

**Book review:**

# **Sosiologi for sosionomer: En stående invitasjon**

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Katarina Jacobsson, Joakim Thelander, David Wästerfors, 2011

Translated from Swedish by Einar Blomgren

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**Åse Vagli,  
Doctor Philos, Associate Professor in Sociology,  
Institute of Social Studies, Stavanger University**

As a sociologist teaching upcoming social workers the art of thinking sociologically, I always welcome and am curious about possible new contributions and new approaches to the curriculum. Thus, I am happy to be asked to review this book.

The authors of *Sosiologi for sosionomer* are all experienced teachers and researchers in the field of sociology and social work, who are based at Socialhögskolan, Sociologiska institutionen, Lunds University and Högskolan Kristianstad in Sweden.

*Sosiologi for sosionomer* [1] presents questions and topics closely related to the everyday work of social workers. The authors are discussing a selective area of sociological concepts and perspectives, and apply these to practical situations and areas. Through seven chapters, including an introduction and closing, the chapters address the following topics:

- The Poor
- The Client
- Families
- Treatment
- Care

The book *Sosiologi for sosionomer* is pedagogical and well structured. Each chapter includes several facts sections, and there is also a separate dictionary. The book has a well-developed bibliography over 10 pages and an index that makes it a useful tool for further reading. The reference list has a predominance of Swedish literature. This is natural since the book is translated from Swedish and the authors are Swedish, but may be a disadvantage for Norwegian readers who are then not guided towards relevant Norwegian studies in the same area.

The book *Sosiologi for sosionomer* is about how sociological thinking and perspectives can help understand, unveil and make visible hidden phenomena linked to the practice of social work. And the book is successful in illustrating this, with apt examples from actual social work fields on how sociological perspectives may contribute to understanding disclosed and taken for granted phenomena in social work.

It may always be discussed as to which topics should be included in a relatively short introductory presentation of sociology for social workers. There will always be decisions about what to include and how to present the topics, how much theory, how many examples and so on. All of the choices leave something out and there are no perfect solutions. I find the choice of topics here to be relevant for *sosionomer* as the target group, and there is a fruitful balance between the choices of topics and examples of theory. I think the balance is rather well done, even if some questions about the inclusion of topics may be asked.

When starting to read the book I became rather provoked by the opening statement about social workers not needing sociological knowledge to do their work. Given that the aim of the book is to: “demonstrate that knowledge of sociology can influence the practice of social work” (p. 13), this opening is surprising and makes one wonder what the authors are up to. But upon further reading, the book makes me see that this opening serves as both a pedagogical aim and substantial point. Sociology is not purely useful for social workers, but may have significance if the intent is to open up for an acceptance of sociological thinking. The book presents itself as a standing invitation to see what sociology has to offer. It then becomes clear that one point is to avoid presenting sociology as something which it is not – a practical theory for social workers. The authors arguing for the difference between sociology and social work, and emphasise that sociology is better at raising apt and important questions concerning social work than giving answers to how to solve the

questions. In this way, sociology's relation to social work is presented from a realistic perspective. As a teacher, I know that many social work students have a resistance towards learning what they define as a difficult and theoretical subject such as sociology. Upon meeting this attitude, it may be tempting to try to "sweeten the pill" by presenting sociology as a practical tool. Fortunately, the authors of this book have not fallen for this temptation.

Throughout the book, it is demonstrated that sociological perspectives are useful for areas of social work by opening up for questions, reflections and critical orientations about what is taken for granted in the field. The book *Sosiologi for sosionomer* has its strength in the use of many relevant examples from the everyday life of practical social work, although I do miss some deeper discussions on themes such as power, knowledge and organisations/institutions. The theoretical perspectives presented are also selective, and have a preponderance of constructivist and symbolic interactional theoretical perspectives and theories of everyday life. The authors argue for this selection of perspectives due to its special relevance to the field. And though I do not really disagree, I think that an introductory course should also have as its aim to make clear that there are many different ways of thinking about the same topic. To achieve balance, even if there is a preponderance of interactional theoretical perspectives, the book also presents some examples from other theories. Finally, I wonder why the authors narrow the addressing of the book to *sosionomer* as the title indicates? In Norway, we have several educations within the field of social work (*barnevernspedagogikk, vernepleier og sosionom*). I think it would be more natural in a Norwegian context to title such a book, *Sociology for Social Work*, thus broadening the scope of the addressees.

I close this review with a recommendation to try out this book on the curriculum for introductory courses in sociology for bachelor students in social work, but I think it must be supplemented with some more reading in the basic theories. Due to the high amount of references to Swedish research literature, there is also a need to supplement with some relevant Norwegian research and facts.

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[1] In Norway, *Sosionom* is in Norway a protected professional title for those qualified by a three- year bachelor's degree in social work. This education is offered both by *hHøgskoler* and by *uUniversities*. *Sosionomer* works in Norway in a wide area within social work, both public and private. Some examples are Social Service ( NAV) and Child Welfare , institutions for drug treatment, criminal re-establishment, mental health care, schools, family - child and youth administrative work, refugee centres and women's refuges, are some examples.