

Marta Arretche *Editor*

Paths of Inequality in Brazil

A Half-Century of Changes



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Preface

From the 1970s on, democracies in the developed world have witnessed a substantial increase in income inequality. Although the level of inequality and the speed of such upward progress differ among countries (Piketty and Saez 2014), the path has been the same whether observed by means of the share the top richest obtain from total income (Piketty 2014) or by the relative income gains enjoyed by different economic strata (Milanovic 2016). Not surprisingly, inequality has turned out to be one of the most salient topics in public affairs around the world today.

Under democracy, Brazil headed in the opposite direction. Income inequality systematically declined after reaching a peak in 1989, at the end of the Sarney administration, when the average income of the richest 10% (as measured by surveys) was 71 times higher than the average income of the poorest 10%. Since then, this ratio has presented a systematic decrease. In 2014, when this number reached its lowest level, the average income of the richest 10% was 32 times that of the poorest 10%.¹ Despite this trend, there is no doubt that the income gap remains very high. Latin America has the highest inequality rates in the world (Ravallion 2014), and Brazil ranks among one of the most unequal countries in Latin America.²

Both pathways – of developed countries and of Brazil – subverted well-established theories and raised important questions for democratic theory. In the history of political ideas, liberals and conservatives feared universal suffrage in view of the risk that struggles for income redistribution would gain political momentum and that the possible outcomes would be disastrous on property and the social order. The trajectory of post-World War II democracies seemed to confirm the claim that in the long run, universal suffrage would lead to a reduction in social and economic inequalities. Given that in the overwhelming majority of democracies the

¹Calculations based on data from the National Household Sample Surveys. As this introduction was written, IBGE data was available up to the year 2015.

²The inequality-adjusted income index calculated by the 2012 United Nations Program for Development indicates that in Latin America, only Colombia, Paraguay, Venezuela, and Ecuador have worse income distribution than Brazil. Source: <https://data.undp.org/dataset/Inequality-adjusted-income-index/kgcz-8b4v>

median voter's income is below the average income, collective social choices under universal suffrage would lead to an increase in the State's redistributive role (Meltzer and Richard 1981).

Contrary to these expectations, evidence displayed by mature democracies in the early twenty-first century has revealed that middle-class society, which emerged in the post-World War II period, may not endure. Has the golden age (Hobsbawn 1994) been just a pause along the path of wealth concentration rather than an expression of structural changes in capitalist societies? If democracy can give way to either inequality reduction or long-run increasing impoverishment, it appears that it is not a sufficient condition for redistribution to occur. If so, what is it that drives politics to affect an individual's well-being?

Such facts seem no less challenging for economic theory. Even if Simon Kuznets had been far more cautious than his observers, his preliminary speculations (1955, p. 7) gave rise to a research agenda that sought evidence and reasons for an inverted-U in the long-term trajectory of income inequality: the increase in inequality would only occur during the early stages of industrialization; more advanced developmental stages would be accompanied by a reduction in inequality (Kuznets 1955, p. 18).

The fact is that the factors leading to inequality reduction are still the subject of on-going debate among social scientists. That is why Brazil's story of success deserved to be scrutinized, even if the path we observed from the early 1990s to the mid-2010s does not continue into the future. Inequality and poverty has long been a constraint on the country's economic and human development, a pattern shared by many other countries in Latin America. As a result, different dimensions of exclusion in Brazil have also long been at the center of the political debate and academic agenda.

Indeed, many analysts were quite skeptical about the prospects of redistribution in Brazil under democracy. Some shared the assumption further elaborated by Boix (2003), according to whom it is not rational for elites to accept democratization in highly unequal societies due to the risk of future expropriation. Others were disappointed by the constancy of inequality and poverty that took place in Brazil during the transition to democracy (Barros et al. 2000; Carvalho 2001; Reis and Cheibub 1993). Finally, still others acknowledged that institutions inherited from a previous context where exclusion was the rule would impede the adoption of inclusion policies (Carvalho 2001; Lamounier 1992; Stepan 1999).

As this book shows, inequality in Brazil affected much more than simply income inequality. Market forces along with social policies, whose origins date back to the early 1930s and whose main pillars remained in place up to the late 1980s, set in motion a mechanism of fusion of advantages through which roughly the same categories of individuals acquired better positions in the job market along with entitlement to social rights such as worker protection and social security, access to health care, and home ownership. The result was the emergence of a monumental divide between insiders and outsiders. In turn, starting in the early 1990s, economic inequality reduction, along with factors exogenous to policies themselves, was a by-product of the inclusion of outsiders, a mechanism through which access to different social benefits were incrementally, albeit at different speeds, de-linked from

income and social background. Such a process entitled those in the middle and bottom strata of income distribution to social rights.

This book hopes to contribute to the overall understanding of the trajectory of inequalities. In a gathering at the Center for Metropolitan Studies (CEM), the authors of this volume were exhilarated by the availability of six editions of the Demographic Censuses compiled by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), for the 1960–2010 period. The opportunity encouraged us to undergo a collective effort to analyze the changes over a period of Brazilian history comprising very distinct economic and political contexts: rural-urban transition, industrialization, rapid economic growth and economic slowdown, inflation and monetary stability, authoritarianism, and democracy. Even though these transitions have been extensively covered by the specialized literature, a systematic assessment of the trajectory of inequality during this period has yet to be carried out.

Brazil in 1960 was a rural country where inequalities regarding income and the provision of infrastructure services were limited in scope throughout the vast national territory. This was, however, a relative equality in poverty insofar as low income and lack of essential public services were more or less evenly distributed throughout the country. The labor market was predominantly male. In 1970, in an overwhelmingly Catholic country, women bore an average of six children, but the better educated had a fertility rate of two children per woman. At each end of the income and education scale, the predominant arrangement was the traditional family, in which females were confined to domestic work.

Over three quarters of the Brazilian population was functionally illiterate, i.e., they had 0–3 years of study. Only 20% of youth between the ages of 12 and 15 had completed 4 years of schooling. Universities were restricted to the admission of white men from upper strata environments. Inequality between whites and non-whites began as early as the access to elementary education.

The short supply of skilled professionals ensured male providers with major advantages in the labor market and in the social protection system, since entitlement to pensions and health care was linked to formal inclusion in the job market. In a context of limited size of the urban industrial sector and high levels of chronic unemployment, social policies themselves were a source of inequality.

In 2010, Brazil was extremely urbanized: 85% of the country's population lived in cities. Educational levels had changed radically. Functional illiteracy had dropped to below 20% of the economically active population, mostly concentrated among the elderly. Among youth, completion of elementary education was virtually universal – almost 70% of youth completed eight years of schooling. Therefore, the completion of primary education was increasingly less dependent on family origin. At the other end of the educational system, the population over age 18 that reached high school went from 6.2 million in 1980 to 39.7 million in 2010; the population reaching university studies went from 3.4 million in 1980 to 21.5 million in 2010. Both numbers increased more than sixfold. During the same period, Brazil's infant mortality rate fell from 69 to 16 per 1000 live births and life expectancy increased from 62 to 73 years.

However, protagonists of the feminist as well as civil rights movements of the 1960s, women and non-whites, did not enjoy the same success in their respective emancipatory agendas. From 1970 on, women massively began to attend universities to the point of becoming the majority of university students in 2010, and to substantially reducing the differences between typical male and female occupations. The female fertility rate fell at a fast pace since poorer women began to adopt the reproductive behavior of highly schooled women. Having children became a choice!

Alongside these changes in women's behavior emerged a multitude of family arrangements – the traditional family ceased to be the predominant grouping. Likewise, a marked decline in Catholicism, far from signaling the end of this religion, in fact established religious pluralism.

Although the black and brown population has progressively enrolled in universities in recent decades, the fact remains that in 2010, whites still made up 75% of the university population. Moreover, when non-whites entered the higher education system, they tended to enroll in programs leading to less prestigious occupations. Consequently, the reduction of inequality for non-whites within the educational system continued to be restricted to where access had become universal, that is, at elementary schools.

However, the mass entry of women in school and work did not translate into equal wages. Women and blacks still earned less than white men in 2010, even when they possessed the same level of education.

In 2010, illiteracy was no longer an exclusion criterion for voting: costs of voter registration, turnout and obtaining information about competitors had been considerably reduced. Furthermore, there were countless opportunities for extra-parliamentary participation, whether through councils or a variety of associations.

Some conclusions can be drawn from this brief summary. Firstly, the term "inequality" remains overly abstract. The social world presents multiple inequalities: between rich and poor, men and women, between categories of race, which in turn are expressed through income, access to services, and political participation. In fact, the centrality of the income factor in comparative studies on inequality is most often the result of data availability, not the fact that income is the only relevant factor. Inequality is much more complex and goes well beyond its sheer monetary dimension. Therefore, knowledge of inequality demands that we analyze its multiple dimensions. Moreover, far worse than income inequality is the fusion of disadvantages upon the same individuals, that is, the mechanism through which someone's capacity to have a decent life is impeded by several layers of deprivation.

Secondly, the Brazil of 2010 still suffered from many unacceptable inequalities. Its course, however, was far from steady. The brief summary outlined above reveals that major offsets took place in the distances between social categories. Moreover, as one can observe in this volume, these shifts are unquestionably tied to democracy. The 1964 authoritarian regime expanded access to education, urban infrastructure services, and entitlement to social security and health care. But, contrary to the aphorism attributed to John F. Kennedy, this wave of supply expansion did not raise every boat to the same level. The increase in inequality, marked by inequalities

between individuals and regions in terms of household infrastructure as well as status distinctions in social security rights, accompanied both the economic growth and the expansion of the military regime's social policies. In contrast, the accelerated decline in poverty levels, income inequality within the labor market, and inequalities in access to services among individuals and regions would only emerge under the democratic regime. The 1990s introduce a shift in the history of inequality in Brazil.

Democracy, however, is not a sufficient condition to affect long-established patterns of income distribution and access to public goods. The evidence presented in this volume confirms the findings of a traditional line of research in the social sciences, emphasizing the need for continuous policies for substantial changes in the economic and social order to occur (Glaeser et al. 2004; Esping-Andersen 1985a, b, 1990). The long-term trajectory of inequalities in Brazil reveals there is no determinism – economic or political – in this process. Policies matter! Moreover: displacements in inequality patterns demand that policies be implemented over a long period of time.

The existence of continuous policies is precisely what allows one to explain the puzzle expressed by Kingstone and Power (2008, pp. 2–5), for whom in contemporary Brazilian democracy, “progress in some areas is offset by stagnation in others. (...) Some dimensions of democratic governance have improved rapidly and dramatically, while some have improved very little or not at all.” Dimensions of deprivation and inequality which displayed a dramatic decline – such as income, access to education, health, and electricity, as well as barriers to political participation – were those subject to continuous policies from the 1990s on. A number of chapters use a different lens to examine the improvements in these dimensions and point toward a steady path through which policies of inclusion incrementally reached those who were once considered outsiders. In fact, those areas have had greater centrality in the national political agenda.

Conversely, the reduction of inequality levels was considerably slower in those areas – such as access to water and sewage networks – marked by a lack of continuity between presidential terms or even due to decisional paralysis.

The emphasis on continuous policies does not imply that they exhaust the necessary conditions to reduce inequalities, however. A number of factors exogenous to policies also combined in a way that contributed to this downward progress. Besides market forces, such as the commodity boom that favored the increasing demand for jobs, this book also reveals that an individual's behavior can also affect redistributive patterns. In the Brazilian case, a silent revolution in women's behavior on different fronts – massive entry into the educational world and the labor market, changing choices concerning family arrangements, and even in religious choices – played a major role in reducing inequalities. Income inequality declined because a great number of women no longer received zero earnings in spite of the scale of the gender income gap. Changes in reproductive behavior on the part of poor women reduced the abundant supply of low-skilled workers in the job market. In contrast, prejudice and self-exclusion also limited the effect of opportunities brought about by policies regarding individual choice.

This is not a book on policies. Instead, it is an effort to examine inequality through several of its facets and more precisely, to describe its trajectory over the course of 50 years. Collectively, this volume shows that these different dimensions cannot be directly inferred from one another. Each dimension has its own particular path and pace. For example, while the income gap between the rich and the poor started declining from the early 1990s on, the gender earnings gap only began to display some reduction in 2001. The income gap among races in turn did not diminish at the same pace. Therefore, it seems evident that these different trajectories are affected by different factors, which justifies that we examine them separately.

The independent pace of the various dimensions as well as the role of public policies in dissociating income from inequality is even clearer when we look at what happened with regard to citizens' voting. The 1985 removal of the literacy barrier for the right to vote was an important step toward universal suffrage. Still, a number of policy decisions concerning detailed rules for exercising this right – such as holding elections on Sundays, free access to electoral campaigns through the media, and the electronic voting system – were just as decisive in reducing electoral participation costs for the poor. As a result, there was a significant reduction in the weight income and education exercised on electoral participation.

By the same token, the path toward access to public services in Brazil reveals an incremental dissociation from income. However, this de-linking effect is only eradicated under universalization. The negative association between household income, on the one hand, and unequal access to education, health care, and electricity, on the other, is only reduced if and when such policies become universal. The path toward universalization, however, reveals that the poorest are the last to be included. Once universalization is reached, inequality is displaced to a new frontier, where social origin and income continues to have a significant impact.

Book Contents

This book is organized into five parts, each corresponding to a dimension considered to be central by the literature.

The first part deals with political participation. It reveals that major changes occurred in this sphere, whether observed from the perspective of electoral participation or in the form of extra-parliamentary participation. The chapter “[Political Participation in Brazil](#),” by Fernando Limongi, José Antonio Cheibub, and Argelina Cheibub Figueiredo, analyzes the dimensions and mechanisms behind the incorporation of voters: Brazil went from 7.4 million voters in 1945 to 135.5 million in 2010. These numbers are not a mere consequence of demographic growth. Instead, their main explanatory factor was the elimination of the educational barrier in 1985 in view of the high illiteracy rates that still prevailed in Brazil at that time. The authors argue, however, that evidence shows that legislation excluding illiterates was bypassed during the military regime (1964–1985). Therefore, considering the impossibility of knowing for sure the extent to which the legal exclusion of illiterates

was indeed complied with until 1988, the real impact of the fall of the educational barrier as well as its effect on political decisions is debatable.

However, the elimination of legal barriers to electoral participation is not enough for effective inclusion of the underprivileged. As shown by the authors, those included in the voting world must overcome obstacles – regarding registration, displacement to polls, and information retrieval – in order to cast their vote in the ballot box. Electoral codes have been the subject of intense political dispute precisely because they are not neutral. Income and education unevenly enable voters to afford such costs. The chapter shows that decisions concerning electoral rules removed many of these obstacles, which greatly reduced electoral participation costs for the poorest and least educated, with obvious consequences on the act of voting.

The contemporary democratic regime was also witness to dramatic growth in the number of civil society associations. This is clearly demonstrated in the chapter “[Councils, Associations and Inequality](#),” by Adrian Gurza Lavalle and Leonardo Sangali Barone. Between 1988 and 2009, local-level policy councils expanded throughout the country, converting into reality the provisions envisaged in the 1988 Federal Constitution. The course of this expansion reveals the interactions between civil society and Brazilian State institutions since expansion is affected by the federal government’s induction policies. The presence of councils in all municipalities is limited to policy areas in which the federal government harnessed its spending power to condition federal transfers for their establishment though. In the absence of such federal induction mechanisms, territorial penetration of councils is affected by cross-municipality inequality: there is a clear association between citizens’ education and income, as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI), and the presence of local-level councils.

Between 1999 and 2009, the number of civil society associations increased at a faster rate than did population in all municipalities, regardless of socioeconomic conditions. However, the authors show that a greater presence of associations in more advantaged municipalities is essentially an effect of the indicator used to measure the phenomenon, that is, under the condition that registry offices and condominium associations, which tend to flourish in urban agglomerations, are recognized as civil society associations. By adopting an indicator better suited to measuring the type of associations described by the literature on political participation – associations for the protection of rights – the authors reveal that in the 2000s, such proliferation was most remarkable in municipalities that had the lowest HDI indexes.

The book’s second part deals with the relationship between education and income, a classic theme in the literature on inequality. It shows that this association is twofold, that is, social origin has an effect on an individual’s access to school as well as on her educational performance. Besides, there is a prize associated with education that distinguishes individuals with different educational levels in the labor market. Education is among the factors that most strongly determine better opportunities in the labor market, just as there is a close relationship between education and political participation. For this reason, any comprehensive study on inequality should carefully examine the behavior of access to education and its impact on income as well as the trajectory of the connection between family origin and access to education.

In the chapter “[Educational Stratification Among Youth in Brazil: 1960–2010](#),” Carlos Costa Ribeiro, Ricardo Ceneviva, and Murillo Marschner Alves de Brito examine the impact socioeconomic background has on educational progression and access to education among youth. The authors show that substantial changes have occurred over the course of the past 50 years regarding the magnitude by which social inequalities affect educational opportunities. Universal access to primary education – almost 70% of youth who enrolled in the school system completed eight years of schooling in 2010 in contrast to 10%, which was the rate in 1960. The subsequent massive entry of young people into high school education resulted in a saturation effect-induced displacement of the educational level in which socioeconomic origin operates as a constraint on school progression.

With regard to concluding primary school, the factors – rural origin, parents’ educational level, family income, gender, and skin color – which in the 1960s and 1970s acted as constraints on educational progression were virtually eliminated. However, these effects have not entirely disappeared. They were instead displaced to the upper levels of the educational trajectory. Albeit an increasing number of youths have enrolled in high school and university, graduation rates at this level are far below admissions rates. Moreover, inequalities of opportunity – the link between failure to complete these educational levels and family background – proved to be resilient for high school or even increased in terms of holding a university diploma.

In the chapter “[Education and Inequality in Brazil](#),” Naercio Menezes Filho and Charles Kirschbaum analyze the connections between the relative supply of a skilled and schooled workforce and income inequality in the labor market, even as the authors acknowledge that this trajectory is also affected by other factors. Based on the evidence that the labor market is the main element behind the reduction in income inequality, the authors attempt to unravel what happened to change the previous pattern of steady inequality increase. Their core argument is that both trajectories – the rise and fall of income inequality – are directly linked to educational gains, which in turn can be explained by the supply and demand for skilled labor.

According to the authors, Brazil’s educational lag – extremely low educational levels – and the consequent shortage of skilled workers is responsible for the high wage disparities in the labor market. They demonstrate how an increased supply of education increased the supply of more skilled workers, and thus reduced the prize obtained by those holding more education. Hence, wage compression in the labor market has its origins in the expanded supply of education among the economically active population.

In the chapter “[Horizontal Stratification in Brazil’s Higher Education \(1960–2010\)](#),” Carlos Antonio Costa Ribeiro and Rogerio Schlegel provide an additional analytical step. If, as shown by Naercio Menezes Filho and Charles Kirschbaum, the correlation between education and income differentials in the labor market holds true, it is also true that individuals with the same educational level obtain different earnings in the job market. This horizontal stratification can be seen in university careers, that is, through professional titles obtained by individuals. The authors therefore examine how gender and race affect university enrollment. Horizontal

stratification means that individuals at the same educational level are differentiating by means of occupations of quite diverse prestige.

Carlos Antonio Costa Ribeiro and Rogerio Schlegel reveal that between 1960 and 2010, increasing numbers of poor, women, blacks, and browns were admitted to universities. Women, however, were more successful than other population segments. Not only was the rate of female enrollment in higher education much higher than the rate for blacks and browns, to the point that the former surpassed men in terms of percentage as of 1991, but women also enrolled in programs leading to careers once typically considered to be male and more prestigious, such as medicine, dentistry, and architecture. If, on the one hand, there was reasonable equalization of university careers between men and women, inequality between races remained fairly stable. Blacks are not only less likely to enroll in universities, but when they do so, it is usually in programs that lead to less prestigious occupations. However, women, blacks, and browns receive lower income, even when holding the same diploma as white men.

In the chapter “[Racial Inequalities in Brazil: A Persistent Challenge](#),” Marcia Lima and Ian Prates draw our attention to the inequality of different skin colors in the school system and labor market. Their results tread in the same direction as previous chapters: the authors show that in the age bracket between 7 and 14 years, which corresponds to primary education, universal access had already eradicated racial inequalities in 2000. However, inequality in the access to high school by non-whites would only present a downward trend from 2000 on, after showing reasonable stability between 1980 and 2000. In higher education, on the other hand, despite the expansion of enrollment rates, in 2010 there was still a substantial gap between whites and non-whites, where blacks and browns presented very similar trajectories. In addition, in 2010 there was still an overlay of disadvantages by color and income, since poor blacks encountered greater difficulty in achieving higher levels of education than poor whites.

Thus, according to the authors, declining racial inequality does not mean that it was eliminated. Instead, there has been a displacement of the point at which race inequality manifests itself in the educational system. Brazilian universities are no longer predominantly white, but non-whites still have a lower share of university spots. One’s family background still affects the odds for enrollment in higher education. Moreover, when non-whites enter the university, they tend to concentrate in programs that lead to less prestigious careers.

The third part of the book examines the path taken by public policies whose outcomes critically affect an individual’s well-being.

In the chapter “[The Geography of Access to Basic Services in Brazil](#),” Marta Arretche examines the trajectory of access to infrastructure services and its association with poverty from 1970 to 2010 by using Brazilian municipalities as units of observation. The chapter shows that living conditions have improved considerably from 1970 to 2010. There was a decrease in the unequal access to basic services such as electricity, water and sewage, garbage collection, and schools among Brazilian municipalities. However, access to services has expanded in close connection with the expansion of per capita income as well as the concentration of

the poor in Brazilian municipalities, although the causal mechanism behind such dramatic changes is not clear.

The path of improvement had notable regional expression however. In other words, the territorial expansion of services revealed a very similar pattern across policies. The expansion of supply began in affluent municipalities where universalization of services significantly preceded expansion in poorer jurisdictions. Coverage expansion in the South and Southeast regions is the first expansion cycle for all policies. Policies of the military regime and the re-democratization period were of greater benefit to the South and Southeast. Supply expansion for cities in the Central-West region constitutes the second expansion cycle for all policies, albeit in different periods for each region. Finally, the North and Northeastern regions are the last expansion zone. Whether for water or for energy – whose universal access was in place in the Southeast since 1980 – access only became universal in the Northeast beginning in 2010. In fact, rural populations and the poor who lived in less advantaged areas, especially in the Drought Polygon, would only gain access to water and electricity in the twenty-first century.

In the chapter “[Housing and Urban Conditions in Brazil](#),” Eduardo Marques argues that housing inequalities cannot be captured by indices of housing ownership. The high rates of housing in private residential property in the country since 1950 are explained by a recording problem: one that concerns ownership of buildings rather than ownership and legalization of the land on which a building is erected. Housing inequality therefore must be examined according to household occupancy density – which shows a downward trajectory – the existence of a bathroom – which is strongly associated with income – and access to essential services, such as water, sewage, garbage collection, and electricity.

The author shows that between 1960 and 2010, there was a significant improvement in urban conditions, with the exception of sewage collection coverage, which still remained very low in 2010. This reduction in access inequalities, however, varied considerably between policies. Electricity and garbage collection have become almost universal in urban areas, whereas water coverage has stagnated in the 90% range since the 1990s. The chapter reveals that two factors intersect in producing inequalities for infrastructure access in urban households. The first is household income: coverage for poorer households is systematically inferior to that for richer households, a factor that only disappears under the condition of universal access. The second is city size: larger cities tend to have higher coverage rates. The overlay of these two factors can be the source of a third expression in urban infrastructure access inequality: inequality between regions. Poverty and smaller towns are a feature concentrated in the North and Northeastern regions, therein producing situations of greater urban precariousness.

In the chapter “[Health and Inequalities in Brazil](#),” Vera Schattan Pereira Coelho and Marcelo F. Dias analyze the trajectory of health inequalities in Brazil. They show that health indicators improved considerably after re-democratization: between 1980 and 2010, the infant mortality rate fell from 69.1 to 16 per 1000 live births and life expectancy increased from 62.6 years in 1980 to 73.4 years in 2010.

Moreover, these indicators were accompanied by a reduction in inequalities among regions, states, and municipalities.

The authors found a solid and statistically significant association between these health indicators, on the one hand, and the average income of municipalities and level of schooling of women on the other. Furthermore, higher income inequality rates were associated with higher infant mortality rates and lower life expectancy. The strength of this association was, however, modest and declined throughout the period.

The fourth part of the book addresses the links between demographics and inequality. Recent decades have witnessed intense demographic changes in the form of major population displacements, profound changes in conditions for women, a decline in fertility rates along with significant changes in religious behavior. These changes were both the expression and cause of the path of inequality examined in this book.

In the chapter “[Brazil’s Internal Migration in 50 Years: \(Dis\)continuities and Ruptures](#),” José Marcos Pinto da Cunha, in addition to describing the intensity of population displacements, shows how their scope and direction were closely associated with the dynamics of the Brazilian economy and the spatial distribution of employment opportunities. Industrialization – and, therefore, the rural-urban transition – was the main driving force for the country’s massive population displacements that peaked in the 1970s.

This transition, however, is not enough to account for the volume or the direction of internal migration in each decade. In the 1970s, the accelerated growth of the Southeastern region (Sao Paulo in particular) greatly appealed to massive contingents of population living in expelling regions, given the scarce employment opportunities and poor housing conditions therein present. The same nature of motivations explains why the economic downturn – in the 1980s, but especially during the 1990s – intensified return migration. Employment opportunities had become limited in the Southeast. In the 2000s, this return migration decreased in intensity due to the recovery of economic activity in wealthier regions.

The rural-urban transition was not the only driving factor for migration in Brazil, however. In the 1970s, massive groups also moved to the North and Midwest as a result of agricultural modernization in the South and poverty in the Northeast. This rural-rural migration expanded the agricultural frontiers and made migration pressure toward the Southeast less dramatic.

The strength of both factors – jobs in the Southeast and the expansion of agricultural frontiers in the North and the Midwest – was less intense in the 1990s, resulting in a reduction in the volume of migration flows. From then on, the de-concentration of economic activity has changed the intensity of migration flows. More importantly, it has upset the hegemonies of the Southeast region and of the agricultural frontier areas as privileged migration destinations.

The chapter “[Fifty Years of Gender Relations and Generation in Brazil: Changes and Continuities](#),” by Maria Coleta Oliveira, Joice Melo Vieira, and Glaucia dos Santos Marcondes, describes the silent revolution in private life that occurred in Brazil over 50 years, a revolution where women were the main protagonists. The

authors unravel the extent of demographic changes in Brazil between 1970 and 2010. Not only did life expectancy increase but inequalities among those living longer decreased. In parallel, there has been a decline in progeny, i.e., there was a significant decrease in the number of children per woman of childbearing age. This drop in the fertility rate was an expression of the widespread adoption of a behavior typical to more schooled women in the past. This behavioral change displaced the association between income and education across different types of inequality affecting women. The act of having children became a choice as did factors such as the widespread presence of women in the labor market and the proliferation of females in education.

No less intense were the changes in family arrangements. There is an increasing heterogeneity in family configurations. The number of formal marriages dropped significantly just as marital separations increased although this does not mean that the nuclear family model is less important. In contrast, consensual unions have grown exponentially, revealing the coexistence of multiple and changing forms of cohabitation and parenting. The authors show that, regardless of the persistence of inequalities, the scope of women's freedom and choice greatly increased over the course of a half-century.

In the chapter "[Religious Transition in Brazil](#)," Ronaldo Almeida and Rogério Barbosa describe the path of conversion from a heavily Roman Catholic country in rural 1960s Brazil to a country marked by religious pluralism in a highly urbanized environment. For the authors, the religious history of the half-century has been the history of progressive loss of hegemony on the part of the Catholic Church, which has not only lost members outright but has also maintained a large number of non-practicing members.

This route, however, far from signifies the end of religion, especially if we consider that the nonreligious population only modestly increased throughout this period. The gradual decline in the importance of Catholicism led to the proliferation of many diverse religious affiliations. The authors indicate that religious pluralism has established itself in Brazil as a result of intense societal transformations as well as the proselytizing strategies employed by the religions themselves. Such a plurality in religious affiliations, however, is not without its own stratification. Catholic hegemony remained restricted to rural areas. In urban areas, evangelicals increased at a rapid pace, especially in large metropolises, given their greater presence – particularly on the part of Pentecostals – at the base of the social pyramid. Spiritists, in turn, are mostly concentrated among the most educated and higher income populations.

Last but not least, changes in the composition of the labor market comprise the central theme in the trajectory of inequality and constitute the main subject in Part Five.

In the chapter "[Economic Development and Inequalities in Brazil: 1960–2010](#)," Alvaro Comin begins with an unsettling observation: income inequality in Brazil is perpetually high in spite of its downward trend from the 1990s on. Based on evidence that the main factor that explains income inequality lies in the labor market, the author attempts to reveal this phenomenon by analyzing changes in the

occupational structure. In his approach, preexisting agrarian structures and the industrialization model along with educational and social rights policies assume a central role.

The author shows that the macro process of rural-urban transition, which accompanies industrialization, a combination of superimposed factors concerning the stratification of occupations, explains the persistence of an unequal and polarized labor market. The agrarian structure was only marginally altered by the modernization process. Rural populations were excluded from access to education as well as from social rights and worker protection. As a result, they had very limited opportunities for integrating themselves into the urban economy. Oversupply and low qualifications translated into low wages and below subsistence conditions in the urban economy. The path this significant segment of the population found through which to integrate themselves into the economically active population – especially women, the less schooled, and non-whites – was the service sector in low-skilled manual occupations.

For the author, the great challenge in reducing income inequality consists of reducing the wage disparity among these segments in comparison to the privileged portion, which succeeded in obtaining higher levels of education and, by extension, occupying nonmanual professions.

In the chapter “[Commodification of Labor in Brazil’s Labor Market \(1960–2010\)](#),” Nadya Araujo Guimarães, Leonardo Sangali Barone, and Murillo Marschner Alves de Brito unravel the paths by which commodification of labor established itself in Brazil. According to the authors, in order to analyze this process one must first understand the processes by which the labor market, which in 1960 had not yet spread the typically capitalist wage labor dynamics to the entire workforce, became, in 2010, a place where most of the population of working age sought the conditions for their survival. For the authors, answering this question required an understanding of the trajectory of potential labor supply, i.e., the configuration of the economically active population.

The authors show that the most significant change in the consolidation of commodification of labor in Brazil in the last 50 years is linked to the integration of women into the labor market. Even though women reached the same levels of participation as men in 2010, the growth of opportunities for women has been remarkable. This, in turn, is associated with variations in the expected return as a result of labor market participation.

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São Paulo, Brazil

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