

HOW ARE SOCIAL POLICIES INFORMED BY SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Fatos Tarifa¹, Enila Cenko², Ilir Kalemaj³

¹University of New York Tirana, Email: fatostarifa@unyt.edu.al

²University of New York Tirana

³University of New York Tirana

Abstract

Following the intellectual tradition that started with Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, major figures of Western thought like Hayek and Popper have pointed up the centrality of policy-making for the social sciences, which have largely developed through the criticism of proposals for social improvements, or through attempts to find out whether or not a particular economic or political action is likely to produce an expected or desired result. From a different perspective, C. Wright Mills expanded on the theme of rationalization, understanding it as "the practical application of knowledge to achieve a desired end." Like Weber, Mills believed that the goal of rationalization is efficiency, whereas its means are coordination and control over the social processes needed to attain that goal. Both Weber and Mills maintained that rationalization is the guiding principle behind bureaucracy and the increasing division of labor, and it is a product of "scientific specialization and technical differentiation" that seem to be characteristics of Western culture. It was not until the mid-1940s that the term "policy sciences" was introduced by Harold Lasswell. He attempted to develop a "systematic theory", devising new instruments for research, and acted as a policy advisor to "aid in perfecting the intelligence function" in society in order to "clarify alternatives of action", "provide pertinent information about trends and causal relations". Lasswell's policy science orientation was holistic: a multi-method, multi-disciplinary, problem-focused, contextual approach to policy analysis and development. Adopting his approach, the proposed paper focuses on a number of issues pertaining to social science research and the social policymaking process in Albania, such as: (a) the role of analysis in policy making; (b) the complexity of social reality and cognitive limitations to policy analysis, and (c) partisan analysis *vis-à-vis* value-freedom and objectivity in social science research.

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