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Statement of the German Sociological Association against the intended decentralization of government funding of sociology and philosophy in Brazil's public universities

As recently announced via twitter (April, 26th 2019), the Brazilian government plans to decentralize funding for philosophy and sociology at public universities. Instead, public funding is to be rechanneled into so-called "useful" disciplines, such as engineering, arguing that these would have an immediate return to taxpayers, and suggesting that students who wish to pursue degrees in sociology and philosophy ought to pay tuition.

The German Sociological Association protests this political move, which we consider a grave violation of the universally recognized and fundamental principle of academic freedom. The political autonomy of universities and other academic institutions is a core element of free and democratic societies. Specifically, the knowledge produced in disciplines such as philosophy and sociology is without doubt crucial for understanding the modern world and the complex social realities we all inhabit. No modern society can do without the profound theoretical and empirical knowledge of these disciplines.

The decentralization of public funding of sociology and philosophy might be the death-knell for these disciplines in Brazil in the long run. To study in these fields would then depend on the prosperity of students and their families leading to increased elitism and social inequality of education, thus depriving Brazil of the creativity of its diverse population

As sociologists, we are deeply concerned that defunding sociology and philosophy would seriously damage the international reputation of Brazilian universities, not only in the disciplines at stake. Universities and research institutions in Brazil and Germany have close ties and important cooperation. Such a one-sided move by the new Brazilian government would certainly hamper future cooperation between our countries.

The German Sociological Association declares its solidarity with philosophers and sociologists in Brazil and calls on the Brazilian government to continue public funding of philosophy and sociology in its country!

Board of the German Sociological Association, May 2019