

The fetish of the “Social Responsibility”: the fallacy of the “new consciousness”

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ABSTRACT

This research has the aim of understanding the true role of corporations' discourse of “social responsibility” and to reveal its social, political, ideological and economical functions. This is placed in the context of capital restructuring which began in the mid-1990's in Brazil.

This study identifies “social responsibility” as a fetish of a “new consciousness.” An empirical study of data revealed irregularities in the supply chains, final products and/or trade practices of companies labeled as “socially responsible.” By a critique of the firms' literature, it was also possible to identify politico-ideological functions. Namely, the legitimating of the reform of the State, validating the transfer of social services from the State to the market and to a civil society transformed into a “third sector”, using the idea of partnership which presumes a “new sociability.”

This paper also demonstrates “social responsibility” as a strategy to cover irregularities which are necessary and inherent to the logic of capitalist accumulation, with politico-ideological, economic, cultural and social functions within the context of capital restructuring. It is possible to understand “social responsibility” discourse as posed within in a context an ethic-moral reform of capitalism, which leaves its economic structure untouched.

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