# P01 / Perceptions on Redistributive Policies, Justice and Inequalities

**Topic :** INEQUALITIES AND PUBLIC POLICY

**Chair :** Carolina Raquel Justo (Federal University of São Carlos - UFSCar (universidade Federal de São Carlos))

**Second Chair :** Camila De Mario (Universidade Candido Mendes)

**Third Chair :** Carla Tomazini (University of Warwick)

**Fourth Chair :** Osmany Porto de Oliveira (Universidade Federal de São Paulo)

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

It is important to understand perceptions about inequalities and ways to combat them, since public policies are an important point of contact between the State, government and citizens, through which they inform and are informed about demands, preferences and political interests. Since the opinions expressed affect and are affected by the actions of the State, in a two-way street, they interfere in the social and substantive dimension of equality in democracy. And although voting is the main mechanism for representing interests and legitimizing the actions of the State in relation to the preferences of the majority of the population, the fact is that citizens do not choose policies, but rather politicians, and the decisions that they make, the measures and actions that they adopt, in terms of public policies, do not respond to preferences that could supposedly be homogeneous, of a majority, but to the first preference or, at most, sets of interests of larger minorities, as Dahl (1956) rightly warns in his argument in defense of the pluralist perspective. Hence the special interest in population perceptions in terms of their priorities in public policies, which cannot be inferred from electoral results. As Howlett (2000) adds, public opinion, whether generic or majority, cannot be considered the independent variable that defines the production of public policies (whether due to Dahl's justification above or due to the various political and institutional factors that affect decisions about their formulation and implementation); government actions, directly and intentionally or not, also influence public opinion, in a process that feeds back dialectically. Therefore, the interest in research on perceptions of social policies is justified, notably those aimed at combating hunger, poverty and inequality, to the extent that they have been affected, differently for different social groups, as they have expanded and contracted throughout history in different contexts.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

What do social policies, combating hunger, poverty and inequality policies say about democracy? And what kind of support do they receive from citizens? What do the comparative analises say about the legitimacy bases for more egalitarian and redistributive policies implementation, following the social democratic lines of Welfare-State, in different countries? It matters to know the perceptions of different social groups about inequalities and ways to combat them, since public policies are an important point of contact between the State and citizens, through which both inform each other about demands, preferences and political interests. Since the expressed opinions affect and are affected by the State actions, they interfere with the social and substantive dimension of equality in democracy. Views and perceptions about poverty, justice, social inequalities, social assistance, conditional cash transfer policies and about their origins and justifications vary among social groups. Knowing them may help to understand how to improve democracy.

Comparative, qualitative and quantitative studies are welcome, including groups such as elites, street-level and high-ranking bureaucrats, policy beneficiaries and sociodemographic strata.
The analysis of public policies has benefited from cognitive approaches and the sociology of public action inspired by France, from which the notion of “State in Action” comes. Emphasizing the role of ideas, values, references, beliefs, knowledge and worldviews - and of action - such approaches dialogue with the theory of Political Culture, an approach that has been little explored. The panel aims to contribute to this debate. Papers may be concerned on: a) perspectives such as bureaucratic cultures, epistemic communities, advocacy coalitions, networks, the three “i”s (ideas, interests and institutions), historical and discursive neoinstitutionalism; b) objects such as councils, civil society, participatory, sectoral, intersectoral and intersectional policies; c) analyses of change, diffusion, implementation, the role of institutions, actors, social movements, political parties, bureaucracies at different levels; d) normative themes such as democracy,

citizenship, justice and political projects. Interdisciplinary in nature, the panel encompasses quantitative and empirical-qualitative methodologies: analysis of surveys and indicators, interviews, case and comparative studies, ethnographic studies, instrumentation studies, etc.

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## Session 1Bureaucrats' Roles and Perceptions about Justice and Inequalities and Their Effects on Redistributive Policies

Friday, July 4th 08:00 to 10:00 (C2)

**Discussants**

Carla Tomazini (University of Warwick)

Camila De Mario (Universidade Candido Mendes)

### From Bureaucrats to Beneficiaries? Justice, Inequalities and Income Transfer Policies Perceptions in Brazil

Carolina Raquel Justo (Federal University of São Carlos - UFSCar (universidade Federal de São Carlos))

The paper analyzes the justice, poverty and inequalities perceptions from beneficiaries and high and street level bureaucrats linked to income transfer programs in Brazil, between the years 1995 and 2010. Through long-term interviews with both groups, we identified, on the one hand, a coincidence of perceptions between bureaucrats and beneficiaries from the same location, regarding to the concepts and references of the programs; on the other, variations in perceptions between municipalities. The coincidence of perceptions suggests the diffusion of sectoral and global references from street-level bureaucrats to the beneficiaries of the policies they implement. The research findings corroborate the argument about the relevance of these actors for identifying the core values ??that guide the implementation of policies, their concrete meaning, which does not always coincide with that formulated by managers. This implies in recognizing the process of opinion formation and diffusion of political culture through public policies, results that researchers often do not attach much importance to, although they are the core of the political-ideological conflict. Comparative studies brought evidence of a dispute between alternative models of income transfer programs, which operate on the ground in society: Minimum Income X Basic Income.

### Health Equity and Distributive Justice: Views of high-level African policymakers

Michelle Amri (University of British Columbia)

Health equity matters, but there is no universally accepted definition of this or associated terms, such as inequities, inequalities, and disparities. Given the flexibility of these terms, investigating how policymakers understand them is important to observe priorities and perhaps course correct. Accordingly, this study analyzed the perceptions high-level policymakers within the WHO African Region. An online survey was distributed to attendees of the WHO’s Fifth Health Sector Directors’ Policy and Planning Meeting for the WHO African Region by email. After responses were collected, both inductive and deductive coding were applied. Inductive coding was undertaken to glean central concepts from free-form responses on understandings of health equity and deductive coding was used to assess alignment with four theories of distributive justice using a coding framework. In analyzing central concepts, three became apparent: access to health services and/or health care, financial protection, and recognizing subgroups. And when we investigated alignment with theory, most respondents’ understandings of health equity aligned with Rawls’

‘Theory of Justice’ (95%). Of these responses, 70% were exclusively aligned with Rawls’ ‘Theory of Justice’ and 30% aligned also with another theory (this 30% was split 55% utilitarianism and 45% Sen’s Capabilities Approach). Respondent understandings of health equity showed limited alignment with other theories of distributive justice, which were: utilitarianism (n=7/39; 17.95%), Sen’s Capabilities Approach (n=5/39; 12.82%), and libertarianism (n=2/39; 5.13%). This study demonstrates that alignment with certain theories is tied to specific themes (i.e., theoretical underpinnings may guide policymakers to favour certain policy approaches). For instance, a utilitarian-minded policymaker may be focused on a widespread vaccination campaign, whereas a Rawlsian-aligned policymaker may focus on a targeted approach to reach communities that have lower vaccination rates, and a Senian-aligned policymaker may focus on health literacy programs targeted at addressing vaccine-hesitant individuals within communities with lower vaccination rates. These findings can guide high-level policymakers and international organizations to optimize decision-making by clarifying ethical alternatives.

### Retrenchment and Resilience: A comparative study of Brazil’s PES programs

Tomás Borges (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro)

Ana Paula Santos (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

This article aims to discuss the retrenchment strategies employed in two of Brazil's leading payment for environmental services programs (PES), Bolsa Floresta and Bolsa Verde. The goal is to identify the reasons behind the endurance of the former and the dissolution of the latter during crisis times. In general, the study frames the transformations in Bolsa Floresta and Bolsa Verde at two distinct levels: (1) the role of legal and fiscal centralization in shaping budget cuts, particularly during years of economic crisis, and (2) the drift mechanisms embedded in these policies from their inception. These issues are also assessed in light of the institutional changes that occurred during the transition from the Dilma government to the Temer government. As a result, we find that building a dedicated bureaucracy whose sole purpose was to finance the program was crucial for Bolsa Floresta's sustainability during Brazil’s severe economic and political crisis. However, both programs underwent distinct retrenchment strategies since their creation, which were intensified in 2014 and 2015. By situating PES within the broader discussion on social policies, inequality, and democracy, this study contributes to comparative debates on the legitimacy and political feasibility of redistributive policies, particularly in contexts of crisis. Moreover, it highlights the vulnerabilities of Bolsa Verde and Bolsa Floresta regarding retrenchment and proposes future research directions that integrate political culture and institutional change into the analysis of environmental social policies.

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## Session 2

Friday, July 4th 10:15 to 12:15 (C2)

### Discussants

Carolina Raquel Justo (Federal University of São Carlos - UFSCar (universidade Federal de São Carlos))

Camila De Mario (Universidade Candido Mendes)

### Bridging the Gap: How Youth Behaviors Influence the Density of Youth Nonprofits in U.S. Counties

Vernise Estorcien (Indiana University Indianapolis)

Nonprofit organizations play a critical role in addressing community challenges, yet limited research examines how youth safety and risky behaviors influence the density of youth-serving nonprofits. This research addresses a key public management issue: the alignment between nonprofit presence and localized youth-specific needs, particularly in addressing service gaps left by local governments.

The primary research question is: How do youth safety and risky behaviors at the county level influence the density of youth development nonprofits? Combining insights from two frameworks, this study puts forth a model to explain the presence of youth-serving nonprofits. According to Government Failure Theory, nonprofits emerge to fill gaps left by insufficient or ineffective public systems (Weisbrod, 2009; Smith & Grønbjerg, 2006), whereas Demand Heterogeneity Theory suggests that communities with diverse socioeconomic profiles drive nonprofit density due to varied needs (Grønbjerg & Paarlberg, 2001). While the government at every level has consistently tried to prevent and reduce youth crime and delinquency, this remains a pressing issue in local municipalities across the U.S. The correlates of such behavior often include racial and socioeconomic diversity (cite).

Using longitudinal county-level data on youth risk indicators, socioeconomic conditions, and public funding, the study employs hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to explore relationships between these factors and nonprofit density. Using counties as the unit of analysis enables a detailed understanding of nonprofit distribution, given their alignment with public service administration and their reflection of socioeconomic diversity across urban, suburban, and rural areas (Allard, 2009; Lecy & Van Slyke, 2013). Preliminary findings indicate that higher nonprofit density is associated with counties experiencing elevated juvenile crime, substance abuse, and school dropout rates, especially where traditional public systems show resource constraints or limited effectiveness.

These findings have significant implications for public management and policy. They suggest that nonprofits play a pivotal role in filling service gaps, but whether nonprofit service provision reduces youth's risky behaviors is yet to be seen. This study advances nonprofit and public management literature by refining theoretical frameworks and offering actionable insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to improve youth outcomes and community well-being.

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## Technological Change, Public Opinion, and Inequality: The Fourth Industrial Revolution in South Africa

Zama Mthombeni (University of Pretoria)

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has been promoted globally as a transformative force promising economic growth, technological innovation, and societal progress. However, its implementation in developing contexts such as South Africa has raised significant concerns about its implications for inequality, justice, and redistributive policies. This study investigates public perceptions of the 4IR, using data from the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), to explore the socio-demographic and economic factors that shape attitudes toward automation and technological advancement. It addresses critical questions: What shapes public perceptions of 4IR technologies? How do these perceptions reflect broader societal inequalities? And what are the implications for redistributive policies aimed at mitigating technological disruption?

The research employs a quantitative methodology, leveraging regression-based analysis to examine variables such as age, race, income, education, and employment status. Key findings reveal significant disparities in attitudes: marginalized groups express heightened skepticism due to fears of job displacement and inadequate governmental intervention, while more affluent individuals exhibit optimism tied to their relative security. Additionally, a generational divide is evident, with younger, tech-savvy individuals more accepting of automation than older cohorts, who fear obsolescence. Most respondents also lack confidence in the government’s ability to mitigate the adverse effects of automation, underscoring a critical trust deficit.

This paper argues that uncritically adopting 4IR technologies risks exacerbating existing inequalities unless accompanied by inclusive redistributive policies. It proposes measures such as universal basic income, targeted skills development, and enhanced STEM education to promote equitable participation. Moreover, the study highlights the necessity of engaging public opinion in policy formulation to ensure alignment between state actions and citizen priorities. This two-way relationship, where government decisions shape and are shaped by public perceptions, is crucial for advancing substantive equality and justice in a technology-driven democracy.

By addressing the intersection of public perceptions, redistributive policies, and inequality, this research contributes to the broader discourse on justice and the role of public opinion in shaping policy outcomes. It aligns with the panel’s objective to explore how societal demands, shaped by perceptions of fairness and inequality, inform and are informed by public policies. The findings underscore the importance of integrating public concerns into the design and implementation of 4IR policies, ensuring that technological progress benefits all, rather than entrenching socio-economic divides.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL POLICIES: CHALLENGING OR GENERATING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY IN COLOMBIA?

Cristian Rodríguez Olaya (Universidad Nacional de Colombia)

The objective of this project is to analyze the possibility that public policies to combat poverty and inequality may produce, in their implementation, possible unexpected effects that are contrary to their social purpose established in the design. Thus, the project has as its central question: can significant social inequalities be generated in the implementation of social policies, when in their design they seek exactly the opposite? Therefore, the study addresses two public policies (which are part of the Colombian social protection system) and analyzes their execution in a region of Colombia called Llanos Orientales.

Methodologically, the research is of a mixed nature. In this order, in the qualitative field, information gathering techniques are used, such as semi-structured interviews with both bureaucrats in charge of implementing the policies and their beneficiaries. Likewise, these interviews are analyzed according to coding and categorization techniques. Quantitative surveys are also conducted on the two population groups mentioned above. Therefore, the results of these surveys are analyzed with evaluation techniques, such as Pearson or Spearman.

The aim is to determine whether the implementation of the two public policies analysed generates inequalities or negative social impacts on the beneficiaries, as well as the reasons for this, if such impacts are confirmed. In this sense, issues such as the technical and political components inherent to the implementation of public policies are analytically explored, including variables such as the technical knowledge of bureaucrats, their values ??and discretion regarding decisions on the beneficiaries of social policies (or even on potential beneficiaries), or the perception of the beneficiaries on the objective, structure and impact of the public policies studied, within the framework of the social protection system of Colombia.

Keywords: public policies, inequality, poverty, bureaucracy, implementation.