

PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY IN THE DOMAIN OF ACADEMIC WORK AND INTERVENTION IN SPORT AND LEISURE

*A SOCIOLOGIA PÚBLICA NO ÂMBITO DA PRODUÇÃO E INTERVENÇÃO EM
ESPORTE E LAZER NO BRASIL*

*SOCIOLOGÍA PÚBLICA EN EL ÁMBITO DE LA PRODUCCIÓN Y LA
INTERVENCIÓN EN DEPORTE Y OCIO EN BRASIL*

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Keywords

Public Sociology.
Sports.
Leisure.

Abstract: In order to examine the shaping of public sociology in Michael Burawoy's terms, within studies of sport and leisure policies in Brazil, this article examines indicators provided by four research groups dedicated to the topic under the categories proposed by the author. Data indicate that most of the work is based on critical or political sociologies, with predominance of policy assessment. Research on sport and leisure policies provides some specific contributions, if only incipiently, from public sociology and the actions of intellectuals as organic professionals.

Palavras-chave

Sociologia pública.
Esporte.
Lazer.

Resumo: Este artigo procurou investigar a configuração de uma sociologia pública, nos termos de Michael Burawoy, no âmbito dos estudos das políticas públicas de esporte e lazer no Brasil. Para a realização desse objetivo, foram analisados indicadores provenientes de quatro grupos de pesquisa dedicados ao tema a partir das categorias propostas por Burawoy. Os dados dão indícios de que grande parte da produção se faz a partir de sociologias críticas ou políticas, predominando a avaliação das políticas públicas. A produção no campo das políticas públicas de esporte e lazer traz contribuições pontuais, porém ainda incipientes de uma sociologia pública e da atuação dos intelectuais como profissionais orgânicos.

Palabras clave

Deportes.
Intelectuales.
Habermas.
Bauman

Resumen: En este artículo se trató de investigar la configuración de una sociología pública, en los términos de Michael Burawoy, en el campo de los estudios sobre políticas públicas para el deporte y el ocio en Brasil. Para lograr este objetivo, se analizaron los indicadores de cuatro grupos de investigación dedicados al tema, con base en las categorías propuestas por Burawoy. Los datos dan evidencia de que gran parte de la producción proviene de las sociologías críticas o políticas, predominando la evaluación de las políticas públicas. La producción en el campo de las políticas públicas para el deporte y el ocio trae contribuciones específicas, aunque incipientes acerca de la sociología pública y del papel de los intelectuales como profesionales orgánicos.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Movimento's invitation to think of a “public sociology” under Michael Burawoy’s (2006) terms is indeed an invitation to reflect on intellectuals’ practices of and commitments to building a sociology of sport and leisure in the context of demands and struggles of/in contemporary society. Achieving such goal involves taking a stance towards two important issues. First, the challenge of thinking locally based on analytical categories generated in another context without falling into asymmetric or purely consumerist relations in intellectual exchanges. Second, using categories produced after reading the work of professional sociologists to examine, *mutatis mutandis*, a field that, in Brazil, is populated by intellectuals with diverse backgrounds and who use social sciences’ theoretical and methodological tools to study sport and leisure.¹

A literature review indicates the poor circulation of Burawoy’s proposal in sociology of sport and leisure² in Brazil. Likewise, if, as we shall see below, the assumption of *organic public sociology* is engagement, then examining *life stories* would be the most appropriate methodological resource to identify professional practices. Given this context, there seems to be a lack of initial empirical references that can present indicators for the challenges posed above. Thus, we believe that it is more productive to take the categories proposed by the author as a way to test their conditions of possibility and to think both the field and the practices of its intellectuals. To achieve this goal, we briefly revisit the core elements of Burawoy’s proposal as well as some of the criticisms made to them. Then, given the momentary impossibility of investigating practices themselves, we examine the goals of four major research groups working with sport and leisure policies in Brazil, in order to look for indications to build initial references. In this context, we considered the conditions for implementation of policies as an indirect indication of the establishment or not of a public sociology in this area. This examination has provided significant elements to think about division of labor in sociology of sport and leisure.

2 THE BURAWOY MANIFESTO

Presented as a lecture at the American Sociological Association in 2004, the so-called Burawoy Manifesto was published in the United States in 2005 and in Brazil a year later (Burawoy, 2006). In a context characterized by mismatch between a largely progressive sociological field and an increasingly conservative historical context (PERLATTO; MAIA, 2012) or by the “insurmountable” contradiction between professional sociology and critical sociology (TOURAINÉ, 2009, p. 245), Burawoy (2006) introduced his view of public sociology as an “ideal type” among others in the division of sociological labor. In a few words, we can say that this division would include a *professional sociology* designed to solve scientific problems in institutionalized university environments; a *policy sociology* practiced as a form of work hired by governments, NGOs and other agencies and non-academic institutions; *critical sociology* conducted by intellectuals who would reflect on the very status of social theories and their policy implications; and *public sociology* understood as a form of political action in close correlation with disadvantaged social groups. In sum, this social division of sociological labor fits in a 2x2 model (Table 1), although the author does not eliminate the possibilities of professional transit between them.

¹ In this regard see, for example Ferreira *et al.* (2013) and Souza; Marchi Júnior (2010).

² A survey using the search term “Burawoy” on Scielo and directly on the websites of journals *Movimento*, *Revista Brasileira de Ciências do Esporte*, *Revista de Educação Física da UEM* and *Revista Brasileira de Educação Física e Esporte* did not find any related articles.

Table 1 - Division of sociological labor

	Academic audience	Extra-academic Audience
Instrumental	Professional	Political
Reflexive	Critical	Public

Source: Burawoy (2006, p. 20)

Public sociology *per se* entails two major divisions: in the first one, called *traditional*, sociologists would address the general public in newspaper articles, editorials, books and magazines, in which, preserving certain communicational hierarchy, experts would intervene in the public space. In the case of *organic* public sociology, sociologists would engage more decisively with several specific publics in a more horizontal and bidirectional relationship that might allow extending the democratic experience in society and scientific practice itself, thereby demonstrating their normative character whose interpretative key is engagement.

An extensive review of the debate that followed Burawoy's proposal would be beyond the scope of this text, but we should note that, in addition to normative positions or moralistic stances to the right and left of the political-academic spectrum, several obstacles were presented to his views. For some of his critics, concepts such as "critical"; "reflexive" and "public" are used in ambiguous and ill-defined ways, which would prevent proper empirical explorations of what public sociologies would be (CALHOUM, 2005, MACLOUGHLIN; TURCOTTE, 2007). Others felt that the claim of a reflexive status only for *critical* and *public* sociology was an excessively harsh judgment of *professional* sociology (SCHEIRING, 2007). Other criticisms are related to the theoretical limits of the 2x2 model to understand how the four "ideal types" relate to each other or to examine the institutional context in which relations between sociology and its public are established (MACLOUGHLIN; TURCOTTE, 2007, MORROW, 2009). A third type of criticism refers to the model's limits for thinking relations between sociology and other disciplines (Physical Education, for instance), relations with institutions outside the academic sphere, and the distinct forms of engaging or not (CALHOUM, 2005). For some authors, the need for analyses and definitions of professional practices based on well-defined institutional contexts also extends to national contexts, since the claim to a universal application of Burawoy's model of division of labor contrasts with the author's criticism to American domination and a false universalism (PERLATTO; MAIA, 2012).

Although Burawoy (2006, p. 12-13) contextualizes his proposal in a "world [that has] move[d] to the right" and the "ever-deepening inequality and domination", we must recognize that the situation is not exactly the same in Brazil. It displays the typical complexity of democratic societies, with contradictory signs and movements between liberal political demands and the recovery of the State's central role in social organization and in guaranteeing public good – or between civil society's demands and privatization of the State by all kinds of Patrimonialism. This distinction of local conditions is not exactly a problem to the extent that Burawoy himself (2009) recognizes that sociologists accomplish their missions in ideological and political fields, which are local and national before becoming global. As Touraine (2009, p. 250) said,

what makes a general agreement difficult is that each type of sociological research is strongly connected both with a national, cultural and political history and with certain division of intellectual labor, which influences both the representation of sociology and its frontiers with neighboring social sciences.

Despite this distinction, Touraine (2009, p. 245) accepts the validity of Burawoy's categories to think the "sociological community."

3 RESEARCH GROUPS IN SPORT AND LEISURE POLICIES

The development of sport and leisure policies in Brazil has been studied by different authors (AMARAL, 2003; AREIAS, 2011; BUENO, 2008; HÚNGARO, 2008; MARCELLINO, 2008; PEIXOTO, 2007; STAREPRAVO, 2011; VERONEZ, 2005). However, it seemed more meaningful to analyze the academic field based on research groups, since they allow seeing it in a more structured way. In order to identify the sociological community focused on sport and leisure policies, we conducted a qualitative research exercise associating characteristics of exploratory, descriptive and explanatory studies as indicated by Richardson (1999). Our strategy was to focus on the goals of working groups currently registered with CNPq's Lattes Platform, looking for those that have been most devoted to investigate the *policy cycle*³ for sport and leisure in Brazil.

Melo and Alves Junior (2003) had already conducted important survey of research groups active in Physical Education that focus on sports and leisure policies. Peixoto's (2007) and Starepravo's (2011) doctoral theses offered a significant contribution by showing groups with the highest quantitative and qualitative impact in the field of sports and leisure, through works published in the most prestigious journals and events.

Importantly, a comparison of the contribution of the two aforementioned authors shows the production of the groups rather than that of individual researchers, since it would be possible to find some reference that is important for the field, but whose production might not faithfully express the scope of this work. After indications taken from collective productions, we were able to stratify the following groups for our analysis: Research Group in Leisure (Methodist University of Piracicaba/SP – Unimep),⁴ led by Nelson Carvalho Marcellino and Edmur Antônio Stoppa; Group of Research and Socio-critical Training in Physical Education, Sport and Recreation – AVANTE (Federal University of Brasília/DF – UNB), led by Fernando Mascarenhas and Marcelo Edson Húngaro; Center for Research in Sport, Leisure and Society (Federal University of Paraná/UFPR), led by Wanderley Marchi Júnior; Group of Sociological, Political and Cultural Studies on Body Practices – INSIÈME (Federal University of Espírito Santo/UFES), led by Carlos Nazareno Ferreira Borges.⁵

As noted in the description of one of the project goals of the first group we studied – GPL – their intentions focus on "[...] guiding policy actions and providing new foundations for research in the area".⁶ Such intentions consolidate when we find similar goals reproduced in works of the group's members. In turn, when Marcellinus *et al.* (2007) – studying sport and leisure policies in the cities of Campinas and Piracicaba, in the state of São Paulo – presented their goals, it was argued that they were examining sector-specific policies under broader

3 That is how the cycle of public policies is commonly known from a systemic perspective, with policies as products of the operation of the political system (outputs) by processing demands (inputs). The complete cycle includes new outputs based on generation of results and responses from the implementation context (feedback).

4 This group was recently discontinued, but we consider that its production remains significant for the field.

5 We know that research groups working in the field of studies mentioned in this study have peculiar characteristics, as in all fields of study. In the case of investigations related to public policies, it is important to inform that the groups cited in this work, as others who were not selected, have distinct theoretical (and political) frameworks. Therefore, GPL, Insième and Avante conduct studies with Gramscian theoretical foundation, while the Center for Research in Sport, Leisure and Society based its studies on Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical categories.

6 Available at: <<http://www.unimep.br/noticias.php?nid=2113>>. Accessed on: May 2, 2014.

policies implemented by the federal government, especially those with a social policy nature. Therefore, the goals were:

a – to verify the importance of the policy for people training and development as the axis of sport and recreation policies of two municipalities in the State of São Paulo; b – to check which the components of the education and development policy of those municipalities are; c – to study possible alternatives to better adjust those policies to general sport and leisure policies in those municipalities (MARCELLINO *et al.*, 2007, p. 8-9).

Something similar was found in Rodrigues and Marcellino (2011, p. 1), in a study that aimed at “identifying and analyzing the inclusion of Leisure as a policy area in the city of Porto Alegre, in 1994-2004, trying to understand its guidelines, goals, assumptions and projects implemented”.

A look at the second group – the Center for Research in Sport, Leisure and Society (UFPR) – showed that the goals of their projects are described as follows:

[...] to investigate the form of management of Municipal Sports and Leisure Departments of the above municipalities. The core data collection instrument of this action is a structured interview with open and closed-end questions, held with Municipal Secretaries or those in charge of the cities' Departments of Sports and Leisure. Interviews include three parts: The first part investigates the Administrative Structure of secretariats and/or departments, focusing on their internal divisions, relations between professionals and decentralized divisions. The second part refers to public administration, directing questions to the government plan, participation of civil society organizations and the general community in developing, monitoring and controlling the government plan. The third part deals with municipal programs and projects for sports and leisure. Through a dialogue with scientific sources and approaching the concepts proposed by sociology, it aims at discussing how Sport and Leisure spaces and equipment are planned and experienced in the cities to be researched. In the first stage, it will situate some issues related to the cities' urban planning. It aims at developing a descriptive inquiry on municipal intervention programs and projects for the elderly, with a special focus on issues related to physical, sport and leisure activity. The main data collection instrument for this action is a semi-structured interview that has been applied to those in charge of programs and/or projects for the elderly.⁷

A search in the work of the group shows Starepravo, Souza and Marchi Júnior (2011, p. 236) as a study whose purpose is:

[...] To contribute to a more refined reading of sport and leisure policies by experts, through some thoughts, concepts and methodological procedures that are part of social researchers' tools, particularly those seeking a sociocultural reading of sport, leisure and related topics.

Continuing our examination of the third group, INSIÈME's goals include:

To gather studies about phenomena related to body practices that interface with policy issues and the areas where they are found, including education, health, culture, sports, leisure, social assistance and others. The theoretical framework used is that produced in the field of policy, focusing on conceptual theoretical frameworks of policy, public policy, management, policy evaluation, democratization and access to rights, and political education.⁸

⁷ Available at: <<http://www.redecedes.ufpr.br/projetos.html>>. Accessed on: May 2, 2014.

⁸ Available at: <<http://plsql1.cnpq.br/buscaoperacional/detalhelinha.jsp?grupo=03924099IU4BKW&seqlinha=1>>. Accessed on: May 2, 2014.

Studies by Areias and Borges (2011) and Borges and Tonini (2012) – conducted in the aforementioned group – had the following goals:

[...] To understand and show whether the view on Leisure by managers and social workers of the City Sports and Leisure Program (PELC), in Vitória, ES, influences the efficiency and social effectiveness of that program (AREIAS; BORGES, 2011, p. 575). We will conduct an interpretive look at data on the relationship between the city of Victoria and high performance sports listed here, and how it favors citizens. We intend to generate empirical data to assist in evaluating the city's Sport and Recreation Policies and thus potentially enable the implementation of those policies, or even generate others that are perhaps more significant (BORGES; TONINI, 2012, p. 283)

Finally, the fourth group – AVANTE – aims at:

Consolidating research activities and socio-critical studies related to the topics of Physical Education, Sport and Recreation at the university, working with faculty and students, especially the School of Physical Education, extending actions to the university and other institutions; developing activities aimed at coordinating teaching, research and extension, with emphasis on internships, exchanges, extension projects, seminars, research training and database organization for Physical Education, Sport and Leisure; offering undergraduate and graduate courses that further develop socio-critical studies in Physical Education, Sport and Leisure while articulating initial and continuing vocational training at UNB's School of Physical Education; stimulating production, systematization and dissemination of knowledge on Physical Education, Sport, Leisure time, Policy and Education; providing lab space by organizing, gathering and socializing teaching materials and resources to students, teachers and researchers from UNB and other institutions.⁹

By visiting some works of the group, we found goals such as that announced in Carneiro and Mascarenhas (2013, p. 1), intended “to understand the direction of the Federal District's sports policy from the different dimensions of sport, with a view on sports planning and spending in 2008-2011, examining the possibility of its effectiveness as a social right”. Something similar can be seen in Liao Junior's (2003, p. 39) study aimed at investigating:

[...] the processes related to management of Physical Education policies, sport and leisure in the Federal District government in 1995-1998, during the Buarque administration. The development of principles embodied in actions in the segment showed prospects for management based on public interest, transparency, impartiality and administrative decentralization, despite the internal contradictions and late initiative of the most strategic sectors of the area in that so-called “democratic and popular government” regarding implementation and assertion of physical education, sport and leisure as social rights.

We believe that the elements presented, which intended to show the shaping of the projects of these research groups for policy for sports and leisure, as well as specific examples of their productions – seem to approach the characteristics of what has been termed as *professional sociology* by Burawoy (2006). Our belief stems from the concern apparent in works such as those of GPL and Research Center in Sport, Leisure and Society to conduct systematic studies guided by rigor in the protocols that is sufficiently consolidated to provide guarantees of knowledge with recognized scientific academic value.

In the same direction of the above argument, we believe that the data may also indicate that academic production in the field of sport and leisure policies can be understood within the framework of *policy-oriented sociology*. We understand the concern of groups such as Insieme with developing studies within specific realities and territories, with high interest in answering unique questions that also matter to particular policy agendas. That is, the initiatives that fall into this perspective are usually concerned with local problems and can focus on a dimension of micro-sociology that cannot be always expanded to other realities. In general, that is in sync with Touraine (2009) in that the practice is very active in Latin America while public sociology would be less visible.

Similarly, we also believe in the existence of a critical sociology, considering the intentions of the studies of groups such as Avante, to influence, contribute or challenge the value of policies implemented by sports and leisure departments in administrations at all levels of government. The initiatives directed to political and critical sociologies seem to have been produced in order to influence the actions of political coalitions that guide agendas in the political arenas of all government levels (BUENO, 2008).

Based on the same arguments presented above, we can see that sectoral policies on which works are based seem disconnected from the intention of facilitating access to the social right to sport and leisure (although they often state that intention), thus being detached from any public interest beyond “taking advantage” of something offered as a favor. Therefore, the development of *critical sociologies* and *policy sociologies* has been highly positive in a context where actions seem to provide a return that favors institutions rather than citizens. On the other hand, there seems to be no evidence of *organic public sociology*.

Since we referred to the social right, which is one of the main concepts in academic studies when discussing sport and leisure policies, it is necessary to emphasize that that social right does not receive proper theoretical treatment in the works we are examining, which shows and explains the lack of a public sociology in the area.

This paper cannot include different data resulting from management reports from several places investigated by research groups mentioned here. However, we consider important to show evidence for our previous statement by pointing it in the Annual Audit Report of the Comptroller General of the Union (CGU) about the City Sports and Leisure Program (PELC), the core policy to promote universal democratic access to sport and leisure at federal level in Brazil. According to the report:

To evaluate the results of Program 1250 – City Sport and Leisure, both SIGPLAN and the Management Report describe the following indicator: Rate of Recreation Sport and Leisure Demands Met for People in Situation of Social Vulnerability = number of people benefited by the Program/Number of people from families with income up to half a minimum wage per capita or no income. According to information recorded in the Management Report, the indicator in question represents only two out of 15 Actions related to Program 1250 in SIGPLAN, so that **its usefulness is compromised, not properly demonstrating the scope and diversity of the service provided to beneficiaries of all Program Actions**. The usefulness of the indicator is clearly compromised since it does not provide sufficient information to base the Program’s management decisions, considering that the number of beneficiaries by itself does not translate into quality and impact assessment of such service in communities served, neither does it help to assess performance of adjustments established, for example. Thus, when analyzing the value resulting from

that measurement, it **is not possible to state that the purpose of the Program was accomplished**, which is to *“increase, democratize and universalize access to the practice and knowledge of recreational sport and leisure, integrated with other policies, thus promoting human development and social inclusion”*. **(Emphasis added)**.

Taking this to be the only indicator built to evaluate this Program, it does not provide a thoughtful and multidimensional view of its implementation.

As we know, and researchers of the field of public sports and leisure policies are keen to emphasize, sports and leisure gained the status of social right in Brazil under the 1988 Federal Constitution (FC). However, even though it is included in social rights listed in Art. 6 (it cites only leisure, but recreational sport can be considered included) and mentioned in Art. 217, especially in its paragraph 3 (here considering sport in its multiple dimensions, including leisure), that social right underwent no regulation similar to other social rights.

Among other rights, the same FC regulated the right to Health and Social Well-being, for example, by providing developments in these sectors such as the Unified Health System (SUS) and the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS).¹⁰ However, despite the demands that emerged at the Second National Conference on Sport and Recreation, held in 2006 in Brasília and whose theme was precisely the National System of Sport and Recreation, sports and recreation were not regulated as other rights listed in Art. 6 of the FC.

One of the consequences we observed for the situation described above is non-recognition of sport and recreation policies as social policies. We know that social policies are implemented with focal character because they are intended to promote rights for those persons to whom they are restricted (BEHRING; BOSCHETTI, 2011). From this perspective, sports and leisure have not been considered as basic needs that must be protected, although they are part of the universe of education (another social right) and are included in specific laws for certain vulnerable groups such as children and adolescents¹¹ and the elderly.¹²

Several works by researchers linked to the groups mentioned in this article argue that many citizens are excluded from the right of access to sport and leisure. That would explain the designation of “social policies” given to the Government’s initiatives, since those policies would be intended to seek eradication of social inequalities (DEMO, 2006). However, the data we mentioned on the CGU’s finding about the PELC, based on information contained in the very Ministry of Sports’ reports, cannot explain that policy as reducing or eliminating inequalities in sport and leisure. The proportion is similar to what happens in local contexts and can be found in the results presented in works mentioned in this article.

The above arguments seem to support the claims of Mascarenhas (2003) and Veronez (2005), according to which sport and leisure policies have not been able to legitimize their intervention objects as social rights. Furthermore, *critical* sociology that studies them does not seem to have social impacts. We know that rights have often been achieved through struggles. For example, the right of access to health in a unified system, despite the several problems it faces, is a result of the three-decade struggle by the health reform movement (PAIM, 2007). Similarly, the rights related to social assistance through a unified system were achieved through historical

¹⁰ All regulated by organic laws enacted after the complementary text (Law 8080 of September 1990 and Law 8742 of December 7, 1993, respectively).

¹¹ Art. 4 of Law 8069 of July 13, 1990, The Statute of the Child and Adolescent.

¹² Art. 3 of Law 10741 of October 1, 2003, The Statute of the Elderly.

struggles carried out by several political actors, especially social workers, and intensified during the drafting of the 1988 Constitution (BEHRING; BOSCHETTI, 2011).

Therefore, the role played by political agents in the process of struggle should not be underestimated, as well as that played by intellectuals, who, by conducting a public sociology in Burawoy's (2006) terms, are ideally able to mobilize focal publics. Those subjects have effectively played the role of organic intellectuals in the manner of Gramsci (2001), enabling civil society participation in the war of position waged in arenas where policies are made and implemented, in order to achieve the rights intended by members of that very civil society.

4 BY WAY OF CONCLUSION...

The fertility of the categories proposed by Burawoy might be seen as a practical tool to analyze practices of the academic "community" dedicated to the study of sport and leisure policies, even though it is populated by intellectuals with different backgrounds.

Thus, following the author's terms, the initial analysis of the groups surveyed found indications of an academic practice of the type of *professional* sociology from which initiatives emerge towards *critical* sociology, here considered only within the framework of social theories' political implications. Moreover, there were no visible indications of a *public* sociological type of production as defined by Burawoy (2006).

If we seek a link between the statements in the previous paragraph and the views advocated by Burawoy, perhaps we should think that the role of *organic public* sociology in the discussions involving sports and recreation would be to raise awareness and legitimize such privileges, exceeding the limits of that particular right, establishing partnerships with other policies for employment, transportation, housing, education, and thus setting inter-sector policies. In our view, the trajectory of political, organic intellectuals who play a central role within sports and leisure is yet to be historically consolidated as a trajectory of accomplishments.

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