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Título da comunicação:

Business groups in Portugal in the Estado Novo Period (1930-1974): strategy and structure

Resumo:

The Portuguese literature has given less attention to the business groups created during the Estado Novo period than they deserve. There are very few works studying them in a specific and extensive way, the most famous among them dating back to 1973 (Martins, 1973), which is systematically quoted as the source for several conclusions on business groups during the Estado Novo period (1933-1974). The common understanding is that these groups dominated the economy of the country and concentrated a disproportionate share of the domestic income.

This interpretation has several shortcomings. No definition of business group is ever provided, which contributes to the muddling up of different types of business organizations. Portfolio participation or collateral for debts is not separated from share ownership with actual control over the firm. This constitutes a critical issue to define a business group from a mere collection of portfolio investments without any kind of managerial control over the firm. The claim that those business groups ruled the economy is not substantiated in any clear measure of economic dominance.

This study attempts to answer four main questions: How were the groups constituted and how did they develop over time? What was its importance in the Portuguese economy? How did they interact with the corporatist state? How did they affect the economic performance of the country?

The reconstitution of the different groups does not provide unique reasons for their rise, strategies and organic structures, as well as for their relations with the state and the economy. In this sense, it offers a focal study for discussing several theoretical explanations for the development of business groups over time and across space (Amsden and Hikino, 1994; Colpan and Hikino, 2010; Khanna and Yafeh, 2007; Kock and Guillén, 2001; Morck et al., 2005).