

A Moment of Equality for
Latin America?
Challenges for Redistribution

Edited by

BARBARA FRITZ

Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

LENA LAVINAS

Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

ASHGATE

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Published by
Ashgate Publishing Limited
Wey Court East
Union Road
Farnham
Surrey, GU9 7PT
England

Ashgate Publishing Company
110 Cherry Street
Suite 3-1
Burlington, VT 05401-3818
USA

www.ashgate.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

The Library of Congress has cataloged the printed edition as follows:

Fritz, Barbara, 1964–

A moment of equality for Latin America? : challenges for redistribution / by Barbara Fritz and Lena Lavinas.

pages cm. – (Entangled inequalities : exploring global asymmetries)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4724-4672-5 (hardback : alk. paper) – ISBN 978-1-4724-4673-2 (ebook)

– ISBN 978-1-4724-4674-9 (epub) 1. Income distribution–Latin America. 2. Equality–Latin America. 3. Latin America–Social policy–21st century. I. Lavinas, Lena. II. Title.

HC130.I5F75 2015

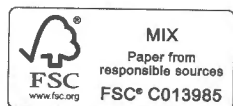
339.2098–dc23

2015011056

ISBN 9781472446725 (hbk)

ISBN 9781472446732 (ebk – PDF)

ISBN 9781472446749 (ebk – ePUB)



Printed in the United Kingdom by Henry Ling Limited,
at the Dorset Press, Dorchester, DT1 1HD

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Notes on Contributors

Bielschowsky, Ricardo worked at UN-CEPAL for 20 years, recently as the director of its Brazilian bureau. He is now an Associate Professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), having published over 60 books and papers on development and economic thought in Brazil and in Latin America.

Braig, Marianne is a Professor of Political Science at the Freie Universität Berlin, in the Institute for Latin American Studies—LAI. Her current research projects and publications deal with the topics of “Political cultures and statehood” and “Entangled inequalities between regions (especially Latin America, Europe and China).”

Costa, Sérgio is a Professor of Sociology at the Freie Universität Berlin as well as one of the spokespersons of desiguALdades.net, the Research Network on Interdependent Inequalities in Latin America. Trained in Economics and Sociology in Brazil and Germany, he obtained his B.A. and M.A. at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), and his Ph.D and “Habilitation” from the Freie Universität Berlin.

Fagnani, Eduardo is a Professor at UNICAMP’s Institute of Economy, researcher at the Center for Union and Labor Studies (CESIT) and coordinator of the Plataforma Política Social—Agenda para o Desenvolvimento www.plataformapoliticassocia.com.

Fritz, Barbara is Professor for Economics at the Institute for Latin American Studies and the Department of Economics of the Freie Universität Berlin. Her fields of expertise are development economics and international macroeconomics, money, and finance, with a special focus on Latin America.

Gentil, Denise holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the Institute of Economics (I.E.) at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), where she is currently an Associate Professor.

Haldenwang, Christian von is a Senior Researcher at the German Development Institute/ Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE). He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science and an M.A. in Political Science and Philosophy.

Hermann, Jennifer holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the Institute of Economics (I.E.) at the Universidade Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). She is currently an Associate Professor at the same Institute, and has co-authored the book *Economia Brasileira Contemporânea: 1945/2004* (Campus, 2005 and 2011).

Jiménez, Juan Pablo is an Economic Affairs Officer at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) and a Visiting Fellow at the International Centre for Economic Development (ICER) and the Research Network on Interdependent Inequalities (DesiguALdades.net).

Lavinas, Lena is an Associate Professor at the Institute of Economics at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and Senior Researcher (Level 1) at the Brazilian National Research Council (CNPQ). She is a Research Fellow at *desiguALdades.net* (Freie Universität). Most of her research focuses on social policies.

Lo Vuolo, Rubén is an Economist and Academic Director of the Interdisciplinary Center for the Studies of Public Policy (Ciepp) in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and teaches graduate courses at various universities in Argentina.

López Azcúnaga, Isabel is a PhD Candidate and has a Master's in International Economy and Development from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. She works as a consultant for CEPAL.

Pérez Sáinz, Juan Pablo holds a Doctorate in Economics from Vrije Universiteit, Brussels, Belgium. He is currently a researcher at Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), Costa Rica.

Puhle, Hans-Jürgen is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the Institute of Political Science, Goethe Universität, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. He has published over 30 books and over 150 academic articles in various fields such as social history, comparative politics, and political theory.

Saboia, João is a Professor at the Institute of Economics (I.E.) at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). He received the 2007 Jabuti Award for co-editing the best book of the year in Economics and Business Administration, entitled *Celso Furtado e o Século XXI*.

Simões, André holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the Institute of Economics (I.E.) at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and currently works in the Department of Population and Social Indicators at the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE).

Therborn, Göran is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of Cambridge, UK and an Affiliated Professor of Sociology at Linnaeus University, Sweden. His works have been published in 24 languages. His latest books are *The Killing Fields of Inequality* (Cambidrige, Polity 2013) and *El Mundo. Una guía para principantes* (México, Océano 2012). He is a civic intellectual, with a lifetime commitment to universal freedom and equality.

Valdés, Maria Fernanda is an Associate Researcher at the international research network *desiguALdades.net* at Freie Universität Berlin, where she has been researching inequality and tax policy in Latin America.

Acknowledgements

This volume would not have seen the light of the day without the support of many people and institutions.

Firstly, the research network on interdependent inequalities in Latin America, *desiguALdades.net* (www.desiguALdades.net), provided far more than generous financial support. Coordinated mainly by the Institute for Latin American Studies of the Freie Universität Berlin and the Ibero-American Institute of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation in Berlin, and funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), this interdisciplinary, international, and multi-institutional research network created not merely a virtual platform, but a real stage for reflection and knowledge creation, over four years with researchers from many places and institutions and a huge variety of approaches to the issue of the entangled inequalities of Latin America. A vast collection of working papers synthesizes an intellectual and academic trajectory which is plural and overflows conventional disciplinary borders.

As a truly international endeavor, this book also has considerable Brazilian participation, in both intellectual and financial terms. A series of outstanding institutions from academia and beyond helped bring about an international conference in Rio de Janeiro with a large number of participants. This seminar was supported and funded by the Institute of Economics at the UFRJ (I.E./UFRJ), the International Celso Furtado Center for Development Policies, the Institute of Economics at UNICAMP (I.E./UNICAMP), and the National Bank of Economic and Social Development (BNDES). In parallel, the Celso Furtado Center is also publishing the Portuguese version of this edited volume.

But there was still a long way to go before a book could emerge out of part of the conference contributions, plus a few papers from other sources. Our special thanks go here to Rubén Lo Vuolo and Göran Therborn, who served on the editorial council and had a fundamental role in improving the articles with insightful comments and helping the authors to review their contributions, in some cases more than twice.

No less important in this enterprise was the backstage support we received from a highly transnational team. Our thanks go to Denise Uderman, our superb Rio-based coordinator for both the workshop and the book, to Flora Thomson-DeVeaux for perfect and timely translation and editing support, to Anna Wickes-Neira for dealing with all financial issues, to Tom Norton for copy-editing and indexing, and to Neil Jordan from Ashgate for his continuous support.

Last but not least, we are truly grateful to Sérgio Costa, who offered us the honor of putting together the inaugural volume in the book series entitled "Entangled Inequalities: Exploring Global Asymmetries," and who, alongside Marianne Braig and Barbara Göbel, acted as the spiritus rector of the whole endeavor.

SPONSORED BY THE



Federal Ministry
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and Research



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Inequalities in Latin America

Foreword

Marianne Braig

The growing social gap between the rich and the poor has once again become an important social *problématique* and is attracting increased attention in social science research. The research network *desiguALdades.net* forms part of an ongoing revitalization of the study of inequalities from both national and global perspectives, bringing together experts on social inequalities and experts on Latin America. The objective of *desiguALdades.net* is to make a contribution to research on social inequalities in Latin America.

The intersections of different types of social inequalities and the global interdependencies of local constellations of social inequalities beyond the nation-state are at the focus of these analyses. While considering the particularities of Latin American inequalities, it is important to include other dimensions in the debate over the creation and reproduction of social inequalities. With special focus on the multidimensionality and interdependencies of social inequalities, scholars address the roots and dynamics of persistent inequalities in the region. Through empirical research on Latin America, the network seeks to contribute to a more diverse understanding of social inequalities, taking in multidimensional and transregional interdependencies.

Latin America is critical for understanding social inequalities for two seemingly contradictory reasons. It is the only region that has seen a reduction in inequalities in selected countries over the past 20 years. Recent reductions in inequality notwithstanding, however, Latin America remains one of the most unequal regions in the world.

In the discussion over the question of how to reduce inequalities, there is a widely shared consensus as to the positive effects that state action can have in making societies more equal. Hence, Latin American states are held to be the most powerful and important actors in reducing inequalities and related patterns of socioeconomic and political exclusion in the region. Such an approach, however, tends to underestimate two central aspects. The first is the question of politics, understood as struggles over the definition and implementation of state policies at a specific historical moment, in the making of inequalities in Latin America. The second has to do with the institutional legacies responsible for the reproduction of inequalities over time.

Against this background, this publication is bringing politics, and economic politics in particular, back onto the stage of research on social inequalities and attempts to explore the limits to distribution and redistribution over the last two decades.

Intensive cooperation between Brazilian and German research and funding institutions made it possible to bring together experts from Europe and Latin America in the international seminar on "Challenges and Limits of Redistributive Policies in Latin America," and to publish the results of their debates and exchanges.