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## The hidden side of business anti-crisis personnel management. Social inequalities and power asymmetries in large corporations: a documentary sociological study

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### Abstract

Social inequalities and their consequent power asymmetries that exist in all societies between the elite and the rest of the common people constitute, even today in the 21st century, a central problem for the critical social sciences. Considering this scientific and social background, this research consists of explaining, sociologically, the hidden side of anti-crisis business management, from a critical reading of social inequalities and power asymmetries in large

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corporations. For the satisfactory achievement of this objective, a hermeneutic and documentary methodology based on the compilation of academic sources of proven scientific value was used. Among the most relevant ideas of the conclusions, it is shown that, in its scientific project, critical and counter-hegemonic sociology must dismantle the “institutional myths” (efficiency and meritocracy) that legitimize corporate inequality, proposing alternative qualitative indicators of economic value, which include, on equal terms, labor welfare and community sustainability.

**Keywords:** corporate governance, social inequalities, power asymmetries, critical sociology, anti-crisis management.

*La cara oculta de la gestión del personal anticrisis. Desigualdades sociales y asimetrías de poder en las grandes empresas: un estudio sociológico documental*

## Resumen

Las desigualdades sociales y sus consecuentes asimetrías de poder que se dan en todas las sociedades entre la elite y el resto de las personas comunes constituyen, aún hoy en pleno siglo XXI, un problema central para las ciencias sociales críticas. Tomando en cuenta este bagaje científico y social, esta investigación consiste en explicar, sociológicamente, el lado oculto de la gestión empresarial anticrisis, desde una lectura crítica de las desigualdades sociales y las asimetrías de poder en las grandes corporaciones. Para el logro satisfactorio de este objetivo, se hizo uso de una metodología hermenéutica y documental basada en la recopilación de fuentes académicas de comprobado valor científico. Entre las ideas más relevantes de las conclusiones, se muestra que, en su proyecto científico, la sociología crítica y contrahegemónica debe desmontar los “mitos institucionales” (eficiencia y meritocracia) que legitiman la desigualdad corporativa, proponiendo indicadores cualitativos alternativos de valor económico, que incluyan, en igualdad de condiciones, bienestar laboral y sostenibilidad comunitaria.

**Palabras clave:** gestión empresarial, desigualdades sociales, asimetrías de poder, sociología crítica, gestión anticrisis.

## Introduction

In the words of Osemuyi (2024), deep social inequalities are a historical phenomenon that has permeated societal structures, since the consolidation of modern economic systems, generating political tensions that weaken democratic cohesion and erode the legitimacy of institutions. In general terms, these structural imbalances have triggered recurrent economic crises, characterized by the excessive concentration of resources in minority elites while large sectors of the population experience job insecurity and exclusion from access to opportunities for social mobility (Stiglitz, 2014). The social dimension of these disparities is manifested in the fragmentation of the community fabric, the increase in conflicts between identity groups and the loss of confidence in the social order of which one is a part.

Culturally speaking, social asymmetries have led, according to Houle et al., (2022), to the emergence of hegemonic narratives that naturalize inequality as an inevitable consequence of individual merit, hiding the structural mechanisms that perpetuate the systematic exclusion of certain population groups. The cumulative effects of these processes have shaped societies characterized by extreme polarization, where the distances between social strata have become practically unbridgeable (Stiglitz, 2014). Faced with this situation, a historical understanding of these phenomena is essential to unravel the deep roots of contemporary crises that threaten global social and political stability.

For their part, for authors of the prestige of Szreter (2024), the historical trajectory of industrialized societies reveals that economic transformations have been intrinsically linked to the reconfiguration of power relations, particularly

evident in the processes of original accumulation of capital that dispossessed entire communities of their traditional means of subsistence. However, unlike the propositions of classical Marxism that envisioned an egalitarian communist society as the ultimate goal, contemporary sociological evidence suggests that a certain degree of social differentiation constitutes a dynamic element of collective progress (Stiglitz, 2014).

In this order of ideas, the total elimination of social class differences could paradoxically generate social stagnation by eliminating incentives for innovation, entrepreneurship and the development of specialized human capacities that require differential investment of time and resources. Following the ideas of Szreter (2024), the most prosperous societies have achieved effective dynamic balances, where real opportunities for upward social mobility coexist with protection systems that prevent the extreme exclusion of the most vulnerable sectors.

In short, the key does not lie in the absolute elimination of social differences (communist society), but in the construction of institutional frameworks that guarantee that these differences are not perpetuated in a hereditary way or generate insurmountable barriers to integral human development, which Nussbaum (2011) speaks of in his philosophical proposal to create intrinsic human capacities.

The transformations of contemporary capitalism have intensified the contradictions inherent in globalized production systems, where multinational corporations have acquired political power that even rivals that of nation states, altering traditional democratic balances. You don't have to be a genius in economics to know that this concentration of corporate power has facilitated the implementation of profit-maximizing strategies that subordinate social welfare to

the imperatives of financial profitability, generating negative externalities that are unevenly distributed among different population groups.

The mechanisms of accumulation by dispossession have found new expressions in the financialization of the economy, where speculative investment decisions have a direct impact on the living conditions of millions of people, without them having effective mechanisms for participation in these decisions (Stiglitz, 2014). In the current neoliberal order, the systematic privatization of essential public services has turned basic social rights into commodities, increasing barriers to access for the most economically vulnerable sectors.

At the same time, and as Konczal et al. (2020) demonstrate, technological advances have been appropriated unevenly, widening the digital and cognitive divides that reproduce and enhance pre-existing inequalities. Thus, in today's digital world, the reconfiguration of economic power has redefined labour relations, weakening traditional collective bargaining mechanisms and making employment conditions precarious for large sectors of the working population.

As will be seen in this research, the negative impact of social inequalities and power asymmetries in large corporations is particularly acute in the exponential increase in wage distances between ordinary workers and management teams, where differences have reached historically unprecedented proportions that exceed 600 times in some cases (Mirza, 2023).

The extreme polarization of pay not only reflects an unfair distribution of collectively generated value, but also erodes the sense of corporate identity by creating two distinct categories of workers with radically divergent work experiences. As a result, employees at operational levels progressively experience

an emotional disconnect from organizational goals, perceiving that their contribution is undervalued while observing how benefits are disproportionately concentrated in the C-suite.

Those who subscribe to this research hypothesize that internal fragmentation weakens organizational cohesion and reduces collective productivity, generating work environments characterized by distrust, resentment, and decreased commitment to excellence in work performance. Practices of concealment of information and knowledge are intensified when workers perceive that sharing their skills can only benefit those who receive disproportionately higher compensation. Paradoxically, these counterproductive dynamics negatively affect business results, demonstrating that extreme inequality constitutes an inefficient organizational strategy that harms both workers and the objectives of sustainable profitability (Houle et al., 2022).

In the face of these social and labour concerns, the general objective of this research is to explain, sociologically, the hidden side of anti-crisis business management, from a critical reading of social inequalities and power asymmetries in large corporations. From this central objective, three key questions emerge that guide the research development:

1. What are the specific organizational mechanisms by which large corporations reproduce and expand pre-existing social inequalities in their internal power and remuneration structures?
2. How do corporate power asymmetries influence the configuration of work identities, and the strategies of resistance developed by workers at different hierarchical levels?

3. What emerging organizational alternatives demonstrate the viability of business models that combine economic efficiency with equitable distribution of the value generated and promote the democratization of decision-making processes?

These questions seek to transcend the superficial explanations that attribute corporate inequality solely to market forces, to delve into the analysis of the political, cultural and psychosocial dimensions that sustain the reproduction of these asymmetries. The research aims to contribute to the development of renewed theoretical frameworks that allow us to understand the complexity of power relations in contemporary organizations and their implications for the construction of fairer and more democratic societies.

This article is structured in five different sections that progressively address the theoretical, methodological and analytical dimensions of the phenomenon studied. The first section develops the theoretical framework, where the main social theories that explain the origin and consequences of social inequalities and power asymmetries in modern societies are reviewed and critically discussed, with particular attention to their specific manifestation in large corporations. The second section describes in detail the methodological design of the documentary research, specifying the criteria for selecting sources, the content analysis strategies and the conceptual tools used for the treatment of the information collected.

For its part, the third section presents the analysis of organizational practices that reproduce inequalities, examining specific cases of multinational corporations and their impacts in different geographical and sectoral contexts. The fourth section develops the discussion of results, contrasting empirical findings with

theoretical predictions and, at the same time, exploring the implications of the identified patterns for the sociological understanding of contemporary business organizations. Finally, the conclusions and recommendations are presented, which synthesize the theoretical contributions of the research and propose lines of action for the transformation of corporate practices towards more equitable and sustainable models.

## 1. Theoretical framework

The classical Marxist philosophical tradition conceptualizes social inequalities as inevitable manifestations of the contradictions of economic systems based on private ownership of the means of production, where the bourgeois class extracts surplus value from wage labor through mechanisms of systematic exploitation (Marx & Engels, 2015).

This perspective holds that class differences are not natural phenomena but specific historical constructions of the capitalist mode of production, historically characterized by the alienation of the worker from the product of his labor and the progressive concentration of capital in the hands of a propertied minority. The internal contradictions of capitalism generate recurrent crises that intensify social inequalities, creating objective and subjective conditions for the emergence of proletarian class consciousness and the eventual revolutionary transformation of the economic and political system, in its entirety.

For the logic of Marxist thought, the class struggle is presented as the historical engine that drives social changes, configuring antagonistic relations between (exploiters and exploited) that transcend individual differences to consolidate themselves in collective structures of domination (Marx & Engels,

2015). This conflictual dynamic permeates all spheres of social life, from political institutions to cultural manifestations, establishing the material and symbolic bases on which identities and political projects of social transformation are built.

As Lyon (2020) indicates, in the business sphere specifically, Marxist theory proposes that capitalist corporations reproduce and expand social inequalities through the hierarchical organization of the production process, at which point workers lose control over strategic decisions that directly affect their working conditions. In contrast, workers' control of the means of production emerges as the radical alternative that seeks to democratize business management through the direct participation of workers in the planning, supervision, and distribution of productive surpluses, eliminating the artificial separation between manual and intellectual labor that characterizes the capitalist division of labor. In their completely radical vision, Marxists claim that:

The irreconcilable contradictions inherent in the regime of workers' control, inherent in the regime of dual power, will sharpen and reach a critical state where these contradictions become intolerable to both sides. Dual power is a stage of the class struggle where the class contradictions have become so acute that society is split into two hostile camps, two hostile powers, one old and outlived, and reactionary; the other new, in its ascendancy, and revolutionary. The only way out of this situation is for the working class to take power and claim victory for the revolution, or it ends in the crushing of the revolution and the victory of the counterrevolution. One only has to look at the difference in the outcome of the Russian Revolution and the Italian and German Revolutions to see this. (Lyon, 2020, para., 11)

The nationalization of industries under workers' control implies the subordination of business decisions to the objectives of central planning, coordinating social production according to criteria of collective utility rather than

private profitability (Marx & Engels, 2015). In Marxist terminology, business transformation requires the construction of organs of dual power that dispute bourgeois hegemony in the workplace, developing technical and political capacities that prepare the working class to assume the effective direction of social production.

Thus, according to Mazower (2020), the factory councils (Soviets) and workers' assemblies constitute embryos of proletarian power that prefigure communist social relations characterized by the elimination of the exploitation of man by man and the destruction of the asymmetrical power relations that subordinate the popular majorities.

On the other ideological side, the liberal perspective approaches social inequalities from a perspective that considers them the "natural result" of individual differences in talent, effort, and preferences, always arguing that free market systems provide efficient mechanisms for the allocation of resources and rewards according to the productive contribution of each economic actor. According to Dixon and Suk (2018), this theoretical current emphasizes that income disparities fundamentally reflect differences in marginal labor productivity, so that the most skilled and entrepreneurial individuals obtain higher returns for their investments in human capital and their willingness to take entrepreneurial risks.

In business ethics, liberals argue that state intervention to reduce inequalities through fiscal redistribution generates economic distortions that discourage investment, savings, and innovation, reducing aggregate economic growth and paradoxically harming the most vulnerable sectors of the community (Ostermaier & van Aaken, 2020).

Upward social mobility is presented as a distinctive feature of open societies, where democratic institutions and competitive markets offer opportunities for individual advancement based, in theory, on personal merit rather than on inherited privileges. In this ideological context, the State must limit itself to guaranteeing institutional frameworks that protect property rights and facilitate the functioning of free markets, avoiding interference that compromises economic efficiency and individual freedom of choice. However, no existing state is limited, in concrete reality, only to being an arbiter of economic processes.

As Falato et al., (2022) argue, in capitalist firms, liberal theory justifies power asymmetries as a logical consequence of the right of ownership of shareholders, who assume financial risks and, therefore, must retain final authority over the strategic and operational decisions of corporations. At the same time, labor markets are thought to function as disciplinary mechanisms that align individual incentives with business objectives, establishing differentiated remuneration systems that reward superior performance and, simultaneously, punish mediocrity or negligence at work.

According to liberals, competition between companies to attract and retain human talent generates pressures to improve working conditions and offer competitive compensation, gradually eliminating abusive practices through "market forces"<sup>5</sup> rather than government regulations.

Organizational hierarchies reflect functional specializations needed to coordinate complex activities on a large scale, where different levels of

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<sup>5</sup> In classical liberal thought, market forces or the so-called "invisible hand of the market" are transformed into a kind of metaphysical entity that tends to reduce social asymmetries, however, it is an ideological vision, nothing more.

responsibility require, of course, different degrees of decision-making authority and corresponding levels of remuneration. Business democratization is considered counterproductive because it dilutes managerial responsibility and generates slow and inefficient decision-making processes that compromise the competitive capacity of organizations in globalized markets.

On the other hand, the *theory of the differential distribution of value goods*, commonly associated with the work of the economist Sraffa (1960), addresses social inequalities from a distributive perspective that examines how different social groups have unequal access to scarce and valuable resources, including not only monetary income, but also social prestige, political power, etc. educational opportunities and quality of life.

This neo-Ricardian analytical current focuses on identifying the institutional and cultural mechanisms that determine specific patterns of distribution, recognizing that inequalities do not automatically emerge from individual differences but from social structures that create systematic barriers to equitable access to human development opportunities.

The processes of advantageous accumulation allow, according to Pleinen (2022), certain social groups to convert their initial resources into positions of privilege, increasingly consolidated, generating virtuous circles for the beneficiaries and vicious circles for the excluded that are reproduced intergenerationally.

Therefore, distributive justice requires normative criteria that balance principles of economic efficiency with demands for social equity, recognizing both the importance of incentives for innovation and the need to guarantee

minimum levels of well-being for all members of society. In this sense, redistribution policies must be strategically designed to modify the rules of the social game rather than simply transferring resources between winners and losers of the *status quo*.

As Savage and Li (2021) suppose, the application of this distributive perspective to corporate asymmetries demonstrates to scientific understanding how large companies develop internal distribution systems that concentrate power, information, and economic rewards resources at senior management levels, while limiting the access of operational workers to spaces for decision-making participation and professional development.

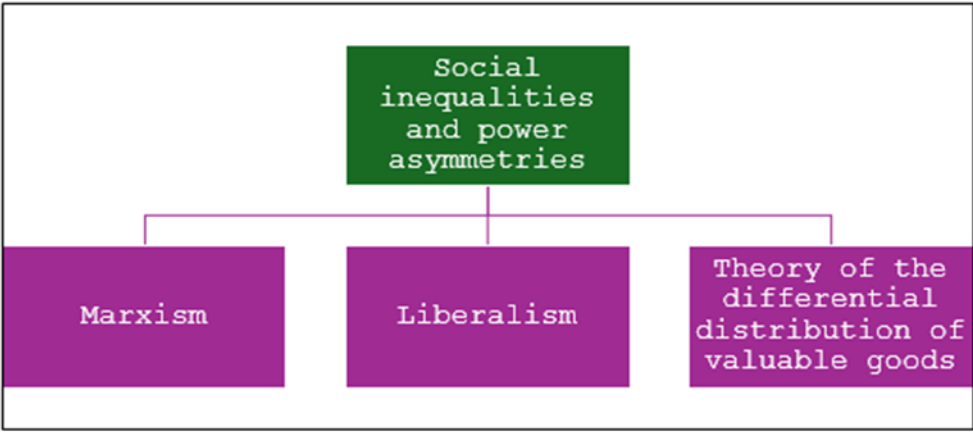
For these reasons, organizational structures very commonly function as "filtering mechanisms" that channel promotion opportunities to individuals who demonstrate loyalty to dominant corporate values, reproducing homogeneous demographic compositions in managerial positions that systematically exclude minority or dissident groups. In the end, research such as this responds to the need to reduce inequalities, more so since:

Over the past decade, the social scientific analysis of inequality has been renewed with a vigour and urgency which is desperately necessary to respond to the burgeoning challenges of the twenty-first century. The tempered optimism of the last decades of the twentieth century based on economic and technological growth which appeared to have played a transformative role in improving the lives of millions of poor people over much of the world has given way to a much bleaker sense of the intractability of emerging challenges of the twenty-first century. (Savage & Li, 2021, p. 1)

The three theoretical currents analyzed offer complementary contributions to understanding the multidimensional complexity of social and corporate

inequalities, providing in the process conceptual frameworks that illuminate different aspects of the phenomenon of inequality in corporate contexts. In principle, Marxism provides a historical and structural perspective that reveals the systemic roots of capitalist exploitation and the need for revolutionary transformations to eliminate the material bases of class domination, emphasizing the centrality of social conflict as a driver of historical change (Marx & Engels, 2015).

**Table 1.** Theoretical bases of the research



**Source:** own elaboration (2025).

Liberal economic theory, on the other hand, contributes with rigorous analyses of the functioning of market mechanisms and the importance of preserving individual incentives for innovation and economic growth, warning of the risks of excessive state interventions that can generate counterproductive effects (Ostermaier & van Aaken, 2020). Finally, the distributive perspective offers sophisticated analytical tools to evaluate sociological criteria of social

justice and, at the same time, design policies that balance economic efficiency with distributive equity, recognizing the complexity of the processes by which contemporary inequalities are generated and reproduced.

## 2. Methodology

This research is based on a hermeneutical conception of scientific knowledge that recognizes interpretation as a natural process through which researchers unravel the symbols and signs that make up both academic texts and the social contexts of which we interpreters are an integral part (Foucault, 1971). This epistemological perspective transcends the traditional dichotomy between explanation and understanding, proposing that the interpretative act constitutes the privileged way to access the structures of meaning that underlie complex social phenomena.

As Contreras (2018) argues, hermeneutics allows corporate inequalities to be addressed not as isolated objective data, but as social constructions loaded with cultural, political, and economic meanings that require critical decoding. In view of the surrounding reality, those who subscribe to this research affirm that the social researcher positions himself as an "active interpreter" who dialogues with documentary sources, recognizing that his or her own historical and social situation influences the process of understanding.

Subjectivities assumed and openly recognized, as a methodological approach, are particularly appropriate to study the "hidden side" of business management, since it allows revealing the implicit and undeclared dimensions of corporate practices that perpetuate power asymmetries. Faced with this objective and subjective reality, hermeneutical action facilitates, as Gadamer (2004) argues,

the cognitive articulation between the micro and macro levels of analysis, which occurs by simultaneously connecting individual experiences of workers with systemic structures of economic domination.

The criteria established to guarantee the accuracy and reliability of the information provided by the selected sources respond to rigorous standards of academic quality that privilege the consultation of high-impact scientific journals published mainly in English and, complementarily, in Spanish. The works of the publications selected for the purposes of this scientific article were characterized by implementing blind peer review processes that ensure the critical and independent review of the manuscripts before their acceptance, eliminating, as far as possible, potential biases derived from the knowledge of the identity of the authors. In addition, our selection prioritized journals indexed in internationally recognized databases, with impact factors higher than the average of their respective disciplines, thus guaranteeing that the articles consulted have passed demanding quality filters.

An additional criterion was established to consult publications that maintain transparent editorial policies regarding conflicts of interest, research funding, and review procedures, elements that contribute to the credibility of the reported findings. In addition to the above, the geographical diversity of the publications consulted made it possible to incorporate theoretical and empirical perspectives from different academic traditions, not only from the Global North, enriching the multicultural understanding of the phenomenon studied. This criterion of bibliographic selection seeks to transcend limitations derived from cultural or ideological biases that could restrict the analytical scope of the research or promote practices of scientific neocolonialism.

The second selection criterion focused on identifying scientific articles produced by researchers with consolidated academic careers, whose research experience supports their status as recognized specialists in the study of social inequalities and/or power asymmetries, both in general societal contexts and in specific corporate environments. This methodological decision sought to privilege theoretical and empirical contributions that have been developed by academics with a proven track record of publications in the area, participation in relevant research projects and recognition by the international scientific community. Consequently, priority was given to authors who have demonstrated the ability to generate innovative conceptual frameworks, rigorous research methodologies, and significant empirical findings that have influenced the development of the field of social inequality studies.

Everything seems to indicate that the philosophical scope of these selection criteria transcends purely technical considerations to delve into epistemological (qualitative) questions that define the very nature of sociological knowledge about corporate inequalities. In this context, the prioritization of researchers with an explicit ethical commitment against social inequalities and power asymmetries reflects an epistemological position that recognizes the impossibility of value neutrality in the social sciences, particularly when studying phenomena that directly affect the well-being of vulnerable groups. As Joaquin and Biana (2020) argue, the boundaries between political practices of liberation and science can be tenuous.

Undoubtedly, this perspective aligns with critical research traditions that assume that social knowledge is inevitably permeated by normative considerations and that, at the same time, the claim of "absolute objectivity" can mask

conservative biases that favor the maintenance of the *status quo* with their asymmetrical relations of knowledge and power. For these reasons, the ethical criteria adopted sought to identify research that not only describes corporate inequalities, but also, and this is fundamentally, questions their moral legitimacy and proposes transformative alternatives.

From our point of view, research on social inequalities and corporate power asymmetries entails ethical commitments that transcend the mere production of academic knowledge to delve into the social responsibility of providing theoretical and methodological tools that can be appropriated by groups affected by these dynamics. This ethical dimension implies that research findings must be communicated in an accessible way to workers, trade unions, civil society organizations and social movements that fight for the democratization of labor relations and the more equitable distribution of economic power, without this necessarily being confused with radical Marxist positions.

Finally, it should be clarified that, as Du et al. (2022) warn in their reflections, the inherent limitations of documentary research on corporate inequalities entail, among other aspects, restrictions on access to internal information of the organizations studied, particularly that which reveals management practices that companies prefer to keep confidential. Similarly, reliance on secondary sources means that certain aspects of the "hidden side" of corporate governance may remain inaccessible, especially those related to confidential strategic decisions, internal negotiations between different hierarchical levels, and informal power dynamics that are not reflected in official documents.

We cannot omit either that documentary research faces the challenge of the selectivity of the available sources, since corporations significantly control the information, they make public, generating potential biases in the data accessible for academic analysis. Likewise, the temporality of documentary sources can limit the ability to capture recent transformations in corporate practices, particularly in contexts of accelerated change derived from economic crises, technological innovations, or regulatory modifications.

### **3. Organizational practices that reproduce labor inequalities and asymmetries in corporations: some documented cases**

In the words of Amis et al., (2020), organizational practices that perpetuate socio-labor inequalities are defined, in principle, as structural and institutionalized mechanisms that, under the guise of neutrality, distribute resources, opportunities, and power asymmetrically among social groups within corporations.

These dynamics operate through formalized criteria—such as performance appraisal systems or promotion policies—that, by interacting with implicit biases, reinforce hierarchies based on gender, ethnicity, class, or other social categories of domination. Moreover, and as Mair (2019) states, corporate management hides these inequalities under narratives of meritocracy and efficiency that are very much in tune with technocratic and neoliberal ideology, presenting the results as natural products of individual differences in capacity or effort, instead of recognizing their origin in exclusive and unethical organizational designs.

In the corporate context, the main problems generated by these practices include the consolidation of "glass ceilings" for underrepresented groups, the concentration of strategic information in managerial elites, and the normalization

of structural wage gaps. In research authored by Esaya (2022), it can be seen that, at Amazon, for example, algorithmic monitoring systems impose unattainable productivity goals that leave warehouse workers unprotected, while executives access millionaire bonuses linked to short-term financial indicators.

These unjust dynamics are sustained by the deliberate disconnect between corporate rhetoric of inclusion and operational policies that prioritize profit maximization over labor well-being, affecting workers' enjoyment of human rights. Along with this, the lack of transparency in the promotion criteria and the atomization of work teams make collective organization difficult, thus fragmenting possible union resistance.

A documented case of structural inequality occurs at Walmart, where a legal study revealed that women in positions identical to those of their male colleagues received 4.5-5.6% lower salaries, a gap that widened as they moved up the corporate hierarchy (Giron, 2003). In 2003, female senior vice presidents earned 33% less than their male counterparts, a difference justified by subjective evaluations of "leadership potential" that reproduced gender stereotypes (Giron, 2003).

Continuing with the case of Amazon, Esaya (2022) argues that journalistic and academic research has documented precarious working conditions in logistics centers, where automated surveillance systems impose exhausting routines with minimal breaks, while managers enjoy flexible schedules and stratospheric compensation.

In fact, a 2022 report, to which Esaya (2022) had access, details how injured workers face selective dismissals under "poor performance" criteria, while the

company evades its legal responsibilities through temporary contracts and subcontracting. These practices, often "invisible and naturalized," are part of corporate risk outsourcing strategies that concentrate profits in the top management, while exacerbating economic inequalities inside and outside the organization.

**Table 1.** Analytical exercise of organizational practices that generate inequality

Practice	Causes	Aftermath	Characteristics
<b>Subjective evaluation systems.</b>	Implicit biases in "potential" confirmation criteria” (Giron, 2003).	Gender/ Ethnicity Pay Gaps(Giron, 2003).	Methodological opacity, fictitious standardization of control procedures.
<b>Algorithmic monitoring.</b>	Constant pressure for production optimization (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016).	Job insecurity and excessive burnout físico/mental (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016).	Information asymmetry, remote control of production (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016).
<b>Temporary Hiring Policies.</b>	Reduced operating costsv (Esaya, 2022).	Economic instability and violation of labor rights (Esaya, 2022).	Fragmentation of the workforce that increases inequality (Oxfam International January, 2024).

**Source:** table prepared by the authors (2024), based on the information provided from the sources cited.

From a critical sociological perspective, this picture shows how corporations transfer class conflicts (workers vs. managers) to the technical-administrative field, neutralizing their political dimension, as Marx and Engels (2015) already understood at the time. The standardization of evaluations and the use of algorithms mask asymmetrical power relations under a veil of "techno-scientific objectivity", naturalizing exploitation because of "individual inefficiencies" which justifies labor exploitation.

In this scenario, which is taxed even more in the global South, the externalization of risks through temporary contracts reflects a strategy of capitalist accumulation that offloads the social costs of production on workers, while managerial elites capture all the benefits (Amis et al., 2020). Thus, these mechanisms institutionalize a corporate order where inequality is not a collateral effect, but a functional requirement for maintaining rates of profit in globalized economies.

Resistance to these hegemonic practices emerges in cases such as the unionization of Amazon warehouses on Staten Island, studied by Minchin (2024), where workers challenged anti-union tactics through horizontal organizing and community alliances typical of the labor movement. Thus, these movements reveal the contradiction between the corporate discourse of meritocracy and the harsh reality of structures that deny political agency to the labor majority. Faced with this situation, the sociological challenge lies in deconstructing the institutional myths that legitimize inequality, proposing organizational models based on co-management, salary transparency and democratic redistribution of decision-making power in comparisons but is this possible by reform?

#### **4. By way of discussion of results: empirical findings and sociological readings of contemporary business organizations**

From our perspective, corporate anti-crisis discourses are built on narratives of organizational resilience that prioritize operational continuity through labor flexibility strategies and financial restructuring. In the words of Elamer & Boulhaga (2024), these practices typically include "operational efficiency" programs that transfer economic risks to workers through selective dismissals, reduction of social benefits, and outsourcing of production processes to regions with lower labor standards.

Undoubtedly, Elamer & Boulhaga (2024) are right in that corporations legitimize these measures through conceptual frameworks such as ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance), presenting them as "necessary" to preserve business sustainability, while hiding and naturalizing their material or symbolic impact on the deepening of wage inequalities and, even worse, on the erosion of collective labor rights. The rhetoric of "we are all in the same boat" masks structural asymmetries of profits and power, since, while the executive elites maintain bonuses linked to short-term financial indicators, workers face accelerated precariousness under the threat of relocation.

In this order of ideas, in the digital age, anti-crisis practices institutionalize algorithmic control mechanisms that always monitor productivity in real time, imposing unattainable goals that justify dismissals based on the criterion of "low performance" (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016). As already mentioned, at Amazon, automated systems generate strenuous routines with minimal breaks, while managers have access to flexible schedules and stratospheric compensations

(Esaya, 2022). These deeply unfair and unequal dynamics are complemented by temporary hiring policies that fragment the workforce, making it difficult to organize and bargain collectively.

In addition to the above, the pandemic showed how companies used state subsidies to maintain dividends to shareholders, while cutting salaries and essential medical benefits (Braband et al., 2022). In this tragic context, the corporate narrative of "corporate survival" operates, as well as an ideological device that naturalizes the concentration of profits in the top management in the exercise of corporate power.

From a Marxist or at least critical reading, these practices reflect the inherent contradiction between capitalist accumulation and the reproduction of the labor force. The crisis becomes an opportunity to intensify the extraction of surplus value through the systematic deconstruction of rights historically won by the working class. However, this perspective underestimates the agency of workers to develop creative resistances, as strikes and other forms of labor resistance show.

According to Howell and Kalleberg (2022), liberalism, on the other hand, justifies asymmetries as a "natural" result of differences in marginal productivity, ignoring the fact that corporate evaluation systems are designed to favor managerial profiles with cultural capital and networks of influence. While acknowledging the importance of individual incentives, it fails to explain why women and ethnic minorities face insurmountable labor barriers, even exceeding performance metrics.

For its part, the theory of the unequal distribution of valuable goods reveals how corporations transform crises into mechanisms of advantageous accumulation

for managerial elites. In Ghana, for example, manufacturing companies used pandemic relief funds to automate processes, laying off 40% of their unskilled workforce while executives increased their bonuses for their supposed "efficiency" (Dzage, 2024).

Dynamics such as these not only perpetuate economic inequalities, but also constitute a systematic violation of human rights. Even more so, when contemporary corporate geopolitics allows multinationals to exert pressure on peripheral states to obtain tax exemptions and make labor laws more flexible, consolidating an economic neocolonialism where corporate power rivals' national sovereignty, as Braband et al., (2022).

**Analytical Table 2.** International Findings in Corporate Anti-Crisis Management.

Phenomenon	Impact on inequalities	Sociological reading	Empirical example
Labor flexibility.	Job insecurity in temporary jobs.	Commodification of labor relations (Howell & Kalleberg, 2022).	Spain: 2022 labour reform increased temporary contracts in key sectors of the economy (Braband et al., 2022).
Algorithmic control.	Increased work stress.	New social class struggle in the 21st century (Marx & Engels, 2015).	Amazon: Warehouse Surveillance Systems Cause Physical and Mental Injuries to Workers Due to Labor Exploitation

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Phenomenon	Impact on inequalities	Sociological reading	Empirical example
			(Williams & Erickson, 2024).
Productive outsourcing.	North-South pay gap.	Economic neocolonialism.	
Executive bonuses.	Excessive pay disparity between: CEO/common worker.	Hyper-accumulation of profits in managerial elites (Elamer & Boulhaga, 2024).	

**Source:** table prepared by the authors (2024), based on the information provided by the sources cited.

Simplifying things, this analytical table 2 shows that, as a rule, the so-called "anti-crisis management" operates as a technology of power that reconfigures global social hierarchies. Consequently, it is not unreasonable to imagine that transnational corporations use soft regulatory frameworks to simulate ethical commitments, while externalizing human and environmental costs to peripheral regions of the Global South (Du et al., 2022). Faced with this complex reality, critical sociology must deconstruct these mechanisms, articulating the bases for the achievement of "transnational resistances" that link local labor struggles with global justice agendas, always recognizing and places that the defense of human rights in the twenty-first century requires confronting the geoeconomic power of megacorporation's. without ambiguity or academic euphemisms.

Conclusion and recommendations

At this point, it is appropriate to answer the question: What are the specific organizational mechanisms through which large corporations reproduce and

expand pre-existing social inequalities, in their internal structures of power and remuneration?

Indeed, corporations institutionalize inequalities through hiring practices based on "cultural adjustment," a euphemism that conceals biases toward dominant demographic profiles (white men in the educational elite), systematically excluding racialized minorities and women. Performance appraisal systems, apparently neutral, prioritize metrics linked to unlimited time availability, penalizing workers with care responsibilities (mainly women), as evidenced by the case of Japanese companies where mothers face salary reductions of up to 33% (Nemoto, 2012).

Also noteworthy is the outsourcing of risks through temporary contracts in logistics sectors, such as Amazon, which transfers economic costs to precarious workers while executives capture stratospheric bonuses linked to short-term financial indicators (Esaya, 2022). Overall, these mechanisms are sustained by "meritocratic narratives" that naturalize the concentration of corporate power in managerial elites, presenting it as the result of "superior skills" rather than "structural privileges," in which the elite justifies the present reality, beyond its obvious contradictions, as the best possible reality to which one can collectively aspire.

In response to the second question posed by us in the introduction of this work: How do corporate power asymmetries influence the configuration of labor identities, and the strategies of resistance developed by workers at different hierarchical levels? All documentary evidence indicates that corporate hierarchies segment work identities, so that operational workers internalize a narrative of

"expendability" that limits their demands, while managers assume roles of "guardians of efficiency" to justify exclusionary decisions.

In chemical factories studied by Sanson and Courpasson (2022), workers developed an "ethic of everyday insubordination" through a cognitive process of symbolic appropriation of spaces (such as canteens) and solidarity networks that go beyond the workplace, challenging neoliberal fragmentation.

However, at professional levels, resistance takes individualized forms (for example, teleworking fewer hours), evidencing how corporate power shapes opposition tactics according to the hierarchical position of asymmetrical relations of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1971). Consequently, these dynamics reflect that the capacity for resistance is mediated by differential access to organizational resources (information and internal networks), perpetuating inequalities even within the strategies of resistance to hegemonic corporate powers.

To answer the last question that arises from the general objective of the research: What emerging organizational alternatives demonstrate the viability of business models that combine economic efficiency with equitable distribution of the value generated and promote the democratization of decision-making processes? It is convenient to answer here not in the abstract, but by showing concrete examples that have been widely documented.

In this sense, Italian cooperatives demonstrated during the 2011-2018 recession that co-management models allow employment to be stabilized through collectively negotiated wage flexibility practices, while maintaining financial viability, although with lower profit margins (Cristini et al., 2022). This and other cases disprove, from our point of view, the neoliberal myth that corporate

democratization reduces business competitiveness, showing that the equitable distribution of decision-making power can coexist with high standards of productive efficiency.

Finally, the documented empirical evidence and the reflective and critical apparatus of this research allow us to make a set of recommendations, designed for workers who are victims of anti-crisis management, in their daily struggle to dialectically overcome the inequalities and asymmetrical power relations of which they are part. These recommendations aim to:

- Build transnational networks of labor support. Digital platforms can be used to share successful legal tactics against mass layoffs, such as those employed by Amazon unions in the US and Poland.
- Require independent social audits of corporate governance. This means demanding access to corporate data on salary distribution and job promotion criteria, backed by transparency laws such as the European Corporate Governance Disclosure Act (European Commission, 2024).
- Take advantage of the existing legal frameworks in each country on Corporate Social Responsibility. In this sense, employers are pressured so that diversity and inclusion policies include binding quotas in executive management and crisis committees, with sanctions for non-compliance.
- Articulate local struggles with global ones. This means linking the thousands of complaints of job insecurity with campaigns by consumers and activist shareholders, to achieve, if necessary, a boycott of companies and brands for labour exploitation in the Global South.
- Claiming in Public Opinion the Role of Sociological and Critical Social Sciences.

In its scientific project, critical and counter-hegemonic sociology must dismantle the "institutional myths" (efficiency and meritocracy, for example) that legitimize corporate inequality, proposing alternative qualitative indicators of economic value, which include, under equal conditions, labor well-being and community sustainability.

In this initiative, the organic intellectuals of the twenty-first century must design post-neoliberal and post-Marxist epistemologies that integrate decolonial critiques of extractives exploitation with intersectional analyses of gender and race, thus overcoming the economistic reductionism of classical Marxism. This implies, at the same time, mapping experiences of solidarity economies to build hybrid epistemological and ontological models that combine technological innovation with collective ownership of means of production. Only in this way can the social sciences guide transformative resistances towards a paradigm where efficiency is not the antonym of equity, but its necessary condition.

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