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History & Society: The Work of Michael Mann

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EDIÇÃO E PROPRIEDADE

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INTRODUCTION

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History & Society: The work of Michael Mann

This forum is the outcome of the symposium *History & Society: The Work of Michael Mann*, organized by Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and António Costa Pinto at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon, on 8 June 2012.¹ With the support of Edições 70 (of Almedina Group), the publishing house responsible for the Portuguese edition of *Fascists* (Mann, 2011)², this symposium gathered several Portuguese scholars interested in engaging critically with Professor Mann's *oeuvre*, from a multidisciplinary perspective and from diverse thematic, historiographical, and historical standpoints. One of the highpoints of the meeting was Professor Mann's presentation, entitled *The Future of Capitalism. The End May Be Nigh. But For Whom?*, in which he explored the contemporary interplay between economic power and the other sources of social power, assessing

1 This event and this publication are related to two research projects funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT-MCTES): *Portugal is Not a Small Country: The End of the Portuguese Empire in a Comparative Perspective* [PTDC/HIS-HIS/108898/2008] and *1615, 1798, 1878, 1961 and 1975; Constructing an Empire-State: A Historical Sociology of Portuguese Colonialism* [PTDC/CS-SOC/108650/2008].

2 This edition contains an introduction by António Costa Pinto.

these connections on a global scale. A revised transcript of that presentation is included in this Forum.

Professor Mann is one of the most deservedly renowned sociologists (of an ‘unconventional’ kind, as he frequently states, a truly *classical* sociologist), interested in Comparative and Historical Sociology, Political Sociology, and Social Theory. Spanning over four decades, Professor Mann’s career includes forays into state theory and historical state-building; class consciousness formation; nationalism; empire; war, militarism, and geopolitics; fascism; ethnic cleansing; and also globalization, or more properly, *polymorphous globalizations*. In all these subjects, Professor Mann formulates comparative analytical frameworks, ‘looting and pillaging’ the human and social sciences’ intellectual patrimony, thereby promoting interdisciplinary dialogues that defy easy disciplinary demarcations and demonstrating the intellectual costs that they bring about (Lawson, 2005). At the same time, he explicitly mistrusts ultimate analytical primacies and favors instead the principles of multi-causality and multi-spatiality, resolutely embracing the ‘patterned mess’ of history. Consequently, he provides an alternative to those who question the validity and the outcomes of orthodox *realist* and formalistic conceptions of the *political* and of the *geopolitical* that govern the dominating paradigms in the fields of Political Science and International Relations.³

Professor Mann is the author of the magnum opus *The Sources of Social Power*, a work that covers the history of power in human societies from pre-history to the present, sophisticated in its theoretical framework and undeniably rich in its historical detail and empirical analysis. Volume I, entitled *A History of Power from the Beginning to 1760 A. D.*, was published in 1986. Volume II, entitled *The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760-1914*, was published in 1993. More recently, he published the much-anticipated third and fourth volumes, respectively entitled *Global Empires and Revolution, 1890-1945* and *Globalizations, 1945-2011*. These four volumes are one of the most vital and influential contributions to the human and social sciences in the last decades.

Apart from his great quest for the *Sources of Social Power* in history, he also managed to offer us other important works. In 2003, he published *Incoherent Empire*, the German translation of which was the winner of the prestigious 2004 Friedrich Ebert Foundation award for political books. In 2004, he published *Fascists*, a comparative study of fascists in six European countries. In 2005, he published *The Darkside of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*, a comparative and historical analysis of murderous ethnic cleansing, which

3 For the widespread impact of his work on several fields and subjects see Hall and Schroeder (eds.) (2006).

received the *Barrington Moore Award* of the American Sociological Association. More recently, in 2011, he engaged in a thought-provoking dialogue with another prominent Comparative Historical Sociologist, John A. Hall (author of, among other important works, *Powers and Liberties: The Causes and Consequences of the Rise of the West*, in 1985; *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison*, in 1995; and *Ernest Gellner: An Intellectual Biography*, a splendid account of one of the most important thinkers of the twentieth-century, in 2010). This series of exchanges would eventually turn into *Power in the 21st Century*, published by Polity Press, offering a clear view of the recent developments of Michael Mann's thought.

This multifaceted and thoughtful contribution was the main focus of the symposium. Its theoretical and methodological guidelines and its thematic diversity were at the core of the participants' concerns. The usefulness and potential shortcomings of his model on the sources of social power; the 'great divergence' between the (parts of the) West and the East⁴; the characteristics and legacies of late imperial formations⁵; the role of ideological power in state-formation and in its historical transformation; the rise of American and Soviet power and their competing worldviews and power projection⁶; the plurality of historical mechanisms, processes and forms of *globalizations*⁷; and the conditions and consequences of the contemporary interplay between the *sources* and *forms* of social power were some of the main issues debated at the meeting. Some of them are again addressed by the texts included in this volume. Together with Professor Mann's *The Future of Capitalism*, these texts testify clearly to the significance of his intellectual contribution.

4 For this subject, among other important works, see the crucial work of Kenneth Pomeranz (2013), now translated into Portuguese: Kenneth Pomeranz (2013). This translation is accompanied by an essay that deals with the key historical and historiographical problems associated with the great divergence thesis (Curto, Domingos and Jerónimo, 2013).

5 See, for instance, Jerónimo and Pinto (forthcoming, 2014); Shipway (2008); Thomas, Moore, Butler (2008).

6 For a similarly important contribution, which should be compared to Mann's analysis, see Westad (2005).

7 For other stimulating analysis see Hopkins (2002) and Bayly (2004).

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