

Call for papers

International conference

Organized by the iPOPs laboratory of excellence

2 - 3 July 2015

Is inequality increasing again?

What population science can tell us

Presentation

In the second half of the twentieth century, there was widespread confidence in the prospect of continuous social progress. In Northern countries, the expansion of the welfare state, steady economic growth over three decades, gains in life expectancy, improved urban living conditions, the democratization of education, broad access to consumer goods and the apparent reduction of poverty nurtured a belief that reducing inequality was a realistic ambition. These trends were abruptly halted in the 1970s, however, giving way to a radical restructuring of capital and modes of production in industrialized societies that widened income gaps and marginalized whole sections of the population. As hopes were dashed, disenchantment ensued, and the earlier optimism has been replaced by the spectre of a return to inequality whose unacceptability makes it all the more intolerable. But did this reversal actually happen? Are we witnessing a resurgence of earlier forms of inequality, or had they simply been overlooked in the dynamic of growth that followed World War II? Can we speak about a global exacerbation of inequality without making a distinction between areas where it is in retreat, areas where it persists, and areas where it is making new inroads? In short, the representation of an overall deterioration must be combined with a more nuanced and differentiated interpretation of changes over the last 30 years.

The illusion of a reduction in inequality in the North has fed upon the persistence, if not the aggravation, of a very unequal distribution of resources and of populations in Southern societies. The question of development in the South – now a central concern of international relations and population policies – has highlighted not only inequality between societies, with some achieving

prosperity thanks to the pauperization of others, but also the spectacular difference in wealth and living conditions between the elites and the rest of the population in Southern countries. Following on from the North, the initiation of economic and social development, and the growth surge observed in so-called emerging countries, have led to the emergence of an educated middle class. Here too, and for various reasons linked to the political systems in place and the way in which the dividends of growth are syphoned off by local and international oligarchies, the promises of progress and equality have often not been met.

While inequality is a central feature of our societies, it takes an extremely diverse range of forms, and is present in wide-ranging areas. It is social and based on income, it comes between men and women, it follows an age and generational divide, it is national, ethnic or racial, religious or cultural. It concerns health, housing education, employment and territory. It establishes hierarchies, governs life chances and creates segregation. In this diverse context of inequality, a wide range of approaches are needed to analyse change and to capture the dynamics at play. For example, income differences may widen overall, but they may also narrow between certain population groups (between men and women, for example, or between different geographical regions). The social sciences have understood the need to adopt a multi-faceted approach to inequality by addressing the question from different angles and by looking at how other forms of stratification tie in with those of social class. How can population science contribute to the debate?

This international conference organized by iPOPs aims to probe this world of inequality, be it protean, sharp-edged or diffuse, openly acknowledged or concealed behind an egalitarian political philosophy. The conference organizers welcome proposals focusing on the dynamics of inequality and on the reshaping or worsening of this inequality.

Potential themes include:

- *How population science can help to study and understand inequality*
- *Inequality for whom?*
- *Political treatment of inequality*
- *Measuring inequality: how does the choice of method affect analysis?*
- *Geography and inequality*

This list is purely indicative and the list of topics may be changed in response to the proposals received by the organizing committee.

Venue

Université de Paris Ouest Nanterre

Languages

French, English

Submissions

Proposals should be sent to ipops@ined.fr. Deadline for submissions: **27 February 2015**

Please include the following:

- A clear description of the paper to be presented (reference framework, empirical components, methodology, bibliography, etc.), in 2000 characters at most;
- A four-page long abstract (an original text would be preferred, but is not obligatory)
- A completed submission form.

Papers will be selected by the organizing committee and authors will receive a reply by **20 March 2015** at the latest.

Submission form available on the iPOPs website
<http://www.ipops.fr/en/recherche/seminaires/>

Practical information

Registration is free. It includes access to the plenary sessions and workshops, to the conference documents. Lunches and coffee breaks are provided to responders on both days. Funds are available to help a limited number of Southern participants and doctoral students with transport and accommodation costs, at the discretion of the organizing committee.

Organizing committee

Christophe Bergouignan (Université de Bordeaux)

Didier Breton (Université de Strasbourg)

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