

The Political Economy of Social Inequalities: Consequences for Health and Quality of Life

Edited by Vicente Navarro

IN PRAISE OF

“These essays provide careful and searching in-depth analysis of some of the most crucial questions of the contemporary era. The range of inquiry, unusually broad, integrates highly significant factors that are commonly neglected or studied in misleading isolation. This is a truly impressive contribution to the understanding of issues that should be high on the agenda of social policy and organized action”.

—**Noam Chomsky**, Professor, MIT

"The information age is also the age of inequality for reasons, independent from technology, that this volume explains and documents. Vicente Navarro, one of the world's leading scholar's in the study of the welfare state and social policy, has inspired and directed a series of studies, organized in this book, that show the other side of globalization. They link the dynamics of global, unfettered markets to social inequality and to the deterioration of health and living conditions for a majority of people in our planet. Regardless of one's agreement with the bleak social diagnosis presented in this volume, it is indispensable reading for social scientists, political leaders, and concerned citizens alike. The growing movement against socially irresponsible globalization should find in this volume arguments to ground its debates on solid information and analysis."

—**Manuel Castells**, Professor of Sociology and Planning, University of California at Berkeley

The Political Economy of Social Inequalities provides us with an extraordinary panorama of how politics and power influence social inequalities in both advanced and developing societies. It brings together thought-provoking studies of the success and failure of welfare states, and trenchant criticisms against prevailing mainstream orthodoxies. Its range is formidable. It engages scholars and policy makers generally interested in welfare states, but also experts in health, employment, and social security policy. The book stands as an exemplar of feisty radical political economy, at once empirical and critical. As such it is bound to stir debate and controversy across the scholarly and political landscape.”

—**Gosta Esping-Andersen**, Professor Political and Social Sciences, Pompeu Fabra University

“This is a wide-ranging, deep-digging, and hard-hitting collection of articles on causes and consequences of inequality in the world. It is pertinent to a wide audience outside as well as inside of academia, to people of all continents, in medicine, as well as in social disciplines.”

—**Goran Therborn**, Professor, Sociology, Uppsala University

“*The International Journal of Health Services* has consistently challenged mainstream and neo-liberal perspectives on inequalities and health without succumbing to post modernist subjectivism. This volume of updated articles develops a powerful political economy analysis of capitalism, state policies and health inequalities at the end of the

last century. It provides an indispensable alternative to the dominant orthodoxy.”
—**Ian Gough**, Editor in Chief, *European Journal of Social Policy*

“Navarro has assembled a superb volume, the best collection of essays on social inequality. The book goes beyond the usual superficial description of inequality and injustice to explore the economic and power relationships that cause inequality.”
—**David Himmelstein**, Professor, Health Policy, Harvard University

“An impressive analysis of the growing inequalities in health throughout the world, which constitutes one of the main moral and social problems of our time. Causes, consequences and solutions documented by qualified experts and coordinated by Vicente Navarro.”
—**Giovanni Berlinguer**, Professor of Social Medicine, Rome University

“From the mid-19th century of Rudolph Virchow till 2001, public health science and its magnificent achievements have rested firmly upon elucidating the nexus between social conditions and health. Professor Navarro’s excellent collection of studies in that tradition is both timely and just in time, given the market place, blame-the-victim onslaught from conservative ideologues. *The Political Economy of Social Inequalities* is good medicine”.
—**Quentin Young**, Past President, American Public Health Association

ABOUT THE BOOK

In the last two decades of the 20th century, we witnessed a dramatic growth in social inequalities within and among countries. This has had a most negative impact on the health and quality of life of large sectors of the populations in the developed and underdeveloped world. This volume analyzes the reasons for this increase in inequalities and its consequences for the well-being of populations. Scholars from a variety of disciplines and countries analyze the different dimensions of this topic.

Part I of this volume reviews the historical evolution of the political context in which scientific studies on social inequalities have evolved.

Part II examines the causes for the growing inequalities, questioning economic determinist explanations (such as attributing the growth to economic globalization) and technological determinist explanations (such as attributing the growth to the requirements of the New Economy). These chapters show, instead, how the growth of inequalities is rooted in power relations within and among countries and their reproduction through the state. The enormous economic and political power of the financial and entrepreneurial establishments and their related social classes is responsible for neoliberal public policies characterized by increased transfer of funds from labor to capital, further deregulation of labor markets, and declining redistribution through the welfare state.

Part III then analyzes how the World Bank, IMF, WHO, and other international agencies are reproducing these neoliberal policies.

Part IV addresses how privatization of the welfare state and resulting inequalities are negatively affecting the quality of life of populations.

Part V presents one of today's major debates (the Wilkinson-Muntaner debate) in the scientific literature on the relationship between inequalities and health, contrasting different conceptions (one based on Weber, the other on Marx) of the pathways between inequalities and health.

In Part VI, the contributors critically analyze some proposed solutions for reducing inequalities and provide alternative proposals rooted in the need to broaden the meaning of politics, democracy, and quality of life, and to intervene actively in political life on the side of those who question power relations within and among countries.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Vicente Navarro is professor of health and public policy, sociology, and policy studies at The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, and professor of political and social sciences at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, Spain. A founder and past president of the International Association of Health Policy and founder and editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Health Services*, he has written extensively on health and public policy themes.

Dr. Navarro is the author of fifteen books translated into several languages and of many articles on these themes. His latest books are *The Politics of Health Policy* (Blackwell) and *Neoliberalismo y Estado del Bienestar, Globalizacion Economica Poder Politico y Estado del Bienestar* (Ariel Sociedad Economica).