

Social Change and 'Sozialpolitik'

Franz – Xaver Kaufmann

Professor, University of Bielefeld

Faculty for Sociology and Institute for Population Research and Social Policy

Social policies as well as their academic treatment have been until now largely a national affair. Despite of some common labels like 'social security' or 'welfare state' which try to bridge the national diversities we must become aware of the facts that not only the institutions of the welfare sector show substantial variations from country to country but also the political definitions of the problems to be solved and the academic reflections on them exhibit characteristic differences as we focus different places and historical periods. It is therefore a memorable moment when today representatives of various academic and national traditions meet not only for academic exchange but for the development of a continuing cooperation in the teaching of social policy on the European level. To be sure, we are not moving from ourselves, by pure intellectual curiosity, beyond the national limits, although many of us welcome the practical circumstance which leads us to widen the focus. The mushrooming of international conferences about issues of social policy, social security or social services in the recent past and the immediate future corresponds to the growing awareness of the social and socio-political consequences of the economic and political drive towards "Europe 1992". (And the fact that we are meeting here in an easy if not comfortable way is due to that same drive towards Europe.)

If one reviews the recent efforts for a comparative approach to social policies one becomes quickly aware how far we are away from a common framework to study what is going on in different countries. So I think we should start with the acknowledgement that we are all bound to our national traditions in thinking about social politics and social policies and that we have first to explore the mostly unknown strands of other national traditions before we aim to common frameworks.

But one might also take an opposite position: Isn't it the task of theoretical reasoning to *abstract* from the peculiarities of place and time and to bring forward the essential or at least the common features of a field which is so obviously a part of the modernization process of Western societies? Are there not clearly identifiable *social problems* which were and are linked to industrialization and the actual transition towards a post-industrial society? Were e.g. the insecurity and powerlessness of early industrial workers or are the actual changes in gender relationships not trans-natio-

nal problems of social change in our countries? Or to put it on more general terms: Are there not characteristic patterns of social change which challenge in a rather uniform way the variant political traditions and specific socio-political institutions? And should this pressure of similar problems not result in a long-term convergence of socio-political solutions? Isn't it the merit of a sociological perspective to provide us with a Copernican point from which we might be able to compare the histories and actual problems of social policy in different European countries?

I do not doubt the merits of abstraction nor of developing generalized concepts and propositions as it has been the thrust of sociology compared to history in the analysis of the last centuries. But we have to check also on this level to *what extent we agree with the basic assumptions which guide such processes of abstraction and generalization*. In order to bring us into that debate I found no better way than to demonstrate you some basic assumptions of the German tradition of reasoning about 'Sozialpolitik' both from a historical and from an actual perspective.

1. 'Social-Politik' as mediation between state and society

As the editors of the recent British volume "The Goals of Social Policy"¹ rightly observe, the continental languages do not distinguish between social politics and social policy, both is meant by the term 'Sozialpolitik' or 'politique sociale'. Even worse, 'Sozialpolitik' means also the scientific treatment of both, the political processes leading to new laws and institutions as well as the processes of social administration dealing with specified deficiencies. But this lack of differentiation has also its merits, as I shall try to demonstrate by a short historical retrospect.

As far as I can see the German term 'Social-Politik' is the oldest of the international concepts dealing with our issues. In the 1830s the French term 'social' was received by the German language and originated many composite concepts like 'Socialwissenschaft' (social science), sociale Bewegung (social movement), sociale Frage (social question) and Social-Politik.²

The development of all these concepts in the 1840s took place in the theoretical context of a basic distinction introduced by G.W.F. Hegel in his philosophy of law (§ 175), namely the distinction between 'state', bourgeois, 'society' and 'family' as the three basic forms of moral life. Hegel was the first to reflect what today we call the functional differentiation of society. Whereas in the Anglo-Saxon social philoso-

phy the Aristotelian concept of the polis or *societas civilis* remained intact, it was broken up by Hegel and his followers into the distinction of the *state* and the *bourgeois society*. It was then the *problematic relationship between both* which became the central focus of the intellectual debate in these stormy and hopeful times before 1848, the year of revolutions in continental Europe. And it is in that debate that the term 'Social-Politik' has originated to designate the answer to the 'social question', which meant first the miseries of preindustrial overpopulation and later the powerlessness and insecurity of the industrial workers as well as their threat to the existing order.

Synopsis: Socio-Political Positions toward the 'Social Question'

Ideology	conservative	liberal	reformist	revolutionary
Representative social scientists	Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl 1823-1897	Robert von Mohl 1799-1875	Lorenz von Stein 1815-1890	Karl Marx 1818-1883
Definition of the situation	Decay of traditional order	Exploitation and lack of social integration of industrial workers	Ownership as structural cleavage in industrial society	Class antagonism as revolutionary situation
'Therapies' proposed	Restoration of solidaristic institutions	State protection against exploitation. Fair wages, saving for selfemployment	General suffrage State intervention against social inequalities, social administration	Expropriation of capitalists by the working class. Progressive abolishment of the state through emancipation from alienation
Moving principle	none	Economic progress	Interaction of state and society	Self-Organization of the proletarians

Four intellectual positions emerged in that debate, and all became seminal for the ideological trends of the following century (see also synopsis). The *conservative position*³ criticized the unleashing of the forces of markets and individualism in the bourgeois society and made it responsible for the moral and economic decay of this transition between the feudal and the industrial society. 'Social-Politik' meant here the action of the state to restore older norms of solidarity and morality in order to combat the miseries of the time.

The *liberal* position, which in Germany never took the face of a Manchesterian 'Laissez-faire' concept, hoped for an answer to the social question by the development of the bourgeois society, i.e. by the growth of the market economy and by spreading the status of independent workers. The liberal ideal of bourgeois society was *the generalization of the self-employed worker* as the owner of his means of production. Dependent work was seen for men (women were considered to belong to the family!) as an only transitory stage in their biography. 'Social-Politik' meant in that context the action of the state to protect the dependent workers from exploitation by their employers in order to empower them for saving and for establishing themselves as self-employed artisans, merchants etc.⁴ In the first stage of industrialization, when factories seldom employed more than 20 people, such a vision seemed not completely utopic.

It was the thrust of *socialist* class theory to demonstrate that this would not be the future of industrial society. This theory had originated in France under the alienating experiences of an oppressive system of state absolutism and feudal exploitation and is older than industrialization. It was the work of two German thinkers, Lorenz von Stein and Karl Marx, to combine the idea of class antagonism with that of industrialization and to demonstrate that (as in the feudal society) the ownership of the means of production in the hands of a few capitalists and the exclusion of the many workers forms the basis of permanent social classes and their antagonism, which is judged by both authors as a source for revolutionary disorder. Insofar Marx and von Stein agree even in their terminology which in both cases was inspired by French socialists of the time.⁵

But they differ in additional assumptions and in the consequences they draw. *Marx*, who claimed to put Hegel from his head-stand to the feet, believed in the forces of production and their socio-economic consequences of strengthening the class-struggle *alone*, and looked forward to the disorganization of capitalism by its own success. For him the Hegelian distinction between state and bourgeois society was only a superficial one. The state had no power of its own but was thought as depending upon the ruling class and therefore as an instrument of oppression against the working class. Thus only a revolution could free the working class from the chains by which it was forged to its dependency in the existing social order. Sozialpolitik is therefore neither a term nor a conceivable tool of solving the 'social question' in Marxist thought, but only another trick of the ruling class for maintaining their dominance.

Lorenz von Stein, on the other hand, may be called the first theoretical thinker of the social or welfare state, although he did not yet use these terms but the terms 'social monarchy', 'social democracy' and social administration.⁶ For him the Hegelian notion of the state as the trustee of reason and morality was not a mere ideology but a historical possibility. By contrast to Hegel he didn't identify this possibility with the reality of the Prussian state, but as a young man he hoped that Napoleon III could become the first 'social monarch'. His argument for demonstrating the possibility of state intervention to settle or at least mitigate the class struggle relied on the assumption that the ruling class, by fearing a revolution, might consent to universal suffrage. This then would help the political authorities and the public administration to become more independent from the ruling class. As the *idea* of the state (following Hegel) always aims at the integration of *all* members of a society, one has only to find ways of activating this idea for solving the 'social question'. Therefore Sozialpolitik means here a *reorganization of the relationship between state and bourgeois society*. Not the separation and relative autonomy of both spheres *but the interaction of both* should solve the social question. This interaction means on the side of what we call today policy input the general suffrage and hence the influence of the working class on public policies and on the side of policy output a social administration which aims at social reforms to be consented by both classes.

2. The strong state concept and welfare⁷

I have to stop here with this very rough outline of the origins of 'Sozialpolitik' in German social science. But I hope that you became aware that 'Sozialpolitik' means more than what we call today social policy or social administration. 'Sozialpolitik' in the German tradition is intimately tied to the problems of political and social order, or more precisely to a theory about the relationship between 'state' and 'society'. The term 'welfare state' was by no means invented by Archbishop Temple in 1941 or the Swedish in the 1930s but its synonyme 'Wohlfahrtsstaat' was currently used in the German Reich since 1876. It doesn't mean simply the system of social security and social services but *the responsibility of public powers for freedom, social justice and the basic well-being of all members of society*. Its ideological roots go back to the so called enlightened absolutism of Prussian Princes⁸ and its Hegelian sublimation in the concept of the constitutional state, but also to Protestant pietism and Catholic social thought.⁹ In German mainstream of social thought and action there is no utilitarian tradition like that of Bentham and Chatwick. Rather it starts from a *strong concept of the state as an abstract entity "above and distinct from both government*

and governed; as an institution which is autonomous, formally co-ordinated and differentiated from other organizations which operate in a defined territory; as an object of universal service and respect; and as the source of a distinct public morality."¹⁰ Although this idealistic concept of the state and its paternalistic real model surely was not strong enough without the threat of socialism, but it proved to be sensible enough to program reforms which mitigated not only political pressure but also the social problems of industrial work in a time when other countries like France or even Great Britain were still believing that it was not the task of government to solve them.

If we conceive the welfare state not only as a system of social services, but as the *institutionalized responsibility of political power for freedom, social justice and the basic well-being of its members*, then the major step towards the German Welfare State was not the so called Bismarckian legislation on social insurance but the Constitution of Weimar in 1919 which for the first time formulated such responsibilities and prescribed institutions of co-determination of workers and employees. The experience that this detailed program prescribed by the constitution did not become reality due to shifts in political majorities and the economic difficulties of the 1920s has lead the authors of the actual constitution, the Grundgesetz of the FRG, to renunciate from detailed prescriptions but to state the '*social character*' of the state as one of its essentials beside its democratic, lawful and federalistic character (Art. 20 I and 28 I GG). One might ask if such an abstract notion of '*Sozialstaat*' has any practical impact for political actions. In fact many professors of law (which are very influential in Germany) denied in the first years of the constitution the obligatory character of this rather empty formulas for legislation and administration. Meanwhile there is however an established consensus (confirmed by decisions of the supreme court) that these norms protect the social legislation from substantial abolishments and direct the interpretation of the existing law towards the issues of social well-being. As a matter of fact the system of social protection in Germany has much better resisted to political attempts for cutbacks in the economic crisis of the last decade than those in Great Britain or in the United States.

3. The social sciences and '*Sozialpolitik*'

Let me now draw some consequences from these sketched features of '*Sozialpolitik*' for the institutionalization of teaching and research on social policy in Germany. As I have shown the development of the *scientific* concept of Social-Politik has preceded

in Germany for decades the conscious involvement of government into social affairs. Also the founding of the "Verein für Socialpolitik" in 1872, an association of economists and social scientists aiming at social reforms, preceded the social legislation of the Bismarck-era and influenced it, as well as the further development of legislation on labour affairs. But its influence waned during the Weimar Republic and was not restored after World War II. The "Verein für Socialpolitik" still exists and today its members are above all academic economists. Social problems, social policies and more than even social administration are only of marginal concern for this highly respectable association. Insofar as economists are still concerned with social policies they make inquiries into the costs and sometimes into their distributive effects. Social policy has become in Germany mainly a matter for jurists, since specialized courts for labour affairs have been created already in 1926, and in 1953 also for social affairs. The development of social administration thus depends to a substantial degree upon law and jurisdiction. I think that this is the main reason why in Germany *the development of a specialized academic field on social administration is still lacking*. The dominant discussion about social policies in Germany is neither on the efficiency nor on the effectivity of the services but on their legal regulation and their economic costs and its impact.

This means in practice that we have in Germany very few specialized academic expertise on matters of social affairs. The specialists in the field acquire their knowledge through training on the job. Until recently most of them have been trained in law if they had any academic training at all. But normally the functionaries of social security bodies or of the social administration on the local level lack any academic training. They have been trained as public servants or made their apprenticeship in the social security bodies themselves. Executives often come from the trade unions and have got by them some specialized training, if at all.

However, things have begun to change since the 1970s. The education of social workers has been institutionalized at an academic level, although mostly not in universities but in specialised 'Fachhochschulen'. Sociology has begun to contest the dominating juridical and economic interpretations on issues of social policies.¹¹ Whereas until the 1970s nearly all chairs for social policy at German universities were headed by economists we observe since then a growing influence of sociologists and political scientists (these disciplines are not quite differentiated in Germany) both in teaching and in research. The inauguration of the first postgraduate course in Public Health in Germany at this university in spring 1989 is perhaps a sign that the social sciences begin again – as in the 19th century – to structure some fields of

social policy. One can also observe the slow development towards a kind of policy communities with respect to particular fields of social policy as e.g. health policy, labour market policy, family policy or policies for youth and old age. But their degree of institutionalization is still rather low.

Most perplexing is the still complete absence of a specialized training for jobs within the social security system. It seems that the substantial and often mutually paralyzing control of these systems by the representatives of employers and trade unions prevent any initiative to professionalize this domain.

The sketched making up for analyzing and training in special fields of social policy is necessary without doubt and one can but welcome initiatives toward these ends. But as the actual discussions concerning the discipline of academic social administration in Britain show, such a specialized professionalization establishes also limits of perception and narrows the focus to the problem—definitions of single agencies or institutionalized fields of social intervention. This narrowing of perspectives obscures four basic issues of social policy which are in my mind of central concern for *sociological* research in social policy.

1. The complexity of the life situation of individuals;
2. the externalities and interdependencies of various social policies;
3. the functions of the state for the steering of welfare production;
4. the overarching impact of social change to social policies.

4. Sociology and Social Policies

Let me explain in the rest of my time these four issues which might form also a program for the sociological analysis of social policy. To do this in historical and comparative perspective is — as the title of our program suggests — the aim of our common endeavour. (1967)

'Sozialpolitik', i.e. the state interventions influencing or solving social problems which have become political ones, has resulted in all western countries in a set of more or less differentiated institutions and regulations which are meant to promote the welfare of those concerned. These institutions and regulations cluster around various issues and become with their subsequent development often separate fields of policy. In Germany the basic structural division of policies separates the area of dependent work (labour law) from that of the social services (social law). A related

but nevertheless different frontier is drawn by ministerial domains: The Ministry of Labour is not only responsible for labour affairs but also for issues of social insurance; the responsibility of the Ministry of Youth, Family, Women and Health concerns the other social services (with the exception of education which in Germany is not considered as belonging to 'Sozialpolitik' and is moreover mainly an affair of the federated states). A much more differentiated structure becomes visible if we consider the institutions implementing the federal laws. The unified labour administration and the very fragmented social security administrations are basically under control of the federal agencies in cooperation with the employers associations and trade unions.¹² Most other social services like hospitals, kindergardens, care institutions for the elderly or activities for the youth are run mainly by voluntary agencies, but partly also by lokal authorities and are under the supervision of the federated states (Länder). The administrative structure in Germany is three-tired (Federal state, federated states and communes) and this is reflected also in the structure of social administration. Moreover an important part of the services, i.e. the medical practice outside hospitals and also the old age, disability and health insurance are administered by formally autonomous bodies which are regulated by federal law. The publicly regulated welfare sector in Germany is thus very differentiated and fragmented. There is no overarching control structure, and a *multitude of various services* run by different agencies are of interest for individuals in their life situation. To be sure not all individuals are concerned by all services. But the likelihood of being concerned in cases of need by more than one service and thus the *dependency of badly coordinated administrative agencies* is high. An important part of pertinent sociological research in Germany during the last 15 years concerned therefore the lack of coordination between different services and the development of tools to measure the compound impact and also perverse side-effects of cumulative interventions. There is also some endeavour to systematize the forms of public interventions as e.g. legal, economic, ecological and personal intervention and to define the modus operandi as well as particular problems of this different kinds of intervention.¹³ This is a rather analytical approach which starts from the assumption that the life situation of individuals depending from social policy is to be defined by legal status, financial assets, the character of the local environment (including opportunities and services) and personal knowledge as well as individual competences. Social welfare in whatever respect seems to be the compound result of these four dimensions: status, assets, opportunities and consequences, and therefore any public intervention has, to become effective, to consider these four dimensions.

Thus the differentiated and fragmented character of the welfare sector produces externalities and interdependencies which are not foreseen by the legislator. The sketched cumulation of interventions in the case of individuals or families is only one aspect of that issue. Another one is the competition of legal rules and their often perverse effects which then have to be settled by the courts. A third externality concerns the growth of the financial burden and the lack of coordination among the different budgets. The fragmentation of the system causes antagonistic financial interests of the various agents which may often lead to the neglect of the interest of the needies.

The multicentric character of the German welfare system thus prevents adequate coordination, but on the other hand enables initiatives from below, the experimentation with new solutions and also to a certain extent a higher degree of choice for individuals in certain circumstances. It is an *ambivalent situation* in which the desirable role of the state is contested and by no means clear. This is another subject for sociological inquiry into the organization of the welfare state. If we could agree that the essentials of Western Welfare States consist in (1) a strong state, (2) a dynamic market system and (3) a developed welfare sector, we have then to inquire into the most efficient relationship between these three elements.

Finally we have to acknowledge, that processes of social change are both, *causes* or challenges for social politics and policies and at the same time, *effects* from the impact of social policies. There is e.g. some evidence that the strong fall of the birth rate and the consequent ageing of populations is due to substantial changes in the economic interest for children. And these changes have been caused mainly by social policies: The abolishment of child labour, public schooling, the promotion of dependant work and the collectivization of security in old age. But now these policy induced demographic changes challenge the systems of old age and health insurance themselves.¹⁴ Another example of the overarching impact of social change is the actual change in gender relations.¹⁵ The institutions of social security in Germany were constructed under the model of the male - breadwinner - housewife - family. With the growing participation of women in protected forms of dependent work their economic dependency on the husband is substantially lowered and thus barriers to divorce or to remain single have been removed. At the same time the cumulation of social insurance entitlements by a couple with two breadwinners leads to new forms of social inequality as compared to the insurance status of housewives. In Germany we actually witness a new polarisation between couples with high labour force participation and few children on the one side and housewife families with two or more

children and a very reduced per-capita come as well as reduced entitlements in social protection on the other side. These examples should give some evidents of the growing importance of sociology for the analysis of social policies. They do not exhaust the subject. If we take a historical or comparative point of view we will even find more encompassing subjects for sociological analysis like e.g. the explanation of the development of welfare states and of their specific national traditions.

References

- 1) *Martin Bulmer, Jane Lewis, David Piachaud (eds.): The Goals of Social Policy.* London 1989.
- 2) cf. *Eckart Pankoke 1970: Sociale Bewegung – Sociale Frage – Sociale Politik. Grundfragen der deutschen Socialwissenschaft im 19. Jahrhundert.* Stuttgart 1970.
- 3) Documented perhaps best by the social scientist *Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl: Die Naturgeschichte des Volkes als Grundlage einer deutschen Social-Politik*, 4 vol. 1854–69.
- 4) Cf. *Robert von Mohl, Über die Nachteile, welche sowohl dem Wohlstande und der Sicherheit der gesamten bürgerlichen Gesellschaft von dem fabrikmäßigen Betrieb der Industrie zugehen, und über die Notwendigkeit gründlicher Vorbeugungsmittel (1835).* Abdruck in *Friedrich Fürstenberg (Hrsg.): Industriosociologie I, Vorläufer und Frühzeit 1835–1934.* Neuwied 2. A. 1966. See also *Erich Angermann: Robert von Mohl 1799–1875. Leben und Werk eines altliberalen Staatsgelehrten.* Neuwied 1962.
- 5) Cf. *Lorenz von Stein, Geschichte der sozialen Bewegung in Frankreich von 1789 bis auf unsere Tage.* 3 Bde. (1850) hrsg. und eingeleitet von G. Salomon, München 1921.
- 6) Cf. *Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde: Lorenz von Stein als Theoretiker der Bewegung von Staat und Gesellschaft zum Sozialstaat.* In: *ders. (Hrsg.), Staat und Gesellschaft.* Darmstadt 1976, S. 131–171
- 7) For a more detailed exposition see *F.-X. Kaufmann: The Blurring of the distinction 'State Versus Society' in the Idea and Practice of the Welfare State.* In: *F.-X. Kaufmann, G. Majone, V. Ostrom (eds): Guidance, Control, and Evaluation in the Public Sector.* Berlin/New York 1986, 127–138.
- 8) Cf. *R.A. Dorward: The Prussian Welfare State before 1740.* Cambridge Mass. 1971
- 9) Cf. *F.-X. Kaufmann: The Churches and the Emergent Welfare State in Germany.* In: *ders., Concern: The Welfare State (Three Papers).* Bielefeld (IBS) 1983.
- 10) *Kenneth Dyson, The State Tradition in Western Europe.* Oxford 1980, p. 51.
- 11) Cf. *F.-X. Kaufmann, Stand und Entwicklung der Forschung zur Sozialpolitik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.* In: *Politikwissenschaft und Verwaltungswissenschaft. Sonderheft 13 der Politischen Vierteljahresschrift (PVS) Opladen 1982, 344–365*

- 12) Cf. *F. – X. Kaufmann*: Die soziale Sicherheit in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. In: *H. Weidenfeld/H. Zimmermann* (Hrsg.) *Deutschland – Handbuch. Eine doppelte Bilanz 1949 – 1989*. München – Wien 1989, 300 – 325
- 13) Cf. *F. – X. Kaufmann*: Elemente einer soziologischen Theorie sozialpolitischer Intervention. In: *ders.* (Hrsg.) *Staatliche Sozialpolitik und Familie*. München – Wien 1982, 49 – 86.
- 14) Cf. *F. – X. Kaufmann*: Sozialpolitik und Bevölkerungsprozeß. In: *H. Birg/R. Mackensen* (Hrsg.) *Demographische Wirkungen politischen Handelns*. Frankfurt – New York 1990, S. 103 – 124.
- 15) Cf. the papers of *Rémi Lenoir* and of *Alessandra Minervino et al.* in this volume.