



İSTANBUL
GELİŞİM
ÜNİVERSİTESİ

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

WEEK 1

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Sociological Imagination

- **Structures, institutions, environment, individuals and groups:**
- Live in a moment and location both determine their being and both shaped by their experience. Therefore, their daily experiences and existence is in relation with their life in a certain moment and certain map.



Sociological Imagination

- **Example:**

Take the experience of people in Avcılar, İstanbul, Turkey in 2018. Their income would be related with the economic condition of Turkey. They will be educated according to the recent education system in Turkey. They will dress, socialize, eat, entertain themselves according to the present fashion / tendencies in Turkey.



Sociological Imagination

- **Question:**

Is the present condition of Turkey enough to explain Turkey; the life in Avcılar, İstanbul; the economic situation; the lifestyle?



Sociological Imagination

- **Structures, institutions, environment, individuals and groups:**
- Live in a moment and location both determine their being and both shaped by their experience. That is true, however this is not enough. Their life is also determined by a greater geography and time. Their daily existence is built up during historically longer and geographically bigger processes.



Sociological Imagination

- **Example:**

People live in Avcılar, İstanbul and Turkey are living also in today's world. Both the world and Turkey and İstanbul have a long history. Take the education system as an example. Our education system is developed according to the modern education system. The roots are back in the Enlightenment era (18th century).



Sociological Imagination

- **Example:**

During Enlightenment the idea that science and education is the key for progress was born. Even before Enlightenment there were universities. The first university (in the modern sense) was established in Italy in 1088 (The University of Bologna). Universities were developed during the time, the education system is changing day by day and therefore a student in Avcılar, İstanbul in 2018 lives also in a historically developed institution whose roots are back in 11th century and whose idea of education is still related with the 18th century.



Sociological Imagination

- **Example:**

Let me give you a simpler example:

Assume that a couple marries in Avcılar. The fashion of marriage would be related by the present fashion however their marriage is itself belongs to a long of traditon of marriage both in Turkey which gives it its local aspects and both in the world. Even though marriage is a very old custom in all the world, it is still one of the most important ways that explain our relations with our selected partners.



Sociological Imagination

- **Therefore:**

Neither our lives nor the lives of people around us, nor the functioning of systems or institutions (education, marriage) are independent from the world history and the present world.



The case of the distant house

- Imagine a very distant house at the end of a town. The house and so the household members are away from other houses in the town.



The case of the distant house

- Even these people cannot live a life independent from:
- The past and present of the world
- The structure of family in the country they live in,
- The development of cities and towns in the world and in their country,
- The labor market
- The economic structure...



Sociological Imagination

- **The role of the sociologist:**

is to relate the individuals in that distant house:

- first with the social circles, society, economic and cultural factors and then
- With the historical development of the present condition and the similar cases in the world.



Sociological Imagination

- I use the term sociological imagination by referring to the well-known sociologist Wright Mills.
- This concept of sociological imagination means to consider the relations between our biography and social and historical facts and developments.
- Sociological imagination helps us to see that many events which seem to be related with individual problems/conditions are in fact happen in a larger net of relations.



Sociological Imagination

Sociological imagination refers to a perspective that understands the relation between individuals and society without neglecting the effects of time and history.



What do we gain from sociological imagination?

- To develop a better understanding of the life of individuals and the history of society,
- To connect the present time with the past,
- To be able to look at historical periods and the facts of these periods from the aspect of the experiences of many different human groups and the relations between these experiences.
- To understand the personal life and evaluate the future goals,
- To be aware of the historical period we live in and the condition of other people living with us,
- To understand whether the problems are individual problems or structural problems.



What do we gain from sociology?

- Individuals who have the education of sociology learn to think critically about social life and question it.
- Sociological perspective increases our awareness on our limitations and opportunities.
- Sociological perspective enable people to pass beyond the daily perspective.
- Sociology enables us to look at the social and cultural relations in a comparative and historical way. We can discover different human conditions that we have never realized before.
- Sociological education increases our knowledge on other societies and institutions and bring common sense instead of polarization.
- Knowledge on sociology enables a comprehensive search for solution to societal problems.



What Is Sociology?

- **Sociology:** is according to Giddens an inquiry of the societal life of people, human groups and societies”. (Giddens, 2008:38),
- It is the systematic and planned study of the human groups and societal life in modern societies” (Browne,1998:1)
- It is the scientific study of human societies and the human behavior in the groups forming these societies” (Kornblum ve Smith 2008:4).



What Is The Subject of Sociology?

It is the interactions developed by individuals, human groups and societies within **themselves** and with their **surroundings** during the course of time.

- The subject of sociology is not individual worlds or individual lives.
- The subject of sociology is the social world we live in and the social life we experience.

What is sociology?

- Let's take a look at the definitions again:
 - **Sociology:** is according to Giddens an inquiry of the societal life of people, human groups and societies". (Giddens, 2008:38),
 - It is the systematic and planned study of the human groups and societal life in modern societies" (Browne,1998:1)
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What is sociology?

- Sociology investigates in the larger scale (at **macro level**) the structures of and changes in societal institutions or societies; in the smaller scale (**micro level**) the groups, the interaction between groups and the societal roles.
- **Microsociology** deals with daily behaviors in the close environment which involve close interaction, proximity.
- Makrosociology deals with the analysis of political structure, economic system and other macro level societal structures and systems (Giddens (2008), *Sosyoloji*, s.60).



What is sociology?

Sociology appeared as a scientific branch in 19th century.

The important social forces in the birth of sociology are:

- Political revolutions
- Changes in religion
- Development of science
- Industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism
- Urbanization
- The rise of socialism.



Political Revolutions

- The most important political revolution for sociology is the French Revolution (1789):
 - The French Revolution introduced us the principles of equality and solidarity. It was the strongest expression of the idea that citizens should be equal and they should interact with solidarity.
 - The French Revolution developed the definition of nation and nationalism. Before that people were identifying themselves mostly with their religion or their position under the ruling system.



Changes in Religion and Scientific Developments

- Religion was the only authority to explain life, however the scientific developments and explorations demonstrated a wider knowledge on the world.
- New and comprehensive world maps were developed; people started to get mobilized, travel and they started to meet new human groups.



Industrial Revolution and the Rise of Capitalism

- The scientific changes led to the industrial revolution.
- Rather than the income gained from the rural work; the industry started to offer works and became the center of economy.
- A new group appeared: the workers.
- People migrated from rural to the spheres of industry.
- The system of capitalism is developed following the changes.



The Development of the City and the Life of Worker Groups

- People migrated from rural to the places where they can work.
- These places are turned to the modern city.
- The city became the main unit where the economy and social life is accumulated (gathered together).
- The workers started to live in workers' neighborhoods, the schools, hospitals, sports areas are designed for their leisure time.



The Rise of Socialism

- Capitalism and so the employers demanded more work and more income.
- The workers were working in low wages to support their families but the employers were getting the entire wealth of the goods produced by workers.
- A conflict occur between workers and employers and a demand on equal rights and equal division of capital occurred, which is socialism.



Sociology has branches almost as much as the subjects it researches.

- Sociological theory
- Methodology
- Applied sociology
- Comparative Sociology
- Social statistics
- Sociology of law
- Sociology of crime
- Sociology of language
- Sociology of Family
- Sociology of Religion
- Sociology of Language
- Sociology of Culture
- Social Identity
- Socialization
- Medical Sociology
- Political Sociology
- Urban Sociology
- Rural Sociology



- Industrial Sociology
- Sociology of Economics
- Sociology of Sports
- Sociology of Art
- Sociology of Literature
- Social Change
- Social Movements
- Social Stratification
- Sociology of Social Institutions
- Sociology of Migration
- Sociology of Youth
- Sociology of Education
- Social Control
- Sociology of Information
- Sociology of Science
- Racial and ethnic studies
- Sociology of Occupations



- Smelser reminds us that today almost everything under the sun has its own sociology.
(Smelser (1994) *Sociology*, s.8)



- BUT...

Let's not forget that sociology is comparative!

Remember the definition of the role of the sociologist: making comparisons between the individual biography and the condition of today; between the present location and time, and the larger geography and history.



- SO:

Even though we have branches and endless subjects, they cover each other and they refer to each other.

Take for example the Sociology of Youth. Imagine that you would investigate the latest trends in the youth in Avcılar, İstanbul in 2018.



- Could you make your research without referring to the economic condition of youth and therefore refer to sociology of economics?

Fashion trends require an economy which is linked to the economy of the groups they belong to and the overall economy of the country.



- OR:
- If you would add the experiences of the entire youth in the Avcılar district, you would have to refer to the young refugees living in the area and therefore refer to the Sociology of Migration.
- Sociology investigates relations and relations always have many actors and many sides (aspects).



- Let us remember the distant house:
- The relations within the household members,
- The relations with the neighbors,
- The occupational relations of the individuals in the household,
- The condition of their occupations in the labor market,
- The condition of the neighborhood in the city,
- How the city is effected by the developments in the country,
- How their occupations are effected by the economy of the country....
- All of these factors present us an almost endless variety of human relations. These relations can be seem very COMPLEX to us.



Sociological Imagination

- Sociological imagination eases this complexity in a comparative and historical way.
- Mills reminds us that if we define the questions of social science well we can cover and understand both the individual and public problems, and the complex relations between them.

(Mills (2007) *Toplumbilimsel Düşün*, s.372).



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