

Brazilian Crises: From the Trivialization of Emergencies to Structural Sanitation Issues

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Abstract

When analyzing disasters from a sociological perspective, it is possible to focus on the institutional *modus operandi* adopted to deal with this type of crisis. So, emergency decree is revealed as a core legal *dispositif*. When the competent public authorities, in a mix of political and technical action in the space under their jurisdiction, classify the socio-environmental context identifying a given situation as a disaster, they make a public communication of that socio-spatial occurrence using this legal *dispositif*, so is legitimized a set of exceptional ways of public management to mitigate the crisis. In Brazil, ambiguously, the use of this legal provision is no longer something exceptional, because it has become naturalized as a way of managing public administration. This sociological study discusses whether this would be one of the first political signs that public routines based on democratic dynamics may be opening space for authoritarian routines, with the sanitation sector being one of the precursors of this problematic social change. Much of the Brazilian institutional and inter-sectorial effort oriented towards disaster response actions mobilizes a significant operational contingent and large volumes of material and financial resources, in addition to readjusting the way the public machinery works, generating new disconnections and tensions in the relationship with the citizens. The more the institutions involved are recalcitrant and resist putting these relationships into public discussion, the greater the risk of signaling that the sociopolitical game that has been established is no longer that of democratic promises.

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