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FOCUSING PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY AND POLICY SOCIOLOGY: THE NEW GOAL OF SOCIOLOGICAL PROFESSIONALIZATION?

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I have carried out a study on the professionalization of (German) sociology, focusing especially on how an originally academic discipline is becoming more professional. My point of view on public sociology may therefore be biased. However, I would like to propose some thoughts for discussion.

1. I very much appreciate Michael Burawoy's table of the "Division of sociological labour." While it structures the field of sociology, the table at the same time shows us the problems sociology faces (or might face—in the case of public sociology). I mean specifically its lack of homogeneity (an old problem that is addressed, for example, in Cole 2001). The lack of mutual recognition between different sociologies (in terms of topics, focus, methods, goals, and ethics) is a problem that is expressed on the surface through the use of terms such as "real sociologists" or "bad sociologists." To sociologists, it is clear that no single discipline that may be called "sociology" exists. The public, however, expects otherwise. Of course, the lack of homogeneity can be also understood as an advantage, and I do very much appreciate Burawoy's idea that "the structure of the discipline of sociology is organized to be responsive to diverse publics." But the public as such expects to hear a unified "sociological opinion," something that primarily corresponds to a *traditional public sociology* in Burawoy's terms. We are therefore faced with the question of how sociology is presented to the public. This seems to be an important problem, at least for German sociologists. I have collected a large amount of data on academic sociologists' complaints about those of their colleagues who present ideas to the public and are therefore perceived by the public as providing "the" sociological, scientifically proven point of view. My interviewees complained that some of these public discussions provided the public with false notions about sociology's scientific nature and gave the impression that there is an "official sociological position." In short, what is being presented in public discourse as sociological opinion is likely to be understood by the extra-sociological public as "*the*" sociological opinion. As Burawoy writes, "Speaking on behalf of all sociologists is difficult and dangerous."

2. *Public sociology* does not have a "client" in the sense in which *policy sociology* does. Still, public sociology, especially *organic public sociology*, does have clients of a different nature, and the interests of these clients determine the work of public sociologists. Answering the question of whether a public sociology might become dangerous, we have to focus on these clients, and ask whether we need some kind of special professional ethics for public sociology. ("Hence the paradox: the widening gap between the sociological ethos and the world we study inspires the demand and, simultaneously, creates the obstacles to public sociology. How should we proceed?"—Burawoy 2005:7) Where lie the borders of the possible in public sociology? And how can we avoid the instrumentalization of public sociology?

3. The next point concerns the perception of public sociology by professional sociology. This perception is essential, especially because of its importance to sociological education. In training new generations of so-

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ciologists, professional sociologists have an opportunity to offer notions of what is possible, desirable, and admissible within sociology. My analysis of the perception of public and policy sociologists by the German academic sociological community shows that certain features of public sociological work are perceived as leading to a "de-sociologicization of sociology" (Kühl and Tacke 2003). If we accept Burawoy's idea of synergy, we have not only to overcome the negative perception within academia, but also to show what is sociological about public sociology.

4. And finally, some notes concerning public sociology in Germany. My own research on the professionalization of (German) sociology has led me to the conclusion that sociologies and sociologists (both inside and outside the academic community) are driving the development of a unified sociological profession, displaying an interest in the construction of an area of competence that would be specific to sociology and respond to demand from outside the field. These attempts have led to the emergence of an activity called "consultancy" (*Beratung*). I interpret this term in Burawoy's categories as a hybrid between public and policy sociology. This term is being used more and more frequently in order to designate sociological professionalism and delineate a professional segment to be occupied by sociologists. However, the term as such is very broad and cannot really be used to designate any one professional community. It would be interesting to think about how this development fits into Burawoy's model. How flexible are public and professional sociologies, and how do we deal with the dangers inherent in being flexible between the two? If I understand the idea of public sociology correctly, it implies the absence of a client and a commitment to public discourse. Is it really possible to distinguish clearly between public sociology and policy sociology?

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