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**STRATEGIES OF CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFERS
AND THE TACTICS OF RESISTANCE**

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Abstract

This article examines how poor people negotiate obligations placed on them by social welfare initiatives. More specifically, it considers Conditional Cash Transfer programs (CCTs), and the ways beneficiaries harness program conditionalities to make demands on authorities, in some cases even enacting subtle forms of resistance to state governance. Drawing from Michel de Certeau, it argues that while CCT conditionalities function as *strategies* of state development, they are not always/already under exclusive state control. Marginalized groups like CCT recipients can *tactically* harness these conditionalities. Through such tactics, poor people make demands on the state and deflect program obligations, but in calculated ways that avoid exposing them to greater vulnerability. Drawing from empirical data collected as part of a case study in rural northeastern Brazil, this article contributes to existent bodies of literature on CCTs, governance, and critical development studies in the twenty-first century.

Key words: conditional cash transfers, development, the state, rural, Brazil

1 Waiting on the state

Viçosa do Ceará is a small town in northeastern Brazil. It is located on the western edge of the state of Ceará near to the border with Piauí (see Fig. 1). According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), Viçosa has a population of roughly 20,000 inhabitants. It lies in the center of its surrounding municipality, and is a hub for local political and economic activity. The municipality shares the same name as the town, and has a total population – again, according to the IBGE – of nearly 60,000 people. Viçosa the municipality is overwhelmingly rural, making Viçosa the town the only urban area in a rather large municipal space of 1,312 km². During the day the town comes alive, swelling with visitors from the surrounding agricultural countryside, and in the evening it empties out, reduced to only the residents who permanently live there.

(Figure 1 about here.)

Not surprisingly, there are specific locations in town where activity swarms: the public market, the main hospital, and the municipal offices headquarters, to name a few. Add to this now the local branch office of the *Caixa Econômica Federal* (Brazil's Federal Savings Bank), which very recently has become another of Viçosa's busiest locations. At least, that is, on the last ten days of every month. On these days, large lines extend out the front door and far down the street. The people in line wait to receive their monthly benefit from Brazil's *Programa Bolsa Família* (PBF), a federal welfare program launched in 2003 to alleviate extreme poverty and hunger. Program benefits are distributed via the Federal Savings Bank on the last ten days of each month, when recipients must present themselves to local bank officials to receive payment. On these days, beginning early in the morning and extending through to the afternoon, large crowds gather at the door of Viçosa's Federal Savings Bank branch office (see Fig. 2).

The reasons for such long lines are twofold. The first is that the municipality of Viçosa is a poor one, and more than 95 percent of residents receive PBF benefits.¹ Recipient claims are staggered across the final ten days of each month to prevent overcrowding, meaning that each individual recipient must report to bank officials on their designated day to receive payment. With thousands of people coming to the bank on each of these days, long lines are not surprising. It is the same in hundreds (if not thousands) of other poor municipalities throughout Brazil. The second reason, however, is more complicated, and stems in part from Brazil's penchant for bureaucratic protocol and (over)administration. Rather than automatically transferring program benefits to receipt families, face-to-face contact must be made each month, specific routines are performed, state oversight established, interactions documented, forms stamped, etc. These sorts of practices have existed in Brazil since colonial times (Faoro, 1975). Yet as researchers have observed elsewhere (Ballard, 2013; Standing, 2011), such regulations are by no means unique to Brazil: they are common to Conditional Cash Transfer programs (CCTs) like PBF, where social welfare for the poor comes with strings attached. On the one hand comes desperately needed income assistance, while on the other comes a host of obligations that must be fulfilled by program recipients (Cookson, 2016; Sener, 2015). Sam Hickey notes that although poverty reduction schemes like CCTs are crucial to reducing hunger, they also seek to induce specific and desired behaviors within poor populations through program conditionalities (2010).

(Figure 2 about here.)

The purpose of this article is to critically interrogate how poor people engage the conditionalities of CCT programs. More specifically, I consider the ways PBF recipients make demands on the state *through* program conditionalities, and in some cases even enact

subtle forms of resistance to state governance. Rather than expanding on arguments that CCT conditionalities operate as technologies of governmentality (Hossain, 2010; Luccisano, 2006), or instead that CCTs produce ‘more’ or ‘less’ intense forms of citizenship (Hunter and Sugiyama, 2014; Pereira, 2015; Rego and Pinzani, 2013), my goal in this article is to explore how CCT recipients make use of program conditionalities to put pressure on the state.

Drawing from Michel de Certeau (1984), I suggest that while CCT conditionalities function as *strategies* for state development initiatives, they are not always/already under exclusive state control. Marginalized groups like CCT recipients can harness them *tactically*. Through such tactics, poor people make demands on the state and deflect program obligations, but in calculated ways that avoid exposing themselves to greater vulnerability. Drawing from empirical data collected as part of a case study, this article pushes existent bodies of literature on CCTs, governance, and critical development studies in the twenty-first century (c.f., Garmany, 2016; Gupta, 2012; Li, 2007; Scott, 2009).

Findings in this article come from field research conducted in northeast Brazil; specifically from the municipality of Viçosa do Ceará, and more generally from other neighboring municipalities. This region is decidedly rural, providing interesting points of contrast to existing research on CCT programs (Lo Vuolo, 2013; Sany and Daudelin, 2013; Sugiyama, 2013) as well as studies drawing on the work of de Certeau (Lee, 2006; Secor, 2004). I begin in the next section by unpacking debates over CCT programs and their conditionalities, and ground these arguments in the context of PBF and my case study from northeast Brazil. I then move on to show how PBF conditionalities are engaged tactically by poor Brazilians, highlighting the ways beneficiaries dodge burdensome protocol and make demands on the state through the very discourses of the program itself (e.g., responsibility, compliance, independence). By reflecting on these processes, my goal in this article is to

push existing accounts regarding the effects of CCT programs, and to offer new analytical traction to ongoing debates in political, development, and critical human geography.

2 Debating Conditional Cash Transfers

By most accounts, Conditional Cash Transfer programs (CCTs) have existed for more than 20 years (Ballard, 2013; Pereira, 2015; Seekings, 2012). They require beneficiary families to fulfill certain obligations – e.g., registration and monitoring, healthcare checkups, child education – making them social welfare programs with *conditionalities*. Should recipient families fail to meet these conditionalities, they could be cut off from income assistance used to buy basic foodstuffs. Draconian as such regulations appear to some (Saad-Filho, 2015; Standing, 2011), today CCTs are widely credited with reducing hunger in countries of the Global South and developing “human capital” by targeting child development and education (Fizbein and Schady, 2009). Now at work in dozens of countries worldwide, CCTs are especially popular in Latin America, where at least 18 different countries employ CCT programs to combat poverty and chronic hunger (Lavinias, 2013).

The world’s largest CCT program is Brazil’s *Programa Bolsa Família* (PBF), with almost 14 million registered families and a total recipient base of approximately 50 million people (Campello and Neri, 2014). Since PBF was launched by the Workers’ Party in 2003 it has combined with other federal social assistance policies (many related to housing), along with annual incremental adjustments to the minimum wage, to greatly alter Brazil’s political and economic landscape (Saad-Filho, 2015). It should be noted that in addition to the questions of state governance addressed in this article, elected officials and their political campaigns are also important for shaping PBF. This is to say that the goals and effects of CCTs are explained by more than just state power and governmentality: they represent in many instances the efforts of politicians concerned with winning elections, as well as

competition among political parties and attempts to appeal to voters (Coêlho, 2012; Pereira, 2015).

With respect to effectiveness, policy experts mostly agree that PBF has been implemented successfully (Campello and Neri, 2014; Montero, 2014), and that the program is remarkably well managed and cost effective (Pereira, 2015). Families are deemed eligible for PBF if their per capita monthly household income is less than R\$150 (\$45-55 dollars), and the amount they receive depends on the number of dependents living at home relative to total household income. To receive the benefit, families must adhere to the following conditionalities: registration with municipal authorities; verification and maintenance of municipal domicile; providing household demographic information; ensuring their children maintain regular attendance at school (85 percent of school days for children 6-15; 75 percent for children 16-17); having their children inoculated against infectious disease; having their children's growth and development monitored by state healthcare professionals; and pregnant women must attend pre-natal healthcare checkups. Most development experts look favorably on PBF, and the program is often used as a model for CCTs elsewhere (Pereira, 2015).

Where researchers tend to criticize PBF and other CCTs, however, lies in the *conditional* obligations that recipients must fulfill. Rather than just serving to eradicate hunger and provide child welfare, scholars contend that CCTs are also designed to re-engineer underperforming sectors of society (Corboz, 2013; Ferguson, 2010; Meltzer, 2013; Peck and Theodore, 2012, 2015). Simply put, the poor are meant to change their habits, behaviors, and practices by adhering to CCT conditionalities (Hossain, 2010). Reducing hunger is a high priority, but connected to this are biopolitical objectives: like other development programs, CCTs are intended to improve the productive capacities of the population, creating docile, more pliable citizen subjects out of the poor (Garmany, 2016).

The next section of this article addresses this issue more directly, focusing on CCT conditionalities and their connections to contemporary governance. While academic debates often investigate the biopolitical and neoliberal underpinnings of CCT programs (Corboz, 2013; Meltzer, 2013; Sener, 2015), in this article I take a different approach. By critically unpacking the everyday interactions between PBF beneficiaries and state actors, I show how poor people find opportunities in PBF conditionalities to tactically subvert obligations placed on them by the state, and also to make demands on the state for improved services.

Empirical research for this article was conducted during two rounds of fieldwork between 2013-2014. Both trips to the field lasted for two months, and in 2014 I returned to many of the same towns and settlements I visited in 2013. Though data were collected in several municipalities, this article draws primarily from findings in the municipality of Viçosa do Ceará. Data from this municipality reflect a balance of state and non-state voices, as well as several hours of participant observation split between (and sometimes in the presence of both) PBF administrators and PBF recipients. Moreover, focusing upon a single municipality helps to make comparisons of the data more consistent (e.g., when considering, for example, citizen engagements with municipal authorities), as well as narrowing the analysis to avoid broader issues related to an ongoing border dispute between the states of Ceará and Piauí (see Fig. 1 and also Garmany, 2016).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 22 PBF recipients (with 11 follow up interviews), including several ‘informal’ interviews conducted as part of participatory observation. These interviews queried how PBF recipients experienced state institutions and state actors, their daily challenges and concerns, and their encounters with the state more generally (e.g., public healthcare facilities, public schools, PBF registration and collection, municipal infrastructure). Even more important were several days spent in the company of

these respondents and their families, conducting participant observation to understand the ways they made due on a daily basis. With state actors, 18 semi-structured interviews were conducted (with 8 follow up interviews), along with several informal interviews collected during participant observation within municipal institutions. These interviews brought to light the experiences of state actors working in PBF administration, showing how and in what ways their perspectives (mis)matched with PBF recipients. Part and parcel with these interviews were several hours of participant observation in municipal institutions – what Andolina et al. call “inter-institutional ethnography” (2009, page 247) – in order to see firsthand how they interacted with local residents and how decisions were made. These data were fleshed out with document analysis and technical reports, in addition to extensive travel within the region to visually verify claims made by interview respondents.

3 The strategies and the tactics

Though CCT programs may be a relatively new development strategy, there already exists a robust academic literature on their aims and effects (Ballard, 2013; Fiszbein and Shady, 2009; Peck and Theodore, 2012, 2015). Critical scholars have considered their efficacy in terms of poverty reduction (Handa and Davis, 2006; Soares et al., 2010), as well as their broader political economic and governance ramifications (Fenwick, 2009; Seekings, 2012). While some researchers see potential in CCTs for increasing access to citizenship rights (Hall, 2013; Hunter and Sugiyama, 2014; Sany and Daudelin, 2013), others are more critical, suggesting that CCTs offer only the barest financial assistance and can work in subtle ways to further marginalize poor people (Saad-Filho, 2015; Standing, 2011).

Of particular scrutiny have been questions of women’s empowerment (Corboz, 2013; Molyneux, 2007; Molyneux and Thompson, 2011) and education and child welfare (Hanlon et al., 2010; Hossain, 2010). While they provide crucial assistance to poor families, programs

like PBF also aim to produce an ideal-type neoliberal citizen who is fiscally responsible, economically savvy, and capable of looking after their own welfare (c.f., Ferguson, 2010). Writes Judy Meltzer, CCTs are connected to neoliberal ideologies of “good citizenship,” whereby recipients are meant to learn appropriate financial risk management strategies (2013, page 646).

These critiques connect to broader debates concerning the ways governmentality underlies development initiatives (Gupta, 2012; Li, 2007), and more specifically the biopolitical implications of CCT conditionalities (Hickey, 2010; Meltzer, 2013; Sener, 2015). By requiring beneficiaries to comply with conditional obligations that discipline their daily practice, administer their spatialities (demographic capture, municipal registration, monthly reporting and attendance), and acquiesce to the state’s medical gaze and education objectives, critical researchers argue that CCTs seek a host of governmentality objectives intended to cultivate more productive, complicit, and reliably governable populations (Hossain, 2010; Luccisano, 2006). This is not to say that such intentions and/or their effects are necessarily ‘bad’ or ‘good’: to do so would be to misunderstand the ways governmentality and neoliberalism operate, and to overlook their diverse outcomes (Ferguson, 2015). Instead, what draws scholarly attention are the ways governmentality and neoliberal objectives built into development initiatives remain incomplete, and the ways poor people benefit from, resist, and rearticulate the state’s disciplinary objectives (Ferguson, 2010; Li, 2007). Writes Akhil Gupta, “one has to remember how [governmentality] is itself a conjunctural and crisis-ridden enterprise, how it engenders its own modes of resistance, and makes, meets, molds, or is contested by new subjects” (2012, page 239). Such perspective is especially useful for considering CCTs: while reasons for their failure to produce intended neoliberal governance outcomes have been explored (Garmany, 2016), still missing are critical investigations of the

ways beneficiaries engage program conditionalities. More directly, and following Gupta, how might CCTs produce new modes of resistance, and how are conditionalities met and contested by recipient populations?

Helpful here is the work of geographer Anna Secor (2004, 2007), who explores the ways migrant Kurdish women in Istanbul negotiate everyday practices, tropes, and discourses of Turkish citizenship. For Secor, citizenship exemplifies Michel de Certeau's notion of "strategies": hegemonic practices and discourses deployed by those seeking to control and dominate space and social relations (de Certeau, 1984). As a strategy, citizenship works to differentiate insiders from outsiders, establishing criteria that demarcate the 'real' citizens in any given society. It limits access to certain spaces and establishes hegemonic parameters for spatial mobility. Without access to such strategies, Kurdish migrants in Istanbul rely on their anonymity in public space to "pass" as Turkish (Secor, 2004, page 360). For de Certeau, these practices represent "tactics": "a guileful ruse" adopted by the subjugated who "must accept the chance offerings of the moment" (1984, page 37). Tactics are acts of resistance, but disguised and ambiguous in their challenge to power. Though citizenship may work as a strategy to discipline and code space in Istanbul through various signs, symbols, and customs, the tactics of Kurdish migrants serve to subvert these hegemonic practices, allowing them to exist in their anonymity and guile.

So how is Secor's work useful for understanding PBF in northeast Brazil? On the one hand, PBF conditionalities operate in much the same way as Turkish citizenship: they are strategies seeking to exert greater control over space, practice, and social relations (c.f., Hossain, 2010; Meltzer, 2013; Peck and Theodore, 2015). Like citizenship, conditionalities attempt to implement "a set of hegemonic practices and discourses, [that] assembles and naturalizes the subject positions of [people], situating them within a grid of power relations

across state and society” (Secor, 2004, page 359). These are the governmentality objectives of CCTs, and they are produced through strategies like program conditionalities. And on the other hand, Secor’s work is also useful in how it harnesses Michel de Certeau’s notion of “making do” (1984). With little recourse against state negligence and abuse of power, and a national discourse that expects gratitude for their everyday existence, PBF recipients in Brazil – like Kurdish migrants in Istanbul – must make do on a daily basis. Yet *how* exactly do CCT beneficiaries make do, and what are their tactics? Going further, how do they engage state development strategies and the governmentality objectives of CCT conditionalities?

In the remaining sections of this article I work to provide answers to these questions. By reflecting frequently on contributions from de Certeau, Secor, Gupta, and others, I show how PBF beneficiaries negotiate program conditionalities through disguised and very calculated acts of resistance. Using tactics, PBF beneficiaries push back against obligations laid upon them by the state, and even make use of conditionalities to voice demands for improved public services. In addition to shedding much needed light on the tactics of CCT recipients, this article also explores important spatial differences between urban and rural contexts (Cookson, 2016; Parsons, 2015). To better understand how CCT conditionalities operate on the ground – particularly for those who live outside of major urban areas – more focus is needed on the ways poor people make do, balancing daily household needs with the requirements, protocol, and obligations of the state.

4 *Programa Bolsa Família* in rural northeastern Brazil

Seu Pedro and his family live in the miniscule community of Horizonte on the municipal outskirts of Viçosa do Ceará. Like other families in the area, they are subsistence agriculturalists who, over time, have negotiated a mostly autonomous relationship from local *latifundiários* (large estate owners). In the past these *latifundiários* held total sway over the

region, but in recent decades their ‘governing work’ (e.g., patronage) has shifted mostly to the state. This is not to say that landed elites are no longer powerful in northeast Brazil, but that the *governance* of state actors has in recent years begun to replace the *government* of latifundiários. Reasons for this change are myriad, and connect on several levels to the objectives of state actors themselves. On the one hand is the issue of winning votes, which was hardly a factor until Brazil’s return to democracy in 1985. And on the other hand are financial incentives for municipal officials to expand services like PBF to poor residents, an issue explored later in this paper and in more detail elsewhere (e.g., Campello and Neri, 2014; Garmany, 2016; Pereira, 2015).

The land around Horizonte is poor, like the inhabitants, and life in the region has long been precarious. Until the advent of PBF, rates of malnutrition and infant mortality were high, and even today most adults are functionally illiterate and show the corporeal effects of long-term poverty (stunted growth, premature aging, unaddressed medical ailments). The children look like a new race of people altogether, each one taller, healthier, and better nourished than their parents. PBF alone is not responsible for this change – Brazil’s surging agricultural export market and federal subsidies for small farmers also play a role – but the transformative effects of PBF should not be underestimated. Life for the youngest generation in Horizonte offers a wealth of new opportunities, and for Seu Pedro, the quasi-patriarch of the community, these offerings are not to be wasted.

According to municipal administrators, Seu Pedro visits office headquarters in Viçosa at least once a month to lobby for infrastructural development in and around Horizonte. Seu Pedro confirms, insisting that in fact “every week!” he appears at their door. When I first met him in 2013 he was championing roadways and transportation, insisting the dirt roads of the countryside were insufficient and dangerous for the population. Indeed, few roads in the

municipality of Viçosa were paved, and fast growing numbers of auto-vehicles (mostly motorcycles and scooters) are placing increased pressure on municipal planners. Beginning in 2012, Seu Pedro began to ask for the (almost) unthinkable: to pave the dirt roadways of the countryside so that one could travel from the city of Viçosa, roughly 45 kilometers from Horizonte, all the way to Seu Pedro's house without ever leaving a paved roadway. When municipal planners first recounted this story to me in 2013, one joked that the project was absurd, as a donkey (i.e, Seu Pedro's most common form of transportation) hardly needs a paved road to walk on.

Returning in 2014, however, I found road crews at work all over the municipality. Not every dirt road in Viçosa was slated for paving, but many of them were, including several in the area of Horizonte. Seu Pedro looked vindicated, smiling in his triumph. He could see my surprise, and explained at length his role in the process:

They [municipal authorities] complain when the children miss school, but what can we do? We don't want them to miss school, but when it rains, how are we supposed to take them to school? So Jeff, you know me; we're decent people and we want to educate our children. We try everyday to make sure they go to school and study, we have this responsibility. But if the roads won't allow it, what can we do? We look irresponsible! But who's responsible for the roads? We're responsible for our children, but we can't take them to school if the *Prefeitura* [City Hall] won't take care of the roads. That's *their* responsibility!

Seu Pedro said that for years he had been complaining about school transportation difficulties, and that finally municipal authorities could no longer ignore it. That, and election promises made to him and other rural families in 2013, had finally brought action. "If they never do their job," he continued, "people won't vote for them. So that's what happened: [smiling] they knew the people were watching and they had to be responsible. We didn't say it to them, we never insisted, but they knew. They had to do their job."

Interviews with municipal authorities, not surprisingly, yielded a different account of events. Insisting that forward-thinking fiscal management provided surplus revenues, municipal planners said that it was always their goal to pave rural roadways, but that until 2014 it was unfeasible. Noting (correctly) that other municipalities in the region lagged far behind in such efforts, authorities in Viçosa were also quick to point out that political corruption was an issue in neighboring areas – and not in Viçosa – and that this helped to explain their municipality’s success. What *both* rural residents and municipal planners failed to mention, however, is the very likely role of business interests in these processes. Construction firms are major financiers of Brazilian political campaigns (Power and Taylor, 2011), counting on lucrative contracts if/when their candidate is (re)elected. Thus it should come as no surprise that major infrastructural works were underway in 2014, a post-election year in Viçosa. Seu Pedro was likely right that campaign promises were behind municipal initiatives to pave rural roadways, but whether they were promises to voters or to campaign donors is another matter altogether.

What this example highlights, however, are some of the changes brought on by PBF, both in terms of rural and urban development as well as the ways poor people are engaging the state and PBF conditionalities. In the first instance, municipalities like Viçosa are highly dependent on PBF for revenue: recipients rely on the money for household needs, and central cities like Viçosa gain tremendously from PBF expenditures at local stores. The multiplier effects of CCTs are especially pronounced in rural areas (Campello and Neri, 2014), as recipients come to town, collect their benefits, and spend their income locally. In the case of PBF, purchases can only be made using an electromagnetic card (like a debit card), meaning that PBF money stays within the formal economy and can only be spent at stores with PBF card-scanning capabilities. Additionally, should recipient families fail to meet conditional

obligations (e.g. school attendance) and find themselves cut off from PBF benefits, the results are far reaching: most affected, of course, is the individual family, but central cities like Viçosa also lose out on vital revenue streams. As such, making sure recipient families can fulfill CCT conditionalities – by paving roads and even providing transportation options – is important to a host of different actors in rural municipalities.

These sorts of broader effects provide CCT recipients a certain leverage in their interactions with state actors. Time and again during interviews with PBF recipients in Viçosa, respondents remarked upon the ways business and political elites profited from PBF. People like Seu Pedro are fully aware how important PBF is to Viçosa and its municipal authorities, and it emboldens them in their engagements with program conditionalities. Seu Pedro's lobbying for better roadways on account of meeting PBF education requirements is just one example, as are instances where mothers protest the public healthcare services provided them and their infant children, or entire communities raise awareness for the poor state of public schools. PBF recipients in Viçosa, rather than being merely grateful for these services, realize that others, much wealthier than they, profit considerably from PBF. Rather than directly confronting political leaders with such observations, however – attempting to coerce or blackmail them, as it were – they make their demands tactically, noting the difficulties they face in meeting PBF conditionalities. Seu Pedro realizes the subtext of his complaints to municipal leaders (“I’m being responsible in my PBF duties, now you do the same!”), but outwardly, his language is not a direct challenge to the state (“It’s *so hard* to keep up with school attendance with these dirt roads”). Calculated in their effects, such tactics, instead of confronting state actors head on with rights-based discourses, allow for long-rooted clientelist relations to continue operating, at least on the surface.

In addition to paved roadways, other recent improvements included transportation to and from schools (i.e., school buses) and education resources in Viçosa (e.g., building infrastructure, learning materials, qualified teachers). When asked, rural residents remarked upon their own roles in these processes, noting how change had come after years of complaints to municipal leaders. Said Célia,ⁱⁱ a grandmother of 17 children:

I know it's important that children go to school, but how is my husband supposed to take them all? When I was young we hardly ever went because it was too difficult, we usually walked. But now, as you said, the children all go to school. They have to go because of this *Bolsa Família*. But how are we supposed to take them? This is what I said several times to Paulinho [a local municipal authority]: ok, fine, now our children *have* to be in school, but who will take them? *How* will they get there? And he understood. He understood. And now the school bus comes everyday and takes all the children to school. Every single day.

Célia's account helps to illustrate how PBF recipients draw on program conditionalities to tactically make demands on state actors. Rather than saying 'we deserve better!' – which Célia was certainly within her rights to do – her complaints appealed to meeting the demands of PBF child education requirements. So clever were Célia's tactics with Paulinho, the municipal leader she complained to, that he never appeared to have felt directly confronted by her. When I spoke to him later, he even suggested that the school bus idea had been his own. Whether he truly believed this or was trying to take credit for a good idea, he nevertheless expressed his rationale in the same register as Célia: the school buses had been implemented, he said, because of the difficulties faced by rural residents and their needs to meet PBF requirements. Not only had Célia helped to influence his thinking; Paulinho even sounded like Célia when explaining his reasons.

Combined with PBF school attendance requirements are also a host of healthcare conditionalities. Children must complete several vaccinations by the age of 7, state healthcare professionals monitor child growth and development, and pregnant women must receive pre-

natal care and guidance. In Viçosa, PBF recipients rarely complained about the implementation of these conditionalities, but rather the difficulties of meeting them. Many lamented a lack of resources and healthcare personnel at state health clinics. Complained Juliana, a resident of Horizonte and mother of two young children, “the [health] clinic is open only three days per week and only in the mornings. If you arrive after 9 a.m. there’ll be a long line and you won’t be attended to.” Other residents made similar complaints, noting that clinics in the area often lacked medical supplies and trained staff. Such problems were even worse in some neighboring municipalities, where health clinics opened only once or twice a week and were severely under-resourced. Beyond serious issues of public healthcare neglect, such problems also highlight additional strains placed on state infrastructure by CCTs: more staff and services are needed to fulfill PBF conditionalities (e.g., monitoring child growth and development), and especially in poor, rural areas where a majority of the population is enrolled on the program.

So severe are the needs for qualified medical staff in rural northeastern Brazil that in 2013 the federal government launched the ‘More Doctors Program’ (*Programa Mais Médicos*). Combined with university training to increase numbers of Brazilian physicians and medical professionals, the program also seeks to employ several thousand foreign doctors – most notably from Cuba – to address immediate healthcare needs (Santos et al., 2015). When I returned to Viçosa in 2014 several Cuban doctors were already working in the region, and while none were yet established directly in Viçosa, since then (at the time of writing) four have started work in the municipality, including one at the clinic near Horizonte. To argue that the More Doctors Program is a direct result of PBF beneficiary tactics would of course be too much, but neither should the efforts of poor people be overlooked. Much like roadways, schools, and education resources, PBF recipients have been successful in gaining

better access to resources connected to program conditionalities. Never have PBF beneficiaries in Viçosa protested outright the difficulties they face in fulfilling program obligations, but after more than a decade of tactical engagements with municipal authorities – including subtle complaints, veiled threats, and indirect petitioning – they are starting to see infrastructural improvements. Their relationships with the state and CCTs are not exclusively one-way or always/already top-down: much like Gupta (2012) argues – e.g., that poor people in India find ways to apply pressure on state actors through the state’s own bureaucratic protocol – so too do CCT recipients make use of conditionalities in very nuanced ways to push back and demand better services.

Returning to broader debates over CCTs and their effects (Pereira, 2015; Rego and Pinzani, 2013), it could certainly be argued that Seu Pedro and others in rural Viçosa are finding ways to partake more fully in the rights and benefits of citizenship thanks to PBF. From a material standpoint, CCT recipients appear in many respects to have better access to citizenship rights today than in years past (e.g., Hall, 2013; Hunter and Sugiyama, 2014; Sany and Daudelin, 2013). But to say they have the same relationship to citizenship as working or middle class people (i.e., those who do *not* receive CCT assistance), or even those who live in large urban areas, would be unfair. Despite recognizing the obvious hypocrisy in state development discourses – of stressing individual responsibility, yet failing to fulfill a host of governance responsibilities – PBF beneficiaries in Viçosa are reticent to challenge state actors point blank on such contradictions. They are more tactical in their approach, recognizing and working around the unequal footing on which they stand. Instead of authoritatively harnessing discourses of citizenship and individual rights, they tend to make indirect complaints that hint at (rather than threaten) the consequences of continued state neglect. Such engagements with CCT conditionalities are more tactical than “insurgent” (see

Holston, 2008), “mak[ing] use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open” in order to poach opportunities of resistance (de Certeau, 1984, page 37). Crucial to poor people who can ill afford further marginalization, tactical measures enable CCT recipients safer and smarter modes of resistance: should they fail, there is less risk of retaliation from state actors.

As Secor explains, anonymity is also crucial to the ways tactics operate, allowing marginalized groups to work around state strategies. PBF recipients in northeast Brazil, like Kurdish migrants in Istanbul, rarely engage program conditionalities through acts of outright resistance, but instead by “‘making do’ [...] in everyday life” (2004, page 353). These tactics also enable them to capture the attention of state actors, keeping the state on its toes, as it were, by hailing the state on issues it has difficulty ignoring (e.g., PBF revenues and federal development initiatives) (c.f., Gupta, 2012). In this way PBF beneficiaries are able to reposition their relationship with the state, stringing it along – just as it does to them – by making commitments that will never be completely fulfilled. Like the state, they shirk certain obligations, but tactically so, in ways that maintain their anonymity. This idea is more fully developed in the penultimate section, exploring the differences between anonymity/identification, tactics/strategies, and the ways PBF recipients engage beguilingly with the state, making and evading CCT commitments, just as the state does with them.

5 Stringing along the state

Fundamental to tactical engagements with CCTs are practices of sidestepping, eschewing, and dodging certain state obligations. In Viçosa, for example, CCT beneficiaries often took measures to avoid especially burdensome tasks required by PBF conditionalities. To be clear, never once did interview respondents argue that conditionalities were unfair, or that PBF benefits should come with no obligations. Rather, complaints focused on the unnecessary difficulties of fulfilling program obligations (e.g., waiting for hours each month

on long lines), and the ways conditionalities handcuffed and infantilized beneficiaries.

Residents noted that municipal boundaries complicated their access to PBF benefits, meaning that instead of drawing on resources nearest to them (e.g., schools, health clinics, branches of the Federal Savings Bank), families might have to travel for hours to reach their officially designated municipal center. They also complained that spending their benefits was limited by where they could swipe their card, and that those stores were few in number and sometimes under stocked. While PBF administrators argue that such protocol is necessary to avoid program fraud and abuse, the effects on rural families can produce a host of new difficulties (see also Cookson, 2016).

Speaking on the issue of PBF income requirements and how families risk losing the benefit if they earn extra income, one middle-aged man named Gustavo highlighted two key ways in which local families subvert state protocol:

Most of the work people do around here isn't for pay. It's a favor you're doing for someone, and then when you need it, he'll help you out in return. Some people have extra jobs and they keep quiet about the money they earn because, well, if [municipal authorities] knew, they might make a cut to your benefit. But most of the work people do around here is for favors, or maybe you'll get something in return, something you need, you see what I mean? It's like an informal job, you understand? It's rarely for money [laughing]. No one here has any money.

Author: Has anyone with an extra job ever been caught and lost their benefit? Or, like, would someone around here ever denounce them?

Gustavo: No, I don't think so. That's not how it works here in Brazil. People are always bending the rules [*dando um jeito* – see for example DaMatta, 1984]. Look, worst are the officials, the politicians. They're the most corrupt. So if there's some guy here who's got an extra job but his family still receives *Bolsa Família*, no way, that has nothing to do with me. At least he's working. If I denounce him, his [PBF] money will go right into the pockets of officials. Seriously!

In the first instance, the informal work described by Gustavo helps to illustrate how PBF recipients make do, supplementing their monthly benefits with other goods and services.

Rather than seeking formal employment, and thus potentially losing their PBF benefit, they engage in unpaid labor not captured by the state's formal economic analyses. This tactic comes with a host of positive effects, not least in that it violates no laws or CCT obligations. And in the second instance, some recipients under report their monthly income so as not to disqualify their families from the program. Without the privilege of legal or financial advisors – often used when hiding money by the middle and upper classes – they must be more careful and calculated in their methods. In line with Pereira's (2015) observation that PBF has by no means reduced labor productivity among beneficiaries, findings from Viçosa also confirm Hall's (2013) suspicion that CCTs unintentionally stimulate informal labor practices. While CCTs may be intended to increase state influence, oversight, and governmentality (Hossain, 2010) – including connecting poor people to formal employment (Garmany, 2016) – such outcomes are complicated by the ways recipient families negotiate program conditionalities. Simply put, people are working just as many hours today (if not more), but much of this work is informal or underreported due to the tactical ways poor people engage CCT conditionalities.

Related to this, PBF recipients also find ways to ease the burden of their conditionalities, particularly when it comes to travel distances and municipal boundaries. In cases where it might be easier for them to access resources in a neighboring municipality, rather than actually moving there, some residents simply report they have moved, register with authorities, and thereby establish domicile in the municipality where they want to access PBF benefits. Even though they continue to reside in their original municipality, ground truthing is rarely done, and thus poor people find ways to reduce the time and distance they must travel to fulfill program obligations.ⁱⁱⁱ In similar fashion, recipient families also find ways to sidestep spending conditionalities imposed on them by PBF card-scanning

requirements: they spend their benefit on goods and at stores approved by PBF, and then trade those goods with others for the things they actually want. Like informal labor, this practice is appealing in that it is not illegal or likely to draw the attention of program officials. Most often in rural Viçosa, foodstuffs were traded for agricultural goods or other foodstuffs, making it nearly impossible to identify what had been bought with PBF benefits and what might have been produced locally. In this way local residents remain mostly anonymous in their evasion of program conditionalities, with few ways they could be identified or singled out for not following PBF protocol. Returning to Secor (2004), anonymity is fundamental to those on the margins and plays a central role in ways tactics are harnessed. By drawing on tactics like these, CCT recipients find ways to work around particularly difficult obligations imposed by program conditionalities, while at the same time reducing their exposure to being singled out or sanctioned.

In many respects, tactics like these in rural Brazil are similar to strategies used by the state. Both work to string the other along, making commitments that invariably are not upheld, and in both instances blaming the other for systemic failures. Much like Secor (2007) notes in Istanbul, the relationship between the state and the working poor in Brazil is characterized by longing and despair – for state and non-state actors alike – where the promises and responsibilities that constitute the relationship are inevitably broken by both sides. Everyone seems to know they will be let down in the last instance. Development initiatives like CCTs are one of the state’s strategies for maintaining this relationship of infinite deferral, ‘assuring’ benefits to the poor provided they hold their end of the bargain. Yet the poor are by no means helpless, finding ways to tactically engage these programs so that they are not the only ones strung along.

So why, then, are the state's practices strategic, and PBF recipients' tactical? For example, why is it a strategy when state authorities abuse PBF money but not when poor people do, to reflect on Gustavo's comment? It stems in the first instance from unequal power relations. According to de Certeau, strategies are linked to institutions that seek to dominate and engineer space (i.e., the state), whereas tactics are "clever tricks of the 'weak' within the order established of the 'strong'" (1984, page 40). Going further, anonymity is also crucial for distinguishing the two (Lee, 2006; Secor, 2004). When poor people in Viçosa pressure state actors over difficulties they face in meeting PBF conditionalities, they do so indirectly, in ways that are non combative or might expose them to being singled out. They are much less likely to protest outwardly state or municipal policy – the same institutions that provide PBF benefits – preferring instead more cautious methods that are not obviously threatening. Much like James Scott observes (2009), this involves small, calculated interventions that make it difficult to assign responsibility or blame to a singular individual. Additionally, rather than openly chastising the state, their critique is indirect, "a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus" (de Certeau, 1984, pages 36-37). These practices are decidedly tactical, applying tacit pressure on the state by engaging development programs through governmentality discourses of responsibility, compliance, and pastoral oversight.

In some cases individuals make themselves more clearly identifiable, like Seu Pedro with his repeated requests. Yet in this instance he plays the role of meek peasant farmer – not of angry, entitled citizen – tactically avoiding head on confrontations with state actors and long-established clientelist relationships. For state actors, these tactics of anonymity and ruse are less accessible, as they are always/already connected with political moments and discourse. Their relationships with non-state actors are meant to be pastoral, not horizontal (Garmany, 2014), and the state's supposed objectivity inhibits diversity and unpredictability

so crucial to tactics. State strategies in development programs can of course appear ambiguous and opaque, but the state, as such, struggles to be anonymous in space or practice (see also Lefebvre, 2003; Secor, 2007). It is clearly identifiable, its representatives connected to specific discourses and their practices bound within certain registers. It is the burden of power, perhaps, that strips the state of the “maneuverable, polymorph mobilities” essential to tactics (de Certeau, 1984, page 40). Moreover, state actors themselves are easily singled out, less able to camouflage their practice. The signs, symbols, tropes, and indicators of the state are meant to erase multiplicity, working to establish a sense of cohesion and prominence. This in fact is intentional, a strategy in and of itself. Development initiatives are in every sense a contested terrain, and between CCT recipients and the state, the methods of engagement – the tactics and the strategies – are separate and unequal.

Exploring these differences helps in many ways to understand how CCTs are struggled over and, like Secor (2004) notes with respect to citizenship, the ways development initiatives are open to constant renegotiation. Program conditionalities offer new strategies for the state, as well as new tactics for recipients through prosaic and unanticipated openings. Such findings contribute to broader debates over the growth of rights-based discourses in the Global South (Hall, 2013; Lo Vuolo, 2013), and what the political effects of new income distribution policies might be (Ferguson, 2015; Seekings, 2012). Yet whether CCTs *empower* the citizenship rights of poor people is a different question altogether (Hunter and Sugiyama, 2014; Pereira, 2015; Rego and Pinzani, 2013). Perhaps in urban areas – and/or from a macro, quantitative perspective, from where an overwhelming majority of this research is drawn (e.g., Sany and Daudelin, 2013; Lo Vuolo, 2013; Sugiyama, 2013) – CCTs help to produce stronger forms of citizenship. But as evidence from this case study in Viçosa shows, in rural contexts, where per capita numbers of CCT beneficiaries are much higher (Parsons, 2015),

the relationships between people and CCT programs are more nuanced. Rather than producing more empowered forms of citizenship, CCTs appear instead to offer recipients new points of entry for tactically engaging program conditionalities. Granted, these programs also provide the state additional governance strategies, but even the quid pro quo conditionalities of CCTs spark new tactical opportunities for program recipients. Through mutual practices of engagement and distancing, promising and blaming, fulfilling and shirking responsibility, and so on, CCTs appear not so much to empower the citizenships of poor people, but rather to intensify processes of constant renegotiation (c.f., Secor 2004) that characterize development initiatives in the first place.

6 Conclusions

The last time I met Seu Pedro was in June 2014, near to the central market in Viçosa (the city). We bumped into each other by chance, exchanging pleasantries and commenting on the weather. It was raining hard that day. I teased him about the rain, saying I was surprised to see him given what he had told me about dirt roads in the region. He winked, and smiled, and winked again: “Man, I’ve lived here all my life. You think I worry about a rainstorm?” I laughed, saying he should watch out that day for municipal authorities. Still smiling he shook his head, saying he was not worried. The episode captured perfectly how development and governance operates in the region, as both state and non-state actors string one another along with half-truths and empty promises. PBF may be working to increase and intensify the relationships between poor people and the state, but whether this is producing stronger forms of citizenship is highly questionable. CCTs are a contested terrain, particularly in rural areas, and even state strategies aimed at inducing greater levels of governmentality are rearticulated through the tactics of recipient populations.

This article has considered the ways CCT recipients engage program conditionalities, focusing specifically on rural contexts. While numerous studies debate the relationships between CCTs and citizenship (Hall, 2013; Hunter and Sugiyama, 2014; Pereira, 2015), this article follows Hickey’s warning that efforts to measure the citizenship effectiveness of development initiatives like CCTs risk re-producing a host of “Development” theory problems (2010, page 1149). Rather than examine CCT programs through the lens of citizenship, I have instead considered how PBF beneficiaries draw on tactical measures to negotiate program conditionalities. More specifically, I have argued that conditionalities are not fixed or immovable state strategies, but can instead be engaged tactically by PBF recipients to pressure the state and shirk particularly burdensome obligations (c.f., Gupta, 2012). It thus appears that CCTs introduce even more tactical opportunities for program recipients – as well as strategic ones for the state – leaving relationships between poor people, development, and the state neither stronger nor weaker, but rather more unsettled and intensely renegotiated. Findings from this article contribute to existing debates regarding development and political governance (e.g., Hickey, 2010; Li, 2007; Meltzer, 2013), showing the diverse effects of initiatives like CCTs and the ways recipient populations sometimes harness these programs to pressure state actors for better services.

Still to be investigated are a host of issues related to CCTs, their relationships to governance, and important variations that distinguish urban and rural space. Though accounts of CCTs in the Global South are numerous (Ballard, 2013; Handa and Davis, 2006; Molyneux and Thomson, 2011), an overwhelming majority of this research comes from urban settings. As this study from rural northeast Brazil shows, there exist key differences between urban and rural areas in the ways people engage with development and the state. While the urban poor may be gaining better access to citizenship rights (Lo Vuolo, 2013;

Rego and Pinzani, 2013; Sugiyama, 2013), the rural poor confront different landscapes and thus cannot be lumped uncritically with their urban counterparts (e.g., Cookson, 2016). Understanding these differences, and accounting for the roles of CCTs and other development initiatives, remain important areas of study for researchers concerned with socio-political development in emerging world regions.

Notes

ⁱ Unless otherwise noted, the data, quotes, and observations in this article come from interviews and fieldnotes recorded by the author while conducting field research.

ⁱⁱ The names of those in this article have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

ⁱⁱⁱ Such practices are even encouraged in some instances by neighboring municipal authorities looking to poach new residents and, with them, new income revenues that result from PBF. For more on this, please see Garmany, 2016.

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