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History of Sociology in Chile

**Trajectories, Discontinuities,
and Projections**

Juan Jesús Morales Martín
Justino Gómez de Benito

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Sociology Transformed

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The field of sociology has changed rapidly over the last few decades. Sociology Transformed seeks to map these changes on a country by country basis and to contribute to the discussion of the future of the subject. The series is concerned not only with the traditional centres of the discipline, but with its many variant forms across the globe.

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Introduction: Society and Sociology in Chile

Abstract The origin of sociology in Chile, its institutionalization process, and the close relationship between sociology and society are introduced. We give account on how the country's historical events have marked the evolution and identities of the discipline, and highlight the Latin-Americanist identity of Chilean sociology, as it shares features with other sociological fields of the region. In addition, the analytical dimensions used in the chapters are introduced, namely: (1) the relationship between society and sociology; (2) sociology in Latin America and Chile; (3) the institutional framework of sociological training and production; (4) sociologists within the intellectual field; (5) sociologists and sociology in other fields; and (6) sociology of sociology.

Keywords Sociology • Chile • Identity • Process • Institutionalization • Crisis

Making history of sociology for sociologists, and also for the general public, implies something different from assuming a descriptive approach on the development of the events and factors that have influenced it from its origin to its present. Its expansion and progression should be taken into account, but also its reductions and suppressions, and main promoters

with their achievements and difficulties, their thematic fields, tensions, heroes and villains. In addition to outlining a chronology, making sociology's history means also understanding the process of configuration of its identity, or rather identities, insofar as in both the old and new worlds—and in Chile too—sociology was born plural and diverse. Its object of study—Chilean society and its social life—is heterogeneous in the composition of its population, its form of stratification, and the extreme particularities of its geography and territories. The processes and events that have marked its history have also taken part in sociopolitical and ideological movements that carried diverse, even divergent, orientations and purposes. More importantly, its spaces of institutionalization—both public and private—, as well as its actors and their analytical perspectives, have marked an accumulation of sociological production that has proved diverse in quantity and quality, but above all in themes, theoretical approaches, and methodological uses.

These pages are motivated by a set of questions that show a continuity throughout the two centuries in which the seven decades that make up this history of Chile's sociology are located. These questions are related to the origins of the discipline, its development, and its institutionalization process; they also raise the significance, social function, and roles that sociology has played, along with the status it has acquired both for society and for its own practitioners. To answer these questions, we theoretically rely on a classical approach that combines perspectives from intellectual history, the history of sociology, and the sociology of sociology (Blois, 2018; Brunner, 2014; Coser, 1971; Moya, 1970; Ribes, 2008). We propose therefore a study of Chile's sociology that places the discipline, its institutions, authors and works, both within and outside the space of sociology itself. Particular attention is given to the historical contexts and social frameworks; to the general political, cultural, and intellectual issues that accompanied it; to the sociological tradition and the discourses about its major works; as well as to the audiences to which these works are addressed. The book also intends, albeit modestly, to understand how sociologists themselves have defined and regarded themselves over time; what their relationship with the sociological tradition has been; what are their concepts of Chilean sociology and society; and how they have been seen by other sociologists, and by the very society they have analyzed. It is very important to point out here the influence of Dahrendorf (1966a, 1966b) and his perspective of relating society and sociology, something that makes it possible to problematize the historical evolution of sociology in Chile,

and its relationship with its own society (Garretón, 2005). For the history of sociology in Chile is also constitutive of the history of Chilean society.

Given the closeness of the link between sociology and society (Beigel, 2007), this combination of the study of sociology, society and history allows us to understand Chile as a powerful “laboratory” for the development, production, and application of sociological knowledge. More concretely, we depart from the fact that sociology in this country, from the decade of the 1950s until the coup d’état of 1973, assumed a role of “awareness” regarding the broader socio-historical projects, being it by formulating its general perspective, in its programmatic design or in the formulation and representation of projects or visions of society. Of course, there is a “before” and an “after” with regard to the 1973 democratic breakdown, and this historical fracture makes it difficult to trace continuities within the Chilean sociological field, when dealing with the discipline’s classic authors or the received legacies and traditions. Above all, it profoundly conditions the account that Chilean sociology makes of its own past and about itself. For the discipline, like sociologists themselves and their works, share a common historicity and are mediated by a specific society, with its processes, contradictions, issues, traumas, and dilemmas.

However, interpreting the history of Chile’s sociology involves not only placing it along the history of Chilean society, but also leads us to develop a broader framework, since it belongs to the history of sociology in Latin America and, due to the great influence of European and US-American sociologies, is also tied to the actual globalized world. We dwell a little to point out the Latin-American identity of Chilean sociology, which shares with other sociologies of the region features such as composition and cultural diversity, political and economic crises as well as ways to overcome them, and their contribution to building future perspectives. The sociology developed in Chile was instrumental for the whole region, and even it contributed to unfold the idea of a “Latin American sociology”, with its distinctive scholars and professionals, institutions, theoretical and methodological options, and political commitments, under the coloniality of knowledge and power, displaying a singular nature since its inception (Germani, 1964; Giordano, 2017; Ianni, 1965; Marini, 2008; Poviña, 1941; Roitman, 2008). In fact, and as we shall see, Chilean sociology has made a contribution to giving shape to various debates about the configuration and structural composition of our societies; on the status of LatAm in the world; on how the region has been incorporated into global history and, in addition, into the world economic

system; and what the historical development of capitalism in the region—which today is in its neoliberal stage—has been. Within Latin American sociology, such intellectual debates can be traced back to at least the 1960s; as these pages shall indicate, they are still alive when it comes to interpreting the social structures produced by modernization processes and the particular forms of being in globalization.

This is also about writing a history of sociology that, even when situated in its subcontinent and bearing the features of Latin-American sociology, has also been nourished by—and dependent on—major European and US American universities, in its trends and paradigms as much as in its methodologies, and particularly in the training of its most outstanding intellectuals and scholars. It is also a sociology that received numerous scholars and instructors from other countries, especially Europeans, but also from the rest of the continent. In fact, the contribution of foreign intellectuals has been instrumental to the development of sociology; nonetheless, national authors have also stood out with original sociological products. This is because, in contrast to other Latin American countries, Chile is distinguished by an early institutionalization of sociology in the 1950s. To speak about institutionalization is thus to acknowledge, in Pierre Bourdieu's terms (1981, 1990, 1996), the existence of a field with its own logics, norms, rules, agents, languages and codes. Of course, in speaking about the sociological field we also speak of a discipline that has endured different stages of autonomy and expansion. In some moments, sociology made in Chile was referential for the rest of Latin America, affording for the constitution of truly regional circuits of knowledge and practitioners. In some periods, especially in the 1960s and early 1970s, the sociological field's autonomy has been particularly prominent. In turn, sociology in Chile has endured other moments of contraction, above all during the period of the dictatorship, which implied a major accommodation to adverse circumstances.

Obviously, the 1973 coup impacted the subsequent disciplinary advance and determined its institutional, political and social frameworks, which, in some way, have legacies to this day. This is especially visible in the current fragmentation of the Chilean sociological field, which is characterized by multiple private universities competing with the public ones for both student enrollment and research funding resources by the state; with a growing and diverse work and professional environment—both public and private; and with civil society actors such as private study centers and

think-tanks emerging firmly when it comes to building and disseminating different projects of society.

All this being said, our hypothesis is certainly controversial: not only was Chilean sociology conditioned by the 1973 coup, but after the 1990 democratic return it was also conditioned, precisely, by the cultural and ideological frameworks of the “transition to democracy” and the so-called “political agreements”. From such a historical milestone, we argue that in the 1990s there was a parallel “sociology agreement”: this was certainly useful for the sake of the new public policies that the transition to democracy had to face, but nevertheless with not enough critical distance when reflecting on itself and its own past. As a matter of fact, many studies of the history of Chilean sociology since then have not contained an in-depth analysis of the axes that this work considers essential; accordingly, this book adopts a different approach to the history of the discipline.

For example, in the two decades from the 1950s until the coup, sociology made an instrumental contribution to the developmentalist, modernizing agenda of Chilean society. Yet this political and social project, in addition to being fixed on the Marxism/anti-Marxism axis of the Cold War’s global context (Lamo de Espinosa, 2001), was crossed by significant structural tensions within Chilean society itself. These included: the Catholicism/secularism discussion; the historical quarrel between Universidad de Chile and Pontificia Universidad Católica for the intellectual leadership of Chilean society; the dispute between younger and older generations of sociologists over the scientific status and political value of the discipline; and, above all, for its relationship with political parties, regarding the role that sociology should assume in the socioeconomic transformations that society demanded. Undoubtedly, these axes added further tension to the definitions on the identity—or plural identities—of sociology and its practitioners: public intellectuals, militants, professionals, technocrats, bureaucrats, academics, scientists, consultants, and so on.

Therefore, given the evidence of certain correspondences of the historical context, the sociological field and political power during this period of time, it is striking how the most recent studies about the history of Chilean sociology have left unattended the relationships between sociology, politics and political parties, and some salient problems such as migrations and social movements that have affected the way of life of the population since the return to democracy in 1990. Variables such as political alignments or partisan membership have not been sufficiently addressed by scholarly sociology; in fact, as was mentioned earlier, this has had repercussions for

the ways in which the history of sociology in Chile has been narrated and recounted. Very few works (examples include Cortés, 2020; Iglesias, 2015, 2016) have pointed out this mutual reciprocity between the politicization of Chilean sociology and its positive effects on its institutionalization and professionalization. By contrast, for other authors (Chernilo and Mascareño, 2005; Morandé, 1984), this entanglement with the political field has blocked sociology's independence. From this viewpoint, the politicization of sociology ended up becoming a sort of technology for programmed change, thereby blurring the logic of the field and hindering its autonomy. Perhaps the biggest problem in understanding the discipline has been to overstate its capability to aptly and effectively contribute to the country's development and help solve its more pressing social problems (Godoy, 1977).

From a realistic perspective, we argue that the Chilean sociological field has been related to power and politics, and, of course, it has been closely influenced by the modernization process, the country's development, and its various political cycles. Sociology, at least in Chile, has historically occupied a position of leadership in the interpretation of reality, displaying a remarkable political will to act on such a reality from the political realm. This close relationship has involved a series of crises, tensions, even persecutions, especially in the second half of the twentieth century. Consequently, high doses of creativity and adaptation strategies to unexpected, adverse contexts have been demanded from sociology's representatives and institutions. Furthermore, that urge of sociology for intervening and participating in fundamental debates—such as poverty, marginality, development, democratization, inequality, or the need for social change itself—has not necessarily been a negative element; rather, the desire by sociologists to intervene in social and political reality has been a distinctive feature that continues to the present day. Initially, sociologists in Chile contributed to expanding both critical awareness in society and the potential for participation in emancipation processes (Hopenhayn, 1993). In the heat of development and modernization, this moment also helped professionalize sociology throughout Latin America, and clearly in Chile. During that period, there was a strong discourse about sociologists as public intellectuals with political commitments.

In the period of the civil-military dictatorship, the panorama for the practice of sociology changed radically. Nonetheless, political militancy, participation in popular social movements, and political commitments against the regime and for human rights and democratic recovery remained

in the collective imagination. With the return to democracy, sociology not only returned to the universities; it also—as we will argue—recovered political presence in different spheres—locating sociologists in the upper echelons of state power, as government officials on duty, as advisers in political parties, or participating in unions, organizations, and social movements. In doing so, sociology returned to society and to the political sphere by advising, diagnosing, and influencing as much as possible (Ruiz, 2015). Conversely, a new field of professional development was created in the private sector. In addition, in recent years the discipline has been revisiting its conceptual and interpretive frameworks, as a way to better explain the emergence of new actors, subjects or social movements in contemporary Chile, carrying with them different vindications in education, social welfare, environmental well-being, ethnic and cultural recognition, gender and sexual diversity, health, and dignity. This allows us to speak today of a diverse sociology, which has been adjusting its own identities towards a plurality that was in sync with a dynamic society with its increasingly complex challenges, contradictions, and opportunities.

Composed of seven chapters (this introduction included), this book provides an account of the discipline's development and evolution, which combines a study of the field with careful consideration of the interdependence between the sociopolitical context and the conditions for exercising sociology. Rather than dates, we have preferred to mark periods in terms of events, actors, and sociological production. This allows us to distinguish between stages of society as a whole and, within this, to identify the themes and conditions for sociological production. Consequently, the epistemological and reflexive focus of this work is placed on the interpretation of trajectories, discontinuities, and projections of social sciences in Chile, that is, in understanding the specific relationships between discipline and society, along with observing what sociologists observed, analyzed, and reflected on this very society. With no claim to exhaustiveness (owing to the nature and the extent of this book), we have nonetheless followed a systematic bibliographical review in writing each chapter, mainly of books written in the corresponding historical period. Books are the discipline's "heart" and remain in time; furthermore, the abundant bibliography referenced here helps the interested reader to dig deeper into the authors, themes, and periods presented in this book.

Therefore, this book is regarded as being introductory in nature, and provides a panoramic view of the history of sociology in Chile. Each chapter can thus be understood as a particular picture of a concrete period in

the disciplinary development. In each chapter, we have relied on an analytical scheme composed of six dimensions, in order for this exercise of contemplation and understanding to be as complete as possible. The dimensions account, in turn, for: (1) the relationship between “society and sociology”, which corresponds to the contextual (social and political) national framework, but also to a broader, global scenario; (2) “sociology in Latin America and Chile”, which is related to thinking of Chilean sociology as part of the Latin American sociological tradition; (3) the “institutional framework of sociological training and production”, which mainly refers to the position of sociology within universities, schools, departments, and careers; (4) “sociologists in the intellectual field”, that is, the public presence and sociological production of books and journals by the discipline’s practitioners; (5) “sociologists and sociology in other fields”, which deals with their presence in politics, culture, communication, and also the private sector; and (6) the “sociology of sociology”, a dimension that helps make to make a synthesis and compile a balance sheet with regard the contributions of sociology in each historical period analyzed.

The analytical schemes proposed, as well as the effort to synthesize different theoretical and interpretive perspectives, are two of this book’s main features, and distinguish it from other important studies dedicated to the history of sociology in Chile (Barrios and Brunner, 1988; Brunner, 1988; Devés et al., 1999; Garretón, 2014; Godoy, 1960; Garretón and Mella, 1995). Our rather modest aim is to draw a history that is complementary to those views, by incorporating new nuances—such as the Latin American perspective or the concern for gender—, and including in the picture the discipline’s margins, which are usually excluded from official histories by hegemonic visions (Benavides, Godoy and Vergara, 2015; Donoso, 2020). We have also tried to analyze how, in recent decades, a new type of sociology began to develop in Chile, more in line with the profound changes experienced by the country. Notwithstanding this, Chilean sociology has been characterized as having a great capacity for self-observation over time, features of its early institutionalization, its conquest of autonomy in different periods, as well as its profound critical aim (Ramos, 2014). From the past-present perspective that structures this research, we acknowledge that reflecting on Chilean sociology allows us to understand a legacy of a diverse and variegated knowledge that is important to recognize and valorize contemporarily. The strengthening of the discourse of our sociological history allows us, beyond doubt, to identify a discipline that is now fully autonomous and adequately institutionalized.

As a way to conclude this introduction, it is necessary to point out the position that we, as authors and subjects, occupy in the field of Chilean sociology and, by extension, in Chilean society. The story of this book is very particular, mediated as it is by our biographical, intellectual, and professional trajectories. We are both professors of foreign provenance: both born in Spain, for different reasons we have developed our trajectories in Chile; we belong to different generations, hold different sociological backgrounds, and have coincided intellectually as well as professionally in the School of Sociology at the Universidad Católica Silva Henríquez. This feature of being foreigners gives us, *à la* Simmel, a particular perspective for historicizing the discipline, reading its texts and authors, understanding its phases and stages, and examining Chilean society itself. Coming from abroad gives this work more freedom, as we cannot hide that we come from outside and we have encountered this reality, this society and this sociology, making it our own. Coming from abroad also favors us, *a priori*, when it comes to having less bias, particularly with regard to political matters. However, this way of seeing is also a way of not seeing, and, of course, it brings limitations. At the same time, our way of seeing and analyzing Chilean sociology and its history is conditioned by our location in a small academic and professional School of Sociology. From this arguably peripheral or marginal position, we have been able to develop this research. This book is the result of our academic activity and, more importantly, the in-class discussions with our students, who also helped us collect, analyze, and systematize material. In turn, teaching allowed us to talk about the progress of the book; we were thus able to listen to their visions, ideas, and the way in which new generations understand the role of sociology in a society that finds itself in a moment of historical change, as the current Constitutional process indicates. The book therefore reflects an intergenerational dialogue, and yet, of course, we, the authors, are largely responsible for this very personal vision of the history of sociology in Chile.

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