

## Presentation

Forty years after the military coup d'état in Chile, Sociological Issues Journal No.17 remains faithful to its initial purposes.

Forty years after the military coup d'état we must not forget the closure of centres dedicated to the teaching and research of sociology made by "delegate rectors". The main locus for the development of this discipline was destroyed by the policies of the military regime, they dismantled schools of sociology, closed study centres -especially those linked to the Popular Unity project-, expelled academics and arrested and disappeared sociology students. The regime also implemented budget cuts that hindered the intellectual work; many foreign academics were forced to leave the country and what was left was subject to an obscure system of control and censorship. The objective of this measure was to diminish as much as possible any form of sociological thinking.

The dictatorship put an iron gag on sociology -as the one used to silenced astronomer

Giordano Bruno- through the combination of the national security doctrine, the integrist political philosophy and the neoliberal economic discourse. This destructive strategy was accompanied by a global re-organisation of the society. In the social sciences arena, the regime encouraged strategic lines of action to control any production of knowledge, research and teaching framed by the Chicago School ideological and theoretical approach. This new dogma is not just another view of the economy but a

global conception of society founded on neoliberalism. The jesters of the dictatorship made of a particular kind of political philosophy an omnipresent political-ideological doctrine intending to annul the argumentative work of the scientific thinking.

However, the dictatorship's and dictator's plan did not succeed. Independent academic centres got consolidated; those which existed before the dictatorship and other new ones, each with its particular history and way of getting off that singular social reality. From pain, rebellious research centres developed an untied and critical sociology which built its own social spaces, with various institutional forms and supportive funding, strengthening in this way the development of sociology. Within these study centres, beyond the dictatorship, sociology remained alive.

It was an heterogeneous movement united by the report of human rights violations which critically interpreted the model of society imposed by the dictatorship. There was debate on the understanding of the crisis as a result of the dictatorship and sociologists were dedicated to figure out the nature of the social changes occurring to social actors. There was agreement on the fact that social and economic transformations produced more poverty. It was a democratic movement which goal was the recovery of democracy. Sociologists redefined their role as intellectuals and related to other social actors; the premise was an ethical one, they were not only committed to scientific truth, but to democracy.

This experience of difference and shared objectives continued to develop in democracy. In 1995, at the new School of Sociology of Universidad Cardenal Raúl Silva Henríquez a group of academics created what they defined as "a meeting place for new generations of sociologists and intellectuals dedicated to social issues...as a way of transmitting ideas". Eighteen years on, this purpose is still in force as we intend to contribute from the academia to the strengthening of democracy nowadays threatened by social inequality.

Democracy set new relationships between the state and its citizens. The first one was the return to the Republic and the next one was the opportunity to express citizens' interests. In democracy, interests are arguments as opposed to what occurred in dictatorship when only force was needed in order to deny the interests of other and to impose the own ones. Interests are collective constructions which arise from social identities. Arguments are constructed from common experiences representative of certain social relations. Each actor's interest is the representation of such social relations and it is therefore important to show identities to others and oneself. Consensus makes it necessary to come to new agreements and build new arguments to incorporate the other.

In this new context, sociology returned to university settings and there were new opportunities for professional development in the state, in the private sector and in the civil society. Sociologists started to occupy various social positions; at the beginning, their topics were related to the transition and democratisation process and then to the modernisation of the state and the study of public policies. There are currently sociologists in the res publica and others who work on phenomena like domination, resistance, exclusion, social movements and the civil society. They also build interests from arguments and study the market and public opinion.

The sociological discipline is committed to democracy and its own democratisation which implies the strengthening of social actors. There is no doubt society is moving towards the right direction: democratisation. There is debate on the depth of such move, is it only related to this regime? Is it of an entire era? Is it a social one? However, as we progress the path does not seem so promising. Economic development brings higher levels of social inequality in the whole continent and particularly in Chile which warns sociologists. Social inequalities may result -although never just by themselves- in the lack of democratisation. In Latin Ame-

rica, the phantom of populism and anarchy is always present, i.e.: democracies with no capacity to govern.

It is in this current context when we are delighted to present a new number of our Sociological Issues Journal.

As part of the theoretical articles included in this number, Lucía Wegelin invites us to question Simmel's sociology regarding his diagnosis of modernity in order to determine how his sociological concepts bear his criticism of urban modernity. Philippe Schaffhauser explores the pragmatism behind the social action concept as a "creative action culturally placed" which he thinks may be of help to expand the sociological thinking. Rafael Arriaga Martínez takes Raymond Boudon's general theory of rationality and Michel Maffesoli's postmodernity theory -who offer a reading of Weber's notions of disenchantment of the world and the war of gods- to tackle his research object: the immigrants.

Under the sub-title *The Difficult Identity*, María Teresa Matijasevic and Alexander Ruíz Silva bring into question the ethical and political commitments of social researchers to peasants in Colombia. Tristano Volpato discusses the role of communication in the recognition process and proposes the idea of a multiple identity emphasising the relationship between representation and multiculturalism. Bolivia is developing a complex political process, in this context, Odín Ávila Rojas deals with the central debate between indianism (and katarism) and indigenism, two opposed understandings of the Latin American indigenous question. Julieta Mascheroni and Perbellini Melina analyse worker-recovered factories in Argentina which entail a redefinition of the relationship between capital and labour and the development of social relations based on new principles; can the gramscian perspective account for this phenomenon? María Míguez Passada shows us the struggle of disabled people at work, through stories that question the equality discourse. Her paper tackles the internalisation and externalisation processes of an otherness marked by an ideology of the normal constructed under the equality

discourse. Cora Cecilia Arias studies social conflicts we usually watch on Latin American television. In her article, discourses by the protagonists are contrasted with discourses broadcasted on television. In this way, and understanding the media as agents for social control, the political senses and meanings television transmit are highlighted.

All these works talk about the difficult construction of identity in the context of democracy.

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