Abstract: Through analysis of the Brazilian entrepreneurial elite, its conception of democracy, trust in institutions and patterns of political action, by presidents of entities of entrepreneurial representation and firm directors, we seek an understanding of the dimensions of this group’s relationship to democracy, its consolidation and its prospects for the post-1988 period. Usage of variables related to political attitudes brings elements to the study of the action, or the lack of action, that this group takes in relation to the democracy, revealing how its members evaluate political institutions and their underlying set of values. Within the entrepreneurial elite, we have been able to verify a position that is favorable to political action and sustains a strong adherence to democracy, in fact, one that is significantly stronger than within the population as a whole. Regarding patterns of action, we observe a tendency to reinforce the characteristics of the current political system, such as the primacy of an agenda which focuses on the executive branch. While we can offer no prognosis as to the entrepreneurial elite’s behavior regarding democracy, we have, nonetheless, been able to identify a series of attitudes that are favorable to this system. In short, we intend to contribute here to a Political Sociology of democracy and to do so less by looking at its institutions than at its social bases of support among the political elite of the Brazilian capitalists.
I – Introduction

The goal of this text is to analyze the political values, evaluation of the functioning of political institutions and some other aspects of the entrepreneurial elite’s patterns of action in relation to Brazilian democracy today. When compared to the Brazilian population in general, to what extent does the Brazilian entrepreneurial elite adhere to democracy? What justifications does it deploy in doing so? Which elements can be seen as revealing of the relationship between the characteristics of this adherence and the evaluation that this social group makes of the functioning of democratic institutions? Finally, what considerations emerge when we compare these elements of the Brazilian entrepreneurial elite’s political culture with some of its patterns of political action?

These are the questions that provide a script for the discussion we propose here, which bring out some of the theoretical and methodological issues that should be established at this point, however briefly. In the first place, in studying the political values regarding democracy held by a group that exercises functions of political representation for a property-owning or capital-controlling social class, a few initial observations need to be made.

In general, scholarly concerns have turned toward the whole of society or to voters, relegating more detailed research on smaller groups that occupy privileged positions in the distribution and occupation of places of power — those whom generically could be referred to as political elites — to a secondary level. Nonetheless, Almond and Verba’s study (1989) had already pointed to the importance of looking at the attitudes of both common citizens and society’s political elites. Dahl, in turn, had emphasized the consequential relationship between the beliefs and political actions of “political activists” and raised the issue of whether this would have a positive or negative effect on the construction of polyarchy. In his view, the idea that such beliefs would have an effect on regimes was just as problematic as it was useful. It is worth noting that Dahl also advocated the need to evaluate what society’s most politically active groups think about democracy, given the relationship this bears to their actions (DAHL, 1997).

Ingelhart (1988) has indicated the importance of considering not only the economic and political characteristics of what he refers to as the “bourgeoisie” but also to the cultural traits, attitudes and values of this group, since success in the modernization of economic relations necessarily includes a political culture favorable to democracy. His perspective thus suggests the importance of studies focusing on this particular group.

Putnam has also suggested some interesting reflections on the relationship between democracy and the values of the elite. In his view, elite opinions are conditioned by the traits of the group to which they belong, and elite positions refer more to the social group represented than to their decision-making power vis-à-vis the whole of society and the State. Putnam has understood that the issue of elites cannot be reduced to the matter of their final decision-making power, since power itself is distributed diffusely over the entirety of decision-making processes. Thus, the study of elites, even when not allowing immediate inferences regarding such processes, is useful insofar as it permits the

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1 The present text is a fruit of the research for which I currently enjoy a CNPq Research Grant (Bolsa de Produtividade). Translated from Portuguese by Meryl Adelman.
perfecting of strategies for analyzing the action and participation of the social groups involved therein (PUTNAM, 1976)²

Bishin, Barr and Lebo (2006) state that, although elite support for democracy and satisfaction with the political regime in question are very important for democratic consolidation in Latin America, little is known regarding what democracy actually means to them. This indicates a need to go beyond the immediate issue of degree of adherence to the political regime.

In turn, a survey of recent studies on entrepreneurs and democracy leads us to some works that come closer to the issues that we intend to develop in this paper. Although not his key concern, Durand attributes a certain importance to the concept of democracy that entrepreneurs nurture and calls attention to the need for more study on the matter, connecting it to the analysis of the concrete forms of the group’s action³.

In this regard, Bartell and Payne (1995), in a work that seeks to analyze the relationship between entrepreneurs and democracy within the context of Latin American transitions to democracy, draw attention to a lack of empirical research attempting to explain the political attitudes and behavior of “business leaders” or “business elites”. They question the way that the power, action, attitudes and behavior of entrepreneurs are characterized within existing literature, particularly in regard to the transition context. In sum, the general path taken by the articles that make up this field of literature leads to a focus on the motives underlying “business’ support” for democracy and the chances that the sector’s interests can be tended to within the latter system (BARTELL & PAYNE, 1995).

Finally, the importance of this issue may very well be self-evident. Yet when our purpose is to study the political attitudes toward democracy exhibited by a portion of the elite as socially and economically significant as the entrepreneurial class, some particular problems come to the forefront. In addition to aspects related to political culture, there are several others of considerable importance, including the very localization and characterization of this elite, its recruitment and political representation and, finally, the articulation of economic and political forms of power.

With the goal of addressing these issues, it makes sense to clarify, however briefly, the analytical category that undergirds this research. In general, when we speak of an elite, we think primarily of the criteria of power. This would mean that, in terms of an elite that can be defined by belonging to a group that exercises important economic activities, the entrepreneurial class, we would be referring to those who possess major

² Furthermore, according to the author, Wright Mills had already emphasized the importance both of positions occupied and of institutions themselves for the exercise of power (PUTNAM, 1976). This is relevant for justifying the importance of the main managers of the enterprises and the presidents of entities of entrepreneurial representation as the political elite of a particular social group. We will come back to this matter later on.

³ Durand (2002) analyzed the position of the entrepreneurial elite within the context of the Fujimori government in Peru. Among other sources, he interviewed – over the course of a year – 20 presidents and directors of major associations and conglomerates. They were associations that represented industry, mining and energy, import and export trade and banks. Regarding corporations, he interviewed CEOs from the country’s four largest conglomerates and directors of multi-national corporations and major consulting firms (DURAND, 2002). As we will see further below, our research shares another similarity with Durand’s, insofar as it does not limit itself to the industrial sector, as frequently is the case for a variety of papers on the Brazilian entrepreneurial class. As examples, see Diniz and Boschi (2004 and 2007) e Payne (1994 and 1995).
economic power, whether as owners or managers. Although this may be useful and pertinent, for our purposes, this definition holds some problems. It reduces the question of power to one of property and control over means of production, leaving aside other issues that are equally complex and relevant, particularly those that have to do with political ideas, action and representation.

In order to illustrate our propositions, we can mention Pahl and Winkler’s (1974) interesting work on the European “economic elite”, whose goals include, on the one hand, moving from a study of firm directors and how they conceive of and resolve their role within the company to its implications for a “macro-sociological study of elites”; on the other, discussions of elites and power in society in general. Thus, their particular approach to the study of the “economic elite” leaves out issues related to another type of power, that which goes beyond the economic, that is, political power. This also means failing to consider the analysis of many agents of the entrepreneurial class itself, whose relevance may be more related to political than to economic or managerial aspects 4.

The question of political power refers us back to two types of abilities enjoyed by members of this elite: the prerogative of becoming the most important directorship of institutions that represent entrepreneurial interests and, in consequence, the ability to exercise some type of influence over State organs and centers of political decision-making. Thus, they hold a power that extends itself beyond enterprises, independently of ownership or control over large scale capital.

A study of economic elites based entirely on the attribute of property or the ability to manage large scale firms would leave out exactly that which is a major issue regarding the constitution of the group from which an elite is born, particularly when we are speaking of democracy: precisely, the question of political values, action and representation.

In short, we are using the notion of entrepreneurial elite and defining it as our object of study in a particular way precisely in order to go beyond such limitations. With regard to this group, we take the importance of political variables into account, that is, its characteristics as a political elite, made up of those who represent their peers vis-a-vis the State and other social groups and the bearer of a set of political values that are representative of the class to which it belongs. We articulate the analysis of the political culture of the political elite of a group that holds relevant economic power with the consideration of the concrete political action of this elite and the entities of those at top. For these purposes, our choice of informants was guided by a positional method that used both classical studies (MILLS, 1985; MILIBAND, 1982), and more recent research on the Brazilian case (CARVALHO, 1996; LOVE, 1982), locating the entrepreneurial elite through criteria of greater relevance at the head of institutions that represent entrepreneurial interests and taking the diversity of institutional formats that characterize this representation in Brazil into account.

Data from and methodological aspects guiding this presently ongoing research on the political values and action of the Brazilian entrepreneurial elite are presented below5.

4 This is important for our purposes because Pahl and Winkler’s type of focus also appears in pioneering and recent studies of the sociology of the entrepreneurial elites in Brazil. See Cardoso (1964 and 1967), Martins (1968) and Diniz and Boschi (2007).

5 The fact that our research is currently ongoing, and given the methodological issues we have mentioned above, makes the data we have used less interesting for its statistical qualities or with regard to
II – Entrepreneurial elites and democracy: political attitudes and justifications.

To a large extent, studies on the attitudes of political elites, or even of the population in general, have been quantitative in nature, seeking to verify the variation and dynamics of opinion on a range of topics. Albeit furnishing important data, quantitative research does not allow us to take a more detailed look at the roots and causes of attitudes and their possible implications for political action.

In this vein, our research has sought to verify an issue that earlier research on the Brazilian entrepreneurial elite has disregarded\(^6\): the justifications or the rationale given and bases for evaluations made and positions taken; that is, the attitudes and actions of the entrepreneurial elite vis-a-vis democracy in Brazil today.

For these purposes, we have used a survey, meant to focus more on qualitative than on merely quantitative indicators for variables such as degrees of adherence, conceptions of democracy and evaluations of the functioning of democratic institutions in Brazil and its prospects and fundamentally, on the justifications that are given for positions and attitudes. This both enables us to move beyond the limits of quantitative research and contributes to providing a basis and perfecting a strategy analysis of the political culture and action of the entrepreneurial class. We understand this as a necessary course for the construction of theoretical and methodological bases for the study of the entrepreneurial elite, and further — and primarily — for the group or social class from which it springs.

The questionnaire that we implemented between 2008 and 2010 was put together on the basis of the following issues: conceptions of politics, democracy and political reform; adherence to democracy; consolidation of democracy in Brazil; trust in Brazilian democratic institutions; the relationship between democracy and entrepreneurial interests; forms of entrepreneurial political action within democracy; general aspects of the political trajectory of the entity’s presidents and lastly, the strategies to be used during the next elections regarding candidates for a number of electoral offices. In this text, we will concentrate our comments on particular aspects of issues raised at the beginning of this text, that is, degree of adhesion to democracy and the justifications for doing so, evaluation of political institutions and certain aspects of patterns of political action.

The data we use in this text refer to responses we were given by the presidents of the following entities:

- Brazilian Association of Infrastructure and Base Industries (Associação Brasileira de Infraestrutura e Indústrias de Base - ABDIB), industrial sector entity linked to heavy industry;

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• Brazilian Association of Marketing and Business (Associação Brasileira de Marketing e Negócios – ABMN), representing firms in the communications sector;

• Commercial Association of São Paulo (Associação Comercial de São Paulo – ACSP), a historic entity that is well known for business class representation;

• Brazilian Association of Citrus Exporters (Associação Nacional de Exportadores de Suços Cítricos - CitrusBR), a national entity linked to agriculture and the juice production and export industry;

• National Automakers Association (Associação Nacional dos Fabricantes de Veículos Automotores - Anfavea), major association of the automobile sector that dates back to the 1950s;

• Paraná Association of Public Constructions (Associação Paranaense de Obras Públicas - APEOP);

• National Confederation of Transportation (Confederação Nacional dos Transportes - CNT), national business syndicate for the transport sector;

• Paraná Federation of Commercial Associations (Federação das Associações Comerciais do Paraná - FACIAP);

• Paraná State Industrial Federation (Federação das Indústrias do Estado do Paraná - FIEP), business syndicate for industry in the state of Paraná, its president is a member of the CDES and the CNI;

• Roraima Commercial Federation (Federação do Comércio de Roraima - FECORMECIO-RR);

• São Paulo Commercial Federation (Federação do Comércio do Estado de São Paulo - FECOMÉRCIO-SP), entity representing São Paulo state commercial and service sector business;

• Agrarian Brazilian Society (Sociedade Rural Brasileira - SRB), association representing “the rural [landowning] class”, it introduces itself as “... agent of political negotiation of agribusiness”. Established in 1919;

Although apparently beyond the scope of the present paper, we also look at responses of the directors of two firms, the highly recognized consulting firm Trevisan

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7 Among the firms that make up this association are: Active International do Brasil; Ambev; Banco Bradesco; Banco do Brasil; Banco Itaú; Bristol-Myers Squibb; Caixa Econômica Federal; Casas Bahia; Cyrela; Danone; Dm9ddb Publicidade; Doria Associados; DPZ Propaganda; Editora Globo; ESPN Brasil; Fiat Automóveis; Fischer América; Glaxosmithkline Brasil; Golden Cross; Grupo Bertín; Habib’s; HSBC; Ibope; Indooorídia; Jornal O Dia; L'oreal Brasil; Losango; Mastercard; Mccann Erickson Publicidade; MPM Propaganda; Natura; Nestlé; O Boticário; Rede Record; SBT; Shell Brasil; TIM; Rede Globo; Unilever Brasil; Vivo; Volkswagen; Y&R Brasil. This information was collected through http://www.abmn.com.br/abmn/abmn.asp on May 8, 2009.

8 The FACIAP, together with the FIEP, has created and maintained the Rede de Participação Política, oriented toward mobilizing and encouraging the population’s participation in politics and decision-making processes. See www.participacaopolitica.org.br
Consulting\(^9\), and an industrial and commercial business linked to agriculture and veterinary medicine, Fersol. This furnishes us with an element for comparison to the responses given by entity presidents; furthermore, we believe that the directors of these firms, when considered from the perspective of political values and patterns of political action, fit within the category that we have referred to as *entrepreneurial elite*.

The members of the entrepreneurial elite that we interviewed are linked to representational entities pertaining to a variety of sectors and activities and include the group’s two major institutional forms and ambits of representation — syndicate and associative, at national and state levels — as well as some important firms. Yet as we have indicated above, our interest is less in statistical or other terms of representativeness (that is, in relation to the whole set of business entities) and more in the methodological aspects of the questions we deal with, in this case, our informants’ approach to democracy and the ways in which they justify their positions and attitudes. At any rate, all our interviewees fit within the group we have considered as the entrepreneurial elite and play a relevant role therein. Finally, their responses will be commented in the aggregate and without identification of individual respondents, as was guaranteed to those we interviewed.

Our study revealed a total adhesion to democracy on the part of our informants, justified by the following factors: the importance of broad debate and participation in public issues that this regime allows; because it signifies a more just form of society, even though, within democracy, politics may bring personal losses along with collective benefits; because democracy is necessary for social development, and because it is seen as the most favorable context for free enterprise and individual freedom.

Administrative competence on the part of those who govern is considered to be essential to democracy, yet is at the same time seen as an obligation on the part of those who have been elected into office. Governmental incompetence and the politicization of choices of those who hold positions in public administration is seen as weakening democracy and popular support for this political system.

On the issue of democracy in Brazil, several respondents referred to its immaturity and the need to perfect it, insofar as it is fundamental for all of Brazilian society. Yet on the whole our informants see Brazilian democracy as already consolidated and believe the population is considerably attentive to it. A small minority of respondents qualified this evaluation with the consideration that several reforms and perfecting measures were still needed, among them, political reform.

The questionnaire that we applied also presented several issues which were meant to help us verify what informants mean by democracy and its essential or desirable traits, and justifications were always solicited. On the one hand, representative democracy — that is, the choice of those who govern through electoral processes — is considered essential and advocated as a necessary condition for the democratic regime, one which allows both responsiveness and the best selection of those who govern. On the other hand, the participation of the population in the decision-making process is considered essential by almost all of those whom we interviewed, whose justifications made

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\(^9\) Among Trevisan clientele we find: BNDES, Unibanco, Companhia Siderúrgica Vale do Rio Doce, Petrobrás, Banco do Brasil, Volksvagen, Fiat, Audi, Telefônica as well as some entrepreneurial entities such as the Anfavea. This information was obtained at [http://www.trevisanconsult.com.br/clientes.cfm](http://www.trevisanconsult.com.br/clientes.cfm) on May 8th, 2009.
reference to the character of the democratic regime itself, the need to maintain control over those who govern and the importance of a civic posture and citizens’ co-responsibility. Only two of our respondents understood participation as desirable yet not essential, arguing that democracy could and should be exercised in many aspects without wide social participation, precisely because the latter might, on occasion, pave the road to error.

Regarding the reduction of economic inequality, only a few interviewees did not consider this challenge as “essential”, and even then considered it at least “desirable”. Their motives revolved around allegations that for democratic consolidation, equality in voting rights is more important than economic equality, and that most important of all is equality of opportunities. Most see the reduction in economic inequality as essential and advocate the importance of social inclusion, seen in turn as the feature that turns democracy into an effective reality.

Some of our respondents do not see free market and free enterprise as essential but merely as “desirable”, under the consideration that the latter do not always constitute the best path toward democratic consolidation; the majority, however, see these as essential features and as a way to inject competitiveness into the nation’s economy. Thus, they see the free market and free enterprise as a means for promoting social welfare or conceive of these economic arrangements as democracy’s “other face”.

All of our informants also consider democracy an efficient way to resolve political and social crises, insofar as the crises themselves can be seen as resulting from society’s “poor choices”. Solutions, in their view, should be found through the use of democratic means, which provide the advantage of an open political regime and of freedom.

In turn, the general population’s adhesion to democratic values is unanimously considered essential by those whom we interviewed. In their view, the stronger the population’s belief in such a system, the more democratic and civically-oriented is society, and the greater is its control over government. The same feeling is expressed regarding respect for authorities, which is not seen as equivalent to submission. Rather, — albeit “authority” is sometimes confounded with “police authority” — to question and demand that authorities make good on their responsibilities, as well as subordinating their mandate to the vote, is seen as fundamental. Furthermore, when asked about which levels of authority are the most important, they responded, on the one hand, “the people”, and on the other, “the President of the Republic”, “the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court”, or “institutions”, given that the latter establish citizens’ rights and duties. The exercise of democracy implies the strengthening of institutions through critique and a search for the means to perfect them.

A further concern regarding institutions raises the following issue: what is considered more important, the correct functioning of political institutions (the nation’s congress, political parties, the party system, the electoral system, etc) or of economic institutions (the Central Bank, Bank of Brazil, National Bank for Economic and Social Development, regulating agencies)? With but one exception, our respondents all pointed to the primacy of political institutions, a response which they justified by the argument that the proper functioning of the latter provides stability and governability,

\[10\] Banco Central, Banco do Brasil, Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social.
due not only to the fact they are necessary for the proper functioning of all other institutions (including economic ones) but also because political institutions are seen as those that make individual political freedoms possible.

Regarding the functioning of institutions, the office of the Presidency of the Republic has received positive evaluation, insofar as it is seen as promoting political and economic stability. Only one concrete reference is made to the democratization process in terms of the completely different nature of the presidential office, as compared to the role it was given during the authoritarian regime. Nonetheless, some criticisms were made regarding lack of presidential action in promoting necessary reforms or for not fulfilling responsibilities in a satisfactory manner. Evaluations of the National Bank for Social and Economic Development (Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social or BNDES) have also been relatively positive. Its merit is seen as having established sustainable and transparent financing criteria. Still, there are those who criticize it for discriminating against certain sectors and favoring others, — particularly, larger-scale projects.

The Central Bank (Banco Central) is positively evaluated for its contribution to monetary stability, but seen as meriting greater autonomy. The Bank of Brazil’s (Banco do Brasil) performance is seen as lying somewhere between good and satisfactory, given its lack of transparency and internal stability, or even as unsatisfactory, given its size and the fact that it is hardly more than a regular bank. Evaluation of government cabinet ministers is seen as only satisfactory, due to politicization and varying levels of competence. Regulating agencies are seen as functioning poorly – highly politicized, inefficient and lacking clearly defined roles.

Regarding representative political institutions, political party performance is evaluated as poor or, at best, satisfactory, since some parties are seen as good and others not so. Low ideological density is also mentioned as a flaw in the functioning of the party system. Nonetheless, some respondents trust political parties and the party system, and their only criticism refers to the existence of (too many) small, minority parties. The electoral system on a whole is positively evaluated.

Syndicates, whether entrepreneurial associations or trade unions, tend to receive negative evaluations, and are seen as adopting old-fashioned practices and allowing the prevalence of old leadership. Yet there are those who look favorably on the structure of syndical representation. As would perhaps be expected, this is particularly the case for those who are at the head of this type of organization. Entrepreneurial associations are those that receive the most positive evaluation, seen as the most dynamic, those that contribute the most to the country and play a fundamental role within democracy.

When asked about their views on political reform, responses indicated that the recognition of its importance is accompanied by a certain skepticism regarding its feasibility, whether in relation to ethical concerns (reducing corruption) or emphasizes a greater need for action on the part of the nation’s congress. Some of our interviewees declared that their entities have been concerned about reforming political institutions, particularly with regard to political expression, but the majority has stated that actions in this terrain have not been taken.

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11 We refer here to agencies that regulate the telephone sector (ANATEL), energy (ANEEL), aviation (ANAC) etc.
Regarding issues that mark a still incipient debate on political reform in Brazil, the majority of our interviewees is against public financing of campaigns, in the understanding that this does not solve the problem of lack of transparency, ethics and legitimacy, yet admit not feeling well informed on these matters. Most of our interviewees advocate the possibility of re-election to offices of the executive power. Regarding compulsory voting – whether seen as a means of strengthening democracy in Brazil or as an unnecessary measure – most of our respondents expressed their opposition. Respondents tend to advocate voting by districts as a means of increasing responsiveness and the quality of representation. Very few are favorable to the idea of a constituent congress for the exclusive purpose of political reform, arguing that parliament members should not be allowed to legislate over their own activities. This reveals a certain lack of knowledge regarding what is actually being proposed in this regard.

With respect to patterns of political action, our informants declared that that their actions are usually articulated with those of other entities or enterprises. Contacts were primarily with powers and agencies at the federal level – the Presidential office and, more intensely, with ministers, secretariats, federal agencies and the Senate – with whom, in general, interests of the firm or sector represented by the entity would be dealt with. Entities that work at the state level tend to look more to the state executive and state members of the Senate. The result of such contacts generally received a positive evaluation and revolves around the most immediate interests of those represented.

Regarding forms of entrepreneurial representation, there seems to be no conviction of the need for a peak association, with only one exception: one informant who believed that there were already enough entities in existence, each type of entity has its own problems and interests and the only thing that is needed is a greater coordination among already-existing entities. Yet, in a general sense, our interviewees provide a positive evaluation of the role of entrepreneurs in the functioning of post-1988 Brazilian society, although they maintain that more pressure for necessary reforms should be made.

III – Final Considerations

A first aspect to be observed is of a theoretical and methodological nature, that is, the importance of analyzing the values and political attitudes of elites regarding democracy. This is justified by the contribution that this type of study has for understanding the characteristics of these elites, their political action and the relationship that the social class they belong to has with democratic institutions, their functioning and their development. In other words, through a focus on political dimensions, we bring a recognition of their political character to the study of economic elites.

The analytical fruits rendered by the usage of variables related to the conceptions, opinions and evaluations of this social group can be demonstrated by the information obtained on elements conditioning its action — or lack thereof — on concrete issues. In

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12 The idea of a constituent assembly for the exclusive purpose of redefining the functions of political institutions and the party and electoral systems in particular enjoys some diffuse support among entrepreneurs and other sectors of Brazilian society, but has not gone beyond a few movements with little continuity. There is no single position on this matter. For example, one of our interviewees advocated that assembly members only be able to run for election 8 years after the assembly’s conclusion, as a means for separating, albeit temporarily, those responsible for elaborating new political rules from participation in electoral contest.
this case, this means judgments made regarding political institutions, as well as justifications given and the values they are based on.

This information is indicative of entrepreneurial tendencies to accept, support, refuse or criticize certain characteristics of Brazil’s current democratic regime, furnishing working hypotheses with stronger fundaments and suggesting probable arenas and patterns of entrepreneurial actions, as well as possible contradictions or changes in their positions (COSTA, 2007). It also demonstrates the importance of the use of qualitative methods which seek out the bases of and justifications for political attitudes and actions.

Although we are not able to develop all the implications of the analytical strategies we propose here, interest in this alternative approach to entrepreneurs’ political action enables us, on the one hand, to look at issues that bring us close to questions of social group or class. We do not limit ourselves to issues of representative institutions – precisely because we are dealing with political representation, a fundamental dimension of the analysis of collective action. This also enables us to forge comparisons between the relationship that the group we focus on here, the population at large and other specific social segments maintain with democratic institutions.

Furthermore, an analytical focus on the entrepreneurial class centered around economic policy tends to concentrate on the relationship between this group and the federal level of decision-making processes, and in particular, executive power, leaving aside other important spaces of entrepreneurial political action and of the very functioning of politics within democracy, and in particular, of the State and government, such as state governments, legislatures and city halls. Lastly, analysis of entrepreneurial positions on the issue of political institutions enables us to see, through another lens, aspects of adhesion to democracy and to “liberal ideology stricto sensu” (DINIZ e BOSCHI, 2004, p. 32). Thus, we are able to see whether the entrepreneurial class is or is not liberal, not only regarding the relationship between State and market but also with regard to the fundaments of democracy.

Within the current limits of our research, we can enunciate our major conclusions regarding the Brazilian entrepreneurial elites’ patterns of political action and values in relation to democracy. We have seen that there is, on the part of the entrepreneurial elite, a position more favorable to political activity than the one that prevailed during an earlier period, that is, until the mid 1990s (COSTA, 2005a e 2005b), as well as strong adhesion to democracy, in fact, much more so than among the Brazilian population in general. Furthermore, the justifications that our informants provide for the positions they take do not diverge from what we could consider as fundamental characteristics of the political regime, i.e. placing value on public debate and promoting the population’s well-being as well as a climate of economic and market freedom. Yet, in spite of this strong adherence, many respondents have indicated that they devote little real effort to politics, in the sense of promoting or participating in initiatives that seek to perfect the functioning of Brazilian political institutions.

We have noted that our informants have a more realistic and less managerial perspective with regard to what can be expected from politics in a democracy, when

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13 Compared to journalists, we see that the entrepreneurial elite’s adherence to democracy is equally strong or perhaps stronger, yet their degree of satisfaction with political institutions is greater. See Marcelino et al. (2010).

14 See Moisés and Carneiro (2008) on this matter.
compared to what we found in research carried out during the 1990s (COSTA, 2005a and 2005b). This indicates that the entrepreneurial elite today is quite accepting of the idea that democracy is a way to manage conflict of interests and not simply a matter of proper management of resources and persons.

With regard to current Brazilian reality, evaluations of the performance of economic institutions tend to be more positive than those of political institutions, although the latter are considered more important than the former. Moreover, our study has revealed that our informants evaluate political institutions in a way that diverges considerably from what Moisés and Carneiro (2008) found for the Brazilian population as a whole. For these authors, Brazil can be characterized by a “paradoxical situation”: in spite of the fact that there is majority support for a democratic regime, almost 2/3 of Brazilians do not trust political (or other) institutions. The entrepreneurial elite, as part of the country’s political elite, seems much less dissatisfied and much more confident in the country’s institutions than the population at large.

These data tend to corroborate BISHIN, BARR and LEBO’s (2006) findings that good performance of the economic policies adopted by the president are a fundamental element in obtaining elite support for democracy. Regarding the implications this has on patterns of political action, we have observed a tendency for entrepreneurs to reinforce (rather than oppose) the general features of the political system; for example, the primacy of an agenda that focuses on the executive, especially at the federal level, even though more balanced relationship between executive and legislative powers is advocated. We have also ascertained positive evaluations of results obtained through their political actions.

Although we have not explored possible relations between particular types of entities and the opinions our interviewees express, our data indicate considerable cohesion in relation to numerous aspects of democracy as it is conceived and as it functions in Brazil. This suggests that, given the diversity of entities whose representatives we interviewed, extending this research and including a greater number of entities might confirm this cohesion and the similarity of positions regarding general and essential aspects. At the same time, this should not lead to the inference that there are no sociologically relevant divergences in the positions our informants express. It should be kept in mind that we are dealing with attitudes and declarations, both of which are usually charged with desires and with references to expectations about what entrepreneurial political action and Brazilian democracy should be. Herein lays the importance of analysis of concrete political action, something which our current research is partially able to carry out.

In general terms, the advance of qualitative research, expressed here in the form of a case study, will enable us to verify, through new perspectives, the concrete problems and forms, dilemmas and anxieties of the way the entrepreneurial elite deals with politics and the defense of its own interests within a democratic context. Furthermore, it should enable us to explore new dimensions in the study of entrepreneurs’ political action, perceiving, for example, the correlations that may exist between the type or sector of activity of an entity or firm and political actions and attitudes. It may also contribute in fleshing out tendencies in the political behavior of this elite and the social class to which it belongs.
In this way, we may able to verify the pertinence of our current research findings: whether, for example, the entrepreneurial elite is more or less Manichean in defining and exercising its political role; if its perspective on politics views the latter through a managerial lens and oriented strictly toward the economic or in a more realistic and pragmatic manner; if it acts in a more active or reactive manner; if it takes on short-term, fragmented and segmented ways of acting or a broad, unifying perspective; if it awards greater or lesser importance, through sharp and concrete actions, to the reform of political institutions; if it is closer or further from the political and partisan defenders of social reform (“the left”); if it takes on positions that are more or less liberal, regarding the relationship between State and market, or the liberal premises of democracy.

In relation to such aspects, and in an attempt to speculate on tendencies of the entrepreneurial elite’s political action, through our research results, we note the following: 1- Although the group maintains a high degree of allegiance to democracy, such feelings may be sensitive to the performance of economic and political institutions, not only in terms of its own interests – as is normal and legitimate within a democracy – but also in relation to the interests of society as a whole; 2- There is a slowly-increasing tendency toward more intense political action, even if this does not mean a greater number of entrepreneurs acting directly in political positions (as elected officials or not); 3- We can expect a pragmatic perspective in relation to the concrete results of democracy, which in fact leads the entrepreneurial elite not only to tolerate but also support a deepening of forms of direct popular participation at different levels of the decision-making process; 4- Within a context of reform of political institutions, this elite will tend to advocate maintaining the right to presidential re-election, the district vote and the end of the compulsory vote and party loyalty, while showing little interest in political reform through an exclusive constituent assembly; 5- The entrepreneurial elite will advocate democratic normalcy as a solution to solve possible crises; 6- There is little interest in building a peak association of all business. As we have seen above, this is important issue, since a number of studies on the political action of the Brazilian entrepreneurial sector (DINIZ & BOSCHI, 2004; MANCUSO, 2007; SCHNEIDER, 2004) point to the absence of this type of entity as an explanation for the patterns of political action adopted by the entrepreneurial class and as one of the major problems that exists regarding the role and strength of this group in Brazilian history and society.

On this point, in spite of the limited statistical representativeness of this study, we are able to discern different points of view within the sector; this leads us to believe that, if any attempts of this sort were to occur, they would probably not have their origin within the entrepreneurial class itself. Moreover, if the State were the agent responsible for taking such an initiative, it would most certainly encounter difficulties in carrying out such an endeavor. Although this particular matter would take us far beyond the scope of what we discuss in the present text, it also suggests that the analysis of processes of configuration of forms of class representation in Brazil should not refrain from consideration of the participation and behavior of what have been referred to as economic categories.

It is not our pretension to offer a prognosis of patterns and contents of the Brazilian entrepreneurial elite’s political action with regard to democracy and its institutions, nor are we asserting that the whole of this class would act in any particular way. Yet it is possible to recognize that a set of attitudes that are extremely favorable to this type of political regime prevail today on the part of a social class that is fundamental
to capitalist society and that, in the Brazilian case, was at another time among the groups that constituted the support bases of the authoritarian experience.

Rather than wager on the role of this elite in maintaining and perfecting Brazilian democracy, our study suggests the need to complement work already done with the study of actions actually taken in concrete situations. Furthermore, we should keep in mind that action not taken is also both a politically and sociologically relevant concern.

Finally, we understand that the articulation of studies on political culture and those that focus on the action of political elites demands further exploration by researchers and is intended to be a contribution for the Political Sociology of democracy in Brazil. This will allow us to confirm or not evaluations on the power of the Brazilian entrepreneurial elite by specialists and through common sense notions, but also to carry out comparative work, a terrain that is yet to be charted.

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