



Brazilian Studies Programme Annual Conference

Informal Practices in Brazil: Exclusion and Privilege 7th February 2020, St Antony's College (organiser: andreza.desouzasantos@lac.ox.ac.uk)

In many countries, a layer of informality forms economic and political relationships, opening space for nepotism, prejudices and partialities. Political decisions can influence this situation to the better or worse. In Brazil, the recent economic crisis created a system where formal employment positions faded away and new labour laws created more space for employer-employee negotiations. The political crisis itself questioned the corruption of representative politics and the functioning of the state. This meant, on one hand, more attention to laws and regulations and the need to improve institutions. On the other hand, it also meant attention to family and religious principles, previously considered off-the-record connections, as a response to bureaucratic failures. Informality is becoming more important to understand economic and political relationships both amongst the poor and the elite. As a means of extension, this conference explores the term “precarious” to discuss work relationships as well as civility and institutions in Brazil. When looking at informality, we will thus discuss how it may prevent economies from collapse, making life possible through informal jobs and houses, and how it challenges democracies.

9:00 – 9:20

Opening Remarks

9:20 – 10:30

Keynote address:

Brodwyn Fischer, University of Chicago “Historicizing Informal Governance: The Limits of Rights in Brazil’s Twentieth Century Cities”

10:30 – 11:00

Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:30

Panel 1: The place of informality: locating informal practices in growing cities and shrinking economies

Political personhood happens spatially (Bahn 2017). Looking at large and small cities or addressing specific neighbourhoods, systems of informal economies,



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housing, and transportation gain form. Friendship, neighbourliness, but also coveting is typical of tight-knit systems where one relies on the others for jobs or paying the bills with tab in the supermarket. Favours are part of a system of returns amongst known individuals. In this panel we discuss the interaction between (in)formal economy and politics in (in)formal cities.

Chair: David Doyle, University of Oxford

Andreza A de Souza Santos, University of Oxford: “‘Someone who has a name has everything’: Getting by in a friendship economy”

Martijn Oosterbaan, University of Utrecht: “Ghostly Sovereignty: State Power and Informality at the Margins”

Marie Kolling, DIIS: “Building life on credit. Precarious homes and credit economies in Salvador’s periferia”.

Martijn Koster, Radboud University: “Informality, precariousness and aspirations: Rethinking popular politics in Recife, Brazil”

12:30 – 13:45

Lunch Break

13:45 – 15:30

Panel 2: Imagining justice: selective punishments and omissions

In Brazil, a common saying is: “To friends everything, to the enemies the rule of law”. In this panel we address selective systems of justice. We analyse historical injustices, its consequences and contestations. Whether Brazil has improved a sense of access and impartiality to the justice system and how illegalities and legalities intersect are guiding questions for this panel.

Discussant: Leigh Payne, University of Oxford

Corentin Cohen, Sciences Po/CERI: “Social orders and the PCC's justice systems in Sao Paulo”

Jacob Blanc, University of Edinburgh: “ST Before the M: The Itaipu Dam and the Paraná Roots of the Landless Workers Movement”

Octavio Ferraz, KCL: “Precarious Health Justice. How and why the poor are excluded from health litigation in Brazil.”

Ezequiel Gonzales Ocantos, University of Oxford: “Of Cockroaches and Superheroes: Public Perceptions of Lava Jato in Brazil and Peru”

15:30 – 15:45

Coffee Break

15:45 – 17:00



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Panel 3: Politics and self-censorship

When INPE's director was fired in August 2019 it laid bare a sense that doing one's job may imply losing the job. Brazil has long been described as a country where 'those who command do so because they can, those who obey do so because they are sensible' (*manda quem pode, obedece quem tem juízo*). Informality in this discussion has to do with political abuse and intimidation as opposed to the bureaucratic rule.

Discussant: Timothy Power

Mariana Borges, University of Oxford: "Everyday practices and political knowledge: the meanings of politics in rural Brazil".

Bruno Bolognesi, UFPR: Right-wing parties in Latin-america's southern cone: informal practices and organizational similitudes

Rebeca Abers, UnB: "The state as an arena for activism: examples from environmental and women's health policy"

Alex Shankland, IDS: "Formalised accountability claims and informalised power networks: indigenous movement organisations and the political system in Northwestern Amazonas."

17:00 – 18:30

Panel 4: Round-table Informality in a changing political-economic system in Brazil

Moderator: Andreza A de Souza Santos, University of Oxford

Timothy Power, University of Oxford

Flavia Biroli, UnB

Mariana Batista, UFPE

Gabriel Ulyssea, University of Oxford

Speakers (as they appear in the programme):

Brodwyn Fischer is Professor of History and Director of the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Chicago. Her research and teaching focus on the intersecting histories of cities, law, race, inequality, slavery and social movements in Brazil and Latin America. She is the award winning author of *A Poverty of Rights: Citizenship and inequality in Twentieth Century Rio de Janeiro* (Stanford 2008); *Cities from Scratch: Poverty and Informality in Urban Latin America* (Duke 2014); a recently-finished edited volume entitled *The Boundaries of Freedom: Slavery, Abolition and the Making of Modern Brazil*; and numerous articles and translations. She is currently writing a book about informality and the afterlives of slavery in Recife, Brazil.



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Andreza A. de Souza Santos Andreza Aruska de Souza Santos is Director of the Brazilian Studies Programme and Lecturer at the Latin American Centre, University of Oxford. Her work focuses on urban and political anthropology, looking mainly at collective memory, particularly trauma and difficult heritage, and participatory politics in mining regions in Brazil. She is the author of the book *The Politics of memory: Urban cultural heritage in Brazil* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019) and co-editor of the book *Urban transformations and public health in the emergent city* (Manchester University Press, forthcoming 2020). Before Oxford, Andreza worked in Brazil, Germany, South Africa and India, this background is visible in her comparative writing.

Martijn Oosterbaan studied Cultural Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam. He acquired his PhD at the Amsterdam Institute of Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam. His research was part of the research project 'Modern Mass Media, Religion and the Imagination of Communities.' While finishing his dissertation he obtained a Postdoc position at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Groningen, as a researcher in the research project 'New Media, Public Sphere and Urban Culture.' In 2014, he became Associate Professor at the Department of Cultural Anthropology at Utrecht University. In 2019, he became the PI of the ERC Consolidator research project 'Sacralizing Security: Religion, Violence and Authority in Mega-Cities of the Global South.' Martijn Oosterbaan has published on religion in Brazil and in Europe. His current research focuses on religious transformations in urban Brazil in relation to (in)security and the widespread use of mass media and popular culture (carnival, telenovelas, superheroes).

Marie Kolling a postdoctoral researcher at the Danish Institute for International Studies and affiliated with the Federal University of Bahia. She holds a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Copenhagen. She has conducted extensive fieldwork in Northeast Brazil on urban marginality and in recent years on the interplay between housing, debt and political economy.

Martijn Koster is Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies at Radboud University. He is the Principal Investigator of the research project "Participatory Urban Governance between Democracy and Clientelism: Brokers and (In)formal Politics," funded by a European Research Council Starting Grant. The project includes research in Brazil, Colombia, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Martijn's research interests include urban governance, political brokerage, citizenship, informal politics, and urban development. In 2019, he edited two special issues: "Betrayal in the City: Urban Development across the Globe" in *City & Society* (with Marie Kolling) and "Moving Beyond the Formal/Informal Dichotomy: Implications for Governance" in *Anthropologica* (with Alan Smart).

Corentin Cohen is OxPo's post doc at the DPIR of the University of Oxford. He received his PhD in political science and international relations from Sciences Po and the CERI in Paris where he researched on the use of images in conflicts. Using different qualitative approaches and visual methods he worked specifically on the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria and on the ethnography of violence in Sao Paulo. His current



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works discuss the connexions between legalities and licitness in Brasil and West Africa to understand the production of social orders and role of violence in societies.

Jacob Blanc is a lecturer in Latin American history at the University of Edinburgh. He received his PhD from the University of Wisconsin in 2017 and his new book, *Before the Flood: the Itaipu Dam and the Visibility of Rural Brazil*, was published in 2019 by Duke University Press. He is also the co-editor of *Big Water: the Making of the Borderlands Between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay* (University of Arizona Press, 2018), and his articles have appeared in the *Journal of Latin American Studies*, the *Luso-Brazilian Review*, and the *Journal of Peasant Studies*.

Octavio Ferraz is a Reader in Transnational Law. He holds an LLB and MPhil in Law (University of São Paulo), an MA in Medical Ethics & Law (King's College London, prize Benjamin Geijssen) and a PhD in Law (University College London). Before joining King's he was a senior research officer to the UN special rapporteur for the right to health, and then moved to Warwick Law School, where he was an Assistant and then an Associate Professor for 8 years. Before moving to academia, he practiced law in Sao Paulo, Brazil, mostly in the fields of corporate public law and medical law for over ten years. He is still a member of the Brazilian Bar and contributes regularly to the Brazilian press. Dr Ferraz's research interests are in the field of human rights and development, especially the role and impact of law and courts in poverty, equality and social justice.

Ezequiel González-Ocantos is Associate Professor in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford, and Professional Fellow of Nuffield College. He is the author of *Shifting Legal Visions: Judicial Change and Human Rights Trials in Latin America* (2016) and *The Politics of Transitional Justice in Latin America* (2019), both with Cambridge University Press. His first book received best book awards from APSA, ISA and LASA. González-Ocantos has also published articles on judicial behaviour and strategic litigation in human rights cases, transjudicial dialogue in the Inter-American Human Rights Systems, the relationship between courts and public opinion, and the political economy of clientelism. He is currently writing a book on the causes and consequences of the criminalization of corruption in Latin America. In 2018 he received the Philip Leverhulme Prize in Politics and International Relations.

Mariana Borges is a Postdoctoral Prize Research Fellow in Politics at Nuffield College at the University of Oxford. She recently received her Ph.D. in Political Science from Northwestern University. Her research is focused on political behavior, elections, campaign strategies, and political representation in developing democracies. She has conducted extensive participant observation among low-income voters in rural areas of Brazil.

Bruno Bolonhesi is a political scientist based at Federal University of Paraná, Brazil. Obtained his BA in Social Sciences, his MPhil in Political Sociology and his PhD in Political Science. From 2011 to 2012 he has been a recognized student at the Latin American Centre. Today, he is the head of LAPeS - Party and Party Systems Laboratory (www.lapesufpr.com.br) and associated editor of *Revista de Sociologia e Política* (www.scielo.br/rsocp). Researching on political parties and party systems in Latin America southern cone, Bruno has published in different journals such as *América Latina Hoy*, *Análise Social* (Lisbon), *Colombia Internacional*, *Revista Mexicana de*



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Ciencias Políticas y Sociales. He is currently investigating right wing political parties in Argentina, Brazil and Chile and, in the other hand, a comparative study on party systems throughout Latin America.

Rebecca Neaera Abers is professor of Political Science at the University of Brasília. Her research has explored how state and society actors create and change policies and institutions for urban infrastructure, water management, environmental protection, women's health and other issues. She is the author of *Inventing Local Democracy: Grassroots Politics in Brazil* (Lynne Rienner, 2000), on the creation of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre. With Margaret Keck, she wrote, *Practical Authority: Agency and Institutional Change in Brazilian Water Politics* (Oxford, 2013) on the construction of a new model of water management. Her current research explores the role of activists defending social movement causes from inside the state.

Alex Shankland is a Senior Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), where he co-convenes the Power and Popular Politics Research Cluster, Accountability for Health Equity Programme and Sussex Brazil Group. He has worked for more than two decades on health systems, indigenous peoples, civil society, social movements, accountability, political representation and local governance, particularly in Brazil and Mozambique. Alex has also worked extensively on the roles of Brazil and other rising powers in reshaping international development cooperation, most recently as Team Leader for a Brazilian Cooperation Agency / UK Department for International Development Mapping Study of the potential for future Brazil-Africa-UK trilateral cooperation. He was Principal Investigator of the recently-completed ESRC/DFID funded project “Vozes Desiguais: the Politics of Accountability for Health Equity in Brazil and Mozambique”, which developed an historically-informed analysis of social, political, market and managerial accountability dynamics in high-inequality urban settings and marginalised rural areas across the two countries. Prior to his appointment as an IDS Fellow in 2010, Alex was Research Manager for the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability and Coordinator of the IDS-led consortium working with the Ministry of Health and the World Bank on the redesign of Brazil's health system for indigenous peoples. Before coming to IDS he worked extensively as a journalist, NGO programme manager, independent researcher and social development consultant, mainly in South America (particularly Brazilian Amazonia) and Southern Africa.

Timothy Power is a comparative political scientist with a deep commitment to interdisciplinary area studies. He completed his PhD in political science at the University of Notre Dame in 1993. He then taught at Louisiana State University and Florida International University before arriving in Oxford in 2005. From 2008 to 2012 he directed the Latin American Centre, and he became Head of the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies (OSGA) in 2018. His research concerns democratization and political institutions (parties, legislatures, and elections) in modern Latin America, especially Brazil.

Flavia Biroli is Professor of Political Science at the Institute of Political Science of the University of Brasília since 2005. Her Master (1999) and her PhD (2003) were in the area of Political History at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), but she has since



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been working within the field of Political Science, in which she has developed most of her academic activities. Since 2009, she is a “productivity researcher” at The National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). She has published many books and articles about gender and democracy in Brazil; feminist political theory; and media and democracy. Her last book, *Gênero e Desigualdades: Limites da Democracia no Brasil* (São Paulo: Boitempo Editorial, 2018), analyzes different dimensions of gender inequalities discussing their connections to democratic values, practices and institutions. She is presently the president of the Brazilian Political Science Association (ABCP). Active in the public debate about gender equality in Brazil, she was part of the Civil Society Advisory Group for UN Women in Brazil (2016-17) and is currently working on projects about gender parity and political violence against women in collaboration with this organization. In 2019, she has also been part of the Expert Group that produced the report on Beijing+25 for the Sixty-fourth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Her current research is about the connections between the backlash against gender and the democratic backsliding in Latin America.

Mariana Batista is a Political Science professor at the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco - Brazil. She obtained her Ph.D. in Political Science from UFPE and was a visiting fellow at the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University. Her areas of research have focused on the politics of coalition governments in presidential systems and the policy implications of government composition. She has published in different journals, such as the *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, *Latin American Politics and Society*, and *Research and Politics*. In 2015 she received the Guillermo O'Donnell award for best dissertation from the Latin American Political Science Association.

Gabriel Ulyssea is associate professor of economics at the [University of Oxford](#), a research affiliate at [CEPR](#) and a Research Fellow at [IZA](#). Research areas: Development, Labor and Applied Micro.



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