
Enterprise and Work Innovation Studies

The 1st ISA Forum of Sociology on the “Sociological Research and Public Debate”

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The main theme of the 1st ISA Forum of Sociology that took place in Barcelona, 5-8 September 2008, was *Sociological research and public debate*. It had the purpose of combining the different research committees and groups in ISA (International Sociological Association) under the basis of a common subject. It was also organized with the purpose of holding a large event between the World Congresses of Sociology. The Forum was able to put together around 2600 participants from different countries including many participants from countries outside Europe like United States (249 participants), Brazil (119) or Japan (61). With around 50 different research committees, the Forum presented a great amount of presentations related with a great variety of areas (Research Committees) like: RC04 Sociology of Education; RC07 Sociology of the Future; RC09 Social Transformations and Sociology Development; RC11 Sociology of Ageing; RC13 Sociology of Leisure; RC23 Sociology of Science and Technology; RC24 Environment and Sociology; RC47 Social Classes and Social Movements, among many others. ISA also organized several Thematic Groups (emerging groups that cover new knowledge fields) and Working Groups (smaller or less active research groups, some of those that were already RCs).

The Forum Director, Arturo Rodríguez Morató, underlined that “the call for papers has been a Great success and the outcome is a vast range of sessions. Many thematic programs have been designed covering a great number of relevant social issues on which sociology can provide fundamental analyses and views. As it was to be expected, the own logic of the chosen subjects has prompted the organizers of those programs to move beyond the boundaries of committees and therefore many joint sessions between them have been scheduled. This transgression of border areas between sociological specialties will be a great experience for the organization of ISA and for the sociological community at large”³⁶

The opening session had the presence of the President from the Generalitat de Catalunya and the closing one the Deputy mayor of Barcelona. In both Michel

³⁶ Rodríguez Morató, Arturo: “Welcome and Introduction to the Forum Programme” in ISA: *1st ISA Forum of Sociology*, Barcelona, ISA, 2008, p. 6

Wieviorka, as ISA President was present as well Oriol Homs as President of the Sociological Association of Catalunya. The opening session was focused on the theme of "Contributions of sociology to public debate". This active role of sociology was also very present in almost all committees, thematic groups or working group sessions. Thus it was a common topic that was discussed from very different points of view, and from distinctive approaches from specialized areas of sociology. The plenary sessions were on the "Contributions of sociology to public debate" with Saskia Sassen (Columbia University, NY, US) among others, on "The intellectual profile of sociology in the public space" with Salvador Giner (University of Barcelona) and "The sociological intervention in public debate" with Michael Burroway (Univ. California, US), Alain Touraine (EHESS, France) and Alberto Martinelli (Univ. Milan, Italy).

One paper was present from IET in the Conference: *The globalisation in the clothing sector and its implications for work organisation: a view from the Portuguese case*, António Brandão Moniz and Margarida R. Paulos, in the session on "Globalisation and its impacts on forms of work, territorialities, work organisation and job content", included in RC30 Sociology of Work. This paper presented some results from the European project WORKS (Work organisation restructuring in the knowledge society), funding under the Sixth Research Framework Programme of the European Union, focusing the Portuguese case studies in several clothing companies in what concern implications of global context for the companies in general and for workers in particular, in a comparative analysis with some other European countries ³⁷.

Between walks from the lively Barcelona's 'Ramblas' and the mystic Gothic quarter, we were able to attend some interesting sessions and presentations. One of them was called: *Current issues on environment and society* (RC24-Environment and Society), where main questions like, environmental conflicts, environmental stress and nanotechnology presented as a sustainable technology were discussed. Another one was the session *Industrial districts and Territories* (RC30-Sociology of Work), which focus themes like globalisation versus local development, regional clusters of innovation or local R&D competencies. Other example was the session *Lifestyles and work-life issues* (RC30-Sociology of Work), focusing the impact of global restructuring on different occupation groups, new lifestyles and working conditions, the youth in Japan and its supports, and finally the importance of unions conflicts in work and social rights. And another interesting session was organized by the TG04 on Sociology of Risk and Uncertainty on *Power, Democracy and Risk* chaired by Ortwin Renn (Univ. Stuttgart, Germany). It covered topics like risk governance, environmental risks (nuclear power and trust communities).

37 Published as working paper: António B. Moniz & Margarida R. Paulos, 2008. "The globalisation in the clothing sector and its implications for work organisation: a view from the Portuguese case," *IET Working Papers Series* 05/2008, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, IET (<http://ideas.repec.org/p/ieu/wpaper/09.html>)

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Also one could follow some joint sessions from different ISA committees. Usually they were about new concepts or new theoretical topics. And they were covering different fields like "Intellectual Copyright, Digital Inequality and Global Hegemony" or "The Internet: from Utopia to Nightmare?" (both involving RC07-Research on the Future, RC14-Sociology of Communication and RC23-Sociology of Science and Technology), "Gender, Science, Technology, Innovation and the Future" (RC07-Research on the Future, RC23-Sociology of Science and Technology and RC32-Women and Society).

We had also the opportunity to attend two sessions lead by two major sociologists of our time: Alain Touraine and Manuel Castells. The first session called *Dialogue around Alain Touraine's penser autrement* was a very interesting and rich session, where also other sociologists like Michel Wieviorka (EHESS, France), Manuel Castells (Open Univ. Catalunya) and Craig Calhoun (Social Science Research Council, US) had an important contribution to the discussion. Some major problems of our century were theme of debate and also the role of this great sociologist, Touraine, and his theories to the construction of contemporary sociology. The second session with Manuel Castells called *Sociology and Society in the 21st Century* was an interesting session also, although in our opinion it didn't focus the more important points of the discussion but only more technical aspects like methodologies and conceptualisation.

As Rodríguez Morató described in the introduction to the Forum "following the aim that has been stated from the very start – to open ourselves to society and to face its main concerns – this programme also includes a series of debates open to the citizens" (idem). Following this same idea the President of the Catalan Sociological Association, Oriol Homs, said also that "sociological research requires a greater visibility in public areas and we hope that this Barcelona Forum can be a good opportunity to know the contributions that sociology may provide to the interests and hopes of the citizens in our societies" (idem, p. 12). They succeeded with this first major event where also several dozens of Portuguese sociologists participated actively.