

CfP

Governing (by) expertise. The politics of social scientific knowledge production

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Social sciences' place is as much in academics as it is with government. As such, political sciences, sociology and economics always aim both at charting and disenchanting the world as well as at projecting desired future societal states and reflexively optimizing governance. In this double role – as academic disciplines and as professions of government – social sciences not only shape practices of governing but are being shaped in this interaction themselves (Abbott 1988). While this Janus-faced character isn't exactly a novelty (Weber 1988, Steinmetz 2016), recent developments have changed the social sciences' position at the centre of an increasingly transnational "knowledge warfare" (Kauppi 2018): On the one hand, the quantification of academic meritocracy and its projectified third-party-funded move towards an output-oriented production regime introduced new ways in which autonomous social scientific distinctions have to take societal and especially governmental requirements into account (Bérard/Crespin 2010, Münch 2014). On the other hand, new modes of governance increasingly rely on scientific legitimacy and represent an increasing demand for social scientific expertise, particularly so in transnational contexts such as the European Union (Heilbron et al. 2018; Cohen 2013; Dezalay/Garth 2011; Georgakakis/de Lasalle 2012).

This development entails both the active role taken up by social scientific knowledge in governing practices as well as the effects which the utilization of academic legitimacy has on academic self-governance. Effects can be seen in the rearranging of boundaries and jurisdictions in disciplinary and professional contexts as well as in influencing and triggering change in bureaucratic, political and economic spheres ('transdisciplinarily'). One of the most indicative effects in recent decades is the process of transnationalization that has prevailed on both sides of this two-way relationship between academic producers of governmental knowledge and political, bureaucratic and economic users. Social sciences have de-nationalized governmental knowledge and increasingly created instruments and methods for observing and influencing bureaucracies, politics and economics using a transnational scope. Insights produced have been used to accumulate power and knowledge in institutions beyond the nation state confinement, creating "operators of global governance" (Kauppi 2018). It comes as no surprise that academic social science has itself come under the gaze of such transnational institutions, who rely on its academic authority as a crucial resource of post-national legitimacy. In turn, academic orthodoxies orient themselves towards such new forms of domination and dispositifs, eager for empirical experience, funding, influence and recognition.

Transnationalization is only the latest effect of this double role, which had previously taken place in various forms of "nation-ization struggles" (Gorski 2012) in the 19th and 20th century. Social sciences

have been deeply involved in imagining, measuring, administering the national scope as a space of governance – thriving, in return, on the financial resources, the cognitive access to experiences and legitimations of nascent nation states. Correspondingly, a certain nationalisation of social scientific governmental knowledge historically was a given (Chaubet 2014). This in mind, the question arises if the worldwide shifts towards (re)nationalization in the last crisis-ridden decade might entail also a (re)nationalization of disciplines and professions of government, be it in content of expert knowledge or academic governance. While this does not necessarily point toward a retrenching of science along national borders, it might very well result in an outright nationally infused transnational academic competition: Recent developments could lead to either further perforation or strengthening of national scopes of governance knowledge and knowledge governance – as well as to a decoupling of transnational social sciences.

In order to analyse these developments, we aim at reflexively researching the dynamics and power relations in specific academic disciplines and adjunct governmental professions, such as economics, security studies, sociology, and the humanities. Processes that can be detected in all these areas, albeit in differing intensity, are quantification, a turn towards New Public Management (NPM) and output-oriented controlling, decreasing disciplinary and domestic social scientific autonomy, an increase of transnational heteronomous interventions and tendencies to transnationalism in general (cf. Bernhard 2011, Gengnagel et al. 2019). In turn, social scientific knowledge is used to restructure bureaucratic practices, dispositifs, subjectivities and power relations leading to a reshaping of national and transnational state institutions along the lines of scientifically legitimized forms of evaluation and regulation.

There are several areas to consider:

- Economics has deeply influenced modes of governance in recent decades with e.g. evidence based policy approaches (as advocated by research labs such as J-PAL, decorated with the ‘nobel’ in 2019), associated think tanks and semi-scientific lobbying institutions (Laurens 2018; Medvetz 2012), that impact politics and societal contexts quite differently depending on the existing disciplinary currents, the area of interest and the specific national-historical setting (Jatteau 2018). Such developments have also influenced political sciences, leading to a rush not only towards quantification but also ‘scientific’ as opposed to armchair consulting (Erkkilä et al. 2016).
- In addition, in sociology and educational sciences the main thrust in recent years has been towards a governance of schooling and education more generally in a human capital perspective (Jessop/Fairclough/Wodak 2008). This fosters on the one hand the need for long term micro panel data and on the other hand triggers dreams of a universal applicability of governance instruments (Marttila 2020). Recently such dreaming has spread to the area of governing migration on a European scale (see e.g. <https://migrationresearch.com> or <https://flucht-forschung-transfer.de>).
- Security studies – especially disciplines and professions associated with data and big data analysis, military and policing – have developed towards a transnational guild of security diagnostics and merchants (Bigo 2016). The inner and outer security of ‘states’ is no longer constructed and achieved in state-governed practices alone. Instead the sovereignty of nation

states is transcended in acts of invoking security practices by agents foremost located in transnational fields more closely tied to professional and/or regional (e.g. European) communities of security experts than to respective states (Mérand 2010).

- Last but not least, law as an academic discipline and administrative body has undergone and pushes processes of transnationalisation in the described transformations of fields of state power (Bessy 2015; Dezalay/Garth 2014). Today, law is one of the main sources of symbolic authority not only in the context of nation-state fields but also in processes of transnational societisation: In recent decades, European integration was driven forward by litigation while fostering a transnationalisation of law as EU law (Münch 2008; Vauchez/de Witte 2013). Whether this development persists in the current crisis of European integration is a most interesting question (Scicluna/Auer 2019).

Keeping in mind that society-state relations differ across historical and national settings, we invite all participants to reflect not only on differences between disciplines, but also between different national and adjoint transnational contextualisation, both of which are also part of the governmental effect social sciences have had and have. In order to allow for discussing the broader politics of social scientific knowledge production, both empirical studies on specific academic fields as well as historical or contemporary case studies are welcome.

Conference presentations (approx. 30 min.) and discussion will be in English. Please send paper proposals of no more than 300 words to cschmidtw@uni-potsdam.de until 30.09.2021.

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