

Enhancing informality as an opportunity for the reflexivity of social sciences

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Introduction

- Scientific Literature
 - Urban fieldwork in environmental risks, housing issues, urban insecurity (CCS, MX, BBAA, SP)
- 1- Outward thinking: informality tells us about social order (Analytical category)
 - 2- Backward thinking: informality tells us about the way social sciences represent society (Epistemology)
 - 3- Politicization: we must be cautious with informality as it entails different worldviews regarding both societies we are observing and our practices of social scientists.

I- Outward Thinking

Analytical category

- 1- Functionalist explanation: Informality is constitutive of societies, economies, right and justice, administration... *It makes things work*
- 2- Structural explanation: Informality is part of social ordering, it is normative and constitutive of hierarchies and inequalities. *It gives sense*

II- Backward Thinking

Heuristic device

- 1- The way we talk about informality is performative and uncovers ideological principals
- 2- The rising of informality is consistent with a rearranging modernity (deregulation, individualization, self-responsibility...): it has political contents.

Informality is

- * A way of to question modern societies in crisis, and to refresh social sciences approaches / methods / perspectives... BUT
- * The criticism that the study of informality entails must be reflexive: it needs to be situated and politicized

III- From reflexivity to politicization of informality assessment through social sciences

- 1- Informality is one of the many ways to question a rearranging Modernity.
- 2- Informality invites us to consider localism, relativism and cultural aspects... with caution because of potential drifts.

CONCLUSION

INFORMALITY:

- Between the emancipating practices of the many little ants
- And another arena – a so called rearranging Modernity – for society to work (and for its understanding)

= As heuristic device, informality is plural. We acknowledge that, and we must figure significant differences out of these many worldviews.