Call for papers

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

Serendipities. Journal for the Sociology and History of the Social Sciences.

Vol. 9, Nr. t.b.a., 2025, guest-edited by:

Christian Bessy, Arthur Jatteau, Frédéric Lebaron (IDHES UMR CNRS 8533, ENS Paris-Saclay),
Vincent Gengnagel (University Flensburg) & Christian Schmidt-Wellenburg (University Potsdam)
– corresponding guest-editors: Vincent Gengnagel & Christian Schmidt-Wellenburg –

Timeline

30. September 2023: Submission of abstracts to both corresponding guest editors
01. November 2023: Editors' invitation to submit a full manuscript
15. April 2024: Submission of manuscripts for review
May 2024: Online author workshop, t.b.a.
August-October 2024: Revisions and re-submissions
First half of 2025: Publication

Aim of the special issue

Social sciences' place is as much in academics as it is with government. Social sciences, such as 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; Miller/Rose 2008). While this Janus-faced character isn't exactly a novelty and has played out differently in specific national contexts (Weber 1988 [1916]; Steinmetz 2016; Chen 2017; Cossu & Bartollini 2017; Moebius 2021; Consolim 2023), recent developments have changed the social sciences' position at the centre of an increasingly transnational "knowledge warfare" (Kauppi 2018): On the one hand, the output-oriented quantification and projectification of academic meritocracy introduced new ways in which societal and especially governmental requirements have to be taken into account by autonomous social scientific distinctions (Bérard/Crespin 2010; Boulet/Harari-Kermadec 2014; Münch 2014; Angermuller/van Leeuwen 2018; Gengnagel et al. 2019; Hamann 2020). On the other hand, new modes of governance increasingly rely on scientific legitimacy and represent an increasing demand for social scientific expertise (Power 2003; Desrosières 2011; Dezalay/Garth 2011; Heilbron et al. 2017, 2018) in national contexts (Rossier & Bühlmann 2018; Connell et all. 2018; Heredia 2018) as well as in transnational contexts such as the European Union (Georgakakis/de Lasalle 2012; Cohen 2013; Boncourt/Calligaro 2017; Gengnagel et al. 2022; for the social scientific marginalization of non-Western Area Studies in the globally dominant US, see Szanton 2002; Lie 2012).

This development entails both the active role taken up by social scientific knowledge in governing practices and how such utilization of academic legitimacy affects academic self-governance itself. Effects can be seen on both sides of the relationship, with four developments standing out in recent times. *First*, the unbroken demand for governmental knowledge in an increasingly digitalised world has led to a rearranging of boundaries and jurisdictions in disciplinary and professional contexts, giving rise to new disciplinary developments such as computational social sciences (Edelmann et al. 2020), and having unprecedented performative effects in markets, social networks, and digitalized interactions in general (MacKenzie 2006). *Second*, this has triggered changes in bureaucratic, political and economic spheres, increasing the importance of experts and expertise in governing. This may well

challenge democratic logics and legitimacy of government, amplifying forms of bureaucratic, expertocratic and even autocratic domination (Turner 2014; Eyal 2019). *Third*, processes of transnationalization that have prevailed on both sides of this 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 (Gorski 2013), contributing to the accumulation of power and knowledge in institutions of governance beyond the nation state confinement (Kauppi 2018). *Fourth*, intellectuals and activists associated with various social movements and political backgrounds create transnational spaces that empower them to challenge hegemonies in and between nationally anchored academic fields, between the Global South and North, as well as between rivalling governance projects of nationalization (Caillé & Dufoix 2013; Collyer 2018; Leyton & Simbürger 2022).

Keeping in mind that society-state relations differ widely across historical settings, we invite all contributions to reflect not only on differences between disciplines, but also between different national and adjoint transnational contexts. 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. We invite papers that investigate such developments e.g. in one of the following areas:

- How has *economics* influenced modes of governance in recent decades with e.g. evidence-based policy approaches or random control trials (Jatteau 2018)? How has the rise of certain methodologies impacted the paradigmatic structure of the discipline?
- How has *political sciences* changed by adapting to the requirements of "scientific" instead of "armchair consulting" (Erkkilä et al. 2016)? Has this influenced the practices of political governance, and changed the personnel that has access to decision-making?
- How do *think tanks and semi-scientific lobbying institutions* (Medvetz 2012; Laurens 2018) relate to certain disciplinary logics and academic populations? How is political as well as academic agency shaped by these relations?
- How has national *law as an academic discipline and administrative body* contributed and reacted to the transformations of fields of state power (Vauchez/de Witte 2013; Dezalay/Garth 2014; Bessy 2015)?
- How have quantitative methods been put to governmental use to survey populations and optimize human capital resources (Diaz-Bone/Didier 2016; Thévenot 2019)? Has this increase in *quantification of governance* put more public, critical, and historical social sciences under pressure, e.g. in *sociology* (Chaubet 2014; Kropp 2022; Schmidt-Wellenburg/Schmitz 2022), or *educational sciences* (Jessop et al. 2008; Nilsen et al. 2022)?
- How can social scientific fields contest the academic and governmental status quo? Case studies both on emerging or past *counter-movements* are welcome (Cramer 2023; Go 2023).
- How is the sovereignty of nation states transcended in areas that have recently developed towards *transnational guilds* of security diagnostics and merchants (Bigo 2016; Mérand 2010), such as military and policing? Cases from other disciplines are very welcome!
- …

In case you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the corresponding guest editors:
cschmidtw@uni-potsdam.de and vincent.gengnagel@uni-flensburg.de

References

Abbott, A., 1988. *The System of Professions*. The University of Chicago Press.

Angermuller, J., & T. van Leeuwen. 2018. „On the Social Uses of Scientometrics: The Quantification of Academic Evaluation and the Rise of Numerocracy in Higher Education". 88–119 in *Quantifying Approaches to Discourse for Social Scientists.* R. Scholz, ed., Palgrave Macmillan.

Bérard, Y., & R. Crespin, eds. 2010. *Aux frontières de l'expertise. Dialogues entre savoirs et pouvoirs*. Presses universitaires de Rennes.

Bessy, C. 2015. *L'organisation des activités des avocats, entre monopole et marché*. Lextenso.

Bigo, D. 2016. Sociology of Transnational Guilds. *International Political Sociology* 10(4), 398–416.

Boncourt, T. & O. Calligaro. 2017. Legitimising Europe with the Social Sciences and Humanities? The European University Institute and the European Integration Project (1976-1986). *Serendipities* 2(1):69–89.

Boulet, E., & H. Harari-Kermadec. 2014. „Le rôle de la quantification dans le processus de marchandisation de l'université. Étude de cas d'une université anglaise". *Politiques et management public* 31(4), 405–420.

Rossier, T., & F. Bühlmann. 2018. The Internationalisation of Economics and Business Studies: Import of Excellence, Cosmopolitan Capital, or American Dominance? *Historical Social Research* 43 (3), 189–215.

Chaubet, F. 2014. Faire l'histoire des sciences sociales: le cas de la sociologie française. *Histoire@Politique* 22(1), 251–68.

Caillé, A., & S. Dufoix. 2013. Les naissances académiques du global, in *Le tournant global des sciences sociales.* A. Caillé, & S. Dufoix, eds., 27–43, La Découverte.

Cramer, M. 2023 Colonial scholars and anti-colonial agents: Politics of academic knowledge production between the West Indies and London in the mid-20thcentury. *Sociology Lens* 36(2) ,208–222.

Chen, H. 2017. *Chinese Sociology: State-Building and the Institutionalization of Globally Circulated Knowledge*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Cohen, A. 2013. The Genesis of Europe: Competing Elites and the Emergence of a European Field of Power. In *Transnational Power Elites: The New Professionals of Governance, Law and Security*. N. Kauppi, & M. R. Madsen, eds., 103–120. Routledge.

Collyer, F. M. 2018. Global patterns in the publishing of academic knowledge: Global North, global South. *Current Sociology*, 66(1), 56–73.

Connell, R., R. Pearse, F. Collyer, J.M. Maia, & R. Morrell. 2018. Negotiating with the North: How Southern-Tier Intellectual Workers Deal with the Global Economy of Knowledge. *The Sociological Review* 66(1), 41–57.

Consolim, M. 2023. L'enseignement des sciences sociales au Brésil. *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 42, 15–48.

Cossu, A., & M. Bortolini. 2017. *Italian sociology 1945-2010: an intellectual and institutional profile*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Desrosières, A. 2011. *The Politics of Large Numbers: A History of Statistical Reasoning*. Harvard University Press.

Dezalay, Y., & B. G. Garth. 2011. Hegemonic Battles, Professional Rivalries, and the International Division of Labor in the Market for the Import and Export of State-Governing Expertise. *International Political Sociology* 5(3), 276–293.

Dezalay, Yves, & B. G. Garth. 2014. Lawyers and the Transformations of the Fields of State Power: Osmosis, Hysteresis and Aggiornamento. In *Law and the Formation of Modern Europe*. M.R. Madsen, & C. Thornhill, eds., 275–307. Cambridge University Press.

Diaz-Bone, R., & E. Didier. 2016. Introduction: The Sociology of Quantification – Perspectives on an Emerging Field in the Social Sciences. *Historical Social Research 41*(2): 7–26.

Edelmann, A., T. Wolff, D. Montagne, & C.A. Bail. 2020. Computational Social Science and Sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology* 46(1): 61–81.

Erkkilä, T., B.G. Peters, & O. Piironen. 2016. Politics of Comparative Quantification: The Case of Governance Metrics. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice* 18(4), 319–328.

Eyal, G. 2019. *The Crisis of Expertise*. Polity Press.

Gengnagel, V., S. Beyer, C. Baier, & R. Münch. 2019. Europeanisation and Global Academic Capitalism. The Case of the European Research Council. In *Horizontal Europeanisation*. M. Heidenreich, ed., 129–152. Routledge.

Gengnagel, V., K. Zimmermann, & S.M. Büttner. 2022. 'Closer to the Market': EU Research Governance and Symbolic Power. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 60(6):1573–91.

Georgakakis, D., & M. de Lasalle, eds. 2012. *The political uses of European governance.* Barbara Budrich Publishers.

Go, J. 2023 Thinking against Empire: Anticolonial Thought as Social Theory. The British Journal of Scoiology 74(3), 279–293

Gorski, P. S. 2013. Nation-Ization Struggles: A Bourdieusian Theory of Nationalism. In *Bourdieu and historical analysis*. Philip S. Gorski, ed., 242–65. Duke University Press.

Hamann, J. 2020. Governance by Numbers: A Panopticon Reversed? *Politics and Governance* 8(2), 68–71.

Heilbron, J., T. Boncourt, & R. Timans. 2017. Introduction to the Special Issue: Understanding the Social Sciences and Humanities in Europe. *Serendipities* 2(1), 1–9.

Heilbron, J., T. Boncourt, & R. Timans 2018. The European Research Area in the Social and Human Sciences: Between National Closure and American Hegemony. In *The Social and Human Sciences in Global Power Relations*, J. Heilbron, G. Sorá, & T. Boncourt, eds., 153–81. Springer International.

Heredia, M. 2018. The International Division of Labor in Economists' Field: Academic Subordination in Exchange for Political Prerogatives in Argentina. *Historical Social Research*, 43(3), 303–328.

Jatteau, A. 2018. The power of elitism. A sociographical study of the randomized controlled trials' leader: the J-PAL. *Historical Social Research*, 43(3), 94–119.

Jessop, B., N. Fairclough, & R. Wodak, eds. 2008. *Education and the Knowledge-Based Economy in Europe*. Sense Publishers.

Kauppi, N. 2018. Transnational Social Fields. In *The Oxford Handbook of Pierre Bourdieu*. T. Medvetz, & J.J. Sallaz, eds., 183–199. Oxford University Press.

Kropp, K. 2022. Quand le Danemark fermait ses départements de sociologie. *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 243-244, 26–35.

Laurens, S. 2018. *Lobbyists and Bureaucrats in Brussels: Capitalism's Brokers*. Routledge.

Leyton, D. &E. Simbürger. 2022. Crítica y utopía en los estudios sobre educación en América Latina: en contra de la osificación de la crítica. *Pléyade* 30, 22–43

Lie, J. 2012. Asian Studies/Global Studies: Transcending Area Studies and Social Sciences. *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 1(2), 1–23.

MacKenzie, D. 2006. *An engine, not a camera. How financial models shape markets*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Medvetz, T. 2012. *Think Tanks in America*. The University of Chicago Press.

Mérand, F. 2010. Pierre Bourdieu and the Birth of European Defense. *Security Studies* 19(2), 342–374.

Miller, P., & N. Rose, eds. 2008. *Governing the Present. Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life*. Polity Press.

Moebius, S. 2021. *Sociology in Germany: A History*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Münch, R. 2014. *Academic capitalism: universities in the global struggle for excellence*. Routledge.

Nilsen, A., C. Eklund, & O. Skarpenes 2022. Quantification and Classification in Education: What Is at Stake? *Policy Futures in Education* 20(1), 120–34.

Power, M. 2003. Auditing and the production of legitimacy. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 28(4), 379–394.

Schmidt-Wellenburg, C. & A. Schmitz 2022. Divorce à l'allemande. Luttes symboliques et tensions institutionnelles dans la sociologie allemande contemporaine. *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 243-244, 110-123.

Steinmetz, G. 2016. Social fields, subfields and social spaces at the scale of empires: explaining the colonial state and colonial sociology. *The Sociological Review Monographs* 64(2), 98–123.

Szanton, D. L. ed. 2002. *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines*. University of California Press.

Thévenot, L. 2019. Measure for Measure: Politics of Quantifying Individuals to Govern Them. *Historical Social Research* 44(2), 44-76.

Turner, S. P. 2014. *The Politics of Expertise*. London: Routledge.

Vauchez, A., & B. de Witte, eds. 2013. *Lawyering Europe: European Law as a Transnational Social Field*. Hart Publishers.

Weber, M. 1988 [1916]. Zwischenbetrachtung: Theorie der Stufen und Richtungen religiöser Weltablehnung. *In Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*. Max Weber, ed., 536–573. Mohr Siebeck.