Adolescents, Crisis and Risk. Are CCTs adequate policy answer?.

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Proposal:

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The current crisis is expected to affect children and adolescents directly, through less quantity and quality of food, resources available to their families, and opportunities for independence and autonomy. It may affect indirectly through impacting funding of basic social services, reduction of job opportunities for their parents, increasing the stress of raising children in a crisis context. Many adolescents are out of the educational system and confronting serious difficulties to enter to the labor market. The economic crisis adds an additional serious factor to the adversity that poverty in general implies for them.

Nevertheless, the experience of those risk factors may vary showing specific articulations from a meso-social point of view. Adolescents, boys and girls, are in a transitional moment of their life cycle. Many of them, especially among the poor sectors, are entering on their productive and/ or reproductive life. Life-cycle transitions draw upon ideas of adulthood as a point of arrival, but there is the need of consider also the inherent importance of adolescence as a moment and a complex set of experiences that, for instance, start full sexual life and autonomous social groups inclusion. Both processes can trace future life trajectories, closing some opportunities and determining some paths.

Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) is one of the policy strategies that have been adopted in most of the countries in Latin America to reduce poverty. Are CCTs useful tools for promoting rights and citizenship among adolescents? Can CCTs help adolescents to overcome the difficult situations that they are facing in Latin America? This is the main question that poses this paper. The discussion will be based on the comparative analysis of characteristics of three CCTs target to adolescents: “Proyecto Adolescente” in Argentinean province of Buenos Aires, “ProJovem” in Brazil, and “Opportunity NYC” in New York City, USA. The analysis will include ethnographic research conducted with adolescent clients of Proyecto Adolescente and assistants to Centros de Actividades Juveniles (CAJ). This analysis will help to expand the knowledge on how they understand citizenship and inclusion in everyday life.