

ABSTRACTS

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Abstracts – Wealth and Inequalities*

Wealth: totem and taboo

Antonio David Cattani

Socioeconomic inequalities are usually only analysed in terms of the “pole of poverty”, with sociological studies of affluent classes being rare. The difficulties for the Social Sciences are due to material aspects (lack of access to essential data), but also to mistaken deontological problems. The introduction summarizes the specific contributions of each article included in the “Wealth and Inequalities” file emphasizing that, despite the diversity of contributions and theoretical references employed, they all have one common feature of demonstrating the scale of the “pole of wealth” hidden by ideology and the effects of power. One of the challenges faced by Sociology is that of demystifying and demythologising totems and taboos created around the material and social existence of the wealthy classes which are neither self-referential nor self-sufficient, but which establish specific relations of exploitation and domination over the social structure.

Key words: social theory, social classes, inequalities

Sociology of the haute bourgeoisie

Michel Pinçon & Monique Pinçon-Charlot

While poverty is studied from all possible viewpoints, wealthier classes are seldom the object of sociological analyses. This article discusses the causes of this imbalance, starting with the reluctance of sociologists. Methodological obstacles result partly from the social background of researchers, who feel more comfortable studying the poor population and social movements, and become hesitant faced with the affluent classes. To this subjective aspect should be added a second issue: the wealthy classes’ lack of interest or refusal to provide information, making the evaluation of wealth into a complex exercise. The subject also suffers from theoretical and social prejudice, with low academic legitimacy; researchers are often stricken by a deontological unease that hampers their relationship with their object of study. Social distancing is finally translated into an ambiguous relationship of domination.

Key words: social theory, social classes, sociology of the bourgeoisie, sociology of the dominant class, social class research methodology

* Os abstracts do dossiê foram revisados por Nick Rands.

Concentration of wealth, millionaires, and the reproduction of poverty in Latin America

Sonia Alvarez Leguizamon

Poverty and inequality increased in Latin America during the late 20th century and early 21st century. Studies by different international institutions show that the number of poor people has grown in both relative and absolute terms in nearly every country, while concentrations of wealth have reached unprecedented levels, causing deep changes in the social structure. Such multiplication of poverty and inequality is partly a result of the failure of practices adopted under pressure from international credit and development agencies on behalf of the so-called Washington Consensus (privatization, market liberalization). Changes in the world of work have resulted in mass unemployment and greater vulnerability for millions of Latin Americans. Alongside this, small groups of individuals and families have begun to concentrate increasing proportions of wealth, widening the gap between the extremes of income distribution in each country. This article discusses the changes in social structure in Latin America and the legitimising strategies employed by the wealthy on the subcontinent, especially charitable neo-philanthropic institutions funded by musicians and major businesspeople. Finally, the author aims to discuss the issue of inequalities from the viewpoint of class-domination relations – a perspective that has been gaining ground in social sciences and that should be extended to the political agenda.

Key words: Latin America, social structure, socioeconomic inequalities, philanthropy

Socioeconomic inequalities: concepts and research problems

Antonio David Cattani

The issue of socioeconomic inequalities is generally addressed considering the “pole of poverty” detached from its relationship to the “pole of wealth”. The imbalance that characterises the latter results from multifaceted processes leading to the emergence of complex forms of appropriation and private fruition of socially produced wealth. It is necessary to return to the debate in terms of social class and formulate new concepts if Sociology is to learn the consequences of the current process on society as a whole, including substantial wealth, the personification of wealth, affluent classes. At the same time, the existence of objective, material

hindrances and prejudices should be recognized, since they need to be overcome to enable movement towards the production of critical knowledge about society's division into social classes and the forms of power and modalities of subordination.

Key words: social theory, socioeconomic inequalities, substantial wealth, concentration of wealth, personification of wealth.

Brazil's largest private banks: an economic and sociopolitical profile

Ary César Minella

This study examines elements of the power of financial institutions, emphasising control over capital flow – characterised as financial hegemony – the constitution of economic or financial groups, the structure of representation of the segment's class interests, and its participation in the political process and in State decision-making mechanisms. Considering the economic restructuring undergone by Brazil in the 1990s, the work draws a profile of the ten largest private banks based on selected economic and sociopolitical indicators. Beyond their stance as mere financial intermediaries, it indicates the degree to which those banks become economic groups and, especially, larger organizational units, which is shown in connections with the State and in the class's actual organization and actions in the corporate and political realms.

Key words: Financial system, bank concentration, financial groups, financial hegemony, class representation

Justice as equality: the perceptions of the Brazilian elite and the people

Celi Scalon

Studies about social inequality in Brazil usually focus on its objective dimensions, such as sex, colour, income, occupation, and schooling. The size of the gap between rich and poor is reasonably well known thanks to studies already carried out, but little is known about how the disparity is seen by Brazilians. In 2000, as part of the *International Social Survey Programme*, an attempt was made to fill this gap through a survey of members of the national elites – here understood as individuals in the richest 10% of the population. The nationwide study – 2,000 interviews in 195 towns and cities – sought to reveal different perceptions of inequality

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by the “elite” and the “people”. The survey raised issues related to the images both groups have of Brazilian society and how it is structured; the appropriate wages for differently qualified workers; the values that should govern distribution of the country’s wealth; Brazil’s major problems; and the strategies favoured by each group to reduce poverty, with an emphasis on the role of the State. The answers showed surprising agreements and disagreements between the people and the elite. Both groups recognise the scale of social inequality in the country, but they tend to advocate different strategies to reduce them, transferring solutions to inequality to the State. These similarities and differences in points of view may provide important elements for understanding the mechanisms that legitimise inequality.

Key words: inequality, justice, equality, social perceptions, elites.

Families, power, and wealth: political networks in the state of Paraná in 2007

Ricardo Costa de Oliveira

The structure of power is not an abstraction; it is materialised in objective situations of possession of wealth, and is reproduced and consolidated thanks to political, social, and kinship networks. Networks of political power are defined in this article as connections of interest which basically involve businesspeople and political offices within the apparatus of the State, in the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary, as well as the other places of power seeking to secure advantages and privileges for their members. In addition to the ideology reinforcing their legitimacy, networks may use artifices like nepotism, clientelism and corruption.

The state of Paraná is shown as an example of modernity and rationality, adhering to the values and practices of capitalism governed by the principles of impersonality and efficiency. This article will demonstrate that this is a myth by looking at the genealogy of the families currently holding power and wealth, but which have been associated to the dominant interests for nearly 300 years. Distinguished names in politics and the economy make up a surprising and intricate network of relations of family, kinship, and privilege that secures the structure of power in the most distinct economic and political scenarios.

Key words: political power networks, dominant social network, dominant groups, genealogy of power.

The schooling of the affluent classes

Antonio David Cattani & Francisco Kieling

After pointing out the inadequacy of the terms *elite* or *bourgeoisie* to label those in possession of great wealth, this article maintains that the dominant classes are constantly constructing and mobilizing themselves in every way to assure their extended reproduction and their everyday coexistence with the aim of preserving and transmitting dominant positions to their descendents. Ideological development within the family and the school years are important elements in the process of class construction. Studies on schooling of class generally address universal education, stressing the problems that afflict the underprivileged population. The education of the dominant class is not often explored as a topic and the few studies available present original results, such as the instrumental relation to education, which would distinguish the case of Brazil from the strategies of affluent classes in economically more advanced countries. Brazil was found to have a lower standard of schooling for some parts of the dominant classes, as if power were so consolidated that they were able to renounce the symbolic resources provided by formal education. However, since the dominant classes are heterogeneous, they can make use of other strategies of schooling to guarantee their positions and their class reproduction.

Key words: schooling of dominant classes, school education of the wealthy, socialisation of dominant classes, wealth and education

ARTIGOS

ARTICLES

Development and labor relations in Southern Brazilian tobacco culture

Ronaldo Guedes de Lima

In this text we discuss the origin, economic structuring, and labor social relations in the tobacco culture segment. Among the distinct theoretical visions about the issue of family agriculture, particularly that of tobacco economy, we have elected the Weberian notion of asset management, in order to understand farmers' current strategies. We discuss that, differently from the business reason

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oriented to acquisition-oriented profit, those family farmers have strategies deprived of capitalist calculation. Finally, we comment on the weak defense that points out the inevitable proletarianization of tobacco farmers.

Key words: tobacco culture, history, labor, production relations, rural sociology.

Citizenship versus diversity and marginalization?

Diana Guillén

One of the core aims of this work is to question the possibility of building political interchanges based on citizen participation models, when material conditions under which most people live oppose the basic principles on which any civility agreement should be based.

Key words: poverty, marginalization, citizenship

Network activism and identity connections: new perspectives for social movements

Jorge Alberto S. Machado

In this work, I attempt to identify the main characteristics of the new organizational forms of social movements based on the use of new information and communication technologies. After describing some cases, it is demonstrated that social collectives ascribe the internet a core role in their ways of interconnection, successfully developing new forms of organization, sharing ideas, aligning strategies, and building coalitions and alliance of global reach. Such phenomenon opens a new horizon for social change that points to the emergence of new dynamics for collective action based on complex identity networks, oriented by “universal values”. It is on those trends that I focus the analysis in this paper.

Key words: social movements, political activism, networks, collective action, information technologies.

INTERFACE
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Image interpretation and the Documental Method

Ralf Bohnsack

The considerable development of qualitative methods over the last 20 years is intrinsically related to the “linguistic turn”. The assumption that recorded texts are the basic data for all scientific research is therefore responsible for that prevalence of text interpretation methods and for such particular “fixation” on texts within qualitative methodologies. However, a difference has to be established between communication *about* (*über*) image and communication *through* (*durch*) image. Methodological access to the pre-conceptual or ‘atheoretical’ understanding was introduced in the 1920s by the iconology of Erwin Panofsky and his contemporary Karl Mannheim with his documental interpretation method. Important correspondences can be demonstrated between the two approaches as well as regarding the field of semiotics. Based on the understanding that the iconic character in its obstinateness is not properly available to us through language, we may conclude – referenced in the aforementioned authors as well as in Barthes, Foucault, and Imdahl –, that apprehending an image’s peculiarities implies suspending, “placing in parentheses” our connotations (based on the iconographic previous knowledge mediated by language) as much as possible. Methodologically, the iconic character can only be reconstructed through the description of form, especially image’s planimetric structure. The documental method of image interpretation is fit to face such challenge.

Key words: Image interpretation, documental method, qualitative methods, Erwin Panofsky, Karl Mannheim.

An ode to humanism

Emir Sader

The text establishes a debate between religion and humanism, approaching alienation, ethical values, and full emancipation of men and women.

Key words: humanism, religion, emancipation

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RESENHAS

BOOK REVIEW

MARTIN, Gerard & CEBALLOS, Miguel. Bogotá: anatomía de una transformación. Políticas de seguridad ciudadana 1995-2003. (Bogotá: anatomy of a change. Policies of citizenhsip security 1995-2003)

Culture and citizen security: in search of violence control in Colombia

Margarita Rosa Gaviria

This review aims at a critical approach of public policies and district programs developed by Bogotá, Colombia, administrations between 1995 and 2003, which allowed a decrease in crime rates, as presented by Gerard Martin and Miguel Ceballos on their book *"Bogotá: anatomía de una transformación"*. In this text, I examine the social and cultural conditions that structured the political decisions immanent to the change in strategy for controlling crime and violence in Colombia. I elaborate on the programs of citizen culture, security, and prevention implemented by the Bogotá administrations, whose experience is a reference to other cities in Colombia. That is to say, I address the scenario that favored breaking away from strategies used until the 1990s to control violence, as well as new strategies and values in which those policies and programs are based. Finally, I consider facts underlying the design and execution of those policies that are not explicit in the work and which reveal some inconsistencies in the proposals and in the working of the State apparatus for security and prevention.

Key words: violence, citizen culture, security, control.