



ARRETCHE, Marta (org.) (2015). *Trajetórias das Desigualdades: como o Brasil mudou nos últimos 50 anos*. São Paulo: Editora UNESP.

This book is a contribution to the Social Sciences on issues dealing with the connections between democracy, public policies, and inequality and features research on the trajectory of inequality in Brazil over the past 50 years.

First of all, one of its original contributions lies in being the first comprehensive study based on solid empirical research dealing with long-term changes in Brazil. The trajectory of inequality includes the “income” dimension, a classic indicator in comparative studies. That being said, the originality of this book consists in bringing together in a single volume a collection of studies on the different aspects of the social and economic structure, considered to be equally important for research on inequality, such as unequal political participation; access to education, health and public services; insertion in the labor market; race and gender issues. Also present in the book are detailed studies on the connections between inequality and the trajectory of migration and religious affiliation. In conjunction, the volume presents a detailed and comprehensive outlook – in each thematic chapter – on inequality, since different and combined dimensions of the problem are addressed.

Every chapter has a quantitative and longitudinal approach. They are based on data from six editions of the Demographic Censuses (1960-2010), and information for each census year makes it possible to identify inflections in each decade’s trajectory.

Therefore in conjunction, the 14 detailed studies allow us to examine the connections across different macro-transitions (from a rural country to an urban one; from an authoritarian regime to a democratic regime; from a stagnant economy to a growing economy) as well as the policy direction of democratic governments (Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Lula), on one side, and the

trajectory of different dimensions of inequality on the other. Critical points in time of the inequality path are identified and associated with these macro-transitions.

On a theoretical level, the book's main contribution consists of demonstrating that industrialization does not necessarily lead to a reduction in inequality, as predicted by Simon Kuznets. Neither is democracy sufficient for this purpose, contrary to the expectations by democratic theory, as recently demonstrated by the work of Thomas Piketty (which does not include Brazil). The Brazilian case reveals that (i) the authoritarian regime witnessed economic growth and expansion of services, but this was accompanied by increasing inequality while (ii) there is a clear association between contemporary democracy and the reduction of inequality in different dimensions.

From 1991 to 2010, inequalities were significantly reduced in dimensions such as political participation, income, access to health, women's participation in the work market and within the educational world. However, only gradual changes occurred in inequalities pertaining to access to education and to the effects of social origin on educational levels just as there has been a very limited reduction of inequalities for black people and access to services.

Therefore, the volume demonstrates that macro-transitions are not sufficient to explain the trajectory of inequalities. It also presents solid evidence that continuous policies are crucial for significant changes to occur in the social and economic order. The volume presents consistent evidence that government decisions and their continuity over time matter in the long-term trajectory of inequalities.

Additionally, the volume demonstrates that public policies do not exhaust the list of explanatory factors for this phenomenon. Societal changes – such as women's behavior (in the labor market, the educational world, and family) as well as prejudice and self-exclusion - also significantly affect the chances for social mobility. Although policies may be able to bring about such opportunities, individual decisions are required so that the disadvantaged may seize such opportunities.

Besides presenting the main conclusions of the study, the concluding chapter presents an update of the trajectory of income inequality in Brazil, based on annual data from the National Household Sample Survey.

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