SOCIAL PRACTICE AND POLICY INTERVENTION

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Interest in public policy making by sociologists raises important discipline questions between the descriptive versus the prescriptive character of applied practice (Foote 1974; Gelfand 1975). The shift to the prescriptive emphasis has redefined sociological practice wherein goal achievement is central and requires the practitioner to relate values and practice to directed change (Gouldner 1970 494; Mills 1959 177). While this form has been seen as politicizing sociologists, social policy analysts do make policy recommendations based on reserach that is directed toward changing society (Street, Weinstein 1975; Coleman 1972; Lazarsfeld, Reitz 1975 144). Since this process is partly political, it is difficult to develop such analyses and recommendations independently of the political environment. When analysis responsibility extends to explaining alternatives, social scientists participate in societal activation and transformation (Etzioni 1968 15). They then simultaneously take the roles of policy analyst and planner. Sociologists should be fully aware of the ramifications of this dual policy role. If policy prescription is an inherent part of social practice, the strategies in recommending and carrying out policy are crucial to the sociologist's applied performance. It follows that the sociologist entering this area should examine other areas of applied practice.

POLITICAL POLICY VS PUBLIC VIEWS

How to handle an issue in a planning environment has become an important part of the issue. When knowledge-based justification for policy intervention is de-emphasized, practitioners have little recourse but to legitimize policy through political acumen — individual competence and interpersonal skills. Making practitioners political actors confuses their roles in resolving public interest questions.

The public interest has been defined by planning theorists as *majoritarian* and *communal* (Meyerson, Banfield 1955 323; Friedmann 1973b; Gans 1973; Nisbet 1973). The majoritarian interpretation is based on an individualist view using utilitarian principles: How can the most people be best served?. This view demands interpretation of beliefs of a predetermined social group to signify what is majority with no attempt to have total consensus on issues. The *communal* view is formed by shared views using egalitarian principles: How can social bodies be constituted so that the goals of the individual and the social body can be one? A communal interpretation tends to be limited or forced by issue consensus so that shared interests can be combined in defining public interest.

The practitioner's handling of the public interest is controlled by the public both formally and informally. Formally, the degree of control over the practitioner determined by law and explicit role thresholds is seen as public accountabliity. Informally, the degree of confidence the public places in the practitioner is viewed as public trust. While the public wants and demands both accountability and trust, the planning strategy selected by the practitioner may shift definitions of the public interest. The public may approve without understanding such reinterpretations of public interest and accountability. The public accords trust of future interepretations on the perceived performance of practitioners. Since this performance is politicl as well as technical, implementing strategies for political necessity can influence eventual interpretations of the public interest and accountability which then affect public trust.

INCREMENTAL PLANNING

Incrementalism tests a good policy by how much consensus develops on proposed policy when examining the marginal differences of closely related alternatives. This strategy has conservative bias. Incremental decisions represent small moves in a desired direction, but do not represent a total or optimal decision (Lindblom 1959, 1965). There are no objective or absolute criteria for goals relevant to evaluation of policy choices. This approach implies that society tends to move away from problems rather than toward goals (Popper 1957).

Incrementalism shares the notion of atomistic individual decisions incorporated in economic theory, and the notion of special

interest pluralism and utilitarianism in political theory. The best economic choice is determined by laws of supply and demand as reflected in price. The best political decision reflecting public interest is the result of communal consensus of individual political actors or groups involved in negotiation and compromise. The definition of public interest is in constant flux and simply represents the direction formed by the policy choice.

Incrementalism closely describes the pattern of decision making in western democratic societies, which is the context in which practitioners find themselves (Braybrooke, Lindblom 1963). Its reduced attraction to social change agents is probably related to its bias toward historical precedents and its incompatibility with objective analysis (Wildavsky 1964). The social practitioner tries to enlarge the margins of choice and tries to introduce substantive criteria for choosing policies, but such input likely is limited. Social scientists have been hired to analyze governmental issues within a limited scope so that the given agency may control findings to generate support for its specific short range objectives, and to avoid comment on politically fragile issues (Record 1967).

Incrementalism posits a difficult public trust problem for social practitioners. With its recognition of pluralist politics, incrementalism relates the public interest to the output of political bargaining between competing interest groups. Consequently, the public trust given to the social practitioner will be partial, given only by some, and not all of the interest groups. Being effective, social practitioners are conditioned by the scope and magnitude of public trust which they evolve. Insofar as the practitioners are independent of the institutional framework, increasing trust requires building a constituency or a coalition of interest groups. Practitioners often see this activity as beyond their responsibility.

ALLOCATIVE PLANNING

The test of a good policy in allocative planning is whether to policy attains the objective. Total emphasis is placed on the alternatives to the exclusion of considering the appropriateness of the objective. With a concern for resource distribution among a given group of competing users, as practitioner using an allocative strategy tends to take goals as given, and devleops the means by which to reach the goals most efficiently through best allocation of resources (Banfield 1959; Friedmann 1966b).

Public interest interpretations in this model also lie in the realm of politics, and the allocative planner relies on goals being firmly anchored. Without this, the ideal form of allocative planning cannot operate. In government areas where a wide scope of administrative discretion exists, as in federal bureaucracies, these ends of public interest interpretaion are established administratively. In closed allocative processes, alternatives and criteria are largely determined by professionals and experts, such as eligibility and funding criteria for social service recipients. Such criteria face legislative determination, but through the alternative analysis by a social practitioner, the agenda for decision making is often predetermined.

This model of planning is widely applicable to social practitioners. Allocative questions versus goal formulation questions are frequently raised by policy makers: What is the best way to reach a policy goal? Critical situations exist when implied goals may be lacking in moral or ethical purpose. When manipulative independent variables are predetermined by a goverment agency, a sociologist can develop propositional models to predict dependent variables for which the agency is responsible. The allocation of resources can be determined by the explained performance of separately controlled variables and the distribution of responsibilities of agency elements for those variables. But the sociologist does not question the validity of the prescribed variables. Should other variables be introduced? Should the agency manipulate the variables, or should some other group be responsible for this? Which group is more capable of manipulating the variables? In allocative planning questions tend to be political, and not open to debate with the practitioner

Social relations surrounding allocative planning may be minimized if a decision elite is responsible for allocation. But distribution of resources among competitive users may encourage them to have a policy input to recommend allocation. Users are more adequately

represented in the decision unit, so there is increased possibility for policy consensus to occur with consideration of public trust. Though allocative strategy works in both decentralized and centralized decision frameworks, the desire to centralize the formulation of policy is always tempting.

While an allocative strategy assumes given ends, the social actions to gain those ends can become a negotiating situation to achieve policy solutions among competitive users. Thus the policy recommendation environment is highly susceptible to gaming techingues. In gaming the interaction becomes oriented to developing strategic positions which are less than fully social. To win the game of policy recommendation, elements of surprise and deceit are necessary. Competition is justifiable if the rules are constituted and executed fairly with all participnts feeling that they have been allowed equitable chances to reach their objectives. But allocation of resources may be decided by one's ability to win policy alternatives rather than by the actual needs of participants. Objectivity is paramount in recommending policy to reach objectives, but such objectivity may be shifted to what it takes to win policy outcomes. Public trust and accountability of the social practitioner operating in this model is difficult. Because the ultimate goals and purpose of the organization, the institution, or the society tend to be outside the scope of the questions framed for the social practitioner to answer.

RATIONAL PLANNING

In rational planning the test of a good policy is the extent to which the policy helps achieve the most desirable ends in the most efficient way (Lindblom 1959). It includes formulation of goals, consideration of alternative policies, and selection of one alternative though some variation of cost-benefit analysis (Davidoff, Reiner 1962). In theory feedback and monitoring of the policy implemented provides the opportunity to revise the policy and goals.

When rational planning is applied to closed systems, specifications and interpretations of ends and alternatives, unless provided by legislative or executive oversight, are largely influenced or determined by professionals and technicians. Such conditions may be found in planning for defense spending and weapons deployment. Planning with community organizations for local devleopment purposes might resemble more open processes in which public interest interpretations are generated from public participation and collective decision making. In the United States context, the questions of whether policies are in the public interest tend to be seen from a majoritarian viewpoint. Considerable slack exists for professional intervention in determining the relation betwen the public interest and policy in either open or closed processes.

Rational planning most closely resembles the social practice model involving social scientists due to its philosophical relation with scientific method. In closed processes, social science practitioners widely use this model, whether in evaluative program research or in general problem solving, because the environment for policy assessments are often well controlled and financed by the institutions desiring such assessments. Sociologists in the U.S. Bureau of the Census formulate sampling policies which influence the distribution of federal funding programs which ae based on population counts. In more open processes which are subject to fewer institutional controls, and are less well financed, social practitioners are less likely to use rational planning.

Public trust is assumed, but is not seen as essential to the logic of formulating policy in the given system. This environment tends to nurture the preparation of policy alternatives with a distinct separation from policy recipients. The public's inability to understand technical jargon, or to identify personal ideologies, or to relate with the practitioner's cultural background are frequently evident to those affected by policy.

While rational planning strategy may be used irresponsibly, the approach can be used to generate accountable action. Sociology will be more effective in societies committed to human and rational planning (Street, Weinstein 1975). The notion of being rationally comprehensive entails the intent to deal with all sides of an issue and the relations between relevant issues. Real problems must be identified to properly recommend policy. By being comprehensive, one is responsible to the process of developing reasonable solutions, but solutions may or may not be formulated and executed accountably, depending on the

intent of the practitioner.

The rational approach is limiting in its ability to address the irrational qualities of people (Friedmann 1966a). It tends to reduce man into a role without considering the individual. It superimposes a rational calculus on people who often neither share the values nor exhibit the behavior articulated by the rational construct. Role labeling encourages a practitioner to act in absentia and manipulate roles rather than interact with other people, taking into account their ideologies. If answerable planning is desired, the rational strategy can limit policy formation with one-way action rather than an interchange of information between practitioners and decision makers and the people affected by the policies.

Practitioners operating in public contexts tend to be subject to a self-selection process in which institutional and personal ideologies are congruent. The social practitioner's role status, ascribed and based on individual expertise, tends to be defined in ways which inhibit carrying policy recommentations into action. As in most cases, interpretation of public interest is technically and professionally based, and wider values tend not be be introduced into the interpretation. As there is equal opportunity to manipulate public opinion relative to the best policy, there is a corresponding opportunity to manipulate public opinion objective is rationality, subordinating other objectives and values.

INNOVATIVE PLANNING

Friedmann (1966b) developed innovative planning as a response to limitations of allocative planning. Whereas allocative planning was seen as systems-maintaining, innovative planning was seen as systems-transforming. The hightly normative strategy has four objectives: 1) to legitimize new social objectives or realign existing ones; 2) to translate general value propositions into institutional forms and concrete actions; 3) to be more concerned with mobilizing resources than with allocating them; 4) to guide the innovative process through information feedback of the consequences of innovation. Political engagement, issue legitimation, tactical coordination and strategic use of information reflect the action orientation of the innovative strategy.

Social practice in this planning mode operates in *third sector* organizations (McGill, Wooten 1975). Examples include organized public interest groups, blue ribbon task forces, citizen action committees and other organizations which fall totally neither in the public nor the private sector. An example is the use of sociological analysis as an aid to selection of juries in court trials. Sociologists have participated with architects and planners to understand the possible consequences of new or renewed physical environments which constitute new living alternatives for existing or potential residents. Since the personal financial rewards to the social practitioner or the research budgets of these organizations are usually limited, the social scientist as practitioner appears less frequently in this model of planning action. Yet it is the very expertise and the ascribed status of the actors in the creative minorities than provide the clout for innovative planners to impact the determination of public interest questions.

Public trust is an overt and explicit objective of innovative planning in its attempt to realign social objectives. But the strategy uses information tactically to the end that new values or institutions are introduced. The concept of mutual learning within innovative planning partially militates against violations of public trust. But there can be social conditions where policy formulation through mutual learning cannot eliminate conflict. Accountable acts may be confronted primarily with subversive acts. When one group learns from another with the intent of dominating the situation, knowledge is used for creating deceitful situations. A practitioner will violate public trust by attempting to use an innovative strategy when it cannot possibly resolve real conflicts of interest.

As creative minorities and coalitions are usually temporary, trust relations within decision environments tend to be both turbulent and short-lived. The ability of such coalitions to affect changes in social objectives may be largely determined by the manner in which trust relations were sustained in a previous encounter.

ADVOCATIVE PLANNING

Advocacy as an urban planning strategy grew out of the civil rights movement of the 1960's with the objective of providing greater

political access to low income and minority groups in public issues affecting them (Davidoff 1965). Public interest determinations are viewed by advocate planners as occurring in a pluralist environment of competing groups. In advocacy planning, technical and professional expertise is seen as instrumental in generating greater political power to minority groups. By competing as special interest groups, these constituencies may have increased impact on public policy determination.

There are two types of social practice in this model: 1) outside, directed advocacy and 2) inside non-directed advocacy (Kaplan 1969). In directed advocacy planning, it is community-based outside the existing public organization framework. It is directed in that the community group acts as a client to the advocate planner. A sociologist can be seen in this framework when actively seeking data and making an evaluation which is supportive of the minority position in neighborhood organizations pitted against city hall. Inside advocacy tends to be establishment-based, either in bureaucracies or quasi-public organizations. It is non-directed in that the practitioner advocates within the organization the values and interests of minorities with respect to specific policy issues. Thus, sociologists within government may generate research themselves or direct research funding proposals to be carried out by other sociologists. The goal is to aid in betterment of specific minority groups such as blacks or the handicapped. The social scientist as practitioner can be found, though less frequently than in other planning strategies, in both types of advocacy.

With the practitioner directing action to support minority positions, the advocative strategy suggests that public trust is lacking, and consensus achieved by minority positions must be sought actively within the system. If direct advocacy is to be successful, the practitioner must do more than provide adequate counsel. Empathy between client group and the practitioner is needed to maximize understanding for desired change. In an advocative strategy neither the practitioner nor the client group are assured that empathetic relations will develop. If there is no ability to establish shared beliefs, the situation will eventually lead to conflict.

In sociology, advocacy has been promoted through scinetific application. Coleman (1972 14) argues that the sociologist's policy recommendations, cased on research results, should be guided by personal values and advocacy concerns. His approach implies that advocacy through research will be performed in the institutional framework. Here, a practitioner working inside dominant planning institutions is an indirect advocate linked to a minority constituency. Such a situation can exist for sociologists working in government agencies, but it does not take into account third party actions which research institutes and universities are able to perform. For example, sociologists at Pan American University developed an analysis of prejudicial hiring practices against Mexican-Americans in civil service positions. This information was used as evidence in a court decision with a verdict in favor of the minority plaintiffs. Practitioners have not often become direct advocates in third party situations, but when they do, they are not as constrained in making policy recommendations as researchers in decision making institutions.

The actions of advocacy groups help set the stage for practitioners to be effective. While cohesive relations may exist in advocacy groups, establishing consensus between policy directed groups can be difficult. Advocacy groups may purposively generate discontent with decision makers in the attempt to generate a new direction in policy making. When conciliation is needed and tried, difficulties will arise in the ability to establish mutual beliefs. Direct and indirect practitioners are placed in the dilemma of recommending policy to satisfy advocate group desires and work simultaneously with the decision unit. If consensus evolves between minority and majority group leaders and the practitioner, the remaining members in the separate groups may interpret such consolidated behavior as an elitist abandonment of the original goals of their individual groups.

RADICAL PLANNING

When given approaches are not seen as conducive to generating positive change, the practitioner may work mainly in radical planning strategy to implement extreme changes in existing planning processes and structures

(Goodman 1971; Kravitz 1968). The domain assumption of the radical strategy is that interpretations of the public trust are dramatically skewed, and minority dominance must be achieved outside of the system. While an advocate retains the notions of compromise and negotiation, the radical practitioner has little intention of doing so. The radical position assumes that distrust dominates the environment, and that the performance of accountable acts by a minority party do not encourage or generate accountable acts by the dominant party.

Public interest determinations are viewed as coming from the concentrated power of an elite social class which manipulates and exploits the under-classes of the society. To the radical planner, wholesale change in the political structure and institutional systems supporting the concentrated power of elites is required. Pluralist political activism is viewed as inadequate for achieving the redistribution or power. Few social science practitioners operate in this mode, because they are vulnerable to formal and informal sanctions. But the radical feels that such class dominance cannot longer be tolerated if personal autonomy is to be maintained. Consequently, hidden agendas and subterfuges are used by the practitioner to achieve autonomy and a balance of power in the system when decision makers consider policy alternatives. Outside of the system, coordinated aggression is implemented to strengthen the stance in influencing policy selection. Distrust is openly admitted between opposing groups, and unification is mainly accomplished by the group which eventually dissipates the other group's policy influence in conflict situations. Organized life is far less in quality than either party desires. While decision making becomes decentrlaized with opposing parties, centralization of policy formation and decision making within each group is necessary to prepare for ongoing conflict.

The sociologist's use of radical planning in practice for policy purposes has not been very apparent in the United States. The radicals are largely seen as Marxist sociologists. Their radicalism is primarily been the development of scientific writing, speeches and teaching to reorient American society to Marxist beliefs (Szymanski 1977). But the element of applied pracitce must be addressed for effectiveness. "For policy research, the ultimate product is not a contribution to existing knowledge in the literature, but a social policy modified by the research results." (Coleman 1966 6) Yet radical sociologists are not in the good graces of the dominant systems to make a substantial contribution to policy reorientation. One alternative is for movement leaders to give the social scientists the needed information, or resources which they would like seized and the radical sociologists will oblige (Szymanski 1977. The guerrilla tactic provides ammunition against present government policies and may slow down implementation. However, since no viable mass revolutionary organization exists in the United States, guerrilla tactics presently have only disjointed and very limited effects.

When there is open conflict between radicals and the dominant system, within group solidarity is necessary to maintian group objectives. Rules may be obscured between opposing groups, but such controls must be highly articulated within each group. Radicals can criticize movement policy and action among themselves, but not to outsiders (Haber, Haber 1971). The radical's concept of public trust encompasses movement believers and potential benefactors, and it excludes resistors. The lack of trust between opposing groups is socially expensive. No one can emerge unscathed when the radical approach is used, but the strategy may be thought necessary when benefits of radicalism outweigh the policy costs within the presently established structure and process. Radical planning must implement distrustful relations in order to be operative. It can operate in a society where public trust is dominant, but from the perspective of the radical practitioner such relations are not seen as a continuing situation.

MIXING STRATEGIES

The social practitioner plays multiple roles and often pursues several strategies concurrently. In selecting strategies it is requisite that the practitioner desires to be involved. Participation in incremental and allocative strategies tends to be done through roles of servitude which require technical expertise. Rational and innovative planning will demand

that the practitioner generate new knowledge through analysis and experimentation to direct change. The role is primarily that of team facilitator for policy formulation. Advocacy and radical planning will place the practitioner out of the mainstream of policy formulation, but with a greater orientation to change. The role in these strategies is policy challenger. With all these intervening strategies, the desire to have servant, facilitator or challenger roles depends on individual willingness and institutional freedom to choose such roles. In real practice decision making is based on a combinational use of strategies to optimize the quality of ongoing actions and outcomes.

An equilibrium pattern of strategies will increase the practitioner's effectiveness. A change strategy selection for the external policy manipulation of a system necessitates a maintenance stragegy for the policy body evoking change. The radical practitioner must be incremental to keep ideological orientations in pragmatic perspective. The advocative planner must be concerned with allocative policy to ensure that the minority receives its equitable share. The innovative planner will use the rational strategy to exhaust various alternatives so that innovation may be optimized. While many other strategy combinations are possible, the practitioner's successful mixing of strategy to generate change partially depends on balancing system-maintaining and system change strategies. Strategy mixes to maintain present systems will include change strategies when such moves assure that the existing systems will continue to exist. A long history of planning for political expediency may demand major policy changes to adjust to a buildup of external factors which are beyond political manupulation.

The balanced strategy mix can also be extended into the need to interpret the public interest as being majoritarian when challenging the dominant system, but public interest within the movement for incremental change is seen as communal. The advocative approach interpretation is balanced by the allocative model and the innovative strategy is matched by the rational. The practitioner adopting one interpretation of public interest will eventually confront the other interpretation for policy support. An advocate practitioner embracing a communal definition of public interest must weigh the consequences of allocative policy produced by the challenged system which attemtps to optimize decisions for the collective good.

Public accountability is largely determined by the location of the practitioner's role relative to existing policy generating institutions. When centrally attached and responsible to these insititutions, the practitioner is increasingly scrutinized as being accountable by law. The applied sociologist must be sure that the values of the organization that employs him coincide with his own (Gelfand 1975). Public accountability becomes important when the practitioner feels that strategy selection and interpretation of the public interest should include the dominant policy generating institutions.

Public trust is the social product realized from policies which are formulated and accomplished through selected strategies. When planning strategies are used outside of institutional limits, public trust can be generated only within some communal groups, but not in others. And public trust may withdraw from given policy institutions of shift to challenger groups forming their own policies when dominant institutions are viewed as distrustful. Since public accountability is institutionally bound, but public trust is not, how to nurture public trust becomes a critical concern for all practitioners.

Public trust can be increased 1) by the charismatic appeal of the practitioners' presentations and evaluations, and 2) by participating with policy recipients. If honest dialogue is possible, participation may encourage increase in trust of the practitioner. Successful generation of public trust is not only the understanding of the practitioner's position but also the belief that policy formulations will be beneficial.

Without public trust, dominant institutions and challenging movements lose their audience, and policy acceptance by the public becomes only possible through force. The achievement of public trust rests on the ability to generate confidence by charisma and public participation. Participation is the best avenue for nurturing a lasting public trust. The public with which a practitioner wishes to generate trust based on a communal to

majoritarian interpretation of the public interest will eventually lead to the critical issues for that public group. How the critical issues should be handled for policy optimization then leads into strategy selection.

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