

## *O Compasso* [*The compass*]

Saguenail (Serge Abramovici) and Regina Guimarães (2008)

Original version in Portuguese with French subtitles

Friday, July the 5<sup>th</sup> 2013 / 10h00 am (Coffee will be provided ☺)

Location: BMBF-Projekt „Gesellschaftswissen“, Hansastrasse 9, 79104 Freiburg

Presentation, projection and discussion of a documentary film about a *sociological revisit* in a Portuguese local community (1977-2007), with João Queirós (University of Porto)

Introduction by Bruno Monteiro (University of Porto)

What happens when the observers are observed? "The compass" is a Portuguese documentary film that deals with this question, when it tries to grasp, in the very moment of inception, the sociological acts of observation, like applying a survey or making an interview. In the late 1970s, in a small community in Northwest Portugal, a seminal sociological work was conducted by José Madureira Pinto and João Ferreira de Almeida, resulting in two milestone books of Portuguese sociology. With the *sociological revisit* (as Michal Burawoy calls it) conducted thirty years later (in 2007 and 2008), it was possible to notice all the changes that the last three decades meant for the everyday life of this community, allowing for a re-appreciation of some of the original findings and conclusions. Besides that, this time the research program also included a documentary film: a film not about the *object* of research, the small community of *Fonte Arcada*, but actually about the very *subject* of the research, that is, the team of sociologists that carried it for more than two years. Saguenail (Serge Abramovici), a very attentive Portuguese film-maker, accompanied the team during their fieldwork in order to look *cinematographically* at the *sociological* look. This turns out to be a very interesting way of grasping the often ignored or omitted moment of negotiating and constructing the access to the people inquired or interviewed, the *tricks of the trade* that are part and parcel of the sociological work and tend to remain invisible when the results are

published, and also the questions raised by the encounter between two parties – the *indigenous* and the *scientists* – that have, each of them, a totally different history and very different interests.

João Queirós was a member of the research team responsible for the 2007 and 2008 revisit in Fonte Arcada, and is currently a doctoral fellow at the Institute of Sociology (University of Porto) and a guest teacher at the School of Education (Polytechnic Institute of Porto).

### Viewing *in the field*.

“Asking a question isn’t a legitimate act – so, the act of questioning denounces either the ingenuity or the exercise of the power of questioning. And the information obtained depends upon the image the inquirer forged about himself, the image he could transmit to others. He must interrogate without seeming to be asking and receive the answers as personal confidences. The ideal inquirer is a confessor. He must raise in the native the desire to speak; he must present himself as an ear that was long awaited. In a certain way, he is obliged to change the roles in order to present himself as someone solicited and not as someone who solicits during the questioning. He must offer his listening as an answer. The tortuous way of truth demands a mask, when it simply doesn’t demand falsity”.

“In this sense, more than the natives, the sociologists are sensible to the presence of the camera. Deprived of some defenses, they discretely throw a look in order to see if they are correctly framed by the camera or not. Sometimes they search for poses; many times they look on their own gestures. They feel disturbed, maybe because the images they wanted to transmit were not the images of themselves. They would prefer to remain anonymous. Transformed into characters, it’s the very objectivity of their sight, the neutrality of their position – that is, the roots of their symbolic authority – that are menaced. The camera interferes in their work because it catches them in the web of the image”.

Serge Abramovici, aka *Saguenail*, Director