

Policy Making and Policy Deficit: Role of the Sociologists*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Social scientists cannot avoid doing research which is relevant to policy because their disciplines deal with facts about which policies are made, and they cannot avoid this as long as they interest themselves in society. There are differences in degrees of 'relevance to policy'. Some work in the social sciences deal directly with those facts and factors with which politicians and civil servants are immediately concerned. Other work, if it is intellectually significant and does not deal directly with the things in which politicians and civil servants are interested at the moment, surely deals with things which should be taken into account by any one who wishes to arrive at a serious and responsible judgment. *In that sense all social science is potentially relevant to policy, however empirical or theoretical it might be.*¹

This is how Edward Shils brings home the changing role of the social scientists including sociologists while he was expounding the subtle as well as contested relationship between sociology and social or public policy in his much celebrated classic work *The Calling of Sociology and Other Essays on the Pursuit of Learning*. Indeed, there is a number mention worthy instances that show that social scientists took up the public roles of policy makers. Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924), a Professor of Political Science, became the President of the United States of America (1913-1921). Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1931-), a Professor of Sociology, became the President of Brazil (1995-2002). Henry Alfred Kissinger (1923-), who was a member of the Faculty at Harvard University, both in the Department of Government and at the Center for International Affairs, became the Secretary of State of the United States (1973-1977). Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1927-2003), a Sociologist and a Harvard Professor, became an Assistant to the American

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¹ Edward Shils, *The Calling of Sociology and Other Essays on the pursuit of Learning* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 286-7. Emphases added.

President for Urban affairs before his appointment to India as US Ambassador (1973-1975). But that was not the case always. Until recently the position of social sciences^{2[2]} was far from agenda setting in so far as their role in making or shaping policies is concerned. Controversies surrounding the public role of the social sciences in policy making and implementation and, correspondingly, the role of the social scientists including sociologists are yet to show signs of abatement in the concerned literature. Viewed against this background it is no surprise that this issue became the theme of the 85th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association in 1990. It was entitled "Sociology and the Public Agenda". More than a decade later, in 2003, social policy (along with the issues of governance and mobilization) became the leading theme for the XXIXth All India Sociological Conference held at Udaipur in Rajasthan.

The relationship between the social sciences and the organizations (public and private) has been always less than satisfactory. In particular sociology is accumulating increasing deficit in the policy-making arena in view of the fact that it is yet to demonstrate its utility and relevance to society either in the amelioration of societal and/or individual problems or in promoting society's developmental goals. Sociologists, whether in India or elsewhere, are yet to convince the government and other organizations that their expert knowledge and skill can be productively fed into the policy making process to deal with diverse social issues and problems, viz., rural and urban poverty, inequality, unemployment, housing, pollution control, crimes, education, family disorganization, transportation, energy, urbanization, health care, displacement due to development projects, and so on. To get an idea of the policy deficit, which sociology and other social sciences have accumulated, one needs only to have a cursory look at some of the publications such as those by Lyons, Lynn Jr., and Scott and Shore.^{3[3]} The policy shortfall also grew because of the resistance offered by the sociologists themselves, those who oppose the practical application of sociology on purely pragmatic grounds. They argue "it is good that sociological research draws very little attention from policy-makers and the media because it both insulates the discipline from outside pressures to pursue certain research topics, particularly those that are topical, and protects the discipline from being sanctioned by the state if the research does not support a particular political agenda or ideology."^{4[4]} But this kind of rationale is self-defeating for longer-term interests of sociology. The reason is that, as Wilson argues correctly, "the more

sociology is ignored by policy makers and the media, the less attention it receives as an academic discipline and therefore the more removed it is from the decision-making arena, the fewer students it attracts, and the more difficulty it has in trying to obtain funding support from private foundations and government agencies."^{5[5]} The result is sociology's ever-increasing accumulation of policy deficit.

^{2[2]} In this essay social sciences and sociology are interchangeably used although my own focus is basically on how sociology plays out or will shape its role as a policy actor in the public agenda at the national, regional or local levels of governance.

^{3[3]} L.M. Lyons, *Uneasy Partnership: Social Science and the Federal Government in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Russell Sage, 1969); L. Lynn Jr., *Knowledge and Policy The Uncertain Connection* (Washington D.C: National Academy of Sciences, 1978); and R.A. Scott and A.M Shore, *Why Sociology Does not Apply: A Study of the Use of Sociology* (New York: Elsevier, 1979).

^{4[4]} W.J. Wilson "Can Sociology Play a Greater Role in Shaping the National Agenda?" in W.J. Wilson, *Sociology and the Public Agenda* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1993), p.6.

^{5[5]} *Ibid.*

Against this backdrop the present paper makes a modest attempt, within the relevant historical context, to explore the role, both real and potential, of the sociologist to become an actor in the policy making and policy processes in the modern society. The strategy of presentation of the arguments is as follows. In the second section I trace, from the perspective of historical sociology, how the much-publicized and so-called impasse emerged through depoliticization of social science or sociology. In other words, I show how sociology and other social sciences came to be stripped of their policy making potential and were subsequently dissociated from policy related research and studies in spite of their embodied value relevant evaluative content. This includes a brief discussion of the nature and scope of social policy or, synonymously stated, public policy. In the third section I take up what follows from my discussion in the preceding section. That is, I take up Weber's methodological prescriptions and undertake a critical assessment of Weber's plea for a value free sociology. In the fourth section I briefly sketch the contemporary trends underlying the application of social and especially sociological researches to the fields of public and social policies—two fields being used interchangeably for my purposes here. It also includes a brief discussion of the historical background for the growing alliance between sociology on the one hand and public policy or social policy on the other. The final section contains concluding remarks including a brief review of the position of the Indian sociologists in respect of social or public policy.

II. DEPOLITICIZING SOCIOLOGY AND RISE SOCIAL/PUBLIC POLICY SCIENCE

The rise of value free sociology and its conversion into a virtual professional ideology

of the sociologists is not accidental. In fact it is integrally connected with the consolidation of industrial capitalism in the nineteenth century onwards and its growing linkage with modern science and technology. From now on only that knowledge and research can be carried on which does not, above all, question the exploitative institutional structures -- political or otherwise -- of capitalism and its attendant science and technology. Inevitably, sociology, along with some other disciplines, suffered a notable historic set back. In the late 1930s J.D. Bernal, a Marxist scientist, thus woefully pointed out:

It is becoming increasingly apparent that we need to bring up what may be called the left wing of science - biology and still more, sociology and economics -- to the level of earlier development of physics and chemistry.

This is not merely a matter of providing more funds for the study of these subjects or attracting into them workers of great ability. The great trouble about biological and, still more, sociological sciences, and the basis of the feeling that they are not real but pseudo-sciences, is that they have no adequate positive relation to practical life. The physicist or the chemist is discovering techniques which, if they are internally efficient, have every prospect of finding their way into direct application for human welfare. ... For the biologist there is still considerable possibility of application in medicine. The agriculturist, however, is now faced with a world where restriction, and not development, is the order of the day, and the enormous potentialities of biological discovery have no prospect of being realized in practice. *With sociology it is far worse. Not only are all sociologists removed from any executive power, so that sociology cannot become experimental science, but the very inquiries which are made into social forms are blocked when it appears that they would lead to a criticism of the existing order of society and diverted on to a sterile and merely descriptive academic plane.*^{6]}

However, as I said, in the beginnings of social thought the situation was quite otherwise. There was unity between production of knowledge and its application in practice. The classical figures of social thought from Aristotle and Plato down to Nicolo Machiavelli, Adam Smith or G.H. Hegel, among others, always thought that it was their task to define the ends of society and lay down, accordingly, the obligations of both citizens and rulers. The social philosophers occupied, until the modern times, the roles of the counselor, adviser, and instructor in relation to both the

policy makers and the citizens.^{7]} But this coalescence of knowledge and policy making was ruptured by the social scientists when they began blindly imitating natural scientists. The latter studying the natural world was interested to discover the laws that exhibit the enduring patterns in the realm of natural phenomena. Like them the social scientists became interested in using reason to discover social laws that govern and explain the human behavior and social phenomena in the social world. What is more important, if not distressing, is that even when they studied social issues or problems and suggested remedies to cure them, they paradoxically refrained from defining the proper aims of policy except by doing "scientific research". In other words social sciences including sociology went through the process of depoliticization.

What it boils down to is that a social scientist cannot perform the role of a social scientist if he or she engages in any of the tasks related to the policy process that will invariably contain political implications. The resultant consequence of this disjuncture was that, argues Shils,

social scientists became less 'political', in that sense that they attributed less efficacy to the desires and will of governments and the politicians who were in charge of them. They did not think that the decisions of rulers, princes, prime ministers, presidents and legislators could be decisive; such power to change or to maintain existing social arrangements, in so far as it lay with human beings at all, lay in 'deeper social forces' and in public opinion. It was therefore to the latter that social scientists addressed their work as well as to the more restricted social circles of their like-minded

^{6]} D. Bernal, *The Social Function of Science* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1940), p.331. Emphases added

^{7]} Shils, *The Calling of Sociology and Other Essays on the Pursuit of Learning*, p.260.

professional colleagues. Only by a better understanding of the 'deeper forces' at work in the processes and structures of society could the course of society be affected. The main task therefore was to create a scientific social science.

The social science became 'depoliticized'; the study of politics turned to the production of specific recipes for administrative practice and the description of governmental processes. The other social sciences -- economics and the slowly growing sociology and anthropology -- were substantively and methodologically apolitical. The desire to establish their disciplines as rigorously scientific and their belief that political preconceptions and passions would hinder this drew them away from politics and politicians.^{8[8]}

The social scientist can be a counselor to the politician or the civil servant. He can even enlighten public opinion about problems or the state of his society. And if he does so, he may be doing it as a technician or citizen who is utilizing his specialized sociological knowledge and skill. But, to be sure, as a social scientist he has nothing to do with the ends of policy to be framed and pursued. Neither can he make political or ethical recommendations and decisions. As a social scientist he is ethically neutral who does not mix up facts with values or colors judgments of facts with those of (ethical and/or political) values, whatever the value- relevance or implication of those statements of facts might be in reality in the society.

It is against this general background one can appreciate the methodological prescriptions recommended by Max Weber (1864-1930) for the exclusion of values from (scientific) sociological work. This helps him also to understand why the sociologist or the social scientist cannot at the same time be a policy maker or policy scientist because policy is above all an embodiment of this or that set of values which can be defined here as those ideas or conceptions which are shared by the people in a society about what is good and bad, right and wrong, or desirable and undesirable. In a culture the values typically come in a pair, so that for every positive value there is a negative one.^{9[9]}

Dunn points out that, etymologically, the term "policy" comes from three different languages. The Greek root polis (city-state) and the Sanskrit root pur (city) evolved first into the Latin *politia* (state) and then into the Middle English *policie*, meaning the conduct of public affairs or the administration of government. Two other words such as police and politics have also the same etymological origin as that of policy. This is also the reason why some other modern languages like German and Russian, for instance, have only one word (*politik*, *politika*) to mean both politics and policy. Finally, this is also the reason why boundaries of such disciplines as political science, public administration, and policy sciences -- all of which heavily concentrate on the study of politics and policy—are not clearly demarcated. In point of fact policy making is, in one way or another, a political process.^{10[10]} Moreover Dunn suggests that "policy analysis is embedded in political processes that reflect conflicting values of different segments of the community as

^{8[8]} *Ibid.* 261

^{9[9]} David Popenoe, *Sociology* (Englewood Cliffs: New Jersey, 1989), p.58.

^{10[10]} William N. Dunn, "Policy Analysis and Applied Social Science", in T. Mayakawa (ed.), *The Science of Public Policy Essential Readings in Policy Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2000), Part-1, Vol.1. pp. 29-30.

they have pursued their own visions of social improvement.”¹¹^[11] Sutton reminds us that policy making is as much political as it is analytical and also problem solving.¹²^[12]

Similarly, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to have a definition of policy which is accepted by all. In fact, while trying to define the term, various scholars have emphasized various dimensions of policy. For David Easton, policy refers to a web of decisions and actions that allocate “values.”¹³^[13] According to W.I. Jenkins, public policy is “a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where these decisions should, in principle, be within the power of these actors to achieve.”¹⁴^[14] W. Parsons regards policy as an expression of political rationality. “To have a policy is to have rational reasons or arguments, which contain both a claim to an understanding of a problem and a solution. It puts forward what is and what ought to be done. A policy offers a kind of theory upon which a claim for legitimacy is made.”¹⁵^[15] Finally, I may quote as well J.E. Anderson who defines policy as “a goal-directed or purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in an attempt to deal with a public problem.”¹⁶^[16] Whatever the subtle differences among these ways of conceptualizing it, it is notable that policy is not something that belongs to the realm of the private. It is either social policy, which is more frequently than not, is in usage in European, particularly Britain, or public policy, which is more prevalent in social sciences parlour of America. Both of them belong to or are integrally connected with the rising discipline called policy science, policy sciences or policy studies. Daniel Learner and Harold D. Lasswell made the first systematic attempt to emphasize the need for scientific analysis of policy in 1951.¹⁷^[17]

What is social policy? There is no agreed definition of social policy. It is an omnivorous concept that will embrace of all sorts of welfare and well-being issues that confront the individual and his society: social service, social security, working conditions, health and safety concerns,

education, poverty and unemployment, social exclusion and marginalization of the least privileged groups, housing and urban affairs, crime and criminal justice, community care, environment and pollution, employment for the disabled, families and children, vocational training for the young and youth policy, elderly people, equal treatment for men and women, and, today, even citizen participation on partnership basis with public and private institutions and agencies. Simply put, social policy stands not only for the

¹¹^[11] *Ibid.*, p. 53

¹²^[12] See Rebecca Sutton, *The Policy Process: An Overview* (London: Overseas development Institute, 1999), Working Paper No.118, p.32.

¹³^[13] David Easton, *The Political System* (New York: Knopf, 1953), p. 130.

¹⁴^[14] Quoted in T. Miyakawa (ed.), *The Science of Public Policy: Essential Readings in Public Policy Sciences II* (London: Routledge, 2000), Vol.5,Part-I, p.44.

¹⁵^[15] W. Parsons, *Public Policy: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Policy Analysis* (Cheltenham: Edwar Elgar, 1997), p. 15

¹⁶^[16] James E. Anderson, *Public Policy-Making: Decisions and Their Implementation* (New York: Praeger, 1975), p. 3.

¹⁷^[17] See Daniel Learner and Harold D. Lasswell, *The Policy Sciences: Recent Developments in Scope and Method* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951).

policies which governments use for furthering social welfare (i.e. well-being, range of services, financial assistance, utility, etc) and social protection (i.e. protection in certain conditions such as childhood, sickness, disability, old age, unemployment, etc) but also for the ways and means by which they are achieved and developed. It includes making and choosing alternative courses of actions. All of these are basically equivalent to the tasks of the welfare state.¹⁸^[18] By social policy Titmuss refers to “the study of the range of social needs and functions, in conditions of social scarcity, of human organizations traditionally called social service or social welfare systems to meet those needs.”¹⁹^[19]

Recently Anne West, the Convener of the Social Policy program in the Department of Sociology at LSE, points out in her introductory remarks that as a discipline social policy is both applied and interdisciplinary covering a large number of other social scientific disciplines such as economic, sociology, psychology, geography, history, philosophy and political science. “Social Policy is focused on those aspects of the economy, society and polity that are necessary to human existence and the means by which they can be provided. These basic human needs include: food and shelter, a sustainable and safe environment, the promotion of health and treatment of the sick, the care and support of those unable to live a fully independent life; and the education and training of individuals to a level that enables them fully to participate in their society. The study of Social Policy is designed to reflect on the ways in which different societies have developed ways of meeting these needs, or have failed to do so. Some societies rely on informal or family institutions, some on private markets and individual actions, some on governmental actions through what is often termed the welfare state.”²⁰^[20] While this sums up the broad sphere of concerns and purposes as rationale of social policy as a discipline, the coverage of this discipline as an academic course has comprehensive similarities with what is usually the subject matter of sociology.

Social policy cannot be discussed in a social vacuum and it is hardly meaningful without situating it within the actual context of the society and its culture -- the realms of sociological investigation. As Titmuss points out:

It is clear that the study of social policy cannot be isolated from *the study of society as a whole in all its varied social, economic and political aspects*. An essential background for the study of social policy is a knowledge of population changes, past and present and predicted for the future; the family as an institution and the position of women; social stratification and the concepts class, caste, status and mobility; social change and the effects of industrialization, urbanization and social conditions; the political structure, the work ethic and the sociology of industrial relations; minority groups and racial prejudice; social control, conformity, deviance and the uses of sociology to maintain status quo.²¹^[21]

¹⁸^[18] Thus George T. Martin, Jr. talks of welfare state social policy whose distinctive feature is that “access to its resources depends on its political status (being an entitled citizen) rather than on market status (having money to purchase benefits). The major limitation of the market provision of welfare is that access to resources depends on income, which is unequally distributed.” See his *Social Policy in the Welfare State* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990), p.8.

¹⁹^[19] R. Titmuss, *Commitment to Welfare* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1968), p.20.

²⁰^[20] <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/socialPolicy/introduction.htm> (Visited 4 December 2005).

²¹^[21] R.M. Titmuss, “The International Perspective”, in B. Abel-Smith and K. Titmuss (eds.), *Social Policy: An Introduction* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1974), pp. 15-6. Emphases added.

If this description of the subject matter of social policy is accepted, then it can also very well be the subject matter of sociology, regardless of academic emphases given to the respective disciplines. It means that there are enormous trade-offs between the two. The social policy is parallel to, if not equivalent of, what is called public policy, which is considered a “process of making choices among competing demands, especially when there are scarce resources.”²²^[22] However, unless otherwise is indicated, public policy refers to what the governments do. Anderson, Brady and Bullock III point out that public policies are developed by governmental institutions and officials through the political process or politics. They are the outcome of actions of legitimate authorities in a political system and these authorities may be, for instance, the elders, paramount chiefs, executives, legislators, judges, administrators, councilors, monarchs, and the like who engage in the daily affairs of the political system. They are the ones who are recognized by the people to have the legitimate power of taking binding actions in the form of public policies for achieving specified goals or objectives.²³^[23]

In this light Anderson and others specifically points out five essential features of public policy. First, public policy is a purposive-goal directed action rather than chance or random behavior. Second, public policy consists of courses of action performed by government officials, and certainly not a result of separate and discrete decisions or actions. Further, a policy involves not only a decision to enact a law but also follow-up decisions to enact other subsequent acts to implement, interpret, and enforce the law. Third, policy does mean what the government intends to do or what it will do. It means what the government does in fact with regard to a problem such as cleaning up the environment, redistributing income, or controlling inflation. Therefore, for instance, the enactment of food distribution policy means that the government has actually done to provide food to the hungry and needy but not what it intends to do because the hungry and needy cannot eat the government’s intentions, however good. Fourth, a public policy can be positive or negative. In the former case, the government takes an action that affects the particular problem. In the case of negative public policy the government does not act where a government action is sought apparently because the government decides not act following a laissez faire or hands-off policy. Fifth, public policy is based on law and hence non-compliance invites punishment. Policies of non-governmental organizations lack this power of legitimate coercion. Finally, how the public policies will be formed depends on the way the politics of public policy is played out.²⁴^[24]

A related concept that is useful in the context of this essay is what is called policy-making or, in specialized technical vocabulary, the “policy process”, i.e. the various methods, strategies and techniques by which policies are actually formed. The policy process is very crucial to the

²²^[22] Robert M. Moroney, *Social Policy and Social Work: Critical Essays on the Welfare State* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1991), p.18.

²³^[23] J.E. Anderson, David W. Brady and Charles Bullock, III, “Introduction to Policy Study”, in Miyakawa (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. 5, Part I, pp.11-2.

²⁴^[24] *Ibid.*

analysis of policy, policy analysis or policy-making. It is this policy process that in the last instance translates a social issue into a social or public policy. The public policy process refers to, describes Miyakawa,

all the mechanisms through which the decision making and the implementation of public policy are made in our society It is a process in the sense that it involves a linked series of activities and events oriented to the achievement of one or more specific objectives. The policy process characterizes how a political system goes about transforming public demands for government actions arising from the socio-economic environment into a public policy. The policy process commences with the perception of an issue which calls for some kind of policy decision, the generation of ideas and the initiation of proposals, continues with some form of debate, analysis and evaluation for the making of formal decisions, and is followed by the implementation of the decisions made through designated actions. The process concludes with the evaluation of the policy outcomes, leading to the policy termination or feedbacks to the next policy cycle.²⁵^[25]

Just as there is no one grand theory of policy making, so also there is no single grand approach to the policy process. In fact there are different approaches that elucidate the policy process as the out of an womb in which many activities, factors and actors are embedded or involved in complex relationship of interdependence and interaction. Moreover, policy content is linked up with the policy-making process.

Anderson and others offer an introductory approach to explain what is involved in policy-making. They point out that public policy itself is a process but it is a single process by which policy is formed. The formulation of the policy consists of five stages or steps through which policy-making takes place. An important advantage of their sequential approach to policy making is that it chronologically follow the sequence of activities that occur in five stages. The first stage is problem formation. A problem is a situation that produces, as Jones argues, “a human need, deprivation, or dissatisfaction, self-identified or identified by others, for which relief is sought.”²⁶^[26] Only those problems – whether pollution, inflation, child abuse, or crime in the street – which cause so much dissatisfaction or difficulty for the people as to compel them to seek remedy and thus move them to action become problems for the policy maker. That is the problem must take on public dimension and importance. “The most important thing that distinguishes public from private problems is the number of people involved. Thus, public problems are those that have broad-ranging effects, including consequences for persons not directly involved (as in a labor-management dispute).”²⁷^[27] It seems that this view of problem is similar to Mills’ own conception of public issue, which is in turn the subject matter of Millsian sociology. More will be said later. In any case the second stage is policy agenda. Not all problems attract the attention of the government or the politician

²⁵^[25] Miyakawa (ed.), *op cit.*, Vol.5 Part 1, p. 3. Emphases added

²⁶^[26] Quoted in Anderson et al. in *ibid.*, p.13.

²⁷^[27] Anderson et al., *op.cit.*, p.13.

and hence they are not agenda setting. Put otherwise, only those problems, which receive serious attention from the policy makers, become itemized in the agenda. These problems achieve agenda status because particular groups, whose interests are affected, seek redress from the government. “Depending upon the power, status, and number of people in the group, the government may be compelled to put the problem on the agenda.”²⁸^[28]

The third stage in the policy process is policy formulation and adoption. Policy formulation implies “development of pertinent and acceptable proposed courses of action for dealing with public problems”. What is more important here is the fact that policy formulation does not automatically result in the adoption of what is formulated as policy, viz. a law, rule or order, for instance. The eventual adoption depends on whether the proposed policy or policies are acceptable to the people who make policy decisions on the one hand and also on whether prevailing contextual conditions are favorable to their adoption. In the long run, “certain provisions will be included and other provisions dropped, depending upon what builds support for the proposed policy.”²⁹^[29] Moreover, what will ultimately be the form and nature of the adoption policy and thus the policy formulation will depend upon “how many branches of government are involved in the adopting process.”³⁰^[30] In principle the law, rule or order once adopted becomes, in the fourth stage, what is called public policy. Then again, argue Anderson and others, “the content and effect of public policy may be greatly changed during the implementation stage. Thus, the implementation or administrative stage of the policy process is doubly important because without application the policy has no effect, and the application of policy proposals sometimes changes the nature of policy itself.”³¹^[31] Needles to add, in the implementation process the legislatures and the courts are also important players although it is the administrative agencies that are the primary agencies of implementation. The final stage in the policy process is policy evaluation or appraisal of the content of policy and its effect. That is, the evaluators try to determine whether or not the concerned policy has worked. Policy appraisal may necessitate additional policy-making, thus starting the policy cycle all over again. There are two types of evaluation. The first is called seat-of the pants or political evaluation, which are basically impressionistic, being based on fragmentary, evidenced and often ideologically slanted. The second type of evaluation is systematic evaluation of policies and programs. It seeks “to objectively measure the societal impact of policies and the extent to which stated objectives are met. Systematic evaluation focuses on the effects a policy has on the problem to which it is directed. Thus, it gives all concerned with the policy process some feeling for the impact of policy.”³²^[32]

An important point to remember about this five-stage sequential approach to policy-making, although only one among many advanced by others, is the emphasis Anderson and others put on the context within which policy-making activity is undertaken. There are different contexts that are relevant in

²⁸^[28] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁹^[29] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

³⁰^[30] *Ibid.*

³¹^[31] *Ibid.*

³²^[32] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

this respect: historical context, environmental factors like political culture, public opinion, social and economic systems, and finally the institutional context, viz. federalism, separation of powers and the party system in the democratic constitutional setup. Furthermore the policy-making takes place at different levels. It may occur at the level of micropolitics in which case a few individuals or companies, for instance, ask for favorable government action for their benefit (viz. tax benefit). Another policy level is subsystem politics “which are usually focused on a particular policy or functional area, such as commercial air transportation, agricultural extension activity, river and harbor development, the management of public grazing lands, or the granting of patents.”³³^[33] Lastly the policy-making may happen at the level of macropolitics involving “the community as a whole and the leaders of government generally in the formation of public policy – whether to combat inflation, provide for an adequate supply of energy, or reform the welfare system.”³⁴^[34] Participants in the macropolitical arena can range from the president or the prime minister down to an intellectual group. Major changes or developments in the public policy normally happen at this macropolitical level.

Let me briefly mention the historical origins of the social or public policy. In tracing this genealogical ancestry of the discipline I need not start from the time of Mesopotamian civilization which in the city of Ur, situated in Southern Iraq, produced one of the first legal codes in the twenty first century B.C., some two thousand years before Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), Confucius (551-479 B.C.), and Kautilya (circa 300 B.C.).³⁵^[35] An important historical watershed in the production of policy relevant knowledge as relatively an autonomous area, resting on scientific procedures and free from interests and prejudices of everyday politics, occurred with the coming of the Industrial Revolution and Enlightenment in the latter part of the eighteenth century. These two epochal events witnessed the rise of an all-pervasive the belief in human progress, to be achieved through increasing use of science and technology. These events had profound impact

among the policy makers and those who advised them. “It is in this period that the development and testing of scientific theories of nature and society were gradually seen to constitute the only possible objective means to understand and resolve social problems. Mysticism, magic, and divination gave way to modern science. In the realm of policy analysis, this meant the production of policy-relevant knowledge according to the canons of empiricism and the scientific method.”³⁶^[36] However, in the twentieth century the social scientific disciplines including sociology came under the process of professionalization. From now on, the producers of policy were “no longer the heterogeneous group of bankers, industrialists, journalists, and scholars who guided the early statistical societies and other institutions for policy research. They were, rather, university professors who specialized in teaching and research and were increasingly

³³^[33] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

³⁴^[34] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁵^[35] For fascinating historical details see Dunn, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 30-52.

³⁶^[36] Dunn, *op. cit.*, pp.33-4.

called upon by governments to provide practical advice on policy making and government administration. In background, experience, and motivation they were also members of social science profession.”³⁷^[37]

In the context of the present essay the contributions of two particular sociologists are important as far as policy sciences are concerned: Karl Mannheim (1893-1947) and Max Weber (1864-1920). Dunn regards their contributions as “foundational studies in the policy sciences.”³⁸^[38] Dunn categorically asserts that the development of the policy sciences in the postwar era owes much to such ‘early methodological contributors as Weber and Mannheim’. Mannheim contributed to the policy studies in his *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (1929) and *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (1940). Mannheim outlined, among other things, the importance of specialized knowledge for planners and policy makers. In his *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* Mannheim criticized the planners because they emphasized “functional rationality” at the expense of what he called “substantive rationality”. Functional rationality signifies relationship of means to certain ends, while substantive rationality is concerned with the appropriateness of the ends or goals themselves.³⁹^[39] Thus, to put it in the words of Moroney, “the analyst who operates within the process approach to policy formulation assumes that his or her role is purely technical and that questions of substantial rationality belong only to the decision makers. Mannheim used Germany of the 1930s as an example of functional rationality in its extreme. The analyst’s function was not to question the decisions of those in power: it was solely one of implementation of the ‘final solution’.”⁴⁰^[40] But the other sociologist, Weber, who actually championed the doctrines of ethical neutrality and the separation of the realm of empirical knowledge from that of values, is also the one who contributed to the growth of value-relevant social research. This is why Dunn contends that Weber’s aim was not to create “a gulf between social science and social policy, the latter of which inevitably involved value judgments; it was rather to show the various ways that empirical science can help to clarify value questions.” Thus Dunn concludes:

Contrary to much scholarly opinion, Weber did not conceive of social science as a value-free enterprise and was himself engaged in a number of controversial policy research projects in the 1890s, as a member of the German Association for Social Policy. Weber did insist, nevertheless on a rigorous distinction between empirical knowledge and value judgments, precisely because so much of the scholarly work of his day contained value judgments masquerading as value-free science.⁴¹^[41]

It is to this dimension that I now turn to evaluate Weber’s so-called but celebrated distinction between empirical knowledge and value judgments in sociology and their bearing on the policy-making role, whether potential or actual, of the sociologists today in the twenty first century.

³⁷^[37] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

³⁸^[38] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁹^[39] For details see Karl Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1936).

⁴⁰^[40] Moroney, *op.cit.* p.26.

⁴¹^[41] Dunn, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

III WEBER, AND VALUE - FREE SOCIOLOGY: POLICY

DEFICITS IN THE ROLE OF SOCIOLOGIST

While discussing the social functions of science function Bernal argued:

Science, conscious of its purpose, can in the long run become a major force in social change. Because of the powers which it holds in reserve it can ultimately dominate other forces. But since, unaware of its social significance, becomes a helpless tool in the hands of the forces driving it away from the directions of social advance, and, in the process, destroying very essence, the spirit of free inquiry. To make science conscious of itself and its powers it must be seen in the light of the problems of the present and of a realizable future. It is in relation to these that we have to determine the immediate functions of science. ... It is the function of science to study man as much as nature, to discover the significance and direction of social movements and social needs.⁴²^[42]

Understandably the sociologist, for the Marxist scientist Bernal, is not simply a social scientist who carries on his scientific activity devoid of any policy implications. For him sociologist is someone who, as a scientist, does his science not for its own sake in the abstract but for the valued ends in the long- run so that the existing society becomes a better place for all of us to live in. Sociologist is a policy-maker at least in the sense that his sociology generates suggestive policy implications and recommendations which, if included in the social and/or public policy content, would bring about a welcome societal change and at the same time serve the needs of the citizen. This is not the position in the case of Weber, not because he was unaware of importance of value-relevance of empirical social research but because of the theoretical and methodological positions that marked his sociology. Weber occupied bourgeois class position and he himself admitted that by saying this: "I am a member of the bourgeois classes. I feel myself as such and I am educated in its views and ideals."⁴³^[43] Therborn rightly states that Weber "modelled his sociology on liberal marginalist economics" and "marginalist economics starts from the individual actor calculating how to realize his goals with a scarcity of means, and therein seeks what can be called an explanatory understanding of the regularities of the market."⁴⁴^[44] While more will be said latter, it suffices for now to say that from this standpoint, along with Weber's other theoretical and methodological prescriptions, it is difficult for the social scientist or, for that matter, the sociologist to emerge as policy-maker or contribute to policy-making. The task then for the moment is to summarize briefly what Weber said in this connection in this regard.

⁴²^[42] Bernal, op. cit., p.410-11

⁴³^[43] Cited in Goran Therborn, *Science, Class and Society* (London: NLB, 1977), p. 311.

⁴⁴^[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 296 and 292.

In a way, Weber had to confront the relationship between social research and issue of policy-making in view of the situation that existed in the then Germany where many social scientists took for granted the validity of their claim to relate their research to one or more dimensions of policy making: providing relevant data that would be relevant for making policy, evaluating consequences of alternative courses of policy actions that may be considered, the recommending the preferred ends of policy or suggesting the best policy alternative to be pursued. In the context of the present paper, these are questions concerning the role of the sociologist in the making of social or public policies of his/her society. That is, to what extent, if a sociologist in the making of social or public policies of his/her society. That is, to what extent, if

at all, can the sociologist take on the role of the policy maker? In Weber's words: "What is really at issue is the intrinsically simple demand that the investigator and teacher should keep unconditionally separate the establishment of empirical facts (including the 'value-oriented' conduct of the empirical individual whom he is investigating) and his own practical evaluations, i.e. his evaluations of these facts as satisfactory or unsatisfactory (including among these facts evaluations made by the empirical persons who are the objects of investigations). These two things are logically different and to deal with them as though they were the same represents a confusion of entirely heterogeneous problems. ...The social sciences, which are strictly empirical sciences, are the least fitted to presume to save the individual the difficulty of making a choice, and they should therefore not create the impression that they can do so."⁴⁵ It is quite clear that for Weber wanted free social science research of potential abuses implicit in the value-judgments of the social scientist. He firmly advocates that

it can never be the task of an empirical science to provide binding norms and ideals from which directives for immediate practical activity can be derived. ... An empirical science cannot tell anyone what he *should* do -- but rather what he *can* do -- and under certain circumstances -- what he wishes to do. ... The capacity to distinguish between empirical knowledge and value-judgments, and the fulfillment of the scientific duty to see the factual truth as well as the practical duty to stand up for our own ideals constitute the program to which we wish to adhere with ever increasing firmness.⁴⁶

How does Weber view the status of social policy (i.e. "statements of ideals")⁴⁷ from this standpoint of fact-value dichotomy, implying at the same time the nature of relationship between the social scientist and the policy-maker? Here too, Weber rules out the inclusion of the social policy within the scope of social scientific study in view of their value relevance. As Weber states: "The distinctive characteristic of a problem of social *policy* is indeed the fact that it cannot be resolved merely on the basis of purely technical considerations which assume already settled ends. Normative standards of value can and must be objects of *dispute* in a discussion of a problem of social policy because the problem lies in the domain of general *cultural* values."⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Trans. and ed. E. Shills and H.A. Finch (New York: The Free Press, 1949), pp.11 and 19. Emphasis in original

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 54 and 58. Emphases in original

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

From this point of view the sociologist as a scientist can hardly afford to become a policy-maker or policy analyst.

Does all this mean that values or value judgments do not have any place in social scientific research? Are values irrelevant to social sciences? Can the social scientist have a value-determined standpoint, anyway? It is of importance to note that Weber, in spite of the gulf between science and values that he created, nevertheless did not underrate the role of values either in social science or in human life. He points out that the specificity of the historical and cultural sciences lies in their being disciplines of cultural significance. The concept of culture stands singularly for values, the presence of which makes the undertaking of scientific endeavor worthwhile and significant.

The problems of social sciences are selected by the value-relevance of the phenomena treated. ... The concept of culture is a *value-concept*. Empirical reality becomes 'culture' to us because and insofar as we relate it to value ideas. It includes those segments and only those segments of reality which have become significant to us because of this value-relevance. Only a small portion of existing concrete reality is colored by our value-conditioned interest and it alone is significant to us. It is significant because it reveals relationships which are important to us due to their connection with our values... All knowledge of cultural reality, as may be seen, is always knowledge from *particular points of view*. When we require from the historian and social research worker as an elementary presupposition that they distinguish the important from the trivial and that he should have the necessary 'point of view' for this distinction, we mean that they must understand how to relate the events of the real world consciously or unconsciously to universal 'cultural values' and to select out those relationships which are significant for us.⁴⁹^[49]

Furthermore, the central object of study of (interpretative) sociology, in contrast to the natural sciences, is human behavior to which the behaving individual attaches cultural significance.⁵⁰^[50]

Be that as it may, Weber's methodological prescriptions created what Gouldner called a myth in his Presidential Address delivered at the meeting of the Society for the Study of Social problems in 1961, more that forty years ago. Although many sociologists since then have evaluated Weber's stand on the concerned issue, Gouldner's assessment still remains

substantially valid even if he did not directly deal with the policy making role of the sociologists as such. To begin with, Weber's value-freedom principle has indeed performed its historic functions. It did enhance the cohesion and autonomy of the discipline *vis a vis* political and religious constraints in the societies of its origin and expansion, Europe and America, and thus enabled the discipline to freely pursue its basic problems and concerns. The Weberian principle was useful in promoting cohesion and autonomy of the modern university, the modern citadel of reason and enlightenment, that was now depoliticized by putting in place a *modus vivendi* among politically committed academicians.⁵¹^[51]

⁴⁹^[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 76 and 81-2. Emphases added.

⁵⁰^[50] Therborn, *op. cit.*, pp. 292.

⁵¹^[51] Alvin W. Gouldner, "Anti-Minotaur: The Myth of A Value Free Sociology", in M. Stein and A. Vidich (eds.), *Sociology on Trial* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 38-9 and 41.

More significant from the point of view of the present paper is the contradictions and confusions which Weber's value-freedom doctrine introduced into the discipline and profession of sociology. Some of the pertinent contradictions and confusions that will have negative, rather than positive, effect on sociology and its development may be raised.⁵²^[52] These are, among others, are follows: Does the acceptance of objective and value free sociology mean that sociologists cannot make value judgements in matters where they have competence or where they can acquire competence by doing it? Should they be morally and politically indifferent to implications of their work? Are they not entitled to deduce value implications of their factual judgments in their work and make them part of their such work or make them public? Or can they make judgments of fact if they simply point out that those judgements are different from so-called factual statement? Isn't the principle value free doctrine a sort of *carte blanche* that empowers the sociologist to pursue his private agenda facilitating, at the same time, the abdication of his public responsibilities as a citizen? Is it not the case that the sociologist could have given, in the absence of the so-called value freedom principle, a rather credible account of value-relevance of the factual accounts of his sociological research?

Particularly if the teachers, who are also sociologists, ought not to express "their personal values in the academic setting, how then are students to be safeguarded against the unwitting influence of these values which shape the sociologist's selection of problems, his preferences for certain hypotheses or conceptual schemes, and his neglect of others. For these are unavoidable and, in this sense, there is can be no value-free sociology."⁵³^[53] Indeed, Weber offers us no guide as to how to ensure value-free results just because the investigator openly declares his intention not to mix up his value judgments with the empirical knowledge because all stages of research process are in one way or another connected with valuations the investigators consider, whether consciously or unconsciously, appropriate and relevant.⁵⁴^[54] To state otherwise, facts to be investigated do not exist in their own right but are organized and determined through the moral spectacles that the investigator uses to look at them and the world.

Parkin states that Weber's belief in the supposed capacity of the researcher to distinguish between empirical knowledge and value judgment is like the belief of the newspaper editors in their capacity to distinguish between news and comment. They claim that in presenting news they scrupulously stick to recording facts, while editorial columns are judgments on the facts. But media sociologists inform us "what counts as 'news' is in fact the end product of a very selective social process. In recording some events and suppressing others, as well as in the moral vocabulary employed in the manufacture of news, certain biases and preconceptions are quietly at work. What purports to be an impartial recitation of factual events is thus a thoroughly loaded presentation. The biases may operate in a more subtle and subterranean fashion than they do in the case of editorial comment, but that makes them all the more effective."⁵⁵^[55]

⁵²^[52] For details see especially *Ibid.*, pp.36-7.

⁵³^[53] *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁵⁴^[54] Frank Parkin, *Max Weber* (Chichester: Ellis Horwood, 1982), p. 32.

⁵⁵^[55] *Ibid.*, p.33

Louis Wirth and Robert Lynd, two of those sociologists who were associated with the unmasking tradition in American sociology, point to the same conclusion. Wirth, writing in the *Preface* to Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*, has reminded that assertions in the social sciences, no matter however objective they may be, have "ramifications extending beyond the limits of science itself" and accordingly points out that truth itself, not being a simple correspondence between thought and existence, is "tinged with the investigator's interest in his subject matter, his standpoint, his evaluations, in short the definition of his object of attention."⁵⁶ Lynd has advised sociologists to be more candid about their 'motivations/ and not to hide behind "the aloof 'spirit of science and scholarship'"⁵⁷ The fact that values are extra-scientific or non-scientific and that they are elusive of logical formulation does not free the social scientist from moral, political and intellectual implications underlying his methodological commitment to objective detachment. Science itself is, as Michael Polyani says, "a system of beliefs to which we are committed."⁵⁸ There is little doubt to the fact that values arise from various possibilities and are involved in all stages of sociological studies and research.⁵⁹ Thus Mills writes, echoing Gouldner, Parkin and others cited above: "Values are involved in the selection of the problems we study; values are also involved in certain of the key conceptions we use in our formulation of these problems, and values affect the course of their solution."⁶⁰

A few examples of how values or value judgments are involved in sociological studies and research may be mentioned here for purposes of illustration of the point I am pursuing so far. Let me cite an example from the area of sociology theory. Jeffrey C. Alexander, a contemporary sociological theorist of international prominence, clearly states that evaluative elements, values or nonfactual/non-empirical elements are an integral component of theory defined as "a generalization separated from particulars, an abstraction separated from a concrete case."⁶¹ A theory has, according to Alexander, two components in its content: factual and nonfactual elements. What is the weight or importance of nonfactual/non-empirical component in Alexander's concept of sociological theory? Let me quote Alexander:

Theories, then, are generated as much by the nonfactual or nonempirical processes that precede scientific contact with the real world as they are by this 'real world' structure. By nonfactual processes I mean such things as graduate school dogma, intellectual socialization, and the imaginative speculation of the scientist, which is based as much on his personal fantasy as on external reality itself. In the construction of scientific theories, all these processes are modified by the real world, but they are never eliminated. There is then a double-sided relation between theories

⁵⁶ Louis Wirth, "Preface," in Mannheim, *op. cit.*, pp. x and xviii.

⁵⁷ Robert S. Lynd, *Knowledge for What?* (New York: Grove Press, 1964), p. 178.

⁵⁸ Michael Polyani, *Personal Knowledge* (New York: Harper 7 Row, 1964), p.171.

⁵⁹ For details, see Bipul Kumar Bhadra, *The Political Sociology of C. Wright Mills* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 1989), pp. 39-44.

⁶⁰ C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 78.

⁶¹ Jeffrey C. Alexander, "What is Theory", in his *Sociological Theory Since 1945* (London: Hutchinson, 1947), p. 2.

and facts. *I will call the nonempirical part of science the a priori element. This element is carried not through observations but by traditions.* Such a claim might strike you as rather odd. You would normally view science, the prototype of rationality and modernity, as antithetical to tradition. In my view, however, science— even when it is rational—vitality depends on tradition. Sociology is an empirical social science, committed to rigorous testing, to facts, to the discipline of proof and falsification. *Yet all these scientific activities, in my view, occur within taken-for-granted traditions which are not subject to strictly empirical evaluation.*⁶²^[62]

The nonempirical/nonfactual elements consist of presuppositions that refer to general assumptions which every sociologist makes when he encounters reality – be it action or order, for instance. The presuppositions about action and order are the foundations on which sociology rests. Whether theorists or not, sociologists have to make presuppositional decisions and live with their consequences as well.⁶³^[63] Furthermore, theory is not only evaluative but also politically value-relevant and determined. To quote Alexander: “Sociological theories are not simply attempts to explain the world, but also efforts to evaluate it, to come to terms with broader questions of meaning. *Because they are existential statements and not just scientific ones, they invariably have enormous political implications.*”⁶⁴^[64]

Another example of the role of the values in sociology can be cited from the recently arisen sub-field of sociology: feminist sociology. It makes amply clear how (male) values have virtually affected the entire corpus of sociology. Feminist sociology points out that until recently sociology was not a science of society but rather a science of male society. The male-bias, which was built into the mainstream sociology, made it malestream sociology. It interfered with “our knowledge-based understanding of the way our society operates.”⁶⁵^[65] The sexist bias in sociology was all- pervasive. Thus, argues Bernard, “practically all sociology to date has been sociology of the male world. The topics that have preoccupied sociologists have been the topics that preoccupy men: power, work, climbing the occupational ladder, conflict, and sex – but not women – or women only as adjuncts to men. When women have been dealt with in this sociology of male society, it has usually been in a chapter or a footnote on ‘the status of women’, thrown in as an extra, almost beside the point, rather than as an intrinsic component of a total society.”⁶⁶^[66] They were basically hidden from the sociological gaze since the modern sociology was and still is a male-dominated discipline. In contrast, the emergent feminist sociology is one that is for women. It challenges

⁶²^[62] *Ibid.*, p. 6. Emphases added.

⁶³^[63] *Ibid.*, pp. 10 and 15.

⁶⁴^[64] *Ibid.*, p. 16. Emphases added.

⁶⁵^[65] Jessie Bernard, “My Four Revolutions: An Autobiographical History of the ASA”, in Kristen A. Myers et al. (eds.),

Feminist Foundations: Toward Transforming Sociology (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1998), p. 9.

⁶⁶^[66] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

and confronts, argue Pamela Abbott and Claire Wallace, the patriarchal supremacy that institutionalizes women's inequality in the society.⁶⁷^[67]

They cite, to give an example, how recent sociologists have questioned the traditional view that medical science has progressed because of the application of scientific method, which has also enabled the acquisition of objective and unchallengeable facts and value-free body of knowledge. But the fact is that this view grossly ignores or underrates the role of society in shaping modern medicine:

Marxist feminists have highlighted inequalities in health care and the ways in which the health care system serves the needs of a capitalist society. A 'cultural critique' has questioned the view that medicine, as a science, is value-free and objective, that doctors as professionals are knowledgeable and concerned with meeting the health care needs of clients, that medical intervention is always of benefit to clients and that the dramatic reductions in ill health and general improvements in health achieved in industrial countries in last 100 years are due to advances in medical knowledge.⁶⁸^[68]

Indeed it is pointed out that malestream scientific knowledge, as also malestream sociology, has ignored, distorted or marginalized women. It has excluded women from positions of power and authority in all major institutions, including the political and economic, of the society. That is why "feminist knowledge, including sociology, challenges the objectivity and truth of that knowledge (which is presented as neutral) and seeks to replace it with more adequate knowledge – more adequate because it arises from the position of the oppressed and seeks to understand that oppression."⁶⁹^[69] Moreover the feminist theory or sociology is "*also political: it sets out not just to explain society but to transform it.* Feminist theories are concerned to analyze how women can transform society so that they are no longer subordinated, by understanding how patriarchal relations control and constrict them."⁷⁰^[70] The value-laden conception is thus built into the very definition of feminist knowledge and sociology

Finally let me cite a few examples from the sociology of science and technology to illustrate how sociocultural values shape even modern science and technology with the corresponding suggestion that they are not necessarily and purely outcome of the judgments of facts on which the scientists and technologists claim to depend for doing what they do.

Thomas Kuhn argues that 'normal science' operates according to a paradigm. It stands for a consensus among a community of scientists concerning model solutions -- 'exemplars' -- to the problems -- puzzles -- which they deal with. Put otherwise, scientists carry on their activities in 'normal science' within the framework of a given paradigm accepted by the scientific community at large. The scientists' commitment to the paradigm is rooted in their training and shared value system. Scientific revolution takes place when a new paradigm, accepted by the scientific community, replaces the old one in view of the latter's inability to solve an increasing number of perplexing anomalies. The paradigm shift

⁶⁷^[67] Pamela Abbott and Claire Wallace, *An Introduction to Sociology: Feminist Perspectives* (London: Routledge,

1990), p. 10.

⁶⁸^[68] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁶⁹^[69] *Ibid.* p.203.

⁷⁰^[70] *Ibid.* Emphases added

takes place and the normal business of science proceeds along the new paradigm. It is apparent from this point that the distinction between the normal science and crisis (or revolutionary science) is socially constructed.⁷¹^[71] According to this Kuhnian analysis of scientific change, knowledge does not exist independently but is socially constructed within an alternative set of assumptions accompanying the new paradigm. Restive thus states “in a sense, Kuhn’s discussion of social factors in scientific change in the early 1960s was a significant departure from positivistic and idealistic histories and philosophies of science.”⁷²^[72]

In his classic study of automation, *Forces of Production* (1984), David Noble illustrates how technological development is guided and shaped by ‘patterns of powerful and cultural values’. He argues that the

concepts of ‘economic viability’ and technical viability’, which are often used to explain technological change, are inherently political. ... A major goal of machine tool automation was to secure managerial control, by shifting control from the shop floor to the centralized office. There were at least two possible solutions to the problem of automating machine tools. Machining was in fact automated using the technique of numerical control. But there was also a technique of automation called ‘record-playback’ which was as promising as numerical control yet it enjoyed only a brief existence. Why, asks Noble, was numerical control developed and record-playback dropped? It was the post-war period of labor militancy that provided the social context in which the technology of machine tool automation was developed. Record-playback was a system that would have extended the machinists’ skill. Although the machines were more automated under this system, the machinists still had control of the feeds, speeds, number of cuts and output of metal; In other words, they controlled the machine and thereby retained shop floor control over production. Numerical control on the other hand offered a means of dispensing with these well-organized skilled machinists. The planning and conceptual functions were now carried out in an office because the machines operated according to computer programs. The machinist became a button pusher. Numerical control was therefore a management system, as well as a technology for cutting metals. It led to organizational changes in the factory which increased managerial control over production because the technology was chosen, in part, for just that purpose.⁷³^[73]

The same bias based on the dichotomy between male and female values also shapes contemporary architectural practice. Thus, Margrit Kennedy argues “there would be a significant difference between an environment shaped mainly by men and male values and an environment shaped mainly by women and

⁷¹^[71] See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970), *passim*.

⁷²^[72] Sal Restivo, “The Theory Landscape in Science Studies”, in Sheila Jasanoff et al. (eds.), *Handbook of Science and Technology* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995), Vol. 1, p.100.

⁷³^[73] Judy Wajcman, *Feminism Confronts Technology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 46-7. For details see also David Noble, *Forces of Production* (New York: Knopf, 1984).

female values.”⁷⁴ Kennedy suggests the following is a list of male and female values characterizes current architectural practices.⁷⁵

THE FEMALE PRINCIPLES

1. More user oriented

than

designer oriented

2. more ergonomic

than

large-scale/monumental

3. more functional

than

formal

4. more flexible

than

fixed

5. more organically ordered

than

abstractly systematized

6. more holistic/complex

than

specialized/one-dimensional

7. more social

than

profit-oriented

8. more slowly growing

than

quickly constructed

Male subjectivity is expressed in tall phallic towers, while female values are expressed in buildings, which are “round, enclosing, curving and low-rise.”⁷⁶ In the light of the foregoing

illustration of how values or value-determined decisions are shaping sociological studies and research, contrary to what Weber prescribed, it will not be prudent to insist on the maintaining the distance between facts and values. Indeed such an insistence is, both theoretically and on grounds of practical expediency, is quite suspect. What therefore is required is what Mills said in his *The Sociological Imagination* in the following, which outlines the viable methodological procedures one the one hand and insists upon appropriate calling that is wanting in the contemporary sociologist on the other:

So far as conceptions are concerned, the aim ought to be to use as many ‘value-neutral’ terms as possible and to become aware of and to make explicit the value implications that remain. So far as problems are concerned, the aim ought to be, again, to be clear about the values in terms of which they are selected, and then to avoid as best one can evaluative bias in their solution, no matter where that solution takes one and no matter what its moral or political implications may be. ... *Whether he wants it or not, or whether he is aware of it or not, anyone who spends his life studying society and publishing the results is acting morally and usually politically as well.* The question is whether he faces this condition and makes up his own mind, or whether he conceals it from himself and from others and drifts morally.⁷⁷

This is also the position of many other sociologists and social scientists who justly underline the abandonment of the value free sociology in the Weberian sense. If that is done, sociology will not be

⁷⁴ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 121

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Mills, *op. cit.*, pp.78-9.Emphases added.

alienated from the society which the sociologists study and within which they work. It is only then that sociology will become relevant for the society itself, can be concerned with human predicament, and will not, as Gouldner says, “ignore current human problems.”⁷⁸^[78] Myrdal states that the social scientist cannot free himself from his duty of making his values explicit in his reasoning simply just because methodologically ‘values are extra-scientific’ and because it is difficult to determine them by ‘logical procedure.’⁷⁹^[79] He goes on to state that ‘the factual analysis cannot be carried out except when guided by the value premise’ that should be openly introduced rather than kept hidden as tacit assumption.⁸⁰^[80] Myrdal vigorously claims that value premises “should be used not only as premises for our policy conclusions but also to determine the direction of our positive research. ... We employ and we need value premises in making scientific observations of facts and in analyzing their causal interrelation. Chaos does not organize itself into any cosmos. We need viewpoints and they presume valuations. A ‘disinterested social science’ is, from this viewpoint, pure nonsense. It never existed, and it will never exist. We can strive to make our thinking rational in spite of this, but only by facing the valuations, not by evading them.”⁸¹^[81]

It is to this dimension, public issues in Millsian terms, that Mills wants us to direct our sociological imagination. Sociology and politics, sociological calling and political commitment, all combine to promote what basically is the goal of policy making or public policy. To quote Mills:

*It is the political task of the social scientist – as of any liberal educator – continually to translate personal troubles into public issues, and public issues into terms of their human meaning for a variety of individuals. It is his task to display in his work – and, as an educator, in his life as well – this kind sociological imagination. And it is his purpose to cultivate such habits of mind among the men and women who are publicly exposed to him. To secure these ends is to secure reason and individuality, and to make these the predominant values of a democratic society.*⁸²^[82]

It is no wonder that contemporary sociologists, overcoming their self-doubts as to the usefulness of sociology beyond theorizing and empirical inquiries, are predicting the coming alliance between sociology and social policy. They are looking forward to practical application of sociological knowledge, along with empirical inquiries, to the solution of the public policy problems.

An American sociologist, I.L. Horowitz, among others, is quite optimistic about the sociologists’ emergent policy making roles in the contemporary societies. In 1979 he said that we have now reached “a historic watershed” in the profession of social sciences when many of the social scientists are being increasingly employed in different public policy-making sectors of the government. “For the most part, social science personnel are the bookkeepers of the soul. They are involved at the level of generating data, compiling facts, monitoring programs, and evaluating results; they are not central figures in the policy process or in decisions affecting future policy. Nonetheless, it is clear that a qualitatively new era in social science has begun, and requires

careful analysis in order to establish a better appreciation of the contours of social science, not only for the balance of the century, but for the twenty- first century.”⁸³^[83] An eminent British sociologist, Giddens,

⁷⁸^[78] Gouldner, *op. cit.*, p. 43

⁷⁹^[79] Gunnar Myrdal, “The Relation Between Social Theory and Social Policy”, *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol.4, 1953, p.229.

⁸⁰^[80] *Ibid.* p. 241.

⁸¹^[81] *Ibid.*, pp. 241-2. Emphases added.

⁸²^[82] Mills, *op.cit.*, pp. 187-8.Emphases added.

⁸³^[83] I.L. Horowitz (ed.), *Constructing Policy Dialogue with Social Scientists in the National Political Arena* (New York: Praeger, 1979), p.1.

in one of his nine theses on the future of sociology, has forecast in 1987 that “*there will be a deepening involvement of sociology with the formation of practical social policies or reforms. ... The point of doing social research, from practical angle, is simply to allow policy-makers better to understand the social world, and thereby influence it in a more reliable fashion than would otherwise be the case. From this standpoint research does not play a significant part in shaping the ends of policy-making, but serves to provide efficient means of pursuing already formulated objectives.*”⁸⁴^[84] In the light of this let me turn to brief discussion of the ways in which sociology or the sociologist can contribute to the tasks of policy- making arenas.

IV: RISING ALLIANCE BETWEEN SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL POLICY OR PUBLIC POLICY

To begin with, one must acknowledge that sociologists are not as yet very visible in any public or social policy arena for a number of reasons. First, there are still sociologists within the professional community of the discipline who have strong reservations against practical application of sociology. They are skeptical also of the actual utility of sociological knowledge or uses of sociological knowledge in real life in view of their allegiance to the pure theoretical and empirical aspects of the discipline. They think that their main task is not to sell sociology to the prospective buyers for money or for remedying a social problem. Second, many sociologists have a mistaken conception of the influence social research will have on the public or policy. They think that their intervention in the policy arena will farther increase the distance between research and policy in view of their respective goals. Third, other sociologists think that sociology has not yet attained the maturity that is required to become an important player in the public or social policy forum “because of its present orientation toward, approach to, and handling of research and scholarship relevant to issues of public concern.”⁸⁵^[85] Fourth, often sociologists are discouraged because of the difficulties they face while acting in aid of policy-making agencies. The relationship then becomes very precarious. “Sociologists are seldom called upon to help in making policy, and when they are they are not always very helpful. Poincare once said that

sociologists spent practically all of their time on their methods without ever applying them to anything. Today, sociologists spend much time talking about their potential for making policy without doing much about it. This is said not to discourage the dialogue among sociologists, but rather to point out that at the

⁸⁴^[84] Anthony Giddens, *Social Theory and Modern Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p. 44-6. Emphases added.

⁸⁵^[85] Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

moment their participation in policy-making is quite limited.”⁸⁶ Some sociologists would avoid doing applied research in view of the fact that they have to abide by the priorities of the funding agencies. They thus apprehend that their research findings would become tainted in view of their association with money interests and power structure. Finally, it is also common that politicians and civil servants often reject policy recommendations of the social scientists when they deem them politically or otherwise unfeasible or undesirable.⁸⁷

But all this has not been able to prevent the coalescence of sociology and social policy. Put otherwise, sociologists are on their way to taking on many roles that the so-called policy-makers occupy. The truth of the matter is that sociology has already emerged as policy science even if it has a long way to go to attain its maturity.⁸⁸ The reason is not far to seek. As Shils puts it:

Social scientists cannot avoid doing research which is relevant to policy because their disciplines deal with facts about which policies are made, and they cannot avoid this as long as they interest themselves in society. There are differences in degrees of “relevance to policy.” Some work in the social sciences deal directly with those facts and factors with which politicians and civil servants are immediately concerned. Other work, if it is intellectually significant and does not deal directly with the things in which politicians and civil servants are interested at the moment, surely deals with things which should be taken into account by anyone who wishes to arrive at a serious and responsible judgment. In that sense all social science is potentially relevant to policy, however, empirical or theoretical it might be.⁸⁹

This analysis of the transformation of social sciences into policy sciences, whatever may be the extent, is corroborated by claims and willingness of sociologists in different sub-fields of sociology to carry out and participate in social or public policy making. Take, for instance, the case of feminist sociology. Thus Myers and other feminist sociologists express their intention to take on their ‘feminist sociological imaginations and knowledge’ and also to become ‘policymakers themselves’. In view of increased decentralization policy decision making at the American federal level their chances for participation in the policy process has brightened. As individuals they have little access to the federal level. But, at the state and local levels, they have stronger networks and more access to the decision makers. It is against this background that they want to use their expertise and contacts to affect policy.⁹⁰

Similarly sociologists of science are claiming that science policy-making will be strengthened provided the decision making authority pays due importance to their research findings. There is no doubt that there is much that sociological analysis can offer to the science policy process. “Most importantly, it can encourage those involved in policy making and evaluation to be more reflexive about the assumptions they make. Sociology should help to refine the instrument of policy without becoming a slave to

⁸⁶ N.J. Demerath III et al. (eds.), *Social Policy and Sociology* (New York: Academic Press, 1975), p.9.

⁸⁷ See Shils, *op.cit.*, p 270.

⁸⁸ See James S. Coleman, “The Emergence of Sociology as a Policy Science”, in Lewis S. Coser and Otto N. Larsen (eds.), *The Uses of Controversy in Sociology* (New York: The Free Press, 1976), pp. 253-61.

⁸⁹ Shils, *op. cit.*, pp. 286-7

⁹⁰ Myers et al. (eds.), *op. cit.*, p 410.

polycymaking: it must be capable of offering a critique of policy, to limit the extent to which misplaced assumptions produce ineffective policies.”⁹¹^[91]

There are others who use sociological concepts for social policy research. For instance Mooney use the concept of class from social stratification in his exploration of class inequalities as they bear on health and educational inequalities as particular areas of research concerns for social policy. As he justifies:

Class 'matters' to social policy in a myriad of ways: it continues to be a major factor in, for instance, the restructuring of health inequalities, in educational attainment, in relation to housing and health provision, and it underpins the distribution of poverty and economic inequality in modern capitalist societies. ... Using class in a relational sense should be a central feature in any attempt to *rethink social policy*. This enables us to comprehend both the class nature of the state and the reproduction of class inequalities in and through social policy. ... The recognition of class as a central agency, shaping and recreating the world, can help us to understand social policy, the nature of welfare provision, and struggles over both, in modern capitalist societies. While this may be an unfashionable idea in some quarters, through a focus on class relations we can begin to explore social policy as part of a wider social totality, as part and parcel of the relations and processes of exploitation and oppression.⁹²^[92]

The growing alliance between social sciences and policy-oriented social research in both the USA and the UK has been historically linked up with the expansion of the sphere of the activities of the modern state and its growing socioeconomic interventions as a welfare state in the public arena as a provider of social welfare for those who were left out on the margins of the society and thus who needed it most. Indeed the rise of the welfare state in the background created in turn ever-increasing demands on the social sciences which, at the same time, increasingly became more research oriented. The state and the social sciences came into closer relations with each other and this acted as a positive catalyst for the transformation of the professional sociologist into one who contributed more and more to the making of policies in matters that are basically within his domain of study and research. That is why the welfare state avoided incurring policy deficits on its part, while at the same time it smoothed the path for the sociologist to participate in the policy process and thus perform different tasks as a policy analyst and/or policy maker.

Skocpol describes the growing interaction between the state, on the one hand, and the social scientific theory and research, on the other hand, paving the way for the rise of the sociologist as policy maker, from the American social experience in the twentieth century:

States generally concern themselves with social order and with at least the external conditions for the smooth functioning of markets and production processes. Their needs to act on these issues in increasingly complex socioeconomic settings create growing demands both for general theories of how economies or societies function and for reliable and apparently impersonal statistical data or particular issues that seem problematic (such as the living conditions and likely behavioral responses of the lower classes). Public officials themselves may both demand and develop their own intra-governmental capacities to supply – social theories and statistical data. But demands and supply also come from economic enterprises and politically active groups. Indeed, liberal-democratic societies are almost certainly the most hungry for social knowledge, and the most congenial to the growth and political application of the social sciences. For, the rise of the modern 'public sphere', in which

⁹¹^[91] Andrew Webster, *Science, Technology and Society* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1991), p. 42.

⁹²^[92] Gerry Mooney, "Class and Social Policy", in Gail Lewis et al (eds.), *Rethinking Social Policy* (London: Sage Publications, 2000), pp.157-8 and 168. Emphases in original.

voluntary groups propose ameliorative measures in the collective interest or in their own interest, fuels the search for information and analysis about social problems. Such information and analysis, in turn, encourages demands for governmental interventions -- or abstentions! -- to improve social welfare. The government's interventions and abstentions themselves generate more problems and, directly or indirectly, more needs for social knowledge to help officials and politically active groups set things right. Things are never set entirely right, of course, so the process goes on and on."⁹³

But that is one aspect. The other aspect concerns the development of the social science profession itself in America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the nineteenth century American social scientists sincerely believed that their academic responsibilities -- the empirical discovery and analysis of social phenomena -- were intrinsically tied to their social commitment to active pursuit of social reforms. However, by the next century they were able to separate themselves from their role as reformers to take on new role as social scientists. Once they became secure in their insulated universities, "they began to act in new ways on enduring concerns for policy relevance. They looked for arms-length ways to have their 'objective' ideas and findings achieve beneficial effects through politics -- either via the enlightenment of the educated public of active citizens, or by offering 'expert' advice to strategically situated policy elites. ...By the 1920s, Herbert Hoover's nationally prestigious research conferences, and his officially encouraged overviews of 'Recent Economic Trends' or 'Recent Social Trends' seemingly allowed U.S. academic social scientists to be 'policy-relevant' while remaining true to their own academic standards and continuing to anchor their careers in the universities. Similar opportunities were also provided to academics when they served temporarily on advisory or regulatory commissions without permanent commitment to civil service careers."⁹⁴ By the 1960s and 1970s the relationship between the government and social scientists has become so much complex that they could not be untangled. But this was not the case in Britain where different factors such as uncongenial academic environments of the elite universities like Oxford and Cambridge, the unique political culture of interventionism of the British State in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and the bureaucratic attraction of the potential sociologists to join the politics and public administration retarded the professionalization of the academic social science.⁹⁵

Sharpe puts the difference in two societies nicely: "The epitome of the government's response to a policy problem in the United States is to select a professor with the highest reputation in the field, give him a generous research budget and put him on a contract. The epitome in Britain is to set up a committee of inquiry made up largely of distinguished practitioners in the chosen policy field with a token

⁹³ Theda Skocpol, "Governmental Structures, Social Science, and the Development of Economic and Social policies", in Martin Blumer (ed.), *Social Science Research and Government: Comparative Essays on Britain and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). p. 41.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.43-4.

academic who may or may not be invited by his colleagues to organize research.”⁹⁶^[96] Similarly, on the policy-deficit role of the British sociologists, Blumer states that “sociology in Britain has remained an occupation rather than a profession, tending to be on the margin as a provider of social criticism rather than in the mainline of professional activity.”⁹⁷^[97]

There are two dominant models of how sociologists can relate sociological knowledge to action or how they can apply sociological knowledge, procure evidence and recommend measure for solving a policy problem. The first model is called the “engineering model” which originated in the strong emphasis put on operationalism in the social sciences. It developed in the USA in the 1920s and 1930s. Powerful sociological figures like George Lundberg, Paul Lazarsfeld, R. K. Merton and H.L Zetterberg are associated with this approach. It also involves a sharp distinction between basic research and applied research. The task of the basic researchers is to develop and test a logico-deductive system of hypotheses and propositions. Theoretical contributions are required for systematizing knowledge and stimulating empirical research. Applied researchers are concerned with research applications of existing theoretical knowledge. Fundamentally the applied researchers have the task of collecting empirical data to enable solution of the problem. They are supposed to be skilled in the spot collection of empirical data, and must have the interpersonal orientation and skill to communicate their findings to the policy makers and professional practitioners. Janowitz called these practitioners of engineering model “social engineers.”⁹⁸^[98] From the point of view of working the model is linear. “A problem exists: information or understanding lacking either to generate a solution to the problem or to select among alternative solutions; research provides the missing knowledge; and a solution is reached. Typically a single study will be involved. This – with its data, analysis and conclusion – will affect the choices that decision-makers face. Implicit in such approach is agreement upon ends. It is assumed that policy-makers and researchers agree upon what the desired end-state should be. The role of research is to help in the identification and selection of appropriate means to reach that goal.”⁹⁹^[99] From this point of view there is little doubt that the sociologist emerges in a new policy making role by making available his important contribution to solving the given problem. The most important example of this model in Britain has been Lord Rothschild’s enunciation of the “customer-contractor principle” (1971) according to which the applied researcher provides technical expertise to produce necessary knowledge for use by the government or its departments and agencies which, to begin with, hired the applied sociologists and commissioned them.

The alternative model is called the “enlightenment model” which does not stress the distinction between basic and applied research. The sociologist in this case recognizes that he is part of the social process that he is studying, but not outside of it. This model rejects the view that sociological knowledge can produce definitive answers on which the policy or the professional practice can be based. Here the sociologist performs three interrelated functions that contribute to the decision making process. “First, sociologists collect descriptive data and chart social trends. These descriptive materials are a form of social intelligence which supply professionals and public leaders with a better ‘picture’ of the societal and institutional context in which they must operate. These data are concentrated forms of experience, which

⁹⁶^[96] L. J. Sharpe, “The Social Scientist and Policy-making in Britain and America: A comparison”, in Blumer (ed.), *Social Policy Research*, p. 305.

⁹⁷^[97] Martin Blumer, “Successful Applications of Sociology”, in C.G.A. Bryant and Henk A Becker (eds.), *What Has Sociology Achieved?* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1990), p. 123

⁹⁸^[98] Morris Janowitz, “Sociological Models and Social Policy”, in Miyakawa, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 303.
⁹⁹^[99] Blumer, “Successful Applications of Sociology”, pp. 124-5

men can use according to their intelligence and capacities; Second, sociologists seek to test hypotheses about specific problems and institutions in their effort to develop generalizations. Sociologists make use of concepts which may stimulate new ideas and new approaches to problem solving. The testing of hypotheses is also designed to evaluate the relative effectiveness of the social costs of different strategies and policies of social control. The enlightenment model encompasses both the explication of 'causes' of social behavior and the systematic analysis of planned or managed efforts at social change. Third, the sociologist may be engaged in developing models or broad scale studies of the most complex social systems. The end results of such undertaking are new bodies of data and new models which may help society to clarify, or even alter, its social and political goals and objectives."¹⁰⁰^[100] Under this model the sociologist interacts with his subject and the public to which he remain responsible. His work will have impact on himself, and his findings will influence his subject and the public on an ongoing fashion. Finally, his work will not simply be the product of his client but becomes part of the broader culture of our society. "The enlightenment model assumes overriding importance of the social context, and focuses on developing different types of knowledge which can be utilized by policy makers and professions. While it seeks specific answers, its emphasis is on creating the intellectual conditions for problem solving. Its goal is a contribution to institution building."¹⁰¹^[101]

However, it is better to move beyond these two somewhat stereotyped models to a broader conception of diverse roles the sociologists may take on in response to the policy making demands in the modern societies. In fact the sociologist can be a policy actor in various roles. First, the sociologist, who was an outsider earlier, can be brought inside the government, for instance, as a consultant or adviser. In this capacity his primary responsibility in the practical public setting is to draw the attention of the politician or the civilian to the policy findings on different public problems and issues. He is also expected to interpret those findings to them in order to help them in the concerned policy matters. Second, the sociologist may again be an actor in the policy process when he tries to shape and affect policy making and policy outcomes by communicating with the community at large on issues of public interest. This he can do through the media, which are always at arms length from the public authorities. Needless to mention, both politicians and bureaucrats are sensitive to media. In this case "the successful application of sociology depends not only on the quality of the sociology product but on the acceptability of what is offered and on the effectiveness of the means by which it is communicated."¹⁰²^[102] Third, the sociologist may act as what Blumer terms as "illuminator" who throws light on the operation of society or any burning issue (such as the working of labor markets, the outbreak of a disease etc.) in his personal capacity even without seeking to participate actively in political or pressure group processes.¹⁰³^[103] Finally, a sociologist may be working inside the government and may act as an inside adviser or employee. Modern welfare states normally employ an army of professional experts such as statisticians, demographers, economists, architects etc.

¹⁰⁰^[100] Janowitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 305-6

¹⁰¹^[101] *Ibid.*, p. 307.

¹⁰²^[102] Blumer, "Successful Application of Sociology", p. 138.

¹⁰³^[103] *Ibid.*

Nowadays sociologists are being appointed in various government departments whose functions extend beyond collecting data or marshalling them within a theoretical framework. They are expected to provide analysis and interpretation contentious and strategic policy issues and underline their positive and negative implications or consequences.

In the short-run the role of the sociologists as participants in the policy processes may be very visible because they are not in a position to provide panaceas for the treatment of different problems that the modern societies are suffering from. But it is also true that their role is acquiring increasing prominence in the public or social policy arena in view of the rise of what has been called postindustrial, information or knowledge society in our midst. Several features characterize the postindustrial society: the centrality of theoretical knowledge, the creation of new intellectual technologies, the spread of a knowledge class, shift from the production of goods to that of services, instrumentalization of science, and the production and use of information. The importance of the social or public policy matters has thus assumed a new dimension and is still subject to evaluation. One approach, called technocratic *guidance*, views that we need more analysts for producing more analyses if we want to improve the quality of public choice. Another approach, called *technocratic counsel*, holds that “the professionalization of policy analysis and related activities simply signifies new and perhaps more effective ways to enhance the power of policy makers and other dominant groups whose social positions continue to rest on wealth and privilege.”¹⁰⁴^[104] What is clear is that the policy process is certain to experience far-ranging transformations in keeping with the developments that are fast taking place in the postindustrial societies of North America and Europe. In view of this the role of the sociologist as a participant in the policy processes of postindustrial-knowledge societies is also going to undergo changes. Correspondingly this requires fresh evaluation of the opportunities which the sociologists will get to become major players in the social or public policy arena.

Wilson calls for programmatic action in order to bolster up the chances of sociology to play a greater role in shaping social or public policies especially in this critical era of intense national and international turmoil and change. He rightly suggests that, if we want to see our ideas and contributions enter the public policy domain, then we need to take on pragmatic grounds a more aggressive and positive orientation for greater role for sociology in the public

policy agenda. Sociologists themselves have to carry their own baton in order to promote the policy making the cause of sociology. The four measures that Wilson recommended for this in the context of American sociology deserve serious consideration from all concerned.

In the first place, sociologists need to broaden their conception of the use of policy relevant sociological data. This means that in order to expand the domain of policy relevant research and study in sociology, the sociologist need not wait for the availability of a data set that would unambiguously and incontrovertibly prove the validity or correctness of the sociologist’s application of his knowledge to the solution of the social ill. Wilson argues that “the issue here is not whether the data set are adequate to advance policy recommendations, or whether one can recast the terms of a policy debate with certain kinds of data. *Rather the issue is whether the description and sociological analysis of a problem that would be*

104^[104] Dunn, *op. cit.*, p.49.

considered important if fully recognized is sufficiently compelling and thought provoking to enlighten or raise the consciousness and concern of policymakers and the general public.”¹⁰⁵

Secondly, through its theoretical ideas, hypotheses, concepts, or findings, sociology can influence what the people think about a public issue or social problem and also what the government thinks or does with regard to those matters. On the basis of American social experience it is argued that “the public discourse on issues such as persistent poverty, urban planning, pollution control, and criminal justice has changed because of thought-provoking ideas from the social sciences, Theories of class conflict and mobility have influenced government policies in education, social services, and community development. Concepts such as participatory decision making, labeling, concentration effects, or maintenance of native language competence, have been incorporated in policy discussion concerning criminal justice, mental health, poverty, and education.”¹⁰⁶ Carol H. Weiss further points out:

Sociology has other effects, too. Policy actors sometimes use research to support positions that they already want to take; they use the research to provide legitimacy and justification for their cause. On occasion, they use sociology to help persuade others that the cause is right. It provides ammunition to mobilize supporters and develop coalitions. ... *Sociological ideas, more than discrete pieces of data, have influenced the way that policy actors think about issues and the types of measures they have been willing to consider. ... The concepts and theories of sociology make a difference.* They are helping to make public decision makers more sophisticated about social structure and group processes (less content with individual-level explanations for social phenomena), and they are gradually infusing political thinking with more complex and subtle notions of conflict, social disorganization, community norms, social movements, and other sociological constructs.¹⁰⁷

Thirdly, Wilson rightly says that there exist different mechanisms for communicating insights from sociological data, theories and concepts to policy actors. It is regrettable that, argues Wilson, “some of the best sociological insights never reach policymakers, however, because sociologists seldom take advantage of useful mechanisms to get their ideas out. Academic journals are infrequently read by officials of government. One of the best ways to communicate sociological knowledge is through the media. As Weiss points out, just as sociological ideas can influence a reporter’s perception and coverage of the news, so too do the articles of a reporter often influence the public policy agenda. Although occasionally an enterprising reporter will prepare a story based on an article in an academic journal, sociologists who conduct public agenda research should be encouraged to work with their university’s department of public information in preparing press releases and reports for the media.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 9. Emphases added.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.10.

¹⁰⁷ Carol H. Weiss, “The Interaction of the Sociological Agenda and Public Policy”, in Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-

9. Emphases added.

¹⁰⁸ Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-2.

Finally, in expanding the domain of policy relevant scholarship, sociologists have to overcome what Stanley Lieberman has called the formalistic policy, i.e., the view that data for generating policy recommendations should be obtained from the use of certain formal procedures or techniques. In this view, nonquantitative research such as ethnographic research is said to be inappropriate for generating policy recommendations. Wilson refutes this formalistic fallacy: “Although all scholarly work should be subjected to critical review, concern should focus on the logic of inquiry – the structure of explanation, the significance of concepts, and the nature of evidence – not on the procedures or techniques used.”¹⁰⁹

V: CODA

We now know what we have to do in order to expand the domain of our discipline for strengthening the participatory role of the sociologist in the policy process. Sociology will certainly accumulate surplus rather than deficit, i.e. it will be enriched if sociologists have a bigger field of action than they have now. But, then again, there is last question that I must address: why should sociologists expand their domain for policy relevant scholarship? What are the justifications for sociology to get into the province of policy-making process? Why should the sociologist venture into an intellectual area that is fast becoming as specialized as sociology itself, leaving aside the political risks implicit in this venture?

There are indeed quite a few good reasons for answering all these questions in an optimistic mood.¹¹⁰ First, as sociologists we have a social, if not a moral, obligation to get involved in an area where we have the necessary knowledge and skill to deal with the problems of the society—society which we study as sociologists. We must understand that policy decisions will be made any way. If we are not in this process, others will certainly be in it even if they are not as good as we are in studying society and its different aspects, either singly or collectively as a professional community. Moreover, we learn something new by doing it, particularly when legislative bodies are nowadays making participation of social science experts somewhat mandatory in certain areas such as environment, poverty, marginalization and so on. Second, sociologists should get involved in the policy process for intellectual reasons. Their involvement

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.13. Although I have mentioned how sociologists should expand the policy-relevant area of their discipline to enhance their ability to mould public or social policy agenda, there are other things, left out here, that one should take note of, viz. how the public policy influences the sociological agenda for research and theorizing, and how government influences the sociological agenda, and how little sociology and government affect each other in their mutual interaction. For details see Weiss, *op. cit.*, pp.23-39.

¹¹⁰ For details see N.J. Demerath III, “Epilogue”, in his *Social Policy and Sociology*, pp. 345-6. For a very generalized discussion without any specific inclusion of concrete data on India see also Yogesh Atal, *Indian Sociology: From Where to Where* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2003), pp. 138-57.

and experience might produce results that, if beneficial, could be integrated into the discipline of sociology to its own advantage. We know how biology benefits from medicine or physics from engineering. Third, from the point of view of the labor market, sociology's involvement with policy sciences will ease the pressure of finding jobs for the new PhDs in sociology with the development of an additional academic employment market. Even those who remain or choose to remain in the university and prefer doing pure/basic research are going to benefit because they will have an extra source of research funding when traditional sources are drying up in this era of structural adjustment and globalization. There is no point underemphasizing this reason for it above all involves the bread butter issue of everyday existence.

These points are particularly applicable to India where unemployment of the MAs and PhDs in sociology is quite chronic. Although recent data in this regard is not available, Mohan and Pillai mention that by the 1970s and 1980s sociology as an academic discipline and as a profession exhibited characteristic expansion both in quality and size. But, even then, unfortunately sociology graduates "have not been employed in the sociology profession. In 1971, 60 percent of the graduates were employed; a majority of these graduates were women who were not seeking employment."¹¹¹ However, the prospect of the Indian sociologists for assignments in the disciplinary domain of the policy sciences is simply not bright, if it exists at all, as far as one can ascertain. On the one hand, Indian sociologists are yet to enter into the field of policy processes concerning the country's development This is so even if one leaves out their active participation, if at all, that exists in other (policy) fields – such as health care, ageing, science and technology, medicine, poverty, homelessness, housing, urban and rural poverty, crime and justice, social security, gender equality, abolition of child labor and abuse, and so on so forth. — where there is scarcely any worthwhile coordination between different public or social policies, which exist, when it does, mostly in the piecemeal fashion. All this so in spite of the fact that India is constitutionally and otherwise professed to be a welfare state.¹¹² Thus, Albert Cherns bemoans as back as 1977 pointing to the non-participation of the social sciences in the country's planning process: "*Wherever you go in India there is a pervasive sense of disappointment about the contribution of the social sciences to India's development.* Here is a country with a long-established and highly developed university system, with an experienced civil service and with a formidable production of theses and publications of advanced character. ... Whatever view one may take about the usefulness of the economic research or failures of planning, the existence of a published plan acted as enormous stimulus to the economists. This was not the case for other social sciences. The plan was not accompanied by a social plan – an account of the developments in Indian society that would be needed if economic targets were to be

¹¹¹ Raj P.Mohan and Vijayan K. Pillai, "Contemporary Sociology in India", in R.P. Mohan and A.S. Wilke (eds.), *International Handbook of Contemporary Development in Sociology* (London: Mansell, 1994), pp.693-4.

¹¹² See Mohinder Singh (ed.), *Social Policy and Administration in India* (New Delhi: M.D. Publications, 1996), esp. pp. 3-14.

achieved. It is true that a 'plan' of this nature would be crude document and easy to criticize. Furthermore, the step from analysis to prescription, now an accepted part of the economist's trade, is not yet part of the sociologist's self-image. Nor do sociologists have agreed goals, and even when goals can be agreed between sociologists and administrators or planners, the basic indicators that could monitor the path toward the goal are lacking. But such a 'plan' would be a challenge which social

scientists could not ignore and it would present to the government and the planners the

complexity of the social framework they were trying to alter. It would also stimulate the provision of the social indicators which would at least assist legislators and administrators of all kinds to know what improvements they could reasonably expect and aim for."¹¹³

At the same time it is also distressing to note that academic study and research of the policy sciences in India is yet to catch up with those in the knowledge societies in the advanced parts of the world such as USA and UK. And this is especially so when we explored how to expand the participation of the Indian sociologists in the policy-making issues for providing solution the country's social ills in Annual Sociological Conference of the Indian Sociological Society held in 2003. In a *Working Paper on the Policy Processes* (2003), thus, Jos Mooji and Veronica de Vos were constrained to state that:

Within India, the study of policy processes is not very well-developed. This is so, despite the fact that many Indian social scientists are involved in policy relevant research and aim to contribute, through debate and research, to policy formulation and implementation. These debates are, however, almost entirely dominated by economists, and insights from other social sciences have hardly entered into them. There are very few political scientists, sociologists or anthropologists focusing on public policies. As a result, some aspects of policy studies are relatively well-developed (such as measuring policy effects), but others much less. The issues and questions, for instance, of why policies are formulated and designed in particular ways in the first place, and the political shaping of policies 'on the ground', do not receive much attention. There are exceptions, of course, to this generalization. ... 114¹¹⁴

This observation is substantively true. The reasons for non-development or non-proliferation of public or social policy studies and research in India are not far too seek. The teaching of sociology as a subject in India can be traced to around the year 1915. In Calcutta University Brajaendra Nath Seal of the Department of Philosophy lectured on what he called 'comparative sociology'. Later sociology as a special course was introduced in the Department of Economics

at Calcutta University in 1917. Radhakamal Mukherjee and Benoy Kumar Sarkar taught it. In the same year sociology was introduced as a subject in the B.A. course in Mysore University. In 1919 a department of sociology and civics was set up in the University of Bombay under the leadership of Patric Geddes. Until 1947 sociology course was offered only in four universities. More importantly, however, it may be said

¹¹³ Albert Cherns, *Using Social Sciences* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), pp. 210 and 219. Emphases added.

¹¹⁴ Jos Mooji and Veronica de Vos, *Policy Processes: An Annotated Bibliography on Policy Processes, with Particular Emphasis on India*, Working Paper 221 (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), p. vii. Emphases added.

with confidence that sociology's legitimation as a discipline is basically only 'a post-independence phenomenon'. 115^[115]

A few developments in the 1950s and 1960s provided a number of opportunities and incentives to the Indian sociologists to engage in studies and research in the area of social or

public policy. These developments include the Research Programmes Committee (RPC) created by the Indian Planning Commission, and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (1969) set up by the Government of India on the recommendation of the same Planning Commission. These two organizations provided funding to undertake social scientific research. In addition a number of other organizations, especially in the government sector, were established for various purposes. They also required the expertise of the sociologists.¹¹⁶^[116] However, the involvement of the Indian sociologists in developmental efforts at the level of policy formulation and implementation remains significantly unimportant, if not altogether absent. This is so in spite of the fact that, given the required opportunities, Indian sociologists could have contributed significantly to the achievement of developmental goals by their studies and research, and skill and experience in regard to manifold aspects – social, cultural, religious, ethnic, etc -- that lie at the root of the complexities of such problems that the Indian society are now facing on its way to planned modern industrial development. There is little doubt that sociologists can indeed play their due role both in analyzing the complexities of the problem and in suggesting policy options for its solution. This is so even if risks of political partisanship arise in the allocation of funds for undertaking policy related studies. As Srinivas and Panini warned about these risks: "While sociologists can play a useful, if not important, role in policy formulation and implementation there is a likelihood that the demonstration of the discipline's utility might result in government funds being made available to agencies, institutions and individuals toeing the governmental line on various matters. Correspondingly, dissenting research and scholars without go without

funds."¹¹⁷^[117]

There are, however, a good number of Indian sociologists who reject the Weberian methodological prescription and indeed strongly call upon their colleagues to engage in the policy studies and research.¹¹⁸^[118] In his Presidential Address to the Xth All India Sociological Conference at Hyderabad in 1970 R.N. Saksena stressed, for instance, the role of the sociologist as a trained scientist in helping to bring about radical changes in the traditional Indian rural social structure. "While planners and administrators must share the primary responsibility for the formation and implementation of rural

115^[115] Mohan and Pillai, *op.cit.*, p. 675 and 679; and M.N. Srinivas and M.N.Panini, "The Development of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India", *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 22(2), September 1973, pp. 186-191.

116^[116] For details, see Srinivas and Panini, *op.cit.*, pp.197-9; and D.N. Dhanagare, "Social Policy Concerns in India Sociology," *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol.53(1), January-April,2004, pp. 23-6.

117^[117] Srinivas and Panini, *op.cit.*, p.211.

118^[118] For an over-all assessment of the views of Indian sociologists including of those who subscribed to the Weberian methodological prescription of value free sociology, see Dhanagare, *op.cit.*, pp. 1-30

development projects, the social scientist can give them valuable help in the areas of social organization, human relations, culture, and values touched by the plans.”¹¹⁹^[119] Elsewhere he was even more forthright: “Knowledge for the sake of knowledge is not enough. More important is the social utility of a particular branch of knowledge. ... *If the sociological researchers kept looking down their noses at the policy-makers and confined themselves to purely academic and scientific character of their studies, their work would lose much of its significance....* Sociology is now universally recognized as an aid to social welfare in a free-society.”¹²⁰^[120] In the Presidential Address to the XIVth All India Sociological Conference at Jabalpur in 1978, I.P. Desai emphatically points out that “we search for knowledge not for its

own sake but for guiding our actions. That is knowledge should help us to solve short term and long term problems of our society.”¹²¹^[121] Finally, I may as well mention the views of M.S. Gore who used the concept of social policy in a broad sense embracing the issues of (a) human freedom and rights of the individual citizen, (b) equality and equal opportunity and, finally, (c) human welfare.¹²²^[122] In his own presidential address to the 16th All India Sociological Conference at Annamalainagar in 1982 he clearly dismisses the Weberian plea for a value free sociology, and simultaneously envisions for the sociologist a much wider role which legitimates his/her

engagement with social or public policy issues:

The sociologist must develop the skills necessary for the effective use of available data in analyzing social policy and in planning as well as executing special studies wherever they might be necessary. ... *The sociologist can play many different roles in the promotion of a social policy which will help achieve a humane, egalitarian and democratic society.* He can be an analyst and help identify problem areas as well as inadequacies in the policies and programmes devised by government; he can be a teacher of social policy and help in inculcating the skills of research and analysis in his students; he can be an interpreter and an advocate on behalf of disadvantaged groups to bring home their difficulties to the planners and policy makers and, finally, he can himself participate in policy formulation directly as a social planner. If he has to perform, these various roles, he must first take an active interest in issues of social policy and be more articulate on them.”¹²³^[123]

It is in this light that we can really appreciate what Bernal, the famous Marxist historian said as far back as 1940 said in his *The Social Function of Science*. With remarkable foresight he said that we need to promote the development of the social sciences more than the physical sciences. The fact of the

¹¹⁹^[119] R.N. Saksena, “Sociology of Development and Planning in India,” *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol 20(10), 1971, p. 9.

¹²⁰^[120] D. Narayan, “Report on Conference of Indian Sociologists”, *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 17(1), 1968, p. 93-4. Emphases added

¹²¹^[121] I.P. Desai, “The Concept of Desired Type of Society and the Problems of Social Change,” *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 28 (1-2), 1979, P. 3.

¹²²^[122] M.S. Gore, “Social Policy and the sociologist”, *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 32(1), 1983, pp.3-4.

¹²³^[123] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-3. Emphases added.

underdevelopment of the former than the latter is not fortuitous. "It is not so much their intrinsic difficulty as the fact that their mere study is a damning criticism of present social institutions. They are never likely to be developed in our form of society. The struggle for the development of social sciences is at the same time the struggle for the transformation of society."¹²⁴ The truth of the matter is that Indian sociologists have really a very hard task before them. They have to struggle very hard if they want to be heard, and if they are heard there is of course a better chance that for all Indians India will be a better place to live in. From the standpoint of the object of the present paper, then let me conclude in the words of Carol H. Weiss:

My preference is for sociology to be more actively engaged in research on contemporary topics of policy relevance. I would like to see sociologists use their research as a basis for taking a more active part in the discussions that go on not only in Washington (or New Delhi -- BKB) but in state capitals, where many important policy decisions are being made these days. ... But there is the possibility for engagement with policy action that is not so close as to require compromise or collusion. There can be a vigorous, independent, original, daring, *critical* sociology that provides insight and criticism to government, a sociology that is captive to the assumptions of neither the right nor the left. It is not a rarity. It is a type of sociology that many sociologists practice. But what is often lacking are two critical elements: (1) sustained effort to reach policy audiences with sociological messages; that is, serious attention to dissemination, contact, and continuing conversation with actors in the policy process; or the use of intermediary institutions to undertake the task, and (2) recognition that sociology has more to offer policy audiences than validated data from well-designed experiments and studies. Although good data are useful and build credibility, equally important is the *sociological perspective* on entities, processes, and events. Participants in the policy process can profit from an understanding of the forces and currents that shape events, and from the structures of meaning that sociologists derive from their theories and research."¹²⁵

124^[124] Bernal, *op. cit.*, p.343.

125^[125] Weiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-7. Emphases in original -- BKB. A number of articles bearing on the policy implications of sociology have appeared since the symposium address was delivered in 2003. For instance, Hugh Lauder, Phillip Brown and A.H. Halsey, while vindicating that 'a theoretically informed empirically driven sociology focused on fundamental social problems' has an important role to play' in addressing the fundamental problems of the twenty-first century, strongly defends the point that " sociology has at least five sets of theoretical and methodological resources that it can marshal in order to inform the policy process. These are: the ability to link private troubles to public issues ... through the concepts of agency and structures of power; the related role of quantitative studies and especially the legacy of political arithmetic in illuminating the consequences of these power structures on life chances; the role of qualitative empirical research in illuminating the connections between structure and agency; the more recently developed concept of self-reflexivity ... and its role in linking the identification of power structures to a social democratic politics ... and finally, the disciplinary openness of sociology when contrasted with, for example, neo-classical economics." See Hugh Lauder, Phillip Brown and A.H. Halsey, "Sociology and political arithmetic: some principles of a new policy science", *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 55 (1), 2004, pp. 4 and 6. In his Presidential Address to the 2004 American Sociological Association Burawoy offered a framework for understanding the existing the division of sociological labor in the mainstream sociology. In his schema he traces antagonistic interdependence among four types of sociological knowledge or, stated otherwise, four kinds of sociology: public sociology, professional sociology, critical sociology, and policy sociology. The policy sociology is defined as 'sociology in the service of a goal defined by a client. Policy sociology's *raison d'etre* is to provide solutions to problems that are presented to us, or to legitimate solutions that have already been reached'. However, policy sociology is as important as any other sociology, although connections among them are often hard to ferret out because 'they call for profoundly different cognitive practices, different along many dimensions – form of knowledge, truth, legitimacy, accountability, and politics, culminating in their own distinctive pathology'. However, each of them has its own relatively autonomous area of focus. 'In the case of professional sociology the focus is on producing theories that correspond to the empirical world, in the case of policy sociology knowledge has to be 'practical' or 'useful,' whereas with public sociology knowledge is based on consensus between sociologists and their publics, while for critical sociology truth is nothing without a normative foundation to guide it'. For details see Michael Burawoy, "2004 American Sociological Association Presidential address: For public sociology", *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 56(2), 2005, pp.266 and 276.