Creating Useable Knowledge for Tomorrow's Democratic Societies: The Academic Background of Social Science Works

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Potsdam, May 2015

Contents

Introduction

According to many critics (Lindblom 1990, Shapiro 2002, Lawrence and Skocpol 2006, Flyvbjerg 2001, Scott 2007, Burawoy 2005, Patterson 2014, Sayer 2011) the search for context-independent laws and theories within social and political science has predominantly created hyper-professionalized, hyper-fragmented, scholastic, method- and theory-driven disciplines that are hardly of relevance for those who struggle with concrete social and political problems.

At the same time, modernizing societies show an ever increasing demand for all kinds of research, meant to inform and justify policies that organize and capture more and more spheres of life. To a decreasing extent this research has been supplied by the social and political sciences. This despite the fact that an important motivation behind the endeavor to become more 'scientific' was to contribute to rational, 'evidence-based' social interventions. The role of other actors, traditionally already big, has grown: governmental agencies, quasi non-governmental organizations (Quangos), corporations, interest and advocacy groups, political parties, think tanks, and private research and consultancy institutions. In societies with big, still growing social, political and economic inequalities, the research produced by these actors is often biased in favor of the interests and values of privileged groups. Besides, this research primarily reflects and strengthens the functional rationalities that are dominant in our societies.

A leading theme in the evaluations of the strengths and weaknesses of social science and in the suggestions for change is its ability to question commonly accepted ideas and perspectives and to indicate alternatives. Social scholars should help to counter the 'impairment' (Lindblom 1990) of which everybody and every culture is a victim, an impairment that blinds for alternative views, ideas, values and goals. They should also help to lay bare how power shapes claims on expertise and objectivity. And the social sciences perform well in the sphere where the natural sciences perform badly: the substantial rational analysis and discussion of values and interests. By questioning accepted ideas and views and by suggesting alternatives social scholars contribute to a competition of ideas. By furthering civil society in this way they could be a vital liberating and humanizing force, also giving counterweight to unguided processes of rationalization.

Despite the fierce criticism formulated in the last decades on modern political science and sociology, despite the growing need to contribute to public decision making via substantial-rational queries, and despite the alternatives offered, no fundamental reorientation and change has taken place. The apparent rigidity of the system makes it important to empirically investigate the ideas and the social processes that underlie, foster and preserve the status quo. There is an urgent need for social science to research its own discipline.

In the following, we start with an overview of the development of the social and political sciences since the end of the Second World War. Although both disciplines show a comparable history, in the first part we focus on political science, in the second part on sociology. What were the societal and scientific ambitions and hopes of the early generations of modern social and political scholars? To what extent have these been realized? What is the current condition of the social sciences? What criticism has been formulated? What kinds of adjustments, changes or alternatives have been proposed?

Thereupon we concentrate on sociology. A call for 'public sociology' has developed here in the last decade, aimed at the collaboration between sociologists and publics in defining, understanding and relieving social problems. Open to discussion is whether this kind of social science hampers 'objectivity' or 'neutrality' and, related to this, whether there exists a 'professional sociology' less burdened by subjectivity.

In the last part we examine the apparent need for sociological research on the epistemological assumptions and expectations of researchers and on the ways scholars are trained, socialized and disciplined in their disciplines. This introduces a pivotal question: why has it proven to be that difficult to change, despite mounting criticism, the ongoing academic practices?

1 Hopes, expectations, and assumptions regarding a political science

Since the forties, partly as a reaction to the social and political disasters that had taken place in the preceding years, social and, particularly, political scholars felt a tugging democratic responsibility to develop their disciplines in a more scientific direction. What a social and political science could be, however, was not always clear to the partakers of, what Dahl (1961) later called, the "behavioralist mood". Clear was that the new science had to be more empirically informed, more accurate, systematic, theoretical, verifiable, replicable, quantitative and also more socially and politically relevant (Merriam 1945, Truman 1951, Eldersveld et al. 1952, Easton 1953, 1962, Brecht 1959, Dahl 1955, 1961, Eulau 1963). However, important epistemological questions remained unanswered and have stayed on the agenda ever since (Moon 1975, Bernstein 1976, Ricci 1984, Lindblom 1990, 1997, Gunnell 1993, Farr 1995, Blokland 2011). Everyday research practice has consequently been determined to a large extent by implicit suppositions, habit and simple convenience.

In these early years, it remained vague whether there were important differences between the natural and social sciences, and if so, what kind of consequences these differences would have for the methods, aims and results of social and political scholarship. Vague remained whether observations, descriptions and explanations of empirical phenomena could be theory or value-free and whether social and political science could be divorced from social and political philosophy. Vague remained to what extent societal complexity and free will would hamper the discovery of laws and theories that could be helpful to explain or even to predict social and political events or processes of significance. And thus vague remained how a social and political science had to be built up. Should scholars first conduct research in relatively small and comprehensible domains of reality and then later combine the widely distributed knowledge that had thus been collected, into one or more grand theories? Or would such a strategy, as Robert Lynd predicted in 1939, mainly produce a science that would look like "the ditty bag of an idiot, filled with bits of pebbles, straws, feathers, and other random hoardings" (1939: 183)? What was the meaning of "progress" in social and political science? What criteria, yardsticks or determinants could there be for "quality"? Alongside these epistemological concerns, the question of how social and political science could or should be socially and politically relevant also went unanswered. What would "relevance" mean, anyway?

In this context of ambiguity, many social and political scholars simply tried to find out practically or "on the job" how far their conception of science would bring them. Despite exposition of the weak epistemological foundations upon which it stood (e.g. Elliott 1928, Mannheim 1936, Voegelin 1952, Wolin 1960, Berlin 1962, Oakeshott 1962), "normal science", as Kuhn (1962) would put it, developed, a state where the fundamental assumptions of the entire endeavor are hardly questioned and where an array of social rewards and punishments, subtle or less subtle, "discipline" individuals to work within the dominant paradigm.

2 Doubts and worries in the sixties

A new round of doubts began to surface as social science remained largely silent in the face of civil rights tensions, gaping social inequality, and the Vietnam tragedy. Even some of the pioneers of political science became progressively skeptical about the transformation of the study of politics into, as Easton expressed the aspiration, "a science of politics modeled after the methodological assumptions of the natural sciences" (1962: 17). Already in 1961 Dahl (cf. Eulau 1963, Easton 1969, Lowi 1972, Kariel 1972) warned that the concentration on "is-questions" had led to the neglect of urgent normative or prescriptive questions. The separation of science and philosophy had caused an uninformed and detached philosophy and a superficial and directionless science. The absence of historical knowledge had inclined many scholars to overlook those variables of which the sometimes decisive importance only becomes manifest in the long range. The scientific attitude could cause the researcher to restrict himself to providing superfluous and unambiguous proof of trivialities and to be afraid of formulating theories that, though less firmly grounded, are considerably more relevant. It seemed to Dahl evident "that unless the study of politics generates and is guided by broad, bold, even if highly vulnerable general theories, it is headed for the ultimate disaster of triviality" (1961: 25).

Some of these worries culminated at the end of the sixties, both in the US and in Europe. In 1967 The *Caucus for a New Political Science* was set up in the US, striving to bring "An End to Political Science". Its members condemned the "anti-political" character of the prevailing political science (Green and Levinson 1970; Connolly 1969, Surkin and Wolfe 1970). In their attempt to develop a value-free science, political scientists had banned everything associated with politics from their discipline. They seemed, wrote McCoy and Playford, "to select their topics not by any criteria of political significance but rather by criteria determined by their methodology" (1967: 7). Political science seemed "unrelated to the needs and concerns of the times" and despite their interest in empirics, the scholars involved had constructed an ivory tower out of "jargon" and "scientism" (1967: 8). And because political scientists did not come up with any answers to crucial societal problems, they left a vacuum that got filled by "the poet, the Bohemian fringe, the propagandist and the opportunist" (1967: 9; cf. Mannheim 1940: 30-3, 185).

The criticism of the 1960s took various and not always internally consistent perspectives (Blokland 2011: 275*ff*). The fundamental epistemological issues were touched upon, but were never fully elaborated. They also never became the subject of discussion across the breadth of the discipline. As a consequence, no workable consensus was reached on the epistemological possibilities of social and political scholarship. Partly for this reason, these

disciplines broke up after the 1960s into a multitude of alternative approaches, with their own departments, professional journals, conferences and discourses, and the exponents of each tended to stick by and large to their own kind (cf. Almond 1990). The ideas of Kuhn (1962) and Lakatos (1970) about the merits of scientific paradigms seemed to justify this development.

3 Hyper fragmentation and specialization, scholasticism and irrelevancy

Discomfort and criticism over the way social and political science was developing never disappeared and seems on the rise in the last decade. Out of uneasiness about the political irrelevance of their discipline, the *Perestroika* movement arose in American political science, a movement that in many ways resembles *The Caucus for a New Political Science*. Its members call for publication, research, and appointment policies less influenced by positivistic assumptions and more by political relevance (Smith 2002, Shapiro 2002, Monroe 2005, Schram and Caterino 2006, Scott 2007).

Concurrently, more and more objections have been formulated against the "specialization" of the profession and perceived invalid justifications for this trend. Jacobs and Skocpol observe a "hyper-fragmentation into ever more disconnected research communities that are of diminishing importance to understanding the state of democratic life" (2006: 29). Political science has become increasingly irrelevant and ignored: instead of informing "pressing problems of public life" modern professional scholars produce "increasingly insular and self-referential bodies of research.., with little or no relevance to broader public debates" (2006: 28).

Likewise, Mead observes that political science is becoming "scholastic": "Research questions are getting smaller, and data gathering is contracting. Inquiry is becoming obscurantist and ingrown" (2010: 453). He discerns four trends that define scholasticism: specialization, methodologism, non-empiricism and literature focus. Thus, modern political scientists do not only specialize in smaller and smaller parts of reality, they "are interested mainly in methodology or statistics, rather than in the subject of analysis... They have a method, but they often have little to say apart from it" (2010: 454). Since the availability of data and literature decides which issues are studied, important subjects are often neglected. First-hand, practical experience and knowledge of politics and policymaking is most of the time absent.

The fact that subfields in social and political science have grown more and more specialized and insulated from one another, results, according to Walker, from "paradigm mentalities" which "prompt scholars to break into narrow, highly-specialized, esoteric research communities" and encourage "hyper-specialized tribalism within subfields" (2010: 434, 435). This "paradigm mentality", inspired by the ideas of Kuhn and Lakatos on normal science and incommensurability, has been widely employed, if not internalized, by social and political scientists (2010: 436, cf. Ricci 1977, 1984).

Political science, James Scott states likewise, "suffers from the problem of hyper-professionalism, by which I mean the proliferation of small coteries doing increasingly specialized work that appeals to narrower and narrower audiences" (2007: 384). The articles

published in the highly specialized journals are hardly ever read by more than three persons, research shows. Consequently, "the whole business of peer-reviewed journals has no effect on the external world and is just a Rube Goldberg machine designed to get people tenure" (2007: 385).

In the natural sciences, Shapiro observes, specialization often furthers important scientific progress. Specialization indeed does exist in the social and political sciences as well, "seen in the proliferation of dedicated journals, professional organizations and sub organizations, and esoteric discourses notable for their high entry costs to the uninitiated. Here tangible advances in knowledge are less easily identified, however" (2002: 596, cf. Shapiro 2005).

Lindblom notices similarly that in a genuine science debate leads to a convergence of ideas and to a broadly accepted "body of knowledge". In political science though, "debate rarely leads to findings. And on any given big issue of fact or value, debate in political science tends to be endless rather than declining (or terminating in a finding)" (1997: 243; cf. Gunnel 1997, Smith 1997, Scott 2007: 382-3).

According to Shapiro, specialization has also cultivated a divorce between political philosophy and political science, and consequently generated an ill-informed normative theory and an empirical theory "banal and method-driven - detached from the great questions of the day and focused instead on what seems methodologically most tractable" (2002: 597, cf. Dahl 1961). With many others, Shapiro pleas for a social and political science that is less driven by methods or theories, and more by concrete social and political problems (cf. Lindblom and Cohen 1979, Lindblom 1990, Green and Shapiro 1996, Flyvbjerg 2001, Monroe 2005, Jacobs and Skocpol 2006, Mead 2010).

4 Ontological assumptions and social pressures

There have been few attempts to get to the bottom of persistent irrelevance of the social sciences. In democracies, which are saturated by politics, policies and a demand for information, evidence and justification, why has "scholasticism" or the "paradigm mentality" prevailed? Ontological, hardly ever explicated and evaluated assumptions seem to be at work, assumptions about the existence of objective, universal and timeless laws and theories. These context-independent laws and theories would describe, explain and also predict human behavior and social phenomena. Like in the natural sciences, the laws and theories in question are waiting to be discovered by us, or some of us, armored with superior scientific methods and techniques. The fact that we still have not found much is a temporary drawback, asking for the collecting of more data and the development of new methods. In other words, a monistic "Weltanschauung" (Berlin 1958, 1962, 1978) seems to prevail among social and political scientists. Consciously or unconsciously, they appear to assume the existence of a cosmic order in which all genuine questions, whether about facts or values, can only have one right answer and in which all right answers can be logically organized in a harmonious, coherent and consistent system.

On a sociological level, the few endeavors to identify causal mechanisms point to what can be best described as socially-reinforcing professional incentives and pressures. Shapiro (2002: 435) argues that scholars are so preoccupied with method and theory driven research because this is in demand by academic journals and tenure committees. Walker (2010: 435)

points to the inappropriate application of Kuhn (1962) and Lakatos (1970) to social science as frequent sources of scientific legitimation for the many social rewards and punishments employed to keep scholars committed to paradigms. Thus, scientific progress is assumed to take place when scholars meticulously collaborate in the context of a generally accepted paradigm or research program. Implicitly reacting to this practice, Byrne notes that democracies should not allow social scientists to provide the only assessments of their discipline given their conflicting interests. Social scientists, "having built careers within them and being committed to existing academic discourses as sources of prestige and power, are perhaps the last people to judge their overall worth" (2011: 177). Therefore, exclusively asking the present incumbents of academic positions to evaluate the work of their colleagues and to appoint their successors is asking for more of the same.

We come back to socialization and disciplination after we have had a closer look at the developments in sociology. Exactly this discipline has or should have a special eye and a deeper understanding of the social pressures exerted on individuals not to question existing ideas, views and institutions.

5 Some reform proposals for political science

Amid their criticisms of social and political science practice, scholars have also made concrete suggestions for change in general and increasing public relevance in particular.

Charles Lindblom argued that scholars should turn their backs on the search for something they in the end cannot deliver, namely 'nomothetic propositions', i.e. "propositions true of all times and all places… aping the ambitions of the natural sciences" (in Charlesworth 1972: 223).[1] Instead they should attempt to develop "*Usable Knowledge*" (1979). Thus they should try to help specific partisans in the public decision process to better understand their goals and values, as well as the ways these could be realized; they should try to analyze the policy "problems" that within a particular public discourse have been defined and, if needed, to reformulate or redefine these problems; they should try to offer alternative models, perspectives or visions than the prevailing ones to observe, understand and evaluate social and political reality and problems (Lindblom and Cohen 1979). In general, scholars should seek to help other lay(wo)men to overcome the "impairment" of their thinking, learning to critically engage with sources and consequences of enculturation, socialization, education, indoctrination and manipulation. To counter impairment scholars should especially further an extensive, currently often absent, competition of ideas, not only in society at large but certainly also in their own disciplines. Too often social and political scientist just follow and reinforce the prevailing ideas in their societies and disciplines, not acknowledging the

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[1] On the character of the knowledge gathered in political science Isaiah Berlin asks likewise: "What is this knowledge? Is it knowledge of a science? Are there really laws to be discovered, rules to be learnt? Can statesmen be taught something called political science - the science of the relationships of human beings to each other and to their environment - which consists, like other sciences, of systems of verified hypotheses, organized under laws, that enable one, by the use of further experiment and observation, to discover other facts, and to verify new hypotheses?" (1996 : 40) Berlins answer is unambiguous: "There is no natural science of politics any more than a natural science of ethics" (1996: 49).

powers and influences that make these ideas prevail. The aim is a "self-guiding society" where large numbers of partisans are involved in *"Inquiry and Change"* (Lindblom 1990). Social scientists cannot and should not try to replace these widely scattered inquiries in social problems and their possible solutions. Instead, they should try to further and support these.

Andrew Sayer (2011), echoing Lindblom, Shapiro and many others, urges social scientists to contribute to social and political life by critically evaluating mainstream and influential interpretations of social phenomena (cf. Berlin 1962, Connolly 1974, Bluhm 1978, Dryzek 1990, Shapiro 2002, Byrne 2011). Specifically, he suggests that social scientists should not shy away out of fears of being accused of ethnocentrism from recognizing the fact that humans can either suffer or "flourish". Social scientists should help develop and then use measures of human suffering and flourishing, like Amartya Sen's "Capability Approach", to identify relevant problems to research (Sayer 2011: 99, 104, 243; cf. Brecht 1959, Bay 1968, Lane 2000: 336-7.)

In his *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How It Can Succeed Again* (2001) Bent Flyvbjerg also concludes that social and political scientists should stop their self-defeating search for objective, universal and context-independent laws and theories. "Social science emulation of natural science", he states, "is a cul-de-sac" (2001: 4, cf. 73). Byrne keeps it even shorter: "Nomothetic claims for social science are simply rubbish" (2011: 38). Instead, Flyvbjerg states, the scholars involved should concentrate on Aristotelean phronesis (practical wisdom), the activity where the natural sciences are inescapably weak and the social sciences could be strong: "just as the social sciences have not contributed much to explanatory and predictive theory, neither have the natural sciences contributed to the reflexive analysis and discussion of values and interests, which is the prerequisite for an enlightened political, economic, and cultural development in any society, and which is at the core of phronesis" (2001: 3). According to Flyvbjerg, social science should be restored "to its classical position as a practical, intellectual activity aimed at clarifying the problems, risks, and possibilities we face as humans and societies, and at contributing to social and political praxis" (2001: 4, cf. 139).

Power relations Flyvbjerg holds of pivotal importance in phronetic research. Because of their belief in objective knowledge and truths modern science and society have a blind spot for the ways truths are produced by power. Every society, Flyvbjerg reiterates Foucault, "has its regimes of truth and its 'politics of truth', understood as the types of discourse which society accepts and allows to operate as true" (2001: 125). Knowledge is often marginalized by power, and power produces the knowledge that serves its purposes best: "power often ignores or designs knowledge at its convenience" (2001: 143; cf. 155). Democratic decision making is not just furthered by trying to offer more reliable, valid or usable knowledge, but also by exposing how power manufactures truth. Therefore, according to Flyvbjerg, in every research the questions have to be asked: Who gains and who loses when the present state of affairs will be continued? What kinds of power relations shape or sustain the present situation? How do these create certain rationalities and how do these support the existing

power configuration? What possibilities are available for change? Is this change desirable? (2001: 123)[2]

Likewise, modernity is not fond of contestation and conflict. Conflicts seem to be at odds with the monist, rationalist belief that all questions can only have one correct answer, and that all correct answers can be organized in one harmonious system (cf. Berlin 1958). Nevertheless, the more democratic a society, Flyvbjerg states, the more it will allow groups to define their own specific ways of life and the more it will accept and legitimate the conflicts that are the result of this. These conflicts do not always undermine social order, they can also produce the ties that hold societies together (cf. Truman 1951; Latham 1952; Dahl and Lindblom 1953; Dahl 1956; Lindblom and Braybrooke 1963; Coser 1956). Echoing Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault and Benjamin Barber (1984), Flyvbjerg writes that in *strong democracies*, "distrust and criticism of authoritative action are omnipresent." Strong understandings of politics and democracy "must therefore be based on thought that places conflict and power at its center" (2001: 109, cf.155). Phronetic researchers understand that bringing conflicts to the surface and evaluating critically the different positions do a bigger service to democratic decision making than suggesting, that conflicts are needless misunderstandings, as well as threats to social harmony and order.

All in all, phronetic social science concentrates on three value-rational questions: Where are we going? Is this desirable? What should be done? Additionally, in answering these question, one asks: Who gains and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power? The objective, Flyvbjerg writes, "is to balance instrumental rationality with value-rationality by increasing the capacity of individuals, organizations, and society to think and act in value-rational terms" (2001: 130). Likewise, the purpose of social science, "is not to develop theory, but to contribute to society's practical rationality in elucidating where we are, where we want to go, and what is desirable according to diverse sets of values and interests" (2001: 167, cf. 140). To enable this program we have to communicate effectively to fellow citizens. Publishing exclusively in academic journals does not reach the practical world of politics, administration, and planning. Here public dialogue, including communication via everyday media, is necessary (2001: 158). If social scientist are able to make these transformations, Flyvbjerg hopes, "we may successfully transform social science from what is fast becoming a sterile academic activity, which is undertaken mostly for its own sake and in increasing isolation from a society on which it has little effect and from which it gets little appreciation

(2001: 166).

6 Growing social inequalities, diminishing democracies

The concept of democracy assumes that citizens have a fair or even equal chance to make their preferences known and to influence public decision making on policies that affect them. Democracy diminishes with rising social inequality in political resources as income, wealth, knowledge, access to opinion- and decision-makers, and capacities to produce or commission research aimed at justifying preferences.

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[2] Obviously, these very same questions could or should also be asked in the context of a research on prevailing academic research practices.

In the last three to four decades social inequality in most western societies has risen strongly, in countries like the United States, England and Germany even dramatically (Neckerman 2004; Brandolini and Smeeding 2006; Bartels 2008; Winters and Page 2009; OECD 2011; Stiglitz 2012; Piketty 2014). As a consequence, access to public decision-making has become more and more unequal. Subjects not welcomed by those profiting the most of the standing social-economic constellation are increasingly banned from the political agenda. The already existing social and political inequality has subsequently become more deeply entrenched. Growing social and political inequality gives a further impetus to unequal opportunities to advertise and vindicate values, goals, ideas, views and interests. Consequently, this inequality diminishes the competition of ideas, increases "impairment", and impedes the quality of public decision-making (Lindblom 1990; Skocpol 2003; Berry and Wilcox 2007; Winters and Page 2009: 740-2; Blokland 2011: 265-71).

Paralleling the emerging criticism on mainstream political science discussed above, the mounting social and political inequalities have received more attention among political scholars. For instance, in 2003 *The American Political Science Association* initiated a Task Force to investigate the political consequences of increasing social inequality. In the final report the authors conclude, that privileged and well-organized groups are more and more successful in making their wishes known to government. Democratic politics has become less and less relevant for majorities to realize their needs and preferences: "Citizens with lower or moderate incomes speak with a whisper that is lost on the ears of inattentive government officials, while the advantaged roar with a clarity and consistency that policymakers readily hear and routinely follow" (2004: 651; Skocpol and Jacobs 2005: 1, 2006: 27; cf. Lehman Schlozman *et al* 2005; Macedo *et al* 2005; Gilens and Page 2014). The authors warn for the long time consequences for democracy: "If disparities of participation and influence become further entrenched, and if average citizens give up on democratic government as a tool to enhance security and opportunity for all, unequal citizenship could take on a life of its own, weakening American democracy for a long time to come" (2005: 232).

Inequalities in power and their effects on democracy have formed a core research theme in political science for decades. This is no longer the case. Political scientists have gradually retreated into diverse ivory towers, also Skocpol and Jacobs observe: "Increasingly insular and self-referential bodies of research emerged, with little or no relevance to broader public debates" (2006: 28). In doing so, they have made themselves more and more socially irrelevant and have evaded their public responsibility. Yet, according to Skocpol and Jacobs, a renewed concentration on research into power could provide research in political science with a common focus again. And such research is now highly relevant due to the sharp rise in social, political and economic inequality.

7 The increasing demand and supply of research

The rationalization of our western societies induces an increasing demand for rational, "scientific" justifications and evaluations of institutions and policies. Social, political and economic inequalities cause a socially and politically unbalanced supply of these.

The essence of the rationalization or intellectualization of our worldview, Weber (1905, 1920), Mannheim (1940) and Schumpeter (1942) argued, is the dissemination and the

deepening of the conviction that we are in principle able to explain and control events that occur around us (cf. Blokland 2006). We no longer consider events as the result of magical, incalculable forces but as having causes and reasons that we can understand. On the basis of this knowledge, we can actively intervene in the world and turn it to our purposes. Science and research are both products of rationalization and impetuses for it.

Although both forms of rationality do not exclude each other, in the process of rationalization functional rationality gets more and more weight and substantial rationality less and less. According to Weber (1978: 24-6), substantial or value-rational action emanates from the conviction that any action that is ethically, esthetically, religiously, or otherwise inspired is inherently meaningful. The meaning or aim of the action lies exclusively in the action *itself* and not in reaching some goal. It is distinguished by the deliberate nature of the values underlying the action and by the carefully considered, consistent manner in which the action is attuned to these values.

In contrast, a man's action is functionally or instrumentally rational when he attempts to reach a given goal at the least possible cost. We may speak of functional rationality, Mannheim defined (1940: 53), when a series of actions is organized in such a manner that they lead, at the least possible cost, to a predefined goal. Each act performs a specific function to that end. The end can be, but need not be the product of independent deliberation. Inherent in substantial rationality, though, is the capacity for independent judgment and deliberation with regard to values and goals.

More than its substantial counterpart, functional rationality asks for empirical research.[3] Many social and political scientists have tried to deliver this by searching for context-independent laws and theories that optimally connect instruments to goals. Since these laws and theories have not been found yet, and since policies are always made in specific contexts, the research used in actual practice comes from other sources. This last research is often in need of substantial-rational evaluation. Academic social and political researchers could fulfill this need, as substantial rational questions should form their main subject matter in general.

Both bureaucratization and industrialization or marketization are expressions and catalysts of functional rationality. These processes create "iron cages" of functional rationality, forcing people to think and act in the rational terms that constitute these cages and making them in the long term less and less capable to think substantially "out of the box" (cf. Blokland 2006, 2009). Especially those whose lives are not (yet) comprised and constraint by markets and bureaucracies, could play a role in reducing this impairment of our thinking. Here, theorists from Karl Mannheim to Herbert Marcuse had high hopes of the "Sozial freischwebende Intelligenz", independent, not socially defined minds often found at universities in their times. These hopes have mostly expired: particularly universities have gone through an unmatched process of rationalization (cf. Donoghue 2008; Liessmann 2008;

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[3] For instance, when it is believed that art is a value in itself, one does not need the same kind of research for justifying arts subsidies than when one believes that art has a function for goals like tourism, appealing inner cities, and the attraction of a "middle" or "creative" class".

Münch 2009; Grafton 2011; Piereson 2011). Related to this, especially at universities socialization and disciplination into dominant paradigms and perspectives seem prevalent (see later in this article).

One of the political consequences of rationalization is democratization, the proliferating questioning, denying and rejecting of traditional authority and plain power. This process too creates a growing demand for justifications of habits, positions and policies. We expect people holding positions and making policies to be able to formulate *reasons* for their occupations and actions. The reasons offered are preferably based on some kind of knowledge or research: "evidence-based policies" have become a new mantra in our times (Morrell 2011).

Concomitantly, the effects of policies are more and more expected to be evaluated. New or adjusted policies have to be developed on the basis of "impact evaluations". These evaluations might feed into the "impact assessments" that policy makers increasingly are asked to present for the policies they propose.[4] In the research that is done for these evaluations and assessments, a strong tendency exists to concentrate on those impacts that can be measured or quantified.[5]

In general, because of the lack of consensus on values and because of the mistaken hope to acquire some sense of certainty in a disenchanted world by collecting and manipulating numbers, those goals, values, or parameters that can be *quantified* get more and more weight in the process of rationalization. The emerging "Triumph of Numbers" (Cohen 2005) goes at the expense of goals, values, or parameters that can only be described in qualitative terms. This gives another impetus to rationalization (Blokland 2006, 2009, 2013).

Rationalization promotes democratization, which at its turn asks for bureaucratization: only rational bureaucracies treat equal cases equally and consequently respect the egalitarian principles underlying democracy.

Another driving force behind bureaucratization is that rationally ordered public and private organizations cannot cope with erratic, unpredictable environments. Accordingly, they try to control and organize their environments on the basis of the very same rational principles that order their own existence. This furthers bureaucratization, not only in the public, but certainly also in the private sphere (Schumpeter 1942). As a consequence, more and more spheres of live are bureaucratically organized and regulated on the basis of the instrumental

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[4] The European Commission, for instance, asks its member states explicitly to follow its example and to engage in impact assessments. For this purpose in 2006 it has installed an Impact Assessment Board. Policies are only implemented when this board approves its expected impacts.

[5] Building on the example of arts policies: in the past the aim of fostering participation in cultural activities has often been justified by the expectation that this participation, among others, furthers the emancipation of individuals by confronting them with alternative visions, ideas, life-styles, or values. Since this supposed increase in personal autonomy can hardly be measured, modern policymakers progressively ask for data proving that art subsidies advance, for instance, tourism or the use of inner cities (Blokland 2013).

or functional rational principles that form the heart of bureaucracies. To make this ordering possible, justifiable and acceptable, research is again of prime importance.

8 The vacuum left by the academy

Professional, academic political science and sociology are not able and not desiring to supply the justifications, assessments and evaluations of policies wanted in modern democracies. Scholars hardly ever agree among themselves, they cannot provide objective, universal laws and theories on which policies could be based, and they do not have incentives to involve themselves in tangible social and political issues. Deliberately or mechanically, mainstream scholars still predominantly try to create an objective "science" and for this purpose search for abstract universals. Direct involvement in concrete social and political problems is considered to hamper this endeavor and to harm the reputation of the involved "scientists". As noted above, in this process they have become "scholastic", "esoteric" and mostly irrelevant.

Consequently, policymakers in need of knowledge, both in the public and the private sphere, hardly ever turn to academic social and political scholars. Already more than three decades ago, Lindblom and Cohen stated in their *Usable Knowledge*: "In public policy making, many suppliers and users of social research are dissatisfied, the former because they are not listened to, the latter because they do not hear much they want to listen to" (1979: 1).[6] The needed justifications and evaluations are more and more supplied by governmental organizations, interest and advocacy groups, political parties, think tanks and other non-governmental organizations, and to an increasing extent on commission by private research and consultancy institutions.

Besides, in an age of "knowing capitalism" (Thrift 2005) big corporations progressively do their own research, making the research done by academics often obsolete and "peripheral", Savage and Burrows write (2007: 888). For instance, collecting and analyzing social data via especially the survey and the depth-interview was once the core business of sociologists addressing the wider public. This trade has been mostly taken over by corporations like Amazon, Google and Facebook deploying unparalleled research techniques and datasets. Considering the fact, that research is "an intrinsic feature of contemporary capitalist organization", sociologists should redefine themselves, Savage and Burrows state, "through a concern with research methods (interpreted very broadly)" (2007: 895). Like the above cited political scientists addressing their discipline, in their view sociologists should

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[6] Looking back at his political career, former German Prime Minister Helmut Schmidt soberly concluded on the assistence he received from social scientists: „Während ich im persönlichen Gespräch mit Personen, deren Kompetenz und Urteilskraft ich vertraute, seit meines Lebens viel lernen konnte, habe ich von institutioneller Beratung nie viel gehalten. Gremien, Kommissionen und sonstige Beratungsinstitutionen, die lediglich Gutachten erstellen und Empfehlungen aussprechen, aber nicht selbst handeln müssen, haben nur selten wirksamen politischen Einfluß. Viele Ministerien verfügen über einen „wissenschaftlichen Beirat" … Es kommt ziemlich selten vor, daß ein Minister oder seiner leitenden Beamten den Beirat in einer speziellen Frage um ein Gutachten oder auch nur um einen Ratschlag ersucht" (2010: 38).

abandon "a sole focus on causality (which we are very bad at)" and instead critically challenge the minute descriptions of social reality given by others: "we can better situate our concerns as exposing these descriptions, challenging them, and presenting our own descriptions. In such a process we need a radical mixture of methods coupled with renewed critical reflection" (2007: 896).

Especially the most resourceful interest groups in terms of organizational size and financial mass are in a better position to justify their preferences via research: their existing institutional infrastructure and their funding sources enable them to produce or commission it. Commercially motivated research institutions have an interest to produce research that legitimate the interests of their clients: they need new contracts. Research is often done just to back up and to legitimize decisions that actually have been taken already. It gives the involved decision makers the opportunity to blame external actors and to keep the internal peace (Leif 2006; Weiden 2011: 70-4). Likewise, academic research paid for by external funders is less independent than also the researchers themselves would like it to be (Köbben and Tromp 1999; Smith 2010). When formulating their conclusions and possible recommendations the need to receive future funding is always at the back of their mind.[7] Second, independent opinions of this kind of externally funded research is wanted. In general, academic researchers have seldom shown an independence of mind that would have made it possible to investigate topics that were at odds with the "Zeitgeist" (Lindblom 1990). The disappearance of the research on social inequality, power, economic democracy or economic regulation during the neoliberal eighties and nineties is an illustration (Blokland 2011).

9 Public Sociology

In the above we mainly went into the developments in political science. Yet, within sociology comparable efforts to turn the discipline into a hard science and comparable waves of criticism can be observed, resulting in current appeals and justifications for a "public sociology". Critics see contemporary mainstream sociology as over professionalized, fragmented, incoherent, detached, irrelevant, or ultimately based on the wrong epistemological assumptions and aspirations (Jacoby 1987, Seidman 1994, Horowitz 1994, Agger 2000, Cole 2001, Gans 2002, Patterson 2002 and 2014, Berger 2002, ASA 2004, Burawoy 2005, Calhoun 2005, Clawson 2007, Nickel 2012, Nyden et al. 2012).

It is telling for the non-communication between disciplines and paradigms that the relevant debates in sociology and political science have developed almost completely independent from each other. Most scholars involved are unaware of each other's contributions to what basically is the same debate and hardly ever refer to each other. This is a loss for both sides. To the regret of the behavioralist scholars involved, the endeavor to turn the study of politics

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[7] Interview data collected by Smith "reveal a frequent concern about the potential damage caused to researchers' credibility amongst potential funders by appearing to be 'too political' or 'radical'" (2010: 182). "Perhaps unsurprisingly, the sense of feeling constrained about what it was appropriate to say often appeared to be most acute when researchers had received, or were receiving, funding from policy-based sources" (2010: 184).

or "government" into a hard science came relatively late in time. The catastrophic consequences of politics in the thirties seemed to make this turn nevertheless more urgent. These circumstances might explain why their endeavor was rather vehement and radical. As a consequence, the debate in political science on the entire development is epistemologically more deep going than in sociology. Sociologists could have taken advantage from this debate, in the same way as political scientists could have taken advantage from the more lasting practical experiences of sociologists with working with and for communities.

The history of the efforts within sociology to become more or 'really' scientific resembles that of political science and is thus already basically covered above. Therefore, in the following we will chiefly address the current criticism on mainstream sociology and the appeals for a more socially and politically relevant 'public sociology'. In this we will also devote more attention to the practical issues connected to researching in more relevant ways. Besides, we will go more into the sociological question which social rewards and punishments keep paradigms and specific philosophies of science in their place, despite mounting criticism.

9.1 Herbert Gans and human liberation

In a short article, "More of us should become public sociologists" (2002), Herbert Gans coined the term "public sociology". He expressed the regret that in public debates about the conditions and futures of our societies, sociologists are mostly absent. "Public sociology", that is, "speaking out and writing whenever an issue shows up on the public agenda to which we can contribute", he considered "badly needed": "It can demonstrate that sociology adds distinctive insights and findings; increase the discipline's relevance by forcing it to analyze current events and issues; and enhance sociology's visibility" (2002: 10).

Gans saw different varieties of public sociology, including research reports for the lay public, surveys for students of the main ideas and findings of a major field in the discipline, and popular (non-textbook) treatments of topics of widespread interest. "Public sociologists can be particularly useful", he thought, "in debunking the conventional wisdom and popular myths (e.g., that teenage pregnancy is a major cause of poverty). They can reframe social phenomena in helpful ways (e.g., to point out that the family is changing, not declining)." He acknowledged that public sociology of this kind to some extent already existed, but noticed that "it must still be institutionalized as a legitimate way of doing sociology" (2002: 10).

This is a recurrent theme in the publications of those who strive for more relevance: work on usable knowledge, published in more accessible ways, is usually debunked by colleagues as "unscientific" "hobbyism". It is supposed to proof a lack of distance, diligence and objectivity and, consequently, these undertakings form a threat to one's academic career (cf. Etzioni 2010: 653; Hacker 2010: 659; Farmer 2010: 717).

The role Gans sees for sociologists in debunking established wisdom and in redefining observed problems, is in line with the contribution many sociologists, especially the public sociologists, hope to make to human liberation and emancipation. In their widely used textbook *Sociology* James Fulcher and John Scott stress, for instance, how sociology can help people to understand in what way their identities and lives are influenced or constructed by social structures and processes. On the basis of this knowledge they can liberate themselves

from these influences and develop another identity or existence. Thanks to sociological imagination, Fulcher and Scott write, "we can escape the 'straitjacket' of the society that we live in and discover that very different societies, with other ways of organizing life, other institutions, and other beliefs, have existed and continue to exist. This enables us to examine critically our own society and consider alternative ways of living and thinking, alternative organizations and institutions" (2011: 17).

We like to see ourselves as unique individuals, that created their distinctive identities all by themselves via a mysterious process from the inside. Sociologists, however, show us how identities are social products, the result of processes of enculturation, socialization, education, manipulation, or indoctrination. This does not mean we inescapably are just victims of our social history and social environment. When we know how we are shaped by our environment, we can free ourselves from its influences; we can also change this environment and change ourselves (cf. Blokland 1997). When people make the world, the world can be transformed. In the words of Zygmunt Bauman and Tim May: "Sociological thinking is, one might say, a power in its own right, an anti-fixating power. It renders flexible again the world hitherto oppressive in its apparent fixity; it shows it as a world which could be different from what it is now" (2001: 16).

9.2 A 'thrilling' presidential address of Michael Burawoy

Next revealing phases in the debate in sociology about public relevancy were the presidential address "For Public Sociology" of Michael Burawoy for the American Sociological Association (2004) and the report of the Task Force on Institutionalizing Public Sociologies of the same association (2005). These publications raise two fundamental questions: Is "professional sociology" more scientific than public sociology? And how do academic disciplines discipline their members, a discipline that makes change towards more relevant sociology difficult?

In his presidential address Burawoy implicitly tells a comparable story about the development of postwar sociology as the one we observed within political science: students often become sociologist because they feel an urge to better the world, they subsequently trust to be taken more seriously when they transform their discipline in a kind of hard science, and then come to the realization, after a couple of decades of meticulous work, that they have lost touch with reality and that they have lost the connection with their possible audiences. Because the original moral impetus and sociological spirit has not extinguished completely, many feel disheartened. Consequently, there is still a drive to change things to the better.

Because of this still simmering spirit, seven years later, in his review of the *Handbook of Public Sociology* (Jeffries ed., 2009) Sujata Patel could write: "For a large number of sociologists the meeting of the American Sociological Association (ASA) in July 2004 and the presidential address by Michael Burawoy was a turning point in the history of the Association and inaugurated a new identity for the discipline. Burawoy's address created huge excitement and his call to make sociology a public sociology was supported by many" (2011: 617; cf. Stacey 2007: 91). In his 'The promise of Public Sociology' Craig Calhoun likewise observed: "Michael Burawoy's Presidential Address to the 2004 ASA meeting was an extraordinary event. There was a buzz of excitement, the culmination of a week of high

energy discussions of 'public sociology'… The excitement was fueled also by a sense of renewed engagement with the reasons many … had chosen to become sociologists in the first place. A ballroom with seating for several thousand was filled to overflowing… 'Public sociology' was a hit" (2005: 355). Following up Burawoy's address, symposia were organized in *Social Problems* (Vol. 51, Nr.1, 2004), *Social Forces* (Vol. 82, Nr.4, 2004), *Critical Sociology* (Vol. 31, Nr. 3, 2005), the *British Journal of Sociology* (Vol. 56, Nr. 3, 2005) and the *Canadian Journal of Sociology* (Vol. 34, Nr. 3, 2009). All these responses indeed suggest a "hit" and a widespread uneasiness about the current state of sociology. Yet, the question is whether all this uneasiness and excitement lead to significant change.

To clarify the meaning of public sociology Burawoy contrasts between 'traditional' and 'organic' public sociologies. The first kind of works are read beyond the academy and ignite or fuel a public discussion about the nature of society – its values and ends, its promises and realities, its tendencies and malaise (2005: 264). Examples are *Habits of the Heart* (1985) of Robert Bellah et al, and *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) of David Riesman.

Apart from this traditional public sociology there exists a much bigger, but also barely visible, more private and hardly ever recognized 'organic' public sociology: sociologists working with labor movements, neighborhood associations, communities of faith, human rights organizations, et cetera. Other than in the first instance, there is a direct dialogue, "a process of mutual education", between the sociologist and a specific public (2005: 266).

Separately from public sociology Burawoy distinguishes a 'policy' sociology, as well as a 'critical' and a 'professional' one. In the case of policy sociology the problem to be investigated or the goal of the research is defined by the client. In (organic) public sociology, however, there is a dialogue between the scholar and her public "in which the agenda of each is brought to the table, in which each adjusts to the other" (2005: 267). On this agenda are values and goals that are not straightaway shared by both sides.

'Professional sociology' is to be found at universities and in academic journals. Here, "the focus is on producing theories that correspond to the empirical world" (2005: 276). The research programs of professional sociologists, Burawoy suggests, produce another kind of knowledge, a more objective, universal, timeless knowledge, than the other divisions of sociology. After decades of hard work in which sociology became more scientific and, at the same time, more socially isolated, it can now give back this knowledge to the community, Burawoy states. Sociology has become a serious, well respected science and therefore can afford itself to get directly involved again in civil society and its problems: "professional sociology has now reached a level a maturity and self confidence that it can return to its civic roots, and promote public sociology from a position of strength" (2005: 281).

Whether this is actually the case could be the topic of the fourth division of sociology that Burawoy distinguishes: 'critical sociology'. The objective of its practitioners is to examine the foundations of the research programs of professional sociologists. Examples are Robert Lynd's *Knowledge for What? The Place of Social Sciences in American Culture* (1939) and Wright Mills' *The Sociological Imagination* (1959). Burawoy beliefs that this division of sociology, like public sociology, is in danger. Both 'reflexive' dimensions of sociology have been pushed to the margin by the 'instrumental' dimensions, that is, professional and policy sociology (2005: 279).

According to Burawoy, the flourishing of sociology ultimately depends on the acknowledgement of the reciprocal dependence of professional, policy, public and critical sociologies. Each should be fueled with "energy, meaning, and imagination" by its connection to the others (2005: 275). When each becomes too much absorbed with its own audience, it can assume a pathological form, which threatens the vitality of the whole. Thus, a policy sociology only communicating with clients is threatened by "servility"; a public sociology only entering public dialogues with designated publics becomes "faddish"; critical sociologists only debating other critics gets "dogmatic"; and a professional sociology only directed to peers becomes "self-referential". Those professional sociologists, Burawoy observes, "who speak only to a narrow circle of fellow academics easily regress toward insularity. In the pursuit of the puzzle solving, defined by our research programs, professional sociology can easily become focused on the seemingly irrelevant. In our attempt to defend our place in the world of science we do have an interest in monopolizing inaccessible knowledge, which can lead to incomprehensible grandiosity or narrow 'methodism'" (2005: 277).[8]

The purpose of sociology in general and that of public sociology in particular is for Burawoy "the defense of the social" and with this "the interests of humanity". This has become even more important "in times of market tyranny and state despotism" (2005: 287). In his view, the standpoint of economics is "the market and its expansion", and that of political science "the state and the guarantee of political stability" (2005: 287). Only sociology defends civil society and the values it embodies.[9]

9.3 Recommendations of the Task Force on Institutionalizing Public Sociologies

A next important illustration of the apparently widespread felt need for change was the establishment of the *Task Force on Institutionalizing Public Sociologies* of the *American Sociological Association*. Its end report with the telling title *Public Sociology and the Roots of American Sociology: Re-establishing Our Connections to the Public* (2005) contains proposals to further the recognition and validation of public sociology, to develop incentives for doing public sociology, and to evaluate the products of this kind of sociology. The Task Force observes too that despite the fact that public sociology has a long tradition in American

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[8] Likewise, Peter Berger holds "methodological fetishism", the dominance of "invariably quantitative" methods over content, responsible for a demise of sociology. Their dominance has made the belief common "that nothing is worth studying that cannot be analyzed quantitatively" and has resulted in "many sociologists using increasingly sophisticated methods to study increasingly trivial topics" (2002: 28-9). Patterson (2014) observes that "sociologists have become distant spectators rather than shapers of policy. In the effort to keep ourselves academically pure, we've also become largely irrelevant in molding the most important social enterprises of our era."

[9] Already considering the importance attached to civil society in political science, this seems to be a rather chauvinist opinion. Nevertheless, concentrating on "the social", on those social relationships that keep people together in a society, seems also to John Scott prudent for an "incredible shrinking discipline" that because of specializations, divisions and sub-divisions, has lost more and more of its identity (2005).

sociology, "the work of public sociologists traditionally has not been recognized, rewarded, or encouraged in many of our sociology departments. This has resulted in the underdevelopment of a valuable resource that can effectively link both the discipline's accumulated knowledge and research approaches in addressing pressing social problems in our society" (2005: 2).

A small survey under ASA-members that define themselves as public sociologists reveals what these sociologists actually do. Their major research approaches appear to be interviews, program evaluations, needs assessments, impact analysis, and data collection and dissemination. These methods are used for the exploration of problems and the finding of solutions in areas such as education, community development, children and youth, health, social policy, race and ethnic relations. The public sociologists worked together with a wide variety of actors, including community-based organizations, state agencies, local governments, think tanks, trade associations, and faith-based organizations. Most of the time these projects did not have university funding or external grants. Those that were funded, received this support from government agencies, educational institutions, national foundations, non-profit organizations, local community foundations, and business. The products of this public sociology include formal reports, community forums, public briefings, policy drafting, websites, videos, and printed articles (ASA 2005: 9-10).

The report contains many concrete recommendations to further public sociology. Several of these are about application, tenure and promotion: the advice is to give public sociologists more changes to have an academic career and to make this career no longer solely dependent on "professional", inner directed activities. Doing "Public Sociology" is not on a par with being a good citizen in the community, serving in the university parking committee and other kinds of "service", but contributes importantly to a "healthy, robust, and effective discipline" (2005: 11). It is not healthy for the discipline when "traditional discipline-based research" is seen "as the only accepted, only effective approach to knowledge creation and professional advancement" (2005: 11).

Several other recommendations are about media contacts and the attempt to make sociology more visible for journalists, policymakers and audiences. As a consequence of the current invisibility, "many potential constituencies fail to benefit from publicly-engaged work" and "avenues to legitimize public sociology are being closed off" (2005: 19). Some further recommendations are about the, now often lacking, funding of public sociological researches. Taking this kind of sociology serious should imply opening the funding options currently only available for "professional sociology". Some proposals are about changing the curriculum with more space for public sociology and with more teachers able to prepare students for this kind of sociology. Because public sociology has such a low esteem and activities in this sphere do in fact harm one's career changes, today there is hardly any staff available that could teach interested students how to do research that is relevant for the outside world. And some advices center around the aim to give public sociologists, working inside or outside the university, more voice in professional sociological associations like the ASA, its conferences and decision-making bodies.

Much attention is given to the need to bring together public sociologists working in the field and sociologists working at academia. This "to recognize and integrate the experience and knowledge of public sociologists into academic curriculum and meet the needs for

continuing education of non-academic sociologists. This networking and two-way communication will make academic departments more aware of developing trends and needs among non-academic sociologists and public sociologists" (2005: 5). The Task Force observes that about one third of all American PhD sociologists and one-half of all with a master's degree work outside the academic sector. These sociologists represent "an underutilized resource that could be used in strengthening links between academic researchers and practitioners in many institutions" (2005: 27). They hint to, but do not elaborate, the possibility of giving a role to these non-academic sociologists in the review of the work done at universities. Certainly, they often are in a better position to evaluate the relevance of this work and to start a public dialogue on its contents.

9.4 Some practical considerations regarding doing public sociology

Public Sociology: Research, Action, and Change (2012) of Philip Nyden, Leslie Hossfeld and Gwendolyn Nyden helps us to assess how a research in public sociology differs from that in professional sociology and to appraise its possible pitfalls. The authors plea for a collaboration and dialogue between academic sociologists and those working in the field, complementing each other's knowledge. They condemn the "cult of the expert" stating that others – "long-term community residents, community leaders, businesspersons, and non-profit organization staff" – have considerable knowledge too, "albeit not always organized or analyzed" (2012: 13). This knowledge could contribute importantly to any research. Thus, organic public sociology, "… represents a more collaborative approach to research in which boundaries between researcher and practitioner, scholar and activist, or university and community are more permeable. It is sociology that more explicitly recognizes the value of both university based knowledge and community based knowledge" (2012: 4).

How to start a project in public sociology? The authors state that research projects "typically grow out of existing relationships between sociologists and publics" (2012: 34). These publics can be a particular, physical community or a group of people sharing interests or goals. After the sociologist has chosen his public, he negotiates with its members the definition of a problem or a topic, as well as the organization and time schedule of the research. The researcher has to respect the need of the public to have research results at a particular time, so that it can make informed decisions on policies. Trust and credibility have to be built up to make the research and the implementation of its results into a success. An established relationship can also generate new research in the future.

To further the relationships between sociologists and communities Nyden et al. advice to set up formal and informal groups and meetings where both parties can inform each other about ongoing projects, about research results and about community problems in need of research. They also propose to ask communities directly about their knowledge needs: "Distributing a call for two-page community proposals on emerging needs that could benefit from additional research is an effective way of starting new research initiatives" (2012: 44). Additionally, installing advisory committees with members of both groups would stimulate the involvement and the commitment of researchers and community members. Finally, when the research has been done it should be presented in such understandable and concrete ways that the communities are able to take advantage of its results.

Public sociology as promoted above poses some reservations.[10] With many others, Nyden et al. proclaim that "all research is political" (2012: 9). From a epistemological perspective this could be true indeed. Nevertheless, researchers might be more convincing, legitimate and influential towards all parties involved when they keep their distance to the research subject. Presenting dry data about discrimination might help the discriminated groups more than explicitly taking their side.

It seems the dilemma above has no clear solution and researchers inevitably have to strike a balance. Too much engagement endangers their independence and credibility. Too much detachment leads to epistemological and social irrelevancy: abstract theories not connected to the daily experiences of people and therefore without social meaning and impact.

A second reservation concerns the definition of a 'public'. Public sociologists work with and for particular publics. But how can it be ensured that the members of the publics that participate in research projects get an equal voice and represent the whole community? How does one prevent that the research is involving and helping only a dominant part of the public in question, and that members that are less visible are neglected? The question is whether this institutionalist approach is neglecting interests, problems, values and goals not organized or institutionalized.

This problem threatens all democratic decision making, though. We cannot assume that those who participate the most do represent the political community. On the contrary: as research has shown over and over again the 'political stratum' (Dahl 1961) over represents the better educated, the better paid, the healthier, the whiter, the happier, the more articulated or louder part of the population (Jacobs and Skocpol 2005). Opening more opportunities for political participation, as also promoted by the adherents of additional 'deliberation', might even more silence those groups that presently are already unheard and disregarded (Sanders 1997). The task of the researcher here seems to be not very different than the task of the politician: to give a voice to those who are ignored and to actively explore their interests, preferences, goals, values and worries. The translation of vague, indeterminate and undirected 'troubles' into 'issues' (Wright Mills 1958) that can be put on the political agenda and on the basis of which policies can be formulated, is an important part of this. Scholars working with publics should therefore never just take over the agenda of the latter.

A third reservation might be that public sociology, certainly when one concentrates on psychically located publics (which is not necessary), runs the risk overlooking how the local issues are decided by macro-level processes and structures. Real social change might sometimes only be made possible by changing fundamental social processes and structures. On the other hand, a researcher could get a better awareness of the workings of big structures and processes by concentrating on the daily lives and experiences of concrete

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[10] Here I took advantage of the insightful discussions I could have with the students that took my course on „Usable Knowledge": Hans Christian Ziebertz, Hade Dorst, Sarah Coughlin, Elina Renko, Benjamin Restle, Manuel Deringer, Tessa Gulpers, Oktay Tuncer, Nils Wadt, Sophia Heinzmann, Veerle Verlaat, Vesela Mincheva, Frederic Lenz and Asaf Leshem.

people. At some point, though, she has to translate this back to the macro-level and to make evident how local problems sometimes are only solvable on higher levels. Also publics based on shared interests and values might lose sight of the fact that their problems cohere with those of other groups, including the general public, and can only be solved by cooperation or coordination.

10 How 'scientific' is professional sociology?

More than many other critics of contemporary political science and sociology Burawoy beliefs that there is a vast body of generally accepted knowledge of professional sociologists, underlying the work of public sociologist, as well as policy sociologists: "There can be neither policy nor public sociology without a professional sociology that supplies true and tested methods, accumulated bodies of knowledge, orienting questions, and conceptual frameworks. Professional sociology is not the enemy of policy and public sociology but the sine qua non of their existence – providing both legitimacy and expertise for policy and public sociology" (2005: 267, cf. 261).

Like Burawoy the members of the Task Force emphasize that public sociology should not be viewed as "the antithesis to traditional sociology. This narrow view muddies the waters of what should be an otherwise complementary relationship" (2005: 7). And, consequently, like Burawoy the Task Force does not address the deeper epistemological questions what kind of knowledge traditional or professional sociology produces and how this differs from the knowledge produced in the field. Many remarks continue to suggest that professional sociologists have generated a generally accepted body of knowledge that only needs to be translated and transformed to the public.[11]

In his ideas about the development of science, Burawoy declares to have been inspired by Imre Lakatos (1970). So he writes about the multitude of research programs within sociology: "Within each research program, exemplary studies solve one set of puzzles and at the same time create new ones, turning the research program in new directions. Research programs degenerate as they become swamped by anomalies and contradictions, or when attempts to absorb puzzles become more a face saving device than a genuine theoretical innovation" (2005: 268).

It remains unclear whether this view of science does not, as, among many others, Ricci, Shapiro and Walker stated about political science (see above), predominantly justifies scholasticism, a non-communication between scholars caught in their own exclusive paradigms, research programs, schools, departments, journals, conferences, sub-divisions of professional organizations, a scholasticism without any general advancements. Lakatos sees a progress in natural science (from which perspective he writes, like Kuhn did before)

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[11] "Making public sociology more noticeable benefits the discipline by taking sociology beyond the confines of the academy to the diverse publics our work addresses" (2005: 8), "Thousands of sociologists have built up an impressive body of knowledge through decades of work… Given both the public sources of our knowledge and the potential for sociological research to address a broad array of social problems, we have an obligation to the public around us. As a discipline we need to communicate our findings beyond the walls of academia" (2005: 28).

in the sense that every new research program is not only able to settle some new puzzles or problems, but also all the ones solved by the previous research program. This progress, though, is absent in sociology, as it is in political science, according to scholars like Berlin (1962), Ricci (1984), Mead (2010), Walker (2010), Lindblom (1990, 1997), Gunnell (1997) and Shapiro (2002, 2005). "The tendency in the physical sciences", sociologist John Holmwood likewise observes, "is for research programs to succeed each other, while sociology, at best, would be characterized by 'multiple research programs,' where the very use of the term research program serves to suggest that they are relatively well insulated from each other. It is difficult to see how the domain of professional sociology can be characterized by the production of 'true and tested methods' and 'accumulated bodies of knowledge' if the relevant 'tests' and knowledge claims are internal to research programs and there is no agreement across them" (2007: 59). Sociology, Holmwood continues, "does not appear to demonstrate any strong tendency toward convergence on agreed concepts, methods, or accumulated knowledge" (2007: 62). The positivistic or Parsonian effort to "de-politicize" sociology and to increase its public legitimacy by producing a growing, uncontested "body of knowledge" has failed, hence. However, public legitimacy will also not increase by *politicizing* sociology, Holmwood believes, since this would not less create an undirected orchestra of contradictory messages.[12]

Like most participants in the discourse within sociology, Burawoy and the members of the ASA-taskforce in the end fail to address the fundamental epistemological question what professional sociological knowledge actually is and how we acquire this knowledge. In case professional sociologists search for universal generalizations and theories could this be, as Flyvbjerg stated, a dead end? Maybe policy sociology or problem-driven-sociology, where 'professional' sociological insights are applied and thus tested, should play a pivotal role in the development of knowledge. Or maybe organic public sociology is indispensable for this, in which case sociologists are in an active dialogue with those people in the field who are on a daily basis confronted with the problem at stake and whose experiences and insights sociologists could try to tap off. Maybe in the end sociology has not much more to offer than some very general insights (certainly not laws or theories) about the variables that *might* play a role with regard to particular problems or issues. Maybe all what sociology has more to offer is knowledge that is highly depended on particular contexts, knowledge, though,

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[12] For this reason he proposes to bring unity and legitimacy to sociology not by political persuasion, but by "a shared concern with particular political issues" (2007: 63). Holmwood further pleas for a 'dialogic' sociology that accepts that its claims will always be contested. To make this dialogue possible, 'political neutrality' in the institutional organization of sociology is of pivotal importance, "not because it secures objectivity, nor because social inquiry can, or should be, value-neutral. It is central because it creates the space for dialogue and is the condition for any sociology to have a voice" (2007: 63). 'Political neutrality' seems to mean for Holmwood, that sociology should harbor political pluralism. 'Professional sociology' in the way Burawoy would like to see it, is consequently impossible. Ricci (1977) and Walker (2010) formulate similar pleas for a more Popperian open society of scholars were paradigms and research programs are all the time challenged and criticized by scholars working in other paradigms and programs.

that is indispensable to acquire the general insights of the *Maestro* about possible relevant variables.

The pivotal question "What do 'we' know that 'they' don't?" is hardly ever asked within mainstream sociology. Neither is this done in political science – Lindblom (1979, 1990, 1995) again being the most important exception. Sociologist Anne Mesny (2009), working at a Management School, nevertheless explicitly formulates the question. Unfortunately, she too does not really stockpile what 'we' know, what 'they' have learned from 'us' or what 'they' could learn from 'us'. Instead, she gives an overview of possible standpoints. The same goes for much that is published in specialized journals like 'Research Policy', 'Evaluation and Program Planning', 'Knowledge and Policy' or 'Science Communication'. Within the medical and natural sciences there is much more interest in and research on 'knowledge utilization' or 'dissemination'. This might not be a coincidence.

Mesny explores several positions regarding the status of sociologists' versus lay people's knowledge. In the following I take this as a point of reference. The first is *superiority*: "sociologists' knowledge of the social world is more accurate, objective, and reflexive than lay people's knowledge, thanks to science's methods and norms" (2009: 671). This claim has two varieties, not separated by Mesny. First of all, sociologists might believe that in comparison to lay people they have more objective, better founded, more reliable knowledge. This knowledge might also contradict commonsensical beliefs. The assumption that social class does not play a role anymore in peoples educational career, or that the family is disappearing (see Gans above), or, in general, that the way we live our life is the only possible way, are examples. Sociologists contribute to public deliberation and policy making by providing more valid and accurate descriptions and explanations of social reality or by correcting untenable beliefs.

Besides, sociologists might believe that the assumptions about man, society and world that inescapably underlie also their knowledge claims are more explicated and evaluated than those of the knowledge of laypeople. This does not necessarily make their claims more "objective" or "true". Instead, the knowledge is more "reflexive": sociologists are more aware than lay people how assumptions shape their observations, descriptions and explanations. Whether this awareness is actually present is open for discussion. Brian Wynne, for example, shows not only that "lay publics enjoy a much greater capacity for reflexivity in relation to science than is usually recognized," but also that "modern science exhibits much less reflexive capacity to problematize its own founding commitments than is supposed" (1993: 334; also cited by Mesny 2009: 678). The workings of paradigms and the processes of socialization that protect paradigms show this.

Also in political science many see the possible superiority of the discipline's knowledge in the explication and critical evaluation of normative, epistemological and ontological assumptions. Political theorists or philosophers in particular should fulfill this task. Unfortunately, as a byproduct of the search for 'scientific' knowledge, exactly these last students of politics have been pushed more and more to the margin (Wolin 1960; Berlin 1962; Connolly 1974; Bluhm 1978). Also as a consequence of this development, here too it needs to be researched and proven whether political scientists really have a higher awareness of the foundations of their knowledge claims.

Another possible relation between professional and lay knowledge is that of *complementarity* and homology: professional sociologists tap off the local, embedded knowledge of common people, including insights about the connections between phenomena, and transform this into general, disembedded knowledge. They are depended on the superior insights and knowledge of their local informants, but other than these locals they can compare different contexts and consequently have a more general, context-independent overview. Thus, the suggestion is that they have abstract theories which contain general laws or insights. This still has to be made plausible. Again, maybe the most that sociologists actually have to offer is some general insights about the variables that might come into play in particular configurations. Their importance and interactions might differ substantially in different contexts.

Circularity is a last option discussed by Mesny: sociological and commonsensical knowledge feed each other. Professional sociological knowledge is always rooted in common sense knowledge, but at the same time infuses this last knowledge with its own findings and insights. Thus, sociologists continuously influence and change our self-understanding and our behavior. And as a consequence, Mesny writes referring to Easthope (1974) and Taylor (1983), "there will never be any recurrent situations to study in sociology because study of a situation changes that situation. Thus sociology can never be a science and must always cause change" (2010: 684). Political scholar James Scott states likewise: "We cannot ever really be like the natural sciences, because we study the conduct of human subjects, which is amenable to self-reflection. Once you tell people what you have found out about their behavior they are free to change it and just piss in the soup" (2007: 382).

This is an old debate in both sociology and political science, a debate basically on 'free will' that cannot be philosophically decided, but only via empirical research. In response to Robert Merton's (1948) claims on 'self-fulfilling' and 'self-denying prophecies' David Easton remarked already in 1953, that it is an implausible assumption that people can change their behavior any time they choose. People are embedded in cultures which are never transformed overnight. Moreover, there are generalizations which validity is not influenced by the awareness of the existence of these generalizations. The spread of the knowledge that a link exists between industrialization and urbanization has not changed this relation yet (see Blokland 2011: 128-9). Hence, it is again to be empirically investigated to what extent sociological knowledge indeed influences and changes our self-understanding and behavior.

11 Socializing and socialization in academic disciplines

Considering the apparent craving for change within sociology, the disillusionment about the state of the art of sociology cannot be less as in political science. However, as in the last discipline, it is still to be seen whether all the excitement about 'public sociology' caused big, lasting changes. It might be that the "battery of disciplinary techniques" that also Burawoy observes, is too well established: "standardized courses, validated reading lists, bureaucratic rankings, intensive examinations, literature reviews, tailored dissertations, refereed publications, the all-mighty CV, the job search, the tenure file, and then policing one's colleagues and successors to make sure we all march in step" (2005: 261). It is, Burawoy further complains, "as if graduate school is organized to winnow away at the moral commitments that inspired the interest in sociology in the first place" (2005: 274; cf. Stacey

2007: 94). With respect to the training of students and graduates, Theodore Lowi comes to the same verdict: "Every political scientist should be a public intellectual. But the urge is trained out of us in graduate school, to stick to our research, the methods and the results as contributions 'to the field.' What a waste" (2010: 680). The strong emphasis on methodological rigor in modern political science has led to a focus on trivial questions, James Scott states, and students better follow the mainstream when they aspire an academic career. As a consequence, "most dissertations .. raise uninteresting questions that are not really worth asking in the first place. There are lots of dissertations on questions that I don't even want to know the answer to. I'd rather see a failed effort to tackle an important question than a successful effort to address a trivial one" (2007: 383).[13] Students are routinely advised to forget about any kind of public sociology until they have tenure, Burawoy observes. But by the time they have accomplished this, their youthful passions for a relevant sociology often have worn out and have been replaced by activities in the lucrative world of policy consultants or by the complacency and tranquility that comes with occupying a niche in professional sociology.

The battery of disciplinary techniques becomes even more troubling when one apprehends that public sociology is foremost an American phenomenon, a reaction against the 'professionalization' of sociology in this culture. In other countries, Burawoy notices, public sociology "is the essence of sociology" (2005: 284). Increasingly, however, sociologists and other academics around the world are forced by their home universities and governments to publish in English in Western, especially American journals and to live up to the "'international' standards" that these journals embody. As a consequence, "national sociologies lose their engagement with national problems and local issues… Without conspiracy or deliberation on the part of its practitioners, United States sociology becomes world hegemonic" (2010: 284). Burawoy therefore pleads to "provincialize" sociology, to recognize its embeddedness in local cultures and communities.[14]

Accordingly, scholars trying to do another kind of social or political studies than the 'professional' ones, find a host of disciplinary obstacles on their road. Disciplination is all present, though, not just with regard to public sociology or problem-driven political

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[13] As a member of the selection committee of the Berlin Graduate School of the Social Sciences of the Humboldt University this author had to form an opinion on approximately 1050 research proposals of applicants between 2009 and 2012. The relevance of the research problem was hardly ever discussed in the committee. Often the proposals did not contain any 'problem' at all, but just a data set or a method. Decisive criteria were methodology, research design and letters of recommendation, as well as, personal relationships with the authors of these letters or with the applicants themselves (Blokland 2010).

[14] Unfortunately, he again fails to connect this issue to the deeper epistemological question whether the drive to publish in journals dominated by Western professional sociology also reflects the epistemological assumption that we are all searching for the very same objective, universal, context-independent, timeless theories. What consequences, in other words, will a 'provincialization' of sociology have for 'professional sociology'?

scholarship. Although we do acknowledge that scholars work in the context of paradigms or research programs and even continue to do so when doubts about the endeavors in question have developed critically, research is hardly ever conducted on how paradigms and programs, not to mention disciplines as a whole, are developed, preserved and prolonged. Researchers have shied away from applying to their own discipline the sociological research tools they possess and the knowledge they gather about social interaction. Consequently, insights about knowledge construction in the social sciences have largely remained a dark spot on our radar.

Homo Academicus (1986) of Pierre Bourdieu is one of the few publications on the social workings in academia. In this he mockingly describes how academics slowly work and network their way up and how they stay up by reproducing the very same structures of hierarchy, domination, obedience and servility that brought them to the top. The academic career is a slow process, laden with, mostly implicit, expectations, obligations, requirements, pretended mutual admirations, and exchanged reviews, invitations, positions, titles, and other indulgences. This ongoing exchange between favor banks would in the outside world readily be recognized as expressions of deplorable cooptation, nepotism and corruption, but are part and parcel of university life.

The academic status quo, Bourdieu writes, is preserved by hierarchy, slowness, and a fierce, unrelenting competition for scarce positions and careers. This competition, regulated and refereed by those higher in the hierarchy, implies and ensures the acceptance of the objectives of the competition, and, in the end, the hierarchy itself. The number of competitors must be carefully balanced or regulated: when it is too big, the hope on getting the aspired job and the docility and compliance that comes with it, are too little. Submissiveness and obedience are also threatened, though, when the number of competitors is too small. Further, *Gravitas* or 'healthy slowness' is supposed to prove quality, merit and reliability, and because of the sacrifices that have to be made to reach the top, nobody at the top is willing to put this top, and the road leading to it, into question. One got there because of one's brilliancy and exceptionality. Everyone who does not show *obsequium*, the "unconditional respect for the fundamental principles of the established order" (1986: 87), will be ignored at best, and reproached, punished and ruined at worst. Students know, or are made to know, subtle or less subtle, how much they depend on the goodwill of their professors for grades, recommendations, publications, positions and promotions, and are therefore hold in a "docile", "submissive" or even "infantile" position (1986: 88).[15] "Waiting" is crucial here: those who are in power need to master the "art of

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[15] The numbers of PhD's and Postdocs have risen dramatically in most western countries in the last two decades, putting even more pressure on the students involved to adjust to the existing power-relations, expectations and paradigms. They complain about the long hours, the low pay, the quality of supervision, the lack of academic freedom and the lack of career prospects. Consequently, the dropout rates are high. Universities have no real interest in changing this situation. The number of PhD's and post-docs professors collect is considered an indication of their academic standing. PhD's and post-docs are cheap labor, are highly motivated and are obedient, humble and disposable. More and more teaching at universities is done by underpaid hopefuls while their superiors frantically publish-not-to-parish. This

making someone wait". This is the art to give people aspiring to climb the hierarchy the expectation that waiting will be rewarded, the art of "stimulating, encouraging or maintaining hope, through promises or skill in not disappointing, denying or discouraging expectations", the art "to get people to put up with and accept the delay, the continuing frustration of hopes, of anticipated satisfactions intrinsically suggested behind the promises or encouraging words of the guarantor, but indefinitely postponed, deferred, suspended" (1986: 89).

Bourdieu supports his verdict with some scattered ethnographic observations. More systematic observations in and empirical data from different times and contexts are called for. The need for this already starts with the question under the influence of exactly what kinds of social rewards and pressures paradigms, or sets of ontological and epistemological assumptions, become and stay hegemonic in the social and political disciplines. "There has been very little recent empirical, sociological analysis of the social scientists involved in undertaking (or resisting) different kinds of intellectual work", Katherine Smith notices. "Indeed, aside from reflecting on the impacts of the increasing 'audit culture' within academia .. social scientists have been remarkably reticent in discussing the factors shaping their own career trajectories" (2010: 177). On political science David Ricci wrote already some decades ago: "Little is known formally about personal ties, public tests, bureaucratic pressures, social conformity, and the like, as they affect the origin and adoption of ideas in our discipline" (1977: 28). The few studies that have been conducted support the descriptions of Kuhn of the social workings of paradigms. These demonstrate, Ricci writes, "that at least some fields of careful and protracted behavioral research have failed to overcome cultural or professional biases, with the result that what they actually produce is contemporary history rather than objective science" (1977: 29).

An example is the study of Holt and Turner (1975) on the academic community doing research on developing countries and active in the Committee on Comparative Politics of the *Social Science Research Council*. This council, Ricci writes, "sponsored dozens of conferences, workshops, research projects, and publications, bringing together hundreds of scholars and providing an intellectually congenial and professionally rewarding context for their work. In fact, what the Committee fostered over a period of two decades was an "invisible college," to borrow the sociological term. As members of this entity, scholars exchanged information and concepts, read and cited one another's writings, and, above all, came to regard knowledge acquired within the group as valuable and sometimes even true" (1977: 29-30). In over two decades this committee produced seven volumes with research but Holt and Turner had to conclude "that these well-known and influential volumes achieved no scientific success whatever… their authors, leading and respected scholars, never managed to order the available development data rigorously and precisely… knowledge did not accumulate from one book to another, and therefore it is no surprise that the summary volume of the series' lacks hypotheses plain enough and specific enough to be falsified" (Ricci 1977: 30). It is not difficult to think of other research communities that sometimes over decades show no progress whatsoever in their mastery of reality but

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hampers the quality of both teaching and publishing (Grafton 2011; Piereson 2011; *The Economist* 2010).

continue to operate on the basis of biased, unsustainable assumptions and methods. The research on 'power and 'democratization' are important examples (see Blokland 2011).

Scholars are not just rewarded and punished within disciplinary paradigms, they are also educated to accept the assumptions of academic disciplines as a whole and to work within its boundaries, despite the fact that these boundaries often are arbitrarily or have become obsolete. Commenting on Burawoy, John Braithwaite observes that not just the urge to demarcate 'public sociology' is a western phenomenon, but also sociology in itself. Its disciplinary separation at the end of the nineteenth century from anthropology, for instance, is just "silly": sociologists are supposed to study the social in societies that are like the North Atlantic ones, and anthropologists study "the same phenomena using a different mix of the same methods in societies that are not like the North Atlantic powers" (2005: 346). There is no academic or 'scientific' justification for this, only a sociological and political explanation. As John Scott (2005) put it: "Disciplinary distinctions are rarely based on coherent and logical divisions within knowledge that reflect essential forms of understanding. They are historically contingent products of the development of educational systems within particular national contexts… The particular pattern of disciplinary differentiation found in a society exhibits a division of scientific labour that is the negotiated outcome of a particular balance of power among socially organised academics, each discipline laying claim to its particular intellectual territory."

According to Braithwaite, the social sciences should follow the example of the biological sciences where the organization of the work around categories (zoology, botany, entomology, microbiology, anatomy) has been replaced by an organization around problems that cut across these categories (ecology, evolutionary biology, molecular biology) (2005: 345; cf. Shapiro 2002). Training in rigorous methods is to be welcomed, Braithwaite acknowledges, but we have to "resist the way disciplines enforce the methodological orthodoxy of their own tradition, instead of training students to scan the social sciences for the best method for a particular problem" (2005: 347). So it is not enough, as Burawoy does, to make a case for the mutual inspiration of his four sociologies. The walls around sociology as a whole should be taken down. Out-the-box research projects that could really contribute to progress, "struggle against the hegemonic forces of disciplines that define the terms of excellence in research assessment, tenure, gateways to publication" (2005: 350).

A science, stresses Lindblom likewise, is not called a discipline by coincidence: its students are actively and deliberatively disciplined in their thinking and behavior. They are trained to observe reality in specific ways which, on the one hand, help them to focus and to organize and interpret their observations, and, on the other hand, impair them to perceive phenomena that could put their specific, inescapably limited perspective into question. Particularly economics, the discipline he originally was trained in, has in this way become "the most distinctive, the most differentiated, perhaps the most analytically powerful, and also the most provincial of the social science disciplines" (1990: 199). It took Lindblom decades, he declares later in his career, to free himself of the "impressive theoretical inheritance of economics, especially the elegance and precision of its methods" (1988: 17). Exactly because of the attractiveness of its rational, systematic, theoretical constructs, "economics becomes perhaps the most intolerant of the social sciences and perhaps also the narrowest in that it restricts its inquiries to questions for which its formidable techniques are productive, refusing to venture into other no less important questions about economic life" (1988: 17).

The discipline of the science of economics was well illustrated by the financial crisis starting in 2008. "Almost nobody", Paul Krugman stated six years later, saw this crisis coming (2014). What explained this academic failure? Discipline and the apparently widespread monistic belief in a well ordered Kosmos that we already discussed above, seem to be pivotal in any answer. The "central cause of the profession's failure", Krugman writes, "was the desire for an all-encompassing, intellectually elegant approach that also gave economists a chance to show off their mathematical prowess. Unfortunately, this romanticized and sanitized vision of the economy led most economists to ignore all the things that can go wrong" (2009). Economists with a less optimistic view on the rationality of man, society and world, were pushed to the margin during the neoliberal ascent. Economists will have to learn again to live with "messiness", Krugman advices, to improve the empirical validity and relevancy of their science. That is, "they will have to acknowledge the importance of irrational and often unpredictable behavior, face up to the often idiosyncratic imperfections of markets and accept that an elegant economic 'theory of everything' is a long way off. In practical terms, this will translate into more cautious policy advice — and a reduced willingness to dismantle economic safeguards in the faith that markets will solve all problems" (2009).

It seems evident that in any empirical research on the workings of social and political science the ontological assumptions of the scholars involved should be addressed. It is striking that this issue is hardly ever attended, as if the scholars involved were impertinently asked about their political or religious leanings. Just posing the question seems to undermine the purity and objectivity of their scientific travails. Unfortunately, the question is warranted.

12 Conclusions

The discussion above can be summarized in the following theses.

- In the twentieth century mainstream social and political scientists have tried to transform their disciplines into a hard science offering objective, universal, and context independent laws and theories.
- Despite the ambition to assist in the rational intervention and organization of social and political reality, in this process they often have become esoteric, scholastic, and socially and politically irrelevant. Policy makers struggling with concrete social problems, will hardly ever turn to social scientists for advice and input.
- In both political science and sociology fierce criticism has been formulated on this development. In the last 15 years this criticism has grown more and more intense and fundamental.
- The rationalization of our western societies induces the rational organization of more and more spheres of life. This creates an ever increasing demand for rational, 'scientific' justifications and evaluations of social organizations and their policies.
- Goals, values, parameters that can be quantified get more and more weight in this process, at the expense of goals, values, parameters that can only be described in qualitative terms. This gives another impetus to rationalization.
- Professional, academic political science and sociology are not able and not desiring to supply the justifications and evaluations wanted in modern democracies. Scholars hardly ever agree among themselves, they cannot provide objective, universal laws and

theories on which policies could be based, and they do not have incentives to involve themselves in concrete social and political issues.

- The needed justifications and evaluations are more and more supplied by governmental organizations, corporations, interest and advocacy groups, political parties, think tanks and other non-governmental organizations, and to an increasing extent on commission by commercial research and consultancy institutions.
- Especially the most resourceful interest groups in terms of organizational size and financial mass are in a better position to justify their preferences via research: their existing institutional infrastructure and their funding sources enable them to produce or commission it.
- The concept of democracy assumes that citizens have a fair or even equal chance to make their preferences known and to influence public decision making on policies that affect them. Democracy diminishes with rising social inequality in income, wealth, knowledge, access to decision-makers, and capacities to produce or commission research.
- A Leitmotiv in the evaluations of the strengths and weaknesses of social science and in the proposals for change is its ability to question commonly accepted ideas and perspectives, and to indicate or suggest alternatives. Social scholars should help to counter the impairment of which everybody and every culture is a victim, an impairment that blinds for alternative views, ideas, values and goals.
- Impairment increases with social and political inequality and thus with unequal opportunities to advertise and vindicate preferences.
- In this take on impairment social scholars should help to lay bare how power shapes claims on expertise and objectivity, they should expose how power manufactures and marginalizes knowledge and truth.
- Social scholars should also not shy away from conflicts and contestation. They ought to understand that bringing conflicts to the surface and evaluating critically the different positions are more helpful for democratic decision making than suggesting, that conflicts are avoidable misunderstandings and threats to social harmony.
- By questioning accepted ideas and views and by suggesting alternatives social scholars contribute to a, currently often considered inadequate, competition of ideas. By furthering civil society in this way they could be a vital liberating, civilizing and humanizing force.
- The social sciences perform well where the natural sciences perform badly: substantial rational 'phronesis', the reflexive analysis and discussion of values and interests. According to many critics the purpose of social science is not to develop general, universal theory, but, in the words of Flyvbjerg, "to contribute to society's practical rationality in elucidating where we are, where we want to go, and what is desirable according to diverse sets of values and interests" (2001: 167).
- By doing so, by providing substantial or value rational reflections, the social sciences help to curb and guide processes of rationalization.
- In the sphere of policymaking in particular, the social sciences could further civil society and improve policies by helping partisans to better understand their goals and values, as well as, the ways these could be realized. Moreover, they could make a contribution

by critically analyzing and, if wanting, adjusting or redefining the policy 'problems' that have been defined within a particular public discourse.

- Despite the criticism formulated of modern political science and sociology, and despite the alternatives offered, no fundamental reorientation and change has taken place.

- The apparent immobility of the system makes it important to empirically investigate the ideas and the social processes that underlie, foster and preserve the status quo. There is an urgent need for social science to research its own discipline.

- Ethnographic studies seem warranted about what kind of narratives social and political scholars have about themselves and their activities, and how this relate to the social structure of the university or the academic field.

- Together with the prevailing social pressures and incentives, the dominant epistemological ideas about the social and political sciences have vast consequences for the ways these disciplines are organized and taught. The uneasiness and worries that have developed in the last decades about the education universities offer to their students, especially the slow evaporation of the liberal arts program, can only be tackled when the social and political sciences review their epistemological position and their social organization.

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