them students of federal technical schools or public universities, benefiting from free services funded through taxes, not likewise obliged to provide a community-based return commitment (*contrapartida*), knowing that they would have the conditions for this type of action given their cultural and social capital? Is there here another demand directed only at poor people, those who – in discourse, at least – are considered to be deprived of rights?

This is not to deny the potential of voluntary action and the creative energies of youth sectors who succeed in mobilizing to act collectively even in extremely precarious living conditions (see Melucci 1991, Sposito 2000, Novaes 1997). However, it is possible to note a new concealment or naturalization of the conditions in which social inequalities operate, since in the absence of guaranteed rights, it remains for these young actors, very often without any more long-term support, to assume the task of building a project aimed towards ‘local or community development,’ shifting responsibility for such enterprises onto subjects who strictly speaking are in no position to achieve them. There is always the risk of a mere farce or simulacrum of a project of collective action. However, if young people are responsible for a project, there is a good chance they will also feel responsible for its failure, individualizing situations limited by the structural barriers of inequalities. As Dubet states, the institutions pass through a process of mutation that alters the nature of the domination such that individuals are invited to act ‘freely’ within the categories imposed upon them. As a result, the dominated subjects are invited to assume control of their own identity and social experience, at the same time as they placed in a situation where this project is unrealizable (Dubet 2002).

As it involves a task impossible to realize, in most cases any youth ‘proactivism’ or mobilization of young people remains confined to the field of discourse which masks the absence of innovative practices.³⁷ On the other hand, the fragmented nature of the initiative, which, due to its focused approach, selects its public only on the basis of rigid income criteria, hinders the possibility of collective action and the formation of more solidary practices, since it fails to recognize the lifestyles and networks in which young people are immersed in their everyday experience.

Hence, it can be observed that these programs as a whole make few real advances in terms of effective dialogue with young people, recognizing that they are not just a target public, but subjects capable of participating effectively in defining the areas impinging on their interests and their own life. From this point of view, a distance remains between the reasoning of the public authorities, the proponent of the actions, and the ideas guiding the daily lives of those that remain at the bottom of society.³⁸ In trying to overcome this distance, an attempt is usually made to impose the logic of those responsible for the action on the youths, augmenting the level of permanently frustrated expectations.

Keeping in mind the ambiguities of these proposals, there is another path that also deserves to be analyzed, as a hypothesis for the speed with which these actions have spread. This relates to a

form of institutional management of the free time of impoverished youngsters, deemed a threat to public order. From victims, these sectors are rapidly transformed into potential perpetrators, since forced inactivity is seen to be the inevitable prelude to violence and crime.

For poor youngsters, the desire to fill their spare time outside the space of school is linked to the possibility of access to its enjoyment, whether in the sphere of culture or the sphere of leisure (see Brenner *et al.* 2005, Sposito 2005, Guimarães 2005). But, at the same time as young people aspire to experience 'youthhood' through 'a truce' in relation to demands of the adult world (Dayrell 2005), poor youths also want access to the work place, rather than postpone this search until some time in the future. For many, paid work is the best way of creating the possibility of enjoying their free time and gaining access to the predominantly commercialized forms of leisure (Brenner *et al.* 2005).

Thus, in the interstices of the crisis in the job market, the absence of effectively guaranteed rights of access to leisure and cultural resources, or an educational system capable of including its new public, we find the income transfer programs for youths, incapable by themselves alone of ensuring more concrete transformations in these spheres.

These questions – circumscribed by the sociocultural process of building an image of youths in Brazil, founded on fear and the perception that impoverished youths are potentially dangerous and constitute a problem for society – make the public actions designed to transfer income to them even more intriguing. Beyond the evident benefits provided by the access to income, the demands for a return commitment, or *contrapartida*, end up producing new models that, if not subjected to critique, will potentially disseminate new forms of domination, obscured by the discourse of social inclusion and citizenship.

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Notes

1. The reflections contained in this article form part of a broader field of investigations into municipal government actions targeted at young people in 75 Brazilian towns and cities from

metropolitan regions (Thematic Project “Youth, Schooling and Local Power,” with the support of FAPESP and CNPq).

2. The Pro-Youth Program offers conditions for supplementing basic education for youths aged between 18 and 25 who are not linked to the formal job market. Lasting for one year, the program includes an allowance and must be executed in agreement with city councils from metropolitan regions (see Novaes 2005).

3. We should also highlight recent initiatives of the Federal Legislature, which led to the elaboration of a National Youth Plan and the Youth Statute.

4. At this point our intention is not to define the concept of youth. Rather, our aim is to reiterate the historically and culturally determined character of ‘youthhood,’ and to examine how the symbolic models defining what young people should be in a given society work to delimit what is recognized as legitimate behaviour for specific moments of the life-cycle, and provide a normative set of images for the transition to an ideal adult condition. Despite the diversity of models, some of these forms can be seen to reinforce social control and dominance by orientating the concrete experience of young people, albeit in response to the particularities arising from social class, gender, ethnic group, religious background, and urban or rural life.

5. In this article, the meaning given to the notion of representation is based primarily on Henri Lefebvre, who rejects the dichotomy between what is outside and exterior (as a thing) and the representations that also come from inside and are contemporaneous with the constitution of the subject, both in the history of each individual and in the genesis of the individual at a social level. Consequently, representations are neither false nor true, but simultaneously false and true: true as replies to ‘real’ problems and false insofar as they conceal ‘real’ objectives (Lefebvre 1980:55).

6. The regimes of citizenship define a set of rights and trace the limits to the intervention of the political in society. For the author, young people are a priority public in terms of the regimes of citizenship, each of which can be comprehended as a hierarchized set of statuses: “Next to the normal citizen appear the groups with ‘minority’ status, both in the sphere of civic rights and in the sphere of social rights” (Loncle-Moriceau 2001:87). The regimes of citizenship, she argues, tend towards the differentiation of actions, meaning the challenge of universalizing them remains.

7. One of the biggest fields of conflict between young people and municipal authorities in various Brazilian cities over the last two years has been public transport sector tariffs, considered abusive by the youth sectors.

8. The research conducted by the Citizenship Institute reveals multiple aspects that mobilize youths, especially in the spheres of work and school, but which also extend to some of the main social problems identified, including the theme of security and the expectations for accessing cultural assets (see Abramo & Branco 2005).

9. The creation of a National Youth Institute was one of the proposals yet to be implemented due to the difficulties observed in the Latin American experience.

10. The designation used here – impoverished youths – is intentional, since it is not our intention to accept various other adjectives that have been widely adopted, such as ‘excluded,’ ‘vulnerable,’ ‘at risk’ or ‘destitute.’

11. For Dubet (2004), this type of action can also be interpreted as an increasingly pronounced difficulty experienced by adults in terms of completing their education, which ends up hindering the process of identity construction among young people themselves.

12. This article examines only public initiatives, implemented through partnerships with civil society associations (NGOs, business foundations, and so on).

13. Hereafter called the Young Agent Program, the VCS Program and the WIA Program, respectively.

14. In a recent assessment conducted by the MDS itself, one of the municipalities reported pressure from some mayors to indicate names for the project (see MDS 2005b).

15. On the new mode of registration in the Young Agent Program, see CEF (2005).

16. “Young people from 15 to 17 living in impoverished localities (municipalities/ communities) have few alternatives. In addition, the various welfare programs and projects offered fail to meet the needs of this age group, which is still too young to enter the job market, leaving them on the margins, subject to idleness and marginality” (MPAS 2001b).

17. Directive n. 879, published in December 2001 (MPAS 2001a).

18. The amount set at the start of the program remains the same.

19. The funds came from the FAT – Worker Support Fund, via the extinct Planfor (see Ministry of Justice 2000).

20. We were unable to obtain the figures for the current government.

21. Leão (2004) researched the evolution of the VCS Program in two classes of the RMBH during 2002 through semi-directed interviews with the program coordinators, field observations, a questionnaire for 57 youths and thirteen semi-structured with ex-class members.

22. Initially the program was called simply the Work Allowance. During its implementation and the creation of new modalities, as we shall see below, the program was renamed the Work-Income Allowance.

23. According to Pochmann (2002:102), “the errors of the scant government actions directed towards impelling young people into their first jobs have shown to be inefficient, when not ineffective. How can the children of poor families be pushed into the work market when not enough vacancies are created for everyone? This type of action results in transferring responsibility for being unemployed onto the young people themselves.”

24. Put simply, it amounts to an allowance for the young person not to have to work, rather than a support program for entry into the job market, an ambiguity reflected in its title.

25. The most frequent duration was around six months.

26. Although the selection process in the Young Agent and VCS Programs is being modified through the implementation of a unified registration system, at first the executive entity itself undertook the selection of the beneficiaries, a practice criticized in the São Paulo municipal council for failing to use more impersonal criteria capable of preventing potential distortions caused by clientelism. Both of these approaches contain their own particular dilemmas, since recruitment merely on the basis of technical criteria, without taking into account the networks and first-hand relations in which young people are involved, undoubtedly hinders any action geared towards promoting collective identities and more solidary forms of action.

27. As a result, other programs were incorporated into the Job-Income Allowance Program: the Short Course Work Allowance Program and the Trainee Work Allowance Program for young people aged between 16 and 29, and the Work Job Allowance Program for young people between 16 and 24. As well as widening the age range, the programs were directed at youths who had already completed secondary education.

28. Before its application in the public area, this modality of action was widespread among NGOs and business foundations. At federal level, new public programs are taking a similar format, such as, under the current administration, the Live Culture Agent Project, the product of a partnership between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Work, which offers allowances of R\$ 150.00 for a period of six months to young people between 16 and 24, with the obligation to attend school and take part in training programs. The return commitment (*contrapartida*) involves carrying out voluntary work for a period of six to ten hours weekly. The Pro-Youth Program's central proposal is the offer of schooling to young people who failed to complete primary education (Novaes 2005).

29. The young person's direct access to this type of remuneration also fails to achieve unanimity, since some approaches prevalent in the social welfare sector defend the central importance of the family as a target for State action, in detriment to income transfer programs focused directly on adolescents and young people. Without becoming immersed in this debate, it is worth underlining that the wardship and subordination of youths to family life probably only tends to increase during a moment of the life-cycle in which most aspire to greater autonomy and independence (Singly 2000).

30. A possible explanation for the permanence of these positions resides in the eternal distrust in the capacity of poor people to make good use of monetary resources.

31. These positions, defended by Rosanvallon (1981), are not completely endorsed by Castel (1995), who argues that the return commitment should be accompanied by inclusive policies backed by the State and centred on employment. As Zaluar states, this debate is occurs within the financial crisis of the State, which "reignited the worry over those people who avoid work after developing the 'vice' of dependency, turning into parasites on everyone else" (Zaluar 1997:32). A survey of the set of theses in favour of an unconditional minimum income can be found in Benarrosh 1998. The journal *MAUSS* also devoted a special issue to this question (cf. Caillé *et al.* 1996).

32. Previously known as the Basic Income European Network. Leading figures among the network include Klaus Offe, Guy Standing, Phillipe Van Parijs and, in Brazil, Eduardo Suplicy and Maria Ozanira da Silva e Silva (Silva *et al.* 2004).

33. However, the implementation of all these intermediary devices ends up absorbing considerable amounts of funds from programs that could be directly targeted at the core public were this set of return commitments not included.

34. According to Camacho (2004), the designation 'non-conventional' better encompasses the sense of these socioeducational practices given that they are formalized and institutionalized, meaning they do not fit the idea of non-formal education.

35. We can also observe the almost total absence of educational policies linked to these programs, insofar as they could be partners capable of taking part in the redefinition of the type of schooling and educational action suitable for young people.

36. On the various meaning contained in the idea of promoting citizenship and its relationship with the educational system, see Barrière & Martuccelli (1998).

37. A critique of the idea of youth pro-activism can be found in Castro (2002), Zibas *et al.* (2004) and Corti & Souza (2005). These approaches privilege the idea as a pedagogical instrument emptied of sociopolitical content.

38. On the divergence between the rationality of the administrator who attributes a narrow rationality to the user, and the 'good reason' of those assisted, see the study by François Dubet on users of minimum income programs in France (Dubet 2001).

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