



## **Response: Public sociology: populist fad or path to renewal?**<sup>1</sup>

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Christine Inglis writes that 'For Public Sociology', was itself an act of public sociology. True enough, it addressed professional sociologists, urging them to see themselves through a particular classificatory lens. It was a small part of a wider collective call to public sociology, attracting over 5,500 sociologists to San Francisco for the best attended annual meeting in the 99 year history of the American Sociological Association. But its success seems to have also aroused suspicion. While broadly endorsing the project of public sociology, Craig Calhoun is apprehensive about its popular appeal to non-elites – sociologists laying siege to the commanding heights of our discipline – when we might be better served protecting university autonomy from outside imposters. He wonders whether public sociology is but a 'current fad' rooted in 'feel-good populism', the last hurrah of 1960s baby-boomers. In responding to him and my other critics, I will defend the seriousness and coherence of public sociology as a distinct realm within a national and global disciplinary division of sociological labour, and as an antidote to external subversion.

To give a better sense of the public sociology project and the source of Calhoun's ambivalence let me set the immediate context of the address. The 5 days of debates and discussions in San Francisco opened with an interdisciplinary plenary on the significance of W.E.B. Du Bois, perhaps the greatest public sociologist of the twentieth century. What lessons can we draw at the dawn of the twenty-first century from his life of engagement that spanned a century and a globe? The distinguished panelists asked about the significance of Du Bois's marginality and exclusion within the academy for his public sociology, they asked whether the focus on Du Bois himself detracted from the many African American 'organic' intellectuals, many of them women, working in the trenches of civil society, they inquired into the lessons Du Bois's Pan Africanism held for an international public sociology today, and they discussed how to carry radicalism into the public arena. These questions set an agenda for the entire conference.

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We were interested not only in bringing academic knowledge into public debate, but also, as Ragnvald Kalleberg writes, in infusing the academic world with public discussion. On the second evening Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, spoke of the close connection between human rights work and public sociology, while on the fourth evening Arundhati Roy, Indian intellectual-at-large, political activist and Booker-Prize winning novelist, captivated us with a talk on Empire – the way it squashed but also recreated publics in different parts of the world. To close the conference Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Paul Krugman discussed the future of neoliberalism – the one from the standpoint of a sociologist as President and the other from the standpoint of an economist as political commentator. Each session was greeted with overflowing and electrified audiences never before seen at an ASA convention.

Sociologists were not only interested in bringing public debate into the heart of their profession, but deploying professional sociology – their science and their craft – to illuminate public issues. The energy of the plenaries and public addresses came from and flowed through the 570 panels and, in particular, into the 60 thematic sessions organized in four streams: *Making a Difference* – how does and can sociology make an impact beyond the academy? *Public versus Private* – how is the public sphere itself changing and with what implications for public sociology? *Sociology and Its Publics* – what publics are accessible to sociologists and how can we reach them? *Crossing Borders* – how can sociology connect to transnational publics, movements and organizations? We wanted to be as ecumenical as possible, which was why the conference theme was not public sociology but public sociologies. We also wanted to stretch participation across the world. So with the help of the Ford Foundation we sponsored eight prominently featured panels with public sociologists from Latin America, Africa, Middle East, South Asia, East Asia, Europe, and the former Soviet world – all designed to challenge and problematize the insularity of US sociology as well as serve as a platform for cross-national exchanges in all directions.

To tackle the insularity of United States sociology entails more than recognition of its *peculiar content*, universalizing problems of a very particular society, and more than recognition of its *peculiar form* with its preponderant weight of professionalism, defined by the coupling of research and teaching. Our insularity is not just global, it is also local. We are also insulated in and from our own society. The palpable excitement in the conference took place within a bubble, cut off from the wider society. A local radio station interviewed the panelists of the Du Bois plenary, a local newspaper published an op ed by Mary Robinson, and a public television channel broadcast Roy's address, but that was it as far as the media – national and local – were concerned. You might call it the privatization of public sociology! We might as well have been on a different planet. Ironically, it was English journalist,

Jonathan Steele, invited to participate in an Open Forum on the Iraq War, who gave the meetings their most comprehensive coverage in *The Guardian*. The challenge for American public sociology, therefore, is to break out of the bubble.

I say all this by way of contextualizing the particular vision that lies behind the four-fold distinction of professional, policy, public and critical sociologies. Undoubtedly, this typology was constructed to comprehend the peculiarities of the American field of sociology, but it was also informed by very different experiences in Africa, in the former Soviet world and in Europe. I recall, for example, returning to South Africa in 1990 after a 22 year absence, impressed by sociology's immersion in the anti-apartheid struggles, its research giving vision and direction to what might be. I would later write of the South Africanization of United States sociology. Similarly, I was struck by the distinctive public role of sociology in late perestroika Soviet Union and equally by its rapid degeneration, with a few notable exceptions, into opinion polling and market research in the post-Soviet era. I have watched sociology come out of the cold of Thatcherite England. I believe that the distinctions I lay out in 'For Public Sociology' are not confined to the USA but map out the parameters of global as well as national fields of sociology. Nor should we be surprised by the universal applicability of the matrix since it derives from two fundamental questions: Knowledge for Whom? and Knowledge for What?

The twelve commentaries take up very different issues from different parts of the world and when they take up the same issue it is often in a contradictory manner. I shall try to show, however, how each perspective makes sense when placed in relation to the others within a global division of sociological labour. Their contributions, in other words, mark distinctive positions and dispositions within the disciplinary field of sociology, and point to distinctive challenges, dilemmas and new directions.

### **Policy sociology – a dubious proposition?**

What better place to start than England and the fascinating debate inaugurated in the *British Journal of Sociology* with the article by Lauder, Brown and Halsey (2004) that calls for a new policy science. Reflecting the greater openness of the Labour Government to sociological research, they seek to invigorate sociology by restoring its connection to the tradition of social administration, associated with the early postwar years at the LSE, that is the tradition of political arithmetic pioneered by Marshall, Titmuss, Abel-Smith, Townsend, Glass and Halsey himself. The new policy science asserts the professional, public and critical dimensions of policy sociology (Figure I). Thus, it seeks to harness theoretical programmes and methodological advances of professional sociology to tackle fundamental social problems. Second, it seeks to

FIGURE I: *Dimensions of the new policy science*

<b>Professional dimension</b> New theories and methodologies based on Popperian Science	<b>Policy dimension</b> The practice of policy research
<b>Critical dimension</b> The positionality of sociological knowledge	<b>Public dimension</b> Fostering public debate to hold government accountable for its policies

hold governments and their policies accountable by invigorating public debate informed by sociology. Third, even as it embraces a Popperian concern for social engineering, and a community of skepticism, it stresses the importance of recognizing the positionality of sociological knowledge – its value laden basis. It wishes to incorporate critical perspectives that derive from the different publics affected by policy and policy research.

This programmatic statement takes into account everything but the perspective of the policy makers themselves, and so the editors of the *British Journal of Sociology* offer three commentaries from heads of research within the Labour government. Paul Johnson, who directs social science research in Department of Education and Skills, concludes that social science and policy worlds are often ‘too distant and unwilling or unable to work effectively together’, social scientists ‘do not do enough to facilitate democratic debate’, and ‘too little social science is directed at important issues’ (Johnson 2004: 29). But this is a rather positive assessment as compared to that of Paul Wiles, Director of Research at the Home Office who singles out sociology whose ‘practical utility is at an historical low and . . . is regarded as the least developed of the social sciences in terms of the rigor of its methods’ (Wiles 2004: 31). Philip Davies, deputy director of Government Research Service in the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit, is equally scathing, complaining that sociologists are often ill-equipped in statistical techniques, not trained for policy science, that they write in an impenetrable English, that they ask questions of no interest to anyone but fellow sociologists, and their theory has little bearing on policy (Davies 2004: 448–9). Although, one would like to hear from the researchers they supervise, this carping from gatekeepers of the policy world is not encouraging for a new policy sociology!

But this is not news! We have known for a long time that sociology is ill-equipped to operate at the policy level. Ulrich Beck, for example, recounts the results of his extended research into the policy uses or rather the abuses of sociology, that when it is deployed sociological knowledge is transformed out of all recognition. It becomes a servant of power. Indeed, it is its theoretical

openness, so lauded by Lauder, Brown and Halsey as conducive to policy work, that proves to be its greatest handicap. It is economics by successfully constituting its own object – the market economy – with its own laws and principles, that has a privileged position at the policy level. It is so effective because it is so coherent. Not surprisingly economists are much more popular in the corridors of Whitehall – not to mention the powerful interests outside the state that they so often elaborate and defend.

The broad conclusion is that sociology will be effective at the policy level only through its public role. Here, again, is the conclusion of Beck:

We found that the resistance, ignorance and indifference of, for example, administrations to sociological findings (which they themselves financed) crumbles when those findings are published and discussed in the mass media . . . Thus, the public standing and presence of sociology – its published voice – produces, enforces, or constructs its administrative, practical and political uses (whatever this means). (Beck 2005: 338)

Paul Wiles (2004: 31) says as much in his comments that politicians often absorb their ideas through osmosis, ‘the influence of social theory is less direct and more opaque.’ Richard Ericson says the same. Drawing on Anthony Giddens, he maintains that the practical impact of sociology is through the classification systems it develops, its concepts and the theories that become common sense and that thereby ubiquitously frame policy and its implementation. Perhaps an exaggeration, but nonetheless the influence of sociology on policy, if it comes at all, will come via its public face.

### **Public sociology – dialogue or normative stance?**

If sociologists will most effectively shape policy through public sociology, what is this public sociology? What sets it apart from policy sociology? Broadly policy sociology has its agenda set for it – either widely in the case of patrons or more narrowly by clients who have specific problems in mind. At its core there is no dialogue about normative assumptions, although, as we have seen, in its supportive zones the critical and public dimensions of policy sociology do play their part. Public sociology, by contrast, makes both dialogue and normative stances central to its preoccupation. In some projects dialogue takes the upper hand while in others normative commitments prevail.

Take the example of Diane Vaughan’s analysis of space shuttle disasters. *The Challenger Launch Decision* (Vaughan 1996) is an exhaustive, detailed ethnographic reconstruction of the social processes that went into the designing, fabricating and launching of the shuttle that crashed. Her conclusion: given the budgetary and political environment of NASA as well as the tightly coupled technology, leading to the ‘normalization of deviance’, such accidents

are bound to recur. Sure enough, come February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003, the Columbia shuttle crashes and Vaughan was catapulted to the centre of media attention. She drops everything and begins several months of intense dialogue with journalists who feed her detailed information about the technological, political circumstances of the accident. She devotes herself to responding to emails, phone-calls, elaborating her theory of what happened as a further instantiation of her indictment of the organizational culture of NASA. It all rested on the minutest details of social process for which her ethnographic talents served her well. The press adopted her language and concepts and disseminated her social theory. Her interpretation became entrenched in the media, whereupon it was adopted by the government-appointed Columbia Accident Investigation Board. She became a consultant to CAIB. Her public sociology morphed into policy sociology.

Dialogue prevailed over normative stance. Vaughan was not taking a position on whether money should be invested in the space programme or not, she was concerned to prevent technological catastrophes. She suppressed values and concentrated on science. Amitai Etzioni could not be more different. He too indicted NASA in a book published in 1964 entitled *The Moon-doggle*, which as its name implies condemned the US space programme as an enormous waste of resources. There was not much attention to social theory, concepts, or ethnographic detail here! After his sorties into his peace activism Etzioni would take on many other moral issues, including the risks of bioethics and the genetic revolution, and a treatise on socio-economics that inveighed against neoclassical orthodoxies. He then launched his now famous communitarian project that called on social responsibility to balance excessive focus on rights – leading him most recently to ask how patriotic is the US Patriot Act, advocating a compromise of public security and individual liberties. Dialogue is subservient to normative commitment, but none the less there is dialogue. Etzioni spent a year as an advisor in the Carter White House, and then sought to persuade world leaders, Blair, Kohl, and Clinton, of the importance of his communitarian ideas.

For Etzioni, therefore, the first principle of public sociology is to be normative (although he conflates normative assumptions, implications, issues, and dimensions). The second principle is to be in political dialogue. As far as he is concerned the key variable is how far the public sociologist wanders along the action chain – whether they simply float their ideas in the public realm or become activist in propagating them. He advocates policy research as a resource for public intervention. He pays lip service to professional sociology as ‘keeping public sociologists from straying *too far* from the evidence’ (Etzioni 2005: 373) (emphasis added). The further Etzioni strays not only from the evidence but also from sociology, the more he strays from public sociology and becomes a public intellectual, a pundit who takes up arms for any cause.

As public sociologists Etzioni and Vaughan are polar opposites, drawing attention to the two issues Saskia Sassen raises – how to combine theory (dialogue with sociology) and values (normative stance) in public sociology? How can we preserve social theory in our public sociology, how can we develop social theory in collaboration with our publics, take advantage of what they can see and we can't? Vaughan is the example here of someone who has managed to work out her theory with publics. But Sassen also asks the normative question, calling attention to the contradiction between my advocacy of value pluralism and a partisanship that defends particular values. Does Etzioni, for example, have any way of justifying his various moral projects, from peace to bioethics to family values? Is there something about sociology, say the defense of civil society, that places sociologists in a particular moral space? Does public sociology, for example, imply a critique of all forms of domination that impair reciprocal recognition or undistorted communication? In short does dialogue imply a particular normative stance or range of normative stances? Good question!

There are other ways of diagnosing the tensions of public sociology. Ragnvald Kalleberg divides public sociology into dissemination (by which he means popularization) and contributing to public discourse (democratic deliberation). In my scheme dissemination is more like the public dimension of professional sociology. In the USA this is covered by the American Sociological Association's quarterly magazine, *Contexts*, which explicitly concerns itself with making sociology accessible to lay audiences, although it turns out to be largely consumed by sociologists! Desperate to communicate with publics this popularization can degenerate into a form of public relations, which, as Kalleberg suggests, better belongs in the policy moment of professional sociology.

But for the moment I'm more interested in public sociology proper, promoting public discourse. Norway is a fascinating case study in its own right. There are only 600 sociologists in Norway's national association, a small number but a per capita density three times greater than the USA. This is significant for a number of reasons. First, sociology has a higher status (relative to other countries but also relative to economics) and major departments are ringed by policy units that feed the research machinery of government. Second, careers in sociology being limited and its standing high, sociologists have moved into prominent positions in society and government. Such household names as Gudmund Hernes, Ottar Brox, and Johan Galtung spring to mind. But, third and more important my impression is that sociological participation in the public sphere is high, particularly in the media. Whether it is because there are too few sociologists to form a self-referential community or because the media are always hungry for sociology, the public visibility of sociology is much higher than say in the USA where journalists more effectively patrol the entry of sociology. Clearly, the social democratic political context

as well as Norway's small size and its affluence decisively shape its more vibrant public sociology. Thus, Kalleberg's project to constitute a public sphere within the University of Oslo, while not unheard of in the USA, wouldn't attract the same broad public interest. But all this presupposes a vital academic sociology.

### **Professional sociology – sceptics, monopolists, and the paranoid**

Let me emphasize once again. I am unequivocally committed to the values and practice of professional sociology – its rigour, its science, its research programmes, its care to get things right, its concern with theoretical issues. I am committed to science not just for its own sake, though there is that, but because it is a *sine qua non* for policy and public sociology. Without professional sociology there is no public sociology. This is not the conventional view among public sociologists who have often vilified professional sociology as irrelevant, obsessed with minutiae, suffering from the sclerosis of methodism, in short, as self-referential. They have too often reduced professional sociology to its pathological expressions. Although there are hints of this in Etzioni, he is relatively restrained in his critique of professional sociology, complaining about the academic disincentives to practice public sociology.

Equally restrained are the commentaries from the other side, from those who speak from the place of professional sociology. How often have I heard professional sociologists dismiss public sociology as a euphemism for partisan sociology – and how public sociology threatens sociology's legitimacy as a science, endangering grants and professional status. This is most likely to be the complaint of those who most benefit from professionalism and who wish to shore up our reputation among other scientists or policy makers. There is nothing wrong with activism, they say, but it should have nothing to do with sociology which, implicitly or explicitly is assumed to be value neutral. Again the tactic is to pathologize the enemy while simultaneously idealizing the self.

In this symposium my critics don't oppose public sociology because it is partisan and therefore beyond the pale of sociology. Indeed, they argue the very opposite – that public sociology is already part of professional sociology. In short, there should be and there is no division of labour. Richard Ericson devotes much of his commentary to demonstrating that my four types of knowledge 'are not discrete in the way that he [Burawoy] contends, and that all four are embedded in any sociological analysis' (Ericson 2005: 365). Sociology is inherently oriented to and by policy, it is inherently normative and public. 'All sociology has policy relevance' (2005: 367) 'All sociology entails public knowledge' (2005: 369). Sure! But it is one thing for sociology to be policy relevant, or to be shaped by policy, but it is quite another to do policy sociology as we know from the policy responses to Lauder, Brown and Halsey! It is one thing for sociology to *entail* public knowledge, or to have public



*consequences*, it is quite another thing to *practice* public sociology. And Ericson says as much. For his second concern is the importance of ‘discrepant criteria of relevance and communication logics of different institutions’ (2005: 365), that is to say professional and public sociologies (but critical and policy sociologies too) operate with different types of knowledge, truth claims, legitimacy, accountability, etc., which is why they are and should be separate. Ericson’s complaint that it is difficult for public sociology to be good sociology is precisely why we have to focus on public sociology as *distinct from but interdependent with* professional sociology. Ericson ends up perfecting a rationale for advancing the very disciplinary division of labour he claims to oppose.

Craig Calhoun also questions the idea of a division of sociological labour. While he embraces the aims and values of public sociology, critical sociology and even policy sociology, ‘these are tasks for sociology in general, not for a specialized sub-field or quadrant’ (Calhoun 2005: 356). I’ve spent some time already talking about the distinctiveness of policy and public sociology, so let’s consider critical sociology. As a devotee of Pierre Bourdieu Calhoun knows that the practice of science is best conceived of as a game with its own rules, resources and goals. Playing the game entails and requires *illusio*, an investment in the game that obscures its preconditions, its foundations. Playing the game effectively and necessarily blinds the participants to its assumptions. You cannot be intent on solving the puzzles of stratification theory while at the same questioning its assumptions. For that you need critical Marxists. You cannot be working out the latest iteration of structural functionalism while questioning its foundational assumption – value consensus. For that you need Alvin Gouldner. And so on. Working within a paradigm, riveted to its puzzles – its contradiction and its anomalies – is incompatible with questioning its foundations, its negative heuristic. Science well done is totally absorbing so that you need someone outside of its practice to develop a critical perspective, a perspective that is profoundly different from the practice of science itself. Gouldner’s, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*, C. Wright Mills’s *The Sociological Imagination*, Robert Lynd’s *Knowledge for What?*, and Pitirim Sorokin’s *Fads and Foibles in Modern Sociology and Related Sciences* had to be separate from professional sociology.

This is not to say that professional sociology does not have its critical dimension. Of course it does. There are debates on the terrain of science, adjudicating between theories, arguing about operationalizing concepts, the most appropriate statistical technique, etc. but that is different from a critique that calls into question the basis of our research programmes, that interrogates the extra-scientific foundations of science. Just as there are professional, critical and public moments of policy sociology so there are critical, public and policy moments of professional sociology, which must be analytically distinguished from critical, public and policy sociologies. The latter are so disparate that they cannot be all part of a single seamless sociology. To try to force them into that

singular mould is to give preference to the most powerful which, at least in the USA and to a lesser extent in other advanced capitalist societies, is professional sociology, and thus strangling the most weak – the critical and public sociologies.

I've engaged the paranoid and the monopolists, so let me briefly turn to the professional skeptics who claim we neither have the capacity nor the will for public sociology. John Hall packs a lot into his short comment but he summarizes the position,

By and large, we do not have the capacity to undertake the tasks that Burawoy has in mind. Nor do I detect a groundswell of support for his plea for public sociology. There is more to be said for his position prescriptively than descriptively (Hall 2005: 380)

So instead of 'manning the barricades' as *he* puts it, we should remain cloistered (as I would put it), reflecting on the lessons of historical comparative sociology. As I shall say below there is much to be gained from such a comparative and historical sociology in formulating a public sociology – not least in recognizing both the peculiarity and the fatefulness of United States sociology – but I think he is empirically wrong about the interest in public sociology whether in North America or the rest of the world. Turning to our capacity, John Scott points out that the sustainability of public sociology will depend on our ability to connect to publics, on our success in transcending the different logics of professional and public sociologies. That success, however, will in turn depend on the obstacles presented by professional sociology, the incentives to be inward looking, to be concerned with recognizing and being recognized by our peers rather than by publics, and broadly on the criteria we use to evaluate one another.

But even with all the obstacles – and there are many – public sociology is flourishing. It simply does not have a public profile but operates in the interstices of society in neighbourhoods, in schools, in classrooms, in factories, in short, wherever sociologists find themselves. The existence of a plurality of invisible public sociologies gives lie to the sceptics. To give it more vitality, more influence, more visibility, we need to recognize it. What better way to recognize it than naming it, and then placing it alongside and in relation to other sociologies and then introducing incentives. Rather than assimilating public sociology to all sociology, and making pious claims about its importance, better to recognize its specificity, its challenges, and the contradictions it brings with it, better to bring it out into the open, objectify it in order to study it.

### **Critical sociology – toward a new internationalism?**

So far my response has been too riveted to US sociology. A critical sociology has to problematize this. We can dismiss US sociology out of hand as an

imperial imposition, and then develop alternative particularistic national sociologies. But that easily slides into another form of provincialism. US sociology is fateful for all sociology – it cannot be brushed aside with a wave of a hand, not yet at any rate. It looms too large on all national horizons of sociology. That is not to say it should not be contested. To the contrary critical perspectives from different parts of the world must be developed and must be taken up by US sociologists, who have a special responsibility in contesting the hegemony of their own sociology.

Christine Inglis, therefore, is right to take me to task for not distinguishing between *provincializing* US sociology and recognizing its *provinciality*, by which she means we have to ‘open and expand it to others forms of sociological knowledge’ (Inglis 2005: 385). She points to the myriad ways in which US sociology sets international agendas through influencing global careers that often pass through the USA, and thereby globalizing conceptual frames, theoretical paradigms and methodological practices, and through US financial support for research and fellowships that drains off the best and brightest. Not so much a ‘brain drain’ as a ‘brain circulation’, these migratory careers foster the hegemony of US sociology. She might have added state pressures, that originate in supra-national agencies such as the World Bank, to benchmark national science to so-called international standards, evaluating national scientists by publications in Western, mainly US journals. This affects Norway as well as Taiwan, England as well as South Africa. All these pressures draw sociologists away from local, national and regional issues to the remote problematics of US professionalism – a disaster for national sociology in general and for public sociology in particular.

From what location will alternative frameworks contest US hegemony? John Braithwaite argues that innovation and new knowledge come not from the centre nor from the periphery but from the periphery of the centre, ‘secondary centres well connected to the dominant centres’ (Braithwaite 2005: 357). We can think of this geographically – that countries such as Brazil, Canada or Australia are well placed to push sociology in new directions. Braithwaite himself, situated at the lavish Australian National University, has pioneered work in the sphere of restorative justice and economic regulation – both have strong public and policy components. I recall how the idea of social movement unionism was first invented during the anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa and a decade or two later was reinvented in the USA – again in labour studies at the margins of the discipline – to capture the successes of union organizing among immigrant workers in the service sector. Sadly, each was oblivious to the other. Sociologists were also active in designing and monitoring the innovative schemes of participatory budgeting in Brazilian cities, most notably in Porto Alegre. And the examples may be multiplied.

Braithwaite also argues that challenges come from work across disciplines. Not altogether foreign to the US scene, it is much more likely in more peripheral societies that are less invested in protecting disciplinary boundaries. Promoting interdisciplinary dialogue makes each discipline aware of its blind spots and like public sociology itself can promote important disciplinary reconfigurations. He has in mind developments in the biological sciences, but he might have made the same argument from the standpoint of public sociology. Chopping up the world according to disciplines is a major impediment to engaging publics who don't recognize such academic distinctions. Indeed, some of the most important social science innovations in the USA and elsewhere have come from the interdisciplinary scholarship of feminist studies, ethnic studies, African American studies, Chicano Studies – sensitive to propagating perspectives of publics into the university. By the same token, precisely because they challenge taken-for-granted boundaries, they are often the most beleaguered entities in the US academy, but much less so in other countries.

Moving to less well-resourced, smaller societies, where local academics are more disconnected from international circuits, Stella Quah calls attention to the continual pressure on sociologists to deliver on all fronts – to be simultaneously, professional, public and policy sociologists. But with what consequence? Exhaustion? Continual cutting of corners? Impoverished scholarship? Or can a case be made that this also leads to a professional sociology infused with public and policy concerns? Indeed, one of the biggest problems is how to even sustain sociology in severely underprivileged societies, and here the International Sociological Association's project to develop regional exchange is important.

Although he speaks from Germany – a country at the other end of the spectrum – Ulrich Beck likewise points to the enormous inequalities across national boundaries, eclipsed by sociology's focus on the relatively 'small' inequalities within nations and their legitimation. Methodological nationalism is built into the deepest premises of sociology which must be dismantled by a 'New Critical Theory with cosmopolitan intent' (Beck 2005: 342) if we are to come to grips with the catastrophes that beckon. Beck is less concerned about US hegemony and more concerned that we build a counter-hegemonic sociology that uproots the old. Even if this is not as novel as he claims – how does his project depart from world systems analysis, theories of globalization and underdevelopment? – still he is right to hammer away at the national centrality not only of sociology but of the public consciousness. A cosmopolitan critical theory will need fertile soil in which to grow – what will be its transnational institutional foundations? How to ensure it is not another outpost of Empire? We should make sure we do not imitate the imperial path of economics.

## Public sociologies and social transformation

Critique is all very well, but what about social change? Armed with our critical sociology we can now return to public sociology, which looks two ways – to changing sociology but equally to changing society. Here the remarks of Calhoun are once again pertinent. He stakes out Pierre Bourdieu's perspective on sociology as a science that starts out from a rupture with 'spontaneous sociology' – a science that radically demarcates itself from the common sense of agents who do not and cannot comprehend the conditions of their own existence. In Bourdieu's conception people are not confused or dumb or automata – they may suffer from misrecognition but they have a deeply layered habitus that allows them to follow a logic of practice. Still, the logic of logic, true understanding, is the monopoly of scientists, sociologists in particular, ensconced in the academy with leisure (*skholè*) at their disposal and subject to competition based on the rules of science. The fields of science are privileged sites of truth which must be protected against incursions from markets and states, from television and journalists, and from the doxosophers, the merchants of propaganda and distortion. The autonomy of science must be defended at all costs – a project that propels scientists, but especially sociologists, into the public sphere in the name of their values and truths. After labouring away in their social laboratories, and after 'armed struggle with their adversaries', academic sociologists transform themselves into public sociologists – in defending their own corporate interests they defend the interests of humanity. Standing above all particularisms, theirs is the corporatism of the universal.

That's quite a leap from science to the public defense of humanity, especially when one thinks how that most rigorous social science we call economics becomes neoliberalism. Bourdieu suppresses the contradiction between his ferocious condemnation of neoclassical economics and his equally uncompromising dismissal of any 'post-ism' that might question the universality and emancipatory character of science. Alvin Gouldner would have considered Bourdieu's reflexive science as but the latest ideology of a radical intelligentsia. In representing their interests as the interests of all, Bourdieu's 'international of intellectuals' (led by sociologists?) would constitute at best a flawed universal class. After Antonio Gramsci we might call them *traditional public sociologists* whose claim to universalism is based on an autonomy that masks their unwitting reproduction of capitalism with its inequalities and exclusions. Wrapped up in an illusory autonomy they too suffer from misrecognition – they misrecognize their own particularism as universalism, they replay the German Ideology.

While not denying the importance of the academy, in the final analysis, for Gramsci truth can only be elaborated in dialogue with agents themselves who are endowed with 'good sense' within their common sense. Subaltern groups

are subject to dominant ideologies but this never totally eclipses their indigeneous reason that intellectuals excavate and elaborate – a good sense that springs from their subjugation in and transformation of the world. In this Gramscian perspective social change comes from intellectuals working in close connection with agents, elaborating local imaginations of what could be, and struggling for their realization. These are the ‘organic intellectuals’, or more specifically *organic public sociologists*.

Time and again Bourdieu inveighs against the notion of ‘organic intellectuals’ and from two sides. On the one side intellectuals’ independence is too easily compromised and their insights too easily contaminated by the misguided common sense of the groups they engage. On the other side, organic intellectuals, perhaps forming themselves into a party, all too easily substitute themselves for and dictate to those groups. Pursuing interests governed by the political field, leaders manipulate the led for their own ends. These are, indeed, real dilemmas for any vision of organic public sociology, but in Bourdieu’s case the dilemmas are not real because subalterns have nothing to offer the scientist except misrecognition, because social structures are so deeply inscribed in their bodies that agents cannot even know those structures – accessible only to scientists who miraculously turn bodily knowledges into true knowledge. For Bourdieu then the defense of humanity requires objectivity of science, detachment from humanity.

Two visions of the public sociologist, two visions of social change – the one riding on the claimed universality of intellectuals, the other riding on the organization of subaltern groups. For the traditional public sociologist the privileged site is the university, while civil society is the locus of misrecognized suffering; for the organic public sociologist civil society is the source of insight into what is and what could be, insight excavated and elaborated by the sociologist. This gives us two divergent visions and divisions of sociology as a field of power. In the conception of traditional public sociology the danger comes from the invading (heteronomous) forces of mass media, consultantships, technocracy, commodification and politicization of the university, refracted within the field of sociology as the subjugation of the academic to the extra-academic. In the conception of the organic public sociology domination appears as rationalization, a suppression of reflexive knowledge by instrumental knowledge. Here the danger comes from science itself, such as neo-liberal economics that imposes a singular model on all, precisely because it does not acknowledge the critique of its theoretical foundations or the lived experience of the people its theorizes. Both threats – the extra-academic forces and instrumental knowledges – are real, both threats must be engaged. The constellation of threats varies from place to place and from period to period, but one should be careful not to promote one in order to hide the other, not to use heteronomy to justify or simply paper over the suppression of critical and public sociologies.

Both visions of public sociology – traditional and organic – are limited. Just as Calhoun would be the first to admit and just as Bourdieu has theorized in his treatises on state nobility and *homo academicus*, the scientific fields of academia, for all their potential, offer a deeply flawed universalism, so I'd be the first to agree with Braithwaite and Hall about the dangers of romanticizing civil society. The distinctive blind spots of traditional and organic public sociologies provide a necessary corrective for each other. But can the university sustain their antagonistic symbiosis without dissolving one into the other? Can the university promote traditional public sociology which unmasks and de-fatalizes domination in widely read books or in the media, which speaks to broad, thin, passive and mainstream publics, while at the same time nurturing organic public sociologists who burrow away in civil society, engaging and addressing local, thick, active, counter-publics? (How) can the university be the Modern Prince of tomorrow?

In the UK, for example, we have Anthony Giddens writing traditional public sociology of the third way, reflexive modernity, and globalization – books, essays, pamphlets and interviews that float down from high within the academy, that supplied the ideology of New Labour. But we also have the organic public sociology of Huw Beynon, arising from a life-time of collaborative struggles with car workers, miners, dock workers, armament workers, chemical workers, call-centre workers. The one converges on the public sphere from above, the other from below – a public sphere that is not so inhospitable to sociology. Can these different public sociologies not only survive together, feeding on each other, but can they survive alongside professional, critical and policy sociologies, and under pressure from competitive rationalization of the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise), as well as from budget cuts and all manner of privatizations. If it is to survive here and elsewhere sociology will do so not by retreating into a professional cocoon but by demonstrating its public value. What configurations and challenges do different countries offer to such public sociologies, and how may national sociologies become full participants in a global vision and division of sociological labour? These are some of the issues we must engage if public sociology is to be more than a populist fad.

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## Note

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