


## In Memoriam: Michael Burawoy

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### Abstract

From the Editors: In Memoriam of Michael Burawoy.


**Keywords:** Michael Burawoy.

I write on behalf of the Editors of *Sociologica*, the members of our Editorial Board, and the members of our Advisory Board in mourning the tragic death of Michael Burawoy. Michael was killed on the evening of February 3, 2025, while using the crosswalk of a major intersection near his home in Oakland, California, by a speeding motorist who then fled the scene.

Michael was a personal friend to several of us. He was also a good friend of *Sociologica*. Burawoy was a founding member of our Advisory Board, serving continuously since 2007. As a sign of his importance for the journal, his paper, “Public Sociology: Mills vs. Gramsci” (Burawoy, 2007a), was the lead article in our first issue — Volume 1, Number 1 — which introduced the Italian translation of his 2005 essay, “For Public Sociology” (2007b).<sup>1</sup> More recently, we published a lengthy interview, taken from a lively conversation with Riccardo Emilio Chesta (Chesta & Burawoy, 2019). For us at *Sociologica*, three facets glimmer brightest in these two published texts.

Standing out first is the importance of debate. Michael Burawoy never shied away from debate. In fact, he enjoyed it and sought it out, — whether in published form or in other forums, like seminars, panels at conferences, or various public venues. That he was so obviously happy

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1. For the Italian translation of “For Public Sociology”, see Burawoy, 2007b; for the original English publication, see Burawoy, 2005.

in that mode does not mean that he was not tough. His arguments were principled. Even if one disagreed with those arguments, there was never a doubt that they went directly to the core issues in question. Moreover, if his interlocutors were fellow sociologists — no matter what their affiliations or perspectives — his tone was always professional, often friendly.

The second facet is Michael's advocacy of global sociology, as seen in this passage from a 2007 *Sociologica* article:

Just as the national division of labor is a terrain of struggle, so the global division of labor should also be an arena of contestation. While it is far more complex than a simple North-South struggle, promoting a South-South dialogue unmediated by, yet engaged with the North is a necessary condition for a vibrant global sociology. Nor is the North homogenous – European sociology is not the US and nor is European sociology of a piece (Burawoy, 2007a, p. 12).

The third facet is his passion for sociology. Michael truly loved sociology which he, following C. Wright Mills, viewed as “linking personal troubles to public issues, the foundation of a sociology for publics” (Burawoy, 2007a, p. 8). And he loved professional sociology no less than public sociology:

Underlying the postulate of the division of sociological labor is the belief that a vibrant discipline depends on the synergy of all four sociologies. To the extent that any one type of sociological knowledge cuts itself off from the others, it takes on a pathological form to the disadvantage of all. Thus, while public and professional sociology are antagonistic, they are also interdependent — there can be no public sociology without a professional sociology just as the development of professional sociology depends on public sociology (Burawoy 2007a, p. 9).



Many of the tributes that have been written since Michael's death refer to his passionate love for sociology. I add one modifier: his was a *joyful* passion. To those of us he so generously advised and taught — more than 80 PhD advisees, literally thousands of students who took the required theory course that he taught for decades at Berkeley, and scores of others whom he mentored without any institutional affiliation — let's imagine a question: “How do you remember Michael?” I am confident that the modal answer would include the word “smiling”. It was a lovely smile, filled with affection, mischief, and humor.

As the subtitle of our journal's name indicates, we at *Sociologica: International Journal for Sociological Debate*, just like the author of our first published article, are committed to fostering debate. As a journal published by an Italian university that seeks to reach an audience beyond Europe and North America, we do our part to contribute to a global sociology. Joyfully passionate about sociology, we very much enjoy the work we do among ourselves and with our contributors. We hope this enjoyment is infectious. Without taking ourselves too seriously, we take our work seriously. And, like Michael, we do it with a smile.

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