Editorial Preface

The Case for a Public Sociology

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Public sociology has been on the agenda more prominently for over a decade. Though some theoretical sociologists are reluctant to engage with the discipline, many voices are emerging to advocate the rapprochement of sociology to practice in order to make it relevant to the everyday social actor. A few years ago, I submitted a paper based on the premise of Public Sociology to a ‘highly’ ranked academic journal. The paper received undue criticism and was rejected for lacking credible sociological foundation. One of the reviewers vigorously criticised our reference to Public Sociology as unscientific. For me, this reinforces the message of exclusion of a certain section of the population and readership to academic inquiry, perhaps because of the fear among some academic circles about the potential loss of status. However, other social scientists, e.g. Brewer (2013) “firmly believe that social science has nothing to fear from the impact debate. Social science is highly impactful in the government’s limited sense”. The perspective of Public Sociology is the democratisation of knowledge and the result of academic inquiry. As Burawoy (2014) argues “Public Sociology endeavors to bring sociology into dialogue with audiences beyond the academy, an open dialogue in which both sides deepen their understanding of public issues”. In this perspective, Public Sociology offers a voice to a broad audience involved in the sociological inquiry on the critical issues of our world. It situates the study of social phenomena in the spirit of Sociological Imagination as advocated by Mills (1959) and Watson (2009).

Contributors to the sociological debate and social issues need not be professional sociologists, but people who think society. To this end, the International Journal of Public Sociology and Sociotherapy will be a forum for further pushing the practice-academia duality. Engaging with the public and multiple stakeholders, Public Sociology does not set itself as specialist sociology, but a fundamental condition for the dissemination of sociological inquiry.

The issues addressed by public sociology are international in nature due to globalisation, and Public Sociology invites voices from the Global South, thus, rejecting the supremacy of Western social science. For example, issues of education, poverty, crime, social media, social work, policing, etc., transcend national boundaries. So, the audience of our journal will be global in both academia and practice.

We believe that there is a gap in the market for practice-based academic scholarship in sociology. Most reputable academic journals currently require a high degree of theorisation, which is not always accessible to the practitioners. Our belief is that in order to serve society effectively, academia needs to work closely with all spheres of society and ensure that the knowledge generated is accessible intellectually and financially to the masses. Our journal intends to bridge this gap by publishing articles that are relevant and useful to policy and practice at the same time as requiring a degree of academic rigour as well as conceptualisation.

The International Journal of Public Sociology and Sociotherapy seeks to:

- Provide a forum for practice-orientated research that serves society’s needs
- Actively seek to contribute to bridging the gap between academia and practice
- Contribute to redefine the societal role of academia
- Give a voice to practitioners and policymakers to allow them to feedback their practice-based knowledge to academia to allow theorisation and conceptualisation and a wider dissemination
• Be a forum for sharing good practice locally and internationally

Public Sociology touches on broad societal issues that concern everyone, and we believe that everyone has a part to play and the right to engage with the debate surrounding these issues. Public Sociology, thus, covers most areas of social practice that are relevant but more specifically in the areas of Social policy, Social work, Educational practice, Policing, Poverty (e.g. homelessness, child poverty, etc.), Modern slavery in action, Migrant and refugees in new societies, Entrepreneurship, Youth issues (unemployment, crime, etc.), Contemporary workplace issues, Health and social care, the voluntary sector in action in society, Practices of corporate social responsibility and their local impact, etc. For Burawoy (2013), there is a long implicit tradition of public engagement by sociologists, both founders (e.g. Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, etc.) and modern theorists (e.g. Bourdieu, Frantz Fanon, Alain Touraine, etc.). Thus, the reluctance of some contemporary sociologists and social scientists to embrace Public Sociology (and more broadly public social science) in little comprehensible.

In total, it is my belief that there is a significant role for ‘engaged research’ in terms of developing a model of academic-practice partnership. This is an area that is central to Wright-Mills’ and Watson’s view of ‘The Sociological Imagination’ where they articulate an integral, engaged notion of public sociology (Khan & Hack-Polay, 2017).
REFERENCES


