

**ROUTES INTO THE
FUTURE**
NEW MAPS FOR THE
SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES



18 > 21 June 2008
* International Colloquium

Teatro Académico Gil Vicente
Auditorium of the Faculty of Law
Auditorium of the University of Coimbra

SESSION V: Social policies and new public risks: Is it possible to combine complexity with equity?

June 20th, 14:00-16:00

The SHS have been confronted with multiple challenges in the area of social policies, on the one hand, and of the new public risks, on the other, both to a very large extent linked to the contradictory processes of neo-liberal globalization.

One of the challenges points towards the temporalities and dynamics which social policies have maintained, in view of horizons of equity, redistribution, security and social justice. Bearing in mind the tension between the capitalist logic of accumulation and the need for its legitimization by means of social policies, it is up to the SHS to rethink the effective role of the State and its capacity to create and implement social policies leading to an emancipatory social transformation. Attention must also be paid to the differences between the North and the South, their social policy models and the specificities of the crises which these face in the context of neo-liberal globalization. It therefore becomes necessary to ponder the articulation of the different levels - local, national, regional and global - and of the social and political players involved in formulating and implementing social policies. Analysing this articulation gives rise to challenging the meanings of "global social policy" and of the roles played by the hegemonic trans-national agents who develop social policy models. Such an analysis leads, in addition, to the critical study of the emergence and role of players other than the State, such as NGOs and social movements.

New public risks have, in turn, grown as a central concern within the different scientific domains, including that of the SHS. The development of these new areas calls for new forms of institutionalization, anchored in the development of new partnerships and in trans-disciplinary work. In several areas, we have seen the emergence of a series of public concerns, which have been supplemented by new and emerging concepts of risk in environment and public health, food safety, medical technologies, information and communication technologies, natural disasters, industrial accidents, public security, as well as in emerging forms of social vulnerability resulting from economic and institutional change. What is regarded as a risk in different societies and in different social and socio-ecological contexts throughout the world, both in the North and in the South, is subject to variation and inseparable from the new configurations of knowledge which mobilize scientific and

specialized knowledge, in addition to local forms of knowledge based on experience. The same may be said of the diversity of players involved in the responses to risks in different places and at different levels.

Shiv Visvanathan | “Democracy, Diversity and the Body Politic: The emergence of Biotechnology as an imagination in India”

Risk and Regulation smack of new behavioural sciences. They pose new challenges to science and democracy demanding new experiments and new forms of institutionalization, in the public sphere.

This paper is based on the emergence of biotechnology in the domain of agriculture. If one constructs it only as a formal science policy discourse, one considers predictably issues of regulation, licensing, monitoring. But the discourses of science tend to be too ordered. Often science policy sees debates on ground as noise, as gossip, as a prescientific stage of rational discourse. But once we look at the metaphors, the language, the norms, the rumors of biotechnology agriculture and risk, a different kind of discourse emerges. It is a vision of justice, consumerism, lifestyle, all anchored around the variants of the body as metaphor. Based on field work and survey data in three states - Gujarat, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh - the paper argues that biotechnology is being constructed on sites where the body has escaped the body politic. Complexity emerges not just as science but a diversity of narratives each seeking to construct the vision of a society in different ways. Local and global knowledge, science, gossip, rumor, official discourse and dialects all compete to construct and translate this emerging space. To concentrate on the purely formal is too official. The debates on risk and biotechnology need to consider the “noise” of democracy seeking to construct a new framework for agriculture.

Silvia Portugal | ‘Under/on the Policies which do not Protect Us: New Risks and Challenges Facing Sociological Theory’

The past decades have been marked by countless social, economic, demographic and environmental changes which define new patterns of configuration, perception and risk-addressing. At the same time, welfare production systems are undergoing far-reaching processes of re-structuring resulting from globalisation, the downsizing of the Welfare State and transformations within the family.

High and persistent unemployment, heightened income inequality, the persistence of poverty, despite economic growth, demographic ageing, birth-rate decline, the increase in mental illness, occurrences of ill-treatment and sexual abuse, domestic violence, the downsizing of social protection coverage, the persistence of inequality in access to health and education, the continued exclusion of huge social groups, are some of the issues which now compel us to (re)think welfare production systems.

Thinking in this area has been dominated by the theories on the welfare worlds developed by Esping-Andersen, whose perspective, although grounded on the triad State-market-family, centres above all on State provision. The importance of informal social protection systems was forgotten for a long time, and the political and analytical interest it now arouses is inextricably linked to the crisis of the Welfare State. At a time when social policies were downsizing, approaches had, of necessity, to begin to contemplate welfare production spheres other than the State.

The crisis has brought to the centre of debate the issue of responsibility-sharing between public and private solidarity and, as such, has brought with it the (re)discovery of the importance of the family and of the community as social protection spheres.

This paper sets out from an identification of some of the social problems and risks to discuss ongoing challenges to the definition of public policies and to thinking on welfare production. Differences (between North and South, men and women, young people, adults and the elderly, workers and the jobless), as well as similarities (in exposure to risk, to poverty and to exclusion) make it pivotal to revise ways of pondering social protection. This paper proposes that the classic analytical triangle be replaced by a hexagon, one that integrates informal networks, civil society associations and international agencies, beyond the State, the market and the family. It thus seeks theoretical alternatives with the capacity to integrate the diversity of players present in welfare production, informing on their potentialities and fragilities and of the forms of articulation among them.

About the Participants

Chair:

Pedro Hespanha is Associate Professor at the School of Economics, Coimbra University, and a researcher at the Centre for Social Studies. He is a specialist in rural sociology, and his current areas of interest are social citizenship and the crisis in the Welfare State, globalization, social risk and integration and marginalization. He is the author of, among other titles, *A transformação da Família e a Regressão da Sociedade-Providência*, Porto: Comissão de Coordenação da Região Norte, 2002 (with Sílvia Portugal).

Speakers:

Shiv Visvanathan is Senior Researcher at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies - CSDS in Delhi. An anthropologist and researcher in the area of Human Rights, his areas of interest are the psychological, cultural and political relations in science, societal control by technology and the links between scientific power and the authoritarian structures of the State. He is the author of, among other titles, "The Philosopher of Obsolescence", *Times of India*, 1998.

Sílvia Portugal is Assistant Professor at the School of Economics, Coimbra University, and a researcher at the Centre for Social Studies. Her research work has made use of the theory of networks with a view to discussing relations between formal and informal systems of well-being production. In this area, she has researched the importance of the family in the Portuguese social welfare system, with particular relevance to the role of women. She has published on these themes in Portugal and abroad. Her book *Cidadania, Políticas Públicas e Redes Sociais* will be published soon by Quarteto Books.

Comments:

Graça Carapineiro is Associate Professor at ISCTE and a researcher at the Centre for Sociological Research and Studies. Her areas of interest include the sociology of the professions and the sociology of health and medicine. She has authored, among other titles, *Sociologia da Saúde. Estudos e Perspectivas*, Coimbra, Pé de Página Editores, 2006.

João Arriscado Nunes is Associate Professor at the School of Economics, Coimbra University, and a researcher at the Centre for Social Studies. His current areas of

interest include democracy, citizenship and participation, and social studies of science and technology, especially of biomedical research and the life sciences. His is co-editor of *Reinventing democracy: Grassroots movements in Portugal*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006 (with Boaventura de Sousa Santos), and author of other several publications.