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"Brazil Is the Middle Way"

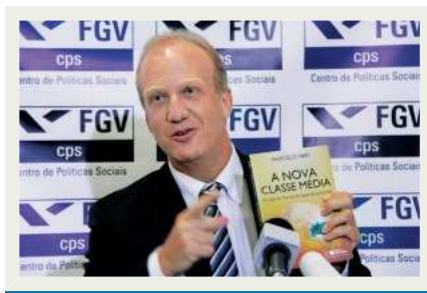
Economist Marcelo Neri says that education is the main driver of a new social revolution in Brazil

25 de Junho de 2012 • 12:03

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DEIXE SEU COMENTÁRIO »

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Neri was the first economist to prove the connection between economic stability and the reduction in poverty levels in Brazil

By Rosayne Macedo

He has traveled worldwide, disseminating his research and ideas that paint a rosier picture of Brazil, with less social inequality and more opportunities for all, mainly those who have been historically excluded. In other words, his Brazil is a happier country with great expectations of playing a prominent role in the global economic arena. At

the forefront of Center for Social Policies at Fundação Getúlio Vargas, one of Brazil's most renowned education and research institutions, Marcelo Néri uses figures and projections to create a new profile of the Brazilian consumer.

He was the first economist to prove the connection between economic stability and the reduction in poverty levels in Brazil. That was as early as 1996, two years after the introduction of the real, the new currency that became the symbol of economic stability after long years of two-digit inflation rates. There has since been a real revolution in the Brazilian economy, with a strong positive impact on the population's rising purchasing power.

In 2000, Néri found out that increased access to education was a more critical factor than a higher minimum wage in increasing the population's income. In 2002, he confirmed that social inequality was falling, unlike in the other BRICs (Russia, China, India and South Africa, besides Brazil). In 2007, he concluded that the lower-middle and working classes (the C class) already comprised more than half of the Brazilian population.

Néri has examined public policies in over 20 countries and developed welfare programs for the three levels of government and civil society organizations. Hailed by some of the top Brazilian political and economic authorities, he is often consulted by governments, companies and universities in and out of Brazil.

The researcher has already come to two important conclusions this year: Brazil achieved a record high reduction in poverty levels (7.9%) in 2011 and has topped the global Future Happiness Index ranking for the fourth time, ahead of countries like Finland and Denmark. He may soon get a new nickname, "master of social mathematics" – a new study revealing that education is the main driver of a new social revolution in Brazil will be coming out soon. The document is going to measure people's expectations about education in 158 countries. It is not to be

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Special content aimed at professional and international companies who are interested in the Brazilian market. Brazil has gained great prominence in recent years and will host two great events (World Cup 2014 and Olympics 2016) that can be great business opportunities for global companies. The channel consists of two areas. The first is Brazilian Market Overview with general information on demographics, consumption, the Brazilian communication market, the main players in the areas of media and agencies. And the second area is Hot News, with weekly update of top stories of the week that have relevance internationally.

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MEIO & MENSAGEM ›› *How have the social and economic changes taking place over the last few years impacted the development of a new image of Brazil worldwide?*

MARCELO NÉRI ›› The economic aspect helps, but what brings credibility – a quality seal – for Brazil is the social and environmental brand. Our search is perceived as one for inclusive, sustainable growth. This is where we're headed.

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MEIO & MENSAGEM ›› *And what about the consumer habits of the people in Brazil that have recently joined the consumer market due to economic boom?*

MARCELO NÉRI ›› Brazil is reaching a point it has never reached before. Brazilians are flying for the first time. And you never forget your first flight, just like your first car, your first owned home... This is a special time for average Brazilians and those in the upper classes should be sensitive to that. When your income doubles, from US\$ 500 to US\$ 1,000, it's a revolution. The Brazilians moving up from the lower classes are those who can see the country's growth more clearly. And this leads to greater happiness than if they'd already achieved a higher standard of living before.

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MEIO & MENSAGEM ›› *How do you think Brazil used to be seen in the global media, how is it seen now and how is it going to be seen after 2016?*

MARCELO NÉRI ›› Brazil has been seen as an interesting, exotic country that speaks to people's imaginations for a long time; however, it didn't use to be seen as a country where things work, a really serious place – as Charles de Gaulle used to say (in a reference to the French general and former president, to whom the statement 'Brazil is not a serious country' is attributed). Brazil is still seen as interesting and exotic, but now it also seen as a more successful country. Things are working here now, to a certain extent. Caracas isn't here. Brazil honors its contracts, but has an active social policy, a major distinct feature in relation to other countries like China and India. Brazilians have a soft power, and everybody likes them. That's where Brazil's power lies. And hosting these two international events (the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games) is proof to that. Major events help strengthen this role.

MEIO & MENSAGEM ›› *If you had to prepare a brief for an ad person who didn't know Brazil, how would you describe this new country?*

MARCELO NÉRI ›› Brazil is the middle way. The Brazil brand stands for moderation, the country's intermediate way to look at the economy and the environment. We don't have high growth rates – ours are much lower than China's – but we're growing with better quality. There's less inequality there, but it's rising. There's more inequality here, but it's falling. It's a more democratic country where there's more transparency.

MEIO & MENSAGEM ›› *Poverty levels fell by 7.9% in 2011, but we're still among the most unequal countries worldwide. Why do we still have so many negative indicators?*

MARCELO NÉRI ›› The key to understanding Brazil is to be able to distinguish between a picture and a movie. The picture is still bad, but it's less bad than it used to be. An example is the decrease in inequality: the poorer half of the country grew 580%, that is, the growth rate of the poorer half is higher than that of the richest 10%. We're bucking our historical trend and the world's trend. Inequality has risen in two thirds of the countries, but it's falling here. We're making quick progress on different fronts and we have the opportunity to take a big leap. There are still very serious problems that we've had for many years and have to be solved. I'm optimistic on a condition - if Brazil does the right thing, we'll be able to