

SUMMARY

Political Science and Sociology

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The border area between political science and sociology, which usually is called »Political Sociology«, forms a research tradition and a line of development which in many interesting aspects is different from political science and sociology. As a matter of fact »political sociology« consists of two different lines, i.e. political sociology and the sociology of politics.

Out of these two, the sociology of politics is subject to sociology. Politics is one of the numerous social phenomena which can be explained with factors in social structure. Political activity, decisions, compromises, planning, etc., are all parametres, whereas the variations can be explained by social and economic groups and their interests. For scientists in the sociology of politics a typical method is the so-called stratification approach. It can be derived from Karl Marx, who tried to explain conflicts and changes in society on the basis of division into social classes. In his earlier works also Lipset has taken the structure of society as an explaining variable for the political institutions, i.e. how political behaviour can be explained on the basis of the respective social classes. The stratification approach is often fertile, but as often it is rather incomplete. It can be mentioned e.g. that the structure of political parties is the same as 40 years ago in many countries, whereas the social structure has changed very largely, or several parties often compete about the same groups of electors. Thus political organization and political traditions independently influence political behaviour.

Political sociology is based on the approach that politics can be an explanatory variable. Politics is conceived as being more important than other social institutions because most major social decisions are made there. This institutional approach is typical for political science, whereas the stratification approach is typical of sociology. Lipset can be mentioned also as representative of the institutional way of thinking. In his later production an increasing interest of this aspect can be found, i.e. under which conditions and by which political processes splits and interest conflicts in the social structure are transformed to the party system and how the party system influences the integration and allocation of resources in society. Such a unification of the stratification and the institutional approach is typical of political sociology. Political sociology is not a special area within sociology, as is the sociology of politics, but it is a genuine borderline discipline.

A central problem within political sociology is the question of the conditions of conflict and consensus in society and the connection between conflict and consensus. The conflict theorists think that conflict relations are quite

central in the structure of the society and that power and force are conditions for the existence of society. The consensus theorists on their side lay the stress on institutional rules which make it possible for a certain value community to exist. This distinction corresponds greatly to the difference between the stratification and the institutional approaches. Also here the question is about the best theoretical strategy. These problems require a strong borderline area between political sciences and sociology, a political sociology.