# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

The general goal of this study is *to investigate if and how the conditions of the production and articulation of knowledge in public policy evaluation make and keep this knowledge inadequate.*  Public policy evaluation is in the study conceived of both as a "science" and as an "art"; both of these facets are examined.

The research problem did not germinate at once; even less did the results reported here evolve quickly.  The study has been going on since 1978, although it has its roots in a personal research interest in public planning, dating from the early seventies, and in public policy analysis, from the mid-seventies.  Further, a personal involvement in practical public policy evaluation since 1977 also contributed to the research interest: first as junior auditor, then as researcher developing auditing, and finally as secretary to a governmental ad hoc commission preparing a reform of the Finnish system of government auditing.  Visits to government audit institutions in the United States, France and Denmark have also had their impact on the orientation of the study.  Many of the issues discussed in this report are frequently encountered as "anomalies" in government auditing; e.g., practitioners often lament that their work has few visible impacts, or that their tools are either underdeveloped or otherwise unsuitable for tackling the tasks at hand.

The first aim in what became this study was to promote the application of policy analysis and evaluative research in government auditing - to give auditing a touch of applied social science.  It soon appeared, however, that such application is impossible without elaborate information systems.  This observation reoriented the embryonic study toward research on information systems and on the intellectual and social

conditions defining their design and content.  It also became apparent that the nature of the government programs and policies evaluated had a definite impact on the content and quality of recorded evaluation results.  This observation suggested the importance of also studying such documents as audit reports through a systematic approach - that had to be developed.

In 1979 the objectives of this study were preliminarily defined: to study the problems encountered in applying social science research in public policy evaluation, and to study documented results of government auditing, when auditing is understood as public policy evaluation.  The preliminary definition of the objectives gave rise to several problems of relating the planned study to earlier research.  The first of these was that even though social science approaches to public policy evaluation and applications of these approaches abounded,[1] the nature of the knowledge produced and articulated in the applications, and the intellectual and social conditions of the production and articulation of this knowledge, were largely unexplored.[2]  Only scattered remarks could be found, either praising the benefits of application-oriented knowledge produced and articulated through the application of social science approaches to public policy evaluation, or, on the contrary, ascribing to such knowledge a lower scientific status than to results of social research proper.[3]

Second, it soon also became apparent that prior research had not paid much attention to the production and articulation of knowledge in practical policy evaluation in politics and administration.[4]  Investigation of the relationship between the nature of the knowledge in the "practical evaluation" and the conditions of its production and articulation had also been neglected.  Thus, the "art" of public policy evaluation was as feebly grounded as the "science" of evaluation.

Finally, it was impossible to find a logical or direct empirical connection between social science approaches to public policy evaluation, and conceptualizations relied on by many practitioners of evaluation, such as government auditors.  Even though the two on occasion did coincide, the "art" of evaluation often seemed to fare quite well without the "science" of evaluation.  This suggested that academic social science did not, after all, seem to have a sufficiently "objective" language for discussing problems of evaluation, and its claims  to

objectivity could be interpreted as reflections of its striving toward "cognitive hegemony", i.e., for transforming and controlling other types of knowledge.

The problems of earlier research thus led to a rethinking of the basic premises of the study, and to a reformulation of its main objectives. After this rethinking and reformulation, the study was to cover, first, two facets of public policy evaluation: its "science", i.e., applications of social science approaches to public policy evaluation, and its "art", i.e., practical public policy evaluation in politics and administration. The "art" was to be represented by government auditing in Finland.

Second, the study was to examine the conditions of the production and articulation of knowledge in the above domains. Clues to the nature and adequacy of the knowledge produced and articulated both by the approaches and "arty" practices were to be sought through the investigation of these very conditions, both internal (evaluation's own "intellectual" premises), and external (the "social determination" of evaluation).

## Basic Concepts

The rethinking of the premises of the present study also made necessary a more exact redefinition of the basic concepts to be used. These concepts have three main foci: "public policy evaluation"; "social inquiry"; and "discourse".

*"Public Policy Evaluation"*. The concept "public policy evaluation" signifies, in this study, the production and articulation of knowledge for evaluating public policies both through applications of social science approaches, and through practical public policy evaluation carried out in politics and administration. Accordingly, the same concept is used both of a "science" and an "art".

The adoption of the concept of "public policy evaluation", and its definition in the above manner, made it necessary to define two other concepts: "evaluation research" (or "evaluative research") and "meta-evaluation research" (or "metaevaluative research"). The former signifies both the formulation of social science approaches to public

policy evaluation and the application of these approaches; the latter
signifies both research that investigates if social science research
techniques have been applied in "practical" policy evaluation according
to current conventions[5], and research on the premises, concepts,
strategies and social implications of "scientific" and "practical" pub-
lic policy evaluation. Accordingly, the present study is itself
a piece of metaevaluation research. Finally, the concept "meta-
evaluation" signifies the same kind of investigation as "meta-
evaluative research" but carried out in politics and administration.

*"Social Inquiry"*. - Both the application of approaches to public
policy evaluation and practical public policy evaluation were above
defined as ways to produce and articulate knowledge for the purpose of
public policy evaluation. In order to discuss the two in common terms,
it was necessary to put the both of them under the heading "social in-
quiry". In this study, the term "social inquiry" signifies production
and articulation of knowledge about society in a broader sense than
(applied) "social science" only; it signifies production and articu-
lation which (1) is indebted for some, but not necessarily all, of its
methodology to social science, (2) which is carried out by professionals
but in most cases not necessarily by social scientists, and (3) which
may try to legitimize its "authoritativeness" by virtue of its associ-
ation with social science. This definition of "social inquiry" stems
from *Charles E. Lindblom*'s and *David K. Cohen*'s definition of their con-
cept "professional social inquiry":

1. The work of seminal minds like Marx, Freud and Adam Smith
2. Academic social science ... what academic social scientists do
   in their specialized roles
3. The following overlapping activities, whether pursued by
   academic social scientists or others:
   ...
   Highly systematic data gathering and reporting (census ...
   survey research ... ethnological fieldwork ...) ...
   ...
   Policy analyses ...
   ...
   Systematic search for ... information ... for a ... decision
   Systematic professional analysis of ... society ... to illumi-
   nate some aspect ... or to make a contribution to the solution
   of a social problem
   Operations research and systems analysis on social problems ...
   Policy evaluation
   Consulting services by professionals
   ...[6]

The adoption of the term "social inquiry" and its definition in the above way necessitated defining and adopting a whole host of other concepts: "theorization of social inquiry", "social science", "social science research", "social research", "theorization of social science", "approach of social science" (or "social science approach"), and "practical social theory". In this study, "theorization of social inquiry" signifies abstract conceptual orientation and knowledge in any field of social inquiry as defined above. The term "social science" will be used synonymously with Lindblom's and Cohen's "academic social science", thus signifying "academic application-oriented social science". As far as the character of social science as a type of *action* is specially emphasized, the terms "social science research" and "social research" will be used. The term "theorization of social science" will signify abstract conceptual orientation and related knowledge in any field of social science, and the term "approach of social science" definite established types of such orientation and knowledge. Finally, "practical social theory" will signify definite established types of conceptual orientation and related knowledge in "non-scientific" social inquiry.[7]

The most important consequences of the adoption of the above concepts are the following. First, both the application of social science approaches to public policy evaluation and practical public policy evaluation in politics and administration are considered "social inquiry". Second, both the basic conceptual knowledge, orientation and analytical knowledge grounding the applications of the approaches and the corresponding orientation and knowledge grounding practical public policy evaluation will be analyzed as "theorizations of social inquiry". Third, definite established types of such theorizations will be regarded either as "(scientific) approaches" (in the case that social science approaches are applied), or as "practical social theories" (in the case of practical public policy evaluation).

*"Discourse"*. - The definition of the "science" and the "art" of public policy evaluation as two types of social inquiry led, first, to their analysis as "discourse", i.e., as "established ways of thinking and acting *and* expressing this thinking and acting" and, second, to the definition of "discourse" as "language as action".[8] The status of the concept "discourse" and some related concepts begame gradually so

important for the present study that its general approach can be de-
fined as one of "discursive social research".[9] The general approach
brought with it also a method of discursive social inquiry: "discursive
analysis".[10] The approach and method and some pertinent concepts are
explained in the following section.


The Research Approach and Method

The general approach and method of the present study can be out-
lined by several steps. First, we can investigate some concepts of dis-
course and next define "two and half" levels of "manifest" discourse, i.e.,
"referential discourse", and "communicative discourse" and its "appendix"
"autocommunicative discourse", and indicate the mutual relations of the
levels. Next, we can indicate the major analytical and research prob-
lems concerning the nature of manifest discourse, conditions it in-
corporates for the production and articulation of knowledge, and the
impact of these conditions on the adequacy of the produced and articu-
lated knowledge. At this stage, the premises of the critical research
focussing on the conditions and their impacts on the adequacy of the
knowledge can be elucidated. The fourth step sketches the premises of
"discursive analysis", a method used to carry out discursive research
and inquiry. Finally, after these steps the application of the approach
and method to the study of the discourses of the "science" and the
"art" of public policy evaluation can be discussed.

The semiotician *A. J. Greimas* has suggested that an overall con-
ception of any discourse can be obtained if the following issues are
considered: the general types of argument used in the discourse; its
"motifs" and "themes"; and its *dramatis personae*.[11] According to
Greimas, the general types of argument within a discourse are: first,
"cognitive discourse" about the existence or inexistence of "objects of
knowledge"; second, "evaluative discourse" about the status of objects
of knowledge in terms of values "invested" in them; and, third, "pre-
scriptive discourse" about what can, must or must not be done, or what
must or must not be the case.[12]

The motifs of a discourse consist of established combinations of the
above general types of arguments, and any given discourse can be

delineated on the basis of the recurrence of an established set of
motifs. The way in which these motifs recur determines the themes of
the discourse; and Greimas suggests that every discourse is a variant
of a "tale" (a "story", "narration") about one single theme: "lack" and
its elimination. According to Greimas, the constellation of the
*dramatis personae* of any given tale "invests" the variant of this basic
theme into the discourse, and every discourse can be analyzed in terms
of the constellation. A complete constellation consists of an "object
(of value)", a "subject", a "sender" initiating the subject's "object-
relation", a "receiver" which "harvests" the results of this relation,
a "helper", and an "opponent" (Figure I-1).[13] The main role, of course,
belongs to the subject who is often the "herd" and "redeemer" of the
object. The constellation of the *dramatis personae* may be "collapsed";
e.g., a "sender" may be also a "receiver"; a "subject" can be also
either a "sender" or a "receiver" or both; or a "subject" may be an
"object" of its own action.

```
   Sender ──→ ┌─────────────┐ ──→ Receiver
              │   Object    │
              └─────────────┘
                     ↑
                     │
                     │
                     │
                     │
              ┌─────────────┐
   Helper ──→ │   Subject   │ ←── Opponent
              └─────────────┘
```
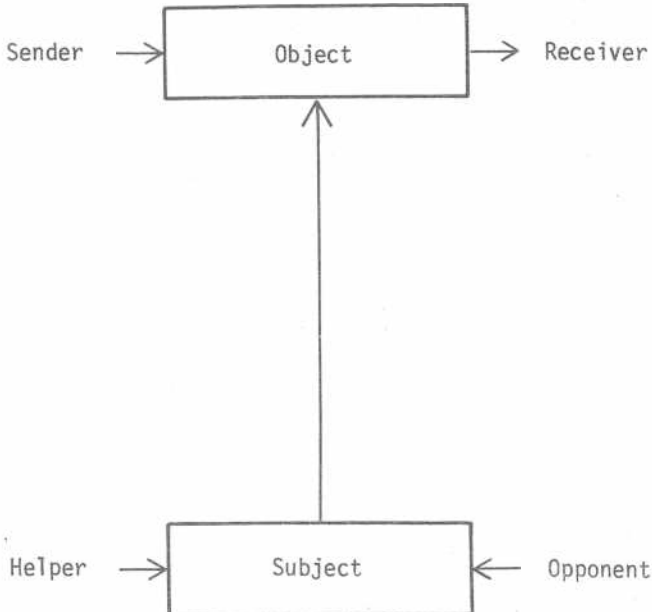
Figure I-1. Greimas's scheme of the *dramatis personae* of a tale

The generality of Greimas's theoretical views suggests that differences between "first-order" discourses on a specific subject matter and discourses of a higher order (e.g., discourses on the former discourses) can from an analytic point of view be only relative. This relativity is one of the ideas upon which we build the following categorization.

*Referential Discourse.* - The elementary level of any discourse is "referential discourse": it is a discourse on a "subject matter", organized by a set of types of arguments, motifs, themes and *dramatis personae*. It is typical of referential discourse that it appears as "objective": the "narrator" situates himself outside the discourse, which here becomes a characterization of an "obvious reality".

*Communicative Discourse.* - Discourse cannot have effects unless its results are transmitted as an "obvious" message (the referential discourse or, rather, its results) in a "communicative circuit" from a sender that encodes it to a receiver who decodes it.[14] The process in this circuit establishes "communicative discourse". Greimas has also shown that communicative discourse can be analyzed in similar terms as referential discourse; he has, e.g., applied his model of *dramatis personae* on this "secondary" level of analysis as well.[15]

*Autocommunicative Discourse.* - Communicative discourse fails to provide a firm position for its "subject" - the narrator; therefore the subject must try to attain and maintain such a position by himself. Here, the subject's "internal" illusory coherence is produced and reproduced by an "appendix" to communicative discourse: its "autocommunicative", "mythical" or "self-descriptive" discourse with itself.[16] Most importantly, the autocommunicative discourse makes the subject's self-understanding that of an unreproachable "hero".

*Conditions of Manifest Discourse.* - There are authors who have analyzed the conditions of the production and articulation of knowledge in manifest discourse, as well as the impacts of these conditions on the inadequacy of the knowledge produced and articulated. *Julia Kristeva* suggests that "ideology" makes the positions of the sender and receiver of discourse appear as unproblematic, and the message transmitted appear as a "representation" of an unquestionable, given "reality".[17] According to Kristeva, there are translinguistic mechanisms which are origins

both of the meanings transmitted in a message of discourse and of the
meaning of the discourse itself; here, the meanings manifest in dis-
course are actually only "traces" of a germination of meaning in these
translinguistic mechanisms.  Kristeva outlines a type of critical dis-
course, "semanalysis", whose purposes is to disclose the mechanisms
anterior to any manifest discourse, and to investigate the mechanisms'
effects that are concealed in the discourse and "present" there only as
the traces.

Kristeva's semanalysis is in part an elaboration of *Jacques Derrida*'s
"deconstruction", another sketch for a critical discourse concerning
what is  anterior  to manifest discourse.[18]  The purpose of deconstruc-
tion is to take apart concepts which serve as rules (or axioms, or
premises) of a period or type of thought.  In these axioms deconstruc-
tion seeks internal contradictions, such as irresoluble "metaphysical"
conceptual oppositions (e.g., "individual" and "society", "nature" and
"society", "signifier" and "signified").  Deconstruction questions the
rules of the manifest  discourse (understood as "text") it investigates,
and seeks cases where the text "transgresses" these rules (i.e., it viol-
ates rules it sets for itself and simultaneously also conceals this
violation).  In deconstructionist analysis, manifest discourse is con-
sidered possible by the very "self-deconstruction" of its rules.

Like Kristeva's semanalysis, Derrida's deconstruction investigates
such mechanisms of the germination of meaning which tend to make the
positions of a discourse's sender and receiver unproblematic, and
which tend to make the message transmitted unquestionable.  However,
according to Derrida  the "deconstructive discourse" itself can
be considered  authoritative only  provisionally:  like any other dis-
course it is possible only because it cannot but conceal  rules it
follows.

*Fredric Jameson* has suggested that Greimas's model could also be
used here.  The model would, then, provide a formal characterization of
the "self-reproducing concealment" or "ideological closure" involved.[19]

In summary, Kristeva's and Derrida's views suggest that the pro-
duction and articulation of knowledge in manifest discourse is made

inadequate by underlying translinguistic mechanisms where the
effects of these mechanisms on the discourse are concealed. Another
way to express this is to say that the mechanisms are the "suppressors"
of discourse: they prevent us from seeing the origins of discourse.
There, the production and articulation of knowledge in discourse re-
mains incomplete or distorted and the discourse remains "suppressed" -
and "self-suppressed" because it produces and reproduces the very
knowledge (or the absence of knowledge) which suppresses it.[20] In this
study we adopt Kristeva's and Derrida's conceptions of the analysis of
the conditions of the production and articulation of knowledge - and
their conceptions of the effects of these conditions on the inadequacy
of the knowledge produced and articulated: the "suppression of discourse".
Their conceptions on the suppression are in this study used to in-
vestigate (1) whether there are conditions of the production and articu-
lation of knowledge which "suppress" the discourse of the "science" and
"art" of public policy evaluation; and (2) how this potential suppression
is produced and reproduced. In different phases of the investiga-
tion, we shall also apply Greimas's model, especially in studying the
"art" of evaluation.

*About the Research Method.* - As "discursive social research", this
study relies on "discursive analysis" as its research method. Two
features of discursive analysis can in particular be considered import-
ant here.[21] First, discursive analysis attempts to break through the
"obvious" in social life and through the apparent "givenness" of social
actors (including participants in discourse). Discursive analysis "de-
constructs": it discloses the germination of meaning behind the obvious
and apparent by disclosing the paradoxical in the conditions and rules
of producing and reproducing the apparent and obvious; or by disclosing
the multiple mechanisms of "exclusion" and "selection" that produce and
reproduce this obvious and apparent.[22] On the basis of deconstruction,
discursive analysis tries to "reconstruct": to make a problematic and
intelligible "discursive object" that which appears as "nature-like" -
or that which does not appear as anything, because it is taken for given
and not made a topic of reflexion at all.

Second, the application of discursive analysis unavoidably takes
place in a specific spatial and temporal context; hence the application
necessarily becomes a context-specific ("localized") intervention into

the "loci", "arenas" or "regions" of society where the discourse
analyzed takes place. The application "politicizes" the obvious and
apparent by disclosing in these loci, arenas and regions the conceal-
ment which is based on the opacity of the underlying germination of
meanings, and which necessarily maintains some type of power and domina-
tion.[23]  Moreover, because the application of discursive analysis is
unavoidably itself a type of discourse, it necessarily establishes an
"anti-subject" or "center" for the  communicative  struggle it launches
when it contests the obvious and apparent by revealing the hidden con-
ditions of their production and reproduction.  The anti-subject may be
a social scientist who in a specific spatial and temporal context (but
not necessarily anywhere, in all his or her professional activities,
nor always) assumes a role of a critic; or a subject carrying out a per-
sonal "political" strategy (e.g., a literary strategy of a literary
critic or of an avant-garde writer trying to keep critics calm); or
a subject of spontaneous collective action.[24]  However, the anti-
subject and center cannot be other than provisional, both in cases
where hegemony of knowledge and power is successfully contested, and in
cases where the contestation fails.  In the former cases, the success
leaves no more place for the anti-subject - and the anti-subject tends
to become a subject with a self-evident status   or with claims to such
a status.  In the latter cases, the forces which the anti-subject com-
bats annihilate its "subversive" project.


Research Objectives and the Structure of the Discussion

The first objective of this study is to investigate if and how the con-
ditions of the production and articulation of knowledge in applications of
social science approaches to public policy evaluation make and keep this
knowledge inadequate. The second objective is to study if and how the
conditions of the production and articulation of knowledge in practical
public policy evaluation by the Finnish State Economy Comptrollers' Office
(*valtiontalouden tarkastusvirasto*), the government's principal audit insti-
tution in Finland, make and keep this knowledge inadequate. Both types of pub-
lic policy evaluation are analyzed as social inquiry and as discourse in

the sense indicated in the previous section. The analysis focusses on
investigating if and how the conditions, and the knowledge produced
and articulated under these conditions, "suppress" the discourse of the
"science" and "art" of public policy evaluation and keep it suppressed.

In order to achieve both above objectives, a conceptual framework to
the study of the suppression of discourse in any social inquiry is
first formulated in *Chapter II*. By drawing on the general research ap-
proach formulated above and on recent theoretical and methodological re-
search, the framework hypothetically suggests how the conditions of the
production and articulation of knowledge in theorizations of social in-
quiry may be such as they suppress the discourse of the theorizations
and reproduce this suppression. The conditions are analyzed as assump-
tions of the theorizations, both as internal "intellectual" conditions
of the theorizations as referential, communicative and autocommunicative
discourse , and as the external "social" conditions of the theorizations,
"finalizing" their status as "valid knowledge". Focus is on disclosing
how the assumptions produce and reproduce the suppression of the
theorizations as discourse.

*Chapter III* is an application of the conceptual framework of Chapter
II to the analysis and metaevaluation of some social science approaches
to public policy evaluation. The aim in this chapter is to disclose the
assumptions which suppress the discourse when the approaches are ac-
tually applied to public policy evaluation. The analysis in Chapter III
has one important limitation. It discusses the applications only in
a general analytical manner, because an empirical analysis would have
posed insurmountable problems; our whole study focusses on the circum-
stances in Finland where social science applications are relatively few.
Because of this limitation and lack of empirical analysis, the critical
implications of "discursive analysis", outlined above, are not actualized
in Chapter III: it is not possible to consider specific strategies for
"anti-subjects" to contest in spatially and temporally specific contexts
the suppression of the discourse of the analyzed approaches - even where
the research results suggest that suppression is the case.

To reach the second objective of this study, *Chapter IV* consists of
another application of the conceptual framework formulated in Chapter II.
The investigation in Chapter IV focusses on "practical social theories"

which are the basis of the Office's audit work; the analysis con-
centrates - as in Chapter III - on the assumptions  which may produce
and reproduce the suppression of the Office's discourse of auditing.
Unlike Chapter III, the investigation in Chapter IV can specify the
meaning of the "public" and "political" in public policy evaluation
not only in general and abstract terms, but it can proceed also to
map specific contexts where the suppression of the discourse
of auditing can be contested.  Finally, *Chapter V*, an epilogue, con-
cludes the study.