Sociology of the company

**Read the text below carefully, extract the main ideas and translate it.**

Although the teaching of the sociology of the company in this way began in the 1990s, this scientific field combines the knowledge accumulated throughout the twentieth century. At the outset, the founding fathers of sociology had a very broad vision to examine more closely the functioning of institutions.

Their visions don't get into the details of what's going on within each company; then during the 20th century, the sociology of work concerned the worker without having to worry about the owner or the client, while the sociology of organizations made it possible to study the institution, but also the administrations and associations to establish the common denominator. It was not until the 1980s that the first lines of corporate sociology began to appear.

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For the sociology of companies, the company is at the same time a place of production, an organization and an institution:

* A place of production, because the company is an economic agent and it seeks efficiency, productivity, due to its employees and its machines, products, etc.
* An organization, made up of individuals who will organize themselves collectively to solve problems, produce, sell a product, a service, act towards a common goal. These individuals are therefore in a necessary relationship with other individuals and these relationships are made according to certain “organizational constraints (regulations, work procedures, work habits, hierarchical status, roles…)
* An institution, that is to say a space where individuals share identical ideas, interests, feelings. It unites groups through work carried out collectively. The Company as a "defined and organized body" is, for (Thuderoz, 1997: 88), a "place of identification", a place "of learning norms of relationship" (Sainsaulieu, 1977: 256), which complements the contributions of the school and the family, a place where friendship is born.

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* + 1. The actors

The contractor (l’entrepreneur) :

The study of companies presupposes the analysis of the entrepreneurial function. Schumpeter is the one who puts the role of the entrepreneur at the heart of all economic and social life. Extending Tarde’s laws on imitation, he considers that any general equilibrium is periodically called into question by “creative destruction” caused by “innovators”: entrepreneurs. They can innovate in five directions: products, production methods; outlet; raw materials; organization.

One of the most complete definitions of the entrepreneurial function is ultimately due to another member of the Austrian school, I. Kirzner : "The crucial capacity of the entrepreneur is to be the first to perceive in the interstices of the current production system the potential situations where there are opportunities to offer others the possibility of achieving what they aspire to in conditions of exchange superior to those of which they were previously aware.

Here we find the audacity and opportunism that have characterized function since it was identified (H. Vérin). Added to this the sense of connecting different actors who will find an advantage. To undertake to take initiatives that improve exchanges by serving as an intermediary. The entrepreneurial approach thus covers a function more than a person does. The same person can occupies several functions in a company: entrepreneur and director, employee and shareholder, etc.

The basic triad (customers, workers, owners)

These three categories of actors have a fundamental characteristic: if only one is lacking, the whole system stops. One can indeed imagine a company without immediate competitor, without union, without lender or even without suppliers. On the other hand, everything stops: either if the customers do not buy, or if the workers do not produce, or if the owners do not invest. This triple remark justifies not only the vast literature in sociology of work (from G. Friedmann and P. Naville to D. Labbé and H. Landier), but also the abundant work on consumer behavior (often between marketing and sociology), and finally the recurring theme of the links between property and power (cf. M. Bauer and E. Cohen in France or H. Mintzberg in North America).

The other actors:

The other players meet less systematically, however their influence and potentials is important.

Let us mention the suppliers. If workers do not develop a product upstream downstream in the same company, certain stages of the production process are "outsourced". There is thus a fundamental choice to make between "doing" (inside, with workers) and "getting it done" (outside, with suppliers). As we can see, the solution between employing workers and calling on suppliers makes it possible to outline what a company's border can be. This border can be flexible: C.D.D., temporary workers, trainees, consultants, subcontractors ... can cover as many intermediate statuses between "inside" and "outside".

Among the influential actors, we should also mention competitors, who contest and threaten the entrepreneur's project; lenders, who supplement the financing provided by the owners with debt; employee unions (G. Adam and J.-D. Raynaud, D. Labbé and H. Landier) but also employers; Public powers; the media ... Rare works focus on professional unions or chambers of commerce and industry (G. Minguet). Finally, in France, sociologists neglect labor justice too much or the function of commercial courts despite the planned statization of the latter

The system

Objectives

The company is a finalized system where global objectives are pursued (C. Perrow): to be the leading car manufacturer, to provide the cheapest access to the Internet, to offer a full range of trips, etc. These objectives fuel the discourse on the "strategy" of the company, presented as a global offer developed in relation to the outside

The actors find their accounts there. As a result, it has no value in itself. in the end, it would be of no use to anyone if a company offered bad products, exploited employees and recorded losses. It would then represent a pure lack of results and a perfect waste of resources. It is only of interest if at least someone begins to find an advantage in it, which is only possible - as we have seen - only if the others also find their way there.

To conclude, the company is neither a wild place of exploitation, nor a providential citizen institution. It is only a mode of coordination. It turns out that this means it can serve customers while valuing the work and making the investment profitable. If these objectives are achieved jointly by this means, they have their full value.