



Reviews: Sociology of knowledge and education

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Filipe Carreira da Silva,

Sociology in Portugal: A Short History, Palgrave: New York, 2016; 101 pp.: ISBN 9781137495501, US\$67.50 (hbk)

Reviewed by: Ricardo A Ayala, *Ghent University, Belgium*

Keywords

History of sociology, national sociology, Portugal

I was totally charmed by the simplicity of this book. Carreira da Silva does not write self-aggrandizing prose – he is as honest as an author can be, writing from one of the most impoverished countries in Western Europe, one with no longstanding sociological tradition whatsoever. And he makes no secret about it.

For that reason, this book's aim is not to inform us about the sociology of Portugal. Nor does it present some Portuguese strand of European social theory. It simply tells us what sociologists based in Portugal do. '[T]here is no strand of "Portuguese social theory" if by that one means a cluster of sociologists integrated by common syllabi, a journal, and a research programme as a means to institutionalize intellectual innovation. Sociological theory in Portugal [...] has been, by and large, an importation of ideas from abroad, which were more or less systematically applied to the study of Portuguese society' we are told (pp. 3–4). The rest of the book elaborates on this process, mostly covering the postwar era up until the era of globalization.

True, the main concern lies not in the telling of the history alone, for it also brings important insights into the methodology being used and why other approaches were justifiably discarded. In fact, two methodological dichotomies are discussed: one addresses the boundaries between internal and external views on disciplinary history, and the other deals with patterns of discipline formation in the context of fragmentation and discontinuity. Both concerns are relevant to historical reconstructions in a country battered by a repressive regime. The book is claimed to be 'explicitly discontinuist' (p. 7) because it emphasizes crucial differences between pre- and post-Revolution thinking. Another redeeming quality is the systematic methodology used to trace disciplinary development, aggregating pieces of information into five units of analysis that Carreira da Silva calls 'dimensions': social agents, ideas, instruments, institutions, and contexts.

These come from a new historiographical approach (see Fleck and Dayé, 2015) on the study of the social and behavioral sciences, to which we are introduced. This is unusual in historical accounts, yet welcome for sociological purposes.

One interesting discussion point is that sociology as a discipline was born out of pure curiosity about social realities, grew without much influence of Roman Catholic thought, and continued to live thanks to academics' conscious efforts to bypass censorship, surviving – in isolation – a long-lived authoritarian regime. The latter was reinforced by the technocratic role ascribed to the scientists of the social, who would later have independent voices owing to a series of national and international research grants awarded in the 1960s. Then the Revolution came, and after the dictatorship ended in 1974, sociology would consolidate its training and its own degree program, taking in political exiles returning to the country and diversifying its core contents. This development would but expand as the nation was reformed, which translated – we are told – into openness to the major theories that were influencing the international scene. This same openness, according to the author, would have prompted discontinuity with the work done throughout the pre-Revolution decades. In terms of institutions, however, post-dictatorship winds blowing over Portugal shaped a favorable scenario for sociology as a discipline, a scenario that seems to resonate with similar developments in Latin American social sciences and humanities.

In the second half of the book, differentiation is the word when distinct disciplinary growth becomes apparent. However, Carreira da Silva criticizes – in an unpretentious way – the self-imposed silence on colonialism in Portuguese scholarship, and – possibly mirroring this indifference – the lack of engagement with Brazilian colleagues. Portuguese sociology's integration, notably through the development with international surveys in the 1980s and 1990s, was greater with the Global North than it was with ex-colonies. This would have helped bridge the gap in the study of Portugal as a society rather than as a country.

But contemporary sociologists in Portugal have also turned to international audiences. Not only ideas, but also study programs, journals, and academic publishers have become infused by a sense of international appeal, and in the process the quality of academic articles has been raised and parochialism diminished. The history of the drivers behind this process is fascinating.

Towards the end of the book, we are provided with informative excerpts from interviews with key actors. These are not pieces that are meant to converge into a single object of analysis, which would have also been illuminating. Rather, they point to different perspectives about the stages of the development of the profession in the country. In the closing part, the author gives us a general overview of the job market for sociologists in Portugal, and how degrees in sociology offer relative protection against unemployment.

On the whole, the story unfolds as an elegant, well-rounded narrative – too well-rounded, some might think – that leaves us wondering what doubts, inconsistencies, loose ends, and contradictions may have crossed the author's mind. While the narrative may seem more straightforward than is to be expected, this is certainly a book that everyone interested in the history of sociology, and of science more broadly, should consider reading.

Reference

Fleck C and Dayé C (2015) Methodology of the history of the social and behavioral sciences. In: Wright J (ed.) *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd edn. Amsterdam: Elsevier, pp. 319–325.

Author biography

Ricardo A Ayala, after a brief career in health care in Chile, studied humanities and social sciences at Université de Strasbourg (France) and completed his doctorate in sociology at Ghent University (Belgium), where he is now a postdoctoral research fellow. His interests include history and philosophy of science and ethnographic research. *Address:* Department of Sociology, Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Campus Aula, Korte Meer 3–5, 9000 Gent, Belgium. Email: RicardoAlexis.AyalaValenzuela@UGent.be

María Bruquetas-Callejo,

Educational Reception in Rotterdam and Barcelona: Policies, Practices and Gaps, Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam, 2014; 324 pp.: ISBN 9789089646446, £90.00 (hbk)

Reviewed by: Monica Bixby Radu, *Southeast Missouri State University, USA*

Keywords

Barcelona, mobility, Rotterdam, sociology of education

Educational Reception in Rotterdam and Barcelona: Policies, Practices and Gaps explores why countries facing similar obstacles in their educational systems respond to these challenges in different ways. In particular, Bruquetas-Callejo explores *how* educational policies aimed at coping with the influx of newly immigrated students are implemented at the ground level. Her approach is unique. Rather than focusing on broad immigration or educational policies, Bruquetas-Callejo concentrates her work on the daily practices and perspectives of teachers and other school personnel working directly with immigrant students within the school system.

Bruquetas-Callejo uses three sets of research techniques – discursive, organizational, and ethnographic. Using systematic observation and in-depth interviews, Bruquetas-Callejo follows the process by which national educational policies are implemented within schools and classrooms. In addition, she assesses the legal-political and ideological structures that frame school integration of immigrant students, and she conducts in-depth interviews with policymakers and key informants. Key informants include (1) national and local policymakers, (2) school officials, and (3) other stakeholders, with 26 interviews taking place in Barcelona and 23 in Rotterdam.

Bruquetas-Callejo's thesis is that because the implementation of many formal policies and practices often deviates from their original form, more research is needed to focus on the individual actors who are responsible for putting *policies into practice*. She argues that above all, teachers shape the ways that educational integration policies are executed in individual classrooms and throughout each school system. Therefore,