## WHEN REALITY SURPASSES FICTION …
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It goes without saying that my stay at Wiko can only be conveyed with superlatives. All expectations I had before coming were greatly exceeded by reality. Having worked in many institutional settings and embedded in distinct national cultures, I have never had the privilege of being involved with a group of professionals so committed to making life smoother and flawless for researchers.

I also arrived at Wiko convinced that the conventional debate between Science and Policy had been to a great extent "settled", in as much as the disconnect between Natural and Social Sciences had been already overcome. Well, I entertained these illusions until I started to attend the weekly Colloquia. Even without referring to the questionable assumption that Humanities and Social Sciences share the same epistemological characteristics, I found out also that many Wiko Fellows still fictionalize the relationships between Science and Policy.

There are undoubtedly plenty and diversified ways to approach the challenge of how to translate the wealth of knowledge produced by *science* into sound responses to the demands for public action that decision-makers must confront in the *policy* arena. However, some of the debates at Wallotstraße 19 seem to elude the *circular* relationships between science and policy. Science does not come about in a policy vacuum, nor does policy operate in a void of knowledge. That is precisely why politics is embedded in this interplay from the outset. This circularity can be expressed with three straightforward questions. First, one should inquire how a social concern is incorporated into the agenda of public decisions, particularly via knowledge generated by scientific research. Second, once this specific societal challenge is fully integrated into political discourse and the public agenda, how are policies changed to effectively bring scientific knowledge to the fore of concrete actions? Third, one must pose the question how the actual results of policies change the scientific agenda by identifying knowledge gaps that call for further research. Needless to say, the results produced by new science will keep this process going indefinitely, shaping existing policies and forging new ones, which will in turn generate new research questions including in areas that were not contemplated in the original agenda, neither of Policy nor of Science.

Nonetheless, I have witnessed once again the frequent difficulty of those on the *science* side of this spectrum who still believe that science speaks for itself. Assuming that science does respond to real challenges faced by society, oftentimes one mistakenly expects that every research result, by its intrinsic value "for the common good", does not require more than the power and brilliance of breakthroughs to be translated into action. Nothing could be further from reality, as Francis M. Cornford, a Professor of Classics in Cambridge indicated in his razor-sharp, witty *Microcosmographia Academica* in 1908: "You think (do you not?) that you have only to state a reasonable case, and people must listen to reason and act upon at once. It is just this conviction that makes you so unpleasant. There is little hope of dissuading you; but has it occurred to you that nothing is ever done until everyone

is convinced that it ought to be done, and has been convinced for so long that it is now time to do something else?"

In effect, one must recognize that any issue, scientific or otherwise, can only be incorporated in the public debate insofar as its connection to the dominant political process can be firmly established, which can be represented by ongoing policies or longstanding demands of civil society. For instance, even though much research already existed in areas such as environmental change or racial and gender discrimination, the wealth of data about environmental decay and natural resource depletion came to the forefront of public policies only after it was effectively associated with other demands in the areas of human rights, democratization and social equality. Thus, it was no historical "coincidence" that both the environment and gender policies gained respectability and strength in the late 1960s, part and parcel of, or at least benefiting from, the anti-war, pro-freedom of expression and counter-culture bandwagon that crisscrossed most Western countries at that time.

Conversely, it should not surprise anyone that, even after environmental issues attained legitimacy through several world summits, scientific insights about matters such as climate change have been the hardest to be translated into action. Why? Due to lack of scientific data? Of course not. As a matter of fact, climate change has been so far the only issue in the public agenda that has counted on an *institutionalized* channel for the world's science community to "communicate" with policy, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change created in 1988. Hence, the answer to this paradox does not lie in a failure of science to convey the seriousness of the situation to policy. Rather, the answer can be found in the fact that the actions proposed by the scientific community ran against the hegemonic yardstick for public policy.

One is forced to acknowledge that the more climate change became an established scientific fact, the more the Washington Consensus spread its wings throughout the world. From a *politics* perspective (much in the same vein as has been suggested above for the "peace-environment" link of the 1960s) this cannot be ascribed to pure "chance". Barely one year after the IPCC came into being, two of the Ten Commandments of neo-liberal economics prescribed "privatization" and "deregulation" as the cure-all recipe for the profound external debt crises of the 1980s. Thus, it was not a question, in Aaron Wildasky's words, of science failing to *Speak Truth to Power* (1987). It was and still remains a fact that power was simply not willing to listen to a scientific challenge that requires government intervention and more regulatory mechanisms to correct the failure of market

addiction to fossil fuels. Not surprisingly, the world had to wait for the increased occurrence and increased severity of "natural" disasters, the corresponding economic loss to entire countries, and the awakening of insurance companies before taking action. Still, only the actual increase of a couple of degrees in mean temperatures will do more than all scientific evidence so far, particularly now that the Washington Consensus is apparently receding at a faster pace than the glaciers themselves.

The above description may partially put the questions about the circularity of the Science-Policy nexus into motion, but one must go a step further and pose the question. Is the fact that an issue brought about by science has been effectively incorporated in the discourse of policy a guarantee for actual change? Sorry, but not really.

Any discussion of scientific knowledge provoking societal changes requires a political instead of a scientific or technical treatment. At stake is much more than the simple arrangement of public actions in one area. It is the concept of *development* itself that is being called into question. Indeed, new policies will often imply redefining, or at least redirecting, the process of development, as the policy options in response to climate change clearly indicate. The holistic and, at the same time, the specific nature of science-induced policy change also underscores the political nature of public choices. Because we cannot deal with all problems at once, we are forced to choose particular areas or problems for concentrated efforts. However, by doing that, by singling out any given area, we are bound to provoke jurisdictional disputes within and between bureaucratic and societal institutions. This in addition to the difficulties derived from what Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon called "bounded rationality" – the limited capacity of the human mind compared with the scope of the problems it needs to address (*Models of Man*, 1956). As a result, what are often considered "scientific" criteria (e.g., standards and norms) will have to be bargained for and politically negotiated and will therefore favour some interests over others. The crucial question, then, turns out to be whether the policy "conflict" that often results from the advancement of knowledge is well administered or not.

Elites in general, but particularly policy-makers, have devised astute strategies to cope with scientific breakthroughs and innovations. Faced with new challenges, both private and public bureaucracies customarily adopt what Donald Schon, in his brilliant 1973 *Beyond the Stable State*, describes as "dynamic conservatism". First, one accepts a discourse that incorporates the new findings, as politicians have been able to do with great flair about Climate Change or Sustainable Development. Then follows the institutional stage of "containment and isolation", when one veritably throws the discourse into a bureaucratic

box. Care should be taken, of course, not to provide adequate resources to this new institutional arrangement. Just enough people should be employed to give the impression that something major is being done – and to serve as scapegoats when things do not (as one *knows* that they will not) get done. Just enough resources should be allocated, it should not be forgotten, for studies, dozens and dozens of scientific studies. Containment and isolation also have another key, beneficial side effect for dynamic conservatism. These processes lead to the compartmentalization of knowledge and scientific expertise. Now that adequate institutions are in place, busily tilting against the windmills of change, there comes the phase of "selective inattention". In other words, new policies and research priorities must be placed in a bus stop where the bus of power does not stop. We may include a policy representative on an interagency scientific committee, because, after all, we do not expect results to come out of committee work anyway. As former President Herbert Hoover candidly recognized in his 1952 memoirs, "There is no more dangerous citizen than a person with a gift of gab, a crusading complex and a determination 'to pass a law' as the antidote for all human ills. The most effective diversion of such an individual to constructive action and the greatest silencer on earth for foolishness is to associate him on a *research committee* [emphasis added] with a few persons who have a passion for truth, especially if they pay their own expenses."

In short, one should promote the minimum change possible so as to guarantee that nothing will actually change. This is dynamic conservatism. It is dynamic because it is not the result of a carefully conceived scheme of overt resistance to new scientific evidence about extant phenomena. There is no conspiracy theory at work here. This brand of conservatism develops out of the synergistic effect of disparate interests. The individual, group, discipline or institution is able to establish a connection between his or its special interests and the (inertial) interests of the social system as a whole (known not to be very fond of dramatic or profound changes). Because everyone is bound to be affected by policy choices in response to change in scientific knowledge, there is no need to connive against taking them seriously. It is just a question of letting the officious process run its course.

We have seen this movie before, at different times, with different characters, and in different national settings and disciplinary territories. But there can be no doubt that the script is tailor-made for the way Science and Policy advance nowadays. And the bureaucracy, both the scientific as well as the policy bureaucracy, have plenty of candidates for the roles of starring actor, supporting actors and, as a matter of fact, for the entire cast. The only thing we will not find in this fiction is the traditional disclaimer. If any character,

event or situation resembles science-derived policies in particular, it is not merely a coincidence.

That Natural and Social Sciences, and both in their relationships to Policy, can be "blamed" for this dialogue of the deafest does not constitute a new reality. I am sure I stand to be accused of perhaps stretching the "politics" argument too far in registering some of my reactions upon leaving the most enlightening scientific colloquia at Wiko. Yet, once again reality, the Wiko reality, superseded my expectations about the kind of scientific inquiry I would encounter here.

I came to Wiko to explore the hypothesis that one may find common, universal roots of Ethics that may be adequate to tackle the crisis of civilization that confronts humankind today as the result of globalization and global environmental changes. The basic assumption to justify this endeavour arose from the conviction that the combined consequences of globalization and of global environmental change threaten human security, the very livelihood of individuals and of entire communities in every corner of the world, and impacts negatively on their social and human rights.

Our current predicament cannot be solved with technocratic solutions, barely disguising the political interests of each actor. When all countries, rich and poor, are reminded of their common duties for current and future generations, one should recall that there is also a reality of domination that governs both the relationships between different generations and between Man and Nature as well. It was also clear to me that it does not make any sense to reinvent a new society based on the expansion of markets, even more so when technological progress remains the driving force of globalization. If this could be somewhat correct in terms of production, the evolution of humankind indicates that technology must be oriented by a value system. Without this, without a new environmental ethics of development, Man is simply an artefact, devoid of humanity.

These convictions bring the traditional discourse on Ethics to the forefront of the debate once again. The incorporation of nature into human culture and productive activities, which have for a long time led to progress and the improvement of life in many respects, currently shows increasing signs of being exhausted and calls for the "re-invention" of Human-Nature relationships. Consequently, to explore the ethical foundations for global change has deep scientific, conceptual and methodological implications and may call for the emergence of a different brand of social sciences: among others, a new Economics, a new Political Science and a new Sociology.

In conclusion, my stay has changed many of my previous notions and reinforced some. I leave Wiko having strengthened my conviction that this sort of inquiry is as much scientific as it is policy-oriented and thus not value-free, but rather value-laden. However, I have been forced to bow to the reality that this science-policy relationship is murkier today than in the past I thought it had been. The rich and fruitful discussions I have witnessed here stirred my (failed, fictional) beliefs that some sort of "post-modern" and also post-colonialist science had already come of age in the halls of Wiko.

Notwithstanding my hopes and wild aspirations, discussions in the woods of Grunewald prove that Western and European-centred scientific rationality is alive and well. I thus leave with the impression that there is still a long road ahead of us if we indeed want to accomplish the most desired ideal of "re-enchanting" a world so effectively maimed and objectified by Cartesian science. Robert Frost's teachings are definitely germane for the scientific enterprise in the coming years, similarly for Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities. The "two roads" of rational, value-free, objective science and, conversely, that of a policy-embedded scientific inquire, do diverge "in a yellow wood" somewhere deep in Grunewald. I now firmly believe that once I and most Fellows do take "the road less travelled", Frost was right, it will make "all the difference".