



A Moment of Equality for Latin America?

Challenges for Redistribution

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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.