The Relevance of Relevance:

Social Sciences and Social Practice in Post-Positivistic Society

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INTRODUCTION

It is widely recognized that the social sciences have an important track record in the transformation of Western European countries from labor intensive agricultural economies to modern urban high-tech societies. European welfare states have particularly required a substantial input from social research. What is less well understood is that the conceptual structure, methodology, and research practice of the social sciences themselves have reflected their relevance, and that all this is rapidly changing as a consequence of the changing forms of governance. In fact, the "positivistic" period of social sciences, split into relatively rigid disciplines, was astonishingly short – only from the turn of the century when the disciplinary boundaries were drawn, to the last third of the twentieth century. Anti-positivist critiques that have always accompanied social science have now become mainstream reality rather than a radical alternative. In this article, I analyze this shift in the light of the concepts of Mode 1 and Mode 2 science developed by Gibbons, Nowotny, and others. I show with some examples that Mode 2 science is no longer a critical challenge to mainstream positivism but an adaptation to the saturation of the ideals of modernization. Mounting demands for evidence-based policy may reduce rather than increase the relevance of social science research.

REPRESENTATIONAL, EPISTEMIC AND POSITIONAL DIMENSIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

Sociological studies tell about social reality in three different ways. *First,* they report knowledge about social realities. This knowledge depends on their conceptual framework and their instruments of observation such as ethnography, media analysis or survey technology. This is the *representational dimension* of knowledge.

   Secondly, the style of reasoning, to use Ian Hacking's term (1990), itself tells us about society's interests of knowledge. They define the types of questions that can be asked about social reality: the *epistème*, to use Michel Foucault's term. Let us call this the *epistemic dimension* of sociological knowledge. *Epistèmes* themselves are social facts that represent the relations of domination in the given society. The master example is Foucault's own account of the history of Western science and its ways of relating human culture and nature. It evolved from classifying and representing the natural world, including humans, within the natural history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to the complete separation between human and natural sciences towards the end of the

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nineteenth century. Another example is Ian Hacking's analysis of the discovery of probability and stochastic processes in the early nineteenth century. This opened up whole new areas of scientific research concerning populations and mass phenomena. Such grand transformations of the *epistème* reflect society's interests in knowing itself and its natural environment in wide philosophical terms. But the kinds of questions society asks of itself are also reflected in research designs in a smaller scale, and the designs and questions themselves tell us something important about society.

Thirdly, sociological studies report facts about the relationship between sociologists themselves and the object of their study through their form and scientific practice. This we can call the *positional,* or the *sociology of knowledge dimension* of sociological facts. The division of sciences into disciplines is in itself an important fact about the society that engenders it. The social sciences are today separated from the natural sciences, and split into sub-disciplines each with their own dominant styles of reasoning. This is a real factor which has an impact on what new knowledge social scientists can produce. Another division, especially important in sociology, is the way that scientific knowledge is entangled with but sometimes also opposed to practical knowledge about society, held by ordinary people, by policy makers, by the media and other significant institutions.

All these three dimensions must be accounted for when we discuss the relevance of social sciences, i.e. their relationship with social practice. Sociological studies should not be read only as reports about their objects, but symptomatically, as manifestations of the power fields of knowledge in which they operate, and of their relationships to these fields. In all three respects the social sciences have undergone a transformation which we must clearly understand to see precisely what practical role they potentially serve today.

PLANNED ECONOMY AND MODE 1 SCIENCE

When the architect of the British welfare state, Sir William Beveridge, envisioned the state's role in post-war society he considered that the "spectacular achievements of the war-time planned economy" (Beveridge 1944: 120) measured by the GNP and employment, should be applied to the economy in peace, which also could benefit from state regulation, and not only by means of income redistribution. The state's aim was no longer to minimize public spending but to optimize all spending in society, in regard to available labour power by means of "manpower budgeting." The state budget should be measured to maintain full employment but not to exceed the national manpower capacity. The Keynesian principle of full employment was translated into income equalization in social policy and growth was its primary objective. Thus planning was not uniquely a socialist idea; a plan designed and supervised by the centralized national state was a generally accepted European model of industrial development.

The planning did not only cover infrastructure, regional policy, monetary- and fiscal policy, but also the ways in which people should lead their lives. The Swedish Alva and Gunnar Myrdal (1934) had in their famous population policy program proposed that the state should root out bad habits among its citizens and teach them good manners. People had to be trained to take care of their households and bring up their children, although the important and complicated task of education should primarily be left to professionals in nursery schools and other institutions. The state had to make people conscious of their

real interests. Psychological research about happiness was needed to discover what makes life worth living according to people themselves, and the institutions of society should be formed on the basis of these observations.

The sociology associated with the *plan* was an exemplary case of what Gibbons et al. (1997) call Mode 1 science. Knowledge production in Mode 1 takes place at a distance from the context of application, as "pure" science at the far end of the RD-continuum from research to "development." Mode 1 knowledge production respects rigorous disciplinary boundaries. Its canon of accountability and quality control dictates that only intra-disciplinary expert authority is qualified to judge the validity of knowledge, the merits of the scientists and the value of their work. Mode 1 science is enclosed in the universities, and – the authors claim in a second book – in fact not accountable at all in practical terms, such as outcomes in welfare or impact on policy effectiveness.

Nowotny et al. (2001) explain that the positivist virtue of a completely self-controlling, context-free science was cultivated in a context that had an unlimited appetite for meaning and certainty, tracing back to the eighteenth century when Western society was experiencing an enormous wave of modernization (63). The same explanation holds even more emphatically for the post-war decades in Western countries where progress, change for the better, lurked in the future biographies of not only the elites but of the great majority of people. Post-war industrialization was particularly dramatic for Europe which, with the exception of England and Belgium, was still a continent dominated by small-holding agriculture on the eve of the Second World War. Germany, Denmark, Netherlands, and Sweden all had well over one fifth of their labour force employed in agriculture; Spain and the eastern countries including Finland had well above one half. Thirty years turned first the West and then the central and eastern part of Europe into economies dominated numerically by the industrial working class, the peaks reaching almost half of the total (civilian) labor force (48.5 per cent in West Germany in 1970)[2].

The post-war industrialization produced a phenomenal growth in consumption possibilities with no parallel in human history, not relatively speaking and certainly not in absolute terms. The earlier consumer booms of the eighteenth century in England (Mukerji 1983; McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb 1982) and still in nineteenth century Europe (Williams 1982) were limited to small elites, but the new industry-based consumer society was a phenomenon of the masses and encompassed the structural foundations of industrial society. In retrospect this change was so drastic that it has been given dramatic names, such as the European golden era (Therborn 1995), the golden years of capitalism (Hobsbawm 1994), the glorious thirty years (Fourastié 1979) or even the second French revolution (Mendras 1988). It changed the makeup and technology of everyday life. It reconfigured both social structures and people's way of thinking about themselves and about their relationships with others. It brought to ordinary people a quantity and diversity of goods, pleasures, and uses of time that either had never existed before or had only been accessible to the very privileged. Luxury was democratized and became part of everyday life. The pleasures of consumption and sensuality became publicly presentable, in everyday life as well as in the media and in marketing, whereas they had earlier been excluded from public discourses and left to the private sphere. The

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[2] Therborn 1995, tables 4.4, p. 66, and 4.6, p. 69.

Weberian values of industrial society – frugality, industriousness and achievement orientation - were replaced by post-industrial or post-modern values that stress pleasure for its own sake and cherished its public presentation as much as they spurned its public control. The Romantic ethos of capitalism seemed to get the upper hand.

At the same time parliamentary institutions were consolidated in all Western countries. Europe only gradually recovered from quasi-totalitarian war-time regimes, the USA from an era of ultra-nationalistic anti-communist suspicion. Value conflicts over religion, nationalism, the family, sexuality, and many forms of consumption and culture gained political platforms and turned into protests and counter-protests or moral panics (Cohen 1972).

The appetite for meaning and certainty was not only of a psychological nature. The plan was a central instrument in progressive national industrial policies, and the plan required reliable and impartial information for its material. Also the moral ambivalences needed to be formulated in a language and described more systematically than with anecdotal accounts by journalists and writers or movie directors. The appetite was not only for meaning and certainty; it was also for information.

Population statistics had already a solid foundation from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. To a lesser extent this was also true for economic and labor statistics. However, household consumption data only began to be available in the 1950s. Income and mobility surveys have an even shorter history, and individual data on specific consumption patterns (such as alcohol), sexual behavior, political opinions, and attitudes about this or that aspect of everyday life were a rarity provided by specially funded academic research programs still in the 1960s. Today these statistics are routinely provided by the OECD, UN organizations, Eurostat, European Science Foundation, and national statistical offices, or they are industrially produced and commercialized by private 'research' companies. All this information required a conceptual portrayal of society—a language to describe its direction of change, and to interpret its relevance.

Even though the epistemic dimension of the sociology associated with the plan was strongly normative—preparing the good life for all—any sociology of knowledge was an alien, if not hostile, idea to Mode 1 knowledge production. Science that speaks with the voice of disciplinary authority does not highlight its subject and its relationship with the reality it speaks about. In the natural sciences, advances in knowledge are recognized independently of who makes them, and whether or not they have straight practical applications. In the same way, one might think that if basic social science research could detect the determining elements in human social conduct, it does not matter who participates in the production of that knowledge, and from what point of view. Decisions concerning how it will be used could and should be left to politicians assisted by applied research.

Basic and applied social research did not form a continuum, however. Instead, a strange cleavage between "Grand Theory" and "Abstracted Empiricism" emerged (Mills 1959). The technical vocabulary of the former and the bureaucratic ethos of the latter appear quite distinct from each other: theory representing "basic" or pure science with disinterested motives (beyond the interest in the establishment of the discipline itself) while empirical researchers apply their measurements and methods to practical social issues of integration, cohesion, equality, crime prevention, youth work, health promotion etc. Neither theory nor empiricism left much room for *human agency*, with

understandable aspirations, goals, and hopes. For empiricist as well as theoretical sociologists, Mills argued, the object of knowledge is *social action* – what makes members of society act in a meaningful and orderly way *from the point of view of society*. According to Mills, it was the task of emancipating social science to help out people who "need, and feel they need ... a quality of mind that will help them to use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves" (1959:5). That quality of mind, the *sociological imagination*, is offered to them by the critical sociologist who is capable of using the classical tradition to translate private problems into public issues and vice versa.

THE POST-POSITIVIST TURN

By the 1970s, social research in accordance with Mode 1 knowledge production was criticized increasingly often. One of the objects of the critique was the problematic assumption about objective knowledge being independent of the viewpoint of the knower. Concepts tend to stand for a wider complex of theoretical thought; therefore they involve points of view with interests, material or ideological, attached to them. One solution has been to make explicit "whose side we are on," as Howard Becker, the famous American sociologist of deviant minorities, asked in 1966. Becker argued that it is the task of the sociologist to side with the "underdogs": the drug users, prostitutes, ethnic minorities or extremely poor people. The voices of such people are not heard in the media, they are not seen in the halls of power; thus information about their lives must be produced by professional sociologists who are equipped with methodologies to make that information available (Becker 1970). But as Alvin Gouldner (1970) remarked in a famous and influential debate with Becker, such a position does not solve the problem itself, created by the division of labor between pure academic science and applied research. Being on the side of the underdog is in itself an ambiguous position. What is an underdog? There is always somebody above every over-dog, and thus if we study drug users, for example, even the local police officer – an obvious over-dog to the addicts – is under the authority of the police headquarters, of the municipal council, the President of the local Lions Club, and many others, not least the legislator who decided that drug use is illegal and thus a police affair. Moreover, Gouldner argued that even when sociologists take the underdog point of view they, knowingly or not, serve a constituency on whose interest their career possibilities depend. As sociologists are mostly liberal – in Europe one would say that they belong to the political left – their constituency is the liberal, educated, bureaucratic new middle class who tends to rely on the authority of the central government over the usually more conservative local authorities. Taking the point of the underdog in Becker's case was, besides defending and understanding the weak and poor, also a matter of articulating the values of the liberal central government, the hub of the *plan*. Handling moral minorities was a matter of dealing rationally with a *social problem*, and the community to be reformed became an object, something apart from and outside of the reformer (Gouldner 1970: 130).The underdog's position that Becker endorsed, was in fact the liberal view of the elite reformers from central governments down to the local communities. It involved preaching tolerance rather than conformity, rehabilitation rather than punishment, correction instead of repression in the name of the "public good."

In European sociology a similar reformism took an even more straightforward political form. British sociology has strong roots in poverty research that developed among labor-friendly liberal movements of the early twentieth century such as The Fabian Society and the Bloomsbury Circle (Eyerman 1994: 109-32). In the Nordic countries the golden years of sociology also coincided with the reformist radicalism of the post-war decades, but the emphasis was less on cultural tolerance as such than universal rights of citizenship. Loyalty to the state among the whole population was a key element in the nation-building process, and social scientists were at the head of universalistic reforms governed by a strong central state (Slagstad 1998; Sulkunen et al. 2000). Here, too, the underdog position in sociology was in full harmony with the interests of the liberal political elite, much like Gouldner had argued concerning the USA.

A major blow to Mode 1 social science came from social constructionism, which pointed out that there cannot be any pure social science knowledge independent of ordinary people's everyday knowledge about society. Anthony Giddens (1979: 245-253) gave this point a famous formulation in his state-of-the-art review of social theory by saying that the twentieth-century trend in social science has been to increasingly account for the fact that people always already, without any interference from social scientists, possess enormous amounts of knowledge about society. A landmark volume to realize this had already appeared in 1966: *The Social Construction of Reality* by Berger and Luckmann ([1966]1987). They had argued that not only do people know a great deal about their society – obviously, in order to go to school, to be employed or to be an employee, to be husband and wife, to make one's way in modern traffic, to act as a consumer, as a political or social citizen, one has to know a very complicated set of rules and norms – but that the whole social structure is based on such shared knowledge. Thus the proper approach to the analysis of social structure is not through abstract measurement such as statistics on income distributions or class divisions but sociology of knowledge.

Once it is recognized that people know a great deal about social life, and that the social scientist's knowledge is part of the same field of knowledge in which other people also live, it is easy to dismiss Mode 1 science as an illusion. There is no pure social science, independent of the context of its application, because the scientist's knowledge is itself part of the context: it serves to define situations, to conceptualize social issues, and to establish selections of feasible policy options, to exclude others and so on. The social sciences are permanently challenged by everyday thought, they cannot in actual fact justify themselves only with disciplinary canons, and their academic authority is constantly questioned. Such a view stresses the positional or sociology of knowledge – dimension of social science: scientific concepts, methods, and language which produce and express facts also reflect the relationship between the scientists and their object, the people they study. Sociology committed to this view always faces what is called "the reflexivity problem." If social reality is significantly influenced by what people think or believe about it, and these beliefs are influenced by the believers' interests, social scientists also contribute to the shaping of this reality in a way that is also infected with their interests. In what way, then, can sociologists claim that their knowledge is superior or somehow less influenced by their situation than other knowledge? Berger and Luckmann said that sociology of knowledge is "like trying to push a bus in which one is

riding" (1987: 20). To pretend that disciplinary social science is somehow neutral and virtuously outside of social reality, even in its basic theoretical part, is to make a fallacious claim of objectivity and a rather dubious attempt to cover up its partiality. Recently this view has been profusely advocated by Michel Burawoy (2005).

When Giddens made his observation that the social sciences tend towards a recognition of the importance of everyday knowledge, he was in fact pointing to a major change in *all three* relationships between social science and social practice: positional, epistemic and representational. I have discussed the positional dimension above as the reflexivity problem. The epistemic role of social science concerning the types of questions it is asked to answer now turns from causal explanation and prediction to interpretation (Bauman 1987). In Erik Allardt's terms (2006), the hermeneutic pole in social science gained dominance vis-à-vis its complementary opposite, the positivistic vision. It was observed that beyond what was taken for facts there is a complex web of communication, from statistics collectors' concepts and classifications, to respondents' interpretations and responses to them, to statistical analysis and interpretation of results by researchers and by their readers. No part in this web can be taken for granted as evident and obvious. In cultural and media studies the same ambiguity of meaning appeared in many forms. Semioticians talked about the "referential fallacy" (Greimas and Courtès 1979), media researchers focused on the user perspective, i.e. the interaction between the media and the audience (Sulkunen and Törrönen 1997; Alasuutari 1995), and literary criticism followed Roland Barthes (1977: 142-48) in believing that the "author is dead" – that is, the "meaning" of literary texts escapes the intentions of their authors, and in the extreme case, it even escapes the text itself. Meaning became a problem, the object of study, the referent, instead of being simply the medium of facts.

In referential terms the focus of European social science shifted from issues of social integration, equality, social change or cultural tolerance to mundane topics such as consumption, the meaning of everyday practices, the body, and cultural studies in general (Sulkunen 2009: 99-118).

NEW FORMS OF GOVERNANCE AND MODE 2 SCIENCE

Why did these shifts take place? Since the representational, epistemic, and positional dimensions of science are relationships with society, we cannot read the answer from research alone but must turn to the forms of governance from which they gain their relevance. The end of the 1970s marked an end of a historical period in advanced capitalist countries. This is the case whether we look at it from the perspective of management ideologies, from the perspective of political governance, or more widely as a structural change in modern societies at large.

Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello (1999) have studied business management ideologies since the 1970s and found that a similar reorganization has taken place in the private sector. The bureaucratic management structures that had been copied from the military were inadequate for performance and unacceptable from the point of view of the increasingly educated labour force. The response was more democratic participatory work organizations, flexible employment schemes, subcontracting, autonomous quality circles or teams, outsourcing, and competition within companies. The new organizational

form was no longer the hierarchy but the network, and its node was the project: a task-based uniquely funded team with autonomous leadership, targets, and a deadline. Control was no longer directed from central management; from now on, it was not only internalized in the employees' own individual interest but also externalized to peers and to competitive relationships between operational units and profit centers.

The doctrines of political governance that were adopted within a short time-span in the mid-1980s in the OECD and its member countries applied the same principles of the new business management ideology to state and local government. Similar problems of bureaucratic management were to be eliminated as in the private sector. Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller (1992), Rose (1999), and Mitchel Dean (1999) have associated the change of political governance with the Foucauldian idea of governmentality, the internalization of power by its subjects in modern society. Citizens were no longer seen as subjects of the state; they were put in the position of clients. Public service providing agencies were re-organized to meet requirements that are often called *the three E's*: *E*conomy (ensuring the best possible terms for endowed resources, implying competition between service producers), *E*fficiency (producing more value for money), and *E*ffectiveness (ensuring that outcomes conform to intentions) (Power 1997: 50). The central government was no longer authorized to issue norms to local officials and service providers such as hospitals, schools, day care centers etc. but only to relay information and advice, and resources were allocated on the basis of output rather than needs.

Michael Power (1997) has used the term *The Audit Society* to describe the essential change that has occurred to the role of social sciences in the new mode of power: evaluation, of which auditing is an especially important part. Using the terms coined by Gibbons and associates (1997) the change corresponds to the change from Mode 1 to Mode 2 knowledge production. In contrast with Mode 1 "pure" science, Mode 2 knowledge production takes place in the context of application; it is trans-disciplinary and it is directly accountable also on grounds of its practical usefulness (Nowotny et al. 2001: 220).

FROM THE GOOD LIFE TO GOOD PRACTICES

I have proposed elsewhere (Sulkunen 2009) that the idea of a centrally managed plan has been replaced by frameworks, programs, and projects because authoritarian and normative structures of governance violate the principles of individual autonomy and intimacy that have been gained in the process of modernization. This concerns especially the moral authority of the state to regulate consumption and lifestyle risks, such as alcoholism, drug problems, sexuality, smoking, eating, and other factors related to public health and social welfare.

Mode 2 science corresponds to the pragmatic goals of governance. The function of central business management is to assure profit to shareholders; its competence is not sufficient to manage the production process itself. All it needs to know is information about the three E's of the company operations.

In political governance, moral issues complicate the picture and make Mode 2 science even more relevant than in the business world. The authority of the state does not suffice to define what the good society is, what kind of life is good or bad or how to solve

problems. Nevertheless, the political responsibility has to be attested and the officials have to be given grounds for decisions about how to allocate state funds. In framing laws and programs, and defining goals, research is needed not in order to make plans but to evaluate results. For example, the European Union framework programs formulate goals on many issues: the development of technology, employment, the prevention of exclusion, regional development, the promotion of health, the prevention of drug problems, and many other things. These are translated to national strategies, policy programs, and eventually to short term action plans. Local and regional governments insert these into their own objectives and action plans. From the epistemic point of view, governance by programs and frameworks rather than plans means that society asks itself different kinds of questions than before. Social sciences that were attached to the plan were expected to say what happens if we do X, and what should be done to make Y happen. Now the questions are: in terms of the *three Es*, which of the projects A, B, C…N best meet the objectives of the program? For example, the objective might be to minimize alcohol-related problems. The central government does not have the means at its disposal to reduce alcohol consumption in the country, or it is reluctant to use such policy instruments (price increases, permitted hours of sale, and other regulations of the market); instead it asks local communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, labor unions, churches etc. to establish innovative projects and have them evaluated on the basis of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness (Sulkunen 2006). The central concept in goal and framework management, 'innovation,' has been used in science and technology policy for a long time. The administration cannot predetermine the results of the researchers or the direction of the development interests of companies, but it can take a stand on the direction of the development in general and make strategic policy definitions. New ideas come from the 'grassroots level,' from field workers and citizens themselves. When transferred to social policy, the pattern of 'innovation thinking' has assimilated traits of romantic rationalism: people are thought to be creative and the solutions have to be given space to develop and grow upwards from below. Researchers should evaluate and strengthen these tendencies instead of planning. The primary tasks of evaluation include surveillance of expenses, ensuring quality, and observance of rules and regulations, tasks which used to be assigned to inspectors and superintendents of state governance. Often they include more ambitious goals of generalization, which are called recognizing good practices.

The expressions "good practice" and "what works" originate from prison administration (Garland 2001), and from there they have spread to social work and public administration in general. This manner of speech is an application of solution oriented therapy or pedagogy, which detaches itself from analyzing reasons for problematic behavior and instead concentrates on the recognition of the effects of alternative action models. The search for reasons is, according to this perspective, not only a waste of time but it might also have negative implications. When criminals learn about the causes of their behavior, those causes become "neutralizations, justifications and rhetoric for escaping responsibility" (Sykes & Mazda 1957).

The recognition of good and working practices is pragmatic thinking. The behavior of a person is a sum of such complicated factors that the practical social work in prisons, for example, cannot commit itself only to one or a few explanation models and their conclusions concerning *clients*. It is more useful to observe the effects of the existing

methods of *social work itself* and choose the methods that seem functioning and cost-effective. The innovation thinking is dressed in the rhetoric of good practice, and it leads to a sort of new social Darwinism. Clients and employees are given the freedom to invent new kinds of action models, mutations, and eventually the most fit among them are chosen for additional refining on the basis of expert reports. Evaluation is then considered the unbiased and unemotional mechanism of social and natural selection. The other side of pragmatic thinking is moral neutrality. The assumption that the methods of social work or the alternatives for control policies could be evaluated only with regards to their functionality and effectiveness, presupposes a strong unanimity of goals –the employment, health, and security of the population being considered good objectives and repeated offences a bad one, for example. In program rhetoric neutrality leads to abstracticism and definitional—and at the same time administrative—ambiguity. Promotion of health is a good example of this. Another is management of security. This rhetoric attributes a morally neutral flavor to the acts of officials. It is easy for everyone to accept, but at the same time it expands the range of goals of the officials and experts and blurs the boundaries of their actions. The other moral point of views related to the matter—the customers' freedom of choice or the sense of justice of that compels many citizens to demand more severe punishment for criminals, for example—can be forgotten from the standpoint of effectiveness.

THE FICTIONS OF EVALUATION RESEARCH

From the point of view of the sociology of knowledge, governance by programs positions the sociologist in a new relationship with social practice, exactly like the one Nowotny et al. (2001) describe as Mode 2 knowledge production. Social research operates in the context of application, it is not constrained by disciplinary boundaries and the criteria of its accountability are less academic than practical: tell us what works, and we shall be pleased *not* to know why something else might *not* work.

If the idea of 'pure science' in the positivist Mode 1 knowledge production was an illusion, but an illusion in a real context with real consequences, are the ideals of Mode 2 social science more realistic and convincing? To some extent the answer is positive: a social science that operates in a context and is aware of its own vested interests, is more honest about itself and potentially also more relevant than social science built on the fiction of basic science and applied research. However, at the same time, Mode 2 science attached to the program rather than to the plan has its own illusions that are as real as the fiction of Mode 1 science but in a different context and with different consequences. The first illusion arises from the logic of governance by programs itself: abstract objectives.

Program and evaluation rhetoric makes politics appear as rational and hierarchical decision-making, just like business management. But why does the state need this rhetoric? Why is it impossible, for example, for a ministry to decide on its strategy in alcohol policy and follow that strategy in financing and other solutions? One reason for this is the pursuit of political neutrality already discussed above. The ministry does not want to decide or it considers itself incapable to dictate how municipalities, organizations, companies or other ministries should act in order to decrease problems caused by alcohol consumption. To preserve the autonomy of those actors the policy

goals are defined with abstract concepts, among which employment, health, and security are the most central ones. It is always possible to reach unanimity concerning those goals, even though the moral or power resources would not always suffice to make concrete policy decisions. The rhetoric of "what works" and "best practices" reflects what we have called the *Ethics of Not Taking a Stand*, quoting a field worker we interviewed on how she advises parents to behave in the drug issue: "The most ethical stand is not to take a stand at all, the parents should decide this for themselves" (Määttä, Rantala and Sulkunen 2003).

Abstraction has also another legitimating function. It protects the sphere of intimacy, which was the historical goal of the welfare state: the self-responsibility of citizens, individual agency, and commitment to good choices to promote a person's own health, security, and well-being. This is not limited to rhetoric or ideological speech, but it is part of the everyday life of advanced capitalist society. For example the health care expert system is relatively helpless, if the patient is unwilling to cooperate: 'only the medication that is taken will help.' But one cannot force another to cooperate. One cannot get obesity under control unless consumers agree to eat less. Disciplining consumers' food choices directly would be felt as unacceptable paternalism. Consumers have to take responsibility for their own choices.

In programs with very concrete targets such as weight loss, the outcomes are easily measured. However, in many cases standards of performance are more ambiguous, and the audit or evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness is in fact a process of defining and operationalizing them, often with perverse effects on the actual operation of the system. A good example is research evaluation. In theory, university departments and research institutes are expected to produce relevant and good quality research, but the auditing criterion, articles published in refereed journals, leads to an increase in the number of such journals, with the consequence that fewer people read them and the social relevance of research results declines.

Governance by programs and frameworks thus supports what Nowotny et al. (2001) consider the key features of the Mode 2 science. Abstract objectives of evaluation research in the context of application encourage a trans-disciplinary and pragmatic division of labor. When one is not interested in explaining behavior or even in the mechanisms of effects of the measures taken, but only in the effectiveness of the alternative action models, there is no need to research alcohol problems, youth culture or deviant behavior except for the studies conducted by skilful evaluation researchers who can flexibly move from one substance area to another. Corresponding abstracticism is visible in the training of field workers and their division of work. As the French sociologist Robert Castel (1981:135-44) has claimed, the professionalization of social work has not actually led to the often anticipated medicalization nor specialization of another kind. Instead, there has developed a paraprofessional mixed type, with the general task of social control.

The abstracticism of goal and framework management has resulted in economy, efficiency, and effectiveness becoming passkey concepts that are applied everywhere. Sometimes, however, they misrepresent the reality that they are supposed to evaluate. For example, every society will need to take care of addicts in some way. For the clients' welfare as well as for the institutions – the police, social offices, penal and medical institutions – the most relevant questions relate not to outcomes in terms of recovery but

to the division of labor between controlling and helping professions. This, however, is not an issue of performance but of ethics and values. Constrained to evaluating efficiency and effectiveness, Mode 2 social science may in fact sustain inefficient responses instead of asking pragmatically relevant questions about their rationale.

THE RETURN OF CAUSALITY AND ITS OLD PROBLEMS

The second illusion of the new mode of practical social science arises from the requirements of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. They are based on the notion of causality. The concept of effect is a part of the equipment of science, as well as of everyday thinking. We light the lamp, roast the ham, start the car, give advice to another person or call a meeting, assuming on the basis of our prior experience, that a certain state of affairs will follow. We do not usually ask why it results from that action. Only when the lamp does not light, the ham does not roast or advice or invitation are not followed, do we start investigating the error. Even then we don't have to know much about the mechanisms of the causal chain, but we can rely on our prior experience. We routinely change the bulb, check the fuse, and the position of the ignition key, or find out whether our advice or invitation has actually been received. Only under very exceptional circumstances do we have to lean on research-based knowledge.

In evaluation research, the primary interest of knowledge is similar to our everyday causal thinking. The interest of knowledge is not to establish general laws about social life but to verify whether the action causes the desired effect or not. This could be called clinical causal thinking. Its objective is not to explain the mechanisms of effects, but only to test pragmatically if they are there, how much they vary, and whether there are any undesired effects. Medicine that is based on evidence and the medicine-influenced social policy are examples of clinical causal thinking.[3] Still, clinical causal thinking has similarly limiting logical conditions as the causality tests of research laboratories. The cause and effect have to be logically independent and empirically dependent on one another, the causal factor has to be adjustable in an unambiguous and measurable manner, and the effect of other variables has to be eliminated experimentally or statistically. Also there must be unambiguous means for measuring the effect, which has to follow the cause in time.

Some clinical medical research is able to come up with these expectations. The treatment will stay the same in spite of who it is given to and who hands it out, and the human body is approximately the same in different circumstances. Usually it is possible to control the effect of a third factor. In social work and social policy the conditions of clinical research can be measured up only in exceptional circumstances. Psychosocial work does not move from a certain place, actor or situation to another remaining the same, like medical treatments do. No 'method' or 'model' psychosocial work can be independent of the agent who delivers it, who receives it, or that would be conceptually independent of the effect it aims at.

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[3] The so-called Cochrane-library collects the results of clinical treatment research, evaluates their validity, and draws conclusions on the probabilities of the effects of the methods. Corresponding work has been done in social policy under the name of Campbell-cooperation.

Evaluation is usually performed in a situation, where a test or even comparative research design is not possible. Ordinarily the evaluator is contacted when the funding of the project has already been granted, its staff and principal idea are decided, and the field work of the project has already partly started. Some vested interests have already been created, the good-willing mission is an inspirational source for action, and there is no time or resources for comparison presupposed by a real evaluation of effectiveness. The expectation of establishing causality turns into a thin fiction.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this article I have discussed the relationship of social science to social practice, and argued that a radical paradigm shift occurred in the 1980s in all advanced capitalist countries from the positivist mode associated with the idea of the plan to a more context-based science attached to governance by programs and frameworks. The change reflects the new practices of governance that were introduced at the same historical period in the business world as well as in public management. In social science knowledge production the shift corresponds to a transition from what Gibbons et al. (1997) call a transition from Mode 1 to Mode 2 science.

This shift has had implications at three levels: referential (what is studied), epistemic (what kinds of questions are asked) and sociology of knowledge in a narrow sense (the position of scientists in relation to the object of their research and to those whose knowledge needs they serve).

I have also argued that Mode 1 social science was a deviation rather than a long tradition in modern social science. It was associated with governance by plan in the post-war decades of state-driven industrialization and construction of the welfare states. It had important functions in providing a conceptual portrayal of society and the theoretical framework for growing needs for monitoring and information, which now are mostly covered by information systems other than the social sciences. However, Mode 1 social science was also an illusion, and many social scientists and critics were aware of this.

The shift to Mode 2 science was a reaction to internal developments within the social sciences but more importantly it reflects the epochal change in the logic of governance in capitalist societies from the plan to programs and frameworks. This change is deeply rooted in the structure of capitalist societies which stress individuality and autonomy of agents. Fixity on abstract targets, good practices, and causal relationships in Mode 2 science are fictions, too. Requirements of relevance in the search for best practices may lead to a loss of disciplinary identities and specializations and in fact reduce the relevance of social science research to society at large. On the other hand, science which is aware of its own context has a greater critical potential and capacity to act as 'public sociology' than a discipline that is divided between pure science and applied research.

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