

SOCIAL SCIENCE METAPOLICY:
SOME CONCEPTS AND APPLICATIONS

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May 1970

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by

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Outline of Paper

1. This outline has been prepared to serve as background material for the International Social Science Council Conference on Social Science Policy, Paris, 13th to 17th April, 1970. Its main purpose is to present a frame-of-appreciation and some concepts, which may help in the formulation of some social science policy issues and their examination. To sharpen the ideas, this paper is presented in "outline" form -- without elaboration, detailed consideration and operationalized applications. Intellectually, this paper is based on theoretic work on the improvement of policymaking, on the integration of social science into policymaking, and on relations between social science and analytical decision approaches. Empirically and experimentally, this paper is based on some surveys of applied social science endeavors and on participant observations in policy research, which tries to fuse social science into policy analysis.

2. I use the term "metapolicy" to refer to policies on how to make policies. Metapolicies deal (1) with the characteristics of the policymaking system, including structure, process patterns,

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personnel, inputs and stipulated outputs; and (2) with master policies (or "megapolicies"), which include strategies, overall goals, basic assumptions, conceptual frameworks, policy instruments and similar interpolicy directives.

The concept of metapolicy can be used behaviorally, to describe and explain actual (past, present and expected future) phenomena. A metapolicy behavioral analysis can improve our knowledge on actual policymaking by providing better frameworks for identifying and ordering data and improved models for interrelating policy variables. The concept of metapolicy can also be used normatively, to indicate metapolicy arrangements needed for better policymaking. These two main uses of a metapolicy framework are interrelated, in the sense that all normative recommendations must be based, in part, on behavioral knowledge; and that collection of behavioral information depends, in part, on the uses of that information in which we are interested. Therefore, meaningful and reliable application of the metapolicy concept to social science requires comprehensive knowledge on actual social science metapolicies, on relations between social science metapolicies and social science outputs, and on the values which we want social science to advance (including knowledge for its own sake). One of the main utilities of the concept of social science metapolicy should be to stimulate research, study, contemplation, design and analysis focussing explicitly on the metapolicy level.

3. To illustrate the applications of the metapolicy concept to social science policy, I will take up a few main metapolicy issues, explain them in short and transform the general metapolicy issues into social science metapolicy issues. I will use normative language, but the same issues can easily be transformed into behavioral ones:

<u>Metapolicy Issue</u>	<u>Short Explanation of Issue</u>	<u>Transformation Into Social Science Metapolicy Issue</u>
A. <u>Basic modus operandi of policymaking systems</u>	Mix between market, polycentric, and hierarchic structures in policymaking systems,	To what extent should there be "social science policy" involving explicit policymaking

Metapolicy Issue



Short Explanation
of Issue

Transformation Into
Social Science
Metapolicy Issue

with spontaneous evolution of policy as one extreme.

and a formalized policy-making system? What should be the basic modus operandi of that system, varying from "control by overlapping peer groups" to central decision-making.

B. Main components of policymaking system, especially (a) organizations, and (b) personnel

What should the main components of the policymaking system be, with special attention to (a) organizational components, and (b) policymaking personnel? In addition to usual components, the possibilities of new types of organizations (such as policy research organizations) and new types of professionals (e.g., policy analysts) raise novel opportunities and issues.

What special organizations for social science policy-making should be developed? With what functions, power and resources? For instance, what about permanent social science policy analysis units? What should the social science policymaking personnel be? What about participation of politicians, administrators, and community representatives in various social science policymaking roles? What about training of professionals who specialize in issues of social science policy?

C. Information inputs into policymaking

What types of information are needed for good policymaking? Which parts of that information are cost-effective? What arrangements are needed to collect and process that information and for introducing it into actual policymaking?

The general problems of information for better policymaking apply directly to social science policy. Specific information needs include, for instance: data on current studies and manpower; predictions of studies and manpower; data on image of social science held by various relevant groups; feedback on results of study--both theoretic and applied. Criteria to ascertain results and standards for appraising them are also needed.

D. Main policymaking methods

Patterning of policy-making, phasing in time stream (e.g., by sequential decision-making), and development

Development of methods for social science policymaking, on different macro-levels (international, cross-national, national) and

<u>Metapolicy Issue</u>	<u>Short Explanation of Issue</u>	<u>Transformation Into Social Science Metapolicy Issue</u>
	of methods and techniques for explicit analysis (e.g., policy analysis, benefit-cost estimation, multiple-year planning, etc.).	micro-levels (e.g., universities, institutes, etc.). Especially policy analysis and sequential decision-making seem applicable, but research explicitly directed at developing methods for social science policymaking seems urgently needed.
E. Main megapolicies in particular on:	Master policies guiding policymaking on specific issues, in particular on:	Master policies guiding policymaking on social science policy, in particular on:
(a) Values and cutting-off horizons (including the question, in how far values and cutting-off horizons should be explicated?).	(a) the main values at which policymaking should aim, with explicit determination of considered impact-space and of borders of alternative sets to be considered. The costs (political, psychological, moral, etc.) of classifying values and cutting-off horizons must be considered to decide how far to proceed with this megapolicy.	(a) the values at which social science policy should be oriented, such as (1) pure knowledge, and (2) social goals (specific or/and as set down by legitimate policymakers). The borders of "social science policy"--what are social sciences, and in how far should social science policy be considered as a component of broader issues (e.g., science policy as a whole)? What are the limits of values and issues to be considered as subjects for social science policy? What are the costs of establishing this megapolicy and what are its benefits (including sensitivity analysis--does this megapolicy really make much difference?).
(b) Nature of operational goals	Should policies be mainly directed at achieving specific goals, to provide options or to build up resources for the future?	Should social science policies be directed at solving defined theoretic or applied questions? And/or provide knowledge which can be used to deal with various questions? And/or build up the resources to develop knowledge in the future (through training of academic and applied scientists, longitudinal data collection, refinement of methodology, etc.).

<u>Metapolicy Issue</u>	<u>Short Explanation of Issue</u>	<u>Transformation Into Social Science Metapolicy Issue</u>
(c) Degrees of innovation	Incremental change vs. radical change; in how far and how to encourage "heresy" and far-going innovations.	To what extent should social science policy aim at incremental progress and/or at radical breakthroughs--up to "scientific revolutions"? How to encourage/control fargoing innovation--what about incentives, resources allocation, peer support for unconventional approaches?
(d) Attitudes to risks (this is closely related to point (c) above).	Mix between maximax, minimax, etc.	To what extent should social science policy become adventurous, follow risky research possibilities (e.g. on altered states of consciousness), take up taboo issues (e.g. as tried in the Chicago jury studies) and provide low reliability recommendations?
(e) Time preferences	Preference between outputs located on different points of the time stream.	Should social science policy be more oriented to immediate issues and problems (as expressed, for instance, by the social advocacy approach) or adopt longer (how long?) time preferences?

4. As already indicated, this is too schematic a presentation, the obvious preference being for some mix between various policymaking system alternatives and megapolicy alternatives. But the concept "mix"--however in accord with our a priori preferences for some "Golden Mean"--is of little help. The question is, "what mix?" Explicit considerations of social science metapolicy issues hopefully can help in at least formulating relevant questions, and thereby taking one step in the direction of identification of preferable metapolicy mixes.

5. To illustrate further the uses of the metapolicy concept, let me indicate in short the implications for social science metapolicy of one view of a desired direction for the development of social science, namely the view that social sciences should, in part, fuse with

analytical decision approaches and serve as a foundation for policy sciences. Let me just emphasize (a) that here this proposal is used only as an illustration to "exercise" the metapolicy concept, and (b) that the proposal aims to add an approach to social science policy, without in any way degrading the importance of other approaches.

6. I will proceed by referring to the various metapolicy issues by the numbers used in paragraph 4 above and indicate the respective metapolicy implications of the proposed approach (which, strictly speaking, belongs itself to social science megapolicy):

A. Explicit social science policymaking is needed, in order to advance efforts to move in the policy sciences direction. Much of this policymaking can proceed in "invisible colleges," but some formalization seems to be required. This is especially necessary in order to get cooperation between the interested scholars and institutions and to assure at least minimum support by the social science community as a whole.

B(a). Special organizations which critically consider social science policy may be needed to perceive the need for change in the direction of policy sciences. Ad hoc committees can (and do) fulfill important functions in this direction. Specific social science policy units are also necessary to support the efforts, supervise them (to avoid the fate, for instance, of future studies which get ruined through overpopularization) and advance them.

B(b). The special characteristics of policy sciences require more heterogeneous policymaking personnel than "normal" social science policymaking. In particular, an interdisciplinary composition is needed, with some participation also of policy practitioners -- politicians as well as senior executives.

C. Information is needed on persons able and willing to participate in a policy sciences development effort, on relevant studies and on relevant experience. As much of the relevant personnel, material, and experience is located outside the "normal" social science community (e.g., at policy research organizations, legislative and governmental research units and private consultants), a suitable new information network must be built up.

D. Sequential decisionmaking on an international scale seems a preferable method.

E(a). The goals of policy sciences are mainly instrumental-normative policymaking improvement, within the boundaries of morally acceptable values. The boundaries of policymaking here are much broader than in "normal" social science policy, including other disciplines and some aspects of politics as well.

E(b). A necessary main initial operational goal is to start and build up the infrastructure of policy sciences, including: (1) establishment and reinforcement of policy sciences research organizations; (2) establishment and reinforcement of policy sciences teaching; (3) initiation of suitable professional activities, such as periodicals, conferences, etc.; and, last but not least, (4) recruitment of financial support. In other words: a main megapolicy should be to build up resources for building up policy sciences.

E(c). Very innovative oriented, with presumption of designing a "scientific revolution."

E(d). Significant propensity to accept risks.

E(e). Preference for intermediate future, about five years and more ahead, with main results to take much longer.

7. My overall main conclusion and recommendation is that every concern with social science policy should devote considerable attention to explicit consideration of social science metapolicy issues.

Bibliographic Note

To compensate somewhat for the brevity of this paper, let me refer the interested reader to some of my writings in which ideas presented in this paper are discussed at greater length and with supportive theories and facts.

The concept of metapolicy and its relations to policymaking are developed at length in Public Policymaking Reexamined (San Francisco: Chandler Pub. Company, 1968). Some additional metapolicy concepts are discussed in "Policy Analysis: A Theoretic Framework and Some Basic Concepts" (RAND paper P-4156, July 1969).

A few empiric findings illustrating the situation which, in my opinion, make necessary some fusion between parts of applied social science and analytical decision approaches are presented in "The Uses of Sociology in Public Administration: Four Cases from Israel and The Netherlands," in Lazarsfeld, Sewell and Wilensky, The Uses of Sociology (New York: Basic Books, 1967), pp. 418-426. The proposal to move in the direction of fusion between parts of applied social science and analytical decision approaches and advance together towards policy sciences is presented in "Social Sciences and Social Problems: Some Comments on the Paper of Henry W. Riecken," Social Science Information (February 1970), in press (earlier version RAND paper P-4202, September 1969). The same issue is examined at length in "Systems Analysis and Applied Social Sciences," in Irving L. Horowitz ed., Proceedings of Rutgers University and Trans-Action Magazine Conference on Public Policy and Social Sciences, forthcoming (earlier version RAND paper P-4248, November 1969).

The idea of policy sciences is presented in "Prolegomena to Policy Sciences," Policy Sciences Vol. 1, p. 1 (May 1970), in press (earlier version RAND paper P-4283). The needs for special policy sciences teaching designs are discussed in "Teaching of Policy Sciences: Design for a Doctorate University Program," Social Science Information (April 1970) in press (earlier version RAND paper P-4128-1).

Finally, a framework for examining some social science policy issues within a broad perspective is proposed in "A General Systems

Approach to Uses of Behavioral Sciences for Better Policymaking," in Ernest O. Attinger, ed., General Systems Dynamics (New York: Karger, 1970), in press (earlier version RAND paper P-4091, May 1969).

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