models, or material realities that underlie social relations. First to come were the historiographic interpretations which took the nation as an object for study; next were the functionalists and Marxists, who emphasized strata, class, culture, ideology, and methods of production as an explanation of social processes. In these theoretical constructions, change takes the form of sharp struggles between groups and classes expressed in social movements, where individual actions tend to disappear. The Venezuelan Orlando Albornoz found something similar in the field of educational research: Everything seemed to be explained by objective social frames that constrain the possibilities of social actors.

With respect to strategies for the future development of the social sciences, the authors present the most varied of stances. Although none of the authors studies the present situation of sociology departments in detail, they all seem to agree that a great many of these institutions have lost their former splendor: They have become routine and intellectually sterile, and their formative programs are rigid and insensitive to the theoretical and methodological innovations of the past few years. Faced with this gap, private research centers and nonuniversity institutions have been much more dynamic, despite current financial difficulties. Puerto Rican Marcia Rivera suggests a reconciliation between universities and private research centers "to design new forms of collaboration and exchange, and to deal with the problem of reproducing the producers of knowledge" (p. 119).

Other proposals also try to solve the present difficulties, and some of them bear the mark of confused and opaque postmodernist prose or the haste of an accusation against intellectual Eurocentrism and colonialism. Rigoberto Lanz, from Venezuela, reflects the latter stance, presenting the analytical limitations of the liberal dogmas of progress embodied in the diffuse binary classifications "backwardness/modernization." In his opinion, these views hide a Eurocentrist attitude and the crudest intellectual colonialism. They declare the Western experience as universal, as the path that all societies must follow, assuming, furthermore, that Western social sciences are "the best of universal thought" (p. 70). Does this mean that colonial countries will have to create their own social science different from that of the West? Lanz is ambivalent in this respect, but finally he believes it possible and desirable, and in support he mentions the "postcolonial perspectives" of the Cuban José Martí and the Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui. The irony, however, is that these authors were educated in the best of European thinking of their time, and creatively applied this to their study of the Latin American experience.

Not all of the contributions to *Sociology in Latin America* are of equal quality, but as a whole the volume offers valuable information about the state of the social sciences south of the Rio Grande. It is not easy to guess the future, but the experience of the past 50 years indicates that sociology may be unable to avoid political tensions. And amid these conflicts, commitment to the problems of their respective societies will continue to be much appreciated by analysts of the most diverse theoretical perspectives.

Beyond the Fragments: Building a Portuguese-Speaking Community in Social Sciences

Terra Nostra: Challenges, Controversies and Languages for Sociology and the Social Sciences in the Twenty-first Century, edited by **Ana Nunes de Almeida**. Madrid: International Sociological Association, 1998. Proceedings of the ISA Regional Conference for the Lusophone World, Lisboa, Portugal, November 1997.

"Language is a virus"
Laurie Anderson

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Drawing upon a set of papers given at a recent Conference held in Lisbon, *Terra Nostra* reflects upon the current state of affairs, challenges, and prospects for the Portuguese-speaking (or Lusophone) social sciences. Analyzing their own (national) situations, the contributors have a privileged viewpoint from which they can scrutinize the various specific constraints and potentialities, both internal

and external, prevailing upon the development of social sciences in their countries. Moreover, as outstanding scholars, for better or worse, some share a direct responsibility, as in the case of the Portuguese authors, for the institutional trajectory of sociology. *Terra Nostra* is thus a judicious sociological account of Portuguese-speaking sociology.

What is at stake in *Terra Nostra* is the broad ontological question of a Lusophone Community in the Social Sciences (henceforth LCSS). In this specific regard, the contributions are unequally balanced; I suspect the authors' acquaintance with each other's work turned out, ironically, to restrict interactive dialogue instead of promoting it. However, it is fair to acknowledge the contentiousness of the issues raised by *Terra Nostra*. One of those issues involves the existing disparities and inconsistencies among the Portuguese-speaking countries and, given this, the establishment of a minimal degree of internal coherence of a commonly shared social knowledge. As examples, we can examine: (a) different paradigmatic affiliations constituted over large and diverse time spans and varying degrees of institutional maturity (clearly identified in many chapters, allowing us to posit Brazil and Portugal on one side and Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau on the other); (b) pungent national sociopolitical problems forcing social scientists continuously to equate their work in terms of either surrender or emancipation vis-à-vis state instrumentality (as in the newly independent Portuguese-speaking African countries, illustrated by C. Cardoso and A. Loforte); and (c) growing competition for limited or diminishing independent research funds, prompting empiricism and inward group-closedness instead of either theoretical creativity or outward group-openness, or both (see scattered references in some of the chapters by Portuguese authors, especially B. S. Santos, J. F. Almeida, and J. M. Pinto).

Admittedly—other examples aside—what comes out of all this is a dynamic and intriguing picture of an LCSS as a myriad of conceptual plasticity, theoretical and methodological proclivities, fragmentary epistemologies, and varied research agendas and strategies (to be seen in various contributions, particularly that of A. S. Silva). In other words, in terms of the geopolitics of knowledge, an LCSS is still in the making (as M. V. Cabral emphasizes in his chapter). Yet communities—social, political, or scientific—are far from being homogeneous, coherent, and internally balanced. Hence, *Terra Nostra* is itself a prospectus for such a community; it offers an implicit or explicit argument for furthering the LCSS despite multiple national paths and conspicuous asymmetries.

By and large, *Terra Nostra* seems to establish the bottom line of a Lusophone community in the making, first and foremost in the use of the Portuguese language as the main vehicle of intercommunication. The introduction by A. N. Almeida plus the chapter by O. Velho most strongly highlight the potential of such a cultural resource and its likelihood to promote bonds. However, in my view, grammar, not language as such, seems to come to the fore in this community of social scientists. After Lusophonic communication, the next issue becomes the creation of mutual discursive intelligibility. Similar to the Simmelian "bridge and door" metaphor, scientific discourses are likely to forge unity from within and diversity from without. The problem then is twofold. First, one might question *where* to locate an LCSS in the face of the intersecting challenges of global and local knowledge. A straightforward response to this is offered by W. G. Santos, who suggests that only from a peripheral standpoint can we grasp how empowering global and hegemonic knowledge and discourse are. For the Brazilian scholar—in a "can the subaltern speak?" sort of argument—the grammar of an LCSS should then become a threshold at which the margins help to break up the Western/Northern enclosure of social knowledge and radically bring forth difference as an identity form. Otherwise, the LCSS seems to run the risk of becoming a meaningless void wherein a common language limits itself to endorsing (Luso)cacophony. Overtly, as the argument goes, there is little room to discuss the political pertinence of different forms of hybridization, should they be seen as third cultures, heterotopias, meso-languages, or intermediary standpoints.

The second problem is that an LCSS must confront forcibly the power inscribed in the universality of Western/Northern hegemonic social theory and to contrast it with non-Western/Southern (supposedly) descriptive and empirical narratives. The chapter by B. S. Santos is entirely devoted to this complex

matter and, in a way, it goes beyond the argument of the radicalization of difference raised by his homonymous Brazilian scholar (W. G. Santos). With a questioning stance—"which side are we on?"—the point is, naturally, *how* to produce an alternative counterhegemonic theory. The argument is that since modernity's promises are still to be fulfilled, we are now facing (modern) problems for which no handy (modern) solutions exist. We must invent them through intellectual and theoretical creativity, while realizing that existing hegemonic theoretical conceptualizations are part of the problem of emancipatory politics in the South insofar as they provide deficient solutions or no solutions at all.

It is my conviction that we cannot start from scratch, and I believe that, in B. S. Santos's reasoning, the future prospect of an LCSS will depend as much on the ability to theorize anew as on the capacity to incorporate the most pertinent Western/Northern contributions, without yielding to their authoritarian grammar. Still, if we bring this knowledge-power argument inside the LCSS, we cannot avoid questioning the extent to which critical theory—empowering itself, though differently from metropolitan mainstream theorizing—may or may not create new structures and/or reformulate existing structures of internal (dis)empowerment. The question remains: What changes in the internal power structure and the relation of forces will be brought about by the spreading of critical theory within the LCSS?

Terra Nostra is a noticeable attempt to map out new terrains of reflection and critical engagement. All nine chapters (plus the introduction) contain an inescapable invitation to cross borders not only of nationalities, but also of theories and disciplinary forms of knowledge. It may offer no immediate or tangible solutions for an LCSS, yet it counts as a major contribution in the field of geoculture. Last but not least, *Terra Nostra* accomplishes the mission of intellectual work: to help to illuminate the historical choices that we collectively have. We look forward to new *Terras Nostras*, both in book form and in the terrain of active partnerships among social scientists.

A Fine Introduction to Nordic Sociology

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From A Doll's House to the Welfare State: Reflections on Nordic Sociology, by **Margareta Bertilsson** and **Göran Therborn**. Madrid: International Sociological Association, 1998. Proceedings of the ISA Regional Conference for Northern Europe, Copenhagen, Denmark, June 12-13, 1997.

The two editors of this volume—Margareta Bertilsson (University of Copenhagen) and Göran Therborn (Director at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences in Uppsala)—state that they had two goals in mind when they put together this volume: to present a fair picture to the international community of the state of Nordic sociology toward the end of this century, and to raise some questions about sociology that will be discussed within the Nordic countries themselves. They have succeeded very well on both scores; furthermore, the reader gets a fine picture of the evolution of Nordic sociology since its beginning. And all of this is accomplished in just 100 pages. Add to this that each of the 12 contributions to this volume is less than ten pages long, and you have not only a fine book but also one that is very easy and enjoyable to read.

From A Doll's House to the Welfare State opens with a brilliant, erudite introductory essay by Göran Therborn and Margareta Bertilsson. The authors cover not only the evolution of sociology in the Nordic countries from the mid-nineteenth century onward, but also sociology's relationship to the other social sciences, to the arts, and to the political sphere. The introduction also contains some evocative ideas about why Nordic sociology has been very successful at times but less so at others. Around the turn of the century, for example, Nordic sociology missed an opportunity to explore the new ideas being propagated by such writers as Ibsen and Strindberg ("Rendez-vous manqués I: Sociology and Cultural Modernity"). *A Doll's House* by Ibsen and *Miss Julie* by Strindberg, it is argued, can be seen as attempts to conceptualize a social reality that eluded social