

## ECONOMIC THOUGHT, DEVELOPMENT PLANNING, PUBLIC POLICY<sup>1</sup>

*Wilson de Barros Bello Filho*<sup>2</sup>

The paper analyzes the discourse of economists in Maranhão State development plans. Its point of departure is the assumption that the power effects (Foucault) produced by the discourse of economists are, in nowadays societies, the reason why one can observe, as suggested by Schumpeter (History of Economic Analysis), a correlation between Economic Thought and public policies, that is, the discourse of economists is the concrete means by which, at present times, Economic Thought turns into public policies. Its aim is not make a resumed or systematic exposition of such discourse but show clearly its connections with the condition and the position (Bourdieu) of the social agents that produce it as well as make explicit the procedures of control (Foucault) that condition its production. Such an analysis brings a critical purpose implicit: it shows that both public problems and policy solutions are not objectively defined but socially built. The discourses that have the quality of establishing public problems or the ones that are recognized as being able to give answers are not worse nor better than any other. They produce power effects not because they are true but because they are socially accepted as being true.

### I

On December 20, 1962, in reply to Governor Newton Bello's criticism of SUDENE<sup>3</sup>, journalist and Federal Deputy Neiva Moreira published in his newspaper (Jornal do Povo) an article titled The SUDENE and the State Government (Neiva Moreira, 1962) in which he accused Governor Newton Bello of hindering SUDENE's actions towards economic development. According to him, SUDENE had already invested in Maranhão, in the so-called colonization area, ten times more money than Alliance for Progress, and these investments, guided by the technicians from SUDENE, were destroying, by causing a large economic transformation in the area, the ancient social structure that, also according to him, had allowed Governor's election. Although Deputy Neiva Moreira's article suggests that state authorities' actions and SUDENE authorities' actions had little in common, this conclusion is quite wrong; since 1961, Governor Newton Bello's and all State Secretaries' actions were guided by a development plan (Maranhão,

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper was elaborated under the academic supervision of Alfredo Wagner Berno de Almeida, visiting professor at the Master of Public Policy of Federal University of Maranhão. It was presented on February 27, 1998, in the XVIII Annual Student Conference on Latin America, sponsored by ILASSA (Institute Latin American Studies Student Association), at the University of Texas at Austin. Such presentation is transcribed in the appendix, at the end of the text.

<sup>2</sup> The author is economist and a graduate student of the Master of Public Policy of Federal University of Maranhão.

<sup>3</sup> SUDENE (Superintendence of Development of Northeast) is a federal bureau created in 1959, during President Juscelino Kubitschek administration, aiming to promote and conduce the development of the so-called Brazilian Northeast.

1961) that was produced under the same rules of formation (Foucault, 1969) that regulated the production of SUDENE's First Directorial Plan of Social and Economic Development of Northeast, which includes the Project for Maranhão State Populating (SUDENE, 1960) that led to the settlement of the colonization area, that is, both state authorities' and SUDENE authorities' actions were power effects (Foucault, 1976; 1977) produced by discourses that belong to the same discursive formation (Foucault, 1969). They were very close actions neither because they announced the precedence of the same target (development<sup>4</sup>) nor because they used the same tool (planning) and the same means (colonizing) to achieve this target, but because they were structured in the same way, because they were structured by discourses that belong to the same discursive formation.

If one regards Official Messages that Governors send to State Legislative Assembly at the beginning of each legislative year, one will realize that much before the creation of SUDENE colonization had already been considered by Governors a strong means of improving economic performance and welfare. In the Official Message of 1953, for example, Governor Eugenio Barros includes colonization between the actions that, according to him, are "absolutely indispensable to us for running away from economic stagnation" (Maranhão, 1953, p.10-11), and one year later, in the Official Message of 1954, he reiterates this statement by saying that populating and distribution of land have a "primordial importance" to the economic recuperation of Maranhão State (Maranhão, 1954, p.13); before him, Governor Sebastião Archer, in the Official Message of 1948, had already stressed that colonization is essential both to avoid illegal appropriation of state lands and to ensure that public lands are used to develop cropping (Maranhão, 1948, p.22-24). According to the so-called SETA Plan for financial recuperation of Maranhão State, approved during Governor Sebastião Archer administration, the settlement of agricultural colonies based on small properties, created by distributing state lands, is an important means of achieving economic and social improvement (Maranhão, 1949; 1951, p.6). Undoubtedly, the use of colonization as a means of achieving development does not constitute a distinctive point between SUDENE authorities' actions and state authorities' actions.

While analyzing the case of India, Marx (1853, p.514-515) observed that the weakness of private entrepreneurship in poor regions forces governments to take measures to

---

<sup>4</sup> The word development means economic growth and welfare together. Nevertheless, until the 1970s, people used to associate it mainly with economic growth, from which welfare was considered (sometimes implicitly) a natural consequence. From the 1980s onwards welfare is no more considered a natural consequence of economic growth so that the use of the word development is usually followed by the observation that it means both economic growth and development and that economic growth without welfare is not development. It is not correct to say that until the 1970s, when talking about development, progress, or even about economic growth, state and federal authorities were disregarding welfare; to be precise one shall say that, until the 1970s, words as development and progress used to stress economic performance, bringing implicit that economic improvement means better conditions of life.

allow the growth of economic activities and provide better conditions of life; the accuracy of this remark can also be verified regarding the case of Maranhão State so that also the current concern with economic growth and welfare can not be considered a distinctive point of SUDENE authorities' actions when compared with state authorities' actions. It is easy to notice, by analysing official documents, that economic development, as a synonym of economic improvement, economic recuperation, progress, prosperity, etc., has been a current concern of Governors and other high state authorities since long ago so that, despite Deputy Neiva Moreira's accusations, state authorities have always been willing to accept any federal investment in Maranhão (not only the creation of SUDENE, but also the creation of SPVEA<sup>5</sup> and other initiatives took by federal authorities towards state economic and social improvement have always been welcomed by state authorities).

Even the elaboration of a plan devoted to economic growth and welfare does not supply a point of distinction between these actions. In 1948 (more than ten years before the creation of SUDENE), for example, state authorities elaborated the already mentioned SETA [Jan, whose announced target — according to the first article of Law 290 from January 27, 1949 — was “providing better conditions of life to countryside people, and, thus, fortifying state economic structure” (Maranhão, 1949, p.1). By elaborating such plan, state authorities were using the same tool (plan) that would be used by SUDENE authorities ten years later to achieve the same target (development), and in both plans the same means (colonization) is pointed as the one suitable for achieving such target. Indeed, if one uses the word planning to express the activity of programming actions towards a defined target, one will have to admit that planning is an old practice.

Nevertheless, one can not say that SUDENE authorities' discourse and state authorities' discourse in 1962, as well as the actions they structured, were very dose because they had proclaimed the same target and had pointed the same tool and means as the most suitable to achieve this target. Indeed, these actions have much in common, but what makes them so dose is that they are power effects of discourses that belong to the same discursive formation, and what make two or more discourses belong to the same discursive formation is neither a common dominant theme (e.g. development, colonization) nor a common form (e.g. plan), but the existence of a common set of rules of formation regulating their production. Until the end of the 1950s state authorities discourse in plans devoted to economic growth and welfare,

---

<sup>5</sup> SPVEA (Superintendence of the Plan of Economic Valorization of Amazonia) was created in 1953 to implement the so-called Plan of Economic Valorization of Amazonia. In the Official Message of 1954, Governor Eugenio Barros describes the installation of SPVEA as “one of the most important facts” of 1953 (Maranhão, 1954, p.15).

like SETA Plan, were not regulated by the set of rules that regulated the elaboration of plans like the Project for Maranhão State Populating and the state development plan of 1961; what marks the emergence of a totally new discursive formation and, alongside, a complete restructuring of the policy making process during the 1950s is neither the hegemony of the theme economic development in official discourse, nor the creation of a state bureau charged with development planning, nor the attempts (like colonizing) to improve state economy, but the fact that a particular discipline, economics, is acknowledged as the one which holds the kind of knowledge suitable for the problem pointed as the main one (underdevelopment), and the fact that a specific class<sup>6</sup> of social agents, the economists, is acknowledged as the one authorized to speak upon matters that belong to such discipline, that is, what marks the emergence of a new discursive formation in Maranhão during the 1950s is the fact that the discourse produced by economists — that is, the discourse whose production is restricted to those who supposedly possess the knowledge proper to a discipline called economics —, which can be called economic discourse, becomes dominant in the bureaucratic field (Bourdieu, 1980, p.94; 1987, p.37-38). In other words: from the 50's onwards, state authorities' discourse in economic plans remains limited by the boundaries of a specific discipline, limited inside the domains of economics, and this discipline becomes the main source of legitimacy to state authorities' discourse on economic matters.

The emergence of a strong belief in economics is not an event limited to state frontiers, after World War II economics became a very worthy discipline all over western world. Undoubtedly this strong belief is a heritage of the recession of the 1930s in the United States, supposedly surpassed by policies inspired by keynesian economics; since then, there is a consensus on the necessity of appealing to economists' capacity for safely guiding any economy. In Brazil, this emergence brought about the formation of the field of economists<sup>7</sup> (Loureiro, 1997) — that is, the formation of a structured space, space of positions, where only economists are able to interact —, while in the United States and in England there was just an expansion of this space (in these countries, the field of economists was already structured around university courses). With the acknowledgment of the indispensability of economics for dealing with economic matters, the slow and hardly perceived organization of the field of economists in Brazil, around self-taught

---

<sup>6</sup> It is used here the concept of class developed by Boudieu, that is, a group of social agents that possess a common habitus, a common principle of structuration for their representations and practices, which correspond to a common structured space where these agents interact.

<sup>7</sup> Field is a concept developed by Bourdieu (1966a) to designate the structured space where a specific class of social agents is distributed in hierarchical positions so that the field mediates both the interaction of the agents placed inside it and the relationship between these ones and the ones placed in other fields. Field of economists is a concept used by Loureiro (1997) to “analyze economists as participants of a space of material and symbolic struggle” (p.19), that is, by using this concept she intends her analysis to stress not only the so-called economic thought, but also “the social environment where economists circulate, its groups, institutions and disputes” (p.19).

people, was accelerated; civil servants that used to work with economic matters began to search a specialization, a BA, a Master or even a Ph.D. in economics so that after World War II the status of economist<sup>8</sup> became increasingly indispensable for occupying certain positions at the bureaucratic field. At the same time, the field of economists expanded and acquired an academic extension by the foundation of the first university courses in Brazil devoted exclusively to economics. Progressively, the set of institutional sites (university, development agency, committee, institute of research...) from where economists talk — i.e. institutional sites from where economists make their discourses and from which these discourses derive part of their legitimacy — was created; to this set of institutional sites correspond the various positions that economists can occupy inside the field of economists. These positions are not only hierarchically diverse, they also put economists in different perceptual situations so that the positional properties (Bourdieu, 1966b, p.3; 1984, p.136; 1989, p.23) of economic discourses — that is, the properties they owe to the position occupied by the economists who produced them — change according to the perceptual situations (professor, private consultant, civil servant...) economists are submitted to, as well as according to the hierarchic positions<sup>9</sup> occupied by them inside the field.

In Maranhão, state authorities followed federal authorities' discourse and proclaimed economists the indispensable professionals for dealing with economic matters, but only in the end of the 1950s the field of economists began to be structured, around COPEMA (Economic Development Planning Commission), whose works were regulated by Decree 1499, from July 15, 1959<sup>10</sup>. The first studies on Maranhão conducted by economists are from 1952: (1) a report, attending to a presidential request, titled Babassu: an economy to be organized (Conselho Nacional de Economia, 1952), elaborated by a commission of the National Economic Council<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> It is important to notice that economist is everyone who is able to interact in the field of economists. The condition sine qua non for being economist is not the possession of a diploma attesting the capacity of dealing with economic matters, but the possibility of interacting in this field.

<sup>9</sup> Although the structuration of the field of economists is related to the creation of a set of institutions, the hierarchic positions inside any field do not correspond to the institutionalized hierarchy. There was, for example, no institutionalized submission of economists from SUDEMA (Superintendence for Maranhão State Development) to those from SUDENE, but the analysis of the so-called First Governmental Program of Maranhão State (Maranhão, 1968) reveals that, inside the field of economists, the last ones were placed in a position hierarchically superior to that occupied by economists from SUDEMA, which is a state bureau charged with development planning.

<sup>10</sup> COPEMA (Economic Development Planning Commission) was created by Law 1606 from July 14, 1958, but its organization and functioning were regulated only one year later. Also by creating it, state authorities were following the initiative of federal authorities, that had created, by Decree 38744 from February 1, 1956, the so-called Council of Development.

<sup>11</sup> The National Economic Council was a bureau created in 1949 to advise presidents. The report on the exploitation of babassu was requested by President Getúlio Vargas and the commission that came to Maranhão to study the case was led by two economists: General Inácio José Verissimo and Edgard Teixeira Leite. The report is signed by the following economists: João Pinheiro Filho, Edgard Teixeira Leite, Luiz Dodsworth Martins, Octavio Gouveia de Bulhões, and Hamilton Prado.

and devoted to the possibilities of the exploitation of babassu, (2) a brief on the possibilities of populating state unoccupied areas with immigrants from other northeastern States, elaborated by Edgard Teixeira Leite (vice-president of the National Economic Council) in attendance to a request of Governor Eugenio Barros<sup>12</sup>, and (3) an economic plan, elaborated under the orientation of Aluizio Lima Campos (a Maranhão born economist), which was sent, expecting financial support, to the Ministry of Treasury and to the so-called Commission al the Point Four<sup>13</sup>. It is very meaningful that both documents requested by Governor Eugenio Barros are requested to economists; some years before, the signature of an economist was not considered by state authorities a factor that could increase the legitimacy of official documents upon economic matters. It's also meaningful that both documents are elaborated with the hope of being approved by authorities that acknowledge the capacity of economists; as other authorities begin to believe that economics is indispensable for dealing with economic matters, state authorities are forced to adapt their criteria of competence to ensure that such authorities will acknowledge the quality of state official documents upon economic matters. Nevertheless, it would be a hasty simplification to say that the rise of economists in Maranhão is due to the necessity of approving economic plans at federal bureaus and international committees. What happens during the 1950s is more than an adaptation of state documents on economic matters to the patterns of such bureaus and committees, what happens is the affirmation, among state authorities, of a deep belief in economics, in its capacity of pointing the real problems of the economy and the right answers so that, during the 1950s, state authorities' discourse in Official Messages and speeches change substantially when talking about economic matters. From the 1950s onwards state authorities begin to assimilate and use (when addressing economic matters) the concepts and arguments proper to economics; in Official Messages sent by Governors to State Legislative Assembly, for example, one can even find explicit references to the statistical indicators used by "Political Economy" (Maranhão, 1954, p.9) and to "the laws of Political Economy" (Maranhão, 1958, p.XIX).

On the other hand, during the 1950s the appeal of state authorities for economists was not yet systematic. After 1952, the importance of economists is stressed again in an Official Message only in 1959, when Governor Mattos Carvalho announces the elaboration, by COPEMA, of the State Economic Recuperation Plan — also called Plan of Maranhão State Economic Development — and, alongside, emphasizes that this plan is based on 'technical

---

<sup>12</sup> Edgard Teixeira Leite came to Maranhão to study the exploitation of babassu with other economist from the National Economic Council and attended willing the request of Governor Eugenio Barros for elaborating such brief, which was sent to the Minister of Agriculture.

<sup>13</sup> The so-called Point Four Program received this denomination because it was based on the point four of President Truman's inaugural address of 1949. It was launched in 1950 aiming to increase US private investments in underdeveloped countries.

studies conducted by economists and foresightful men” (Maranhão, 1959, p.VIII); in the Official Message of 1960 he reiterates the importance of economists by stressing that in 1959, for the sake of Economic Development Planning Commission efforts, three Maranhão born people had the opportunity of attending the course on development planning offered by CEPAL<sup>14</sup>, and in 1960 a Maranhão born person was attending the course offered by ISEB (Superior Institute of Brazilian Studies) in Rio de Janeiro. These are the first efforts made by state authorities towards the formation of a staff of economists in Maranhão. This “return” of economists by the end of the 1950s coincides with the elaboration of a paper titled A Economic Development Policy to Northeast (GTDN, 1959), written by economist Celso Furtado and presented to the public as the result of studies developed by GTDN (Group of Work to Northeast Development), a group established at BNDE (National Bank of Economic Development), where Furtado was working as one of the directors<sup>15</sup>. Such paper — supposedly produced by a group of economists from BNDE and presented by one of its directors to President Juscelino Kubitschek and other high federal authorities, as well as to high authorities from northeastern states - based the so-called OPENO (Northeast Operation)<sup>16</sup>, and included the colonization of Maranhão State as part of a whole policy (described in it) towards Brazilian northeast development. By announcing OPENO President Juscelino Kubitschek intended to announce the definite solution for northeastern economic problems and the major effort ever made towards northeast development so that the paper supposedly produced by GTDN caught state authorities’ attention all over the states included in the operation. In Maranhão, this made economic discourse increase its symbolic efficacy (Bourdieu, 1987, p.225 and 243), and, as a consequence, economists could definitely get into the bureaucratic field from 1959 onwards. As SUDENE consolidated its position as one of the main sources of federal investments and financial support to Maranhão, economists acquired a more important role inside this field so that, during the 1960s and the 1970s, the field of economists was expanded and consolidated among the institutional sites that compose the so-called State System of Planning and some others, like the Course of Economics of Federal University of Maranhão and the Regional Council of Economics<sup>17</sup>.

---

<sup>14</sup> CEPAL (Economic Commission to Latin America) was created in 1948 by United Nations to elaborate studies towards Latin American development.

<sup>15</sup> Undoubtedly, presenting the paper without Furtado’s signature, as a result of studies carried by a technical group, was essential to ensure its acceptance among federal and state authorities. A discourse attributed to an impersonal group whose competence is considered indisputable is much more able to produce power effects than a discourse produced by a single economist, even when his competence is acknowledged by anyone.

<sup>16</sup> The so-called OPENO included basically the creation of CODENO (Council of Development of Northeast) on March 1959, and, after that, the creation of SUDENE, at the end of the year.

<sup>17</sup> Economists, as an institutionalized professional class, are supervised and inspected by the Regional Council of Economics.

Although a theme does not characterize a discursive formation, the emergence of the theme economic development is meaningful to this analysis because it explains why economists could occupy very high positions at the bureaucratic field since they first got into it, and why economic discourse became hegemonic, turning the legitimacy of other discourses upon public policy (e.g. medical discourse and pedagogical discourse) dependent of a kind of “validation” supplied by economic discourse<sup>18</sup> (e.g. public medical assistance and the fight against illiteracy are justified by the argument, produced by economists, that such actions are important to economic development<sup>19</sup>). In other words: both the high positions occupied by economists and the hegemony of economic discourse is explained by the fact that, from the end of the 1950s onwards, economic development is proclaimed by Governors the most important target of Maranhão State Government.

Until 1957 the word development was scarcely used in the Official Messages sent by Governors to Maranhão State Legislative Assembly. It begins to be massively used only when Governor Mattos Carvalho sends his first Official Message, in 1958; this is the one in which economic development is, for the first time, proclaimed the main target of Maranhão State Government. This upsurge in usage of the word development is, undoubtedly, due to President Juscelino Kubitschek’s election and to his continuous usage of it in Official Messages and speeches<sup>20</sup> indeed, it is easy to notice the existence of a very significant correlation between federal authorities’ discourse and state authorities’ discourse not only in this case, but also in many others. From at least the 1940s onwards, and probably much before that, Maranhão State Governors’ discourse followed Presidents’ discourse so that the same problems and solutions pointed generically by Presidents were pointed by Governors referring to Maranhão State (e.g.

---

<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, this “validation” is nothing but a reaffirmation of the general targets announced by Doctors, Pedagogues, etc. Medical discourse, pedagogical discourse, and others are produced under their own rules of formation, that is, by social agents that interact in their own relatively autonomous space so that economic discourse can not regulate deeply their production. Economic discourse simply points which targets are important to economic development and, by making this, economists select the discourses that are able to produce power effects at the bureaucratic field. But once economists have pointed a legitimate public problem (e.g. illiteracy) and acknowledged that another class of agents (e.g. pedagogues) is the one able to say how to solve it, they lose the power of producing the legitimate discourse upon the matter (e.g. programs against illiteracy are monopoly of pedagogues so that economists are not able to say which policy must be implemented to solve this problem).

<sup>19</sup> Since the end of the 1950s, when the theme economic development becomes hegemonic at the bureaucratic field, governors stress that education, health, basic sanitary conditions, etc. are essential to development; from the mid 1960s onwards, the expression social infrastructure is used in Official Messages to stress that not only investments in roads, energy, ports (the so-called economic infrastructure) are considered parts of the infrastructure essential to development, but also the expenses on health, education, basic sanitary conditions, etc. (the so-called social infrastructure).

<sup>20</sup> By preferentially using the word development in the place of words like progress, prosperity, etc., President Juscelino Kubitschek had already assimilated the vocabulary proper to economics, since development is the word used by economists to express such ideas (notice, for example, that there’s neither prosperity economics nor progress economics, what exists as a sub-discipline of economics is development economics — development is a word that belongs to the domains of economics).



colonizing, economic development, administrative reform, national integration), that is, in Maranhão, higher state authorities' discourse has been controlled by a non-institutionalized submission to higher federal authorities' discourse, thus, by a procedure that excludes the legitimacy of all other discourses that could point alternative problems and solutions. From 1958 onwards state authorities' discourse and federal authorities' discourse acquire a single nucleus: they have economic development as the main theme; they say planning is essential to achieve development; they associate the word development to welfare, growth of production, and raise of productivity; they associate under development to poverty, low production and low productivity; they stress that development is important because it keeps freedom safe from communist threats; they say governments should take measures to achieve development but should be careful to maintain private enterprise as the base of the economic system<sup>21</sup>. This single nucleus was also shared by US authorities' discourse during the 1960s, particularly by those discourses produced by authorities from Alliance for Progress, so that, even after Kubitschek administration, this single nucleus remained untouched for a long time.

## II

In 1961, at the elaboration of a development plan to be implemented during Governor Newton Bello administration (Maranhão, 1961), economist Antonio Dias Leite acted as consultant of COPEMA. Dias Leite had been a member of the Council of Economic Planning (a consultant committee created in 1944, during President Vargas dictatorship), and, in 1961, was considered a respectable professor of FGV<sup>22</sup> (Getúlio Vargas Foundation) and a competent private consultant<sup>23</sup>. It is very meaningful that state authorities decided to appeal to an economist with such credentials because it shows how the positions inside state institutional sites are hierarchically inferior to those available to economists at federal ones. This hierarchical

---

<sup>21</sup> Not only in bureaucratic field, but also in political field (Bourdieu, 1986), development becomes the hegemonic theme and discourses acquire this single nucleus. Governor Newton Bello's electoral campaign of 1960, for example, was based on a series of seven speeches, published by his electoral committee under the title Seven Speeches on The General Ideas of a Governmental Plan (Bello, 1960), in which the candidate stresses the importance of economic development, justifying its proclaimed precedence, and points the measures that, according to him, will conduce Maranhão State to economic development.

<sup>22</sup> Since its creation, in 1944, FGV became the central institutional site around which the field of economists was organized in Brazil. Working at the Brazilian Institute of Economics (IBRE), which is a kind of department of FGV, Antonio Dias Leite was one of the leading economists in the group charged with the first calculus ever made of Brazilian social accounts. In 1963, working as private consultant, he led the production of a document titled Economic Evolution of Maranhão: population, income, production, trade (ECOTEC, 1963), the first systematic set of statistical data on Maranhão State economy produced by economists.

<sup>23</sup> Dias Leite created a technical office called ECO TEC- Economia e Engenharia Industrial LA. by which he and other economists could act as private consultants.

arrangement of the field of economists remains still the same so that nowadays it is not hard to notice that economists placed in state institutional sites often use statements produced by economists placed in federal institutional sites to ensure the legitimacy of their own statements. One can also say that the field of economists is organized in a world scale so that statements produced by economists placed in some international institutional sites (e.g. IMF, CEPAL) or in institutional sites whose value is acknowledged all over the world (e.g. Alliance for Progress, University of Cambridge) are also frequently used to legitimate discourses produced in hierarchically inferior institutional sites. This usage of other economists' statements does not have to be explicit; indeed, in development plans, most times it is not declared at all. Dias Leite, for example, used the W. W. Rostow's famous book, *The Stages of Economic Growth* to determine that the rate between investment and additional value is equal to 3/1 (Maranhão, 1961, p.III; Rostow, 1959, p57'), but Rostow's name is not mentioned. To Brazilian economists, Rostow is a respectable university professor whose competence allowed him to act as President Kennedy's consultant and to work at Alliance for Progress. The same book was used by economist José Tribuzi Pinheiro Gomes, who was the leading economist during the elaboration of the development plans of 1968, 1971, and 1975 (Maranhão, 1968; 1971a; 1971b; 1975), to justify both the emphasis on infrastructure in the plan of 1968 and the emphasis on agriculture in the plan of 1971.

The most remarkable example of such hierarchical, though not institutionalized, organization of the field of economists is provided by the use of the concept of poles of development, created by the French economist François Perroux (Perroux, 1961). The concept was brought to Brazil by some economists from SUDENE that, after having studied abroad, organized, in 1966, a seminar at SUDENE on poles of development. As the use of this concept was consolidated among economists from SUDENE, economists from SUDEMA (Superintendence for Maranhão State Development — the state bureau charged with development planning at the end of the 1960s — begun to use it. From 1968 onwards the expression pole of development is used in Maranhão State development plans to designate the major cities, particularly the capital, São Luís. According to economic discourse in development plans, investments in such cities are correct because they are poles of development and, as such, they need to be stimulated. This kind of argument, based on the concept of pole of development, is used until today. This example shows clearly how economic discourse is affected by the institutional site from where it derives major part of its legitimacy; economists placed at state development bureaus play a very reduced role in defining which theories shall be

considered scientifically correct and, thus, applied in the plans they produce. This is surely the most important positional property of economic discourse in Maranhão State development plans.

### III

The abundant use of statistical data to support analyses is undoubtedly the most clear intrinsic property<sup>24</sup> (Bourdieu, 1966b, p.3; 1967, p.340; 1984, p.136; 1989, p.23) of economic discourse. In Maranhão State development plans, statistical data are always used by economists to base their arguments and justify the policies recommended. Since 1963, when Dias Leite led the production of the first systematic<sup>25</sup> set of Maranhão State statistical data (ECOTEC, 1963), its production and use by economists have been greatly expanded. When the already mentioned State System of Planning was organized, in 1972, it was created a state bureau called IPEI (Institute of Socioeconomic Research and Information)<sup>26</sup> that was charged with the production of statistical data. Anyone who takes a look at the shelves of FIPES<sup>27</sup> Library today can feel, by the large number of volumes containing basically tables and numbers, how important statistical data are to economists. Indeed, this extensive use of statistical data became an additional source of legitimacy to economic discourse. By using numbers to develop their arguments and prove their conclusions, economists can produce a discourse with a strong appearance of objectivity and neutrality (numbers don't lie!). By using numbers, economists are supposedly equalized to physicians, engineers, etc., whose discourses are supposedly safe from all sort of manipulation, so that economic discourse possesses a status of "technical that usually hinder democratic debate upon the public policies that are based on it.

---

<sup>24</sup> Intrinsic properties are those properties related to the condition of the social agent that produces the discourse, thus, in the case of economic discourse, such properties are the ones the discourse owes to the fact of being produced by economists.

<sup>25</sup> The adjective systematic means here that the data are produced aiming to form a coherent set of informations suitable to help economists both in understanding state economy and in conducting economic development.

<sup>26</sup> One could argue that before the creation of IPEI there was already a state bureau charged with the production of statistical data. Although this remark is true, the works of such bureau were not conducted by economists and its aim was not providing statistical data to economic analyses (i.e. to analyses conducted by economists). The creation of IPEI marks the beginning of a continuous production of statistical data by economists to economists.

<sup>27</sup> Nowadays IPEI is called FIPES (Institute of Economic and Social Research Foundation).

## RESUMO

O trabalho analisa o discurso dos economistas nos Planos de Desenvolvimento do Estado do Maranhão. Seu ponto de partida é o pressuposto de que os efeitos de poder (Foucault) produzidos pelo discurso dos economistas são, nas sociedades de hoje, a razão por que se pode observar, como sugerido por Schumpeter (History of Economic Analysis), uma correlação entre Pensamento Econômico e políticas públicas, ou seja, o discurso dos economistas é o meio concreto pelo qual, no presente, o Pensamento Econômico se converte em políticas públicas. Seu propósito não é fazer uma exposição resumida ou sistemática de tal discurso mas mostrar claramente suas conexões com a condição e a posição (Bourdieu) dos agentes sociais que o produzem, bem como tornar explícitos os procedimentos de controle (Foucault) que condicionam sua produção. Tal análise traz implícito um propósito crítico: ela mostra que tanto os problemas públicos quanto as políticas para solucioná-los não são definidos objetivamente mas construídos socialmente. Os discursos que têm a qualidade estabelecer problemas públicos ou aqueles que são reconhecidos como aptos a oferecer respostas não são nem piores nem melhores que qualquer outro. Eles produzem efeitos de poder não porque são verdadeiros mas porque socialmente aceitos como verdadeiros.

## REFERENCES

- BELLO, Newton de Barros (1960). Em sete discursos as ideias de um plano de governo. São Luís: Comitê Central Newton Bello-Alfredo Duallibe/Tipografia São José, 1960. p.3-li.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre (1966a). Campo intelectual e projeto criador. In: POUILLON, Jean et al. Problemas do estruturalismo. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1968. p.105-145.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre (1966b). A economia das trocas simbólicas. 3.ed. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1992. Cap.1: Condição de classe e posição de classe, p.3-25.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre (1967). A economia das trocas simbólicas. 3.ed. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1992. Cap.8: Estrutura, habitus e prática, p.337-361.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre (1980). O poder simbólico. Lisboa: Difel, 1989. Cap.4: Le mort saisit le vif: as relações entre a história reificada e a história incorporada, p.75-106.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre (1984). O poder simbólico. Lisboa: Difel, 1989. Cap.6: Espaço social e gênese das "classes", p.133-161.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre (1986). O poder simbólico. Lisboa: Difel, 1989. Cap.7: A representação política: elementos para uma teoria do campo político, p.163-207.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre (1987). O poder simbólico. Lisboa: Difel, 1989. Cap.2: Introdução a uma sociologia reflexiva, p.17-58.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre (1987). O poder simbólico. Lisboa: Difel, 1989. Cap.8: A força do direito: elementos para uma sociologia do campo jurídico, p.209-254.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre (1989). Raisons pratiques: sur la théorie de l'action. Paris: SEUIL, 1994. Cap.1: Espace social et espace symbolique, p.13-29.

CONSELHO NACIONAL DE ECONOMIA (1952). Babaçu: economia a organizar. Rio de Janeiro: Conselho Nacional de Economia, 1952.

ECOTEC - Economia e Engenharia Industrial S.A. (1963). Evolução econômica do Maranhão: população, renda, produção e comércio. 1963.

FOUCAULT, Michel (1969). The archaeology of knowledge. London: Routledge. 1997.

FOUCAULT, Michel (1976). Microfísica do poder. 12.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1996. Cap.11: Genealogia e poder, P.167' 177.

FOUCAULT, Michel (1977). Microfísica do poder. 12.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1996. Cap.1: Verdade e poder, P.144

- Grupo de Trabalho para o Desenvolvimento do Nordeste (1959). Uma política de desenvolvimento econômico para o Nordeste. In: BACELAR, Tama, DUARTE, Renato, GUIMARÃES, Leonardo, GOMES, Enoque (orgs.). O GTDN da proposta à realidade. Recife: Ipespe/UFPE. 1994. .153-238.

LOUREIRO, Maria Rita (1997). Os economistas no governo. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 1997.

MARANHÃO (1948). Governo do Estado (Sebastião Archer da Silva). Mensagem à Assembléia Legislativa. São Luís, 1948.

MARANHÃO (1949). Lei nº 290, de 27 de janeiro de 1949. Aprova o plano SETA e dá outras providências. [Diário Oficial Estado do Maranhão], São Luís, ano XLIV, n.26, p.i-2.

MARANHÃO (1951). Governo do Estado (Cesar Alexandre Aboud). Mensagem à Assembleia Legislativa. São Luís, 1951.

MARANHÃO (1953). Governo do Estado (Eugenio de Barros). Mensagem à Assembleia Legislativa. São Luís, 1953.

MARANHÃO (1954). Governo do Estado (Eugenio de Barros). Mensagem à Assembleia Legislativa. São Luís, 1954.

MARANHÃO (1958). Governo do Estado (José de Mattos Car- Mensagem à Assembleia Legislativa. São Luís, 1958.

MARANHÃO (1959). Governo do Estado (José de Mattos Carvalho). Mensagem à Assembleia Legislativa. São Luís, 1959.

MARANHÃO (1961). Governo do Estado (Newton de Barros Bello) - Reunião do senhor Presidente da República com os governadores do Piauí e Maranhão. Maranhão - Plano e Reivindicações. São Luís, 1961.

MARANHÃO (1968). Governo do Estado (José Sarney) - Superintendência do Desenvolvimento do Maranhão. 1 Programa de Governo do Estado do Maranhão. São Luís, 1968.

- MARANHÃO (1971a). Governo do Estado (Pedro Neiva de Santana). Plano de Governo 1971/74. São Luís, 1971. v.1.
- MARANHÃO (1971b). Governo do Estado (Pedro Neiva de Santana). Plano de Governo 1971/74. São Luís, 1971. v.2.
- MARANHÃO (1975). Governo do Estado (Osvaldo da Costa Nunes Freire). Plano de Governo 1975/78. São Luís, 1975.
- MARX, Karl (1853). A dominação britânica na Índia. In: MARX, Karl, ENGELS, Friedrich. Obras escolhidas em três tomos. Lisboa: Avante, 1982. v.1. p.513-518.
- NEIVA MOREIRA, José Guimarães (1962). A SUDENE e o governo do Estado. In: BUZAR, Benedito Bogéa (org.). Neiva Moreira: o jornalista do povo. São Luís: LITHOGRAF, 1997.
- PERROUX, François (1961). A economia do século XX. Lisboa: Moraes, 1967. Parte 2: Os pólos de crescimento, p.11-328.
- ROSTOW, Walt Whitman (1959). Etapas do desenvolvimento econômico. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1961.
- SUDENE - Superintendência para o Desenvolvimento do Nordeste (1960). Projeto de povoamento no Maranhão. In:  
\_\_\_\_\_. I plano diretor de desenvolvimento econômico e social do Nordeste. Recife: SUDENE, 1966. p.242-247.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

- BNDE - National Bank of Economic Development
- CEPAL - Economic Commission to Latin America
- CODENO - Council of Development of Northeast
- COPEMA - Economic Development Planning Commission
- ECOTEC - Economia e Engenharia Industrial S.A.
- FGV - Getúlio Vargas Foundation
- FIPES - Institute of Economic and Social Research Foundation
- GTDN - Group of Work to Northeast Development
- IMF - International Monetary Fund
- IPEI - Institute of Socioeconomic Research and Information
- IBRE - Brazilian Institute of Economics
- ISEB - Superior Institute of Brazilian Studies
- OPENO - Northeast Operation

SPVEA - Superintendence of the Plan of Economic Valorization of Amazonia

SUDEMA - Superintendence for Maranhão State Development

SUDENE - Superintendence of Development of Northeast

## APPENDIX

This paper was presented on February 27, 1998, at the XVIII Annual Student Conference on Latin America at the University of Texas at Austin. The lines below are the transcription of the ten minutes presentation.

[first words]

The paper is titled "Economic Thought Development Planning & Public Policy" this basically an analysis of the discourse of economic is in the development plans elaborated to Maranhão State from the 1950s onwards. For those who don't know, Maranhão is one of the Brazil's poorest States. It is placed in the north of Brazil, though officially it belongs to the so-called Northeast Region.

[theoretical and methodological observations]

First I'd like to make five observations, theoretical and methodological observations, about the paper.

1. The paper assumes that there is a correlation between economic thought and public policies. This correlation is suggested by Joseph Schumpeter in the introduction of his book 'History of Economic Analysis'
2. The paper assumes that the discourse is the concrete means by which economic thought turns into public policies. Public policies are power effects of discourses. This assumption is based on Michel Foucault's works.
3. The paper rejects the idea of looking for the thought behind the discourse. The paper is devoted to analyse the discourse, in the light of its rules of formation. This procedure is also based on Michel Foucault's works.
4. **paper uses the concept** of 'field' developed by Pierre Bourdieu, to designate the structured space, space of positions, where a class of social agents interact.

The concept of 'field of economists' used in the paper, was developed by the Brazilian sociologist Maria Rita Loureiro, based on Pierre Bourdieu's works.

Field of economists is the structured space where only economists interact, it holds positions in universities, banks, federal bureaus, state bureaus, etc.

5h Economist is everyone who is able to interact in the field of economists

Not only the ones who possess a diploma at leasting the capacity of dealing with economic matters are economists. Economist is everyone who has this capacity acknowledged, with or without a diploma.

[The analysis]

In Maranhão, until the 1940s there wasn't a specific class with the monopoly of the discourse upon economic matters, but during the 1950s economists begin to be acknowledged as the competent class to talk upon economic matters.

This "valorization" of economists is a consequence of the acknowledgment of economics as the discipline which holds the indispensable knowledge for dealing with economic matters.

This emergence of a strong belief in economics, which led to the constitution of the field of economists in Maranhão is not an event limited to state frontiers.

Indeed, after the Second World War economics became a very worthy discipline in the western world.

- In 1952, for the first time, a Maranhão State Governor decides to appeal to economists for elaborating programs upon economic matters, but the organization of the field of economists in Maranhão begins only in 1958, with the creation of the 'Economic Development Planning Commission

Alongside the creation of this commission, state authorities make the first steps towards the formation of the field of economists in Maranhão.

In 1972 with the creation of the so-called 'State System of Planning the organization of the field is consolidated.

In this period (between 1958 and 1972), the field of economists also acquired an academic branch, with the creation of the 'Course of Economics of Federal University of Maranhão This is one of the most important institutional sites of the field of economists in Maranhão.

Other important institutional sites of this field in Maranhão are the state bureau charged with planning and the state bureau charged with the production of statistical data and economic research.



• Alongside this process of organization of the field of economists we can observe two procedures of controlling the production of discourses upon economic matters: one selects the talking subject, that shall be an economist; the other imposes to the discourse the limits of a specific discipline: economics.

The field of economists became the legitimate locus of production of discourses upon economic matters. For this reason, the structure of the field provides, to the production of economic discourse, a kind of structural censorship.

This structural censorship provides two sorts of properties to economic discourse: positional properties and intrinsic properties.

• positional properties are those the discourse owes to the position occupied by the social agent that produces it

The most important positional property of economic discourse in Maranhão State development plans is the use of the economist's statements to legitimize the statements found in the plans.

This happens because institutional sites are the main source of legitimacy to discourses, and because the positions available in state bureaus are lower than those available in federal bureaus

Also the economic theories evoked to legitimate the supposedly technical choices are submitted to a non-institutionalized approval provided by economists placed in hierarchical institutional sites.

The debate upon economic theories inside state institutional sites remains limited to those theories used by economists placed in hierarchical institutional sites,

intrinsic properties are the properties the discourse owes to the fact of being produced by a specific class of social agents, in this case to the fact of being produced by economists.

The most remarkable intrinsic property of economic discourse is the large use of statistical data to support the analyses.

The use of statistical data provides to economic discourse an appearance of objectivity and neutrality that no other discourse produced by social scientists possesses.

This appearance gives to economic discourse a status of 'technical discourse'

This status, together with the belief that economists are essential

for dealing with economic matters, usually hinders democratic debate upon public policies based on economic discourse.

Final remarks]

I'd like to make two final remarks

(1)

• by using the concept of field of force, one intends to analyse the discourse in the light of its rules of formation.

I support that a discourse can't be characterized by its dominant theme (development or colonization, for example) or by its form (for example the form of plan)

A discourse shall be characterized by its rules of formation, that

is, by the class of social agents that produce it, and by the institutional issues that provide symbolic efficacy to it.

(2')

• The work carried out towards the elaboration of this paper can be qualified as a genealogical

It describes the formation of the discourse and its sources of

legitimacy.

• This work could be completed by a genealogical research. This genealogical research would show the discourses that were excluded by the economic discourse.

• The genealogical research was not carried out. However, the paper stresses simply the importance of genealogical research.

By making the genealogical research the paper shows that the excluded discourses are neither worse nor better than the ones that became dominant.

The genealogical work shows that the fight against the hegemony of technical discourse is essential to the debate of public policies.