# Managing Change: Professorial State Relations of High-Ranking Bureaucrats from the Sociology Field in Iran

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Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

*In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts*

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Budapest, Hungary

2019

**To Bahareh Arvin, and, through her,**

**To all the passionate people in the world,**

**Wherever they may be found**

**Abstract**

The present research focuses on a group of sociology professors who hold important positions in the state bureaucracy. In this stategraphy, I ask how these sociologists-cum-bureaucrats perceive their contributions to the political and bureaucratic field. I specifically inquire into the genealogy of their imaginations of the state with its surprising continuities starting from the first generation of sociologists in the late 1930s, that convinces them to contribute to and engage in state relations. Finally, I look into the realization of this state image through their own practices as bureaucrats. Drawing on one month of fieldwork, I contrastively describe Sociology professors who hold powerful, high-ranking positions inside the state bureaucracy, with Sociology professors who have never had such positions, and university students. I show how the bureaucratic pole of the field constitutes a social group that attempts to seize the state machinery to bring about reforms in society. Their image of the state is that the state is the single motor for reform and change, which convinces them to move from analyzing the state to working for and within the state bureaucracy, trying to translate their sociological understanding of the link between theory and practice into forms of engagement in bureaucracy. As such, this stategraphy sheds new light on the state-society relation by demonstrating how Iranian Sociology professors' embeddedness in the field of Sociology and the intelligentsia at large significantly shapes their modality of work for the state.

**Acknowledgments**

This thesis has benefited enormously from the supervision of Jean-Louis Fabiani and Andre Thiemann. I cannot appreciate them adequately for their feedback. Alina-Sandra Cucu was central not only to the writing-up process but also to the process of cheering me up during the times of anxiety over this work. I was lucky enough to have her supports. Rusia Koziienko, Ihsan Mejdi, Mennatullah Atta, and Elsayed Elsehamy made the CEU fell like home. They have been my pillar of strength and friendship in Budapest. Nahid Marvi and Mohsen Ghomashlooyan were gentle and hospitable enough to host me at their home during my field trip to Tehran, for which I am endlessly thankful. Last but not least, I am grateful to my interlocutors who let me into their lives. They have been generous enough to help me by answering my questions. I hope I have done some justice to their voices.

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# Introduction

> As Durkheim once said, if this science does not help us to reform society, it is not worth studying even for one hour…Therefore, It was the idea of change that made me study Sociology…Probably, it is only Sociology that can help us to better the situation in the country. Sociology, more than other sciences, can advance changes.

On April 5th, 2019, on my way to settle in a neighborhood in south Tehran, I was intrigued by people lined up in front of a grocery store. I stopped to ask around and it turned out that essential staples like rice, meat, and cheese had been rationed. I have witnessed these lines for buying government-subsidized staples almost every day afterward. The reason? The price of everything in the city had doubled. Everyone was talking about the recent round of the U.S. sanctions - started from 2018 - that has prompted prices to increase. On the news ran stories about food and medicine shortage across the country and the likelihood of a war imposed by the U.S. and its regional allies on Iran. In this situation, my main interlocutors, position-holders in the state bureaucracy inevitably brought up discussions about the works they are doing to make the situation better for the citizens.

The present research focuses on a group of sociology professors who hold important positions in the state bureaucracy. I look at the way in which they perceive their contributions to the political and bureaucratic field. I inquire how they imagine the state practice that convinces them to contribute to it and whence it comes. Finally, I look into the realization of this image through their own practices as bureaucrats. Moreover, I embed their professorial state relations in the broader context of state-society relation in modern Iran. Specifically, I look into the genealogy of the discipline and the greater group of the Iranian intelligentsia from the Pahlavi era.

Bureaucrats-cum-sociologists constitute the entry point into a social group that tries to take control of the state apparatus, with the stated desire to bring about change in society. Their image of the

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state is neither the one of an entity separated from society nor about the hope for state gridding or resistance against it. Rather, this image of the state as the singular motor of reform and change is what convinces them to move from analyzing the state to working for and within the state bureaucracy. They try to translate their sociological understanding of the link between theory and practice into forms of engagement in bureaucracy. It is a group of people who moved from the classrooms to offices and meeting rooms. They have concentrated on bureaucratic procedures in their workplaces and achieved skillful knowledge about complicated affairs of bureaucratic systems. Conducting ethnography in a scientific field in which there is a dominant pole consisted of bureaucrats (Ghomashlouyan 2018), and questioning them about their rationales to become part of the state bureaucracy was not never completely without a direct link to the great problems besetting the country. Consequently, whenever they were asked about the state of the field and how their bureaucratic tasks overshadow their academic practices, it was hard not to hear their justifications as a form of sacrificing their professorial tasks for what the people are most longing for: a responsible state that does something for the good of the citizens. In their views, Sociology has made them the right persons for the job, and the job is to take control of the state, their ultimate reference point for any possible change. In the first chapter, by drawing on the history of the Iranian intelligentsia in general, and Iranian sociologists in particular, I will argue that this omnipotent idea about the state constitutes and shapes the state-society relation in contemporary Iran. As I argue, Iranian sociologists have shared their idea about the state with the greater group of the Iranian intelligentsia, an idea in which the state is the single motor for reform and change. With this focus on the state images of high-ranking professionals working as state bureaucrats, this stategraphy sheds new light on the state-society relation in contemporary Iran and beyond.

## *Methodology*

I draw on one month of fieldwork from early April 2019 to early May 2019 in Tehran. During this time, I focused on Sociology professors who hold powerful, high-ranking positions inside the state bureaucracy, Sociology professors who have never had such positions, and university students. Most of the times, I was either in the University of Tehran[1] or Tarbiat Modares University (literally means "Professor Training University")[2]. Also, I allocated a large proportion of my time to shadow one of the professors to her workplace at the City Council of Tehran, the highest office in the local government of Tehran, of which she is a member. Based on participant observation and interviews, I explore the lived experience of these academicians who have accepted powerful executive positions in the state bureaucracy.

In the present work, I have three main protagonists. One of them, Bahareh Arvin is a directly elected member and First Secretary of the City Council of Tehran, that presides over the capital of Iran, and elects the mayor of Tehran. She is holding this position since 2017. She was born in a neighborhood in south Tehran, in an urban lower class family in 1982. Her father is now a retiree of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army, without any political affiliations, and her mother, a housewife. She started to work part-time jobs immediately after her matriculation as a college student at the University of Tehran. Her economic independence from her family, however, started when she pursued graduate studies. She defines her political leanings as affiliated to the Reformist block. She got her Ph.D. from the University of Tehran in 2011 with a thesis on the processes of knowledge production in Social Sciences. One is the deputy mayor of Tehran, Mohammad Reza Javadi Yeganeh. He has held different positions inside the state bureaucracy, but, now, he is the deputy mayor of Tehran since January 2019. He was born in Tehran in an elevated middle-class family in

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[1] - The University of Tehran was founded in 1934 by the parliament. It has remained the most important state university in Iran and a hub of student activism.

[2] - Tarbiat Modares University was founded by the post-revolutionary state in 1982 to train university professors. Among its alumni and faculty are high-ranking Iranian politicians.

1969. His parents were unschooled. He also managed to acquire economic independence from his family when he was 20 years old. Although he is a deputy to a mayor who has been elected by the Reformists, he does not define himself as affiliated to any political party. He procured his Ph.D. from Tarbiat Modares University in 2004 with a thesis on Social Dilemmas. Another one, Mehdi Etemadifard is the president of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Tehran who presides over 65 university professors, 7 departments, and more than 2000 students. He is holding this position since 2017. He was born In Isfahan in an urban middle-class family in 1980. His father was a college-educated man and his mother, a housewife with a high school degree. He also has been of independent means since he was 21 years old. Although he is charged with presiding the Faculty by a Moderate government allied with the Reformists, he does not define himself as such. He got his Ph.D. from the University of Tehran in 2010 with a thesis on religion in contemporary Iran.[3,4]

## *The state-society relation*

In the postwar period in the United States, political scientists, in response to the difficulty of demarcation of the boundary between the state and the civil society, abandoned the concept of the state. They viewed the concept of the state as too vague to work as an object of study (Almond 1960, 5–8). On the contrary, political sociologists urged others in the 80s to bring the concept of the state back in and try to understand it as a weighty actor that is relatively autonomous from society (Skocpol 1985, 3). However, as Philip Abrams (1988) and Timothy Mitchell (1991) argue, both efforts to deal with the elusive boundaries between the state or the political system and society are

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[3] - A study on the social trajectory and the affiliations of these sociologists who are position-holders in the state bureaucracy, with respect to other sociologists who have never had such positions is needed in order to accomplish a comprehensive prosopography of the university professors. The comparison between their specific background and the others' was out of the scope of this research. However, such a study would shed light on the state of the field, and most importantly, on the issue of vertical social mobility in post-revolutionary Iran.

[4] - Final remarks on the methodology: pseudonyms are used for the students throughout, but not for the professors. All translations from Persian to English are mine.

unsatisfactory. While the first approach breaks with the concept of the state, the second approach draws an illusory boundary. An alternative approach, Mitchell argues, should start with the very uncertain border between the state and society (ibid, 89). Thus, studying state practices should accompany studying the state imagination (Mitchell 2006, 169–70). Or, as Philip Abrams would say, we should study the state as a system of institutionalized practices held together by a historically contingent state-idea (Abrams 1988, 82). These debates provided an opening for the application of an anthropological lens for the study of the state, in a way that deals with the question of how people see the state and its boundaries.

An article by Akhil Gupta (1995), often celebrated as one of the founding texts of the anthropology of the state, was among the first to take into account how different groups of people understand state practices. Gupta asserted that the ethnography of the state involves both the study of daily practices of the state and the state bureaucracies, as well as the discursive construction of it in public culture (Gupta 1995, 375). He focused on the cultural practices (in fact, English-language and vernacular newspapers in India) by which the Indian state practice is represented to the citizens and to the street-level bureaucrats (ibid, 376). He explored the citizens' state imagination and the manner in which the state came to be imagined (ibid, 385). This line of inquiry provided an opening for anthropology to investigate different state imaginations. However, in practice, it ended up with the emergence of a dominant dichotomy: the dichotomy of resistance/collaboration vis-a-vis the state.

For instance, Stef Jansen (Jansen 2014) maintains that much of the anthropology of the state is the anthropology against the state. Anthropologists, he argues, mostly have contributed to the reporting of bottom-up resistance against state gridding. He points to this "libertarian paradigm" as the mainstream scholarship in the anthropology of the state. David Graeber (2007, 2011) and James Scott (1998, 2009), Jansen argues, are the main advocates of the people's hope against the state. They have theorized people's evasion of the state and by means of that, facilitated the imagination of

alternatives to the state. Although Jansen admires the efforts of this paradigm, he believes that these contributions came with a price. It has limited, the possibility of seeing people's hope for state gridding and investment in statecraft (Jansen 2014, 241). While he criticizes the libertarian paradigm for reinforcing the understanding of the state-society relation with clear-cut boundaries (ibid, 240-41), he contributes to reinforcing the dichotomy of resistance/collaboration.

In the same manner, Emine Fidan Elcioglu in studying pro-immigrant social movements and their opponents, immigration restrictionist activists in Arizona (Elcioglu 2017), sees two different state imaginations: one that is correspondent to a strong state, and the other to a weak state. She argues that the way these two social movements understand the state's power shapes their tactics toward their goals (ibid, 241). The pro-immigrant movement in accordance with their image of the state as a strong state struggled to restrict the state's reach. Their advocates sought to empower groups to resist the state to boot. Quite the contrary, restrictionist activists who had the weak-state imagination fought to extend the state's reach and empower groups to assist the state (ibid, 243-44). Similarly, another ethnographic study (Yang 2005), in investigating how a community of indigenous people of Taiwan perceive and imagine the state, points out that they use their own idioms to understand and construct their relationship with the state. As a result, she asserts that they place emphasis on their compliance rather than their resistance to the state. In other words, they try to be easy to rule by the government. These two works remain again in the dichotomous understanding of the resistance/collaboration toward the state. I am not saying that this dichotomy is false. However, the case of the sociologists in Tehran, the professorial idea of sociological practice, and the one of state practice show how a social group seizes the state apparatus to implement its ideas, that is, to manage change and navigate it in the desired directions.

What I do in the present study is 'Stategraphy.' Stategraphy is the study of different images of the state practice that come to be realized through the actors' practices within or vis-a-vis the state.

Tatjana Thelen and her colleagues have introduced this framework for the ethnography of the state (Thelen, Vetters, and von Benda-Beckmann 2014). In this framework, they try to take advantage of a relational approach that can encompass both the state idea and the state practice. Such an approach investigates how the state practice at the same time draws on the imaginations, and, shapes them. It is the analysis of concrete social relations and situations in which "it becomes possible to see both the processual nature of state formation and the way in which images become generalized and concretized" (ibid, 9). In general, the main point of departure in this approach is the ethnographic analysis of the ways in which the state is understood, experienced, and reproduced in everyday practices (ibid). In a stategraphy focusing on the analysis of the programs of elder care in Serbia, Thelen, Thiemann, and Roth (2014) conducted fieldwork in two different regions where they problematized how in social relations between state actors and citizens situations state practices and images of the state and its imagined opposite, kinship relations, come together. The work shows how similar state images are distributed across ethnic diversity and despite diverse and counter-intuitive state practices. In effect, all actors perform a misrecognition of state practice and reproduce dominant state images, regardless if they recognize state practices for what they are, or not. Thus, some social workers strategically use widespread images of an absent (and absentifying) state in order to legitimate state care for kinship relations through elder care) that they otherwise practice. Analyzing a less ambivalent case, in this study I draw on the experience of bureaucrats-cum-sociologists in Tehran to show how they implement their specific state idea in practice, leading to rather homogeneous state modalities but much more ambivalent boundary work around the differences between (good) sociological and (good) bureaucratic practice.

Without a doubt, the states are sites of symbolic and cultural productions that are understood and imagined by the general public (Ferguson and Gupta 2002, 981). In this regard, one thing that is missing is the fact that the state actors are embedded in this understanding of the state. In some

cases, they implement practices that are in line with their general understanding of what the state is (which often times means what the state should be). Stategraphy tries to capture, among other things, this embeddedness. In a study of two Hungarian villages (Schwarcz and Szoke 2014), the authors show how two different relational modalities are rooted in the mayors' ideas about the state, which are embedded in the relationships they had with the villagers (ibid, 154). The point is that there can be other sources of state imagination than the state itself. The state actors' idea of state practices might be rooted in their embeddedness in their social relations. In my case, it comes from high-level bureaucrats' embeddedness in the field of Sociology and the common ideas they have from the Iranian version of the discipline. The answers the discipline provides for questions like "what does a sociologist do?" or "what is Sociology?", shape their idea regarding the state and sociological practice.

Although it might seem that Sociology professors in Tehran, by dedicating themselves to bureaucratic positions rather than research, want to collaborate with the state, their imagination does not correspond to this. In fact, they do not see themselves as outside of the state, but as part of it, as bodies that go back and forth between different offices. Their embeddedness in a specific understanding of Sociology and its founding fathers shapes their vision of state practice. In their view, it is part and parcel of the sociological practice to control changes in society and orient them in the desired direction using the single motor for reform and change, i.e., the state. However, it does not mean these sociologists-cum-bureaucrats believe they are apart from society. Apparently, Timothy Mitchell is right. There is no clear-cut boundary between the state and society in their vision. Of course, even if they would envision a clear-cut boundary, the line might still be blurred[5]. Here, the important point is that since they do not see themselves as either apart from the state or

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[5] - I want to thank Professor Tatjana Thelen for directing my attention to this point in an e-mail correspondence.

from the society, one cannot put them either in the category of resistance or collaboration in the context of the state-society relations.

In his essay, *Seeing Like a State, An Essay on the Historiography of Modern Iran*, Cyrus Schayegh (2010) argues against the dominant image of the Pahlavi state (1925–1979) among the historians of modern Iran "as completely distinct from society" (ibid, 37). Although he admits the power of that state and its separateness from society, it is not the full story, he convincingly shows. The full image lies in the millions' interactions with the state bureaucracy and affecting its policies:

> the image of a detached state is a caricature of the complex practice of governing. We barely understand how societal actions forced the Pahlavi state to react or how societal reactions to policies subjected the latter to unintended changes once off the drawing board. In both cases, policymakers, regular government employees, and ordinary Iranians interacted more intensely than we commonly assume (ibid, 38).

By showing different examples of such interactions throughout the Pahlavi Iran (namely, in land reform, social policy, and infrastructure development), he invites historians of contemporary Iran to rethink the dominant 'methodological statism' and to blur the clear line between state and society. However, Schayegh in his attempt to blurring the boundary between the state and society draws another line between the state bureaucracy and society since he believes that the state bureaucrats are apart from the society (ibid, 37). In Schayegh's argument, blurring the analytical boundary between the state and society is about cramming the people's interactions with the bureaucracy into the analysis. In other words, the state bureaucracy exists outside the borders of society. As I show, in fact, bureaucrats-cum-sociologists constitute a case for a social group that tries to take control of the state apparatus to bring about changes in society. Therefore, their idea is not about seeing the state as separate from society. Nor it is about the hope for state gridding or resistance against it. As my case and Schayegh's own data show, different social groups have always tried to take control of the

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state machine.[6] Consequently, his proposed 'methodological statism' might be in the minds of the researchers and not the people's.

In this stategraphy, I show how Iranian Sociology professors' embeddedness in the field of Sociology shapes the modality in which they imagine the Iranian state and as a result of that, work for the state. In fact, my empirical analysis shows the continuation of this modality within the Sociology field in Iran, starting from the first generation until now.

### *From classifying the supreme classifiers to listening to the empirical individuals*

In previous research on the Sociology field in Iran, using Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), I investigated the question of what Iranian sociologists do, tackling the problematic state of Iranian Sociology (Ghomashlouyan 2018). Iranian sociologists as the principal agents of this scientific field, I showed, largely work on accumulating temporal academic capital rather than scientific and intellectual capital. According to Bourdieu, every university field is the locus of two intersecting antagonistic capitals which lead to two principles of hierarchization. First, what Bourdieu called "the social hierarchy", corresponds to the accumulation of social, economic, and political capitals possessed both inside the field and outside, in the political and bureaucratic field. Second, in opposition stands the "scientific hierarchy", corresponding to the capital of scientific or intellectual renown. Bourdieu calls the capital corresponding to the social hierarchy "temporal academic capital", which is specifically temporal and political and which is characterized, within the logic of the university field, by a dependence on the principles operative in the meta-field of power (Bourdieu 1988, 48). Temporal academic power, which is the product of temporal academic capital, is achieved by holding important positions both within academia and outside, in the political and national bureaucratic structure. These positions allow control over the other positions inside the university field (ibid, 84, 99).

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[6] - I will get back to this point in the last chapter.

Still, some questions were left unexplored, including the question whether Iranian sociologists at the local level distinguish between different sorts of capitals in the academic field, and how they perceive their contributions to the political and bureaucratic field. These unexplored questions are tackled here. I address the question of how the bureaucratic pole of the field conceives the state practice that contributes to the accumulation of this kind of capital rather than scientific capital. How do these bureaucrats-cum-sociologists conceive of sociological practice that leads them to participate in the bureaucratic field? Finally, how do their ideas of state practice come to be realized through their own practices as bureaucrats? All in all, here I explore the bureaucratic pole's professorial ideas of the state and its practice as part of the state.

I have outlined the social space of the current Sociology field in Iran in 2018. As a part of the results, the field, I showed, is divided into two poles. On the one side, there are academic sociologists who have had at least one administrative position during their tenureship at the state universities (73.2 percent of 56 sociologists who have been the faculty members of the state universities in Tehran during the time of the study). On the other, there are academicians who have never had such an experience (26.8 percent). Using another index, I have shown, there are academicians who invest in scientific and intellectual capital (39.3 percent), and there are others who do not participate in investing in this kind of capital inside this scientific field (60.7 percent) (Ghomashlouyan 2018, 91).

There are dispositions corresponds to the positions occupied by the agents in that field. For instance, statistically speaking, the bureaucratic pole of the field is more prone to contribute to the research defined or ordered by the state institutions. Also, either they do not publish books, or they publish them with governmental publishers. And, they are likely to publish textbooks which have a better market. It is the opposite of what the state of the field is in the scientific and intellectual pole (ibid). These are some of the oppositions between two poles of the Sociology field in Iran, which I

have shown in that research. Figure 1 outlines the map of the field, indicating positions of the 56 Iranian sociologists who have been the faculty members of the state universities in Tehran in 2018.
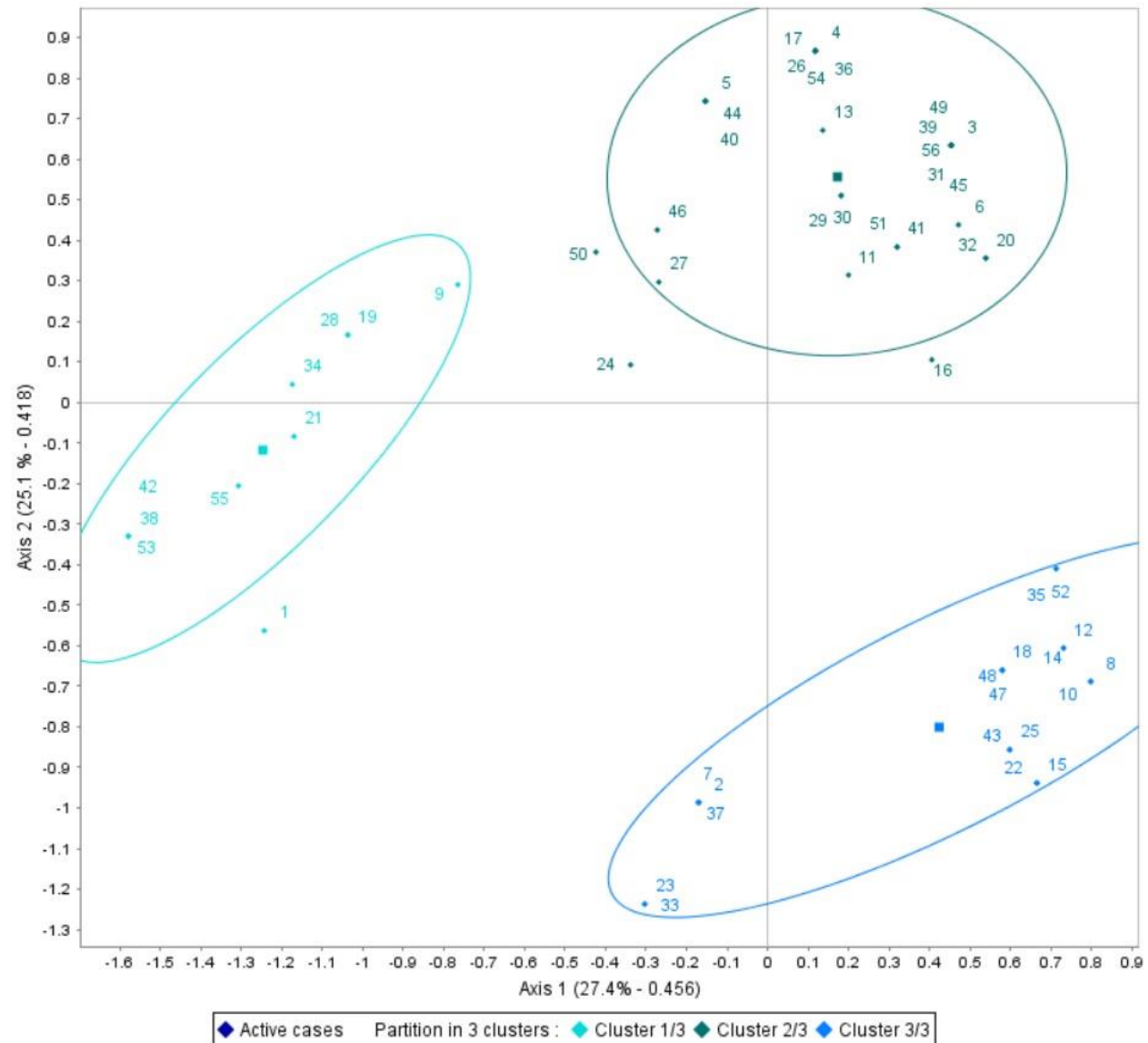


Figure 1. Clustering the positions in the Iranian Sociology field
Source: Ghomashlouyan 2018, 98

Academic sociologists who have had at least one administrative position during their tenureship at the state universities are clustered on the right side of the axis 1 (clusters 2 and 3) and the

academicians who have never had such an experience are clustered on the left (cluster 1). I chose my three main protagonists from the high-ranking position-holders of the clusters 2 and 3. I followed them in their meetings and classes. I heard their stories and their rationales behind their decisions to contribute to statecraft, instead of treating them as some numbers on statistical tables, and classifying them into categories. The latter is what I did in my previous research. As the focus of the current study is on the state-society relation, I studied them as a case for that relation. The interactions I had with them during the fieldwork transformed my attitude toward them. There is a prevalent critical approach toward those bureaucrats-cum-sociologists. When I started to focus on the practices of those sociologists, I also had this critical approach to them, navigating my path throughout my research. In my previous research on them, I had only used existing data available on the Web and other public and published information. I tried to interview them but to no avail. They did not allow me to interview them making various excuses from not having time for that to being suspicious of my questions. Such an incident had already been warned by Bourdieu. In an interview with Loic Wacquant, he pointed out that he had predicted asking questions from his subjects from *Homo Academicus* would trigger hostile reactions. For this reason, he did not resort to direct interviews and used only public and published data (Wacquant 1989, 35). This time, I could work with three of them. Hearing their stories and their rationale for their decisions to become high-ranking bureaucrats seems to have diluted my critical approach toward those professors. However, it does not mean that other students might share this opinion. In their viewpoint, Sociology professors having positions inside the state bureaucracy have affected the quality of lots of things in academia, from the quality of courses and research to the student-teacher relationships.

Part of this personal transformation I experienced is the result of treating my interlocutors as 'empirical individuals' and not 'constructed individuals' (Bourdieu 1988, 22) Bourdieu distinguishes between scientific classification by which individuals differ through a finite set of properties or

variables deemed relevant by the sociologist. According to him, empirical individuals as actual human beings can be reduced to their relevant properties in the theoretical framework considered (ibid). Although it is hard to disagree with Bourdieu on the importance of the act of construction for the social sciences and for the science in general, interacting with my interlocutors, breaking bread with them, hearing their personal stories, and the like has made it hard for me to forget the totality and the particularity of each one of them. One could scale up from the singularity and the particularity of empirical individuals to the generality and the universality that Bourdieu was after in *Homo Academicus*. However, I see them as different levels, working together. For instance, the proper understanding of the state of the things in Iranian Sociology is not flawless without scaling down to the empirical individuals and working with them. If we leave out the process of scaling down, we are pushed to assert our value judgments about the bureaucratic pole of the field. These assertions are at least incomplete, even though they might be justifiable. This is the reason why I integrate Bourdeiusian field analysis with relational stategraphy.

I use my ethnographic data and my interviews as the primary step toward an extended case study on the Iranian sociologists. I draw on the history of the discipline and the state-society relation in modern Iran to show how the state-idea of the current sociologists in Iran is consistent with the image of an omnipotent state the Iranians have had throughout their history. Consequently, this research contributes to the understanding of three intertwined things. It adds to the understanding of the professorial vision of the world in Tehran. As a part of this study, I concentrated on their state imagination. Still, it is part and parcel of their broader vision of the world. Also, this study contributes to the state imagination theories in anthropology. Specifically, it aims to contribute to the growing studies on the situations in which imaginations and practices of the state would come together (Thelen, Vetters, and von Benda-Beckmann 2014). The position of bureaucrat-cum-sociologist forms dual embeddedness regarding both roles. They interlock two distinct positions. On

the one hand, they have specific visions of the state as sociologists, and on the other hand, they have the role of actualization of those visions as the members of the Iranian state bureaucracy. Finally, I see in this research a potential to encourage relational anthropologists of the state to move beyond the dichotomy of resistance/collaboration. Sociology professors in Tehran, as a social group, introduce a more complicated imagined relation between the state and society.

## 2. Iranian Sociology and the state

This chapter aims to give a genealogical account of the history of the discipline in Iran and the greater social group of Iranian intelligentsia to reconstruct how the current Iranian sociologists' image of state practice is consistent with that of their predecessors.

The first Sociology course in Tehran was taught in 1935 by Wilhelm Hass, a German anthropologist (allegedly, a Nazi spy) at the Tehran Teachers' Training College titled The Task of Science of Society. It took the first generation of French-trained Iranian sociologists[7] (Gholam Hossein Sedighi, Ehsan Naraghi, Jamshid Behnam, and Shapour Rasekh) 22 years to establish the first Sociology Department at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Tehran under the name of the Department of Social Sciences. Namely, the first Iranian sociologist, Gholam Hossein Sedighi (1905-1992), the Minister of Post and Telegraph (from 1951 to 1952) and the Minister of the Interior (from 1952 to 1953) in the government of Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq, established the first chair of Sociology in 1939 (Fazeli 2006, 84). The foundation of the Faculty and its research institute (Institute of Social Studies and Research, hereafter: ISSR) was a response to the need for guiding state officials in both the formulation and the implementation of new policies, and dealing with social change (Enayat 1974, 8; Schayegh 2010, 42).

The second generation of Iranian Sociology was formed in the 1970s and 1980s. This generation included three distinct groups: students or colleagues of the founding generation, bureaucrats who entered Sociology, and left-wing or right-wing social critics, most of them Europe's graduates (especially France) and the United States'. All of them went to study abroad in the 1950s (Azad Armaki 1999, 49). The third generation of Iranian Sociology began to work after 1984, after the period of disruption and stagnation in the field, coinciding with the establishment of the Islamic

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[7] - Here, I am talking only about the state of things in academic sociology. For a brief discussion about the contribution of non-academic intellectuals to the Iranian sociology from the thirties to fifties, see Hamid Enayat's *On the State of Social Sciences in Iran* (1974, 6–7)

Republic in Iran and the Cultural Revolution (ibid, 62). Many of them are still active in the field alongside a younger generation of sociologists who have finished their studies in the 2000s.

Going back to the first generation, the question is, what was the Pahlavis main policy that made them establish brand-new universities and research institutes? The general idea about the Pahlavi monarchs (1921-1979), especially during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979), is that they implemented modernization policies and proceeded with all sorts of major changes, be they social, cultural, and economic (but not political) (Abrahamian 1982, 426). In general, one could characterize the 20th century Iran as the period of constant change and alteration in conditions. Therefore, it is also a story about the politics of managing that change, 'as successive governments and political elites sought, and continue to seek, to navigate a stable and sustainable route from a perception of tradition to a particular conception of modernity' (Ansari 2007, 3). The ideology of the Pahlavis regarding social change is a good example of what James Scott calls "high-modernist ideology," which can be best conceived as "a strong, one might even say muscle-bound, version of the self-confidence about scientific and technical progress, the expansion of production, the growing satisfaction of human needs, the mastery of nature (including human nature), and, above all, the rational design of social order commensurate with the scientific understanding of natural laws" (Scott 1998, 4). It has been argued that the modernization policies of the Pahlavi monarchs were always welcomed by the Iranian intelligentsia as a reaction to seemingly enduring humiliation caused by the treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkmanchay (1828), which were imposed on Iran following its defeat in wars with Tsarist Russia. The efforts of the intelligentsia can be summed up as a search for a remedy for the country's compounded problems. In fact, reforms and change were so important for this group that in the aftermath of the cataclysmic attempts at constitutionalization in Iran (1905-1911), they decided to choose a strong, powerful state and swift reforms from above over political rights for the citizens (Atabaki and Zürcher 2004, 2–4). The educated body of the

Iranian elite imposed its vision of change and reform on a largely unwilling society. The elites deemed the management of change as part of their responsibility (Ansari 2007, 3).

Without referring to any examples, Ansari claims that the Iranian intelligentsia as a distinct social group in the 20th century Iran suggested specific policies to the state, however, alternated between a dutiful critique of the establishment and a very occasional co-optation into the state arena (ibid, 4). It is a myth stemming from having the idea of a clear-cut boundary between the state and society (here, the social group of the intelligentsia), and a metanarrative of Pahlavi history. Only microhistories of specific places and groups, which is left to anthropologist, can show the unnoticed reality of state-society relations (Schayegh 2010, 38). Iranian sociologists are among those groups which exemplify the co-optation of the Iranian intelligentsia into the state bureaucracy. From the first generation until now, they have moved from criticizing the state to working for and within the state apparatus, though some of them kept their critique of the establishment intact. For instance, after the growing brutality and political repression by the Shah in the 70s, it became hard for sociologists of the second generation to work within the state, and they started to distance themselves from it. Fazeli argues that the Pahlavi state became unhappy with the working of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Tehran and the ISSR in turn. This had two reasons. First, the state's reach had been augmented and it was felt that the Faculty and its institute were not capable of meeting all government needs. Second and more importantly, the Faculty had become an intellectual hub and it had developed a critical approach toward the modernization policy of the state, especially, after 1970, even though it was the state's own institute. Consequently, after 1970, the state reduced its financial support for the Faculty and the ISSR while increasing support for non-academic, governmental research centers, which resulted in a loss of the centrality and importance of Iranian Sociology (Fazeli 2006, 89).

While the first generation experienced strained relations with the state, it remained relatively close to the state bureaucracy, although their affiliation varied from person to person and from time to time. For instance, while Sedighi had been a member of the Iranian National Front and Prime Minister Mossadeq's democratic administration in the fifties, Ehsan Naraghi (1926-2012), who was a Sociology professor at the University of Tehran and ISSR head for 12 years, remained close to the Queen Consort's office and the court of the Shah until the end of the monarchical regime in 1979 (Naraghi 1994). Naraghi self-documented his state image, and this material can serve here as a case study for the first generation overall. In Naraghi's view, sociological vision does not collide with the state's modernist agenda and top-bottom idea about social change, though it aims to impede the runaway train of industrialization and modernization (Enayat 1974, 8; Naraghi 1994, 4). In his opinion, the aims of the ISSR "were to understand the changes overtaking the traditional Iranian society as a result of modernization, Westernization and industrialization, to control these changes and orientate them in desired [sic] direction" (Enayat 1974, 8).

Naraghi's vision of sociological practice leans toward conducting studies which are applicable for the state and favor social change. According to him, the role of sociologists in "developing countries" is not so much the creation of original works and contribution to the understanding of the processes of change in society. Instead, it should be to "work out propositions favoring social change." The sociologists should, therefore, Naraghi believes, obtain a place alongside high-ranking officials in the elaboration of policies (ibid, 10). It seems that social scientists were not the only social group who had this image of their practices as the way to support social change. As Schayegh states, the employees and the street-level bureaucrats of the first modern state of Iran during Reza Shah Pahlavi era (1925-1941) also believed that they have the knowledge and the duty to accelerate the reforms in society (Schayegh 2010, 42). Notwithstanding, after the establishment of the ISSR, it was the case for the Sociology in general to emphasize its relevance to social planning (ibid).

The majority of the sociologists of the second generation, according to Azad Armaki, were bureaucrats: 'perhaps it is more accurate to call the majority of the sociologists of this group bureaucrats and not social thinkers' (Azad Armaki 1999, 50). If there is always a sense among Iranian sociologists that there is no sociological insight in the Iranian political arena, and the physicians and engineers have created the bulk of the state bureaucracy, this is due to the fact that the physicians and engineers have had the numbers. Sociologists have not given up the active participation in the bureaucratic field of Iran as far as they could, and they have always accepted various executive positions (ibid). In the following chapters, I focus on the younger sociologists who are currently active in the field and contribute to the state bureaucracy. Without a doubt, inside the university, one can witness the administrative duties of academicians, i.e., filling forms, preparing for promotion, participating in administrative meetings, being the head of the department, etc. These are bureaucratic tasks related to the work in the university, tasks that could burden the academicians. However, I am not talking about the administrative duties related to the work in the university. Rather, position-holding in the state bureaucracy is what Iranian sociologists consider as performing bureaucratic tasks. Sociology professors of the bureaucratic pole who have gone form Sociology departments to working within the state bureaucracy always continued their careers as university professors. In the next chapter, I write about the lived experience of my interlocutors form the bureaucratic pole of the Sociology field in Iran to see what it means to be a high-ranking bureaucrat and a sociologist in contemporary Iran. Finally, in the last chapter, I describe the modality in which they imagine the Iranian state.

## 3. "Being a manager and a professor"

> In the developed world…I do not know anyone who is, say the Minister of Roads and Transportation and people say the person is a university professor. Sometimes I feel like it is a farce, it is inconceivable. How is it possible that someone manages to do all these works? This is the pathological part of it that someone is a manager and a professor, and want to give up on neither of them.

With these words, Fardin Alikhah, one of the few Sociology professors who has never had a bureaucratic position, expressed his conviction that you cannot be a manager and a professor at the same time. But as shown in the previous chapter, the majority of Sociology professors in Iran do precisely juggle such a hybrid identity. In this chapter, I attempt to answer the question of what it means to be a high-ranking bureaucrat and a sociologist, both for the Sociology professors and their students. The focus is mostly on the lived experience of these Sociology professors themselves. Their most pressing problems – time-economy and the consequences of their workload on their professional lives – will be discussed in detail. Additionally, I tackle the question of how they perceive their contributions to the political and bureaucratic field, and if they believe their two positions are distinguishable.

### 3.1. Time-economy

On April 28th, 2019, I went to attend Mehdi Etemadifard's reading group at the office of the president of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Tehran. I was sitting at his secretary's office, waiting for him to let me in his office. A lot of people were there waiting for him. The Dialectic of Enlightenment reading group was supposed to start at 14:30. It was 15:30, and people were still waiting outside for his permission to go into his office and start the reading. Lila, a graduate student, was sitting next to me since the beginning. She told me she has been sitting here from 13. She said she only wanted to ask him a short question. Eventually, she could talk to him at

15:35. Before that, she was complaining to me that it has always been the same. Sarah, another graduate student, also told me that she came here at 13:30. She could not meet him eventually since she wanted to have a consultation with him about her thesis. Etemadifard is her supervisor. His secretary was telling the students that these days, he is maintaining a hectic schedule. Surprisingly enough, the reading group members seemed calm, staying outside the office without complaining. Meanwhile, I saw different people going inside for short meetings. They did not look like students. I approached the secretary to ask about the chaotic situation I was witnessing. "The students have become used to this mess here and they know they have to wait always," she said. "You will get used to it as well," she continued. I started to talk to the reading group members and ask around to find out more about the reading group. It turned out that the group is the continuation of one of his courses on the Sociology of cultural changes, and it has been two years since the beginning of this reading group. The topic of the course was interesting for the students of the course and therefore, a few of them asked Etemadifard to continue it in the form of a reading group to read Adorno and Horkheimer together.

I went back to sit next to Sarah. She was complaining that Etemadifard answers neither her e-mails nor her text messages, and since she was starting her thesis, she was under stress regarding her work. Finally, after dismissing some of the students and setting another time for them and meeting some other ones, the reading group started around 16:30 and ended at 17:30 since Etemadifard had another class to teach. They only read less than two pages from the book. For the students, it is a chance to read the book together and discuss it, and that is enough for them. However, I would not attend this reading group if I were in their situation since I did not find it useful.[8]

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[8] I have to admit that he has been one of my favorite teachers since he started his career at the University of Tehran in 2011. It was not only me who liked his course but also lots of my friends felt the same. It seems that he has kept his fame even after becoming the president of the Faculty. However, for me, it was not like I was really fascinated by him. Rather, I could only find a few good teachers in the Department of Sociology at the University of Tehran during the years I studied there.

In this vignette, I represented a day in the life of Etemadifard. The reason I started the section on Time-Economy with him is that he has the most related administrative position to academia. Apparently, he has the easiest position in comparison to the other bureaucrats-cum-sociologists. However, in this vignette, we see that he has a hard time to manage to juggle a dozen tasks at once. When I spoke with him, he portrayed a more detailed typical day of his current life. He arrives at his workplace at 8 in the morning. During the day, he is busy going to classes and doing his duties as the president of the Faculty in an intertwined way, probably, like what I represented above. After 15:30, he has different reading groups almost every day until 19 in the evening. Then he goes home to rest. His nights, he said, are his free times mixed with the reading of some stuff.

Having free times might be exclusively the case for Etemadifard. For instance, Mohammad Reza Javadi Yeganeh, the deputy mayor of Tehran and the head of the Department of Sociology at the University of Tehran, talked about how he misses the past situation when he had a better mindset for reading, writing, and intellectual reflection, and more time for his teaching duties. He likes those old days much more than his current situation, he said. For him, those days had more opportunities in terms of intellectual activities, although he insisted that he does not mean he extremely dislikes his new situation. For him, this could be a good experience, even though he has lost a few things, having the night for himself and sleeping more in the morning, among others. His hectic days do not let him stay awake at night in order to reflect on his days and his works, not to mention reading or writing since he has to be at work circa 6:30 in the morning and go back around 20 at night. He goes to university only one hour per day, he said.

Here we should follow Bourdieu's remarks on the issue of time. As he says, "nothing could better sum up the set of opposition established between those situated at the two poles of the university field than the structure of their time-economy (because of the fact that the kind of capital possessed influences the way in which agents allocate their time)"(Bourdieu 1988, 98). In order to be successful

in their bureaucratic positions, the academics of the bureaucratic pole have to spend constant and heavy time, a time expenditure that cuts the total amount of time they could allocate to their academic duties (ibid, 95). They know this sacrifice of time they are making with the exception of Etemadifard who said he pushes himself to keep the balance between his two positions in terms of time expenditure. That is, he is squeezing his free time and his weekends in order to make room for doing research and reading. Now he has no time for vacations, he said. His strategy is to cut his free times to avoid the sacrifice of his academic time. Others could not keep this balance, whether because of the nature of the administrative position or the workload, as the students pointed out. Mostafa, a third year M.A. student at Tarbiat Modares University who has had courses with Bahareh Arvin both before and after her new position at the City Council of Tehran believes

> the difference was very serious. Before entering the Council, she herself managed 80 to 90 percent of the class. After [entering] the council, the management of the class was passed to the assistant…This was a change in her classes that the quality of her classes dramatically decreased. That same class, I think, had a better quality in the preceding year. She used to be more engaged with the class, more engaged with the people's feelings, more attached to the students, knew more about our feelings, used to chat with them more. But, after [entering] the Council…Bahareh Arvin attends the classes only because she is a professor of the university and receives money from the university…Bahareh Arvin was a punctual person who was always in her office during her office hours. You could make an appointment with her easily, speak with her at the planned time. She was a very disciplined person. But, as expected, after [entering] the Council, she was not a disciplined person anymore. Or, at least, she was less present at the university during the times she was supposed to… Honestly, I think her political personality and her concerns there have overshadowed her scientific personality and compared to the situation before, my experience says that she is not allocating enough time.

I spoke with Arya, Bahareh Arvin's assistant about his experience of working with her. Tellingly, he was feeling dry. He told me that Bahareh Arvin stopped checking his comments on the students'

reaction papers one month after the beginning of the semester. He also made a quick remark upon his experience of working with her at her research group, the one she is supervising from 2012: 'it could be better, but, it does not work efficiently now.' When I asked why he thinks it does not work, he explained to me that almost all of the time of the meetings goes for the members' obligatory theses and dissertations and there is only a little time for doing research or reading books collectively. He referred to the other members' narrative about the group, which signifies 'the golden era' in the past, the time that things were far better and Bahareh used to allocate enough time to the group.[9] He said that he sent two parts of her thesis at intervals to his supervisor Bahareh Arvin. However, she read neither of two parts.

I attended Bahareh Arvin's research group once during the fieldwork. They have had set two items on the agenda for that meeting: discussing a book and receiving reports from two members about their theses. They started off the meeting with the reports. However, they could not go further. There was no time for discussing the book. I realized that everyone is too busy in her/his work that there is no time for any of these five persons for anything extra-curricular, though they spend a little bit of time reading (even partially) and commenting on each other's works.

Bahareh Arvin told me she allocated Mondays and Wednesdays to the university works and therefore, she is in her office at the university during these two days. That is true, and I met with her almost every Wednesday in her office. However, it does not mean that during those days, she always does things related to her academic duties, as she acknowledged. The reason behind spending less time for her academic career might not be exclusively her heavy workload: 'the fact is that the university does not make me feel good anymore. What I want is not going back to university since the university is really boring and barren'. She commented on the issue of time, comparing herself to

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[9] - I happened to be a member of this research group. I experienced working with her both before and after her new position at the City Council of Tehran. In my experience, the group used to function better before 2017, when she entered the City Council.

her colleagues: 'I do not think I am spending less time compared to the others…Even I think I am allocating time to the students more than each of my colleagues…, though it is right that I am spending less quality time compared to the past.' She made this remark on 'Iranian academia' that presents only 'the show of knowledge production,' like soulless rituals in which the performers only maintain the facade of something that meant to be full of meaning. Academia does not kindle new delights for her to continue that path anymore. Therefore, the issue is not exclusively the scarcity of time. Rather, Iranian academia is not worth the effort, she pointed out.

The scientific and intellectual pole allocates time to strictly academic research or to what Fardin Alikhah calls "sharing with the so-called non-academic society," i.e., with the general public[10], while the bureaucratic pole does not have sufficient time for those activities. The following excerpt from my interview with him shows the general approach the scientific pole has toward these bureaucrats-cum-sociologists:

> some people - and they are not few in our country - are manager-professors, maybe, we can use this expression. These manager-professors sometimes, I say, they are superhumans. When you go to become a manager, take full sabbatical leave from the university, you know. It is impossible that you be a professor and teach and want to go and manage a place…I do not agree to have both. It has not been fruitful yet…You know, there is greed in it as well, when the person wants to have both the prestige of a professor and does not want to lose the position.

It is hard to examine what he says about the bureaucrats-cum-sociologists' greed since their answers to the questions about money and status might not be reliable. The fact is that by living in both fields, they have access to more resources, including money, status, and also power, and they are paid for both of their positions. Therefore, there are differences in terms of salaries between these

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[10] - A more thorough inquiry on the scientific and intellectual pole of the Sociology field in Iran regarding the issue of time-economy needs to be done since as Arya remarked, it might not be the case that they allocate time to academic research: 'the whole Sociology department of Tarbiat Modares University seems to do everything but academic work.' Bahareh Arvin also pointed out that she believes the time she allocates to her academic works and to her students is still above the average in the context of the Iranian academia.

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two poles of the field, and the bureaucratic positions they got are with double or triple the salary of their academic positions. It might be true that the person wants to have both the prestige of a university professor, and the money and the power of a high-ranking bureaucrat. However, the reason that I say it might be hard to talk about their greed in terms of the money is that university professors who get tenure are not by any means among the low-paid employees of the state. Perhaps, It is not about social prestige either since the position of the university professor is one of the most prestigious occupations in the country insofar as some of the position-holders in the state bureaucracy, 'want to get [academic] positions… [and therefore] they grant privileges to some academic professors,' one of my interlocutors mentioned.

Moreover, there is a possibility for the academicians of the bureaucratic pole to get involved in exchanging their capitals (Bourdieu 1988, 96). With the position they have, they are well equipped to enter the game of exchange. Their political authority holds a special allure for others to approach them with their ready-to-publish works. The non-scientific capitals inside academia help their holders to elevate themselves in their academic worthiness and publish a lot of co-authored papers. These academicians are prone to expose themselves or will be exposed to the forces outside the field proper since they are relatively poor in the field's specific symbolic capital (Steinmetz 2016, 161). In fact, they can compensate for their lack of time by taking advantage of their administrative positions. I heard the story of the former minister of health and medical education from one of my interlocutors. I checked his Curriculum Vitae. From 2013 to 2018, when he was in the office, he could publish 268 scientific articles as the professor of Tehran University of Medical Sciences. It seemed impossible to me that he was able to do that if he has not had his powerful position to entice his students and his colleagues to collaborate with him. Therefore, the accumulation of the capital external to the field can be exchanged for scientific capital.

### 3.2. Living in two different worlds

Etemadifard feels like the students are mostly more satisfied with the new situation since, he said, he has increased the number of his courses and his reading groups. This was not the same for other professors, and students were not happy with the situation. The reason for this difference is because of the fact that his administrative position is inside academia, Etemadifard explained. For him, his position as the president of the Faculty is not that much different from his professorial position compared to other positions inside the state bureaucracy. He said his administrative position is helping him in his academic duties to perform better in terms of teaching and doing research. However, as the vignette by which I started this chapter shows, not all the students would confirm his claim they are more satisfied with the new situation.

With this exception, the professors-bureaucrats feel like they are living in two different worlds that each one of them demands different things. Bahareh Arvin described her experience of the conflict between her powerful position in the Council of Tehran and her position of an ordinary sociologist, a faculty member in the Sociology department:

> This creates a tension inside you for performing your routine duties in academia. It means that I want to act normally but, you are not normal. For this reason, when you go somewhere, their shock of seeing that you are acting normally shows that you are not normal…There are some conferences that I really want to attend…Ah, defense sessions…In general, attending the defense sessions is really an issue. I might like going to the defense sessions but, it is strange…There is a difficulty in this. Inside academia, they cannot invite me somewhere as a faculty member. I am a sociologist of science, but, I cannot speak about the Sociology of science somewhere anymore. I am now a member of the [City] Council [of Tehran]. Wherever I go, not only my position should be the keynote speaker but also my speech will not be evaluated necessarily as accurate, scientific, and sociological. Instead, it will be evaluated as the speech delivered by a politician. Therefore, it had a very bad effect.

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Here, Bahareh Arvin is talking about how her position at the City Council of Tehran has put her academic position in jeopardy and claims that becoming a high-ranking bureaucrat has transformed her career to a bureaucrat who has also academic duties as an academic sociologist. This is why it is more accurate to call her bureaucrat/sociologist and not the other way around, a sociologist/bureaucrat. Her new position, as she described it, was the beginning of her fall as a serious sociologist: 'I feel like I am left out of academic gatherings.'

For them, it is a contradiction in real time, as a departure from a place where they can speak freely about, say, politics to a place where they have to practice politics. They cannot analyze politics, or write about politics academically and scientifically. However, they cannot completely detach themselves from their academic world either. When I asked Javadi Yeganeh, the deputy mayor of Tehran whether he missed the old days when he was only a university professor, he answered:

> I really liked the past situation. I used to allocate more time for teaching…It was good. I had more time…Teachers' lives and managers' lives are two distinct entities…I really liked that situation more, the situation in which I could have more time for contemplation, for reading, and for writing.

I asked about his career plan,' a teacher,' he replied with an air of decisiveness: 'I really wanted to give up on this managerial system, and will give up shortly. Academic life…homo acedemicus has other concerns [that] does not let the person be a good political actor…Since my life and my traits are that of an academician, I do not see my future in this space.' They understand the conditions of living contradictory worlds. As I mentioned, they know they cannot say and write about whatever they want. When I got into Bahareh Arvin's car for the first part of the interview, I was armed with my list of questions about her experience. I set my recorder and started inquiring into her feelings about her positions. While she was driving, she started off by telling me about the difficulty of maintaining her two characters, the fact that she cannot act as an ordinary academician after getting into her high-ranking political position. A telling example was once she wanted to publish a note on

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the Web about the 1979 Revolution on its 40th anniversary, her advisers warned her not to publish the note, however. For her, it was a signpost pointing to a new era in her life where she cannot write whatever she wants about the political or the social. She misses the past situation, though she is not sure about her future path. Although she does not like to remain in academia, she misses the days she used to read and do research. She does not know if she is going to continue her political career or even her academic career. Nevertheless, she seems quite sure that what she wants the most is reading and doing research. It is hard to assert that it is possible to reconcile the two worlds without overshadowing the academic life and its duties. Perhaps, this is the reason why bureaucrats-cum-sociologists prefer to go back to their offices at the university and read and write.

## 4. The state as the only possible engine of change

> Politics means a slow, powerful drilling through hard boards, with a mixture of passion and a sense of proportion. It is absolutely true, and our entire historical experience confirms it, that what is possible could never have been achieved unless people had tried again and again to achieve the impossible in this world. But the man who can do this must be a leader, and not only that, he must also be a hero-in a very literal sense. And even those who are neither a leader or a hero must arm themselves with that staunchness of heart that refuses to be daunted by the collapse of all their hopes, for otherwise they will not even be capable of achieving what is possible today. The only man who has a "vocation" for politics is one who is certain that his spirit will not be broken if the world, when looked at from his point of view, proves too stupid or base to accept what he wishes to offer it, and who, when faced with all that obduracy, can still say "Nevertheless!" despite everything.

> Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*

For the bureaucrats-cum-sociologists whom I spoke, the state is a powerful apparatus, which gives the position-holders of the bureaucracy opportunities to make changes in society. Javadi Yeganeh told me that if the people who are in charge of the state had the willingness to make improvements in the structures of the society, the situation would be far better. He told me he said this also to Mr. President himself. He mentioned the reforms done by Amir Kabir (1807-1852) chief minister to Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (Shah of Persia[11]) during the three years he was in office, as the results of the willingness of power for reforms. His state-idea is nicely consistent with his idea of the sociological practice. According to his managerial vision of the discipline, applied Sociology is what the Iranian society needs to implement reforms: 'In Iran's case, there is no need for theory and research to understand and solve some important problems; in order to solve them, the will [to

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[11] - It was in 1935 the first Pahlavi monarch informed foreign countries they must stop using the name 'Persia' and instead, use 'Iran,' in an attempt to emphasize the Aryan ancestry of the Iranian people and to ally the country with Nazi Germany.

change] is needed.' If the essential ingredient for making the change is the will of the power, sociologists should take control of the state machine to make it happen, according to him.

'I entered Sociology with the idea of change,' Bahareh Arvin said, 'and I think most of the students who begin their career as such are the same,' she continued. According to her, Sociology students enter this career based on the idea that their society has countless social problems and needs development, and it is only Sociology that can make changes at the macro level. Based on this idea, as there is no systematic conversation between the state and Sociology, sociologists should run for the state positions themselves to lay the ground for such changes. The impression we get from Ehsan Naraghi's[12] account of his meetings with the Shah proves this state-idea (Naraghi 1994). In his last meeting with the Shah on January 14, 1979, two days before the Shah's final departure from the country in the days of Revolution, Naraghi describes the Shah's feelings about his consultations as necessary meetings which started to happen too late (ibid, 145). What I get from reading his biography and his summary of the conversations he had with the Shah in his palace is this idea that he could prevent the Revolution if those meetings could happen earlier than late 1978, and the Shah could take heed of his advice in the years before. Although Naraghi was a person who knew lots of powerful people during that time and had connections across the political spectrum, his proposed person for prime minister was another sociologist, Gholam Hossein Sedighi, the one who, according to Naraghi, could save the country from the crisis.[13]

People's ideas about the state seem among those stubborn things that political revolutions cannot change decisively. Schayegh argues that as the Pahlavi state was so transformative in its history, the state as the only motor for progress became the dominant image (Schayegh 2010, 39). The state of the things in the Sociology field in Iran shows that the 1979 Revolution did not change that image. With a history of Russian, British, and American meddling, the majority of Iranians have been

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[12] - As discussed earlier, he was a sociologist from the first generation of Iranian sociologists.
[13] - The negotiations between Sedighi and the Shah did not go well, and consequently, Sadighi never took that office.

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convinced that any attempt to change and reform from below would put the country's sovereignty and integrity in jeopardy. That is why nearly all of the increasingly large group of the Iranian intelligentsia made its living at the service of the state during the reign of the powerful Pahlavis. (Atabaki and Zürcher 2004, 4). Therefore, it can be said that the Pahlavi monarchs were not alone in depicting this image. The group of the Iranian intelligentsia helped them by participating in the statecraft. According to this modality, this social group reinforces its image of the state practice by contributing to its realization. The social sciences branch of this group, sociologists and economists alike, were central to the high-modernist ideology of the Shah of Iran, in particular, to its programs on planning, rural-urban migration, and sedentarization. Even though they (sociologists in particular) were sometimes critical to this ideology, they tried to modify the state's programs only from above (Schayegh 2010, 42).

Manging from within means that among all the possibilities for the implementation of ideas, sociologists of the bureaucratic pole of the field have chosen to take control of the state. This relational modality is consistent with their idea about society. If the task of the state should be to manage society and preserve its structures, it probably means that society is not functioning all that bad. It was illustrative in the examples Javadi Yeganeh mentioned during the interview. He mentioned the institutions of family and religion in Iranian society. The state, he thinks, should manage the change in those institutions, and the "sociological commonsense" can prevent the state from making too many changes in those institutions. Therefore, their sociological ideas help the state from within to navigate the change in the desired directions.

## 4.1. Between hope and disappointment

What struck me about my conversations with bureaucrats-cum-sociologists was how their relational modality toward the state practice was shaped by pragmatism, that is, for them, it suffices to reform the affairs at the micro level in their state organizations even if their successors are going to undo

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their works. They are doing their best to provide new structures inside the state bureaucracy even if those structures are going to endure only a little bit of time. In a situation where the country is frustrated by compounded problems, anxieties, and sufferings, and high-ranking officials (that happen to be my interlocutors) compared it to the years of the War and described it as 'seriously fragile,' 'really messed up,' and 'stressing everybody out,' one can call these bureaucrats-cum-sociologists "Postpessimists" (Greenberg 2014, 6). In fact, although the situation might be frustrating, these people have the urge to make minor reforms around them (ibid). The context seems similar to what Greenberg describes in post-socialist Serbia where a group of young activists took the name "Postpessimists" to express the possibility of change in a context of deep cynicism:

> The *post* in Postpessimists was anything but a Pollyannaish trust in the future. Rather, the Postpessimists seemed to move beyond the binary of cynicism versus hope. Instead, they opted for some kind of practical action in the interstices of the two (ibid, 7).

Greenberg argues that frustrating situations do not bring the urge to change, and political engagement to a halt. Rather, it paves the way to the realization of such engagements (ibid, 25). Strangely enough, the despairing situation has not stopped sociologists from contributing to statecraft. It has only put them in a position between hope and disappointment.

Bahareh Arvin expressed her positionality between hope and disappointment, a disappointment that comes from the 'seriously fragile' and frustrating situation in country. She once told me that at the end of her term at the City Council of Tehran, she is going to write her narrative of her failure since she was sure that she would see the collapse of all her hopes, referring to what Max Weber said about politics (Weber 2004, 93–94). Illustrating the pragmatic view of Weber on politics, she emphasized her reform-minded approach toward her political position while rejecting utopianism: 'the ones who are after the salvation of the world should not enter politics.' For her, it is not one great war to win. It is more like countless battles she should prepare herself for them on a daily

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basis. If she loses one battle, she should say "nevertheless" and go on. Her presence in the City Council has been very effective, she feels and thinks more about changing the 'processes' systematically in order to make sustainable changes. She has never been after changing people inside the bureaucracy, she said. What she deems worthy of doing is the change in 'processes' inside the local government in Tehran. Making sustainable changes in a way that the successors cannot destroy them easily, she believes, stems form Sociology. However, 'all your achievements may be melted into thin air by one person,' she added. 'Considering the situation in the country,' she said, 'it is possible that everything might fall apart.' She seemed quite sure that the changes she has made would disappear when she leaves her office. 'I do not call it a success, though it is not a failure for me either.'

This pragmatism in terms of making changes is starkly different from idealism and revolutionary temporalities in which the corrupt processes should be toppled overnight. It also rejects the utopian thinking. It is about knowing that the stubborn structures will defeat them, but, they have to get started for the next agenda. The rejection of utopianism and revolutionary temporalities is at the heart of the politics of disappointment, the fact they have to make their peace with the enchantment of utopian progress and the renewal of the political structure (Greenberg 2014, 29). Therefore, their politics are articulated within a pragmatic temporality, which is inevitably incomplete, mundane, and disappointing, and they knew it in the first place. They also knew that they are doomed to present-focused, small-level changes within their organizations.

Javadi Yeganeh also told me the same. 'It is an effort worthy of doing,' he said. The results might not be satisfactory, 'but we can do a little bit of help.' Admiring the good work Bahareh Arvin is doing in the City Council in the issue of transparency, he mentioned the importance of the work that Sociology by means of bureaucrats-cum-sociologists is doing. According to him, their work would bring about expectations that the successors cannot ignore. The successors can destroy their

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works with a click, he said. However, it would have major political ramifications for them. They will suffer the blowback of that destruction, he believes.

Does it mean that the agents are important and they can change the bureaucratic system? For Etemadifard, the state bureaucracy is a form in which you can put your content. Bureaucracy always resists against the change. However, if you play with its rules, he believes, you can be effective. Javadi Yeganeh believes in the agency of powerful people to make a change in the state system, though these changes might not be sustainable. Inside the state bureaucracy, agents can construct structures that may continue to work independently from the people in charge. Using Talcott Parsons' concepts, agents should make the state bureaucracy reasonable, he said, by improving the capacity of the state to install goals for the future and make decisions accordingly. Bahareh Arvin's answer to this question was more convoluted. Although agents can overcome the rigidity of the structure of the state bureaucracy to a certain extent, sustainable changes need to be related to something more than the people who take powerful positions inside the state bureaucracy, she believes. Her idea is that we should tie the changes to the interests of social groups in order to make them endure, an idea which, she believes, comes from a sociological vision.

During the time I was shadowing her at the City Council of Tehran, she allocated a remarkable deal of her energy to advance legislation that allows the shopkeepers in Tehran to continue their work after midnights. She corresponded with her colleagues, negotiated with different people, attended meetings, and the like. The aim was to revive the nightlife in Tehran. Eventually, it happened. Then, all of a sudden, on the news ran a headline that the Chief Commander of the Law Enforcement Force has banned the legislation. Does he have the power to do so? According to law, no, he does not. Is he able to stop its functioning in practice? Yes, he is. Is the position of the Chief Commander of the Law Enforcement Force higher than her position? No, it is not. Statutorily, she and her colleagues only see the President of the country above themselves, she said. However, there is the

office of the Supreme Leader, which can function above the law, and the Chief Commander of the Law Enforcement Force is one of the appointees of that office. Managing the change form within works in Iran in a narrowed-down spectrum, form hope to disappointment and as she said, 'all your achievements may be melted into thin air by one person.' I join her husband in wondering how she still has the energy to continue this path.

## Epilogue

If I had stopped the analysis of the Sociology field in Iran at the point where Bourdieu ends *Homo Academicus*, I would not have had the chance to hear the justifications that bureaucrats-cum-sociologists could make for their modality vis-à-vis the state and reform. Also, I would not have had the chance to re-think the politics of managing change from within, in Iran and beyond. Their modality toward the state practice, that is, to seize the state positions and implement their vision of Sociology to bring about change and reform, has only put them in a position between hope and disappointment. Combining of the relational anthropology of the state with Bourdieusian field analysis, helped me to use the agents of a field to shed new light on the state relations and the politics of managing change.

Anthropologists usually say they study regular people rather than elites[14]. It sounds about right in the anthropology of the state as well. My contribution to this area of study was that I worked on everyday relations of high-ranking bureaucrats (in other words, power-holders) in the capital of Iran and not the street-level ones. The stategraphy has usually focused on the latter. Thelen, Thiemann, and Roth (2014) worked on Serbian social workers, Vincent Dubois (2014) on French welfare controllers, and Schwarcz and Szoke (2014) on Hungarian village mayors, just to name a few examples of this relational approach.

In addition to that, as this case shows, a social group is trying to take control of the state machine, means that in their imagination, the state is not a completely autonomous, impregnable fortress, not able to be controlled. It also means that contrary to what Schayegh argues for, it is not the case that all the Iranian people see the state separate from society (Schayegh 2010). I showed the case of academic sociologists as a case for the state-society relation in Tehran. By going back to the history of the discipline and examples form the first generation of Iranian sociologists, I argued that it might

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[14] - See for instance, Hegland 2014, 7.

not be only the case for the Iranian post-revolutionary state, and this idea about the state as the powerful engine of change has been prevalent since the first modern state of Iran. However, as Schayegh refers to "the cult of the state," an Iranian notion showing the centrality of the state in people's lives, the state had been a banner around which Iranians always gathered (ibid, 39). Perhaps, this is why the Iranian Sociology professors resort to the state power to make a change. If the state was not always a banner around which Iranians gathered, Sociologists might have a different relational modality toward the state and toward change.

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