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Presentation of the special issue: “Labor and Social Protection in Latin America: Recent Developments and Challenges in the Face of the Pandemic Crisis”

The **Brazilian Journal of Latin American Studies (BJLAS)** is pleased to release its 40 issue. BJLAS is a scientific journal specialized in Latin America and the Caribbean studies. The present special issue is entitled “Labor and Social Protection in Latin America: Recent Developments and Challenges in the Face of the Pandemic Crisis”, results of a proposal presented to BJLAS and is one of the outcomes of project ‘Art. 63 – ‘Social security rights and the crisis? Social retrenchment as the normality of the financial state of exception’, funded by Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT, Portugal).

The background of this number is the deep social and economic crisis currently affecting Latin American countries. The second decade of the 21st century was a turning point in the economic and social trajectory of these countries. The 2008 subprime crisis in the United States, followed by the Euro crisis two years later, reversed the favorable external scenario – the world experienced a slowdown of economic growth and the prices of products exported by Latin American countries fell - and, consequently,

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halted the advances in social and labor policies initiated in the previous decade.

Internally, economic austerity policies and an increasingly polarized political environment, fueled by widespread social discontent and distrust of traditional political institutions, contributed to the deterioration of Latin America's socioeconomic situation, expressed in the increase of inequality, poverty and extreme poverty, unemployment and precarious forms of insertion in the labor market.

The COVID-19 pandemic, together with quarantine and social distancing measures adopted to restrain the virus from proliferating, resulted in supply and aggregate demand shocks that reduced or paralyzed both the production and income flows, triggering an unprecedented economic and social crisis. This crisis had particular impact in Latin America countries, since their economic and social structures were already under stress.

This special issue has two main goals. First, it aims to contribute to a better understanding of the current social and economic situation in Latin America, especially in the context of pandemic crisis. Secondly, it aims to foster the debates on alternative policies in the areas of labor and social protection, capable of providing short, medium, and long-term responses to the region's historic problems, which were worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first article, entitled **“PATTERNS OF RESPONSES TO COVID-19 IN SELECTED LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES”**, was written by Thiago Brandão Peres, who holds a PhD in Sociology awarded by the Institute of Social and Political Studies of the State University of Rio de Janeiro (IESP/UERJ) and currently works as a sociologist at the State Center for Statistics, Research and Training Foundation of Public Servants of Rio de Janeiro (CEPERJ Foundation), and by Adalberto Cardoso, professor at IESP-UERJ. In this article, the authors question the use of the death rate (and related indicators) as the sole criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of national policies to fight the pandemic crisis. The authors find that structural

constraints, such as the children's mortality rate or the informality rate, are not very relevant to explain the different levels of deaths per million inhabitants in Latin American countries. Then they move to an in-depth analysis of eleven cases and argue that countries that applied 'collective responsibility' - a notion developed in the article - to the management of the emergency response combined with central coordination performed better in diminishing the effects of the crisis than countries that opted for stressing individual responsibility and with weak policy coordination.

The second article was prepared by Ana Beatriz Jesus, currently enrolled in the MA in Labor and Social Security Law (State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), and Bruna Coelho, Ph.D. student in Law and Sociology at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). In **"ORGANIZATIONS AND NARRATIVE DISPUTES BY THE LENSES OF DELIVERERS IN THE 2020 STRIKES IN LATIN AMERICA"** the authors discuss the deliverers' strikes that took place in Latin American countries, by looking at the calls for strike and analyzing the articulation of different organizations. The authors examine the formulation of the calls for strike and highlight the following trends: participation of a growing number of organizations, the movement is presented as an international one (e.g. calls published in several languages) and linked to broader discussions (e.g. mentions to capitalism and to the exploitation of workers), and includes numerous demands (e.g. health issues, worker status, among others).

The following article, **"THE RELEVANCE OF POSITIVE PEACE TO FACING SOCIAL CHALLENGES: THE POST-AGREEMENT OF PEACE AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN COLOMBIA"**, by Fabrício Chagas-Bastos, Assistant Professor and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the University of Copenhagen (Denmark), and Lina Chaparro, Ph.D. student in Political Science at the University of the Andes (Colombia), examines the relationship between transitional justice and social protection. The article shows that the conflict experienced in Colombia during the last decades has deeply divided society and argues that transitional justice mechanisms

play an important role in addressing socioeconomic vulnerabilities and in fostering the development of social protection, which are relevant factors to ensure long-term peace. The authors also warn against the negative effects of the pandemic crisis on the well-being of Colombians and also on the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms.

In **“COLOMBIAN SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM: AN ANALYSIS OF THE INTEGRATION BETWEEN INTERSECTORAL PUBLIC POLICIES”**

Cristián Rodríguez Olaya, researcher at Universidad Veracruzana (México), continues to examine Colombia by discussing the intensity of intersectorality in social programs. To this end, the author focuses on three programs that are part of the Colombian social protection system - *Familias en Acción*, *Red Unidos* and *De Cero a Siempre*. The combined analysis of different variables showed that the degree of integration of these programs is medium-low and that for intersectorality to be effectively present, in addition to being expressed in program designs, it requires the combination of political and technical factors.

The following article, **“UNSAFE UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH AMERICA”**, by Alexandre Sampaio Ferraz, economist, PhD in Political Science from the University of Sao Paulo (USP), and researcher at Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socio-Economic Studies – DIEESE (Brazil). The author addresses the social protection deficits faced by South American workers, who are part of labor markets historically characterized by their dualism, and the new challenges arising from current labor market transformations and the COVID-19 pandemic. The article argues that the model of income protection for unemployed workers, that combines unemployment insurance with individual accounts (a model found both in Chile and Brazil, in spite of the differences between the two of them), is insufficient to guarantee the income of the worker during the period of search for a new job, and also fails to compensate for the fall of aggregate demand during economic crises. The author suggests Latin American countries should adopt an unemployment insurance policy where it does not exist, and those countries who already have such measures in place

should extend the coverage and the duration of the benefit. Moreover, it is argued that a different kind of unemployment insurance should be created to complement the existing models: a fixed transfer with no links to the formal labor market could protect informal workers.

In **“NEOLIBERALIZATION AND RECENT SOCIAL SECURITY DYNAMICS IN BRAZIL AND CHILE”**, Fernanda Pernasetti, PhD in Urban and Regional Planning from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and member of the Inter-institutional Research Group “Futures of Social Protection” - Center for Strategic Studies Fiocruz (Brazil), argues that neoliberalism is a process that displays distinct characteristics depending on the context. The analysis of the changes that have taken place in recent decades in the Brazilian and Chilean social security systems point to a convergence between them. However, while Brazil has seen growing support for the Chilean individual capitalization model, Chile, on its turn, has shown signs of exhaustion of this model. The author argues that the pandemic contributed to the weakening of the Chilean system, whereas the changes introduced to the Brazilian system reduced both the system's and families' capacity to respond to the crisis.

The article **“PANDEMIC, INEQUITY AND NEOLIBERAL SOCIAL PROTECTION: CHILE, A PARADIGMATIC CASE”**, by Ana Farías Antognini and María Paz Trebilcock, both professors at Alberto Hurtado University (Chile), explores the measures put in place in Chile to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. The authors examine the emergency measures and data from the COVID-19 Social Survey, and argue that the pandemic played a role in exposing the failures of the Chilean social protection system. It is also stated that the emergency response occurred within the neo-liberal framework - minimal, targeted measures were adopted and individuals were made responsible for ensuring their own well-being. The growing demand for support is still unmet, since the neo-liberal model remains in force, negatively impacting the population's well-being.

In **“CASH TRANSFER AND ASSISTANCE POLICIES IN BRAZIL: RECENT DISCONTINUITIES AND CHALLENGES POSED BY COVID-19”**

Sergio Simoni Júnior, professor at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil), discusses the challenges faced by cash transfers in Latin America. This debate is based on the analysis of the Brazilian case and, more specifically, on the study of the implementation of the Emergency Aid (AE). The analysis of data regarding the AE by municipality reveals that part of the beneficiaries was previously excluded from social registries for these failed to be updated. The author draws attention to the relevance of having up-to-date registries to ensure the proper functioning of social policies. Furthermore, he emphasizes the importance of articulation between different levels of the federation with regard to the design and implementation of social policies, in order to maximize their effects.

Pastor Badillo Flores, PhD in Political Science, Administration and International Relations from Complutense University of Madrid (Spain), looks at Mexico in the article **“THE NEW COVID-19 POVERTY SCENARIO: TULANCINGO DE BRAVO CASE STUDY, MEXICO (2016-2021)”**. This article continues an investigation started in 2016 with women in poverty, residing in the locality of Tulancingo de Bravo, in the state of Hidalgo, who were enrolled in the conditional cash transfer program Prospera, which ended in 2019. This study involved part of the previously interviewed women and examined the strategies they adopted to deal with the suspension of Prospera and the pandemic crisis. The analysis of the interviewees' accounts in both moments indicated that these women did not overcome the condition of poverty and became beneficiaries of other social programs after Prospera was discontinued. Meanwhile, illness and/or death in the families and the reduction of available income, the increase in expenses (eg health-related expenses and/or the use Internet services to attend online classes), delays in the payment of pre-existing benefits and limited emergency measures to deal with the pandemic (with scarce information on them disseminated) indicate a deterioration in the living conditions of these women.

This dossier also includes "**CAPITALISM: WITHOUT RIVALS AND AT A CROSSROADS**", by Tiago Oliveira, researcher at the Center for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra (Portugal). This is a critical review of the book "Capitalism, Alone: The Future of the System That Rules the World" by Branko Milanovic, published in 2020. The book starts by observing that the existing capitalism coexists with two models of organization - liberal meritocratic capitalism and political capitalism. Then it discusses the main problems that afflict contemporary societies such as inequalities, social policies, migration, corruption, and globalization, as puts forwards recommendations on how to address them. Special attention should be given to this book by the Latin American public, since countries in this region are historically ranked among the most unequal in the world.

We wish everyone a good reading!

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