


NOTES ON THE SLIDE PAGE FROM SOCIAL ENQUIRY: WEEK 2


What is a sociological imagination?

- Links private experiences and wider social issues
- Term coined by C. Wright Mills who said: "Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both" (1983:9).
- "[People] cannot cope with their personal troubles in such a way as to control the structural transformations that usually lie behind them" (1983:10)



What is a sociological imagination?

- Mills says we must ask certain questions such as:
- What is the structure of a particular society as a whole? (How do its components relate to and differ from other societies; what are the meanings of its features)
- Where does this society stand in human history? (What changes, what stays the same)
- What different types of people characterise this society? (How are people constructed; who is powerful and powerless)




What is a sociological imagination?

Mills says we must look at the distinction between

- **personal troubles** (self & personal awareness, individuals have a biography, local)

and

- **public issues** (larger structure of society; relates to organisational matters; institutions; national or global)



Sociological Imagination.

- CW Mills
- c 1950s

Both the individual and the society must be understood. Historical/contextual

The Sociological Imagination Personal Troubles Linked to Public Issues.

→ Ethnicity. How does the population affect society?

eg marriage equality
- personal
| gay couple

- public
marriage institution
Left vs right in political ideology.

Personal troubles
plus
Public Issues

Sociological Imagination.