The Essence of a Sociological Film: An Attempt to Raise a New Concept

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Abstract: *A sociological film is the one that promotes sociological imagination. What are the characteristics of such a film? To answer this question, it is necessary to describe its most important quality which is sociological imagination. After reviewing the different approaches to this concept, we have derived its characteristics inspired by thematic analysis. Finally, to illustrate the use of this concept in the field of cinema, we have attempted to accurately delineate its overlaps with similar genres closely associated with this concept by relying on concrete samples.*

Keywords: *Sociological film, sociological imagination, public sociology, promoting sociological imagination*

INTRODUCTION

1 – The statement of the problem

Today, one of the deficiencies of sociology can be its dissociation from the society and people. Responding to the growing gap between the sociological ethos and the world we study, the challenge of public sociology is to engage multiple publics in multiple ways (Burawoy et al., 2004). It seems as if the field is engaged in a dialogue with itself rather than the society and people. This dialogue continues within the narrow boundaries of academia and no sign of its impact can be found in the world outside academia. The article suggests that the adoption of a promotional approach to sociology can alleviate this shortcoming. In this respect, the role of cinema is emphasized as an efficient tool for this purpose.

Cinema can be a tool for social scientists to sustain stronger communications with their societies. In this article, we will try to build a bridge between sociology and cinema to promote sociological imagination.[1]

It appears that this link can be useful throughout the different stages of producing films (e.g., writing scripts and the final editing) and film criticism. In this way, we can expect to see films which have been referred to as

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[1] Although photography and sociology have existed for about the same period of time, visual sociology, the use of photographs, film, and video to study society and the study of visual artifacts of a society, are underdeveloped and largely peripheral to the discipline as a whole (Harper et al., 2011). Visual sociology can be divided into two main domains. In the first domain, photographs are used in the conventional sense to collect data while, in the other domain, photographs are used and sociologists are engaged in the study of images and pictures produced in the context of cultures in advertisements, newspapers, journals, and family albums. Accordingly, these two realms of visual sociology are completely distinguished. It is clear that the essence of the sociological film being addressed in this paper differs from the methods and goals of visual sociology. Among other things, unlike sociological films, the visual sociology has nothing to do with sociological imagination. This fact is even seen clearly in films that have similarities to the concept of sociological films and those made with a focus on the idea of visual sociology.

sociological films in this research. While these films help to promote the sociological imagination among the audiences, the element of sociological imagination is also used in their production.[2]

With this description, the most important concept in a sociological film is referred to as sociological imagination which needs to be identified in what follows by relying on the theoretical perspectives of this field. Patton (Patton et al., 1990) believes the identification of themes and patterns promotes the use of data-based inductive methods. In thematic analysis, all data sources are reviewed and the sources of the whole data are analyzed and interpreted. In the inductive method, the known themes are strongly associated with data.

The first step in exploring the theme is finding the basic motifs and this involves the elicitation of codes and key textual points. At this stage, textual analysis and description are intended. This includes the division of texts into smaller segments and continuous refinement and review. In doing so, we have relied on the coding method after familiarity with the sources to know the themes by establishing primary codes. In the first step of coding which is known as open coding, we may expect to find the prominent points and differentiations and express them in codes. In any section of theoretical discussions, this step has been taken within the references made to each sociologist and their perspectives have been categorized with respect to the concept of sociological imagination. The second step describes and interprets the text, depending on the illustration and analysis of the thematic network. At this point, the existing patterns are identified and derived from the data sets. The data must be compared constantly and their levels must be categorized. By comparing the codes, identical codes are placed in one category, the themes are defined and named and their consistency is controlled within the derived codes. Then, the categories are compared with each other to ensure their distinction followed by the explanation and description of the thematic network.

After comparing the categories, we come to the stage of integration and combination. In other words, at this level of coding, we seek to identify the main category and ultimately the process and procedure or the plot that connects these categories to the central division (Adib Haj Bagheri et al., 2013). By recognizing this storyline, the categories are linked to each other and we can achieve the theoretical model in this way.[3] Hence, after summarizing this thematic network and establishing the link between analytic results and theoretical foundations, a report is provided for the analyses under the title of the thematic analysis of sociological imagination.

2 – Theoretical foundations

The concept of sociological imagination has been explained and developed in a book with the same title by C. Wright Mills who is one of the founders of the school of critical sociology in the United States (Mills et al., 1959).Since then, this concept has evolved into a classic and commonly used notion in sociological works and many sociologists have discussed this notion. In this regard, we may refer to Michael Burawoy (Burawoy et al., 2005). who is a pioneer of public sociology. In addition to these cases, the traces of this notion can be found in the works of many other sociologists, though they have focused on the same notion with different interpretations. In this connection, we can refer to Bauman, Gouldner, Berger, and Fay. Thus, we first derive the characteristics of sociological imagination in conjunction with the purpose of this article from the perspective suggested by Mills. Then, we treat these characteristics as a basis to investigate the views of the

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[2] In this article, the promotion of sociological imagination will be discussed as the primary aspect of discussion. Emphasis on sociological imagination in producing films is the subject of a forthcoming paper in which topics such as sociological filmmaking, script writing, development, productions and criticism will be addressed.

[3] This model can evolve into a theory in an abstract form.

aforementioned sociologists to identify and highlight the concepts and approaches which are closely related to this notion in their views.

2-1. A review of the concept of sociological imagination

2-1-1. C. Wright Mills: Sociological imagination

According to Mills (Mills et al., 1959), in the age in which facts and figures dominate people's lives, their social reasoning needs to be nurtured. Sociological imagination is something that can lead to such an outcome. It is possible to go behind the scenes of historical events and trace the global developments and even daily life events. In this way, the individual is placed in the context of his time to find out that other people are in the same situation. Consequently, the individual powers can turn into a collective power to alter the status quo. Thus, by such means the personal uneasiness of individuals is focused upon explicit troubles and indifference of publics is transformed into involvement with public issues (Mills et al., 1959). Hence, one of the most critical ways of achieving sociological imagination as viewed by Mills is linking personal setbacks to general social issues.

What Mills implies by personal issues are those problems that every person experiences in life in connection with the others. These troubles consist of all the challenges and difficulties that a person experiences in life as they generally hamper the realization of one's values and interests. Also, Mills believes that social issues are interesting to the general public. These problems arise when people in a community realize that their social values are being threatened. In other words, a general social problem comes to pass with the emergence of crises in values, institutions, and the pillars of society.

One of the noteworthy points in this regard is that personal problems also appear following the emergence of any general social problem. In other words, the general social issues typically have priority over personal problems and not vice versa. Accordingly, issues such as unemployment, drug addiction, divorce, delinquency and even many diseases and personal problems have social roots[4] and their solution thus depends on the approach to these roots.

Nevertheless, the removal of the social roots of personal problems involves public mobilization and this in turn calls for the public awareness regarding the social nature of their personal problems. According to Mills (Mills et al., 1959), the masses are mostly ignorant of their own values, interests, and threatening factors and the root of their private troubles and the cause of their social passivity and melancholia should also be sought in this matter. However, when people find the main cause of their passivity, they realize that an individual's freedom in any society depends on the freedom of everyone else and they become more hopeful that the social conditions can change in this manner.

Therefore, what we may understand from the perspective suggested by Mills is that sociological imagination involves the adoption of a critical stance towards the status quo. The prevalence of sociological imagination among the people can turn this position into a collective movement for changing social conditions. In this manner, they would understand the social roots of their personal problems and they would try to find a way of changing and improving the conditions.

With that being said, the central pillars of the concept that Mills calls the sociological imagination can be listed as below:

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[4] In this regard, Mills discusses historical realities and the fact that any society must be known with respect to its historical characteristics. Otherwise, this would lead to abstract knowledge. Consequently, we should also study historical changes in order to understand the essence of social changes.

• The link between individual and historical destiny (Mills et al., 1959),

• The link between the personal troubles of milieu and the public issues of social structures (Mills et al., 1959),

• The explanation of affairs based on social structure

• The adoption of a critical outlook

2–1–2. Michael Burawoy: Public sociology

The central issue for Burawoy is commitment to the originality of sociological imagination which is the legacy of classic sociologists. He pins his hopes on the domain which he calls public sociology to promote sociological imagination. This particular science is concerned with the groups of people and its method is based on being intermingled with people (Burawoy et al., 2004). In this direction, he also puts an emphasis on the complementary quality of this genre of sociology and three other genres namely the professional, policy and critical complements. He warns that the development of deficiencies in any of these branches would affect the performance of other branches. In his opinion, the connection between public sociology and professional sociology is especially important. He maintains that public sociology must be constantly involved with professional sociology so that the former can remain within its chief professional framework and the latter can be made to pursue its mission in more realistic frameworks (2005).

One of the themes that is emphasized in public sociology is the need for a dialogue between the sociologist and the studied groups. In this sense, one of the necessities of sociological work is the intertwined relationship between the sociologist and people. In this way, sociology remains in contact with reality and the possibility of promoting and enriching sociological imagination which has emerged from the dialogue between sociologists and the members of the public. In addition, through this dialogue, the publics can be created and people can create and give new life to the public domain in an atomized society. Finally, Burawoy envisions myriads of nodes, each forging collaborations of sociologists with their publics, flowing together into a single current (Burawoy et al., 2004).

Based on these discussions, Burawoy's views on sociological imagination can be summarized as follows:

• The creation of a dialogue between public sociology and the study groups (Burawoy et al., 2004)

• Considering public, professional, policy and critical branches of sociology as complementary (Burawoy et al., 2004)

• Supporting public sociology (Burawoy et al., 2004)

• The importance of professional sociology (Burawoy et al., 2004)

• The dissemination of sociological imagination (Burawoy et al., 2004)

2–1–3. Zygmunt Bauman: Sociological thinking

A concept that is close to sociological imagination and is approached by Bauman is sociological thinking (Bauman et al., 2001). One of the important issues suggested by Bauman is the relationship between sociological thinking and common sense. First and foremost, he believes that the root of sociological thinking should be sought in common sense. According to him, sociological concepts and categories such as city, kinship, nation and the like all have meanings in our lives which have been previously defined by common

sense. Although Bauman maintains that the boundaries of common sense and sociological thinking are fluid, he is also of the opinion that these two cases are somehow different (Bauman et al., 2001). These differences include the following:

• The authority of common sense is visible in postulating any idea. When this feeling grows among individuals, everything is in its place and no one raises any questions or criticisms. However, sociological thinking has always sought to criticize the status quo and improve the situation particularly by challenging the topics that are taken for granted. These questions render the evident a puzzle and may defamiliarize the familiar (Bauman et al., 2001). In this regard, the question of the relationship between the lives of people and their shared history can be a case in point.

• The expansion of visual horizons and profound explorations are peculiarities that make sociological thinking distinct from common sense and the result is a profound understanding of the relationship between personal experience and social processes.

• Contrary to common sense, sociology adheres to its own rules and scientific necessities[5].

• Each of us relies on common sense and its particular modes to make sense of events, changes and life in general. We know from our experiences that we are 'the author' of our actions (Bauman et al., 2001). We always look for the agent behind these events and assume that these events are associated with goodwill and those events we do not approve of are associated with ill intentions. In general, people find it difficult to accept that a situation was not effect of the intended actions of an identifiable person (Bauman et al., 2001). Nevertheless, to think sociologically is to make sense of the human condition via an analysis of the manifold webs of human interdependency (Bauman et al., 2001). Therefore, no event can be separated from its social context.

One of the noteworthy points in Bauman's discussion is the relationship that he envisages between the individual and social structures. In this discussion, he distinguishes between individuality and individualism. He praises the former and criticizes the latter. In his opinion, one's self-esteem should be protected and by the simultaneous establishment of solidarity based on mutual understanding and respect, the motive of freedom ought to be boosted in society. With an emphasis on the individuality of people, we manage to see humans as free agents in the face of social structures and view them as actors who are capable of protecting their values and interests against the general and obligatory social structures. However, this is not something individual; rather, it is a collective action in which it is necessary to maintain the individuality of actors to pursue common objectives. These common goals form different groups of people whose members make their choices independently as reflected by their self-esteem to remove their common misfortunes. In this way, people's common motives are given priority and the power which rules the social order is undermined with the increase in the motives of freedom, tolerance and reconciliation. Finally, Bauman believes that individual freedom will not be likely unless collective freedom is established (Bauman et al., 2001).

Based on these discussions, Bauman's perspective on sociological imagination which has been formulated by the concept of sociological thought can be summarized as follows:

• The separation of the everydayness of life by relying on sociological thinking

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[5] These rules and questions of everything including fixed and clear issues are caused by the scientific discourse which indicates commitment. In contrast, common sense is caused by the discourses that influence the intellectual and social ambience. In this connection, Bonnewitz (Bonnewitz et al., 2002) believes that common sense is an unscientific explanation of phenomena and the state is the most important institution that shapes these categories and social constructs. These categories emerge insensibly in everyday language and are taken for granted. In this way, he holds that sociology must be sensitive to the creation and emergence of concepts and vocabularies.

• The recognition of the limits of freedom and dependence on life and one's role or the role of others in limiting or expanding freedom (Bauman et al., 2001).

• Paying attention to "I" and "self" in individual and group life (Bauman et al., 2001).

• The recognition of the limits and boundaries derived from the concept of "us" and "others" (Bauman et al., 2001).

• Understanding that an individual cannot be the only factor in the occurrence of an event or rather different social situations play a major role in this respect (Bauman et al., 2001).

• A critical look at things, especially things whose existence is taken for granted such as the media, science or daily routines

• Paying attention to the sense of self-preservation in competitions and the use of its strength and organizational order

• Willingness to reconsider to change

2-1-4. Peter Berger: Invitation to sociology

The mission of sociology is one of the topics related to sociological imagination which has been discussed by Berger (Berger et al., 1963). He believes that the mission of sociology is to unveil the distorted and hidden realities. In his view, the first wisdom of sociology is that, things are not what they seem Berger et al., 1963).

Burger strongly opposes bureaucracy and the overdependence of social scientists on power and especially the state. He has a particular interest in the history and understanding of different cultures and insists that one should not be so naive as to surrender to social structures. In this regard, his emphasis is on the use of sociological imagination.

Burger considers this imagination as a vehicle to protect society against dominant systems. He insists that a sociologist should know the results of his scientific experiences lest these results are used to maintain the status quo against the people on the pretext of being neutral and devoid of value Berger et al., 1963). According to Berger, a sociologist must show the people how to fight against the hegemonic system after analyzing different issues in society. In this way, the sociologist must put out the results of his studies and investigations so that they can evaluate, repeat and develop them. This involves the use of a comprehensible language by the sociologist.

By relying on Berger's discussion on the mission of sociology, it is possible to summarize his views about the sociological imagination in the following way:

• Avoiding the impartiality and neutrality of the researcher Berger et al., 1963).

• The fluidity of meaning with respect to time and place.

• Criticizing the social system at any time and in any location. Since all social systems were created by men, it follows that men can also change them Berger et al., 1963).

• Serving the people as a fundamental objective of sociology

• The independence of social scientists from the government Berger et al., 1963).

• Providing a sociological worldview

• Revealing the hidden realities of the society through the enlightened sociological conscience

• The use of a language that is comprehensible to everyone

• The sociologist will occupy himself with matters that others regard as too sacred or as too distasteful for dispassionate investigation Berger et al., 1963).

• The adoption of a suspicious and critical attitude towards subjects

• Attention to historical circumstances especially for the development of sociological thoughts Berger et al., 1963).

• The representation and criticism of the role of social control and stratification Berger et al., 1963).

2–1–5. Brian Fay: Sociological pluralism

The important quality of sociological imagination which is indicated by Brian Fay is the multi-cultural approach. With the multicultural view, one can understand that the criteria of rationality differ in various cultures and change through time and space. Thus, the fluidity of meaning replaces the dualisms. Accordingly, the first thesis of multicultural philosophy is the dialectical thought (Fay et al., 1996).

Of course, this interpretation is also associated with cultural relativism. In other words, even though different people live in different cultures, this does not indicate separation and life in different worlds. We humans have a common background in our beliefs, aspirations and principles of thought. These subjects draw "us" and "them" closer together with the translation of words and the speech of the others, so that we can have a mutual understanding of each other. With that being said, the multicultural perspective addresses similarities as much as it discusses differences and considers the borders among us as a fluid boundary rather than a threatening gap that enables us to interact with the others. According to Fay, one of the facts that contribute to the achievement of such a perspective is replacing the intrinsic thought with the procedural thought (Fay et al., 1996).

Based on the discussion developed by Brian Fay about the multicultural views, it is possible to summarize his views about sociological imagination in the following way:

• Emphasizing the dialectical relationship between the subjects (Fay et al., 1996).

• The identical valuation of similarities and differences (Fay et al., 1996).

• Emphasizing the agentive role and the effectiveness of social and cultural agents (Fay et al., 1996).

• The replacement of intrinsic thought with procedural thought (Fay et al., 1996).

• The manifestation of the fluidity of meaning over time and its hermeneutic difference for each interpreter

2-1-6. Alvin Gouldner: Reflexive sociology

What Gouldner calls "reflexive sociology" has many affinities with regard to the concept of sociological imagination. Here are some examples:

• Reflexive sociology is sensitive to history and considers humans to be dominated by the past, the culture and the evolving social system (Gouldner et al., 1994).

• This type of sociology assumes that there is a dialectical relationship between the individual and society and they are created in interaction with each other. Accordingly, it attempts to help people to control culture and society.

• Self-enquiry is one of its important characteristics and this is primarily about internal criticism as much as the criticism of society. According to Gouldner, social criticisms would not lead to the desired results without any alteration and criticism of social theories (Gouldner et al., 1994).Thus, reflexive sociology is sensitive to the academic context of sociology and the performance of its researchers and suggests that living as a sociologist is a different kind of life. In this respect, reflexive sociology is a radical movement (Gouldner et al., 1994).and warns the sociologist that the knowledge of the world is not separate from self-knowledge. Knowledge changes the internal and external world of a sociologist with respect to his or her social status and actions. He warns the sociologist that this science originates in a sociologist as a human being and the question is not simply how to work but how to live.

• Reflexive sociology emphasizes the role of a sociologist at the heart of the research project and suggests that the relationship between sociology and the research subject is not based on impartiality. Conversely, there is an active association that not only allows the topic to be changed, but also the same change might befall the sociologist as well. As Gouldner reflects upon the role of the personal experiences of a sociologist in research work, he is of the opinion that these personal experiences are the only way to develop knowledge. Unlike positivism that considers one's true 'self' to be treacherous (Gouldner et al., 1994),

the aim of a reflexive sociologist is not neutralizing one's self, but maintaining its awareness (Gouldner et al., 1994).

• Reflexive sociology is a kind of moral sociology. However, it is not the type of morality that makes us consider secrecy and misrepresentation concerning the genuine moral and ethical affairs (Gouldner et al., 1994).

Based on these discussions, Gouldner's views of sociological imagination which are formulated by the concept of reflexive sociology can be summarized as follows:

• Sociological praxis and not just sociological research (Gouldner et al., 1994).

• The sociologist's knowledge of oneself and the realization of ethical ways to influence the society with sociological imagination

• The profundity of self-awareness, the surrounding world, and the provision of reliable information (Gouldner et al., 1994).

• The relationship with academic sociology with an enduring commitment to maintaining consciousness

• Engaging in the surrounding world and maintaining awareness for personal experiences

• The sociologist's link to the research subject and the awareness of one's role and impact on research (Gouldner et al., 1994).

• Avoiding the distinction between the personal and the collective or the public world or political activity and daily life

• In addition to the scientific methods and techniques, it offers a practical example of lifestyle.

• Response to the aspirations and inner motivations instead of clear cultural demands (Gouldner et al., 1994).

• Sensitivity to history and its role in raising awareness (Gouldner et al., 1994).

• Remembering the fact that the society has been built by human beings for the sake of humanity and humans are made by the society and for the sake of society (Gouldner et al., 1994).

• An important part of the historical task of sociology is helping to take over the society and culture.

3. The thematic analysis of sociological imagination

The theoretical perspectives of sociological imagination can be divided into six categories.

The first category: Sociological life

No matter which of the four classes the sociologist might belong to (i.e. professional, policy, critical, or public sociologists), what is important is adherence to the originality of the sociological imagination. A sociologist must unveil the hidden realities of society with creativity, patience and an awakened conscience. These factors depend on whether the sociologist integrates the common sense with sociological thinking and turns this into a routine fact in his life. His main objective is to establish the dialogue between society and individuals instead of relying on major theories and abstract empiricism.

The second category: the dissection of the relationship between the actor and structure

Social structures draw boundaries for the freedom of activists. Understanding these structures could help the actors to get rid of the pressure imposed by structural implications. Of course, the structures do not merely hamper and restrict our lives. Rather, by relying on this dialectical thought, we find out that we are the actors in charge of social construction while we are produced by communities, societies, and cultures.

The third category: A critical perspective

In social life, we encounter facts which are presumed to be sacred and, on the other hand, we face affairs which are so close to us that we consider them natural and evident. The failure to deal with these two issues critically is one of the factors that prevent deliverance from structural implications.

The fourth category: Academic awareness

Sociology must maintain its connection with the academia. A sociologist must be fully aware of the scientific framework and methodology and constantly pay attention to the achievement of knowledge and academic sociology. Nevertheless, the attitude towards knowledge merely as a way of obtaining information is insufficient and might also distract the sociologist from the main course. The sociology should be engaged in the world around him and increase his personal experiences by augmenting this knowledge.

The fifth category: Understand the fluidity of meaning

Time and space have a major role in creating the social order and meaning. Meaning changes over time and its interpretation is different for each interpreter. Thus, there is no single fact for a certain phenomenon and different realities constitute the meaning for each interpreter. However, what is important for us here is giving the same value to these diverse contrasts and commonalities. With that being said, the relationship between the past, present and future should be considered to raise awareness and understand the existing facts better. The link between individual accounts and history ought to be discovered and the role of history in raising awareness should be stressed. This sensitivity makes us focus our attention on the discontinuity in the history of science, thought and culture.

 The sixth category: The promotion of sociological imagination

Sociology should address the society that is its main goal and initiate a dialogue between the studied groups. To expand sociological imagination in the community, we should use a language that is comprehensible to everyone. Moreover, the historical conditions should be noted and ascertained properly. An appropriate manner should be used to mingle with the groups of people and spread this reality-based imagination instead of the fictional stories of the modern age.

3-1. Sociological imagination: A more comprehensive narrative

As mentioned earlier, sociological imagination can be seen as consisting of six dimensions: sociological life, the dissection of the relationship between structure and actors, critical view, academic awareness, understanding the fluidity of meaning, and promoting sociology. The plan that can integrate these six dimensions is explained below.

The main item among the six categories mentioned above is the promotion of sociological imagination. This promotion should make an effort to turn living as a sociologist into a fundamental question. A sociologist should not distinguish between his professional and private life. His incentive is sociology and his main goal is the acquisition of knowledge and raising the public awareness by mingling with the groups of people and materializing the rights of civil society. Therefore, it is important to engage in communities, share one's research results, and use a language that can be understood by the general public.

We have spent a century building professional knowledge, translating common sense into science, so that now, we are more than ready to embark on a systematic back-translation, taking knowledge back to those from whom it came, making public issues out of private troubles, and thus regenerating sociology's moral fiber (Burawoy et al., 2004).

In light of this discussion, the ways of influencing different groups of people and learning from them might occur to the sociologist. This is especially true of the new groups that must be discovered as the grounds necessary for sociological study is created with their assistance. The knowledge acquired through the integration of academic sociological studies and personal experiences will prove to be a solution to problems. This is done by being connected to people's sufferings and their expression in a historical context. This is precisely the task of the organic and public sociologist as noted by Burawoy.

But why public sociology? Because this type of sociology can precisely keep sociological imagination alive (Burawoy et al., 2004).In addition to raising public awareness and making their voices heard, it switches the focus of political and critical sociology to the subject matter. This switch in the focus will pave the way for the response from the public to take on a critical or supportive role in this regard.

The pulse of sociology depends on civil society. Therefore, the civil society must be empowered in order to strengthen sociology. The critical view must be expanded in society and among the people and individualism must give way to a collective work by maintaining individual dignity. Regardless of any label and classification, the whole society should enjoy equal rights to achieve its goals and an identical placement should be considered for differences and similarities. In the meantime, the context for the discussion on values should be provided without the imposition of any single value. Presenting different facts and understanding the fluidity of meaning help the community to increase the possibility of creating common subjects among people. By focusing on historical issues, the actors understand the relationship between the plight of their private lives and the general social issues more efficiently and they can try to change them.

The sociologist should look at everything with a critical view and even study economics and politics from the perspective of civil society. Of course, this is not all because this study is not limited to external phenomena and the sociologist should reevaluate himself. Nothing should be viewed by him as unchangeable and natural. Even in academic environments, one should view oneself as separate from the research subject and should rather put one's own role under a magnifying glass throughout the research.

The sociologist must liberate himself from objectification to get close to the stage which we defined with regard to the theme of academic knowledge. To facilitate the institutionalization of sociology, particular groups must be enumerated and targeted by the sociologist. These are groups such as journalists or filmmakers who mediate between their community and the public and are also connected with the state and thus affect the power structure. This process tries to institutionalize sociological life for the social scientists and promote sociological imagination by the whole spectrum of dimensions among general and specific social groups. This kind of outlook and attitude is not limited to the academic environment. One can live as a sociologist only when one seeks to promote this kind of attitude and thinking in personal and professional life.

I envision myriads of nodes, each forging collaborations of sociologists with their publics, flowing together into a single current. They will draw on a century of extensive research, elaborate theories, practical interventions, and critical thinking, reaching common understandings across multiple boundaries, not least but not only across national boundaries, and in so doing shedding insularities of old (Burawoy et al., 2004).

4. Sociological film as a medium to promote sociological imagination

This section explains the concept of sociological films. As Walker and Avant (Walker et al., 2005) have suggested, one way to explain a concept is to examine the overlapping and relevant and opposite cases. The approach put forward by Walker and Avant (Walker et al., 2005) is one way of conceptualizing and developing notions as a modified version of Wilson's 11 techniques that eventually leads to the development of a theory.

According to them, the borderline cases include some but not all the features of a concept. The identification of borderline cases clearly implies the features that are basic prerequisites for the intended concept. However, relevant issues do not encapsulate the defined features of the concept but seem to be similar to the meaning of the concept being analyzed. This similarity often leads to some confusion and errors in understanding the studied concept (Rhodes et al., 2012).Finally, the opposite cases contain none of the essential attributes of the concept and their introduction clarifies what the analyzed concept does not represent. This difference is so evident and clear that upon observation the majority of people can say with certainty that this instance is incompatible with the concept being envisaged by us.

Based on the above concepts, it should be said that the sociological film has similarities and differences compared to the rest of the film genres and even the schools of cinema. To identify the borderline, relevant

and opposite cases, we compare and contrast the social, documentary and commercial cinema with sociological films.

There is a common interface between social and sociological films. Social films are borderline cases. Nevertheless, most of the time, these borders only appear due to the social issue being raised. All social films cannot be necessarily sociological films just as all sociologists do not have a sociological imagination. Therefore, investigating the six dimensions of sociological imagination in any film can express the overlaps of that film with sociological imagination. Around the world, social cinema has become particularly popular but what displays the outcome of such films is the representation of power. The critical view and the exploration of the relationship between the actor and structure that can be very helpful in social cinema have turned into a missing link that leads to the filmmakers' interest in open-ended films. This has also caused the spread of ideas that advocate the neutrality of filmmakers. In their opinion, the only escape is seen in the individual actions of an actor, especially in an environment in which no criticism of the social structures and the institutions of power is permissible and the cause of all the woes can be traced back to the individual. The outcome of this process is the display of a closed circuit around the dominant ideology. This is the reflection of social problems and the achievement of an individual solution that is often unsuccessful in contrast to the social structures that will be just followed by a public crackdown.

The next item is the filmmaker himself. The social filmmaker has experienced something in the society that is generally the result of his own false consciousness. He injects this into society in the form of a film and moves in the destructive path of abstract empiricism. Although it is rarely seen that consultations from sociologists are used in making these films, there is often some room for dispute over the fact whether the sociologist uses a sociological imagination or not. Of course, another issue is how much the sociologist can intervene in the production process. Moreover, the narrative in this type of cinema is a falsity that should be expressed as realistically as possible. This falsity often unfolds one side of the issue and remains superficial due to the power relations in this genre.

Now, we discuss the documentary cinema which can be labeled as a related case. This genre is thought to be closely related to sociological films. One of the features of documentary films is the claims of neutrality and the objective records of reality. In a sociological film, the director or scholar knows that he cannot be impartial and recounts this in his film. He is also aware of his role and that of his group in the process of filmmaking and does not labor under the illusion of objectivity, while it is impossible to remain impartial due to the dimensions of sociological imagination and especially the critical view associated with this genre. Whatever the circumstances, being the "eye of reality" leaves a lacuna for this revisionist view in documentary cinema. However, in a sociological documentary, those involved in filmmaking come before the camera and make the audience aware of their presence and filming instruments. In documentaries, sometimes an effort is made to indicate the role of those involved in making the film but even the focus on this point does not lead to a true function due to being discussed under the discourse on reality records. In other words, the documentary filmmakers sometimes take advantage of this method as a trick to promote their realistic project.[6]

The other issue which is critical to sociological documentaries and has been paid little attention in the documentary cinema as the filmmaker adopts the role of narrator is the right given to the human subjects to speak in the film. In the documentary, the filmmaker seems to be so enchanted by his role that he finally appears in the role of an omniscient narrator and solidifies this role for the film narrator as well.

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[6] This realism is caused by an illusion in the documentary filmmaker's mind while it is indeed a movement in the course of abstract empiricism.

Making documentaries with sociological imagination is a collaborative process with a circulative collaboration rather than a linear one. It is a thought that seeks to picture the people who are engaged in producing a sociological film in a particular social status based on a common problem. In this way, the human subjects who are known in the documentary as objects would become active participants in a sociological film.

Ultimately, commercial cinema is the most ostentatious type of cinema that has distanced itself from the characteristics of sociological imagination and is known as a framework in total contrast to the framework and structure of sociological films. The commercial cinema pursues the common fashions in cinematic techniques and contents. These are the features criticized by the sociological imagination. As the name suggests, the rules of commerce and trade are the emphasis of this kind of cinema. This is a market whose rules are determined by companies and this is why cinema is today referred to as an industry and not an art.

Indeed, the followers of Frankfurt School were the first to describe the commercial and cultural phenomena with a general title as the industry of culture: "In its totality, the commercial culture has been programmed and developed for the increase in profitability, amusements, entertainment and the spread of consumerism. The variety of products, goods and cultural products that are subject to the rules and laws of the market are no longer a symbol of an independent culture" (Nozari et al., 2010).

Then, it must be admitted that commercial cinema carries out two concurrent tasks: Firstly, the aim of the display is reduced to profitability and, secondly, they foster an aesthetic taste among the audiences which is devoid of critical views and sociological insight. The aim of such an approach is to generate the subject of consumption within the capitalist norms.

4-1. An exemplary case: "The night it rained"

The film entitled as "The Night It Rained" is a documentary directed by Kamran Shirdel which was produced in 1964 by the General Office of Cinema Affairs. The film tells the story of a villager who realizes that the railroad has been destroyed on a rainy night and inspired by the story of Riz-Ali Khajavi which he has read in his book at school, he stops the passenger train and becomes a hero. In the film, Shirdel and his team visit different people to find out the fact of the matter. During the film, the viewers are informed of the investigative process that the filmmaker has developed in this regard. The filmmaker juxtaposes the existing realities and approaches the subject critically. Among other aspects, the film may also be a credible document that one can refer to with regard to a particular subject in a specific part of history. *The Night It Rained* focuses specifically on the notion of consciousness which is revised over and over again.

Another remarkable aspect of this film is the criticism of the performance of media which takes place in different ways throughout the film. In this regard, showing those involved behind the scenes of this film is a remarkable aspect and focusing on this presence contributes to the reflexive quality of the film.

At the start of the film and by the focus on the "epic" story that has unfolded, the identified patterns which are ideological, cultural, social or behavioral are reflected as they take us closer to the subject and ambience. Different groups of people have different reactions to the event depending on the relation that they have to this particular event. Various people including the official from the newspaper office and the switchman provide different interpretations of a particular fact as these accounts somehow reflect the epic story which is unfolded by the film. The interviews and the freedom of speech that the film has allowed for different groups play a key role in advancing the research process in the film. The development of the sequences along with the dissection of the relationship between actors and social structures through the interviews that are conducted in suitable environments take the film closer to the dimensions of sociological imagination.

In the end, the suspicious view of a topic which seems to be very genuine and the investigation of a fact from the perspective of various people perfectly illustrate one of the goals of sociological imagination which is the understanding of the fluidity of meaning for the audience. Finally, the audience stays in front of the silver screen with the realities that have been framed by the filmmakers and only the inner voice behind the screen of truth whispers into one's ear, "It's a lie. It's a sheer lie, sir!"

Discussion and conclusion

Finally, making sociological films would be an efficient tool that can be used to establish a sociological connection with the society with its promotional approach. The first step in understanding the essence of sociological films is the understanding of sociological imagination. It has six dimensions consisting of sociological life, the dissection of the relationship between structure and actors, critical view, academic awareness, the understanding of the fluidity of meaning and the promotion of sociology that help us achieve the framework of the sociological film. In this way, the promotion of sociological imagination is very important and the burden is first placed on the shoulders of sociologists and then groups such as filmmakers who control an important tool like cinema to enhance this imagination. Moreover, the aforementioned dimensions can be helpful in evaluating a film to find out its relation to sociological imagination.

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Films

The night it rained. Director: Kamran Shirdel, release year: 1964