Social Science and Social Policy:

From National Dilemmas to Global Opportunities

Richard E. Lee, William J. Martin,
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1. Social Science and Social Policy: The National Dilemmas

Social science has had an ambiguous relationship with social policy throughout its history. When the term and concept of social science first began to be used in the middle of the nineteenth century, the initial organizations that emerged to promote social science were not located in the universities but in the public sphere. They brought together not only scholars but persons active in the political arena, clergymen, and business people, and the primary objective of these associations was to promote reform, that is, what they considered to be more adequate social policies to ameliorate what they designated as social problems. The social problems of which they spoke were for the most part those associated with the expanding urban centres and the newly-emerging manufacturing sector of the economy. These associations felt that accumulating various kinds of data on these issues, usually statistical data, would illuminate the directions in which the State might proceed, by means of various new policies/reforms, to alleviate the ills that these associations perceived.

This early version of institutionalized social science was essentially an activity occurring in the more industrialized States – notably the United Kingdom, France, the United States, and later Germany and Italy. Obviously, the promotion of social policy was not politically neutral, even if it was not necessarily tied to the programmes of any particular political party or movement. As the century went on, disagreements about policy caused discomfort among the membership of these associations. Some of those who were linked to the university system argued that it was more appropriate for social scientists to play a role that was primarily intellectual, and hence they called

for more "value-neutral" research. The initial social science associations disappeared or changed names and were replaced by more "professional" associations, many of which have continued in existence until today.

Nonetheless, the question of the relation of social science to social policy did not entirely disappear as a consequence. It more or less went underground. Some of those who were concerned with promoting the link between the two activities began to talk of engaging in "applied" social science, as opposed to merely theorizing about social relations or merely undertaking empirical research. Others, consciously or not, intruded basic value assumptions into the analytical premises of their work, thereby excluding certain policy outcomes and implicitly supporting other outcomes. *One might think of the continuing relation between social science and social policy as a sort of tumultuous marriage, in which the rules of conjugality were never fully established or agreed to by both parties.*

There were two noteworthy theoretical contributions to the elucidation of this relationship – those of Max Weber and of Antonio Gramsci – two positions which continue to be discussed today. Weber is regularly cited as the champion of value-free social science, in which the scholar/scientist rigorously segregates his role as researcher and his role as citizen, and Gramsci as the champion of the organic intellectual, who is committed to the objectives of the/a social movement and considers that he works in its service. This is often presented as two quite distinctive positions, but in fact the story is more complicated than that. Both authors, moreover, were writing in a period of colonialism, rivalry among great States, and the First World War, and thus confronted issues of the role of social science and social policy that are analogous to our own.

Weber first put forward his views at the end of the nineteenth century in Germany, where he perceived that many of the major historians and other social scientists were committed to a right wing nationalist position upholding the policies of the imperial government. Treitschke is often taken as the exemplar of this position. Weber felt that these intellectuals were suffocating the possibilities of more liberal thought within the academy. It is in this context that he advocated "value-free" social science, that is, a social science freed from the obligation to support the objectives of the State.

Weber sought to lodge the argument in a distinction between two forms of rationality, what he called formal and substantive (*materiell* in Ger-

man) rationality. For Weber, formal rationality involved analysing the optimal means to a given end, whereas substantive rationality was concerned with whether the end could be considered rational in terms of particular belief systems. Emphasizing the values or belief systems one has (whatever they are) could orient or limit the researcher in ways that might conflict with formal rationality. This simplification of Weber's views has often been presented as an argument for the exclusive primacy of formal rationality in scientific work.

In fact, Weber himself had a more complex position. He was in fact a leading figure in discussions of social policy in Germany, and was active in the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*. The editors of his collected works in German summarize his vision of the relationship of social science and social policy quite differently from this simplistic view, pointing out that for Max Weber the function of social policy was to achieve "a rational policy of interests", and to solve the question of distribution by creating collective actors "who stand on their own feet". For Weber, intellectual, moral and political questions were strongly intertwined, and this was legitimate, provided that the end is a libertarian social policy, oriented by the "free citizen who... lives a self-determined and self-conscious life" (Baier et al., 1998: 15, 17). Politically, this expresses the position of centrist liberalism, far from the "extremes" in politics and indeed "committed", but committed only to consensus values.

For Weber, the collection of data and their analysis should be pursued without the interference of special and one-sided viewpoints. But Weber recognizes in the same text that there is a stage in scientific research in which the values of the researcher play a fundamental role – at the moment he chooses the problems to research (Weber, 1948: 72, 22). Although the scholar should be value-free, he should also be value-relevant. Weber nonetheless reflects soberly on his own position, when he discusses "science as a vocation", reminding us of Tolstoy's position that "science is meaningless because it gives no answer to our question, the only question important to us: 'What shall we do and how shall we live?'" Weber says this is "indisputable" (Weber, 1949: 18).

Weber was struggling against the intellectual control of the German university by right wing nationalist forces and found value-neutrality to be his weapon. Antonio Gramsci was fighting the control of Italian intel-

lectual life by centrist liberals, who precisely espoused value-neutrality. His weapon was the concept of the "organic intellectual". In *The Modern Prince* (1957, 118) he asserted: "Every social class, coming into existence on the original basis of an essential function of the world of economic production, creates with itself, organically, one or more groups of intellectuals who give it homogeneity and consciousness of its function not only in the economic field but in the social and political field as well". Gramsci opposes these "organic intellectuals" to the "traditional" ones who "have a sense of their own uninterrupted historical continuity, of their 'qualifications' and of *esprit de corps*, so they see themselves as autonomous and independent of the ruling social group" (1957, 120).

From within their different national contexts, Weber and Gramsci highlighted the basic dilemmas of twentieth-century social science. But in the twenty-first century, does one have to continue to choose today between Weber's heritage of value-neutrality and Gramsci's organic intellectual? Or should one try to combine the two approaches? Or should one somehow move beyond the two concepts? We outline a programme in two steps: first, presenting what we consider the four essentials of social science in the twenty-first century; and second, outlining the global opportunities that would in consequence be available in imagining the future relation of social science and social policy.

2. Four Essentials of Social Science in the 21st Century

The unit of analysis: large space and "longue durée"

In the nineteenth century, social scientists explicitly or implicitly elected the State as the basic unit of analysis. Economists spoke of the national economy, political scientists of the nation-state, sociologists of the national society, and historians wrote of the history of the States from their putative origins to the present. Statisticians collected data primarily within the framework of States. (Indeed, the very word statistics derives from the word, State.) Reflecting the reductionist bias of nineteenth-century science, social scientists saw larger units as collections of smaller units. Insofar as social scientists dealt with the wider modern world, they tended to see it as an *inter*-national structure, one to be analysed as either the story of the relations between the States or as the description of the cumulation of national statistics.

This bias has continued to dominate world social science up to the present time. In the widespread discussion of "globalization" beginning in the late 1980s, the most common premise has been that we are talking of something radically new which puts into question *for the first time* the primacy of the State as the unit of social action and therefore as the unit of analysis. There is little or no attempt to analyse in historical depth the processes that are described under the heading of globalization. *The most important consequence of the intellectual discovery of "globalization" may*

well be a renewed understanding of the real parameters and temporal scope of our multiple social modes of participation and insertion in the world in which we have been living.

The boundaries within which we have lived for the last four to five hundred years have not been the sovereign States. The States have constituted merely one institutional structure that constrains and determines our individual and collective alternatives. Neither our economic needs and activities nor our political options nor our cultural defences and modes of assertion have been limited to the framework of the States. Rather, they have been circumscribed by our existence within the framework of a larger world-system and we have pursued our objectives not only in the States but in multiple institutions that are either smaller than the States or cut across their boundaries (which, in fact, have been constantly changing in any case).

The questions of social policy are questions in which State decision-making plays a significant role, but in which there are many other settings in which groups seek to promote their interests. Indeed the ability to play off the States against other institutional structures is one of the major tools that social groups have at their disposal. Our allegiances have always been multiple, and the priorities we set are a function of what will work best for us at any given time. The trans-boundary realities so much under discussion today have been a constant of the modern world-system throughout its existence.

One of the ideological assumptions of the modern world has been the phenomenon of constant change, long assumed to be something positive. We have called it progress. That the modern world has been constantly changing, or evolving, is undoubtedly true. But we cannot appreciate what is really "new" without a firm understanding of structural continuities, what is not "new" but merely appearing under a different guise. This is why it is so dubious to analyse current social realities without an analysis of the *longue durée*. Only then are we able to distinguish the constant from the changing, and only then will we be able to appreciate the important moment when what has been constant (structural) is itself undergoing a transformation.

Hype versus reality in social science: theoretically-sound concepts and conceptually-sound measurements

If globalization is the most influential keyword in today's lexicon of terms to describe macro-social change, and globalization debates have permeated contemporary social science thinking, why has the term globalization come to be widely used only in the very recent past? Posing this question broaches a much broader issue: the need to distinguish hype from reality in social science.

The hyping of globalization arose from a specific historical contingency that created a political opportunity to restructure the world-economy. The three-worlds model that structured Cold War thinking disintegrated at the beginning of the 1990s with the demise of the "second world" leaving the erstwhile "third world" without an "ally" to face a now seemingly all-powerful "first world". This was the political opportunity for a global neo-liberalism that combined the "rolling back the State" rhetoric of the 1980s (Reaganomics, Thatcherism) with the thesis of the "global reach" of the multinational corporation of the 1970s to create the ideal of globalization as a borderless world in which States were adjured to stay out of economic affairs. The practice of this new politics has taken two main forms: in countries where political resources for resistance were weak there have been forced "structural" adjustment programmes; and where political resources for resistance were stronger there has been a transformation of social-democratic parties into somewhat lighter neo liberals when in government. The political rhetoric of globalization has made it possible to put forward an economic threat as though it were a given of social science: "There is no alternative" – if a country wishes to avoid (still further) economic decline.

For hype to be credible it has to include elements of reality. For globalization, the term's widespread acceptance derived from a technological breakthrough, the combination of communication and computing technologies which has made possible instantaneous contact across the world. This "elimination of distance" has had a huge impact, first in financial markets, and then more generally in the construction of the worldwide web, ultimately providing a widespread sense of living in "one world". The

same enabling technology has been used by corporations in their global activities which are deemed to be threatening the future of nations. This is the context changing, or evolving, B the bridge between hype and reality B within which much social science has incorporated globalization as a keyword. In using this highly-contested concept, social scientists have been generally divided into three groups: hyper-globalists who accept the idea that we are living in a new "post-state" global era; the sceptics who argue that the present enhanced "internationalism" is no different from previous such periods (such as that just before the First World War); and a group in-between, sometimes called "transformationists", who do think the present is a distinctive period but do not go as far as eliminating the State from the social matrix (see Held et al, 1999).

Notice that this classification consists of a single dimension of positions on a State versus global agenda. In other words, by and large, social scientists have been reactive not proactive in this field. They have accommodated to the globalization hype, rather than set their own more complex social scientific agenda. To be proactive in understanding social change is never easy. The starting-point is to identify the basic unit of change which is the modern world-system. But this system by its very nature is highly dynamic: the reality is that social change in its many manifestations is ceaselessly ongoing. Thus within the system, institutions such as nation-states, large corporations, and political parties, will be very different at any given point in time from what they were, say, thirty years earlier.

The conundrum for any study of social change is therefore, how to distinguish ordinary change within the system wherein institutions adapt to ever-changing circumstances from extraordinary/structural change which is undermining the system to such a degree as to change its very nature. Does contemporary globalization mark a period of extraordinary/structural change? And, if so, what are the crucial characteristics that make it so world-shattering? To answer such critical questions requires cutting through the hype by using theoretically-sound concepts for which empirically-sound measurements can be constructed.

The fundamental requirement for defining theoretically-sound concepts is to focus on processes rather than outcomes. For example, the three-worlds model that preceded globalization was always an unsatisfactory conceptualization because it was a biased, cross-sectional picture of

the world, constructed by first world observers designating "other worlds" unlike themselves, a Communist second world and an "underdeveloped" third world. Even less satisfactory was the North-South designation. Beyond the doubtful geography (New Zealand in the "North" and Mongolia in the "South"!), these broad, bland concepts were merely locational outcomes, providing no meaningful basis for understanding macro-social change.

The alternative concepts of "developed countries" and "developing countries" is at best a partial palliative, marking only synonyms for rich countries and poor countries, which are outcomes of the world-systemic processes of core-formation and periphery-formation. Because both processes create geographically clustered outcomes, core and peripheral zones can be identified across the world. Although superficially corresponding geographically to North/developed and South/developing designations, core and periphery are fundamentally different in that they define relational processes (there can be no core without periphery and vice versa) so that its outcome, global material inequality, can be explained theoretically. In other words, we have theoretically-sound concepts that provide a meaningful basis for understanding macro-social change.

Theoretically-sound concepts are a necessary but not sufficient condition for rigorous social science. Such concepts need to be continually evaluated empirically. There is an evidential presumption behind social science knowledge. Unfortunately, conceptually-sound measurement of macro-social change is by no means straightforward. The main reason is that processes, the mechanisms of social change, cannot be directly measured. What can be measured are events and outcomes at a specified time. Such cross-sectional measures can be combined to show trajectories of change but it is unlikely that quantitative measurement of the full complexity of macro-social change is possible. In other words we measure surface features of social activity, but are unable ourselves to observe the deeper processes that underpin those measures.

A secondary, but still important, reason for difficulties in producing conceptually-sound measurements in social science is that the State is the prime provider of statistics. The information needed to study macro-social change is typically very large and this means that invariably researchers do not have the resources to generate the necessary data. Modern States produce enormous amounts of data, but our accessibility to such rich seams of

data is a double-edged sword. National statistics are produced to satisfy State needs involving administrative and political purposes. It is highly unlikely that these purposes will always coincide with the social science imperative of empirically-sound measurement of theoretically-sound concepts.

The contrast between data provided by State agencies and the data needs of social scientists is most obviously illustrated in terms of types of data. Quite simply, most official statistics are attribute data, whereas most social science research requires relational data. This is because most State needs can be satisfied by counting, answering the question "how much where?" Both the organization of inputs to state mechanisms (taxes) and that of outputs (distributions) are generally based upon attribute measures. It is social relations, however, that are central to all social science understanding. This requires data that answers the question "how much difference between here and there, and why?" Of course, official statistics do provide some relational data, for instance on migration and trade. But even when such data are available, they are not necessarily in an appropriate format for social science research.

The main official statistics source that social scientists have used over the last century has been national censuses, which are the classic instance of counting that produces attribute data for designated areas. But census-counting removes the social context B the web of social relations B producing a quite unsocial science. For example, demographic models are generally trans-species in nature. A good current example of using a simple count to define a social concept is that of the "mega-city". Currently defined by U.N. agencies as cities with a population of over ten million, the arbitrariness of this threshold is signalled by the fact that it has been increased over time as cities across the world have become larger. The processes that have created the very large cities that are New York and Tokyo are very different from those that have made Mexico City and Mumbai very large cities. Easily available data can result in lazy conceptualization and measurement: it does not take much research effort to list the world's mega-cities.

What social science needs is the creation of new data bases that are designed specifically for deriving empirically-sound measurements for theoretically-sound concepts. The key starting-point is to specify a process and then identify outcomes that will inform our understanding

of that process. A process requires agency and therefore the next step is identification of agents, individual or collective (institutions), whose actions constitute the process. For example, "world cities" are sometimes equated with mega-cities but this conflation can be avoided by defining the former functionally as the nodes in a world city network. Thus the process is world city network formation. Who are the main agents? They are the financial and professional service firms who have set up offices in cities across the world to service their corporate and government clients. From this beginning we can formally specify a world city network as an interlocking network with three levels: the nodal level that are the cities where the network is carried out, the net level in the world-economy which is the outcome, and a subnet level which are the firms which are the agents that interlock the cities to form the network.

Given this specification, data collection can focus on the agents, the firms, to create both quantitative and qualitative data. From the former, network models allow indirect measures of flows between cities to measure the network relations. This provides answers to questions such as which city dyads are the most important in a particular sector of the world-economy. From qualitative data (interviewing leading practitioners in firms) we can probe the salience and resilience of the processes that are world city network formation. The key point is that all this measurement and conceptualization derives from social science theorizing without any recourse to national statistics.

2.3 Fact and value: an imbricated pair

One of the fundamental features of the modern world has been the progressive separation of the domain of facts from the arena of values: what is "true" is deemed independent of what is "good". This primary assumption of the structures of knowledge of the modern world found expression in the separation of the sciences from the humanities both as intellectual disciplines and as university faculties. In articulation with economic and political processes, this split became the dominant arrangement "disciplining", that is, limiting and authorizing, human cognition, and thus the cultural parameters of action over the past five centuries or

more. Furthermore, the pursuit of "objectivity" has been a direct product of this divorce of facts from values and arose parallel to the process of rationalization, or the progressive privileging of formal over substantive rationality.

The resulting dilemma for both social analysts and policy planners has been clear for two centuries. Any and all political modes of interpreting social change in the human world, as marked off from the natural world, made uncomfortable appeals to alternative, often mutually exclusive, value-orientations. *Eventually, from the mid-nineteenth century, the objective, value-neutral, problem-solving spirit adopted by natural science was transmitted to social science. This social science in turn would be used to underpin social policies seeking to achieve orderly change in the name of "progress" through scientific control exercised by "experts" and based on so-called hard facts, quantification, and the use of both chronological time and undifferentiated space as unanalysed parameters of value-neutral social analysis.*

The moment of greatest intellectual and institutional success of this structure was the period immediately after 1945. But no sooner had this kind of social science been fully institutionalized than the scholarly legitimacy of the premises underlying the partitions separating the disciplines and the practical usefulness of the distinctions began to seem less and less self-evident. After 1968, they were openly challenged. From the 1960s on, work in diverse fields of the social sciences and the humanities, coming together under the rubric of "cultural studies", suggested possibilities for developing a non-reductionist, non-positivist human science, which challenged both the fact/values and subject/object antinomies as well as all essentialist categories. During the same period, the emergence of complexity studies in the natural sciences with its emphasis on contingency, context-dependency, and the "arrow-of-time" denied "objectivity" as a form of externalism and moved the natural sciences in the direction of a historicized science with a concern for spatial-temporal wholes comprised of both the relational structures of human interaction and the phenomenological time of their construction and development. These two new knowledge movements are evidence that the long-term processes structuring knowledge formation as "two cultures" that are epistemologically counterposed had reached an impasse.

Today, the central, overriding concern in social and policy analysis must be the realization that not only are the structures of knowledge in crisis, but that the totality of the long-term structures of the modern world are going through a transition. The questions that arise then are, on the one hand, what kind of world, within the range of possibility, we might want to create for the future and, on the other hand, what can we do to best bring it about. From this perspective, the fact/values divide hinders rather than helps our understanding. *Instead of construing human values simply as a matter of individual ethics or morality in the creation of authoritative knowledge of the social world, it is more useful to conceive them as integral to a historical social science whose primary mission in our time, a period of systemic transformation, should be to imagine and evaluate possible futures and modes for their attainment.* Such a historical social science would be historical in the sense that it takes into consideration the differences that past reality has created as well as the fact that change is socially produced. And it would be scientific in that it maintains a commitment to the production of authoritative knowledge of long-term regularities.

2.4 *Actors in social change: the constraints of structures and the possibilities of agency*

While this mode of analysis commits us to understanding the long-term structures as well as trends of the historical system in which we are living, it also permits us to appreciate the uniqueness of the present and the necessity of acting "in" the moment and "for" the future. We do not yet know the form that change may take. A substantively more rational world is only one possible outcome. However, since this is a structural crisis, change does not depend on our normatively-motivated action for its initiation. By the same token, however, the direction of change will, as complexity studies show, be completely dependent on small fluctuations resulting from all of our multiple value-laden decisions and actions. Systemic transformation is not immediate and abrupt but, in the language of the sciences of complexity, takes the form of a bifurcation occurring in a period of transition characterized by chaotic fluctuations. By definition, such a period is one of great disorder. But as a consequence, that medium-term future also

presents great possibilities, since unstable systems pose fewer constraints – they are less able to dampen fluctuations, the definition of stability – and very small fluctuations or discrete human actions, now capable of massive amplification, can and will determine the direction any transformation might take. Thus, the creative practices involved in making a new world can be expected to find greater latitude and the potential effects of even seemingly isolated acts will multiply.

Necessity and chance can no longer be viewed as mutually exclusive options either in life or in social research. Methods that specify (often only implicitly) an exemplar and then endeavour to predict the impact of interventions designed to move supposedly autonomous units towards some ideal state have been shown to be flawed and limited in their utility. In simple language, they just don't work and the contemporary world is replete with examples. Many analysts, however, still consider this the paradigm of social science. All the same, large-scale regularities do persist over time. Particularistic "rich description" or interpretative accounts based on an understanding (Verstehen) of local value contexts or resorting to "human creativity" and "free will" explanations also fail to capture the interrelatedness of structure and emergence.

It is becoming clear that the social analyst needs to be aware that he/she is a participant in the "reality" being studied. The first step is to realize that the modernist imperative of producing (objective) knowledge of "who, what, when, where, why" with a "view from nowhere" is yielding less and less, both in theory and in practice, and that we must turn our attention to producing knowledge that considers the (situated) questions of "for whom, for what, for when, for where" and "from whose viewpoint" as an inseparable part of the analytic project and not merely a matter of the individual analyst's concerns.

This is particularly true for the policy analyst, whether working for governmental and intergovernmental agencies, NGOs, or social movements. Since the definition of "problems" represents an arbitrary (or perhaps not so arbitrary) closure isolating them from the complex interplay of the multiple social processes of which they are outcomes, the idea that one can simply intervene to solve them needs to be replaced by the realization that definitive "action" by specialists or those in positions of power needs to be replaced by a "practice" of constant, incremental, iterative

negotiation (no "quick fix") and both insistent and persistent challenge to, and redefinition of, the analytic codes and concepts that limit capacity to imagine possible futures. Such practice would have to be the collective practice of an emerging social subject rather than that of one or more supposedly autonomous individuals. It would be a situated subject attuned to values and differences rather than to objectivity, stability, and linear causality. It would be social scientists using an analytic strategy that avoids reification and is cognizant of the pitfalls of reductionism and dualism. *Both the marketplace of ideas dear to John Stuart Mill and the combination of freedom and reason which C. Wright Mills conceived as persuasion all too often are translated today into a version of pluralism that is blind to relations of power and privilege. These terms no longer seem to express adequately the ethical imperative for the social scientist to participate actively in the making of a new world.*

3. Imagining the Future: The Global Opportunities

Whose Social Policy? Who Sets the Priorities?

Political decisions about social policies rarely are the direct outcome of social science research. They are more usually the result of conflicting pressures by social actors – entrepreneurs, workers' organizations, religious authorities, special interest groups, the media. To be sure, sometimes prominent social scientists influence or advise particular political leaders. But even then, it is less their specific research results than their general orientations that are being invoked. And of course occasionally there are social scientists who themselves enter the political arena, sometimes in the process repudiating their own prior work. On the other hand, social science may be said to have had a quite fundamental role in laying a diffuse base for the dominant themes and assumptions on which social policy is developed. One major influence on policy makers is their prior education in which they may have digested social science knowledge into assumptions that are not examined subsequently. Another results from how the media adopt and relay these themes and assumptions, ignoring or greatly expanding the influence of particular social science arguments. And a third is that, in a fast-evolving world, political leaders often feel the need to proclaim new ideas and risk choosing quickly a fad or the hype against which we warned.

Are there ways in which social scientists can today have a sounder impact on social policy-making, whether that of governments or that of

social movements? And who will be setting the priorities? Social science research is not expensive, compared with the research costs of the physical, biological, and medical sciences. This protects it in part from too much direct control by the powerful. Nonetheless, much social science research does require some resources, and these must be supplied by someone – governments, intergovernmental agencies, foundations, universities, NGOs, social movements. And each of the potential donors/sponsors will consider the utility of the research in terms of its own objectives, which will not necessarily be the same as those of the social scientist.

It is here that we come back to the stylized Weber-Gramsci debate – the social scientist as expert versus the social scientist as committed analyst. We can see today that the involvement of the social scientist in policy-making requires a constant reflexivity on his or her own position and a certain long-term understanding of the source and the impact of the analyses being proffered. Moral choices by the scholar can consequently never be avoided, and least of all in a period of fundamental social transformation. *The question for the social scientist is not merely what moral choices he/she will make, but how, in the process, to maintain the integrity of the intellectual analysis on which it is based.*

3.2 *The Possibilities of Policy-Making*

These choices and dilemmas are increasingly evident as we confront the emergence of vigorous, and contentious, global social policy-making. This is a marked reversal of the past century of emphasis on national development, national social science, and national social policy. From the social actors who press policy concerns onto our agendas, to the institutions that forge social science and social policy, policy-making will be increasingly centred consciously on global social processes and inequalities in our transition to a new world-system. This constitutes a major break with the past and frees us to confront major future opportunities.

Ever since the 1970s, we have witnessed the contraction of the activist, liberal State. The core States in the North have steadily withdrawn from, or at least reduced, their liberal promises and social engineering, while across most of Latin America, Africa, and Asia, a forced retreat from

development planning has taken place. The decline of the powerful labour, socialist, and nationalist movements of the mid-twentieth century facilitated the transition to a neo liberal period.

Those movements that disrupted liberal complacency in the worldwide events of 1968 – despite their success in addressing the historical inequalities of race, gender, and the environment – did not succeed in halting this trend. Indeed their attack upon corrupted States and movements often contributed to a generalized illegitimacy of social policy makers inside and outside States. This affected as well the structures of knowledge upon which previous social policy had stood. The aggressive promotion of structural adjustment policies, particularly the privatization of State education and health programmes, directly undermined liberal social science and policy-making in core areas and fiercely eviscerated it elsewhere.

Scholars and State officials know this all too well, as rising global income inequality has been matched if not far exceeded by the polarization of higher education resources and policy-making capabilities. Indeed inequalities in the resources available to social scientists by race and gender, and particularly by zone of the world-system, may be greater now than in 1968. Not the least indicator of this process has been a global dependence upon, and often migration by intellectuals to, the centres of policy-making and higher education in core zones.

It would be easy to draw bleak future scenarios from these observations. Yet we believe that it is precisely because the structural constraints imposed by the previous stability of the post-war order (including the stability of the social sciences and policy-making institutions) has been grievously damaged that remarkable opportunities are emerging. Global problems demand global social policies, and we have entered an era when this is not only a visible claim but a foreseeable and feasible project. It is visible given the widespread illegitimacy of the stark neo-liberal policies that emerged in the wake of revolts of 1968, the economic upheavals of the 1970s, and the increasingly chaotic world-economy of the twenty-first century. It is foreseeable and feasible given the equally widespread search for new, global policies by both the world's most powerful actors and the social movements around the world.

Indeed the nature of today's actors and the objects of policy indicate a radical shift from twentieth-century patterns. On the one hand, the rec-

ognition of the global foundations of social inequalities and instability has stimulated the number and power of supranational institutions directly concerned with social policy. The language of structural adjustment has, for example, necessarily given way to the language of poverty alleviation, sustainability, and diversity. This is evident not only in the area of social services such as health, education, and the environment, but is revealed in the more powerful field of economic policy, as in the contention surrounding the issues and institutions of trade (WTO, various regional free trade areas) and finance (IMF, the World Bank, regional banks, and the UNDP). Even more notable has been the explosion of international, networked NGOs, which exist both above and below national States, and are deeply involved in social policy-making and the production of knowledge. Unlike the national States and the international organizations of the immediate post-war period which coordinated national policies, these actors target global issues and operate transnationally.

This is no less true for movement actors from below, where there has been a clear transition from State-enclosed to globally-oriented movements. Early signs of this took place as the major groups that were involved in the events of 1968 struggled to coordinate worldwide activities of the movements and manage the tensions within them, as may be seen in the agendas and events surrounding the world women's conferences in Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995), successive environmental meetings, and the World Conference on Racism in Durban (2001). More notable are the new movement models launched in the alterglobalization movement from the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas in 1994 to the Seattle protests against the WTO in 1999 to the World Social Forum meetings beginning in 2001. Even local land or indigenous rights movements are, for example, inexorably organizing on a transnational, world scale.

These collaborations attest to the continuing drive to surpass the dilemma posed by past movements: how to pursue emancipation without equating liberty and equality with the capture of State power. They also mark two further, formidable advances since 1968: the recognition (1) that racial, gender, ethnic, and class inequalities are structured and sustained by the global division of labour, requiring in turn contentious cooperation across core-peripheral divides, and (2) that demands for liberty and equality entail attacking global as well as national processes.

These are not abstract ideas but embedded in very concrete struggles over the world to come. While the world's most powerful States and actors thus seek to commodify the last reaches of humanity (now including the body, water, land, natural resources, and all intellectual products), alter-globalization movements have sought not merely to defend these goods from "privatization" but to go further and seek to decommodify them. This is evident across the movements, from land, indigenous, and environmental movements, to struggles over intellectual property rights, human rights, and migration.

As these examples suggest, this struggle between newly powerful global actors and globally-oriented local and national movements is transforming the issues and objects of social policy. It is not only that social policy is more openly debated, given the withering away of the liberal State and the efforts to entrench neo-liberal policies. It is also that, as these struggles indicate, the rigorous social science we need must forthrightly address the global roots of social problems as we move, amidst great uncertainty, towards a new, post-liberal world-system.

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The Policy Papers, dedicated to social transformations and based on policy-relevant research results of work carried out by MOST and by other sections of the Social and Human Sciences Sector (SHS), are intended for policy makers, advocacy groups, business and media.

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