

A stylized, light-colored illustration of a plant with several leaves and a cluster of small, round buds or flowers, positioned on the left side of the slide against a dark brown background.

KARL MANNHEIM: THEORY AND CONCEPTS

Teo Lee Ken, Shima Vezvaei

Alzahra University

Sociological Theories 1

May 19, 2019

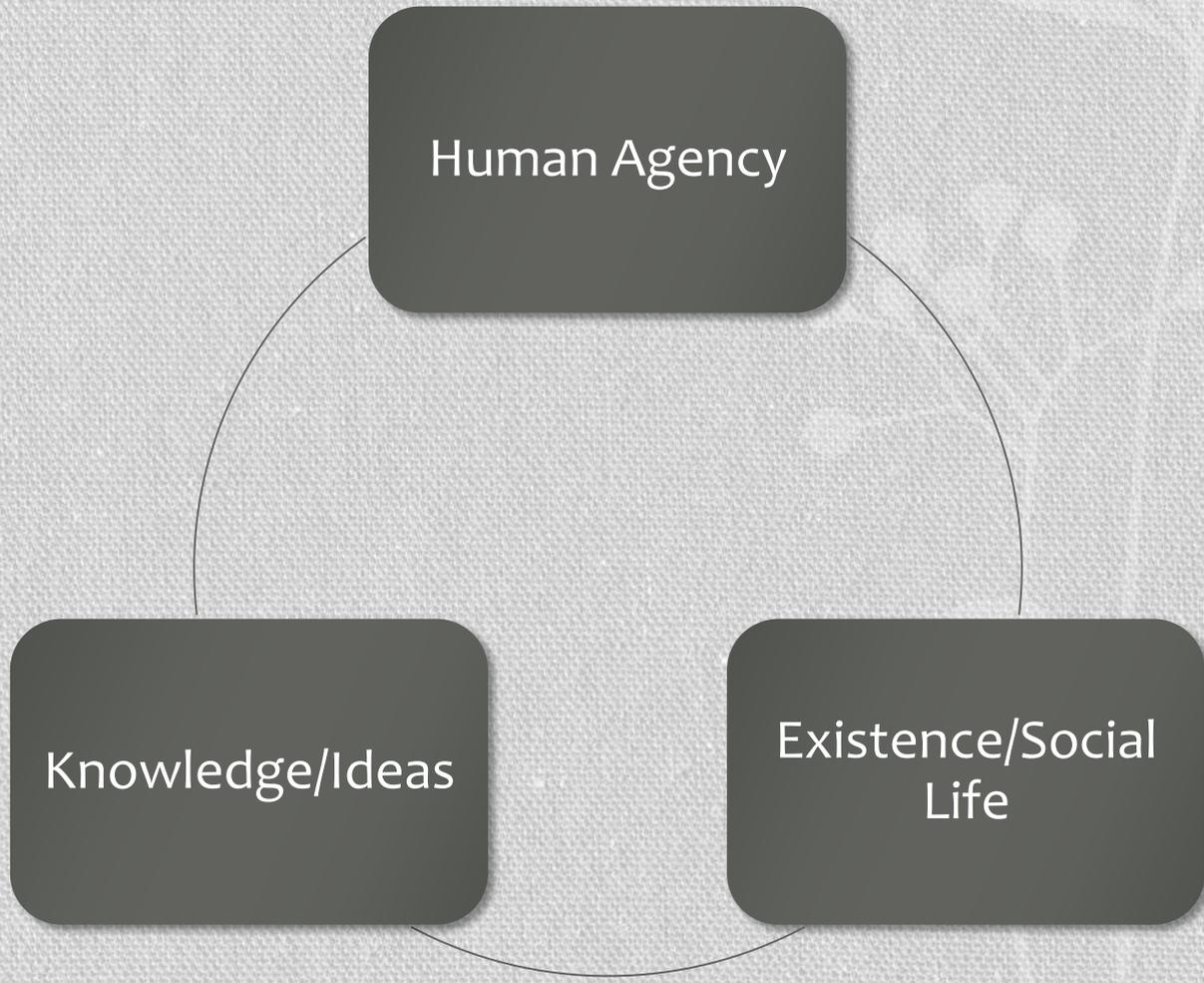
Outline

1. Why Mannheim?
2. Ideas, and concepts
3. Method, and application



1. Why Mannheim

- The interaction and relation between social structures, ideas, and human agency
- The link between the process of social change, and the formation of thought and discourse
- The rootedness of knowledge, thought and ideas in time and place
- Foundations for the sociological analysis of knowledge, and the precursor to works by C. Wright Mills, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Edward Said, Syed Hussein Alatas



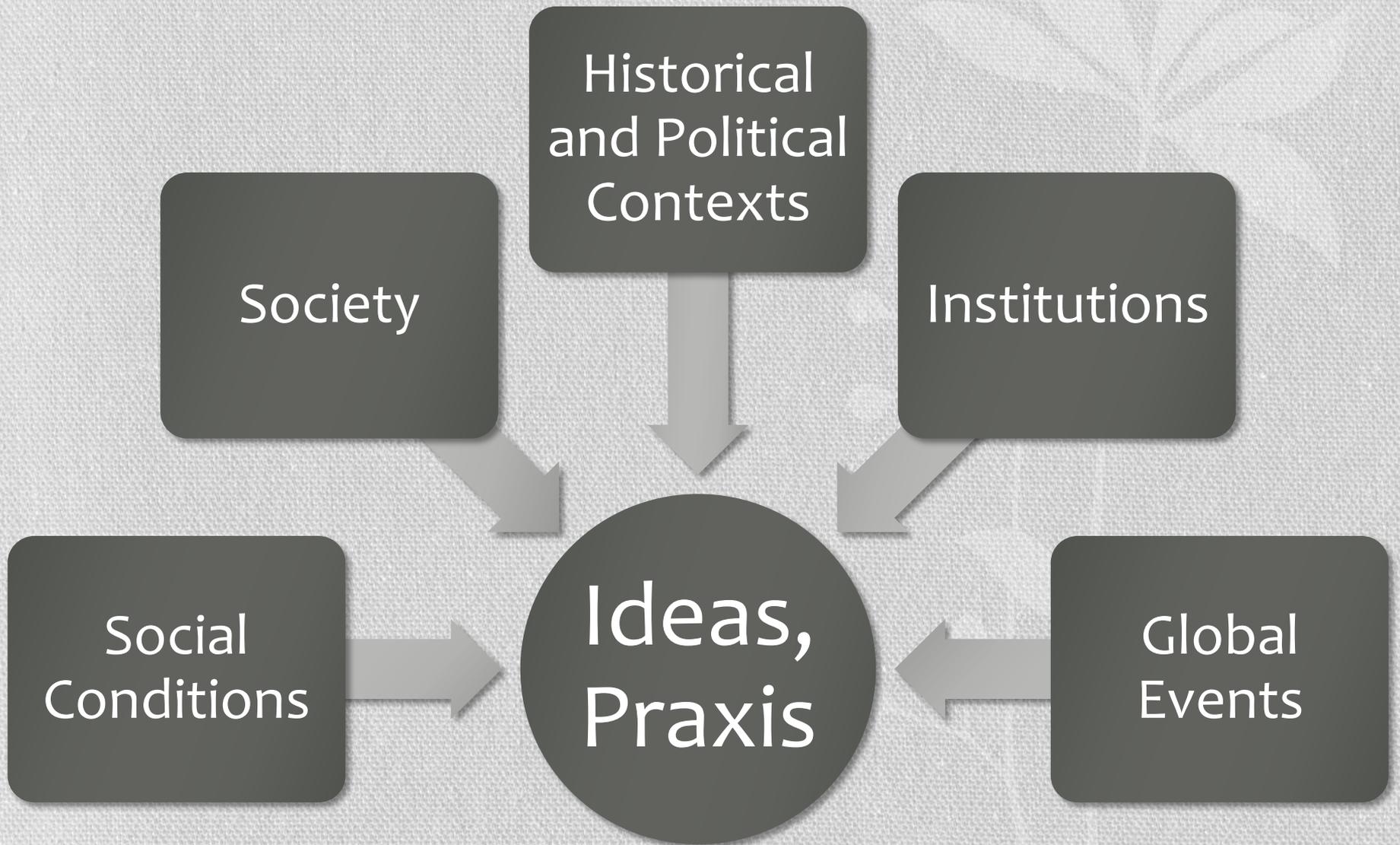
2. Ideas, themes, concepts

- i. Sociology of knowledge
- ii. Ideology
- iii. Utopia
- iv. Intelligentsia



i. Sociology of knowledge

- Interaction between ideas and actions, and social conditions
- The relation between ideas and actions, and social-historical contexts
- Different social and historical settings form different mental structures
- The relationship between knowledge and existence
- The sociological production or process of thought and knowledge



Society

Historical
and Political
Contexts

Institutions

Social
Conditions

Ideas,
Praxis

Global
Events

ii. Ideology

- 1) Particular conception of ideology, and 2) total conception of ideology
- Particular conception of ideology,
 - Conscious disguises of the real situation,
 - Range from conscious lies to half conscious and unwitting disguises
- Total conception of ideology
 - The ideology of an age, or of a historic-social group
 - The composition and characteristics of the total structure of the mind of an epoch of a group
- The totality of the structure of the intellectual world belonging to a social group in a given historical situation

- “...the one discovery which emerged from the political conflict, namely, that *ruling groups* can in their thinking become so *intensively interest-bound to a situation* that they are simply *no longer able to see certain facts* which would *undermine their sense of domination*. There is implicit in the word ‘*ideology*’ the insight that in certain situations the *collective unconscious of certain groups* obscures the *real condition of society both to itself and to others* and thereby stabilizes it.”

iii. Utopia

- Opposite of ideology
- Intent on changing existing condition of society
- Unable to provide good diagnosis of its problems, chooses to only see negative aspects of an existing condition
- Obscures certain dimensions of reality
- ‘a state of mind is utopian when it is incongruous with the state of reality within which it occurs’
- The capacity to transcend reality and change the existing order of things
- Relative utopia, and absolute utopia

- “The concept of utopian thinking reflects the opposite discovery of the political struggle, namely that certain **oppressed-groups are intellectually so strongly interested in the destruction and transformation of a given condition of society** that they unwittingly see only those elements in the situation which tend to negate it. Their thinking is incapable of correctly diagnosing an existing condition of society. They are not at all concerned with what really exists rather in their thinking they already seek to change the situation that exists. Their thought is never a diagnosis of the situation; it can be used only as a direction for action. In the utopian mentality, the collective unconscious guided by wishful representation and the will to action, hides certain aspects of reality. It turns its back on everything which would shake its belief or paralyze its desire to change things.”

iv. Intelligentsia

- As a social group, to provide an interpretation of the world for society
- Do not belong to the conventional scholastic tradition and caste or organized stratum
- Emerged from various social strata and 'life-situations'
- Known as 'free intelligentsia'
- Broke the monopoly of other more traditional and organized groups of scholars on knowledge, thus the break of intellectual monopoly
- Led to the rise of competing thoughts and various ways of looking at the world

3. Method and application

- The study of social groups and discourse in Iran, i.e. ideological and utopian thinking
- The analysis of concepts and categories in Iran
- The understanding and study of politics
- The dialectical relation between utopian and ideological thinking
- The study of knowledge and ideological construction
- Syed Hussein Alatas's *The Myth of the Lazy Native* (1977), Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978)

Works

- Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge (1936)
- Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction (1940)
- Diagnosis of Our Time (1945)
- Freedom, Power and Democratic Planning (1950)
- Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge (1952)
- Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology (1953)
- Essays on the Sociology of Culture (1956)