

Challenges for Sociology. In times of crisis and hope¹

Juan José Castillo

jjcastillo@cps.ucm.es

www.ucm.es/grupo-charles-babbage/

“Social theorists today work within a crumbling social matrix of paralyzed urban centers and battered campuses. Some may put cotton in their ears, but their bodies still feel the shock waves. It is no exaggeration to say that we theorize today within the sound of guns. The old order has the picks of a hundred rebellions thrust into his hide” (Gouldner, 1971: vii, Preface).

“To learn hope is to see the force in the present of a world that does not yet exist but could do: the strength here and now of that which does not fit, of that which screams, however silently, ‘No, we do not accept, we shall create another world’” (Holloway, 2014:1070).

As Howard Becker said in Paris in 2014, when we are writing, or giving a presentation, such as this one, which comes at the start of several days of reflexion, “We all have certain people or an ideal audience in mind, but it is never like that”. In this presentation, this calling card, I am going to identify, as far as possible, my intentions, guided by that audience which I have constructed in my imagination².

When one receives such a proposal, before undertaking it, one asks oneself firstly, what will the people who have included me in a programme of work want me to say about the challenges of the Sociology of Work in times of crisis? (McKie and Ryan, 2012).

And such a proposal, besides the pleasure of receiving it, makes you feel that there is some sort of collective preoccupation which has led to somebody asking you to talk about what you do on a daily basis without anybody asking you to. Your work of reflexion and analysis of social reality, especially of work, enables you to focus permanently on the social forms in which the capacity for sociological analysis of social reality is questioned, undermined or adversely affected. And it is clear, not only from the perspective of sociology as a product of society but also because of how it is losing or gaining ground in terms of its

¹ 3rd INTERCONGRESUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF WORK. Committee of the Sociology of Work of the Spanish Federation of Sociology (FES); Murcia, 28th – 29th May, 2015. This article is a part of the research project “Challenges and alternatives to the precariousness of work and life in the current crisis (2005-2014). Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad; CSO2013-43666-R.

² “It is very important for a writer to bear in mind exactly the type of people to whom he/she is trying to speak, as well as what he/she thinks of them” (Mills, 1971: 231).

contribution to the creation, modification, reformation... construction of society.

We do it starting from what we could call the internal problems of a science which is trying to renew itself albeit while questioning itself. These are our very own problems, which society is always behind, but which pertain more to how we research and how we explain what is happening in front of our eyes, but which we sometimes cannot see. To matters which are never technical, but are presented as such: interdisciplinarity (Cooper, 2012); the methods and challenges which involve much more than innovation, commitment to social reality and openness in the face of new difficulties (Lyon and Carabelli, 2015, in press; Murthy, 2008); the ethical choices which are also important considerations with regard to the subject or the people whom we are researching (Mah, 2013); the problems of continuous theoretical reconstruction (Bolton and Laaser, 2013; the ways of writing, the ways of arguing or convincing others of the solidity of our arguments ... (Castillo, 2015: chapter 3).

So then, when you are thinking about how to organize an exposé which will reflect upon what you have been asked, after a long journey through computer (and paper) files, you realize that many of these preoccupations are in files labelled “to read now”, “articles from 2014”, “methods and writing”, “big data”, “reasoning and rhetoric”, “autoethnography”, “action research”, “teaching sociology”, “recent theorizing” ... ³ Thus I have lots of material, which when I began to make these notes on 23rd April, 2015, was already ordered hierarchically, ready to be used, in part, in this address.

With those same preoccupations, and almost with the same title as the one proposed here, I remember having written, thought about and produced articles and lectures. I also remember many references from people who have also done it and who have provided me with inspiration and cause for reflection. So I have already identified some preliminary tasks to prepare the ground for reflexion, and to work on or change arguments which I have been able to outline or develop previously.

On the one hand, elements relating to the crisis in western sociology, as defined by Alvin Gouldner, with particular reference to North American academic sociology of the 1960's. At the same time I am thinking about our scientific community today, even more complex than in those days. But I am also

³ A parallel journey is the one described by Emilio Lledó in “Los libros me leen” (“Books read me”) which he makes through his library, as I do through my files. “If I had the time and inclination to think about myself I could throw myself into writing a sort of autobiography, telling the story of my library, from the memories which are contained there” [“Si tuviera ánimo para ello y tiempo para ocuparme de mí mismo podría lanzarme a escribir una especie de autobiografía contando la historia de mi biblioteca, de la memoria que en ella me aguarda”] (Lledó, 2015: 480).

drawing on my memory, and that of my computer, of a great deal of literature about the current crisis. I refer of course to the latest crisis, which started in 2008 and which, it seems, will never end.

From these strands, these preoccupations, I have woven the structure of this presentation.

1. The sociological imagination as social critic/criticism.

An excellent edition of the journal, *Sociology* (2014), which has been worked on in the last two years, provides me with an outline of a panorama of the problems, choosing one of the developed themes, to highlight that which appears to me the most striking, the most important, the most urgent, if we want to clarify and specify the current challenges of sociology.

Firstly, as mentioned in the editorial article of the edition (Dinerstein, Ana C.; Gregory Schwartz; Graham Taylor 2014), and already in its title, from which we stole the one for this epigraph, what we are proposing to do is to “interrogate the global economic crisis”.

And here I would like to draw attention to three subjects which I will discuss in more detail later, but which I feel I must mention already. **Firstly**, that call to the sociological imagination which, as we will see is an excellent way to gather reflexions on research, and on the relationship between the subject researching and the subject or subjects being researched. It will make us remember the importance of *theorising* (Swedberg 2012) and force us to take the reflexivity necessary to our research work seriously.

Secondly as that reflexion on practice brings with it that which the aforementioned editorialists consider important: “this special edition must be read as an invitation to leave our intellectual comfort zones, in order to push boundaries and explore possibilities” (...)”in order to facilitate a reflexion on our basic epistemological assumptions in social sciences, to challenge and question the significance attributed to the global economic crisis” (p.861). In order to be part of a project which seeks to question the very significance of the crisis.

The third aspect which I would like to recall now, and which is given excellent treatment in this monograph, is the need for sociology to learn, even to theorise, thanks to its involvement in society. For the editors of *Sociology* a key subject to broach is how the crisis has impacted on subjectivities, how the crisis is lived “through the emergence of new social practices and social struggle” (p.862-3). Due attention is also given to how movements build knowledge (Cox, 2014).

At the end of their interwoven suggestions, which have helped me to structure this presentation, they ask themselves a truly fundamental question, which I think deep down all of us here are trying to ask ourselves: “Where now for Sociology?”(p.861). Or, as a leading review in a similar field asks, “What is organizational research for?” (Davis, 2015).

2. A little on intellectual autoethnography⁴.

And so I return my thoughts to the documents I have been rereading in order to prepare this intervention. Amongst them there are clearly some which have come from posing a similar question, at another time, in another situation ... in another crisis?

I choose firstly an article which was widely diffused, at the first congress of the Latin American Association of the Sociology of Work in Mexico and in 1993 (Castillo, 1994). It was also included in an edition of *Current Sociology*: “Which way forward for the sociology of work?” (Castillo, 1999). It is a good source of inspiration when tackling the challenges which face sociology today, and especially in the case which preoccupies us now, the Sociology of Work.

From this viewpoint, from these watchtowers, whence I intended to consider the situation and the possible future for this and other social sciences, I will set about presenting below some issues which I consider relevant. They are not of course an exhaustive list, but they are at least relevant as the basis for a later discussion.

I shall summarise now some notes on those views proposed and developed in 1993.

1) In order to have an overview of the future of the Sociology of Work, knowledge of the organisation of the profession, and especially its organisation in universities, offers a great deal of information about the possible future of sociology: how the degree course is being developed, which topics are being addressed; how those topics are addressed, questions of methodology and research strategy, publication of results; reviews and other forms of publication and socialisation of results and their possible application.

2) Another perspective is that of the evolution of the ‘discipline’, faced with a more holistic approach, with special reference to fragmentation, so that reality is not broken into pieces of a puzzle which will never be put back together again; a discipline which is both attacked and enriched by other social sciences.

⁴ “Any social study which does not address problems of biography, history and their intersections within society, has had its intellectual day”; “The problems of social science, when they are suitably formulated, must include personal concerns and public issues, biography and history, and the sphere of their complex” (Mills, 1971:26, 236).

- 3) What are the trends, what is the *state of the art*, which schools of thought are dominant, *mainstream*, and new and/or revitalised: research programmes?
- 4) Another perspective which is particularly relevant today, and in relation to the central theme of this intervention: **where is work itself going**; how do we understand all the forms of work which contribute to the reproduction of a concrete society? It is relevant because the global crisis has accelerated and made more acute phenomena and policies which had been being applied to the workplace, to social welfare, to benefit claimants and to so many other fields linked to the capacity for people to live their lives.
- 5) And finally, I proposed then the consideration of social demand, in other words, who identifies social problems, priorities and the motive, and how and why, so that these problems form the basis for demands to become sociological problems which is the fundamental task of sociology⁵.

Looking back and looking forward, I am also choosing a moment which I think is significant for this discussion about the challenges which face Sociology in these times of crisis. Certainly they seem to be similar to those of quieter times... From 2000-2009 our team (the Charles Babbage Research Group) studied “invisible work in Spain”: a means of contributing to the identification of all types of work, not just regular, legal and visible work. The evaluation made by Brígida Garcia (2009) gives a good account and critique of the comparative emphasis which we put on research strategies and on the way to approach research objects which are not accessible except from a highly theoretical perspective (Castillo, 2005).

Finally, I shall draw on elements of a collection of articles and research projects which have the same context of this global crisis which defines our task as male and female sociologists today. I shall revisit the reflexions of the last five years (Castillo 2015) which have fed into the research project in which we are currently immersed: “Challenges and alternatives to the precariousness of work and life in the current crisis (2005-2014)”⁶

This can nearly all be summarised by referring to the final published version (included as chapter 1, in Castillo, 2015) and which was in fact presented at the first Intercongressual Meeting of the Committee of the Sociology of Work of the FES (Spanish Federation of Sociologists), in Valencia in 2009. The title was “From work, to society again: a contribution to the study of all forms of work” and as well as its first presentation in Valencia, it was presented and discussed in various international forums.

⁵ Further details can be found in Castillo, 1994: 10-12.

⁶ Please see the summary note included as an appendix.

Here, as well as considering advances, and removing the obstacles which we had encountered, we tried to bring to light failed theories, which I believe now and I believed then, can limit (or enhance ...) the capacity to see in social reality and prevent us from penetrating the tangled webs which currently obscure work from view (Swedberg, 2012, 2014).

It is true that this was what could be expected of us, being rigorous: a reflexivity applied to the sociologist (male or female) which might help us to convert what are more often 'objects' of study into subjects with exactly the same possibilities and limitations as the subjects which we *usually* always are: "the sociologist' task today is not only to see people as they see themselves, nor to see themselves as others see them; it is also to see *themselves* as they see other people" (Gouldner, 1971: 25).

An excellent piece of work by Carolyn Ellis and Tony E. Adams (2014) considers the history and evolution of autoethnography and has some suggestions which may be very useful to us to orientate our fieldwork as well as some very helpful ideas to assist us in identifying the challenges of the Sociology of Work. For example, they tell us that it is necessary to place "an emphasis on personal experience" (p.260).

Autoethnography is important because it highlights some of the fundamental aspects for sociological research, although they may now be being applied with different names (Ruiz Junco and Vidal Ortiz, 2011: 201). Or, as some authors, with whom we identify very strongly, wrote in the editorial of a special edition on autoethnography in the *Journal of Research Practice* (Ngunjiri, Hernández y Chang, 2010), autoethnography is a fruitful way to connect life and research. It can also be applied to the sociology of the sociology which we are undertaking now, in the midst of the global crisis, because when one (male or female) contemplates the future of this social science, one becomes a member of a collective, a scientific community. To be a critic one must first criticise oneself and look at oneself in the mirror of the collective of which one is a part, with its proposals, its challenges, its struggles ...⁷

It is specifically pointed out, for example, in one of the case studies in which we are currently immersed: "Teaching and researching in the crisis: the challenges of the Spanish Public University", since ethnography, applied firstly to the researchers themselves, is an almost obligatory starting point. Here we are involved as subjects in two ways, as the people who are researching and as the people being researched (Malli and Sacki-Sharif, 2015) and of course, we are

⁷ Including internal academic struggles of course.

not the first ones to use autoethnography in this field (Hernandez, Sancho, Creus and Montané, 2010).

Autoethnography, reflexivity, the unveiling and clarifying of doubts about our own work, call into question, in the first place, the person who is writing or analysing themselves. It also draws our attention to an area to which we will return later: writing, the organisation of the discourse, the presentation of results. Autoethnography requires writers to adopt a style of writing in which the obscure academic language which alienates, distances or leaves behind the lay reader, with its abstract jargon, exotic references etc., is itself left behind. And so autoethnography, and sociology too, clearly brings readers closer, engages them and brings the writing to life ...⁸

3. Sociology is a product of society.

In its constitution, and in the crisis, renewal or challenges which sociology has had to face, social actors, society, have been, as it could not be otherwise, the backdrop, and often the motor for great changes in focus, method, areas or 'social problems'. It has also been the motor for changes in paradigm, or the calling into question of the 'mainstream' of the Sociology of Work, to a greater extent than in Sociology *tout court*.

One example may serve for all: the great workers' struggles of the 1968-73 'cycle' unfolded into a complete renewal of the paradigm which had been dominant until then: they changed our benchmarks, they changed methods following, for example, the eruption of the workers' enquiries in Italy, which was so important for sociology and for methodology.

Sociology as consolidated in the 1970's can only be explained in the context of that 'cycle of struggles', and Harry Braveman does so in an exemplary fashion in *Labor and monopoly capitalism* 1974 (see Castillo, 2000). From there a large school was born which has culminated, even as I write, in its international congress in Athens (33rd International Labour Process Conference: <http://www.ilpc.org.uk/>). There is a detailed analysis of the theory of the labour process in Smith (2015, in press).

Here and now, especially in Spain, this is a question which interests us greatly. If like Laurence Cox (2014) we accept that "sociology's most creative moments have been those in which it engaged strongly with the knowledge produced by social movements" (Cox: 966), one will have to ask oneself how the knowledge that has been accumulating in society, and from which we have so much to learn, is going to impact on our agendas.

⁸ A very recent evaluation by one of the great researchers, in the same direction, in Atkinson, 2015.

“Movements making knowledge” is not meant metaphorically. One expects to see not only the validation of more ‘real’ social problems but also new ways to learn to theorise, starting from practice. Therefore “Social movements have always been ahead of political organisation when it comes to fixing those nuclei of good sense, which fight against the very sense of the existing common sense” (Moruno, 2015:175, my translation).

Of course, people will say to me immediately, that is what has been becoming part of sociology for more than a hundred years. Well, let us return to those classical sociologists, and especially those forgotten female classical sociologists, in order to uncover a rich seam of renewal for the future and for the present (Castillo, 2012).

4. Sociology can change society

Of course it can, you will say. Many of us, both men and women, who dedicate ourselves to this profession, are convinced of it. However it is not at all obvious, because power can change society, but under what conditions?

It will be necessary to try to identify the boundaries and the structures which mark out the possible autonomous and scientific development of sociology, and then to enumerate the terrains in which action seems possible, immediately. These terrains relate to fundamental aspects of our research method, with whom and for whom we are researching, to teaching and to the way to ‘manufacture’ knowledge and disseminate it.

The limits.

I have already compiled a list of problems and refer the reader to section 2 above. In his extraordinary collaboration in *Sociology* (2014) Laurence Cox also highlighted some of the “watchtower” aspects as I called them at the time.

In order to understand the part played by the crisis of sociology, issues such as research funding, publication mechanisms, university organisation and hierarchy, restrictions on funds for research and teaching, continue to be the **foundations**. A warning should be made not to discard all bad things. As Alvin Gouldner wisely said against those sociologists, academics or not, who are always radically supportive of everything which is at least a mile away from their place of work or home. Outwardly they are radical, but inside ‘subserviently fawns upon his [ot her] Department Chair” (Gouldner 1971: 503); they are the very essence of the stagnation of the scientific life of the University: A whole programme of research which is certainly progressing at a very good pace in our country, Spain⁹.

⁹ See for example, the articles in edition 78 of the journal *Sociología del Trabajo*, spring 2013, “La degradación del trabajo en la Universidad” [The degradation of work in Higher Education].

On the other hand, there is the apparently trivial question of “**What are we researching?**” What are the social problems which are at the root of our sociological preoccupation? How can the social problems which social movements are bringing before us nowadays be compiled, interpreted, shared and turned into sociological problems? How can we learn from the movements themselves? How do we integrate it in our sociological out-look? This is Laurence Cox’s main argument, and after reading other work by him, I now take it as one of the foundational points upon which we will need to work.

We will also need to be more cautious in the face of academic trends which, although they can point to important current changes in global capitalism, can also get us tangled up with the so-called ‘knowledge workers’, the flourishing ‘creative class’¹⁰, digital workers or artificial intelligence, or the possibilities (amazing as they are) afforded by 3D printers.

Therefore, opening our research concerns to what is now a well-established line in the best research on the intrusion of work in life, as shown in so many studies on malaise at work, or the extension of this to the homes, free time and even the bedrooms of highly qualified male and female workers. They show, so to speak “the worst of the best”¹¹. Examples of this line of research, to name but a few for now, are the work of Jacobs and Gerson (2004) *The time divide: “How work seeps into life”* (pp 80-98); Melissa Gregg (2011) *Work’s intimacy*; or Judy Wajcman (2015) *Pressed for time: “working with constant connectivity”* (pp. 87-109).

We must, on the other hand, shift our gaze for example towards the *making* “which produces the physical world around us”? (Carr y Gibson, 2015), including, as we must, all work, and recovering complete production processes and the global degradation of work¹². Looking into or towards the contradictions of capitalism (Harvey, 2014).

And finally for now, there is the ‘**fundamental question**’ (Cox, 2014: 967) of *Who are we writing for* and reflecting on how much confidence we can have that the people we want to read our work, read it. We need to consider too whether what we publish, disseminate, discuss, whether they have a JCR or not, has, as its final destination, social actors who are capable of reflecting upon their own practice. We need to learn and to teach ourselves. Scientific common sense must become social force. In turn this will result in the limits imposed on

¹⁰ An example of how this confusing ‘concept’ can be deconstructed is well identified in the proposal of an edition of the review *Organization* (2015), “Diversifying the creative: creative work, creative industries, creative identities”. Flourishing is for Richard Florida’s work.

¹¹ We have researched this ourselves (Castillo, 2007; Castillo y Agulló, 2012; Castillo, 2015).

¹²See Weeks, 2011.

research being reduced, or radically changed. Research findings have an effect on reality. They can change society.

For this reason, it is vital that we change the rigid and sometimes unbearable style of writing which is fairly common in academic publications “This system can promote novelty rather than truth and impact rather than coherence” where “what is good for the career of the individual researcher might be very bad for the collective health of the scientific endeavor”. “Our field should be structured so that we are more like a cathedral and less like a mystery house” (Davis, 2015: 179,182, 186)¹³.

A fundamental but difficult step to take is **how to return the results of the research to society**, in the first place, to the people whom we have studied. Yes, I know that we have a long tradition of action-research, which we sometimes do as if “good intentions will be enough” (Gupta y Kelly, 2014: 6). In my research group we have tried many formulas for this, although I cannot claim that they have been as successful as one might have hoped: we have ensured that research reports have reached in the first place all interested parties; we have brought interviewees together in order to present the results to them, before publishing them anywhere else; we have participated, for example, in union meetings in order to corroborate our initial conclusions with workers; we have adapted our language and reasoning to very diverse publics, in places which now seem very exotic to us (only for doing that, of course), such as bars, residents’ associations, public meetings, etc.

However there is much to do here, not least to acknowledge and show our gratitude for everything that people have given us. Without their collaboration, as much more than ‘interviewees’, more as co-authors, we would have been able to construct very little (Gupta, 2014; Fortmann, 2014). It is a fundamental part of one’s public duty, in the face of the internal and external challenges currently being posed to Sociology, to keep in mind the possible social consequences for social practice (Brueggemann, 2014).

Possibilities

One can write a small book, with bold ambitions. It can be done while thinking about social actors as its readers, and not just our University colleagues or the rigid academic bureaucracy which requires strict formats which put paid to any spontaneity. Moreover, one can write having sought, and succeeded in part, in getting away from the demands of social movements.

¹³ Again Mills (1971:227), who recommended to anyone researching “present your work in language as simple and clear as the subject and your ideas around it allow. However, as you will have been able to observe, a pompous and wordy style of writing seems to prevail in social sciences”.

We have done this, in collaboration with writers who are heavily involved in social movements, the result of which is presented in ‘*What we are doing with work*’ (*Que hacemos con el trabajo*: Castillo, Caravantes, García, González y Lleó, 2013).

We can greatly improve our position and our capacity for innovation in the Sociology of Work, if we occupy ourselves seriously with **teaching**, with how the subject specific knowledge of Sociology is passed on¹⁴. Innovating and improving the way in which sociologists communicate their knowledge is in fact closely linked to the way in which we contemplate how to make scientific knowledge common sense¹⁵. While considering that, we will return to this reflexion: how neoliberalism, in the University as well as in sociology teaching, is undermining higher education, which is of course one of our main research subjects currently (Lucal, 2015)¹⁶.

What we know now, we know after long periods of research, and from trial and error. We can use what we have learned from these multiple stages of reflexivity to improve our teaching style: teaching not only about the scientific results, but also about how one arrived at those results, the problems, the changes which were necessary, and the mistakes. It is a very effective way to teach and learn: from the concrete practice of research to reflexion upon theory and methodology, and back to the beginning again.

Reflexivity, as so many great researchers and teachers have written (and put into practice) not only affects the research product, but is even more important to the process itself.¹⁷

The *making*, or behind the scenes work of research, not only aids the reflexion process, but also plays, in my view, a fundamental role in the experience of relating not only where we have got to, but also how we got there. This should be done in clear and direct language, without dressing up the results as if it has all been a bed of roses. Teaching like this, showing how a piece of research was approached, how it was carried out, and what had to be rectified along the way, removes the metaphorical academic wall, which shields those researchers, who are not already in an ivory tower, and permits them to observe the rest of the human race from their academic hiding place¹⁸, preparing reports for ANECA¹⁹,

¹⁴ A great example of this practice in Valles, 2014. The review *Teaching Sociology* is indispensable in this regard. An example: (Halasz y Kaufman, 2009)

¹⁵ In my view, what I wrote in 1999 is still valid today, Castillo, 1999: 1-35.

¹⁶ See Appendix “Challenges and alternatives to the precarity of work and life in the current crisis (2005-2014)”.

¹⁷ A reflection in line with our own evaluation of the book *Trabajo y vida en la sociedad de la información* (*Work and life in the information society*) is picked up in Castillo, 2015:71-84, “How *Trabajo y vida* was made...”.

¹⁸ An example of how to show the behind the scenes work of research in Moré (2015).

or checking whether such and such a review is in the Index which is most respected by academic bureaucrats.

To whom, or rather, with whom we are speaking? In direct relation to the claim that the best sociology becomes common sense in society, writing, reasoning, the communication and presentation of results, the definition and break with the concepts imposed by the Pindars of austerity, of the “global crisis”, is one of the subjects in which one can break with the epistemology of the established academic class. As I have already indicated when referring to the suggestions of ethnography, one tries to write in the first person, involving oneself in the ‘object’ of the research. One also treats people as what they are, namely subjects, in as much as the sociologist is interviewing them or being a participating observer.

Nothing new here: so many sociologists have reminded us that it is difficult to separate life and research, such as Mills in “Intellectual craftsmanship”, the classic appendix to *The Sociological Imagination*, to name but one, that the list would be endless.²⁰

The work of Richard Sennett is a good example of this desire to **write in another way** in sociology. It is worth remembering here his work *Together* (Sennett, 2012:12) where he demonstrates the ongoing debate between some or other means of ‘convincing’ us that any science is nothing other than a theory of reasoning. Ironically he includes in his acknowledgements, the observation by his wife, Saskia Sassen, from whom he should use fewer quotations, that he should not be so erudite. Meanwhile his editor recommends exactly the opposite...

So precisely that way of writing which has won Sennett international recognition and praise for his skill at taking us to the heart of the proposals being made by the writer, has also brought him fierce criticism and discredited his contributions to sociology. Dale Tweedie (2013) made a brilliant argument, taking those criticisms apart one by one, which reminds us that writing is an excellent means of promoting a type of sociology that renews its own makeup, but also considers how to tell its own story.

Of course, there is no better way to respond to current and future challenges, than to dive into our past, into history and the sociology of sociology, to discover that much of what we consider to be new, has been explored not only by illustrious male predecessors, but also by female predecessors, many of

¹⁹ ANECA is the Spanish institution validating research, equivalent to REF in UK.

²⁰ Look at least at the wonderful evaluations presented in Kemple and Mawani, 2009; and Gane and Back, 2012. Also, of course, re-read Mills (1971: 206-236).

whom have been forgotten about. With far less sophisticated means than those which we (male and female) sociologists have at our disposal today, these female sociologists carried out research and social interventions relevant to them and already practised many of the things which we have been highlighting here. That is to say, they were writing in the same style which so many of us adopt today.

As Shaw (2015) puts it, it is about making an archaeological study of research practices, which he applies ingeniously to Hull House and Jane Addams, the other forgotten Chicago School and which he describes in his article as a collection of practices and processes from which we could learn a great deal today.

The journal *Sociología del Trabajo* (2015, issue 83) features various texts in the same vein, dedicated to Jane Addams, and includes an article by her, published in *The American Journal of Sociology*, in 1896 (Carcía Dauder, Pérez Sedeño, 2015). I myself have dedicated years of work to the recovery of, and intellectual recognition for, the great contributions made by both Beatrice Webb's interpretation of research and by her own research, motivated by a similar concern to recover earlier research, so that we can see what it can teach us today (Castillo, 2012; Webb, 2004 [1898]).

We have many possibilities with our sight set on the tasks which are most pressing now. They are not so different to the ones we have been trying to complete for the last ten years, at least, as a collective of researchers, as a scientific community, yes, but fragmented and sometimes corroded by the 'impositions of the system'. It is an easy excuse for some of us (men and women) to give up on so many things that we can, and must, do.

The points we have argued thus far can be seen as an inward commitment, a commitment to ourselves, certainly. However, as we have already highlighted, that commitment must progress, be built upon and turn into reflexive practice, which in turn may contribute to changing society and changing the world in which we live.

I hope, thanks to your comments, suggestions and criticisms, made with the knowledge of experience, both from research and from the position that each one of you holds in the University, for example, that a **programme of work** can be distilled from the arguments of this intervention of mine. All that remains is for each one of you to respond to those challenges, which we were asked to identify.

Richard Swedberg (2014) did it in an extraordinary book *The art of social theory*. Swedberg is a classic author in the field of sociology, with work published on sociological theory, economic sociology and the relationship between sociology and the economy, etc. A search of the library of the Complutense University, Madrid, brings up 14 publications, several of which are also in my own library.

When Swedberg proposes, in an article which is a sort of introduction to and summary of, the book (Swedberg, 2012), “Theorising in sociology and in social sciences: going back to the context of discovery”, he is presenting his proposal as an insistence that one theorises and thinks, in order to begin to consider the research and its problems. In a second phase, one proceeds to carry out the research. It is a journey back and forth between theory and actual field research. As he will go on to summarise in the book, citing Peirce: “All reasoning is experimentation, and all experimentation is reasoning” (Swedberg, 2014:97).

He re-examines, and then again in the book, with greater care and proposals which are concrete and clearly expressed, how to link his proposal to teaching. He looks at how to use this blueprint to focus on promoting the capacity of his students to see and to question. He also addresses how to ‘detect’ whether your topic is important or what makes it so (‘What makes your topic important?’ *ibid*: 173). He will also consider his final qualification in the title of the book of sociology as an art dedicating suggestive epigraphs to “Imagination and art”, returning of course to Mills, to present and criticise “the style of writing”... “Perhaps we also need a genre called creative social science”, he concludes (Swedberg, 2014:188, 195, 204, 208)²¹.

With the reflexions which I have been pointing out, one can already make a link, albeit a problematic and debatable one, with the challenges which await us and which concern us. Of course there are many other topics, subjects and viewpoints, and there may be more in the future too, which I hope to pick up in the discussion at this meeting and in the comments and critiques which the published text may receive.

5. Finally, for now.

In an address at the presentation of the French review *Travail et Emploi*, on 12th December, 2014, Margaret Maruani said that the centrality of work in our societies nowadays is revived when a research question is based on real social problems.

²¹ I am always thinking of Wolf Lepenies (1990), an author who has had a very great influence on my intellectual development, and whom I recommend to anybody who is already working or who is beginning to work in our field. See for example the pages dedicated to Beatrice Webb, 107-139 and particularly the epigraph “Sociology and literature: the commitment of the autoethnography”, 132-139.

Therefore, to finish my address, I want to summarize one of the key points of my argument, which links to and illuminates many other issues which we have been analyzing in this text or presentation. The vitality and renewal of the Sociology of Work is linked to our capacity to learn to ask questions of and with social movements²², and to ask ourselves and respond honestly, ‘Which side are we on?’²³ It is also linked to our capacity to work in earnest towards breaking the reformist boundaries of sociology “thinking through crisis should be an opportunity also to reflect on whether the grounding patterns of the world we live in permit, and if so in what way, the intervention of sociological knowledge – whether as technical criticism, social critique or even as a laboratory through which to think transitional measures out of a society which, as some banners recently had it, is not in crisis, it *is* crisis” (Toscano, 2014: 1036; Weeks, 2011, cap. 5).

In “Precarious engagements: combat in the realm of public Sociology” published in an excellent edition of ‘*Current Sociology*’ which has been widely discussed and circulated in our scientific community, its editor Michael Burawoy summarised, in his introduction and commentary to the also excellent assembled articles, some considerations which link in with our argument and round it off well.

Sociology unveils some “inconvenient truths” (Bello, 2014), which only become truth because of political action. “As long as inconvenient truths are bottled up in the academic arena, they are innocuous” (Burawoy, 2014a: 153). And he goes on: “Sociology’s future as a discipline will depend on making its inconvenient truths everyday reality, which it can only do by entering the public sphere and becoming a social movement itself, while simultaneously holding on to its scientific basis”.

And having evaluated the contributions brought together in that edition, he concludes thus: “Today, sociology shows us that humanity is destroying itself by unleashing waves of marketization, waves of wanton destruction. This provides the rational basis for the extraordinary moral courage of public sociologists (...). Theirs is no blind commitment but one informed by sociology as science. Today as never before, sociology as a vocation means walking on two legs – science and engagement” (Burawoy, 2014b: 283).

The rest is a given, of course, in the first line of science, in field research on site, and in the line of fire of political action.

²² And surely to join them.

²³ Becker, 1966:239. “The question is not whether we should take sides, since we inevitably will, but whose side we are on”.

Translated from the Spanish by Sophie Higbee.

Acknowledgements: I would like to acknowledge the comments and suggestions of Paloma Candela, Miguel A. Valles, Arnaldo Bagnasco and Begoña Marugán on earlier versions of this article which I incorporated although of course I am solely responsible for its content. Naturally I am extremely grateful for the comments and discussions which followed the public presentation of the first version at the Intercongresual meeting of the Sociology of Work, Committee for the Sociology of Work of the Spanish Federation of Sociology (FES), in Murcia, on 28th May 2015 where Andrés Pedreño chaired the debate.

The challenges of sociology. In times of crisis and hope

Abstract: The article reflects the author's intervention in the inaugural lecture of the Third Intercongresual Meeting of the Sociology of Work of the Spanish Federation of Sociology, Murcia, 2015. Addressing the challenges to the Sociology of Work and, more broadly, Sociology, in the current crisis. His argument starts from sociological imagination as social criticism, the limits imposed by the evolution of the discipline, academic organization, the current transformation of work and social demands of sociological knowledge. Then analyzes Sociology as the product of each society and the rise of new social movements. To finish arguing that sociology can also change society, advocating a theoretical renewal that includes a commitment to public intervention.

Keywords:

Public sociology, fieldwork, action research, reflexivity, autoethnography, teaching sociology, writing and publics.

REFERENCES:

- Adams, Tracey L. (2015) "Sociology of professions: international divergences and research directions", *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 29(1): 154-165.
- Atkinson, Paul (2015) *For ethnography*, Londres, SAGE, 221 p.
- Atkinson, Paul (2013) "Ethnography and Craft Knowledge", *Qualitative Sociology Review* 9(2):56-63.
- Bagnasco, Arnaldo (2014) "Gramsci y la sociología", *Sociología del Trabajo*, n. 82, otoño, pp. 16-27.
- Becker, Howard B. (1966) "Whose side are we on?", *Social Forces*, vol. 14 n. 3, winter: 239-247.
- Becker, Howard B. (2014) *What about Mozart?. What about murder?: reasoning from cases*, Chicago y Londres, The University of Chicago Press, 204 p.
- Bello, Walden (2014) "Inconvenient truths: A public intellectual's pursuit of truth, justice and power", *Current Sociology Monograph*, vol.62 (2): 271-278.
- Bolton, Sharon; Knut Laaser (2013) "Work, employment and society through the lens of moral economy", *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 27 (3): 508-525.
- Bratton, John; Jeff Gold (2015) "Towards critical human resource management education (CHRME): a sociological imagination approach", *Work, Employment and Society*, DOI: 10.1177/0950017014545266.
- Bueggemann, John (2014) "Morality, sociological discourse and public engagement", *Social Currents*, vol. 1 (3): 211-219.
- Burawoy, Michael (2005) "Por una sociología pública", *Política y Sociedad*, Vol. 42 Núm. 1: 197-225
- Burawoy, Michael (2014a) "Introduction: sociology as a combat sport", *Current Sociology Monograph*, vol.62 (2): 140-155.
- Burawoy, Michael (2014b) "Sociology as a vocation: Moral commitment and scientific imagination", *Current Sociology Monograph*, vol.62 (2):279-284.
- Butler, Clare (2014) "Making interview transcripts real: the reader response", *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 29 (1), pp. 166-176.
- Calasanti, Toni (2014) "Social Currents, and the prospects and promise of sociology", *Social Currents*, Vol. 1(1): 3-4.
- Carr, Chantel y Chris Gibson ((2015) "Geographies of making: rethinking materials and skills for volatile futures", *Progress in Human Geography*: 1-19.
- Castillo, Juan José (1994) "¿A dónde va la Sociología del Trabajo?", *Revista de Economía y Sociología del Trabajo*, número 23/24, marzo-junio, pp. 8-21.
- Castillo, Juan José (1999) "Sociology of work at the crossroad", *Current Sociology*, Abril 1999, vol. 47(2): 21-46.

- Castillo, Juan José (2000) “La Sociología del Trabajo hoy: la genealogía de un paradigma”, *Trabajo y Sociedad*, Vol. II (3), 16 p. <http://www.unse.edu.ar/trabajosociedad/S-THOYFINAL.htm>
- Castillo, Juan José (2003) “La sociología del trabajo hoy: el próximo futuro”, en Juan José Castillo, *En la jungla de lo social: Reflexión y oficio de sociólogo*, Buenos Aires-Madrid, Miño y Dávila, pp.125-136.
- Castillo, Juan José (Director) (2005) *El trabajo recobrado. Una evaluación del trabajo realmente existente en España*, Madrid y Buenos Aires, 453 p.
- Castillo, Juan José (2007) *El trabajo fluido en la sociedad de la información: organización y división del trabajo en las fábricas de software*, Buenos Aires y Madrid, Miño y Dávila, 158 p.
- Castillo, Juan José (2012) *Clásicos y modernos en Sociología del Trabajo*, Buenos Aires-Madrid, Miño y Dávila, 174 p.
- Castillo, Juan José (2015) *La invasión del trabajo en la vida. Del ‘trabajador ideal’ a la vida real*, Madrid, La Catarata, 126 p.
- Castillo, Juan José e Itziar Agulló (2012) *Trabajo y vida en la sociedad de la información. Un distrito tecnológico en el norte de Madrid*, Madrid, La Catarata, 224 p.
- Castillo J.J, Caravantes, R., García, D., González, Ch. y Lleó, R. (2013) *Qué hacemos con el trabajo*, Madrid, Akal, 72 p.
- Cooper, Geoff (2012) “A disciplinary matter: critical sociology, academic governance and interdisciplinarity”, *Sociology*, vol. 47 (1): 74-89.
- Collins, Randall (1998) “The sociological eye and its blinders”, *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 27 (1): 2-7.
- Cox, Laurence (2014) “Movements making knowledge: a new wave of inspiration for sociology?”, *Sociology*, Vol. 48 (5): 954-971.
- Davis, Gerald F. (2015) “Editorial essay: what is organizational research for?”, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 60 (2): 179-188.
- Dinerstein, Ana C.; Gregory Schwartz; Graham Taylor (2014) “Sociological imagination as social critique: interrogating the ‘global economic crisis’”, *Sociology*, Vol. 48 (5): 859-868.
- Ellis, Carolyn; Tony E. Adams (2014) “The purposes, practices and principles of autoethnographic research”, in Patricia Leavy (ed.) *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research*, Nueva York, Oxford University Press, pp. 254-276.
- Fortmann, Louise (2014) “Giving back, moving forward”, *Journal of Research Practice*, 10(2), Article M10. [Consultado el 22 de abril de 2015
<http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/399/353>]
- Gane, Nicholas; Les Back (2012) “C. Wright Mills 50 years on: the promise and craft of sociology revisited”, *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 29 (7/8): 399-421.
- García Dauder, S. (2010) «La historia olvidada de las mujeres de la Escuela de Chicago» *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, n. 131, pp. 11-41.

García, Dauder, S.; Pérez Sedeño, Eulalia (2015) “Los inicios de la sociología del trabajo: Jane Addams, la Hull House y las mujeres de la Escuela de Chicago”, *Sociología del Trabajo*, n. 83: 24-49.

García Guzmán, Brígida (2009) “El trabajo realmente existente en España. Reflexiones en torno al Programa de Investigación TRABIN (2000-2007)”, *Estudios Sociológicos*, XXVII (79): 294-301.

Gregg, Melissa (2011) *Work's intimacy*, Cambridge, UK, Polity, 205 p.

Gouldner, Alvin (1971 [1970]) *The coming crisis of western sociology*, Nueva York, Basic Books-Equinox, 528 p.

Gupta, Clare (2014) “Reflections on giving back and giving thanks”, *Journal of Research Practice*, vol. 10 (2), Article N7. [Consultado el 22 de abril de 2015
<http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/400/361>]

Gupta, Clare; Kelly, Alice B. (2014) “The social relations of fieldwork: Giving back in a research setting”, *Journal of Research Practice*, 10(2), Article E2. [Consultado el 23 de abril 2015,
<http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/423/352>]

Halasz; Judith R. y Peter Kaufman (2008) “Sociology as pedagogy: how ideas from the discipline can inform teaching and learning”, *Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 36: 301-317.

Harvey, David (2014) *Diecisiete contradicciones y el fin del capitalismo*, Quito, Editorial IAEN, 296 p. [Publicado con licencia Creative Commons]

Hernández, F., Sancho, J. M., Creus, A., y Montané, A. (2010) “Becoming university scholars: Inside professional autoethnographies”, *Journal of Research Practice*, 6(1), Article M7. [Consultado el 23 de abril de 2015 <http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/204/188>]

Holloway, John (2014) “A note on hope and crisis”, *Sociology*, vol. 48(5): 1070-1072.

Jacobs Jerry A. y Kathleen Gerson (2004) *The time divide. Work, family and gender inequality*, Cambridge, Mss., Harvard University Press, 259 p.

Kemple, Thomas M.; Renisa Mawani (2009) “Global public life: the sociological imagination and its imperial shadows”, *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 26(7-8): 228-249.

Lepenies, Wolf (1990) *Les trois cultures. Entre science et littérature, l'avènement de la sociologie*, Paris, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 408 p. [Publicado en español por Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 1994. La edición original alemana es de 1985]

Lizardo, Omar (2014) *The End of Theorists: The Relevance, Opportunities, and Pitfalls of Theorizing in Sociology Today*, Open Book, 24 p. This essay is drawn from the Lewis Coser Memorial Lecture, delivered August 17th 2014 in San Francisco.

Lledó, Emilio (2015 [2011]) *Palabra y humanidad*, Oviedo, 614 p. [Edición e introducción de Juan Á. Canal]

Lucal, Betsy (2015) “Neoliberalism and Higher Education: How a Misguided Philosophy Undermines Teaching”, *Teaching Sociology*, vol. 43 (1): 3-14.

Lyon, Dawn y Carabelli, Giulia (en prensa, 2015) “Researching young people's orientations to the future: the methodological challenges of using arts practice”, *Qualitative Research*.

Mah, Alice (2013) "The dereliction tourist: ethical issues of conducting research in areas of industrial ruination", *Sociological Research Online*, 19 (4), 13 [Consultado el 29 de abril de 2015 <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/19/4/13.html>]

Malli, Gerlinde y Susanne Sacki-Sharif (2015) "Researching one's own field. Interaction dynamics and methodological challenges in the context of higher education research", *Forum Qualitative Social Research*, vol. 16, n. 1, art. 11 enero [Consultado el 1 de junio de 2015] <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/2225>

McKie, Linda; Louise Ryan (2012) "Exploring trends and challenges in sociological research", *Sociology*, DOI: 10.1177/0038038512452356

Mills, C. Wright (1971 [1959]) *La imaginación sociológica*, México, Fondo de cultura Económica, 237 p.

Moré, Paloma (2015) "Cuidados a personas mayores en Madrid y París: la trastienda de la investigación", *Sociología del Trabajo*, 84, primavera: 85-105.

Moruno, Jorge (2015) *La fábrica del emprendedor. Trabajo y política en la empresa-mundo*, Tres Cantos (Madrid), Akal, 254 p.

Murthy, Dhiraj (2008) "Digital ethnography: an examination of the use of new technologies for social research", Vol. 42(5): 837-855.

Ngunjiri, F. W., Hernandez, K. C., y Chang, H. (2010) "Living autoethnography: Connecting life and research [Editorial]", *Journal of Research Practice*, 6(1), Article E1. [Consultado el 23 de abril 2015 <http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/241/186>]

Organization (2015) "Special Issue proposal. Call for papers: Diversifying the creative: creative work, creative industries, creative identities", 6 p.

Ruiz Junco, Natalia y Vidal Ortiz, Salvador (2011) "Autoethnography: The sociological trough the the personal", en Ieva Zake y Michael DeCesare: *New directions in sociology. Essays on Theory and Methodology in the 21st Century*, North Carolina y Londres, McFarland & Company Inc., Publishers, pp. 193-211.

Shaw, Ian F. (2015) "The archaeology of research practices: a social work case", *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 21 (1): 36-49.

Smith, Chris (2015, en prensa) "The rediscovery of the labour process", forthcoming in Stephen Edgell, Heidi Gottfried & Edward Granter (eds.) *Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Work and Employment*, 26 p.

Sennett, Richard (2012) *Juntos. Rituales, placeres y política de cooperación*, Barcelona, Anagrama, 432 p.

Sociología del Trabajo (2013) "La degradación del trabajo en la Universidad", Madrid, Siglo XXI [Acceso libre Biblioteca de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, UCM : <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/3eohez68r93zbbt/AADvLivkVx-o1q-k7ykF1ZMwa>]

Stuart, Mark; Irena Grugulis; Jennifer Tomlinson; Chris Forde; Robert MacKenzie (2013) "Reflections on work and employment into the 21st century: between equal rights, force decides", *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 27(3): 379-395.

Swedberg, Richard (2012) “Theorizing in sociology and social science: turning to the context of discovery”, *Theory and Society*, 41: 1-40.

Swedberg, Richard (2014) *The art of social theory*, Princeton y Londres, Princeton University Press, 277 p.

Toscano, Alberto (2014) “Reformism and melancholia: economic crisis and the limits of Sociology”, *Sociology*, vol. 48(5): 1024-1038.

Tweedie, Dale (2013) “Making sense of insecurity: a defence of Richard Sennett’s sociology of work”, *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 27(1): 94-104.

Valles, Miguel S. (2014) “Reflexión metodológica sobre un caso de docencia e investigación con métodos cualitativos: la trastienda del proceso investigador y su archivo como conceptos clave”, *EMPIRIA. Revista de Metodología de Ciencias Sociales*, N. 29, septiembre-diciembre, pp. 177-198.

Wajcman, Judy (2015) *Pressed for time. The acceleration of life in digital capitalism*, Chicago y Londres, The University of Chicago Press, 215 p.

Webb, Beatrice y Sydney (2004 [1898]) *La democracia industrial*, Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva-Fundación Largo Caballero, 668 p. [Edición y estudio preliminar de Juan José y Santiago Castillo]

Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011, 304 pp.

Appendix:

Research in progress: “**Challenges and alternatives to the precariousness of work and life in the current crisis (2005-2014)**”. 2014-2016

Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad; CSO2013-43666-R

Directors: Juan José Castillo jjcastillo@cps.ucm.es y Pablo López Calle plopezca@cps.ucm.es

Team of researchers: Itz'iar Agulló, Andrés de las Alas, Paloma Candela, María José Díaz, Julio Fernández, Aurora Galán, Paloma Moré y Josefina Piñón.

SUMMARY:

One of the most significant challenges for Spanish society in the next few years will be to find a way out of the crisis and bet on another viable development model for the majority of the population. Another challenge is the precariousness of work and life, as well as the importance of its effects on social life, which have been evaluated and verified in scientific literature. Therefore we take as a starting point the evidence that the precariousness of life is taking on a socioeconomic dimension, but also a personal dimension; a family and relationship dimension as well as a civic and participative one. To sum up, this evidence links different variables and life stages. These dimensions will be analysed in a global evaluation based on four case studies: 1. The precariousness of work and the life of young people in the suburbs of deindustrialised cities, i.e. the Coslada case. 2. Returning to study after the crisis: Young people from Castilla-La Mancha working in construction with no qualifications and no other employment prospects. 3. Care work under examination: living and working conditions of immigrant care workers in Madrid. 4. Teaching and Research during the crisis: challenges of the Spanish Public University.

Moreover, one can summarise the strengths and more novel points of our contribution to the study of this phenomenon in three aspects: 1) The current economic climate; 2) The proposed research method y 3) The guidelines to action our research programme. Our general aims and objectives are: 1. In the first place, to carry out high quality research based as much on the internationalisation of activities and the publication of results in forums of high technological and scientific impact, as it is based on trying to contribute to the solution of the social, economic and technological problems of Spanish society. 2. To tackle problems relating to sustainable development as far as a relationship between work and life is concerned: work and employment conditions, the use of space and time, of leisure time and the balance between work and family life. Likewise to tackle problems related to social, economic and territorial cohesion, personal and collective identity, social exclusion, quality of life. The articulation of the territorial occupation of the urban/rural, of the residential or the industrial, etc. 3. To propose explanations based on the relationship between changes in production and daily life: changes in job specifications and their impact on male and female workers and on the relationships within work and employment.

The expected results can be synthesised thus: 1. Bring analysis based on direct research work about the trends in the transformation of values dominant amongst male and female youth, women and immigrants and in society in general, about work social participation, political life... 2. Detect which are the new forms of resistance and consent in the workplace and the open perspectives relating to new social movements and traditional social actors, such as the unions. 3. Provide explanatory notes which link the incidence of macroeconomic policies with the changes in the qualification requirements, professional career expectations and people's own life perspectives in such a way that they enable elements of reflexion and action for social actors and political decision makers.