

[Exploring elites and wealth in Latin America](#)

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Call for Papers

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Subject Fields:

Economic History / Studies, Latin American and Caribbean History / Studies, Mexican History / Studies, Political Science, Social Sciences

Latin America is a showcase for a severe asymmetry in the distribution of income and wealth. Compared to other regions of the world, the concentration of land, income and property in Latin America is stagnating on a relatively high level. This constellation reflects a historically persistent, multidimensional and intersectional inequality. While acknowledging the role of *pink tide* governments, recently adopted social programs and policy initiatives – despite some local successes and regional variations – , have not fundamentally changed the structural characteristics of Latin American economies not nor have they led to a sustainable reduction of inequalities in the region.

In recent years, the phenomenon of stable inequality has inspired various studies on poverty and marginality, including different dimensions of social inequalities as well as political struggles for more redistributive measures. However, a sufficient research on the mechanisms ensuring the accumulation of wealth as well as the structural arrangements that perpetuate them is still lacking.

The same is true of research on economic elites that play an active role in the reproduction and accentuation of economic inequality. While, generally, Latin American "elites" are attracting increasing academic attention, studies tend to focus on political elites, the so-called 'state capture' or emphasize specific sectors in national contexts. However, a more comprehensive research program, combining the study of wealth as well as the international and national conditions that enable its accumulation with a closer look at the role of Latin American economic elites, their composition, economic strategies, and their political impact, promises new perspectives for the investigation of social inequalities. This approach also opens the space for a critical debate on the most recent political developments in Latin America.

A thorough investigation of the interrelated phenomena of wealth and elites has to involve research in two different dimensions. First, approaches from Economics, Economic History and Political Economy have shown how internal and external economic conditions shape Latin American societies. Apart from the more classical analyses that focus on structural heterogeneity, natural resource rents and the asymmetric incorporation of the continent

into global value chains, new approaches also highlight important shifts at the global level. Particularly important in this regard is the growing importance of China, as well as other macroeconomic trends such as the green economy and digitalization.

Second, studies in (political) sociology, anthropology and history have contributed to the analysis of economic elites as social actors in the region. These approaches have shown how elites constitute themselves at the micro and meso level. Focusing on colonial, provincial or state elites, these approaches have shown how elites act vis-à-vis the national state and the popular classes. They have also investigated the role of the family, the reproduction of elites through the educational system, and the political influence of economic elites.

While the research sketched out above has contributed greatly to the understanding of social inequalities in Latin America, the two "fields" remain largely uncoupled and separate from each other. Furthermore and directly related to the two dimensions, research methods, case design and data acquisition remain underdeveloped. Wealth is a delicate topic and economic elites tend to elude direct investigation. While there are country-specific case studies and even some comparative analysis of wealth concentration, mainly based on tax data, there is a lack of broader empirical analysis of wealth in its different dimensions (e.g., income, property or land ownership).

Scope

In this context, the conference "*Exploring elites and wealth in Latin America*" seeks to bring together perspectives on elites and wealth in the region and aims to discuss new and interesting approaches. CALAS is especially interested in theoretically sophisticated, empirically rich and innovative research designs that tackle or even combine the dimensions presented above. By way of inspiration, we propose a set of possible research questions:

- How do external and internal factors modify wealth accumulation in Latin America? Which economic sectors particularly participate in wealth generation? Under what conditions do political alliances and state institutions organize and safeguard the accumulation of wealth?
- Which groups and individuals are part of the economic elite(s)? How do they secure access to the sources of wealth? What are the mechanisms of their social and cultural reproduction?
- What are the most promising methods for empirically capturing wealth in its different dimensions? How is wealth distributed at different scales? What are the practical tools for investigating economic elites?

We invite experts from various academic disciplines to discuss these and other questions in four thematic panels. CALAS aims to not only flesh out the relevance of elites and wealth for Academia, but also wishes to contribute to political perspectives for Latin America.

Requirements

- The call is addressed to applicants from the Social Sciences, Economics, and Humanities who want to contribute to the topic of the conference empirically, theoretically and methodologically.
- Application: Fill out the application form, available at the CALAS website, with title and abstract, and add a brief academic record with indication of professional career and relevant publications. Languages: Spanish, English.
- Deadline for submitting proposals: July 11, 2021. An academic committee will select the papers based on criteria of excellence. Applicants will be notified by August 15, 2021.

The Conference will take place at the CALAS headquarters in Guadalajara, Mexico, December 5-7, 2021

For further information and reception of applications:

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<http://calas.lat/en/convocatorias/call-papers-%E2%80%9CExploring-wealth-and-elites-latin-america%E2%80%9D>