

## **Module 1: Doing Public Sociology**

### **Week 2**

#### **Chapter 1 – The Sociological Gaze: Linking Private Lives to Public Issues**

##### **Introducing the Sociological Enterprise**

- Featured in media commentary and public debate – globalisation, economic rationalism, socialisation, class, social status, deviance, alienation, and lifestyle
- A methodical study of human behaviours and societies
- Study of relationship between individual and society
- Investigating how human thought, action, and interaction shape and are shaped by society
- How we create society at the same time as we are created by it

##### **1.1 Defining Sociology**

- From Latin '*socius*' companion – *logie* 'study of'

##### *Charles Wright Mills*

- Enables us to grasp history, biography, relations between the two within society
- Quality of mind that promises understanding of intimate realities of ourselves in connection with larger social realities

##### *Peter Berger*

- We locate ourselves in society – thus recognize own position as we hang as puppets
- Unlike puppets, have possibility of stopping in our movements, looking up, perceiving machinery by which we have been moved – first step towards freedom

##### *Anthony Giddens*

- Scientific study of human life, social groups, whole societies, human world

##### *Zygmunt Bauman and Tim May*

- To think sociologically render us more sensitive and tolerant of diversity
- Sharpen senses, open eyes to new horizons beyond experiences

##### **No Such Thing as Society?**

Sociology is

- Methodical study of ways in which people construct and contribute to society
- How they are influenced by society

##### *Margaret Thatcher*

- No such thing as society – there are individual men and women and there are families

Society

- only a collective term for a group of individuals occupying particular geographic location
- tied by national cultures, languages, traditions
- an entity – reifying it as if it has a life of its own

##### **Structure-Agency Debate**

- we believe as individuals were free agents making independent decisions about our lives
- human agency – we do not make decisions entirely free of social constraints and influences
- individual choices, tastes, behaviours shaped by external (social) influences
- *social structures*
  - o recurring patterns of social interaction through which people are related to each other – social institutions, social groups
  - o social relationships not determined solely by idiosyncratic characteristics of individuals involved
- *structure-agency debate*