About Historical Sociology

In the past four decades we have been witnessing the dynamic development of Historical Sociology or Historical Comparative Sociology. It is a field based on classical concepts (Weber, Elias, etc.) and important contemporary scholars as well (Eisenstadt, Tilly, Skocpol, Mann and Wallerstein). In these decades many ideas and thoughts were developed, discussed and published. The field has its journals (Journal of Historical Sociology since 1998, Historical Sociology since 2009), scholar forums and a part in the International Sociology Association ISA (Working group 02 Historical and Comparative Sociology).

It is represented by vast academic literature, textbooks (Abrams 1982, Skocpol 1985, Smith 1991, Szakolczai 2000, Bühl 2003, Schützeichel 2004, Šubrt 2007, Romanovskij 2009, Lachmann 2013), and also by works having a vocabulary character (Delanty – Isin 2003). Also in the Czech Republic Historical Sociology has been well established. In a short time several overviewing monographies have been published (J. P. Arnason 2009, Holubec 2009, M. Havelka 2010, Šubrt – Arnason 2010, Arnason 2010, Kalenda 2014, Masłowski – Šubrt 2014). In 2009/2010 the Department of Historical Sociology at the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University began educating scholars and two years later, the postgraduate department was opened as well.

Historical Sociology cannot be understood as some hybrid connection of history and sociology. It is a field based on an assumption that a general object of sociology is historical, time and space determined social reality. In accordance with that premise Historical Sociology could be defined as a specific theoretic and methodological perspective focused on long-term social processes, as well as on analysis of differences and similarities between different historical epochs. One key topic of Historical Sociology is modernization. Other topics include questions of social change, civilizational analysis, religious and cultural pluralities, state and nation making, formation of world systems, integrative and disintegrative processes, and globalizing trends. Therefore, Historical Sociology represents a diverse and internally differentiated field which endeavors to develop a general theory, as well as many specific theories, while also going to several specific directions and developing research on an empirical level. The study of Historical Sociology is not based on one theory or method. In the theoretical part the multiparadigm of it on one hand and in a research part the plurality of methodological approach on the other are emphasized. It is an interdisciplinary science, which cooperates primarily with the fields of history, anthropology, politology, and economy.