CCTs: The “perfect” programs.
How epistemic community and International Governmental Organizations do created a consensus about CCTs in Latin America.

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Abstract

This paper seeks to contribute to the understanding of the diffusion process of Conditional Cash Transfer Programs (CCTs) in Latin America and the role of experts – reunited in an epistemic community- and International Organizations (IOs). CCTs have been increasingly implemented worldwide in the last decades, and 17 countries have adopted them in Latin America alone. The evidence suggests that this convergence is due to a policy diffusion process. After their implementation by regional pioneers -Brazil and Mexico- during the middle of the ‘90s, the programs caught the attention of International Organizations like the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, which in turn contributed to their dissemination. These organizations supplied loans and technical advice, and also, they developed diverse activities, networks, papers and reports which have contributed to create a consensus on the efficiency of CCTs. Moreover, the existence of an epistemic community increased the available information on these programs and contributed to their legitimacy, playing a role in the domestic policy making process as well as in the adoption of CCTs by more countries. This matter deserves further attention in order to better understand the influence of ideas which can produce convergence of policies, the role of the actors involved and the relationship between the domestic and international level during the policy making process.

1 This paper is part of the doctoral thesis “The diffusion of the Conditional Cash Transfers programs in Latin America 1990-2010”. Supervisor: Dr. Jacint Jordana, Professor of Political Science and Administration at the university and Director of the Institut Barcelona d’International Studies (IBEI). The aim of the thesis is to respond the main question: What are the conditions that explain the diffusion of conditional cash transfers programs in Latin America? Secondary questions are: What mechanisms are observed in the diffusion wave? How is the diffusion mechanism related to the internal process of formulation and how does it influence the characteristics of the adopted programs?
Introduction

The Conditional Cash Transfers programs (CCTs) emerged in the 90’s as pilot experiences at regional and municipal level. By 1997, three countries had implemented them: Brazil, Mexico and Bangladesh and, in 2009, 29 nations around the world (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009). These social programs have the basic characteristic of providing cash to low-income households, typically including children and young family members, on the condition that beneficiaries will use defined health or education services (Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011). Variations are observed among countries which denote diverse levels of complexity.

A significant geographic convergence of CCTs exists in Latin America, where 17 countries have implemented them² (Leon, 2008; Fiszbein and Schady, 2009). The first programs - Brazil and Mexico- were born in the region and in addition they constitute, along with other countries like Chile, emblematic experiences which have been widely spread and analyzed. Today, the programs reach 113 million people in the region (Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011:107), and in comparison to the rest of the world, they are wider in their scope, level of sophistication and institutional features (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009:38). The acquisition of technical knowledge has also contributed in the long term to the improvement of social program measurement, statistics and monitoring. Most of the research on CCTs has concentrated on the impact of the programs: on poverty and school absenteeism reduction, improving frequency of health checks among pregnant women and children, redistribution of income, among others. Along with it, specialists have described and analyzed their characteristics raising recommendations about their design and implementation³. This literature is important for the analysis of the programs in the region, but also it has become a reliable reference for their application in other regions of the world (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009).

However, the significant concentration of programs in Latin America is not discussed. What conditions do explain the fact that 17 countries of a set of 20 have implemented CCTs? These countries display, evidently, some similarities as Spanish and Portuguese’ colonies, or their presidential political regime. Nevertheless, they also present differences in relation to their political trajectory,
wealth, levels of poverty and inequality, among others. Consequently, a reasonable concern is to clarify why such different countries as Brazil and Honduras, are applying the same type of program to alleviate poverty.

Domestic initiative could explain the adoption of the first programs, but not the later geographic convergence nor “the prodigious rate” (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009:29) of implementation that is observed in the region. “The most domestic conditions – president’s ideologies, state capacity and domestic needs - cannot fully explain the forces at work in the spread of CCT adoption in Latin America” (Sugiyama, 2011:261). External pressures originated in international organizations or multilateral banks could be another explanation. Nevertheless, it does not provide sufficient argumentation to clarify the geographic convergence of the CCTs (Weyland, 2006). In that sense, the evidence suggests that the numerous presences of programs in the region were the result of a policy diffusion process (Sugiyama, 2011). In addition, diffusion tends to occur in waves, starting slowly with a few countries, picking up steam subsequently and finally decreasing its levels. In graphic terms, it adopts an S-shaped curve (Weyland, 2006) which is the form of the adoption of CCTs in the region (see Graph N°1).

Graph N°1

Consequently, the presence of CCTs is the result of diffusion, i.e. “the process by which the adoption of innovation by member (s) of a social system is communicated through certain channels and over time and triggers mechanisms that increase the probability of its adoption by other members who have not yet adopted it” (Levi-Faur, 2005:23). Some studies suggest the success of the first initiatives - pilot programs in the middle of the 90s in México and Brazil, and some years later PROGRESA (today Opportunities) and Bolsa Escola (today part of Bolsa Família) respectively- motivated other countries to provide similar alternatives. Its versatility and efficiency made them very popular (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009). Its popularity also reflects the support from the Inter-American Bank (IADB) and the World Bank (WB) financing such activities (Handa and Davis,
In fact, multilateral banks arranged loans with some countries and/or also technical support. However, there are an important number of cases, where those actions are absent (see Table Nº1). Therefore, these actions do not provide enough evidence to explain the role of these international organizations in the diffusion process and their role seems more complex. Some scholars have demonstrated that the mere presence of loans does not mean a lack of autonomy of local policymakers (Weyland, 2004). In addition, the differences among the programs show that the process was not just the replication of a blueprint in the region following international organizations suggestions.

In this paper it is argued that one variable that can explain CCTs' convergence it is the consensus about the efficiency of the programs to overcome poverty in the region⁴. This idea about was generated by a regional epistemic community (Haas, 1992), linked with the International Organizations, such as World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, and in a secondary role the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Organization for the American States and the Food and Agriculture Organization. Once the first programs in Brazil and Mexico were set up, the epistemic community and the activities of those organizations contributed to the production of information and knowledge, and to its exchange among policy makers of the region.

To aboard these topics is relevant for several reasons. On the one hand, the role of experts and IOs in the diffusion process has been scarcely analyzed in depth by existing literature and therefore numerous questions remain unanswered. In addition, how these actors influence adoption (i.e. the mechanisms) have important consequences for the quality of public policies (Elkins and Simmons, 2005), and in this case, CCT programs are flagship initiatives against poverty. It is reasonable to ask if they constitute the best alternative, since in some cases, countries could have defined a better policy. Consequently, it is relevant to clarify the actors involved and their ways of influence into social policies and programs. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that it would be not possible to develop complete answers about the influence of IOs into the mechanisms of diffusion. That require depth analysis trough case studies to catch the relationship between the external variables and the national policy making process. In addition, this study and its approach allows erasing “the artificial boundaries between international and domestic politics so that the dynamic between structure and choice can be illuminated” (Adler and Haas, 1992:367). Indeed, although it hasn’t been thoroughly discussed in the literature, it is quite clear that “policymaking in contemporary Latin America is not confined to a national scale, but commonly takes foreign inputs into account” (Weyland, 2004:257).

⁴ As part of the research, statistical models were developed, where other variables such as poverty, inequality, ideology and loans from multilateral banks were included to test their influence on the diffusion process. None of those variables were statistically significant. Consequently, the alternative for the epistemic community variable was considered for the analysis. The data and result of the models were not explained here, due to the limits of this paper. If more information is needed, it is possible to provide it.
This paper is divided into three parts. Firstly, the concept of epistemic community, their characteristics, and how they are related to the policy diffusion will be commented. In the second part, the activities of the epistemic communities and IOs during the wave of diffusion are explained. Thirdly, the contribution of this explanation to this diffusion process is analysed and the main findings and future challenges are discussed.

1. Ideas, epistemic communities and International Organizations

Peter Haas (1992) defines epistemic community as “a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area” (Haas, 1992:3). This group of experts, across diverse disciplines—scientists, NGO’s, bureaucrats, journalists and leaders of opinion, among others—works (in a very lax way) to improve the scientific and public understanding of a topic (Speth and Haas, 2006). According to Haas, epistemic communities share four components. “First, a normative set of beliefs and values; secondly, shared causal beliefs, i.e. an interpretative frame that determines the causes that generate certain problems; third, the mechanisms of validation to test information; and finally, a set of practices and policies associated to the problems of their area of concern that ultimately, once applied would benefit society” (Haas, 1992:3). Beside this, they agree on the notions and vocabulary involved, and they are part of a common network in which these findings and concerns are interchanged and shared (Haas, 1989). They do not have, necessarily, the monopoly on relevant knowledge on the topic, but they must share a common approach of understanding that implies that they agree on interpretations, advice and policies.

This approach seeks to understand the role that networks based on epistemic communities play in articulating cause-effect relations, helping states to identify their interests, framing the topics for the collective debate, proposing policies and identifying salient points for negotiation (Haas, 1992). Thus the assumptions that are behind this concept refer to the valuation of knowledge as an important dimension of power and that the diffusion of new ideas and information can lead to new behaviors, being a key factor for international convergence. Their importance is that they can influence approaches, generating organizational and institutional changes, being a major player in the dissemination of policies (Haas, 1989A). The convergence of positions does not happen by itself; requires group of people willing to offer explanations, supposedly superior, to a problem. This role can be occupied by epistemic communities which are listened by politicians and policy makers; therefore they are key players in forcing the reexamination of goals and

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5 Epistemic community, advocacy coalitions, policy communities, knowledge expert networks, refers to diverse kinds of policy networks. The contribution of the concept chose for a specific case is related to the emphasis given to the features of the network. Here, the key point is the relevance of knowledge in the epistemic community’s case.
programs that have not been challenged before (Haas, 1989). Epistemic communities are suppliers of information and advice in uncertainty scenes; when information is needed, networks or communities will emerge and proliferate. “To the extent to which an epistemic community consolidates bureaucratic power within national administrations and international secretariats, it stands to institutionalize its influence and insinuate its views into broader international politics” (Haas, 1992:4)⁶. The governments will confer autonomy to those scientists and experts, usually a small number, who better understand the complex causes of the phenomena and propose policies. Policy makers will mitigate their uncertainty and will defend their autonomy resorting to the scientists for information and advice about the policies. In political terms, this is also an alternative to getting fast solutions and delegating part of the responsibility (Haas, 1989). In that sense, the channels of influence are diverse. “The members can be invited to occupy administrative positions in governments, in regulatory organizations and in advisor bodies. The magnitude of the influence of the community, would depend on how comprehensive the beliefs of the community are and how much they insinuate those perspectives into the policy making process” (Haas, 1989:57).

A second group of actors present in CCTs’ diffusion process is composed by International Organizations. Those organizations, which share goals and interests, can converge advocating certain policies and programs through diverse kind of actions. The first one involves monetary loans, which is indeed the main goal of multilateral banks. Secondly, IOs provide technical assistance to official agreements with countries. Those ways of actions are quite evident in the case of multilateral banks. However, the existence of monetary loans does not necessarily imply the pursuit of specific models; furthermore the influence can be high without any loans from the bank to the country. In that sense, in the CCTs case, the relationship with the bank is more complex than just the delivery of loans or technical assistance, and in addition much variation is observed on this matter across the region (see Table N°1). “These organizations wield power not only through tangible mechanism such as social economic conditionality but also through shaping the terms of the discourse about social welfare” (Deacon, 1997:58). In this sense, it is useful to consider a third type of action, called mediative activities which involve the research and discussion of international trends and national policies (Bradford, 2009). Organizations engaged in policy mediation “function as arenas where all kinds of experiences can be transmitted and compared, where ideas are generated and shared”, and where ways of actions are discussed (Jacobsson, 2006: 208). Mediation activities “involves recruiting experts to map directions and convening dialogue among such experts and policy practitioners in governments” (Bradford, 2009: 136). Finally, it is possible to identify a fourth way of action – exhortation – which seeks policy change. It packages the ideas and lessons from the meditative stages into concrete action plans and

⁶ According to Haas, the development of an epistemic community often is followed by the creation of an advocacy coalition (Speth and Haas, 2006). Nevertheless, it does not seem to be one of the essential characteristics neither is observed in all the policies’ arenas.
recommendations looking to transfer knowledge and encourage specific policies (Bradford, 2009).  

These activities held by the IOs can contribute to the socialization of a policy among policymakers and politicians as a successful initiative for a specific problem. In other words, “in policy terms, the ideas sanctioned by international organizations help to identify problems and to map out the range of ‘best practice’ solutions” (Mahon and McBride, 2009: 3). In addition, experts form the epistemic communities participate in those activities or are the authors of some relevant reports. Therefore, the relationship between experts and the IOs is relevant for the understanding of the disseminations of the idea of the CCTs in the region. This approach highlights the creation of a consensus about the programs as an efficient policy based on expert knowledge, and the authority and legitimacy of the actors which advocate for them. Those actors “establish a transnational or global discourse that is the backdrop against which global decisions are made” (Deacon, 1997:60). The dissemination of ideas and information can lead new patterns of behavior and prove to be a determinant of international policy coordination. “Policy models are moving at an accelerated rate through transnational networks (...) there is no doubt that channeled policy learning forms are enabled through technocratic routines, expert networks and epistemic communities” (Peck 2010: 206). In this case, a regional discourse about poverty and conditional cash transfers programs as an efficient policy to alleviate it, and how it affects the national’s adoption of the programs.

Once it was defined the contribution of the concept it is necessary to clarify the method used for the identification of the members of the community. According to Haas, in order to identify the beliefs of the communities he suggests the study of “detailed of materials such as the early publications of community members, testimonies before legislative bodies, speeches, biographical accounts, and interviews” (Haas, 1992:35). The exercise is not just about to identify individuals but the links – although lax- among the members of this community. In this regard, this research has paid attention to testing, especially through interviews, the recognition as experts in the social policy field and if they know each other. Also through the review of documents and activities attention was paid on, whether some of them are conducting research as a team, writing and/or participating in seminars and meetings. “Individuals in the community may be found among the respected experts whose names recur on delegation lists to intergovernmental meetings or among those responsible for drafting back- ground reports or briefing diplomats” (Haas, 1992: 35). A second aspect is to identify the principles and beliefs that members have about public problems; diagnosis and solutions. In that sense, it would be useful the analysis of materials such as publications of the members of the community presentations to legislative bodies and interviews, among others (Haas, 1992).  

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7 I took these concepts of meditative and exhortative activities from Bradford, because they allow illustrating properly IOs activities in this policy diffusion case.
Consequently, to identify the regional epistemic community about CCTs, the attention was paid on experts who are mentioned repeatedly in the literature, members of specialized groups who are permanently participating on seminars and conferences. In addition, networks, ways of contact and transmission of information and knowledge between bureaucrats and politicians were identified. And finally, publications of the community members, testimonies for legislative bodies, speeches, interviews and biographical accounts were tracked (Haas, 1992). This information was recollected by the analysis of the literature, secondary sources and by 50 semi structures interviews\(^8\).

The means of influence can be diverse, through conferences and specialized workshops where bureaucrats and policy makers participate, going beyond academia or international organizations. For this reason it was needed to put attention on “transnational networks operating within and between governmental and non-governmental organizations, establishing a transnational or global discourse that is the backdrop against which global decisions are carried out” (Deacon, 1997: 60). Consequently, the identification of the epistemic community allows identifying a group of actors who have a professional and social status with authority to make recommendations (Dunlop, 2013).

2. The epistemic community during the first years of the wave of diffusion

Between the mid-nineties and early 2000s, the birth of a regional epistemic community would develop a significant role in the dissemination of the CCTs. Along with the implementation of the first programs, this group of experts helped to create a consensus about their effectiveness and relevance to alleviate poverty in the region.

It is possible to identify three arenas from which its members come. On the one hand, the community began to become gradually from experts (some of them academics) linked to evaluations of the first programs (Mexico, Brazil, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Honduras). Also, local policymakers and managers of the CCTs, who had accumulated significant experience in this regard, are identified. Finally, members who came from multilateral banks and in the next years, from other agencies. The common feature that allows us to label them as an epistemic community - and distinguished them from other collective actors- is their knowledge about CCTs. That was acquired from practice, academia and research, and these experts accumulate it during this period and the following years.

\(^8\) The 50 interviews were semi-structured. A group of them was conducted personally in Chile, between 8th-12th November of 2010 and from August to December in 2012. The field work in Ecuador was conducted from 11th- 18th of June of 2012. Other interviews were conducted by telephone or video conference, during the years 2011-2012, especially to experts and officials from multilateral banks residing in different geographic areas.
Respect to the first and second field, the case of Mexico is a good example. PROGRESA (later Opportunities) had mainly an endogenous origin\textsuperscript{9}, with national experts designing and implementing the program, and also deciding to develop external impact assessments. The results were published and divulged and contributed to the accumulation of knowledge about CCTs. Santiago Levi\textsuperscript{10}, for example, played a central role in the early years of the program and he is frequently mentioned as a reference in the subject. Also, Paul Gertler\textsuperscript{11}, an economist professor at the University of California at Berkley, who advised the impact assessments carried out by IFPRI also conducted further analysis and had subsequently written several reports about it\textsuperscript{12}.

About the members of the community who were officials of the multilateral banks, it is necessary to consider that those institutions had many roles over the years. In the pioneers cases of Brazil and Mexico, the linkage with banks was setting trough the exchange of knowledge, technical advice and support on impact assessments. In other cases, banks had direct participation through loans (e.g. Nicaragua) or also provided technical cooperation (e.g. Honduras). As a result of these instances, a group of experts with experience in CCTs was consolidating. They knew about implementation, and they had access to the specific knowledge accumulated gradually throughout the different cases adopted in the region. In that sense, it is necessary to consider that CCTs were very attractive for banks because they are a good product to be "sold" to the country; considering that these institutions are, above all, banks. “The bank has to promote development, but in the end has to go into business... a bank that manages loans” (CCTs Expert, FAO). Along with this, CCTs opened a possibility for these entities to be linked directly with regional social policies.

About the connections and initiatives that allowed the tying and contact among the members of the epistemic community, it is possible to distinguish explicit instances linked to the policy making process of the programs. In cases where loans and technical cooperation between banks and countries were agreed, there were official instances of meetings between the experts. In other cases, as interviews

\textsuperscript{9} In this regard, there is some debate about how endogenous are the first programs in Brazil and Mexico (eg, Peck, 2010). This paper argues that they are mainly national initiatives, despite the closeness that might exist between Mexican policy makers and some content that banks may be working, as the focalization, for example. This could have contributed to the discussion in the policy making process, but the motivation and the expert group who designed the CCTs are mainly from those countries, and not from the multilateral banks.


\textsuperscript{11} Economist, professor at the Haas School of Business and the School of Public Health, University of California Berkeley. It is considered one of the prioneros in randomized evaluations of social programs in developing countries (http://facultybio.haas.berkeley.edu/faculty-list/gertler-paul retrieved on January 31, 2014)

\textsuperscript{12} Gertler (2004); Fernald, Gertler and Neufeld (2009); Gertler, Martinez and Rubio–Codina (2006) and Fernald, Gertler and Neufeld (2008).
said, it could have been informal meetings among banking officials with academics or national CCTs directives.

It is possible to identify some mediating and exhortation activities from multilateral banks that contribute to the setting and visibility of experts as disseminators of programs; although in this period were still emerging. The IADB implemented in the late nineties, the Regional Policy Dialogue, a mechanism to promote the exchange of knowledge among senior government officials and experts in key areas in Latin America and the Caribbean. Topics such as innovation, water and health, education, energy, labor market, social protection and health networks, among others, are discussed. To facilitate this exchange, the network promotes high quality research and studies. The Social Protection and Health network, inside this Dialogue begin in the 2000 and became a meeting place for experts and program managers.

Finally, the publication of papers with policy recommendations was still bounded during these early years; research and impact evaluation research were just beginning. In fact, the first impact evaluation of PROGRESA began from the year 1998 and the results begin to release two years later (IFPRI, 2000).

2.1. The epistemic community since 2000

The community of experts will be consolidated during the second period. It significantly increased its relationship with IOs, and it was more visible in the mediative and exhortation activities.

In relation to the members who were directors of CCTs, some of them –due to their knowledge in practice and his solid professional profile- began to be recruited from the middle of the 2000s as staff of the World Bank, the IADB and the OAS. For example, Veronica Silva\textsuperscript{13}, one of the Chile Solidario Program Managers, became part of the Department of Social Protection of the World Bank. Also, Manuel Salazar\textsuperscript{14}, from Familias en Acción, Colombia, joined the World Bank in 2002, as Rogelio Gomez Hermosillo\textsuperscript{15} from Oportunidades, Mexico, who is now an external consultant in the World Bank. Santiago Levy, one of the “fathers” of PROGRESA/Oportunidades, since 2007 is part of the IADB as the Vice President for Sectors and Knowledge. Similar cases are Francisca Rivero\textsuperscript{16}, who worked at FOSIS, Chile.

\textsuperscript{13} Social Worker. Between 1999 and 2000, she was Director of the Social Division of the Ministry of Social Development and Planning in Chile. On 2001, she becomes Director of the Social Solidarity Funds Program (FOSIS) (Personal interview on October 31, 2011)

\textsuperscript{14} Economist. Director of Families in Action, Colombia. Since 2002 on World Bank (personal interview March 26, 2012).


(linked to Chile Solidario) and then worked at OAS; and Graziano da Silva\textsuperscript{17}, who was a relevant actor of Zero Hunger in Brazil, and now is the regional Director of FAO. From those positions, the influence of the community is even greater. Following Haas, “to the extent to which an epistemic community consolidates bureaucratic power within national administrations and international secretariats, it stands to institutionalize its influence and insinuate its views into broader international politics” (Haas, 1992: 4). Considering the linkage of the banks and the IOs in the formulation process of some programs, the role filled at those new positions could involve a greater degree of influence on countries.

In that sense, one can say that the legitimacy of community members is based on their own experience, but is also strengthened by their link with IOs. This aspect has a positive impact on the community and its level of influence. For the banks, the incorporation for these experts was part of a learning process, to enrich the information about CCTs. “At the World Bank we have learned, we learned what Mexico, Brazil, Chile were doing...” (Former Director Families en Acción/Current WB Expert). Indeed, as a result of this process of incorporation is possible to distinguish two groups: those with a professional profile doing a career working at the Bank. A second group are the people who join the banks after working on the governments in the region (World Bank CCTs Expert / Former Program Director), as is the case of the former directors just mentioned. Also, especially in the case of WB, there is a process in which the bank have tried to include among its staff professionals with a “Latin American profile” (Expert CCTs, ECLAC and WB) and from various disciplines, looking for a more pluralistic profile in a space where economists had traditionally dominated (Hall, 2007). Today “economists are not only coming with the outfits, banks are more heterogeneous” (CCTs Expert, UNDP). In that sense, some of the former CCTs directors or managers achieve those characteristics which banks apparently are looking for.

Some community members embedded in the multilateral bank have great influence, due to the impact of the activities developed by these entities. In addition, their legitimacy is given by their experience as former executives of the CCTs. In addition, that experience also facilitates their relationship and dialogue with national policy makers. Interviewees agree that trust and legitimacy are greater if the recommendations or responses to the concerns come from a person who has run a program. “If you have on your resume that you were a manager of such programs, they look at you with different eyes” (Academic Expert CCTs). They noted that both policy makers and managers have more expeditious and enriching discussions with other experts who use technical language, and have had similar problems and concerns, whose solutions are only possible to know in practice. Their profile would facilitate the movement of knowledge with credibility.

\textsuperscript{17} Agronomist. Between 2003 and 2004 he was Minister of Food Security, responsible for implementing the Zero Hunger program. From the year 2011 he was elected Director-General of the Organization for Food and Agriculture (FAO). (In http://www.fao.org/about/who-we-are/director-gen/biography/es/ retrieved on January 31, 2014)
given by the implementation and management of processes, and not only by the knowledge of design concepts and policies (Peck, 2010).

During these years, also there were members of the community who stand out for their knowledge of the programs obtained by research and evaluations. Some of them are also authors of reports, books and studies about CCTs, some of them very influential\textsuperscript{18}. For example, Paul Gertler is mentioned as one of the leaders because he participated in the first impact assessment of PROGRESA program and on this basis also conducted several publications. Also, it is noteworthy Ariel Fiszbein\textsuperscript{19} and Norbert Schady\textsuperscript{20} from World Bank, and in recent years Simone Cecchini\textsuperscript{21}, from ECLAC and Fabio Veras from UNDP\textsuperscript{22}.

Regarding the mediating and exhortation activities -that allow the meeting between experts and constitute avenues of influence on their approach towards CCTs-, they have a more significant relevance during this period. As mentioned before, from 2001 it began operating, within the IADB, the Social Protection and Health Network, as part of the Regional Policy Dialogue Initiative. Its main objective is “to create a forum where countries in the region to share experiences, learn about the practices performed outside the region and explore opportunities for regional cooperation in the areas of poverty reduction and protection social” (IADB, 2001: 1). The network finance annuals meetings where the representatives analyze and discuss critical points about CCTs identifying by the periodical contact between banks and the countries\textsuperscript{23}; until 2012, there have been 11 hemispheric meetings of this network, all in Washington, DC\textsuperscript{24}. Since the CCTs is one of the most important programs in this regard, in many of these meetings, presentations were dedicated to linking programs with the central theme of the discussion; for example, financial

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\textsuperscript{18} Some of these publications are Schady and Fiszbein (2009); Levy and Rodriguez (2005); Cecchini and Madariaga (2011); Cecchini and Martinez (2011).


\textsuperscript{21} Economist. Researcher on Social Development Division of ECLAC. It is dedicated to the study of political and social protection programs and poverty reduction in the region, and is an expert on the subject of social indicators (personal interview on November 23, 2011).

\textsuperscript{22} Researcher at the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), UNDP. (Personal interview on 14 November 2011)

inclusion and CCTs. In these activities it is notorious the presence of some experts who are frequently invited by the banks; those names are relevant in certain fields and they integrate the epistemic community.

Community members were also present at the First International Workshop on CCTs, held in Puebla, Mexico in May 2002. This would be the first of three international meetings organized by the Division of Social Protection of the World Bank. The aim of the workshops is to “provide a forum for CCTs implementers who could share their experiences - both successes and challenges - and learn about themselves in order to improve the operation of its programs” (Ayala Consulting Co., 2003: 3). Indeed, these instances were a meeting point between community members and exchange of information and disclosure about CCTs. Along with it, the quality of exhibitors and the fact was organized by the World Bank gave to this activity a huge relevance. In fact, they are repeatedly mentioned as a reference for program managers and experts. The Second Workshop was held Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 2004, and the Third in Istanbul, Turkey. This last one had more global impact with presentations about CCTs in other countries outside Latin America (www.worldbank.org) and more numerous attendances.

There were also other activities that constitute instances for sharing and disseminating knowledge about CCTs, and where the role of the expert community it was outlining. One of them was called “study tours”, which are research missions where policymakers from one or more countries can get first-hand experience. “Since 2001, the Bank has organized study tours in Mexico’s Oportunidades program, Familias en Acción in Colombia and Bolsa Familia in Brazil with more than 30 countries. (...) The study tours are tailored to the needs of participants and have covered all aspects of the CCTs” (IEG, 2011).

By the middle of 2000s, reports are also issued with a character of regional compilation and pointing the official position of the banks about the CCTs. Ariel Fiszbein and Norbert Schady (2009) are authors of Conditional Transfers Programs Reducing Poverty Today and in the Future, a book in which the World Bank reflects the experience accumulated over the years. In 2005, IADB Annual Report (2006) noted that CCTs have been successful in “reducing poverty, promoting the accumulation of human capital and access to basic social services” (IADB, 2006). These studies collected information about various countries and establish critical

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25 As part of this network has been organized annual meetings since 2001, with the corresponding production of documents and related material required of experts (around 230 documents are available on the website).

26 For example, Santiago Levy was guest speaker at the first Regional Policy Dialogue 2001, in his role as Director of the Mexican Social Security Institute. Years later also attend the 11th Meeting 2009. Also, the Argentine expert Fabián Repetto was present in four of these meetings and Ignacio Irrázaival, Chilean expert, was in three of them. Other experts attending some of these meetings were Norbert Schady, IADB, Rita Combariza, Colombian expert, and Paul Gertler. They all have a solid knowledge about initiatives, ranging from conceptual to practical aspects.

points and learning about programs. A favorable attitude towards official programs and specific recommendations regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the CCTs is appreciated.

Finally, an important initiative from the banks is the “Community of Practice” on CCTs, which are defined as an “informal group of professionals who share knowledge on common developmental problems and look for finding joint solutions” (WB, w/d). The WB has numerous communities in practice in relation to a wide range of issues and they are considered as “the heart and soul of knowledge sharing in the organization, because of the wealth of experiences, views and perspectives of social and organizational capital offered to its members” (WB, w/d). The Community of Practice on the PTC was created in 2006 due to increased interest from countries such as Chile, Brazil, Mexico, El Salvador and Colombia, who requested the World Bank to serve as a regional facilitator of knowledge, learning and innovation on programs (IEG, 2011). From that time has developed an active work including annual meetings, videoconferences, exchanging information by e-mail, publishing reports and datasets on the website, face to face sessions between experts, among others (Expert WB; Fiszbein and Schady, 2009). Politicians and experts from other international agencies agree on the importance of this group and its ability to generate greater impact than, for example, participation in an annual seminar (Expert CCTs, ECLAC).

About exhortative activities, the set of documents and reports, based on numerous program evaluations, are a source of legitimacy and plays the role of exhort, invite discussion about poverty and solutions that countries can follow. Many of them respond to requests from the governments themselves; correspond to other studies by the same agencies, along with the debate and the exchange of information from universities or research requested for seminars and meetings. In addition, public databases allow access to systematized information on CCTs. “That rather preeminence is guaranteed in the number of studies, analyzes, evaluations, experiments have been developed. I would say (...) that these programs are one of the most studied social programs in the history of public policy” (CCTs Expert, World Bank). All resources integrate a broad range of knowledge about the programs, which is solid in terms of empirical evidence and breadth of topics covered, and continues to grow steadily.

In recent years, the epistemic community has included in its discussion the weaknesses or complexities of CCTs and their relationship with a broader issue as social protection. This is reflected in the prominence of experts that emphasize these topics and a more important role of international organizations as ECLAC, FAO and OAS. In addition, these agencies have also in recent years led activities related to the accumulation of knowledge and debate about the CCTs. “Initially banks were more important. Today the community is very heterogeneous as programs are heterogeneous, and there are other prominent actors. For example,

ECLAC (...) and OAS” (CCTs Expert, UNDP). They would have, according to some respondents, the greater legitimacy among policy makers and experts. “It’s more interesting a workshop organized by ECLAC to a workshop organized by the Bank. (...) I think the balance of power has changed enough” (PTC Expert, UNDP).

Their late presence in this process could be explained because the bank had in some cases a key role from the beginning through money lending, action that these bodies do not perform. Its objectives and capacities thus differ from those of the multilateral banks. “I think we have different contributions, ideas a bit different, (...) and obviously have less interference, because one thing is go to a country with good budget direct funding or technical (...) or the assistance with resources (...) We come up with ideas and some want to hear us well and some do not” (CCTs Expert ECLAC). In that sense, their participation in the debate about CCTs agrees with the existence of better background, information and a more complex and comprehensive overview about programs.

Putting attention, officially, by ECLAC in the programs is, in a sense, late. One of the first works to address a characterization and analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the CCTs is Villatoro (2004), reprinted the following year in the Journal of ECLAC. Also Lorena Godoy, who boarded the Low Income Program of Brazil (which later became part of Bolsa Familia), although it is not mentioned and/or defined as a CCTs. Other work focused on specific aspects, such as its impact in areas such as gender, education, institutional characteristics.

29. The official interest about CCTs by ECLAC starts in 2005-2006, as reflected in the document Social Protection for the Future: Access, Financing and Solidarity (ECLAC, 2006), presented to the thirty-first session. In particular in Chapter V analyzes of social programs where “special importance is given to those who have had more coverage and distribution in the recent past: the emergency programs linked to employment and conditional cash transfer programs” (ECLAC, 2006: 150). It was also from those years that the focus of social rights and social protection took center stage in the research agenda of ECLAC (Cecchini and Martínez, 2011). From that perspective, ECLAC recommends that States should fulfill its responsibility in its commitments to the international community in relation to the respect, protection and promotion of social rights, and the adoption of concrete measures through policies social protection (ECLAC, 2006).

Given this perspective of social protection, CCTs are a specific tool that should be analyzed in this context. Thus, in the following years ECLAC developed a wide production of knowledge on the subject. There are complete works that provide information about the reality in the region, taking into account the characteristics of the programs and their role in social protection. A study on the contribution of the programs and their role in social protection.

29. For example (Godoy, 2004) and (Armas, 2005).
30. In terms of access to information is important to mention the ECLAC database, where it is possible to find the description of the main components of the PTC region, statistics and documents. In addition http://dds.cepal.org/bdptc/ working documents, such as Social Policy Series, which disseminate studies on more specific aspects of the programs. For example Roman (2010), Villatoro (2005), Rodriguez (2010) and Arim, Cruces and Vigorito (2009).
CCTs meeting the Millennium Development Goals, that is, the extent to which countries implementing programs have reduced (or not) poverty was published in 2008 (León, 2008). Another key work is published from ECLAC, Cecchini and Madariaga (2011), Conditional Cash Transfer Programs. Balance of recent experience in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the programs in the region, considering various aspects such as its core characteristics, type of conditionality, impact, institutional, among others. Finally, in Inclusive Social Protection in Latin America: a comprehensive look, programs are analyzed in their relation to social protection and rights approach (Cecchini and Martínez, 2011) and from this perspective their strengths, weaknesses and challenges are discussed. The authors classify the programs based on their type of conditionality (mild or strong) and with respect to whether they are part of a system of social protection. In this line, CCTs are considered as a component, usually allowing entry to the system, of a broader strategy for social protection. These works are the result of research conducted by experts, and also the results of the discussions and presentations in workshops and seminars organized by ECLAC31. In that sense, in the same manner, as seen in the banks, the authors of these studies are members of the epistemic community. For example, Simone Cecchini and Rodrigo Martínez are frequently participants in seminars and meetings, and they are mentioned as referents for policymakers.

All these actions and publications by ECLAC provide a platform for discussion for experts involved, and they are meeting points with national policy makers. Moreover, compared with other agencies, ECLAC maintains a close relationship with universities and academic centers such as the University of Chile and the Catholic University of Chile, Argentina and CIPPEC in UNAM in Mexico (ECLAC Expert CCTs). Finally, one of the most recent initiatives ECLAC is a new website dedicated to the issue of social protection created in 201232. His goal is to spread the work developed and accumulated by the Social Development Division of ECLAC and other institutions for social protection. In line with what had been discussing, the ECLAC database that existed a few years ago, became a part of this web site on social protection, along with a new database on pensions33. Considering this, ECLAC, as an international organization, has provided a platform for discussion of experts, exchange of knowledge between countries and also provides important systematic information about CCTs. In this way, it establishes a link with the formulation and analysis of national social policies in the region.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has also developed a leading role and has facilitated the influence of community experts. FAO, with its regional office in Santiago de Chile, started since 2006 with the launch of the “Initiative for Latin America and the Caribbean without Hunger” (a political-

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31 Expert Workshop “Social protection, poverty and rights approach: links and tensions.” Organized by ECLAC and GTZ, Santiago, also 5 to 6 November 2009, ECLAC has co-organized several seminars organized by FAO mentioned below.


33 http://dds.cepal.org/bdps/rescatado el 20 de enero.
institutional body of incidence to eradicate hunger in the region within generation), and has focused its work on strengthening the dimension of access to the poorest families to food. In this context, FAO also focused their work on the evaluation of CCTs and its impact on the eradication of hunger and nutrition of children and to exchange information on programs among experts and politicians through regular seminars. However, there was a partial change in this emphasis in 2006 with its new director, Graziano da Silva, who participated in the design and implementation of the Hambre Cero (Zero Hunger) in Brazil, which is a currently a component of Bolsa Familia program. The arrival of this expert, who is part of this community on the CCTs, focused attention on the impact of the programs on nutrition and social protection. For this reason, the seminars are seen as an opportunity to disseminate the analysis of programs and their relation to obtaining adequate nutrition for the population in extreme poverty. These instances went from having too few participants and partners in the early years, reaching increasing degrees of complexity, with the participation and interagency collaboration (CCTs Expert FAO).

3. Final Remarks

It can be said that since the mid-nineties until 2010 a regional epistemic community established a consensus about the effectiveness of CCTs to combat poverty in Latin America. In that sense, this evidence - identification of regional epistemic community, its origin and pathways of influence - helps confirm the presence of this actor who is significant in the explanation about the diffusion process of the CCTs.

The integrants of the epistemic community are professionals from academia, former directors or part of the IOs staff, who are researching, publishing and discussing CCTs in all these instances. They have great legitimacy based on their knowledge, and in some cases, on their position within IOs. In addition, they agree on the relevance of the programs in the region as an efficient policy against poverty, although they can disagree on some points. In the last few years, critical opinions on CCTs have emerged from some academics and experts in the region; they mainly disagree on the conditionality of the scheme and the tension it generate in terms of the universality of social rights (ECLAC and WB CCTs Expert Interviews). However, those disagreements are part of the components of an epistemic community. “They need not agree on every element –in fact they are likely to disagree vehemently about some elements,- they do agree both about the core assumptions and causal forces as well as about the means”(Haas, 2007: 793). The epistemic community is also relevant because it contributes to the

34 Fonseca (2008), Garret, Bassett and Marini (2009), Hoddinott and Bassett (2009); Paes Sousa and Pacheco (2009).
35 Graziano da Silva participated in developing the Zero Hunger program and its implementation as an Extraordinary Minister of Food Security and Fight Against Hunger. Zero Hunger aims to ensure the human right to have adequate food, promoting food security and contributing to the achievement of citizenship among the most vulnerable. It is an integrated political system, which has access components for food, strengthening rural families, income generation and social coordination and commitment.
process of learning about CCTs within those institutions, especially in the case of multilateral banks. The incorporation of experts to the banks provides the required internal knowledge and also the possibility of continuing advising to the countries.

Most group members developed a permanent role in the period, although some of them with a more visible and active role than others. In this sense, they are regularly invited to present and participate in seminars and conferences organized about the programs in different countries in the region and beyond as Asia or Africa. Moreover, they are often mentioned in the interviews as authorities on the subject and their books are essential references. These documents provide relevant inputs for the mediating activities but also have an important role as an instrument of encouragement. As already mentioned, the international agencies have conducted extensive research about CCTs and their impact on the region. Most of them are available on their websites reaching a broad spectrum of groups, including academics, politicians, students and media, among others. The information presented there has strong empirical support, and specific recommendations for the design and implementation of CCTs is an essential resource, with legitimacy and authority to the debate on the issue in the region. In that sense, in terms of the process of policy formulation, this information contributes to the mitigation of the uncertainty and offers accessible insights and solutions to public problems with legitimacy and authority. Such publications have these two aspects, gives them a significant value in the process of negotiating and constructing alternative policy solutions.

The epistemic community agrees on a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to poverty and social policies, and about the role of policies to contribute to improving the living conditions of people. In general, this approach is also seen in international organizations, in terms of the relevance of social policies to alleviate poverty in the region and the establishment of social safety nets. In recent years, ECLAC, FAO and OAS stand out in this regard, although banks mainly IADB, have also established initiatives. However, there are differences between banks and other agencies - in relation to the debate on the role of the state and the market, and in the field of social protection systems, which are more evident in recent years. In fact, this divergence is not new, “although development banks tend to dominate, the ILO and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean continues to provide alternative views” (Ervik, 2005:36). In the case of the World Bank report, *Conditional Cash Transfers programs. Reducing Poverty Today and in the Future* (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009), the role of programs and the need to strengthen the components of a social protection system is discussed. However, CCTs are also mentioned as components of safety nets, as in the nineties. “The potential impact of the global financial crisis of 2008 on living standards in the developing world have given new emphasis on the social importance of safety net programs (...)” (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009: XI). The report, in that sense, differs from other comparable publications from CEPAL, looking from deliver a regional view of the CCTs, promoting and providing a guideline for their design. Instead, Cecchini and Martínez (2011) published by ECLAC, pose a slightly more critical perspective at the CCTs, establishing for
example the idea that they should not become “Christmas Trees” in the sense of adding components without further analysis. This expression is mentioned several times during the interviews with experts, demonstrating that the idea had been spread among the experts. These differences are partly due to the nature of the institutions, their objectives, and the preeminence of certain kinds of experts. However, there is an agreement especially in the early years, about CCTs as a viable policy for poverty alleviation, and its favorable impact on its efficiency. Moreover, converging in the means of validation, i.e., impact assessments, monitoring, targeting methods, among others; the need for verifiable tools for the design, implementation and evaluation of social policies. For example, confirmation by means (proxy mean test) is a feature of almost all programs and experts agree that it was constantly promoted by banks as the most appropriate tool for targeting (Expert CCTs, UNDP and WB).

Regarding the channels of influence and the meeting points of these experts, an important role of international agencies and mediating activities and performing exhortation is observed. Experts have great knowledge about the PTC, which reinforces the legitimacy of being frequent speakers at seminars and mediating activities that have been described. In addition, the support of international organizations allows them to produce reports, books and publications, and access to national and international databases, contacts with policy makers and other types of information. The set of papers and reports, based on the numerous evaluations of the programs, constitute a source of legitimacy and have a role in the exhortation about poverty’s problem and the solutions that countries can follow. Many of them respond to requests from governments themselves, others correspond to studies developed by the same organisms, along with the debate and exchange of information from universities or think tanks that are requested for seminars and meetings. Also, the public databases allow access to systematized information about CCTs and contribute to their diffusion. All those resources integrate an extensive set of knowledge about the programs, rich in terms of the wider issues related, its reliability and its constant growth. The numerous activities described are linked to domestic policy processes. Visits, seminars and access to certain documents occur during this process and can influence one way or another, to adopt the definition of the program or their components. Conferences, such as those by the World Bank, IADB and FAO, usually include the presentation of the national cases, along with the specialized discussion of topics relating to the challenges of social policies and CCTs, and more specific areas of operationalization of programs (funding, targeting methods, indicators for monitoring, etc.).

All these instances facilitated the creation of this regional consensus on the PTC which is one of the explanatory variables for the diffusion process of the programs in Latin America and even to other countries outside the region. In that sense, the

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36 Members of the community are mentioned as influential actors in the process of exploring alternatives for overcoming poverty program in New York. From 2006, impressed by the success of Oportunidades and other CCT programs, the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) leadered by
collected evidence confirms the role of the epistemic community and international organizations. The variable that explains the spread of CCTs is the existence of a consensus about its effectiveness; “CCTs are efficient and work in the region”. This idea has evolved over time and persists, although in the recent years is reviewed and aspire to place the CCTs as a component of a more complex systems of social protection and to involve a discussion about the challenges to ensure the social rights of the population. Along with this, the large body of research and reports that characterize and analyze the CCTs packaged in a generic model and facilitates its diffusion. This is a product that can move fast, with a simple presentation and discussion.

Further research has yet to be developed to understand how experts and IOs influence the domestic policy making process and what factors determine it. Through the case studies it should be possible to clarify, for example, the mechanisms of diffusion, the role of experts and the domestic knowledge. The arguments presented here, reveal the participation of IOs in a collective role beyond the technical transference and monetary loans. Naturally, they were important component in the adoption process of some countries. However, the existence of the regional epistemic community contributed to the consensus about the efficiency of CCTs which can be more relevant in some cases than in others. In that sense, future research should analyze if the policy consensus contributes to the adoption through a learning mechanism. Or, in some cases it could facilitate and motivate emulation. In that sense, it seems that the quality of domestic institutions, the capacities of the actors involved and economic and technical resources are relevant to explain each of these alternatives. Those are factors which have to be analyzed in details in the case studies.

As a final point, it is worth mentioning that the diffusion of CCTs to other regions of the world is very significant. In that sense, the epistemic community continues working through the different organizations and the networks established, especially those created by World Bank, due to its global scope. A relevant flux of south-south transfer of knowledge and cooperation about CCTs is based on these networks, publications and experts.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg, began to explore whether a similar program could be adapted to the poorest neighborhoods in the city New York (Peck, 2010). Opportunities New York (2008-2011) was inspired and influenced by Mexico, and there was a close collaboration of the World Bank (PTC Expert, MRDC). Conferences were conducted to understand the experiences, where experts from the WB participated (Helena Ribe, Ariel Schady, Laura Rawlings, James Levi and Margaret Grosh) (Peck, 2010). They also had contacts with policy makers from Mexico, Chile, Colombia and Brazil. The agency responsible for implementing the program was the MRDC Foundation (http://www.mdrc.org/) a non-profit organization, funded by the Ford Foundation to contribute to the research and design of poverty and education policies (Riccio et al, 2010). MRDC won a Rockefeller Foundation grant to fund an international conference in Bellagio Study and Conference Center, in July 2008.
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Websites:

www.eclac.org  www.worldbank.org
www.iadb.org  www.fao.org
www.oas.org  www.socialprotectionet.org
## ANNEX

### Table N°1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Source of resources</th>
<th>Monetary Loans</th>
<th>Technical Support (Evaluations, Training)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Argentina</td>
<td>Public Resources</td>
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<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Bolivia</td>
<td>Public Resources</td>
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<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Brasil</td>
<td>Public Resources and World Bank</td>
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<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Chile</td>
<td>Public Resources and WB</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Colombia</td>
<td>World Bank, BID, Public Resources</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Costa Rica</td>
<td>Public Resources</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Ecuador</td>
<td>Public Resources and IADB and WB.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 El Salvador</td>
<td>World Bank and IADB</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Guatemala</td>
<td>Public Resources</td>
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<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Honduras</td>
<td>Public Resources and IDB</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 México</td>
<td>Public Resources and WB</td>
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<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Nicaragua</td>
<td>Public Resources and IDB</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Panamá</td>
<td>World Bank and IDB</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Uruguay</td>
<td>Public Resources</td>
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</table>

Source: by the autor