

SOCIOLOGISTS WITHOUT BORDERS

Sociologists Without Borders is where sociology engages solidarities, a natural enough expression of sociology's long tradition of social commitment. Its pioneers, children of the Enlightenment, were a mixture of philosophers and pamphleteers who opposed the "status quo" on rational grounds but from a utopian perspective. Eventually, the profession became consolidated, particularly in the academy, but it has also continued to embrace social criticism, with sociologists desiring to study society and to change it as well.

Throughout the Cold War, functionalist sociology was a dominant paradigm, especially in America, where it encompassed a defence of capitalism and of modernization schemes that perpetuated western dominance. Nevertheless, critical traditions persisted in Europe, America, and, especially, in countries that were former colonies that bore the brunt of Cold War politics and failed development schemes. General expressions of these critical traditions included Marxism, Liberation Theology and Pedagogy in Latin America, Marxism, and later, the Pan-African Movement, and sociologists were also engaged with feminism and critical race analyses. In America and Europe, there were contending viewpoints, but in many countries, intellectuals fought alongside the oppressed, sometimes with their lives. In some anti-communist Latin American countries (allies of the U.S.) the slogan of the extreme right was: "Be a patriot - kill a priest." As a Brazilian Bishop wryly remarked, "If you help the poor, they call you a saint; if you ask why they are poor, they call you a communist".

Sociology is entering the twenty-first century, the century of globalization, with a new challenge. Today, national phenomena cannot be understood without taking international events into account; today, the sociology of work cannot be carried out, for example, without analyzing the international flow of labor and without recognizing the devastating effects of international free markets on workers, communities, and the environment.

Sociologists Without Borders was founded in this new setting and wants to ally itself with these new solidarities that other professions, such as doctors, architects, geologists, and journalists have already established in the face of global turmoil, including increasing poverty and inequalities. Among other objectives, we aspire to provide specific diagnoses that will help the activists and advocates of social change carry out their work with the highest likelihood of success. Going to the core, academic training in the universities, Sociologists Without Borders is working on the design and discussion of a global sociology curriculum and international collaborations.

Sociologists Without Borders is firmly committed to the in-depth study and dissemination of a deontology and ethics of responsibility, which are the counterpoints to the academic prejudice of distance and axiological neutrality as a condition for scientific sociology. We believe that the recognition and defence of human rights constitutes the moral nucleus of our vocation. We may analyze the death penalty and prove that its deterrence effect is very limited, but this analysis must not conclude without affirming that the death penalty is a vestige of the law of revenge, and is a violation of human rights. Judith Blau and Alberto Moncada, Presidents of SWB, have just published a book on the subject, *Human rights: Beyond the Liberal Vision* (Rowman&Littlefield, 2005).

Sociologists Without Borders was founded in Spain in 2001, as a non-governmental organization, and under its charter it is allowed to have international chapters. SSF has the following chapters: Madrid, Catalonia, Valencia, USA, Brazil, and Italy, and others are in formation. One chapter of our history made us more visible. When the United States government began to insinuate its unilateral intervention in Iraq, Sociologists Without Borders approved a critical statement, which, through the efforts of the U.S. Chapter, was adopted by the American Sociological Association, and thus became the first professional group to take a stand against its government's policy, something that had never happened in the Association, not even during the war in Vietnam.

Sociologists Without Borders collaborates with other non-governmental organizations. In 2004 and 2005, young sociologists joined the Kibera project, an international effort in support of the welfare and development of a poor slum quarter of Nairobi by the same name in Nairobi, and in 2006, another young sociologist will go to Minas Gerais, Brazil. In the web of solidarity made possible by the Internet, Sociologists Without Borders interweaves its virtual activity of definition and clarification of global society with other organizations that are offering diagnoses that are supplementary and even contradictory to those offered by the conventional media. Being a sociologist carries with it the responsibility to stay well informed. This obligation makes us sources of alternative information which many citizens are not able to obtain by themselves. Collaboration between sociology and journalists is another commitment of Sociologists Without Borders, and on our websites -- <http://www.socpolsf.org/> and www.sociologistswithoutborders.org/ we work to collect and analyze relevant information that is relevant for all citizens.

In a world that is so fragmented by methodologies and biographical commitments, Sociologists Without Borders does not expect the entire profession to share our aims. The sociological tribe is mixed and we will be content to offer it opportunities for solidarity, as is the case with all other professions without frontiers. You may be satisfied with helping financially, with the annual fee or occasional donations. Or participate in the design and study of projects. Or give your vacation time in solidarity with a good cause. We are an association that is "a la carte" for sociologists, and, very soon, for other social scientists, by virtue of agreements that we are now negotiating.

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