

Social Liberalism and Global Domination*

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Abstract

Neoliberalism was paramount in the transition to the present phase of modernity. But since the 1990s, a sort of social liberalism has also been crucial to the organization of current forms of global domination, including the forms of governmentality that shape contemporary subjectivities. This article investigates the closed forms of seriality as well as sectoralized and targeted policies that underlie social liberalism. Counterposed to them, though not in an absolute manner, is a perspective of open serialities and universalist social policies towards a complex solidarity.

Neoliberalism and social liberalism

Neoliberalism appeared many years ago as a project to which originally nobody paid much attention. It was born out of the efforts of many economists concentrated in this intellectual task. Hayek stood out among them, as is known, but many other important academics took part in its intellectual and practical articulation. Several years passed until neoliberals came to state power, since Keynesianism and the Welfare State, developmentalism and corporatist forms of organizing social policy limited the space in which its doctrines could expand and exercise concrete political drive. It eventually achieved world hegemony, with the period of its rise starting with the dictatorships of Pinochet and Videla, in Chile and Argentina respectively, and later with Reagan and Thatcher in the United States and Britain. With the growing crisis – real or imagined, financial and/or political – of Keynesianism, of Third World developmentalism and the encompassing social policies of the Welfare State, neoliberalism managed to achieve hegemony and redraw the world intensely according to its vision. This included economic policies, of which the so-called Washington Consensus ended up being the best expression. Moreover, successive generations of ‘reforms’ have since then tried and created institutional conditions for its implementation, from privatizations to the refashioning of judicial systems. But they also implied, as shown by Foucault ([1978-79] 2004), a ‘bio-political’ conception of people, which should be understood as ‘firms’ or ‘enterprises’, rationally, systematically, projected, subjectively closed in a career and life trajectory, with investment plans and cost-benefits calculations. Neoliberalism moved therefore between a worldview, a political project and public policies (see Anderson, 1995; Harvey, 2007).

Neoliberalism has already been analysed many times in its distinct currents. It is not the intention of this article to resume and deepen this path of investigation, but rather to inquire into what has happened in the aftermath of its consolidation as economic policy, although some important parts of the world have only partially submitted to its prescriptions (as with China, other countries like Russia have retreated from its acceptance after absolutely disastrous processes). In fact, the goal of this text is to investigate what we can investigate about the successor to neoliberalism: that is to

say, *social liberalism*. This is not necessarily – and in fact, not entirely – opposed to neoliberalism, sharing many elements and perspectives with it, but rests no longer content with the affirmation of the market and the rationalism of the firm in all dimensions, mixing economics and ‘bio-politics’ in an even broader and more subtle way. The latter in particular expanded with social liberalism, which shrewdly knew how to respond to fundamental societal demands, thereby consolidating the hegemony of liberalism in the world. If neoliberalism, evincing strong elements of continuity with liberalism – but, as I shall argue, discarding what was in principle its ‘rights’ claim – was decisive for the broadening of what many still call the ‘American Empire’, social liberalism is crucial for its administration, above all in regions of the world in which popular demands come forward and the theme of poverty stands out (Panitch and Gindin, 2012; Domingues, 2013b).

As we shall see, the World Bank is the key institution in this process. It invented or found ways to draw on innovations that turn up in the so-called ‘Global South’. This is especially true with regard to conditional monetary cash transfers, particularly in Latin America, Africa and South Asia – including Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Chile, Nicaragua and almost all other Latin American countries, as well as Turkey, Burkina Faso, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Cambodia, South Africa, Morocco, Malawi, India, Nigeria, the Philippines and Yemen. More widely, focal and sectorialized policies are decisive for its articulation, which fragments and reconstitutes the social tissue aiming at its vertical functioning, without contraposition exactly to that perspective that we call ‘entrepreneurial’. It responds to what can be defined as the tendencies and dynamics of the third phase of global modernity. I will begin by discussing its concrete functioning, going on to some classical topics of sociology and philosophy in order to frame it, and concluding with its localization in contemporary modernity and in global domination systems.

From rights to particularizing policies

Global social policy cannot be described in a homogeneous way all over the world. There are historical and contemporary variations that are very relevant. In the West we find, since the end of the nineteenth and during the twentieth century, especially in its second half, a tendency towards the universalization of social rights – also as a project of liberal social-democracy, a classical reference to which is the well-known work of Marshall ([1950] 1964) – although on the other hand corporatist systems, such as the German one, have also played a decisive role. This sort of construction of social welfare suffered defeat to a large extent in the United States, where it is residual. Corporatism was also the way through which Latin America and the Arab world developed their social policies, differently from socialist countries, which aimed at more universal social policies, as in the case of the Soviet Union and Cuba, even though China had clearly separated its rural and urban populations, the latter deserving broader social rights.

The market was thus the main original axis of the modern project, alongside civil and in part political citizenship, in the welfare states reaching out to social citizenship, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Very often, however, the theme of affirmative action turned up in several places, such as in India, due to a heterogeneous social fabric, cut across by deep inequalities (in this case, caste based). Rights with a universal

character, in any case, at least rhetorically and as telos, were kept as a state goal in most countries. Since the crisis of the 1970s, the situation has changed. It is not rights or their projection that matters. At stake is not *equality*, but *equity* (Domingues, 2006a). In this regard, what matters is not treating everyone in the same way in the pursuit of a sort of justice capable of creating a common, in other words, universal, 'status'. The issue is to generate policies that treat distinct actors, unequal in their predicament, in an unequal way. Nobody expressed this vision in a more straightforward and well argued manner than Amartya Sen (1999), whose perspective was put forward directly, albeit implicitly, against the developmentalism that would have, it is supposed, led just to frustration.

According to this sort of standpoint, electing the mostly needy would be the point. Targeted policies would therefore be the solution, drawing on the basics of compensatory policies – in other words, the protection of the most 'vulnerable' – that were introduced in the face of the 'structural adjustment' promoted by the Washington Consensus. These targeted policies were recommended by those very international financial organizations that advocated structural adjustment, with their reversion expected in the long run. It was not by chance that Sen got a prize and a tribute from the World Bank. If his decisive contribution to the establishment of the United Nations (UN) Human Development Index (HDI) and the Millennium Goals to combat extreme poverty cannot be overlooked, his role in the development of policies for the poor – extreme poor – must not be forgotten. Both perspectives, in fact, blend to a large extent. The Brazilian 'Bolsa Família' programme has become the most important in the world in this regard, embracing millions of families and surpassing others, such as the Oportunidades in Mexico. Hence it works as a model for the World Bank, as the Brazilian government proudly boasts. This programme is the best example of the Latin American 'social police'. India too, with its massive number of poor people, intends to develop a similar programme – based on direct cash transfers, like the Bolsa Família – although it has to struggle with problems of statistics and administration (Jhabvala and Standing, 2010; Vyasulu, 2010; Gosh, 2011).¹

In healthcare, moreover, the rejection of the universalization of services provided by the state has become a crucial theme, since its provisions would restrict it to basic attention and general treatment for the public. That is all the access the poor would have. The others, of 'greater complexity' and more expensive, would be on offer in the market for those who could pay for them. Reasonable cover could thereby be placed on the horizon, but not universal access as an automatic fallout of citizenship. With education the same thing has happened, with basic education becoming a state obligation (and means to 'human capital' formation), while higher education is in the market for the middle and upper classes to buy. In all these themes equity stands out, not equality, as in fact the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) made clear.

This is not the only area in which there have been important changes in the policies of these institutions. Others came up, under the pressure of public opinion in many countries and the action of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). They related to the demands of specific groups or referred to specific issues. In the first place were indigenous peoples, in particular in the Americas and Australia, as well as in other

areas of Asia and Africa, besides the environmental theme, often combining with the former and generating opportunities once again for the development of sectorialized policies in relation to specific collectivities. The case of women followed next, with social policies that aimed at their promotion in a world dominated by men and sexism, once again treating unequal persons unequally and concentrating on women the benefits and/or control of the concrete implementation of public policies. In some part, albeit less intensively, racial and ethnic questions around the world were also converted into the object of sectorialized equity policies. Some, rather limited level of participation, however, was in addition placed on the agenda of these organizations.

Curiously, there is still very little research about this process. With regard to indigenous peoples and the environment, the evolution of the World Bank is more researched, but as to the other themes this is by no means the case. Most studies are dedicated to its development projects since the 1940s, along the lines of support to infrastructure, industrialization of agriculture, lending, etc. (Goldman, 2006; Pereira, 2011). The special exception is the work of Hall (2007), which analyses several of these policies, the passage from only economics to environmental themes and from there to social policing, including the tensions between the bank and the United States government. However, not all policies win his attention, and he refrains in particular from stating possible and necessary conclusions, either specific or – indeed, even less so – theoretical, about the meaning and historical importance of this subtle evolution. Other discussions deal more generically with the issue, acknowledging that there is something new under the sun. This is the case, above all, with Hardt and Negri (2000), who propose the thesis of a de-territorialized empire in which states play no decisive role, or at least share with other agents in the administration of the global space and of biopolitics. The very generation and management of life and subjectivity would be the key elements of contemporary capitalism, in a way that fragments social life, although the ‘multitude’, a mix of universality and singularity, comes forth as the subject that will eventually close the trajectory of the empire. From another angle, local instead of global, with specific reference to India, Chatterjee (2004) criticized state policies of social citizenship and pointed to the role of particular and circumscribed themes and moral identities which concrete subjects would be capable of engendering, in contraposition to the ‘governmentality’ exercised by the state (a manner of *rule*, not ‘domination’, he affirms, which consists for me in a rhetorical rather than an actually conceptual statement, insofar as the latter is a component of the former).

We need to recognize that this was not a movement deployed only from the top down. In social dynamics several collectivities made their demands heard in increasingly particularized ways, newly or by finding opportunities and spaces to make them more visible than before. The forms of democratic participation of these groups have also become stronger and found receptivity nationally and in the face of some international organizations, with a widening of what some are prone to define as a ‘global civil society’ (Kaldor, 2003). A multiplication of issues addressed was the result.

On the other hand, the idea of ‘entrepreneurship’ was kept central in all these policies. In fact, they look for collectivities as objects, passive or active. But it is very common that the solution ends up being the promotion of entrepreneurial activity, at least

rhetorically, of the beneficiaries of such policies, in particular when it is the combat of poverty that is at stake. In this respect the combination between social liberalism and neoliberalism is plain to see, in that the former remains attached to the latter, entertaining a complementary relationship for a good while, beyond the pure and simple affirmation of the market, but never denying and especially keeping it as the kernel of social development. The clearest example, a pioneer inspiring programme or contributions to programmes that have followed, is obviously the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh that lends money to the very poor, assuming that it is women who receive the benefit – concretely much more complicated, although this is a theme that is usually to be found in all anti-poverty social policies at present. It intends that an individual would leave a situation of privation by becoming an entrepreneur in a new and rationalized way of spreading and promoting Third World ‘self-employment’, in a Latin American, African or Asiatic version, with high costs, including debt (Karim, 2008; Ghosh, 2013).²

Individualism, particularism and universalism, pluralism and complexity

The individualist character of liberal thought is more than established. This is reproduced in neoliberalism although, according to that worldview, institutional and legal issues that allow for social life and the very creation or preservation of freedom should not be overlooked. The same occurred with the way in which the rationality of entrepreneurial behaviour was understood, since it demands a highly predictable environment. All these are themes related to global ‘governance’ and the legal and social reforms promoted by international organizations in recent decades. This sort of perspective conjures up, on the other hand, a rather pronounced abstract universalism: the rational individual (as well as the basic institutional forms that guarantee an optimal environment for her behaviour) is universal and cuts across all regions and countries (regardless of her historical prevalence in the West). Despite national borders, she should be seen as a figure that has finally found in the modern, global world the concrete possibilities for its realization. This is in fact suggested by Hayek ([1944] 1979), with his teleology of historical development: we could say that there is something such as the essence of human beings, but this is revealed only in modernity, when the concrete forms for its social embodiment come true. He believes that economic development, allowed for by the freedom of action of the individual, can thereby happen in a consistent manner, with Europe and the United States launching themselves in the process, in spite of the threats to human freedom that the growth of the state engendered during the twentieth century with the emergence of a new type of servitude.

In a way, a process similar to that which took place in nineteenth century Europe unfolds (see Castel, [1995] 1999), albeit in a somewhat more limited manner. While at that time liberalism had to cope with the permanence of ‘pauperism’ – despite the establishment of the principles of liberal capitalist economy, and in fact due to its lack of success in solving it, poverty remained and was an awkward issue – it is recognized today that deep poverty is a global problem, which it is necessary to address. It is not that liberalism cannot solve it in the long run. But it is admitted that those who are too poor need basic conditions to rise to the position of entrepreneurs. For that they have to be treated in a different way from other sectors of society. It is not equality that is

at stake, but rather equity. It is with this sort of perception that societies were divided into specific collectivities, with particular identities and, by the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, increasingly closed within nation states but also from an international standpoint. Social classes are excluded from these identities, on the other hand, which could problematize especially capitalism, or at least put breaks to its workings and the exploitative relations that characterize it. This is a topic that liberalism in the US has projected already for a long time, intellectually and politically, with private foundations in that country playing a clear role in its articulation and diffusion, first at a national, then at a global level (Herz, 1989; Domhof, 2010).

Anderson (1998) praised nationalism as a way of affirming modern universalism, which promotes what he called 'open serialities'. He opposed them to ethnic identities, which share, according to him, 'bound serialities'. Chatterjee (2004) in his references got closer to the topic I am dealing with here, attacking nationalism and pointing out that Marshallian social rights already evinced a tension in their construction, since it was more difficult to define them universally, and thereby making them concretely universal (in fact, nationalizing them, we could say). He therefore claimed priority for the bound serialities of morally defined popular communities, which become more or less sharply defined targets for state based social policies and with their relations with NGOs (see Domingues, 2012 e 2013a). Chatterjee interprets, in an anti-state mood typical of much of Indian intellectuals, far-reaching processes, which spread out through all – or almost all – countries of the contemporary world. That is to say, if liberalism emphasized a mix of individualism and civil rights, with its social-democratic version doing the same despite difficulties of definitions and practices, and the social rights that expanded civil rights (in some way political rights, which were never at the core of liberal thought or were somehow rejected by it), what is being outlined today is something very different. Within each country and transversally, in global terms, what comes up is a mixture of individualism and identity and social particularisms. While before, therefore, universalized rights, at least in their concretization within the nation, were the telos for the social police, what is envisioned today are specific policies for each social group – in their isolation vis-à-vis the others. This is the *social* face of contemporary liberalism, overcoming and being combined with neoliberalism in its purest form.

Such groups can be defined in a more or less *active* or *passive* manner. In fact many of them emerged due their own efforts, without links with projects of the ruling groups. This finds a visible expression in the councils created by the Brazilian 1988 Constitution, in which several themes and collectivities were selected as axes for participatory democracy, which complemented conventional representative democracy. Women and homosexuals, ethnic and racial groups, youth and those of advanced age, among others, are collectivities that express the increasing level of complexity and social pluralism of the contemporary world. Other groups and social movements deal with specific, also pluralized themes. They are not the outcome of a self-centred activity. On the contrary, they interact in their formation with the state, public policies, NGOs, churches, classes, unions, other movements and international organizations. Also the social question, not of inequality but poverty, especially deep poverty, is a theme that was brought to the fore by broader social struggles that ended

up inevitably forcing it on the state without, however, a rupture that privileged its treatment as essentially passive, insulated from other social sectors. This was a decisive intellectual and political construction for the contemporary world, in identity as well social police and development terms. In some cases it is much more hierarchical and demands passivity, typical of the treatment of poverty, which takes up elements of philanthropy launched by the state from the top down. It includes a certain definition of who the deserving poor are and those who are not (through 'conditionalities'); in other cases, it implies the active participation of these collectivities in the elaboration of public policies, in a more or less participatory way.

Not all countries in the world are under the influence of this sort of politics which affects especially those that affiliate somehow with the liberal tradition, in Latin America or Asia (India – yes, China – no, for instance, while Japan has recently started contemplating this possibility), whereas Africa also has such policies as a reference. Europe, in the medium term, at least in some of its southern countries, can end up taking them up. The United States, for a long while now, is addressing its poor population on a reduced scale with specific and very restricted policies (with an emphasis on basic food), besides having, at least since the 1970s, developed a strong 'identity politics', particularizing through social movements and public policies. In any case, this is at present a fundamental reference for global policies and for the understanding each one has of his/her identity, of what it means to be an agent – as a member of a group, especially closed, not of a broader collectivity, whether as citizens, of a class, nationally integrated – a phenomenon whose scaffolding it is necessary to point out here, at least briefly.

The backdrop for this new way of thinking about social life and the very production of life and subjectivity is found in long term evolutionary processes, as well as on the more limited evolution of modern civilization (see Domingues, 2006a, 2012). The first two phases of the development of modernity – liberal/colonial and later state organized – had homogenizing projects at their core, whether looking for domination, or searching for emancipation. These were also ways of dealing with and trying to reduce social complexity. Today this process is no longer possible: the level of social complexity, which implies a high level of pluralism, in terms of individual and collective subjectivity, does not allow for its capturing simply by projects of modernizing homogenization unfolded by *modernizing moves*, launched by collectivities of any kind, that have as their goal a radical homogenization of social life. This is what makes plausible, albeit problematic, the concentration on bound serialities. It is necessary to be careful, though, with the absolute practical valorisation of this kind of collectivity, since the impossibility of homogenization of social life in a more radical manner does not mean that it cannot be partially reached in a number of fields, with positive emancipatory effects on social life. It always has a combination of open and bound serialities, built in variable ways that answered for the social fabric and the dynamic of modernity. This remains the case, with less room for the former, but without the balance between universalism and particularism being out of necessity totally turned to the latter.

Public policies beyond social liberalism?

We have seen then that equity-based public policies have become crucial at present and that they come along and sometimes mix with sectorialized policies, directed to specific collectivities. The 'poor' are the exact node of junction of such policies. In fact, when they encompass – as in the case of the Brazilian Bolsa Família, the Colombian Familias en Acción or the Mexican Oportunidades, as well as in principle in India – a huge amount of people, they look like something that would almost be universal.³ It is, however, a mistake to see them thus. They have poor families in focus and not really the universal citizen, do not appear as social rights but rather as some sort of state gift, which has a far-away, but actual clientelist element. Although in practice things are less clear, with the beneficiaries of the programme identified by local committees, for instance (Domingues, 2013a). It is instructive that a rumour about the end of the Bolsa Família due to a sudden decision by President Dilma Rousseff has led thousands of people, during a single weekend, to attempt to withdraw their money from the banks before government was expected to take it, ending the programme. The Asignación Universal por Hijo, a similar Argentine programme, is not universal either, since it is also directed at the poor and its object remains families. It is, however, more general and less conditional: it does not define collectivities directly cut out by the state, depending on direct demand of families and tuning therefore more directly to citizens (Neri et al., 2010). On the other hand, Latin American governments are in many cases and moments somewhat further than social liberalism in the strict sense of the term, by means of democratization and increasing inclusion promoted by its sectorialized policies. They do not, however, break with it despite the tensions that came about with some groups due to projects that extracted natural resources (above all, mega-mining) in the region.

An argument in favour of maintaining this type of targeted policy is very obvious and has economic and human plausibility. It allows you to reach those who need more such monetary help, especially because the programmes are not too expensive, in a situation in which, it is supposed, states do not have enough resources to embrace everyone with universal policies – which would also be unfair by wasting much needed resources for the poorest people on those who do not actually need them. Another argument would be high social complexity, which prevents the state from addressing everything it has to if it does not carefully select its goals and strategies that are lost with universal policies. This brings up especially the multiplicity of sectorialized policies, demanded by collectivities with different identities and interests, increasingly particularized, to a great extent a reality difficult to deal with. If these two arguments are not absurd, there are on the other hand social, political and moral themes that need to be framed in another way. It is possible, and necessary, to think of homogenizing policies and common social status, that have the citizen-worker as their subject of universal rights. If a particularizing and heterogenizing state offensive was at stake with regard to those policies, we would then focus on a universalizing and homogenizing offensive. The mix, lending concreteness to a system of *complex solidarity* (Domingues, [2006b] 2007), is what comes forth for an advanced programme of social reforms, by and large in Latin America and the world. Resources exist and it is mandatory that they are simply mobilized.

Thereby we actually move beyond social liberalism, towards something closer to social-democracy and its more open serialities, especially in its citizen version (non-corporatist). In this regard it is also necessary to think that the point is not to compress more particular serialities, although we must reject any essentialization of their attributes, since these are all social constructions, and as such supple and prone to change. In any case, there was a strong criticism in the 1970-1980s of the lack of recognition of these particular elements of social identities. In fact, much of critical social theory during the twentieth century was directed to 'logocentric' operations that compressed social reality through concepts and policies that do not allow for the flourishing of diversity, consisting in one of the key, albeit non-exclusive, elements of the systems of domination during that period (Domingues, 2006a). This perspective must be sustained, opening space to identity struggles and the varied interests that we can find in each and every national society and cut across them. There is no reason, however, to stop there, reifying particularities and reasoning as if homogenizing national and global elements had never, or no longer have, an important role to play. On the contrary, in a situation in which policies of domination and their governmentality aspects are based on social fragmentation, it is the construction of a complex solidarity that combines heterogeneity and homogeneity, especially if such elements appear in an active rather than passive form, that we should consider and promote.

Today in Europe we see the left on the defensive due to the dismantling of the welfare state in some or large measure, depending on the country, and of labour legislation, its flexibilization, in a very general way. It is as if suddenly the defence of the achievements of social-democracy were all that should mobilize this political current. This is not true, nor should it be viewed so, but it is necessary to recognize that these were far-reaching civilizational achievements. It is not a matter of restricting oneself to the construction of the welfare state. Yet, globally, establishing a shared social citizenship, potentially universal, is an element that would stand in opposition to the projects of domination and the construction of citizenship that cuts out society as incommensurable collectivities and demands and leads to fragmentation. Moreover, it is not a matter of demanding the copy of previous social-democratic models, but rather of building projects of a more global character, with some regional and national autonomy, as it happened in Latin America in the last few decades (Pereira da Silva, 2010). We therefore need to open such supposedly incommensurable particularities and build a solidarity that acknowledges specificities, at the same time recognizing that we belong to the human species and to modern national societies, while they furnish the main frame of the concretization of rights through a strong and broad concept of citizenship.

Evidently the themes of international domination are not exhausted by this specific and subtle combination of social liberalism. They include development and underdevelopment, dependency and imperialism, control of intellectual and ideological, scientific and technological production circuits, among the many other elements that constitute inequalities and asymmetries of the modern global system. It is mandatory to combat them in all their aspects in the search for a fairer global society. The management of social life such as I have portrayed here, in any case plays its fundamental role in the articulation of public policies and of individual and

collective subjectivity. Against it, we need to look for ways that can lead us to its criticism and emancipatory outcomes. Moreover, the proposal is not that we stop at rights as the means through which to battle inequalities and domination, since it is necessary to move much further than this. With regard to social policies and the reconfiguration of the social tissue, one must not overlook the importance of the change of standpoint in the last decades.

By way of conclusion we can resume and deepen, therefore, the interrogation of how critical theory is positioned along the metamorphosis of modernity. Originally, with Marx ([1867] 1987), in its foundational moment, critical theory tried to show how, behind the apparently fair wage labour relations under capital – and partly truly, since labour power is sold at its fair price – there were hidden deep and regular relations of exploitation. Marx was moreover very clear about the global character of the capitalist system, although he had an optimistic vision of its penetration in all countries of the world, which offered, in the long run, conditions for a planetary communism. This has corresponded to the first phase of modernity, in the nineteenth century and the beginnings of the twentieth, in which the market, as a reality and as telos was projected as the main pillar of social life, colonial and imperial expansion implying a stronger state, capable of playing such a civilizatory mission, at the end of which all countries and regions would have the market as the homogenizing mechanism. The second phase of modernity, since the 1930s, passing through the processes of decolonization, till the new crisis of the system in the 1970s, had the state and a more general effort of homogenization as its global projection. Adorno and Horkheimer ([1944-45] 1984), among others, put great emphasis on the homogenization of the world – in fact, in their case, concretely only the West and the Soviet world – by means of reason. In its ‘logocentrism’ it did not recognize anything that did not simply reproduce it in the real world (destroying what escaped its operations, which colonialism, it is relevant to note, had already pushed forward in a large scale outside of Europe, including in the United States). In a certain way it is as if such authors refracted the activities of the state, wherefrom an offensive was more clearly launched by a reason that intended to organize, more deeply and by means of more diverse mechanisms, national societies.⁴

In the period we happen to live in, under the aegis of the third phase of modernity, the complexity of social life becomes so high that it is not possible to think of systems of domination as fundamentally homogenizing. Even emancipatory forces share the same characteristic, shown to be so due to its clearly global reach, with the heritage of the several civilizations becoming more salient. Social liberalism manages therefore to render itself, very astutely, simultaneously as homogenizing, through entrepreneurship, and fragmenting, by means of targeted and sectorialized policies. Critical theory, recognizing and embracing social complexity, especially from the standpoint of the collectivities that aspire to emancipation, cannot allow itself to be captured by an excessive particularization of social life. We must know how to combine particularity and universality so that we can unfold a project capable of answering to the challenges that we face us during the twentieth-first century.

Notes

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- ¹ See the panorama and the arguments weaved in Fiszbein and Schady et al., 2009. This World Bank 'research report' offers detail data and social liberal arguments in favour of targeted policies against poverty, as well as its links with 'human capital', health and education. It serves as backdrop of several moments of this article.
- ² What this means in terms of 'petty commodity production' and self-exploitation can be seen, with reference to Africa and south Asia – while this is a very well known phenomenon also in Latin America Latin –, in Harriss-White, 2012.
- ³ By the end of 2010 direct cash transfer programmes in Latin America reached 113 million people, that is to say, 19 percent of the region's population, an extraordinary number from any angle, although the transferred values are by and large very small and its pull on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is also very modest (0.50 in the case of Brazil, for example). CEPAL, 2010.
- ⁴ Although Foucault (for instance [1978-79] 2004) had timely shown that the state, in some crucial aspects of social life, was already busy with that through 'governmentality' mechanisms since the nineteenth century.

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