

17th Brazilian Congress of Sociology – Porto Alegre, Brazil - July 2015



Professor José Vicente Tavares dos Santos, President of the Brazilian Congress of Sociology; Professor Soraya Vargas Cortes, President of the Brazilian Sociological Society; Professor Margaret Abraham, President of the International Sociological Association; Professor Carlos Benedito Martins, next President of the Brazilian Sociological Society

The Sociedade Brasileira de Sociologia (Brazilian Sociological Society - SBS) is an academic association that brings together more than 1.200 Brazilian sociologists. SBS's mission is to foster intellectual discussion, research and teaching in a number of subjects and to promote the interest of its membership.

Every two years Brazilian sociologists and sociology students gather in a national congress. The last meeting - the 17th Brazilian Congress of Sociology - took place between 20 and 23 of July 2015, in the city of Porto Alegre, at the campus of Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. The Congress, whose main theme was 'Sociology Facing Transnational Dialogues', gathered over 2.000 sociologists, ranging from young undergraduate students to professors. It was also attended by sociologists from many countries, such as China, France, Germany, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, UK, US as well as from other Latin American.

The heated discussions held during the event are an expression of the vitality of sociology in Brazil. The Congress featured 52 panels, and 21 conferences, working groups and a number of informal meetings. Sociologists mostly from Brazil but also from other countries have attended these sessions actually promoting the transnational dialogues. Young sociologists - undergraduate or with a university degree, not MS or PhD - were thriving in the presentation of 254 papers in the session 'Sociologists of the Future'.

At the core of the Congress were the 37 Working Groups where Brazilian sociologists presented more than 1.400 papers. They addressed subjects such as urban and rural dimensions of social life, social movements, inequalities, social stratification, consumerism, public policies, sociological theory, sociology of science, of environment, of education, of crime, of work, of professions, of intellectuals, of race, of gender, of generations, of religion, of art, of health, of sexuality, of sport, of image, of youth, of violence, economic sociology.

It is important to highlight a particular Working Group, the one focusing the issues related to the teaching of sociology in basic education. Thanks to the SBS, that champion the advocacy for sociology as a mandatory subject to be included in the basic education curriculum, since 2008, it became a legal requirement. According to law, issued by the federal government, in the three high school years there must be at least one hour per week of sociology teaching. Besides its importance to foster critical thought and to strength the notion of citizenship among the youth, it has opened a huge labour market for Brazilian sociologists. In 2014, there were nearly eight million students in high school in Brazil. This accounts for around 150 thousand classes needing a sociology teacher. This is why it is not surprising that so many Brazilian sociologists are interested in discussing how better teach the subject to their actual or potential students. Not only this Working Group was one of the largest in the Congress, but this subject draw the attention of many more sociologists who met in a parallel Congress focusing exclusively this matter. Three days before the 17^o Brazilian Sociological Congress, the 4^o Teaching Sociology in Basic Education Meeting took place, at the Vale of Sinos River University, in the city of São Leopoldo, 30 kilometers away from Porto Alegre. It gathered 600 sociologists, most of them teachers of sociology in schools.

Another aspect to be stressed is that SBS has invited representatives of ISA Executive Committee to participate in the Congress. Thankfully the invitations were accepted. There were the active involvement in many activities of the President of ISA, Margaret Abraham; of the Research Vice-President, Markus Schulz; of the Finance and Membership Vice-President, Benjamin Tejerina, and of Celi Scalon, member of the Executive Committee and former President of the Brazilian Sociological Society. They all had the opportunity to feel the ambiance of the event and to attest the liveliness and strength of sociology in Brazil.

This brief account of 17^o Brazilian Sociological Congress demonstrated that sociology in Brazil not only is firmly embedded in Brazilian society but also very much connected to ISA, with a view to increase its relationship with the international sociological community. It is helping to increase the understanding of the pervasive social and political inequalities existing in Brazilian society, but also of the potentialities to overcome them in the future. Moreover, it is actively participating in the education of Brazilians helping to brig up a new generation of citizens who, we hope, will be capable of critical thinking and to have socially sensible views of the world.

Soraya Vargas Côrtes
President of the Brazilian Sociological Society