



VII Portuguese Sociological Congress

Pro-memoria

During the 19th and the 22 of June, the VII Portuguese Sociological Congress took place at the Faculdade de Letras of the Oporto University, organized by the

Portuguese Sociological Association (PSA). Founded at 1985, this association stands for the developing, recognition and dissemination of the Portuguese sociology – a country that, under a period of dictatorship, regarded sociology as an “inconvenient science”. Democracy’s new times, brought along vitality to the newly created PSA that, since the end of the 80’s has been organizing, every four years, a national congress where the Portuguese sociological community gathers but also opens its doors to the internationalization of the scientific knowledge, brought by foreign researchers.

At a moment strongly influenced by economical and social disturbances, where more than ever, predictability has given its place to uncertainty, security to risk and hope to fear, this congress thematic – Society, Crises and Reconfigurations – incorporated an increasing pertinence. A diversified work program, related to conferences formats and thematic areas, mobilized more than one thousand sociologists from different institutional ties, as well as 377 as audience and 669 communicants. Even though 72% were from Portuguese institutions, we cannot leave unmentioned that this congress gathered a high percentage (19) of foreign sociologists, especially from Brazil.

At the 19th the Pre-congress took place. A breakthrough initiative strongly directed towards young sociologists and for the discussion of questions that trouble those who are now starting a professional path within sociology – the case of inclusion in the labor market or the possibilities of a career in doing sociological research. This first moment of the work program, had the presence of the ISA President, Professor Michael Burawoy and was witnessed by 180 young sociologists. Shattering the conventional model of conferences – so often hierarchical and distant - the session “Talking with Michael Burawoy”, started months before the beginning of the congress, when young sociologists were called upon the challenge of proposing some issues and questions that they wished were approached by the presenter. Replying to the youngsters, Professor Burawoy reflected on such diversified questions as the democratization of the scientific knowledge, the monopoly of the scientific legitimacy of the big centers of academic production and even the possible margins of sociological intervention within the public sphere in a context of economic and social crises.

During the remaining 3 days of congress, an eclectic academic debate program mobilized the sociological community: Plenary Sessions – “Society and Politics”, “Society, Democracy and Values” and “Crises and Political Perspectives” -, whose respective presenters, known and respected Portuguese sociologists and also prominent public figures, manage to promote a creative interaction with the audience, proposing debate topics that went over the disciplinary sociological frontiers, laying ground for the constructions of bridges between the scientific production and the social and political action; simultaneous special sessions related to economics, Work and Precarity, Education and Educative Policies, Health Ageing and Social Security, Territory and Environment and the Crises and future impacts on Southern Europe, ensured by the presence of both foreign and Portuguese sociologists, specialists on these sub domains of knowledge; finally, thematic sessions, where 688 self proposed communications were presented, distributed through a multiplicity of working areas and thematic sessions. Amongst those, we highlight the considerable high number of participation in working areas such as: Organizations and Professions, Sociology of Education, Art, Culture and Communication, Cities, Fields and Territories, and finally Globalization, Politics and Citizenship. These working areas hosted, respectively, 58, 56, 50, 46 and 42 presentations, posters and distributed texts.

Because this scientific encounter didn’t intend to be limited to sociology, a vast cultural and entertainment program was provided to all participants. Initiatives like display of short-films, performance of a students’ theater forum, musical concerts (from known bands but also, for instance, the homeless orchestra, a project of the educative service from the Casa da Música), book fairs and also the congress dinner, a privilege moment of reencounters, intertwined sociological affinities and affective complicities.

The expressive participation of the sociological community, allied with everyone’s commitment, contributed for the happening and dissemination of a great forum of debate and scientific discussion, prove enough that sociology has already laid ground and left its mark: within the contemporary Portuguese society’s biography, where more and more, sociology is regarded as a valuable knowledge filed of intervention and decision; but also within everyone’s biography, like ours, that (re)lived and updated, in our everyday life, the passion for the sociological knowledge.

Maria Luísa Quaresma

Secção de Sociologia da Educação (APS)

Instituto de Sociologia da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto/Escola Superior de Educação – Instituto Politécnico do Porto

(document translated from the Portuguese original by Dalila Cerejo)