Transnational Perspectives on Transformations in State and Society

edited by

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Volume 3
Transnational Expertise

Internal Cohesion and External Recognition of Expert Groups
Foreword & Acknowledgements

The idea for this edited volume grew out of a conference at the University of Siegen in November 2014 that we organized with the financial support of the University’s School of Arts and Humanities. The papers that were presented at the conference referred to several concepts to make sense of expert groups in different policy fields. Although they dealt with expert groups during different time periods, a similar set of questions was asked throughout the conference relating to the inner workings of expert groups and their recognition as such by external actors. The chapters gathered in this edited volume do not aim at establishing a new concept for dealing with expert groups, but rather seek to shed light on some blind spots in the analysis of expertise and expert groups.

There are many colleagues who commented on papers that were presented at the conference and that form the basis of this book. We would like to thank, amongst others, Sebastian Büttner, Aron Buzogány, Mai'a K. Davis Cross, Åse Gornitzka, Stefanie van de Kerkhof, Lucia Leopold, Frank Schipper, Arno Simons, and Jan-Peter Voß for their valuable feedback. We owe special thanks to our colleagues and research assistants who have supported this project and without whose commitment we would not have been able to edit this book: Magnus Dau, Stefanie Schmidt, Tobias Verter, and Alexandra Weber. We hope that those who read this collection will find it inspiring and that the volume will provide ground for further academic debate on expert groups.

Christian Henrich-Franke, Robert Kaiser, Christian Lahusen, Andrea Schneiker
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Introduction

Andrea Schneiker, Christian Henrich-Franke, Robert Kaiser, Christian Lahusen

This edited volume is devoted to the analysis of transnational expertise, a topic that has received considerable attention in the social and historical sciences, especially in research on transnational professional networks and associations,\(^1\) epistemic communities,\(^2\) and communities of practice.\(^3\) Yet more knowledge about transnational expertise is needed, given the growing importance of expertise in an ever more complex world in which interdependencies between different types of actors—states, international organizations, businesses—are increasing and in which these actors often have to cooperate to address transnational issues. While studies regarding the above-mentioned concepts generally involve empirical cases of expertise in the context of transnational governance since the end of the Cold War—with the exception of those focusing on the European Union—transnational expertise played an important role long before 1990.\(^4\) Therefore, this volume takes an interdisciplinary approach that includes perspectives from history, sociology, and political science.

Expertise plays a role in the formulation, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring of, as well as in the decision-making on, policies and


standards in various policy fields, such as environmental protection, health, the economy, human rights, and telecommunication, and it can have a variety of functions. Political decision-makers may turn to experts and expertise to legitimate their decisions, stressing the experts’ knowledge concerning a particular issue. Because expertise often has a technical or scientific nature, it also often has an exclusive character and a gatekeeping function that regulates access to decision-making processes and decision-makers. In addition, decisions that are unpopular with the public may be hidden behind a veil of expertise to avoid in-depth discussions of policies, standards, and regulations. But expertise can have an inclusive character as well, in that it can help to translate ideas and preferences that exist at the national level to the transnational level, and vice versa, or to translate knowledge across sectoral and institutional boundaries, thereby feeding ideas and preferences into relevant decision-making processes. Expertise of a technical or scientific nature can also translate abstract knowledge into concrete figures and indicators. As a result, it can contribute to depoliticization, in that it makes it possible to formulate claims based on criteria that are deemed objective. Thus, a closer look at transnational expert groups can reveal when and how knowledge is, or is translated into, power.\(^5\)

Regardless of which conceptual framework is used to analyze transnational expertise, the central questions of research in this area concern how expertise and experts can influence political decision-makers and decision-making processes, and the strategies that experts use to do so. These questions boil down to the issue of (private) authority and democratic legitimacy in transnational politics\(^6\) in terms of “uncoerced consent or recognition […] on the part of the regulated or governed”\(^7\), i.e. on the part of those who have not participated in the formulation of the relevant poli-

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5 Cross, Rethinking Epistemic Communities Twenty Years Later, p. 137.
cies or standards. On this basis, we assume that recognizing someone and being recognized by others as an expert and, thus, as an authority in the transnational realm is a social process and, hence, intersubjective. Such recognition requires acceptance both by other experts and by those who are expected to follow the experts’ policy recommendations.

I. A Multitude of Concepts: Existing Knowledge and Blind Spots

Experts and expertise have been addressed by a wide variety of studies. This is not the place to go into detail about every single concept from historical and social science research that deals with transnational expertise. However, in the following, we would like to present three concepts that have, either directly or indirectly, inspired the editors and contributors—epistemic communities, communities of practice, and technocratic internationalism. In this volume, we do not privilege any particular concept or theory of transnational expertise, so we do not consider some concepts to be more useful than others for analyzing transnational experts and expertise.

a) Epistemic Communities

The concept of epistemic communities as used in social science, which was introduced most notably by Peter Haas (1992s), is currently being revisited by a variety of scholars in political science, especially in its sub-


field of International Relations\(^\text{10}\), as well as in history.\(^\text{11}\) According to Peter Haas’ seminal work, an epistemic community can be defined as “a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area”.\(^\text{12}\) These professionals have (1) a shared set of normative and principled beliefs, which provide a value-based rationale for the social action of community members; (2) shared causal beliefs, which are derived from their analysis of practices leading or contributing to a central set of problems in their domain and which then serve as the basis for elucidating the multiple linkages between possible policy actions and desired outcomes; (3) shared notions of validity—that is, intersubjective, internally defined criteria for weighing and validating knowledge in the domain of their expertise; and (4) a common policy enterprise—that is, a set of common practices associated with a set of problems to which their professional competence is directed, presumably out of the conviction that human welfare will be enhanced as a consequence.\(^\text{13}\)

Following this understanding, scholars have shown how epistemic communities managed to influence political decision-makers, and governments in particular. Although the concept as Haas proposed it recognizes that “an epistemic community may consist of professionals from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds”,\(^\text{14}\) the majority of studies from what one


\(^{12}\) Haas, *Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination*, p. 3.

\(^{13}\) Haas, *Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination*, p. 3.

\(^{14}\) Haas, *Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination*, p. 3.
might regard as the “first generation” focused on scientists and scientific expertise.\textsuperscript{15} In the current debate, more attention has been given to the idea that epistemic communities may also be composed of individuals from different professional backgrounds.\textsuperscript{16} From such an understanding of epistemic communities, coalitions of individuals from different sectors (e.g., state, private)—i.e. heterogeneous groups—can be viewed as political actors with a “common policy enterprise”.\textsuperscript{17} However, this poses some conceptual challenges. Given that the members of an epistemic community may have different professional backgrounds, one must first determine which individuals with which professional backgrounds belong to that community. It is also crucial to identify what holds these individuals together and regulates inclusion to and exclusion from the community besides their shared expertise; that is, one must analyze where their normative and principled beliefs originate. More recent research on epistemic communities suggests that these beliefs result from a shared socialization\textsuperscript{18} that fosters a “shared worldview”\textsuperscript{19}, including a specific professional self-understanding that guides the actions of the members of an epistemic community, holds them together, and distinguishes them from other actors.\textsuperscript{20} What has yet to be studied is where such joint socialization can take place in the transnational realm, and how exactly it allows for shared ideas to be built.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Haas, \textit{Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination}, p. 3.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Antoniades, \textit{Epistemic Communities, Epistemes and the Construction of (World) Politics}; Cross: \textit{Rethinking Epistemic Communities Twenty Years Later}, p. 137; Faleg, \textit{Between Knowledge and Power: Epistemic Communities and the Emergence of Security Sector Reform in the EU Security Architecture}, p. 165.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Cross, \textit{Rethinking Epistemic Communities Twenty Years Later}, p. 147.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Cross, \textit{Rethinking Epistemic Communities Twenty Years Later}.
\end{itemize}
b) Communities of Practice

*Communities of practice*\(^{21}\) “consist of people who are informally as well as contextually bound by a shared interest in learning and applying a common practice”.\(^{22}\) This concept has the merit of taking into account that expertise does not have to have a scientific character, but that it can be based on practices. However, communities of practice are even broader than epistemic communities in terms of the possible range of participating actors, because “their main purpose is to introduce newcomers to the practices of the field”.\(^{23}\) For this reason, this concept is also applied to larger communities that are not involved in the formulation of transnational policies, such as the users of IT technologies. This conceptual openness makes it even more difficult to determine the boundaries of a community and to define who does and who does not belong to it. In addition, the concept of communities of practices does not fully take into account the factors that ensure internal cohesion in an expert group beyond common practices, because it does not require a “common policy enterprise”\(^{24}\) and, hence, is less oriented toward a particular political outcome. In fact, it tends to prioritise identifying the practices over understanding the community of actors itself, the internal dynamics that characterise the community, and the great variety of actions—beyond practices—its members take individually or collectively to impact policy outcomes. In so doing, it tends to imbue a path-dependent quality to practices, and underplays the role of human agency.\(^{25}\)

Common practices may be a major factor in determining why individual members of a community are bound to one another, but the question is how common practices are established in the transnational arena in the

\(^{21}\) Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, *A Guide to Managing Knowledge: Cultivating Communities of Practice*.


\(^{24}\) Haas, *Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination*, p. 3.

\(^{25}\) Cross, *Rethinking Epistemic Communities Twenty Years Later*, pp. 146–147.
first place. Thus, the concept directly or indirectly suggests a historical perspective on common practices as a consequence of past actions.

c) Technocratic Internationalism

The concept of technocratic internationalism, originally developed by historians of technology,\textsuperscript{26} puts strong emphasis on historical developments and trajectories in the evolution and cohesion of expert groups, particularly in technology-driven areas. It does not contradict the first two concepts but, rather, underlines the importance of the path-dependent development of rules of social interaction among experts. Starting in the 19th century, when the international regulation of transborder connectivities began to take shape, experts developed a specific technocratic practice in matters related to technology. By negotiating material infrastructures within international committees, they shaped new ways of thinking (shared worldview) about transnational cooperation as a depoliticized expert matter (technification). In addition to normative concepts of thinking, they developed new routines of interaction (practices) that excluded political authorities. Subsequently, the institutional arrangements on the transnational level in which the experts met developed along the lines of this type of thinking and practice. Key to the concept is viewing expert communities from a long-term perspective on their coming into being and on their effects. Expert communities are historically grown phenomena that must be analyzed accordingly.

However, as useful as each of these three concepts may be in a specific context, none of them allows for a comprehensive and consistent explanation of the internal composition of expert groups and why other actors who are affected by the formulation, implementation, evaluation, or monitoring of a policy or standard carried out by these communities accept

their authority, given the absence of hierarchy and, hence, of coercion.\textsuperscript{27} What, then, can explain transnational expert groups’ “ability to influence”?\textsuperscript{28}

As noted earlier, we do not prioritize a particular concept in this edited volume, so in the following we will use the term “expert group,” because it does not imply any assumptions regarding what matters most to a group (an episteme or a practice) nor does it imply any assumptions regarding the structure of that group (network, community, etc.).

II. Dimensions of Analysis

To contribute to the literature on transnational expertise, the volume specifically considers two dimensions—the internal dimension and the external dimension of expert groups. These two dimensions cannot be studied separately, because they are intertwined. The question we must ask is what influence changes in one dimension have on the other.

a) The Internal Dimension of Transnational Expert Groups

Scholarly research thus far has often neglected or underestimated the theoretical value of the internal life of transnational expert groups (regardless of whether they are regarded as networks or communities) and of the dynamics of these groups. In this volume, we seek to look into the black box of transnational expert groups, which the social sciences have not yet opened and which historical research has not yet theorized. If we consider transnational expert groups as being “held together by shared understandings of how issues should be governed, tasks allocated, and who knows


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well enough to do the work”, we must ask where such shared understandings come from at the transnational level. While at the national level, shared understandings are said to result from a common education and/or to be accredited through state-controlled certification, such institutions are often lacking at the transnational level, so the question is what factors bind experts from different countries together.

To answer this question, the authors in this volume discuss the explanatory power of different factors that have occasionally been offered in the literature, such as socialization, trust, or friendship. We must also ask who belongs to a transnational expert group and on what mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion membership of such a group is based. To better understand how transnational expert groups emerge and evolve over time, a series of related questions must also be answered, including: When, how, and why are some individuals excluded from a group? For example, are there any rules of membership that must be followed in order to remain a member of a transnational expert group? How, when, and why can new members join an expert group? Is it possible to identify gatekeepers who play a crucial role in admitting or excluding members? Have there been “lock-in” situations in history when experts agreed on a particular pattern of norms and practices that later reinforced itself? In addition, it is important to investigate the degree of institutionalization of expert groups and to examine whether this has any influence on internal cohesion within these groups. Experts may choose to share knowledge within informal structures, or they may decide to work together in a formalized context. Not much is known about the factors that influence experts’ preferences for either type of cooperative structure.

This perspective may explain why an expert is recognized as such by other experts, but it cannot explain why particular experts and expert groups are recognized by non-experts who are expected to follow the experts’ advice, and it is for this reason that we must study the external dimension of transnational expert groups; that is, the factors that lead others to recognize them as experts.

b) The External Dimension of Transnational Expert Groups

Expert groups do not exist in a vacuum. They are surrounded by the institutional environment in their field, non-professional actors, professionals outside the expert group, or political authorities, among others, all of whom must recognize the experts’ ability to resolve transnational issues for the expert group to have influence. Some theoretical approaches, such as regime theory and new institutional economics, have focused more specifically on the institutional environments, but the rules, behaviors, and practices that ensure that experts and expert groups are recognized as such outside their group are generally not analyzed in a systematic way. Why are experts and expert groups considered to have relevant knowledge and expertise? How do they access and interact with decision-makers? Why do political authorities (and the public) sometimes accept them as de facto decision-makers on the transnational level? How do political opportunity structures facilitate the recognition of experts and of their expertise? And to what extent do changes in the geopolitical environment (e.g., the end of the Cold War) or in the institutional environment (e.g., the institutional setup of international organizations) influence whether or not expert groups are recognized by external actors?

In addition, we must take into account the complex interdependencies between the internal dimension and the external dimension. What influence do changes in the environment have on a group’s internal dimension? Are the individual experts trying to shape the external dimension? These questions also concern the evolution of expert groups. Here, we must ask what the different concepts that exist—including those outlined above—can or cannot tell us about the factors that contribute to the emergence, maintenance, and stabilization or destabilization of transnational experts and expert groups.

The type of expertise seems to be a key element for both the internal dimension and the external dimension of expert groups. Given that various bodies of expertise in a particular issue area might exist that involve, for
example, different sets of norms and values, and that these bodies of expertise can be applied in different ways, it is necessary to determine which body of expertise and which way of applying it allow for someone (or for a group) to be considered an expert (group) in a given context.

III. Structure of the Book

This volume brings together a broad range of different approaches to transnational expertise, both in terms of concepts and of disciplines. We assume that all of these perspectives—most of which stem from sociology, political science, and history—have something to contribute to the study of transnational expertise, and that this interdisciplinary approach can shed light on the benefits and limitations of the various concepts.

The contributions in this volume show that expertise is important both for internal cohesion within a group and for its external recognition. All the case studies collected in this book illustrate that professional knowledge is a necessary condition for participation in an expert group, but being recognized as experts by peers (see chapters by Christian Henrich-Franke, Ingvild Bode, Alexander Reinfeldt, and Christian Lahusen) and/or by political decision-makers (see chapters by Ingvild Bode, Carola Westermeier) depends on other criteria as well, such as the actual performance in terms of social practices that others consider appropriate in a given context and that may even lead to trust on an interpersonal level.

The chapters by Ingvild Bode, Christian Henrich-Franke, Alexander Reinfeldt and Lukas Schemper show that the technical or scientific nature of knowledge can be an important condition for the influence of experts on political decision-making, because politicians regard such knowledge as “neutral.” Henrich-Franke’s and Reinfeldt’s analyses illustrate that whether or not politicians regard expertise as technical and apolitical will also depend on the specific institutional context in which that expertise is used to formulate standards. Their analyses suggest that when confined to informal settings or committees and working groups at the lowest end of the hierarchy in the decision-making process, there is a good chance that expertise will be recognized as apolitical.

The first three chapters approach the role of experts and expertise from a historical perspective. Lukas Schemper discusses transnational expertise on natural disasters in international organizations by studying the role that experts played in the context of the International Relief Union (IRU) during the interwar period. He shows that experts were important promoters
of the establishment of the IRU. Not only did they support the cause of preventing natural disasters and of finding ways to respond to them, they also had strategic motives. Advocating for more international cooperation in disaster research and policy allowed them to professionalize their field of expertise. In addition, experts played important roles in legitimizing the work of the IRU. Their reliance on scientific data, methods, and studies led to a depoliticization of expertise, as a result of which political decision-makers recognized the experts and the organization as important. However, Schemper also shows that the scientific nature of this particular expertise also limited its influence, in that it was sometimes too technical to be translated into concrete policies (although it should be noted that the impact of the IRU and the experts on natural disaster response was also limited by a lack of political opportunities).

In the case of the European Political Cooperation (EPC) in the 1970s, studied in the chapter by Alexander Reinfeldt, the political opportunity structure provided favorable conditions for the influence of experts. These experts—generally functionaries from relevant divisions of national ministries with expertise on particular issues—gathered together in institutionalized expert groups to prepare discussions and decision-making in the EPC’s political committees because the ministers usually did not have the necessary knowledge themselves. Yet, although the expert knowledge was at first depoliticized in the expert groups, the issues were then repoliticized at the decision-making level owing to the intergovernmental structure of the EPC and the prevailing national interests at the ministerial level.

Relying on technical knowledge in order to be recognized as standard-setters by politicians was also important in the case of the telecommunication experts whom Christian Henrich-Franke analyses in his study of the standardization and regulation of international telecommunication in Europe between the 1950s and the 1970s. The telecommunication experts even tried to shape the international institutional setting in which they operated, in such a way as to separate “their” technical arena from the political arena of decision-making. Henrich-Franke shows that the group of telecommunication experts did not emerge out of the blue, but that it developed slowly over time within institutionalized forums and in accordance with previously agreed-upon standards of behavior for its members. Membership of and internal cohesion within the expert group were based not only on specific professional knowledge (i.e., that of engineers) but also on the engineers’ socialization according to these standards of behav-
ior, which allowed for trust-building and even friendship among the participants.

Ingvild Bode focuses on how expertise is socially constructed during interaction, but she also acknowledges that expertise can be an exogenous category that actors possess before they interact with others in political processes. Adopting a political science perspective to discuss the Special Procedures mandate holders in the United Nation’s Human Rights Council, she illustrates that these mandate holders are recognized as experts by others if they manage to enact practices that others consider appropriate in a particular situation. Here, expertise is not static; rather, the social construction of expertise is a process.

In her chapter on the regulation of financial markets in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008/09, Carola Westermeier argues that recognition of economic experts by political decision-makers is based not on practices, but on trust. Looking at trust from a sociological perspective, she argues that although politicians had lost trust in the system of financial markets, they continued to consult with economic experts and to rely on these experts’ expertise to set standards for their respective industry, because they trusted the economic experts on an interpersonal level.

Robert Kaiser analyzes the role of experts in European research and innovation policies. His chapter focuses on institutional competition in this policy field. It examines the types of experts and expertise that influence the definition and objectives for funding. Over the last four decades, European research and innovation policy has developed a strongly path-dependent structure of expert involvement. However, empirical studies in this area have focused mainly on the phase of policy formulation and less so on the role of transnational expertise for implementation. The case study presented in the chapter shows, however, that the implementation especially of new funding initiatives are often highly controversial and a matter of conflicts about competencies.

Last but not least, Christian Lahusen directs our attention to European lobbyists as a transnational community of practice. His study reveals an interesting paradox. The field of EU-related lobbying is highly fragmented in terms of interest groups, forms of organization, and lobbying strategies, and lobbyists differ considerably in terms of educational and academic background, career pattern, and national background, whereas in terms of labor patterns, the field of lobbying is highly integrated and standardized. A standardized survey among public affairs professionals registered in the European Transparency Register shows that the field is dominated by full-time salaried staff who have privileged access to specialized higher
knowledge thus marginalizing amateurs and laypersons. It is a shared identity and ethic of professionalism that integrate this community of practice and fences it off from outsiders.

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Transnational Expertise on Natural Disasters and International Organizations: Historical Perspectives from the Interwar Period

Lukas Schemper

I. Introduction

For reasons inherent in the particular disciplines, the role of experts and expertise in international organizations has been rather underinvestigated in both history and international relations and has only recently received increased attention from scholars. Their publications have highlighted how expertise may lend international organizations legitimacy and provide them with an evidence-based tool with which to make informed policy on complex and technical matters. With a focus on the period between the First and Second World Wars, this article aims at adding a new perspective to that literature by emphasizing how expertise in “natural” disasters can be of value to international organizations. In an edited volume on transnational expertise, this issue is relevant for a number of reasons:

1 My thanks for their feedback goes to the organizers and participants of the conference “Epistemic Communities in Europe” that took place in 2014 at the University of Siegen and at which an earlier version of this text was presented.

2 State centrum of research is often cited as a reason. Only the most recent examples for this emerging research program are, for history, D. Rodogno, B. Struck, and J. Vogel (eds.) (2015), Shaping the Transnational Sphere: Experts, Networks, and Issues from the 1840s to the 1930s (New York) and for international relations, A. Littoz-Monnet (ed.) (2017) The Politics of Expertise in International Organizations: How International Bureaucracies Produce and Mobilize Knowledge (Abingdon-New York).

3 Sociologists tend to put the word natural in quotation marks to emphasize the social, political, and economic causes that render a society vulnerable to an otherwise natural phenomenon, thus enabling the transition from risk to disaster. While the author shares this interpretation, this text contents itself with using the quotes only at the first mentioning. See for example: S. Revet (2009), “Les organisations internationales et la gestion des risques et des catastrophes naturels”, Les études du CERI 157, p. 3.
International organizations are a place of transit, where expertise (alongside ideas, practices, and policies, among other things)\(^4\) from various national or regional contexts is gathered, further refined, and implemented. Natural disasters are a particularly fitting terrain for the analysis of transnational expertise as they are not nationally confined, might have transnational repercussions, and might provoke transnational responses.\(^5\) Like other environmental challenges, phenomena such as floods, cyclones, landslides, locust invasions, and earthquakes do not halt at national borders.\(^6\) Even when they are confined to nation states, they might nevertheless resemble disasters happening in other areas of the world and provoke similar types of management. For instance, although different continents, countries, and regions may have different landslide susceptibility, it is still useful to study landslides in a comparative way as they are triggered by a number of common factors, such as groundwater pressure, earthquakes, and human activity, and are equally exposed to global environmental changes.\(^7\) The exchange and use of expertise transnationally is thus key to governing the risks caused by such natural phenomena.

Yet what constitutes expertise more generally—and expertise in disaster in particular—is up to debate and depends on an author’s approach. For instance, in the process of professionalization, an international organization’s staff may acquire specialized technocratic knowledge or skill in a certain issue.\(^8\) When the UN Disaster Relief Coordinator was created as part of the UN Secretariat in 1971 to manage disaster on a global scale, its

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Transnational Expertise on Natural Distasters and International Organizations

staff first had to acquire experience in how to do just that and found it useful both to provide situation reports to interested humanitarian actors and to send assessment and consulting missions to developing countries.¹⁹

However, the focus of this paper is on expert knowledge that the civil servant of an international organization initially does not possess or cannot acquire on his or her own. This is knowledge that emanates from outside the organization, mostly from academic (e.g., a university or research institute) or pseudo-academic (e.g., a savant society) circles. In some cases, expertise is acquired practically. In any case, the affiliation to an institution—scientific, governmental, or other—is usually important as it often is taken as proof of a specialist’s qualifications.¹⁰

In the domain of natural disaster, this expertise may focus on two (ideally) interrelated forms. The first covers the “hot” ad hoc phase of disaster management: disaster relief. As one practitioner remarks, “Emergency management, similar to the disciplines of fire fighting, medicine, political science, sociology, mental health, and others, relies on researchers to observe, evaluate, and provide referents and reports offering recommendations; reflect on how and what we have done; and to help us define, recognize, and understand the multitude of issues we face. . . .”¹¹ These immediate issues concern planning (elaborating warning systems, “pre-impact operations,” search and rescue operations), organizational behavior (to distribute roles and functions to actors efficiently), and means of communication.¹²

Planning also relies on an understanding of the natural phenomena that cause a disaster, which allows scientists to forecast its type, length, and intensity. This ability to know the time, place, and nature of a disaster may also determine the extent to which the disaster can be managed and even enable actors to minimize the impact of the disaster by evacuating an af-

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¹² Ibid.
fected population. As a matter of fact, for disaster management to even be a viable goal, there must be enough information on a certain risk for that risk to be considered avoidable, preventable, or mitigable. This part of disaster management relies on expert knowledge from the earth sciences, such as seismology, hydrology, and entomology. And expert knowledge of the social sciences might not only help to explain social behavior that happens as a consequence of disaster but also contribute to the understanding of the political, cultural, and socioeconomic root causes that render a society vulnerable to disaster.

As the above explanation shows, the term disaster expert is to a certain extent contradictory if one considers that the word expertise implies specialization and the word disaster covers a wide range of phenomena (deriving from the confrontation of a natural or man-made hazard with a certain form of social, economic, and political organization), which can be studied with the aid of various disciplinary specializations (ranging from epidemiology to anthropology and seismology). As this article will show, this disciplinary fragmentation posed a challenge to efforts during the interwar period to elevate the practice of disaster management to a delineated policy field of international governance.

In addition, the international management of disaster was often disconnected from scientific developments. During the 20th century, international organizations primarily dealt with disaster on an ad hoc and emergency-oriented basis (the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] being an important exception).


15 Bankoff, Natural Hazards, 753.

16 Revet, Penser et affronter les désastres, 2011.

tional Strategy for Disaster Reduction was created in 1999, the intent behind international organizations established to deal with natural disasters was to improve the provision of *ex post* emergency relief and not to sustainably prevent future disasters through a more thorough study of the phenomena that cause them. This was the main intention of governments when they agreed to the creation of the International Relief Union (IRU) at an intergovernmental conference in 1927 in Geneva. This organization lies at the heart of this analysis. Although, in a half-sentence of the IRU’s convention, governments gave it only a vague mandate to “encourage the study of preventive measures against disasters,” the organization actually produced more meaningful activity in the field of disaster research than in disaster relief.

As this text argues, it was not incidentally that a diverse but organized and interconnected transnational group of experts emerged around the creation of the IRU—indicative of the role that experts can play in the creation, consolidation, and activity of an international organization. Once created, such an organization may require expertise to be granted authority in a certain field of action—in this case, dealing with natural disasters—especially when other sources of authority, such as delegation from governments, are weak. This assessment, however, does not seek to idealize the role and weight of experts in the formation of international organizations and their policy making. While the IRU represents a rare historical case of a transnational epistemic community coming together in the field of natural disaster owing to the policy-relevant nature of the experts’ contributions and their lobbying, the discussion of this historical case ought not omit the limits that are imposed on such networks by the structure and


20 The concept means a “network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue area” as coined by P. M. Haas (1992) “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination.” *International Organization* 46 (1): 1-35, here p. 3. A fuller discussion of the concept follows toward the end of this text.
type of knowledge that characterize them as well as by the economic and sociopolitical international contexts that surround them.

The analysis of the creation of this disaster network starts by shedding light on the type of transnational expertise in natural disaster that existed before World War I to help understand the conditions that existed when the project to create the IRU was put forward. The second part briefly describes the difficulties that existed in the creation of the IRU, and the third part explains why the promoters of the IRU believed that the participation of experts could be useful for the creation of the organization and why experts found it worthwhile to participate. The fourth and final part explores the limits of the influence that the expert network had in turning the IRU into a functional organization.

II. Characteristics of transnational expertise in natural disaster before the First World War

With regard to how Western societies explain natural disaster, scholarship usually names the devastating 1755 Lisbon earthquake as the turning point that marks the drift away from divine explanations (punitive or premonitory signs of god or manifestations of evil) of natural disaster toward a more scientific understanding—at least among such enlightened elites as Kant and Voltaire. Kant, notably, theorized that vapor pressure in subterranean caverns caused the earthquake. Voltaire saw the event as proof that faith-based optimism in divine control of human destiny was erroneous. The large-scale urban reconstruction of Lisbon with a more earthquake-robust technique, undertaken under the guidance of the Marquis of Pombal (“pombaline” style), gives evidence of preventive thinking.21 However, it would be a gross exaggeration to see this earthquake or any other event as a sharp rupture between predominantly providential and scientific explanations. Nor was there a historical progressive development from a punitive to a fatalist to a scientific and reflexive understanding as all of these interpretations coexist in various societies and even today.22 In the buildings of ancient Greece and Rome and of Incan South America, for exam-

ple, there is evidence of early forms of earthquake engineering. Yet a great number of superstitious and expert-resistant theories about the causes of the Aceh Tsunami of 2004—for example, punishment for “materialistic lifestyle” or a “test from God”—shows that contemporary societies are in no way devoid of providential views on natural disaster.

Among the Western educated elite, there was nevertheless a new, increasingly pragmatic way of dealing with natural disaster. As a result of new innovations and discoveries in the natural sciences in the 19th century, disaster prevention emerged as a form of policy to deal with hypothetical as opposed to actual dangers. Since at least the mid-19th century, humanitarian causes also started to include victims of predictable events such as accidents.

While expert knowledge was usually developed in national contexts—that is, in regions where a certain disaster was particularly predominant—the 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed plenty of transnational exchanges. For example, in the 1870s, about 3,000 foreign experts, mostly British, were brought to Japan on request by the government to train architects and engineers in seismological knowledge. In return, when an earthquake devastated Messina in 1908, Japanese seismologist Fusakichi Omori went to Italy with a research team and compiled a valuable report on the disaster.

Another form of disaster that received attention in the 19th century involved accidents happening on waters. Life-saving societies, particularly those developed in cities such as Amsterdam and London, formed transnational networks and exchanged knowledge. For example, at the Premier Congrès International de Sauvetage of 1878 in Marseilles, attended by 43 associations from five countries (Belgium, France, Great Britain, Italy, 

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28 Ibid., p. 172.
and Spain), experts exchanged knowledge on technical life-saving techniques and discussed the creation of a permanent commission with some form of governmental representation.\textsuperscript{29} Other international congresses such as this one dealt with several aspects pertaining to disaster. The number of such scientific congresses increased from one or two per year in the 1850s to 12 per year in 1870 and 30 per year in the last decade of that century, facilitating the creation of transnational networks of experts. Science could provide answers to uncertainties in the management of various issues, such as statistics, engineering, geography, and public health.\textsuperscript{30}

One particular group of experts that took an interest in disaster was insurance officials. Especially with the new technical innovations of the second Industrial Revolution and the new sorts of accidents that these innovations could provoke, insurance increasingly became part of the “toolbox of disaster management.”\textsuperscript{31} The Second International Congress on Accident Prevention and First Aid, held in Vienna in 1913, united insurance experts and humanitarians (such as Red Cross officials and life-saving specialists) in pushing for the creation of an institution to coordinate international disaster relief. The International Association for Life-saving and Accident Prevention was supposed to provide participating states with the latest techniques for relief and prevention as well as run an international rescue service to deliver aid.\textsuperscript{32} The changed international political context of World War I, however, prevented this international organization from becoming active.\textsuperscript{33}

Thus, in the decades before the war, networks of experts in various disaster fields played an important role in the transnational exchange of knowledge. However, they came from within rather than from outside institutions: scientists and other experts were the backbone of international governance in the 19th century, aiming to coordinate and standardize poli-

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\item \textsuperscript{29} Congrès International de Sauvetage (1879), \textit{Premier Congrès International de Sauvetage} (Marseille); T. R. Davies (2014) \textit{NGOs: A New History of Transnational Civil Society} (London), p. 25.
\item \textsuperscript{32} F. Bumm (1914) “Über internationale Hilfsaktionen bei Katastrophen Ereignissen des Friedens.” In \textit{Compte rendu du II. congrès international pour le sauvetage et la prévoyance contre les accidents} (Vienna), pp. 205-217.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Compte rendu du II. congrès international, p. I-XXII.
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cy across borders under the patronage of European monarchs. Various congresses and early institutions dealt with disaster-related questions ranging from seismology to epidemic control. For example, since 1905, the International Seismological Association in Strasbourg has published a world catalogue of seismic events in order to compare regions of the globe for their seismicity and its development over time. Already in 1851, 12 states had attended a conference to discuss the fight against epidemics; this conference concluded with the adoption of an agreement to standardize rules among signatory states. This type of conference, with its focus on sanitation, was reconvened nine times over the second half of the 19th century and led to the establishment of a rather modest International Office of Public Health. But disaster as a discipline, or disaster management as a policy, did not yet exist, and until the eve of the First World War, there was no specific, coherent expert network that would take up the cause of what is known today as disaster management.

III. The International Relief Union

After the war, another project for an international organization saw the light of day, but this time it emanated from humanitarian circles. What would quickly be known as the “Ciraolo project” was first proposed by Giovanni Ciraolo, Italian senator and president of the Italian Red Cross, to the international Red Cross movement as a means for it to reinvent itself after it lost part of its raison d’être with the end of the war and a lukewarm reception from the newly established League of Nations (LN). Ciraolo, albeit not an expert in insurance questions, initially planned the creation of a global insurance fund, which could be tapped by states stricken by natural disasters.

34 Mazower, Governing the World, p. 103.
35 Seismologists could not agree, however, on the question of what to include: only crude facts or also observations, taking the local context into consideration; only strong earthquakes? By what scale should the strength of an earthquake be measured? D. R. Coen (2013) The Earthquake Observers: Disaster Science from Lisbon to Richter (Chicago-London), p. 183.
37 Hutchinson, Earthquakes.
Through this fund, an international relief army composed of national Red Cross societies would be financed and dispatched to an afflicted area. The project, which would have required seamless cooperation among governments, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), national Red Cross societies, the LN, and the newly created League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS), was intended to improve efficiency and international coordination during disaster operations.

All these actors took varying degrees of interest in the project, but also had reasons to be wary of it. The ICRC, created in 1863 by some members of the Geneva bourgeoisie to promote the creation of national aid societies and the development of what would later be called humanitarian law, eventually fulfilled a valuable purpose during World War I as a clearing-house for correspondence, parcels, and information on prisoners of war and wounded soldiers. After the war, it was looking for a new purpose, which the Ciraolo project might have been able to provide, but at the same time, the committee was uncertain of the project’s technical and political feasibility. For its part, the LRCS, an ambitious Anglo-American organization and union of national Red Cross societies that had actually been created after the war to deal with disease and other forms of human suffering, considered the project a means to launch its own extensive disaster program but also saw in it a danger of competition. The LN did not work on natural disaster per se, but it developed a plethora of humanitarian, social, and health-related activities (ranging from child welfare to nutrition) and also managed the financial and economic turmoil of states (especially those in Central Europe).

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39 Renamed the International Federation of Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies in 1991.
41 Hutchinson, Earthquakes, p. 15.
42 Hutchinson, Earthquakes, p. 22.
LN’s concept of “human security,” according to which the improvement of social conditions would have positive effects on international politics and collective security. The LN secretariat was divided, seeing in the project both a threat to its own agenda and a welcome way to outsource activities with regard to natural disaster. A few states that were frequently exposed to disasters, such as Ciraolo’s home country of Italy, became enthusiastic supporters of the project, but most states—in particular, the United States and the United Kingdom—saw it as a costly and thus unjustifiable attempt to internationalize and multilateralize a policy that was traditionally a sovereign issue. Their governments usually believed that their national relief organizations were sufficiently equipped to deal with disaster at home and abroad.

Nevertheless, Ciraolo’s lobbying of governments, the LN, and Red Cross organizations was persistent and ultimately successful, and, as this text argues, the use of experts and their knowledge played an important part in persuading stakeholders of the merits of the project. A study commission appointed through an LN Assembly resolution in September 1924 had a dozen members, who were described as experts in various aspects of disaster management. As a matter of fact, following a tradition of the LN, these commissioners were there not as delegates representing states or institutions but merely in their capacity as experts. However, for Ciraolo, having all stakeholders—and especially those states and organizations that had been critical of them—involving in the deliberations took precedence over tradition. Following this logic, Ciraolo managed to recruit members from the ICRC, the LRCS, and the LN Assembly, as well as the American, British, and German Red Cross. In addition, the French national René Cassin took part as a legal expert; the Swedish national Paul G. Laurin, as an insurance expert; and the Belgian National Baron Edmond Carton de Wart, as a finance expert. It should be noted that each of these experts represented important states that Ciraolo wanted to have on his side. While

45 Minutes LN Secretariat, December 16, February 20 and 21 1922, LN archives 12/28667/20947.
47 Correspondence, October 23 1925, LN archives 12/54412/41377
48 Correspondence, February 4 1925, ICRC archives CR 107/403.
49 Correspondence, December 3 1924, LN archives 12/40406/20947
the strategy to include experts with a specific national background did not entirely pay off—the US government, for instance, never stopped being opposed to the creation of the organization—several experts contributed to concretizing some initial ideas while discarding others. For example, when the idea to finance the organization through global insurance was deemed unfeasible, the idea that aid should be delivered not as a charity but by logic of justice (referred to as a "right to relief") was introduced.\(^{50}\)

The experience and expertise of the members in matters pertaining to disaster management helped to produce an authoritative draft of a convention that governments were supposed to only amend and sign. This draft provided the basis for the IRU, which, as previously noted, was created in 1927 at an intergovernmental conference in Geneva under the auspices of the LN. However, conference delegates—in particular, the British and the French—heavily modified the draft: most importantly, the right of people to disaster relief was dropped through pressure from governments, and the IRU was now authorized only to “induce all peoples to render mutual international assistance.”\(^{51}\) Because it was not authorized to dispose of sufficient funds, it could not successfully carry out its mandate to coordinate disaster relief; thus, its work was reduced to disaster prevention and other scientific activity. For this purpose, the IRU resorted to a network of experts, the creation of which its promoters had facilitated since 1924.

\section*{IV. Expertise to legitimize an international organization and guide its policy}

Already before the IRU was created, one important way of legitimizing the project and hereby winning over states and humanitarian organizations was to put the scheme on scientific ground. In addition to having an expert committee draft the IRU’s convention, Ciraolo and his supporters at the ICRC and the LRCS joined with the Geographical Society of Geneva (GSG) in 1924 to establish a journal of disaster studies \textit{avant la lettre}, called "Matériaux pour l’étude des calamités.” The idea was that, in order to coordinate humanitarian operations, there had to be certain knowledge about the disasters in question and, in particular, about their local specific-

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50 & Correspondence, June 13 1925, ICRC CR 107/464 \\
51 & E. Sauer (1932) \textit{Der Welthilfsverband und seine Rechtsstellung} (Göttingen), p. 25. \\
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This scientific endeavor, which also strove to create a world map of disasters, was led by the president of the GSG, Raoul Montandon, who was reaching out to experts around the world to contribute their knowledge to this common effort. Montandon was well positioned to serve as a link between the humanitarian network of the ICRC and the scientific network of experts to which the geographical society belonged, as the same circles of the Geneva bourgeoisie dominated both institutions. To go beyond these local circles, Montandon and Ciraolo also encouraged the creation of national study commissions, which would provide the journal with authors in disciplines such as volcanology, epidemiology, geography, sanitary science, and sociology. The membership of these commissions was heterogeneous, and most members were experts coming from Red Cross societies, universities, or ministries. Fourteen such committees were created over the years, the first in Italy (1924) and the last in National Socialist Germany (1940).

International organizations active in particularly technical areas tend to reach out to experts, and so did the IRU. Promoters of the project even tried to involve experts institutionally because they recognized that natural disaster was a specialized and transnational issue, so technical and, in particular, local knowledge was essential to guide future policy making of the planned international organization. One small international secretariat would have never been able to deal with the diversity of knowledge necessary to become a serious player in the international management of natural disaster. Furthermore, a “technicalization” of the issue would back the organization’s claim to impartiality and an apolitical nature. Especially in the light of the opposition from various governments, this added authority was important for the project to succeed.

As this text has previously argued, disaster research as a discipline did not yet exist in the 1920s, yet there was a certain coherence in terms of the ideas, norms, and policy recommendations that were shared within this network of “disaster experts” from a variety of mainly European countries. One can easily identify them by reading through the over 300 articles and
contributions that were published in the journal from 1924 to 1962.\textsuperscript{56} In terms of disciplines, most texts dealt with meteorological and seismological phenomena. The dominance of meteorological research is not surprising given the variety of phenomena included in that category (from hail or drought to cyclones). The predominance of seismology, however, is telling for the place of earthquakes in the process of rethinking means of disaster prevention and relief.\textsuperscript{57} Both meteorology and seismology were also “modern” disciplines that had only recently been subject to major advances in technology. The development of increasingly precise weather prediction hinged on new forms of communication that “travel faster than the winds themselves.”\textsuperscript{58} The study of seismological waves was also considerably facilitated through new forms of communication and, obviously, the invention and further sophistication of the seismograph throughout the 19th century. Simultaneously, the production of steel on a large-scale basis (in the mid-1900s) and of reinforced concrete helped make buildings more earthquake resistant. For instance, none of the steel buildings collapsed during the devastating 1906 San Francisco earthquake.\textsuperscript{59} Ultimately, the fields of both seismology and meteorology study inherently transnational phenomena and thus required international coordination in the spirit of the IRU more than other sciences did.\textsuperscript{60}

Surprisingly, only an insignificant minority of articles dealt with the emergency side of disaster management, and their focus was on what would today be called “disaster risk reduction.” This can certainly be explained by the fact that the creation of the journal was a direct result of the ICRC’s call on researchers to collaborate on the elaboration of a world atlas of catastrophes. The spirit of its 1927 convention (“encourage the study of preventive measures against disasters”) confirmed the journal’s orientation.

One dominant approach that many of the journal’s contributors followed was the establishment of a “periodicity” of disasters for a given area, which they did by analyzing the historical data of past disasters in or-

\textsuperscript{56} An almost complete set can be found, for example, at the ICRC library in Geneva.
\textsuperscript{57} This is evident in Hutchinson, Earthquakes.
\textsuperscript{59} R. Reitherman, Earthquakes and Engineers, p. 147-152 and p. 107-110.
\textsuperscript{60} K. Anderson, Predicting the Weather, p. 2.
der to better understand or even predict future disasters.\textsuperscript{61} This would allow them to create better preparedness mechanisms or to calculate insurance premiums. As mentioned above, Ciraolo’s initial idea was to finance the IRU through an insurance scheme. The prevention of economic and material loss, especially in a colonial context, is also a recurrent theme.\textsuperscript{62}

Most of the commonalities in the texts of the contributing experts reveal a preponderantly hazard-centered approach. Despite a tradition of dealing with the human perception of disaster during the 19th century (e.g., through the use of civic earthquake observers), there was an “anti-humanist turn” toward the end of the century. Technical inventions such as the seismograph brought earth scientists closer to turning their discipline into a quantitative, objective science modeled on physics.\textsuperscript{63} However, several journal authors were already drifting away from this anti-humanist turn. They understood disaster as a function of human experience. One author blames technical progress and globalized communication for an increased feeling of insecurity.\textsuperscript{64} Another author discusses the direct psychological impact of earthquakes on society and on the psyche.\textsuperscript{65} Other authors focus on the interplay between culture and a society’s ability to cope with disaster.\textsuperscript{66} But it was only in 1938 that one contributor, André Mater, French lawyer and juridical adviser to the IRU, formalized the aforementioned observations in what he tentatively termed a “sociologie des calamités” (“sociology of calamities”).\textsuperscript{67} His objective was to create another field of application for the IRU. He understood that, rather than

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{63} Coen, Earthquake Observers, p. 20 and p. 173.
  \item \textsuperscript{64} L. De Launay (1924) “Tremblements de terre et volcans.” Matériaux pour l’étude des calamités 1 (1): 21-44.
  \item \textsuperscript{65} W. Severit (1933) “Die anthropogeographische Bedeutung der Erdbeben.” Matériaux pour l’étude des calamités 9 (29): 100–218, here p. 185 and p. 112.
  \item \textsuperscript{67} A. Mater (1938) “La sociologie des calamités.” Revue pour l’étude des calamités 1:3 (December 1938), p. 147–66.
\end{itemize}
putting a general focus on disasters in certain states, focusing on the suffering/experience of the population would help justify a right to humanitarian intervention in case of disaster. As sociology was closest to the suffering of humans, he argued, it should be the science closest to the mandate of the IRU.68

The above discussion shows that the promoters of the IRU not only provided a hub in which to connect experts from around the world but also actively shaped the agenda of this network. While the 19th century had seen the formation of a number of scientific networks dealing with specific aspects of several types of natural catastrophe, something like a well-established disaster expert network to which these “social entrepreneurs” could resort did not exist. The creation of a journal for the study of disaster enabled them to identify and connect with experts around the world and to attempt to literally create a discipline of disaster studies. Ciraolo and his supporters hoped that these researchers would not only spread knowledge within their scientific communities but also lobby their national governments to join the project so as to provide the international organization with scientific legitimacy. For instance, for quite some time, the national Chilean Study Commission tried to obtain, although without success, the ratification of the 1927 Convention through the Chilean government.69

What ultimately led experts to collaborate with the project to create the IRU? The network emerged not only because its members shared a scientific interest in all kinds of disaster but also because many of them advocated better international cooperation and preparation in this field, so they were ready to be associated with the cause. Hence, the feedback from the scientific world was generally positive toward the creation of the journal in 1924. Several scientists encouraged further collaboration between the ICRC and the GSG or promised future scientific contributions to the journal.70 The IRU also augmented the visibility of its research and the propagation of its ideas, which were disseminated not only among its fellow scientists but also among practitioners, international civil servants, and government officials. This process contributed to the professionalization

68 Ibid.
of their scientific field, enabling the experts to be "recognized as professional men," as are doctors or lawyers, and conferring upon them professional legitimacy.\footnote{71}{This is a dynamic that was analyzed in S. S. Blume (1974) Toward a Political Sociology of Science (New York), pp. 91-114.}

Clearly, this was a situation in which a nascent international organization provided a transit hub for ideas and expertise from experts of various national backgrounds and disciplinary orientations. First the project and then the organization itself facilitated the circulation and exchange of ideas and expertise through the creation of national study commissions and a journal. Experts invested their time, energy, and resources in establishing and maintaining relations through reunions, correspondence, and readings of each other's works. Through this exchange, a common language, common values, common concepts, and common policy goals took shape.\footnote{72}{This process of an emergence of "communautés d'interconnaissance" is described in P.-Y. Saunier (2008) "Les régimes circulatoires du domaine social 1800-1940: projets et ingénierie de la convergence et de la différence." Génèses 2 (71): 4-25.}

However, considering the mutual benefit actors from science and policy gained from interacting, the author has reason to argue that this was more than simply a network. The term network also does not adequately convey the dimensions of what Ciraolo referred to as a "scientific movement."\footnote{73}{Correspondence, January 27 1938. ICRC archives P UIS E1 - 03 76.} Instead, what the above paragraphs describe resembles an emerging epistemic community, a concept that political scientist Peter Haas describes as a "network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue area."\footnote{74}{P. Haas, Introduction, p. 3.} Although, according to Haas, individuals belonging to this community may come from very diverse backgrounds, they share four features: the same values or principles, the same view on how to validate knowledge in a certain field, the same causal beliefs about a certain problem, and a common view on how to adopt policies in response to a certain problem.\footnote{75}{Ibid.} This paper has already identified the major common views that these scientists and experts shared regarding the IRU’s journal: their support for the IRU’s objectives and their advocacy for greater international cooperation in the field of disaster research and policy.
V. The limits of an emerging epistemic community

However, the existence of an epistemic community does not guarantee that an international organization can successfully implement recommended policy. Several factors may limit the community’s influence in this respect. One is the community’s internal cohesion and thematic coherence. Criticism emerged that the international effort was not coordinated and efficient enough, perhaps owing to the absence of meetings held among the study commissions. In an issue of the *Matériaux* of 1930, E. Van den Broeck, president of the Belgian Geographical Society and member of the Belgian national study commission, criticized the scientific part of the IRU for not being rigorous enough. First of all, he stated, it did not sufficiently define what a disaster was, its focus on major disasters was not useful, and much more progress could be achieved on small-scale disasters. He also thought that the methods of the several study commissions were not homogenous enough and that the IRU should support their work financially. For his part, the president of the Hungarian study commission felt that there should be more interaction between the national study commission and the national Red Cross. In Hungary, one did not know of the other, which was counterproductive if one considers that the national Red Cross was supposed to be the IRU’s executive body on the ground.

In response, the Italian and French study commissions proposed that an international meeting of the study commission experts be organized so that they could exchange ideas and coordinate their work. This meeting took place in Paris in September 1937 under the name "Conférence internationale pour la protection contre les calamités naturelles." The conference proposed several institutional changes so as to bring the individual study commissions closer together. Thematically, it was decided that the

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78 Minutes of expert commission, 18 September 1937. ICRC archives P UIS 6 - 17.


research collaborations be directed closer to the field of insurance and the sociological aspect of disasters.\textsuperscript{81} However, this attempt to strengthen links among experts and between experts and the international organization, and to introduce more coherence in the scientific orientation of the network, seemed to have come too late. The epistemic community did not reemerge after the Second World War.

This could be explained not only by a lack of cohesion of the expert knowledge produced but also by its type. As has been pointed out for the humanitarian sector, “data is not knowledge.”\textsuperscript{82} Much of the produced knowledge within the expert networks was not translatable into concrete policy, much less into the creation of an international regime.\textsuperscript{83} The work done individually by its members was of scientific value (e.g., the creation of historical chronologies of earthquakes and the forecasting of hail). However, this knowledge had no impact on the policy and actions of the IRU, which was not appropriately equipped or staffed to deal with these particular questions.

Another important reason for the powerlessness of the expert network as well as for the IRU’s inability to carry out its mandate to coordinate disaster management worldwide was the economic and political context in the early years of the organization. Interest in the prevention of natural disaster waned as fears of a new man-made disaster—war—increased in the 1930s with the rise of nationalism and totalitarian regimes. As an organization relying on governmental contributions and other donations, the IRU also lacked the financial means to run a serious scientific disaster program in a time of worldwide economic downturn.

Although the IRU’s scientific program struggled on after the war with Montandon’s help, the national study commissions did not resume their


\textsuperscript{83} Although expert knowledge does not deterministically influence policy and cannot explain the outcome of regime creation entirely, it is nevertheless “an important enabling condition because it allows meaningful discussion of the problem and calculation of interest” argues R. S. Dimitrov (2005) Science and International Environmental Policy Regimes and Nonregimes in Global Governance (Lanham), ch. 1 (ebook).
work after 1945. As for many other expert networks and institutions, the war and the rise of totalitarian regimes meant the death of the IRU’s epistemic community. The Ciraolo project had not brought about the paradigmatic shift in managing and researching disaster that its proponents had hoped for. The networks of experts and scientists that emerged in the decades after World War II had no links to the project of the interwar period (and often not even among themselves) but were to a large extent a product of the Cold War context (both earth science and disaster sociology had war-related purpose). There were only a few institutionalized interactions between networks of experts and international organizations. One exception was UNESCO, which supported and financed research and collaboration in seismology, oceanology, and other earth sciences. Only in the late 1980s did disaster experts renew attempts to cooperate with international organizations; this occurred when Frank Press, a respected American geophysician, and a group of other earth scientists proposed to declare the 1990s an international decade devoted to the management of disaster risk under the auspices of the UN.

In this sense, the expert network around the IRU is a fitting example of the limited influence of epistemic communities, as well as of their transience, which has recently gained attention in political science literature. This approach does away with the binary view on epistemic communities—do they exist or not—toward a more nuanced interpretation, taking into consideration such criteria as the political opportunities that allow expert networks to assume a role as well as the type of expert knowledge an epistemic community wants to convey. Mai’a K. Davis Cross, in particular, has called for paying attention to the international and domestic politi-

86 B. Rouhban, Safety First.
87 S. Revet, Les organisations internationales, p. 7.
88 J. Hannigan, Disasters without Borders, p. 68-69.
transnational contexts within which epistemic communities exist, such as “coexisting epistemic communities, leaders’ personalities, security threats, economic costs,” among other things. Radoslav Dimitrov, in turn, has investigated how the type of scientific knowledge might explain the success or failure of collective action in environmental policy.

VI. Conclusion

This contribution has analyzed the role of experts in the creation and activities of the first international organization to be established to deal with natural disasters. The IRU emerged after the First World War mainly out of a humanitarian concern to improve disaster relief, but its promoters soon realized that disaster was such a wide and complex issue that specialized, technical, and also localized knowledge would be necessary to guide the future organization’s activities. Furthermore, for political and economic reasons, the plan to create the IRU was met with considerable resistance from a number of governments and already-established humanitarian organizations. Putting the organization on a scientific basis would legitimize its cause. As no network of disaster experts existed prior to World War I, experts from a variety of disaster-related disciplines were mobilized and their contacts were institutionalized through the creation of a journal and national study commissions. The journal allows for the identification of shared priorities and ideas on disaster within the network. The promoters of the IRU and, later, the organization itself thus actively mobilized experts and shaped the agenda of their network. In return, experts welcomed participation as it legitimized their research not only by rendering it applicable but also by professionalizing it.

Because of the policy-relevant knowledge that circulated and the participation of experts in lobbying and creating the international organization, the analyzed formation of experts seems to be the rare case of an epistemic community on the issue of natural disaster. However, it is also a good case for showing the limits of influence that epistemic communities have in the formation of international regimes and policies: they heavily depend on a favorable international sociopolitical and economic context, on internal

89 M. Cross, Rethinking Epistemic Communities, p. 148.
90 R. S. Dimitrov, Science and International Environmental Policy, ch. 1.
cohesion of the network, and on coherent knowledge that is translatable into policy. None of these three factors existed here.

While this analysis is limited to the interwar period, it has revealed features that still characterize the international governance of disaster in the 21st century. Still today, there is a striking absence of a coherent and functional epistemic community of disaster experts that could advance, through states, the implementation of intergovernmental disaster management treaties and norms. John Hannigan considers these limitations to be one of the main reasons for the absence of multilateral or international agreements in the sphere of natural disaster.91

References


91 J. Hannigan, Disasters without Borders, p. 4.
Transnational Expertise on Natural Disasters and International Organizations


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Epistemic Community? Experts and Expertise in European Political Co-operation (EPC)

Alexander Reinfeldt

I. Introduction

The European Political Co-operation (EPC)\(^1\) established a new diplomacy among the member states of the European Communities (EC) in the 1970s. At a time when traditional official diplomacy between states had become less important in international relations,\(^2\) the EPC gradually changed national foreign policy-making and European diplomacy. The EPC supplemented common forms of inter-state diplomacy and international negotiation on a case-by-case basis by institutionalized regular communication between the foreign ministries, attempting to coordinate foreign policy-making among the then nine EC member states. Unlike the supranational EC, however, the EPC remained strictly intergovernmental in principle, leaving foreign policy decision-making in the realm of the member state governments.

Some developments within the EPC, however, turned out to be beyond governmental control and led to hitherto unknown problems: In August 1976, the acting head and deputy director of the political affairs department in the French Quai d’Orsay, Jacques Leprette, complained in a conversation with Carl Lahusen from the German embassy in Paris about the frequent absence of responsible officials in the Quai d’Orsay from Paris due to meetings with their European counterparts in EPC expert working groups. In a telex to the Auswärtiges Amt in Bonn Lahusen reported on this conversation:


“He [Leprette] has the personal view that the [EPC] working groups make a useful and, in general, necessary work within the scope of the instructions given to them by the political directors. Furthermore, it is doubtlessly desirable for the sake of the European idea if the heads of divisions from the Foreign ministries repeatedly have the opportunity for an overall tour d’horizon and to get to know each other. In his [Leprette’s] opinion, however, it goes too far if they themselves arranged for meetings of the Nine on their level, set themselves their agenda, take decisions on those issues or produce papers on issues not assigned to them by the political directors. No one in higher ranks could read all these papers thoroughly. Occasionally it seems to happen that topics were more or less searched for just in order to justify meetings. Cases have become more frequent in which the responsible head of division is on an official trip in EPC matters whereas his presence is urgently required in Paris, so that he cannot sufficiently fulfil his duties within his ministry any more. As desirable as the intensification of the co-operation among the Nine on the level of the heads of division is, one must not entirely disregard aspects of an efficient and productive working method.”

Obviously, the newly established EPC had gained momentum by the mid-1970s already, and the EPC expert working groups were in the thick of it.

In institutional terms, the EPC can be considered as a forum for the exchange of information\(^3\) in order to align foreign policies among the member states. The EPC was operationalized at different hierarchical levels, beginning from the top: the national foreign ministers of the EC member states (since 1974 also the heads of State and government); the political directors, i.e. the heads of the political affairs departments in the national foreign ministries convening in the EPC Political Committee; the so-called “correspondents” in the foreign ministries convening in the EPC Correspondents Group; the ambassadors of the EC member states; and the EPC expert working groups dealing with various EPC topics.

The EPC expert working groups, which are obviously most relevant in the context of this chapter, consisted of one or two officials, among them the heads of divisions from each foreign ministry of the EC member states. It was their task to prepare the discussions and decision-making in

\(^3\) Politisches Archiv, Auswärtiges Amt (PA AA), Zwischenarchiv, Bd. 119.442: [Fernschreiben] Paris diplo an Bonn AA, betr.: EPZ, hier: Referenten-Arbeitsgruppen, 02.08.76 [translation].

the EPC Political Committee which was the key working level of the EPC.\(^5\)

This chapter discusses the role of these expert working groups within the EPC in the 1970s and endeavours to assess their impact on foreign policy-making. A particular emphasis is given to the question whether the experts in the EPC working groups can be considered as an “epistemic community”; and if so, whether this had an effect on the so-called “coordination reflex” which is assumed to have developed between national administrations of EC member states due to regular and intense consultation within the EPC or whether this led to “socialization effects” within the EPC framework.\(^7\) This chapter is thus dealing with the following questions: What was the role initially assigned to the various expert working groups institutionalized within the EPC and how did this role alter in subsequent years? Which forms of co-operation developed between the national experts and which impact did the work of these expert groups have upon national and European foreign policy-making within the EPC, i.e. which interdependency existed between expertise and political considerations on the decision-making level?

The underlying questions are whether these experts went through processes of socialization on the European level and were, thus, “Europeanized” through frequent and institutionalized transgovernmental or transnational issue-related expert co-operation within the EPC; and, finally, whether this did not only have an impact on their habits and perceptual

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patterns, but also on formal and informal European foreign policy-making processes.\(^9\)

In the following section the composition of the EPC expert working groups, their position within the EPC framework and their tasks will be examined. In this context, the question will be discussed whether the members of the working groups were “experts” at all or primarily diplomats with a rather general or second-hand knowledge of the issues they were dealing with. Based on this, the then following section focuses the questions whether the members of the EPC expert working groups can be considered as an “epistemic community” and whether this had an impact on the development of the so-called ”coordination reflex” within the EPC. In order to tackle these questions reference will be made to the case of the EPC Mediterranean working group, exemplifying the experts’ changing tasks, their role and impact within the EPC (with particular emphasis on operations in the course of the Cyprus crisis in 1974/75). The concluding section will discuss consequences for further research.

**II. The EPC working groups between expertise and diplomacy**

Before dealing with the EPC working groups and their expertise for European foreign policy-making, it is important to re-emphasize a few characteristics of the EPC: In contrast to the supranational EC, the EPC was intergovernmental; decision-making depended on consensus and unanimity between all the EC/EPC member states. Unlike the EC, the EPC did not have legally binding rules of procedure (as the EC *acquis communautaire*), but only a minimum of ad-hoc procedural rules.\(^10\) In principle, this provided the experts with certain flexibility concerning their tasks and

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9 The findings presented in this chapter partly originate from the DFG funded research project “‘To Speak with One Voice’? Europeanization in Intergovernmental Policy Areas – the Case of the European Political Co-operation (EPC), 1970-1981” at Universität Hamburg, Historisches Seminar, Arbeitsbereich Europäische Geschichte; see also G. Clemens (2014) “‘To speak with one voice’?; Großbritannien, die EPZ und der Fall Zypern.” In M. Bachem-Rehm, C. Hiepel, and H. Türk (eds.), Teilungen überwinden. Europäische und Internationale Geschichte im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, Festschrift für Wilfried Loth (München), pp. 531-546.

functioning. The EPC was confidential in character; consequently, the expert working groups worked behind closed doors and did not communicate in public. External communication, for instance with the press, was reserved for the foreign ministers;\(^{11}\) and later for the heads of State and government as well.

Expert working groups within the EPC could be set up by the EPC Political Committee to deal with specific issues. The expert working groups acted on behalf of the Political Committee and were bound to its instructions. In 1978, EPC expert working groups existed for the following issues/regions: United Nations, Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), Eastern Europe, Mediterranean, Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Asia. The expert working groups were chaired by the responsible head of division from the foreign ministry of the EC member state in charge of the EPC presidency and usually consisted of one or two participants from the responsible divisions of the foreign ministries of each member state. For practical reasons, the working languages of the EPC – below the level of ministerial meetings – were either French or English. The French government initially tried to inhibit the setting up of EPC expert working groups and remained reluctant to set up any other expert working groups than the above-mentioned. Instead, French officials favoured, if necessary, to build sub-groups of experts within existing EPC working groups.\(^{12}\)

Given that the members of the various expert working groups within the EPC came from the national foreign ministries,\(^{13}\) the question arises whether they were experts at all or primarily diplomats with a rather general or second-hand knowledge of the issues they were dealing with. In a broad sense, an “expert” can be defined as someone who possesses – or is considered to possess – specialist knowledge or skills on a given issue in a


\(^{12}\) Such as a sub-group for disarmament issues within the United Nations working group or a sub-group for economic measures vis-à-vis South Africa within the Africa working group; cf. PA AA, Zwischenarchiv, Bd. 119.982: [Ref.] 200-350.20, Betr.: Deutsche EPZ-Präsidentschaft; hier: Stellung und Aufgaben der Arbeitsgruppen (AG), Bonn, 28. März 1978.

\(^{13}\) In contrast, for example, to external foreign policy expertise from think-tanks such as the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik (DGAP) or the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP); cf. Conze, Das Auswärtige Amt, p. 130.
A “diplomat”, in contrast, would rather represent his state under international law and protect predefined interests of his state or government in international negotiations. Concerning those diplomats “working at home”, i.e. in their respective foreign ministries (as the members of the EPC expert working groups did), Iver B. Neumann puts it as follows:

“When diplomats are in charge of producing a text, they seek out the opinion of each and every part of the foreign ministry that may conceivably have, or may be expected to gain, an interest in the matter at hand. As a result, the writing up of a diplomatic text is not primarily a question of communicating a certain point of view to the outside world, or producing a tight analysis. It is rather an exercise in consensus building.”

In this broad sense, it is the task of experts to analyze, whereas diplomats seek to build consensus and to find compromises.

Concerning expertise in the EPC, the contemporary use of terminology is interesting in this context: The EPC expert working groups operated under different names in different languages. In the English wording, for example, they were generally named “working groups” or “working parties” (without the prefix “expert”); in French they were called “groupes d’experts” and in German “Arbeitsgruppen” (which means “working groups”) or “Sachverständigengruppen” (which is very close to “expert groups” / “group of experts”). This might be an indication of different na-

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15 I. B. Neumann (2012) At Home with the Diplomats. Inside a European Foreign Ministry (Ithaca/New York), pp. 7ff.: “Diplomacy is about negotiating between different positions held by different polities. To be a diplomat is to take part in such negotiations.”

16 Neumann, At Home with the Diplomats, p. 7. Neumann mainly differentiates between “field diplomats” at their posts all over the world and diplomats “working at home”.

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tional “expert cultures”\(^\text{17}\) in foreign policy-making. Referring to officials working for the EU Council of Ministers, Jan Beyers states that “state representatives are more than diplomats in the traditional sense. Most of them are technical experts within a specialized field of competence.”\(^\text{18}\) This is an assumption worth considering for the members of the EPC expert working groups within the EPC, too. Moreover, the attribution of being an “expert” can be both a self-attribution and an attribution by others and is socially or corporately negotiated.\(^\text{19}\) The social constructedness of being an expert holds especially true for experts on political or social issues, political analysts and so on (in contrast to scientific or technical experts).\(^\text{20}\)

With regard to the archival sources and contemporary publications, it is evident that the members of the EPC expert working groups considered themselves experts in their respective field of expertise and were considered experts by the other actors involved in the EPC and were often entitled “experts” or “Sachverständige” in the EPC files. It is therefore argued here that the members of the EPC working groups must be, in general, considered experts and not only agents of their respective foreign ministries. The EPC expert working groups provided basic issue-related exper-

\(^{17}\) Cf. for the prevalent use of the term “experts cultures” the publications of the DFG Research Training Group 1507 "Expert Cultures from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Centuries", URL: https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/100303.html [accessed 29/04/2016], in particular Rexroth, Systemvertrauen und Expertenkepsis, especially pp. 22f.


\(^{19}\) See DFG Research Training Group 1507 “Expert Cultures from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Centuries”, URL: https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/100303.html [accessed 29/04/2016]: “The expert assumes the social role of an agent of knowledge. His position results on the one hand from special knowledge being assigned to the expert by others. On the other hand, it is based on the expert’s own proclaiming to possess such knowledge. However, the knowledge expert’s [sic!] possess can only be defined in relation to a given situation. Hence, his exceptional status is the result of social negotiation with his environment.”

tise preparing foreign policy decision-making on the level of the political directors in the EPC Political Committee (PC) and the foreign ministers.

However, being a group of experts is not yet the same as constituting an epistemic community. And this leads to the question whether the EPC expert working groups can actually be considered as “epistemic communities” or whether their members were rather linked by a situational understanding of being experts.

III. The EPC expert working groups as "epistemic communities"? The case of the Mediterranean working group

According to Peter M. Haas, the most prominent exponent of the concept of “epistemic communities”, originally developed by John Ruggie,21 “[a]n epistemic community is a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area.”22 These professionals/experts, according to Haas, have

“(1) a shared set of normative and principled beliefs, which provide a value-based rationale for the social action of community members; (2) shared causal beliefs, which are derived from their analysis of practices leading or contributing to a central set of problems in their domain and which then serve as the basis for elucidating the multiple linkages between possible policy actions and desired outcomes; (3) shared notions of validity – that is, intersubjective, internally defined criteria for weighing and validating knowledge in the domain of their expertise; and (4) a common policy enterprise – that is, a set of common practices associated with a set of problems to which their professional competence is directed, presumably out of the conviction that human welfare will be enhanced as a consequence.”23

The concept of “epistemic community” aims at providing an explanation for international co-operation or co-ordination between states and for the influence of experts as a transnational entity (not as mere individuals) on policy-making and governance in this regard. An epistemic community is considered to be an actor whose impact is decisive for dealing with a given issue substituting (or at least interfering with) genuine policy-making by conventional political actors such as governments. In developing the concept Haas focused on the international co-operation between states,
more precisely on processes resulting in policy co-ordination in the field of international environmental issues. He emphasized the “normative component”\textsuperscript{24} of epistemic communities which makes its members less prone, for example, to “the preexisting political interests or preferences of high-level policymakers”\textsuperscript{25}.

As concerns the case of the EPC, the most relevant question in this context is not why the member states began to co-operate on foreign policy issues – or even began to co-ordinate their foreign policies – in the early 1970s, but how this co-operation developed due to the work done by the EPC expert working groups. The concept of “epistemic communities” might contribute to an explanation of processes within the EPC resulting in an altered role and in a possibly increasing impact of the expert working groups on EPC policy-making.

According to Haas, the epistemic community approach is mostly interested in the processes “through which consensus is reached within a given domain of expertise and through which the consensual knowledge is diffused to and carried forward by other actors. Its primary concern is the political influence that an epistemic community can have on collective policymaking”\textsuperscript{26}. In order to investigate whether the concept of “epistemic communities” is appropriate for analyzing the role of the EPC expert working groups and their impact on European foreign policy-making and on the functioning and development of the EPC in the 1970s, the case of the EPC Mediterranean expert working group is instructive.

It was the question of the tasks and competences of the EPC expert working groups which triggered fervent debates among the Nine by the mid-1970s. Despite their position at the bottom of the EPC hierarchy, the expert working groups played an essential role for the functioning of the EPC.\textsuperscript{27} As already indicated, it was the main task of the EPC expert working groups to prepare the discussions and decision-making in the EPC Political Committee,\textsuperscript{28} the key working level of the EPC, meeting at least

\textsuperscript{24} Haas, \textit{Introduction}, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{25} Haas, \textit{Introduction}, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{26} Haas, \textit{Introduction}, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{27} Cf. Găinăr, \textit{Aux origines de la diplomatie européenne}, p. 346: “Malgré leur positionnement en bas de l’échelle, les groupes de travail jouent un rôle essentiel dans le fonctionnement du mécanisme [de la CPE, Reinfeldt].”
once a month and ensuring the continuity of the political consultations among the Nine. Given the above-mentioned general lack of rigid rules for the EPC, the relation between the work of the expert working groups and the Political Committee had also never been exactly fixed. Thus, in 1975/76 in the expert working group Mediterranean/Southern Europe the question arose to what extent the working groups were allowed to set themselves political objectives beyond their original mandate from the Political Committee. Especially the Luxembourg Presidency and other member states were in favour of this. The French were more reluctant. In February 1976, however, the Political Committee agreed, “that the working groups can also work without reference to a specific mandate of the Political Committee.” Thus, the working groups were allowed, if considered necessary by the experts, to study issues beyond the original mandate from the Political Committee. Different from Leprette from the French Quai d’Orsay (see above), the German Auswärtiges Amt had no major difficulties with the resulting absence of officials for EPC expert working groups, but claimed to profit from the expert group meetings in terms of decision-making:

“The disadvantage of an occasional absence of the heads of division from their post for the purpose of coordination among the Nine is perceived by us, too, but is regularly compensated – according to our experiences – by gaining foreign policy insights and common responsibility which are a central part of the EPC. The working groups by now have made a valuable job and have contributed considerably to substantiating debates and decisions in the Political Committee and among the Ministers.”

As at all EPC working levels, the expert working groups were operating by consensus. According to the Auswärtiges Amt, however, the experts

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31 PA AA, Zwischenarchiv, Bd. 119.442: Paris Diplo, Betr.: EPZ; hier: Referenten-Arbeitsgruppen, 11.8.76 [translation].
33 PA AA, Zwischenarchiv, Bd. 119.442: Paris Diplo, Betr.: EPZ; hier: Referenten-Arbeitsgruppen, 11.8.76 [translation].
should avoid seeking for the lowest common denominator in case of disagreement, but should report the Political Committee on the differences of opinion and present options for decision-making. On demand of the Political Committee (and later proactively), the expert working groups ought to submit draft conclusions for agenda items which required a decision of the Political Committee, comprising suggestions for the implementation of proposed actions. The results upon which the expert working groups agreed were put forward as a “rapport oral” of the Presidency to the Political Committee for further policy- and decision-making. This procedure enabled the expert working groups, in principle, to set the pattern for further discussion and decision-making of an issue in the Political Committee (and later, if necessary at all, among foreign ministers). However, the outcome and the impact of the expert working group meetings depended to a large extent on the EPC Presidency, since the Presidency was not only responsible for the “rapport oral”, but also for elaborating draft working papers and setting operational procedures.

The rather issue-related task – in contrast to a rather diplomatic approach – of the EPC expert working groups becomes evident from the debate of the functions of the working groups within the EPC in the 65th Political Committee [1977] in Brussels when several delegates criticized recent Presidency reports on working group meetings for their diplomatic wording:

“Critized were especially Presidency reports on working group meetings that hide different opinions on technical issues behind diplomatic wording in the style of procedural communiqués, instead of submitting operational proposals, political options and clear indications of controversial items to the Political Committee. The [political] directors emphasized the function of the working groups for the __________________

36 Cf. PA AA, Zwischenarchiv, Bd. 119.982: [Ref.] 200-350.20, Betr.: Deutsche EPZ-Präsidentschaft; hier: Stellung und Aufgaben der Arbeitsgruppen (AG), Bonn, 28. März 1978. The Presidents of the EPC expert working groups were also responsible for drafting their respective agenda item for the “relevé de conclusions” of the Political Committee whose meetings they attended on behalf of their working group.
preparation of the decisions of the Political Committee and their operational character. They thus expect reports on working group meetings in which
- reasoned options for joint action are elaborated,
- different national positions are aligned as far as possible,
- remaining differences in opinion are clearly indicated.

Decisions on the joint policy are taken by the Political Committee as far as the [political] directors do not submit them to the Ministers.\textsuperscript{37}

This underscores that the experts gathered in the EPC working groups were not expected to act as diplomats, but that they should bring their foreign policy and, moreover, their issue-related expertise to the discussions in the working groups and prepare decision-making in the Political Committee – if necessary by providing different options for decision-making.

This is interesting because initially it had been rather difficult to define non-controversial fields of activity for the Mediterranean working group at all: The French government, for instance, was reluctant to speak about Algeria, the Dutch government tried to avoid discussing Greek issues in

Experience from the early times of the EPC showed that especially in the Mediterranean working group important particular interests (“wichtige nationale Sonderinteressen”) of the EC member states were at stake and impeded unbiased discussions on current policy issues.

Then again, in 1972 already, it was discussed within the Auswärtiges Amt whether the Mediterranean expert working group should not be confined to analyzing but should make proposals for further action: "In general, it has to be stated that it would be useful if the Mediterranean working group would not leave it at the mere analysis, but would prepare proposals for joint action of the EC member states for the purpose of stabilizing the situation in the northeastern Mediterranean area."

It is also noteworthy, in order to understand both the character of the EPC and the role of the expert working groups in it, that by the mid-1970s there was consensus among the Nine, “that – in addition to the already practised extensive exchange of information – an exchange of basic reports and notes, including those that are beyond the current and operative scope of the EPC, would be beneficial.”

At the suggestion of the German Auswärtiges Amt, this exchange of reports and notes should be put into effect via the expert working groups (or, if necessary, via the correspondents) since the responsible national members in the respective expert working groups were most competent to select appropriate documents, given their familiarity with the issues at hand.

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As a consequence, the members of the EPC expert working groups could increasingly influence the flow of information among European governments and set part of the agenda for foreign policy co-operation between the Nine.\textsuperscript{43}

According to Hermann da Fonseca-Wollheim (between 1977 and 1981 responsible for relations with the EPC in the Secretariat General of the EC Commission and frequent participant in EPC working group meetings), the regular exchange of ideas (and positions) among the experts in the EPC working groups – who got to know each other for several years – was essential for the so-called “coordination reflex” which developed between the national administrations.\textsuperscript{44} Da Fonseca-Wollheim, however, was struck “by the extreme frankness at meetings of EPC working groups, where everyone is ready to share confidential information with his colleagues – which distinguishes these meetings from those of COREPER working parties”\textsuperscript{45}.

Even if da Fonseca-Wollheim might be a bit too enthusiastic about the “extreme frankness” at these meetings, his observation points to the working method in the EPC working groups which generally allowed for a rather factual dialogue. Da Fonseca-Wollheim’s assessment, however, applies only to a certain extent to the EPC Mediterranean expert working group in the 1970s.


\textsuperscript{43} See also Găinar, \textit{Aux origines de la diplomatie européenne}, p. 346, who states with regard to the period between 1977 and 1980: “La place des groupes de travail est renforcée constamment au sein de la Coopération politique.”


Many of the experts in the Mediterranean working group were longtime participants like, for example, the German Hermann Munz, who became head of division for the Mediterranean in the Auswärtiges Amt in the early 1970s and took part in the meetings of the EPC Mediterranean expert working group until 1975. The same applies to his successor, Bernhard Heibach. Many of the members thus knew each other for a longer time. The career of Heibach, however, who had served in several German embassies in South America, Africa and only finally in Portugal before he became head of division in the Auswärtiges Amt also exemplifies another relevant feature: At an individual level, the members in the EPC expert working groups were without any doubt foreign-policy experts, but not always experts concerning all of the issues they dealt with in their working groups from the beginning. Another example for this is the French Isabelle Renouard, one of the very few women in the EPC working groups, who had previously held functions in the French embassies in Canada and Algeria before she became Deputy director for Southern Europe in the Quai d’Orsay and member of the Mediterranean working group in 1978. Their British counterpart, however, Timothy Daunt from the Southern European Department in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who served at posts in Turkey and Cyprus for many years can be considered a real expert for the Mediterranean area.

In terms of “epistemic communities” the above-mentioned role of the group members as experts, not mere diplomats, the general intensity of their interaction, their common understanding of the issues at stake with an issue-related approach as well as their common understanding of the importance of expertise in foreign policy-making are arguments in favour of considering the EPC Mediterranean expert working group as an epistemic community. Moreover, as concerns the EPC expert working groups they seem to feature what Haas considers to be a prerogative of epistemic communities, i.e. “that they may convey new patterns of reasoning to de-
cision makers and encourage them to pursue new paths of policymaking, which may in turn lead to unpredicted or unpredictable outcomes.”

This assumption, however, is challenged by the fact that – apart from the agenda-setting and deliberative role of the EPC expert working groups – their actual impact on decision-making is much more difficult to assess. For this, the Cyprus crisis in 1974/75 (and later on) is illustrative. According to Nicholas van Praag, “the Cyprus crisis demonstrated clearly that political cooperation could work [...] as well as starkly illustrating [sic!] its shortcomings.”

Frequent contacts especially between the political directors and frequent deliberations of the Mediterranean working group initially enabled the Nine to cooperate intensely and to coordinate their respective stances for a while – resulting in several diplomatic démarches on behalf of the Nine in Athens and Ankara in order to foster negotiations between the Greek and the Turkish side of the conflict.

However, apart from these modest results set-backs concerning a common approach towards the Cyprus issue became more frequent in the course of events. Despite regular meetings the attitudes of the Nine increasingly diverged, and the Nine were “unable to move from ‘declaration’ to ‘operation’” concerning Cyprus. Apart from communiqués there was no joint action – not at least because the regional actors pressed for an international solution with substantial participation of the United States and the Soviet Union. The experts in the EPC Mediterranean working group could not prevent this rift among the Nine, although they were re-charged by the Political Committee with the coordination of the Nine’s attitudes concerning Cyprus in December 1975. Since the second half of 1975 there are clear indications for increasingly bilateral approaches of EC member states towards the Cyprus issue, and for the decreasing willingness to compromise on the political issue as well as on procedural issues within the EPC.

51 Cf. van Praag, Political cooperation and Southern Europe, especially pp. 98-101.
52 van Praag, Political cooperation and Southern Europe, p. 100.
53 van Praag, Political cooperation and Southern Europe, especially pp. 98-101.
And yet, in general, contemporary foreign policy actors acknowledged that the EPC expert working groups had an impact on national as well as on European foreign policy-making. In a summary of the development of the EPC by the mid-1970s from the *Auswärtiges Amt* it is stated with reference to the functions of the working groups: “Function of working groups important. Their analyses and proposals inspire Political Committee and Ministers and often become the basis of decisions.”\(^{55}\) The overall picture, thus, is ambiguous.

**IV. Concluding Remarks**

The EPC expert working groups, set up by the EPC Political Committee to deal with specific issues, played an important role for the functioning of the EPC. The expert working groups could, in principle, set new patterns for further discussion and decision-making in the Political Committee or among the foreign ministers; and increasingly so, since the general responsibilities of the expert working groups had been gradually enhanced. The experts gathered in the EPC working groups were not expected to primarily act as diplomats, but should bring their expertise to the discussions in the working groups and prepare further decision-making. The question, however, whether they actually constituted some kind of “epistemic community” can only be answered ambiguously: On the one hand, the case of the EPC Mediterranean working group shows that this expert working group could structure the deliberation process on the issue at stake within the EPC. In this regard, transgovernmental expertise on the Mediterranean issue in general and the Cyprus crisis in particular was decisive for analyzing the political situation and for developing possible solutions. There are also indications that the EPC expert working groups were distinct from mere – what Haas calls – “bureaucratic bodies” or “policy entrepreneurs”\(^{56}\). The EPC Mediterranean expert working group was able to set particular issues on the EPC agenda, whereas other issues were discussed due to solely political demands without prior intervention of experts. Further research with a distinct prosopographical scope is necessary in order to clarify the crucial question of the shared “principled (norma-

\(^{55}\) PA AA, Zwischenarchiv, Bd. 119.442: Stichworte zu Entwicklung EPZ (Gesamtschau, Zielsetzung), undated [1976] [translation].

tive) and causal beliefs” of their members in the particular case of the EPC expert working groups – because this would be an absolute condition (conditio sine qua non) for reasonably considering them as genuine epistemic communities. The same holds true for surveying socialization processes on the European level which seem to have taken place among the experts due to the regular exchange of ideas in frequent meetings within the EPC framework. It seems to be promising in this regard to combine the concepts of epistemic communities and international socialization.

However, the impact of issue-related expertise on actual foreign policy-making, as could also be seen in the case of the Cyprus crisis, tended to remain dependent on political considerations and configurations rather than on intrinsic exigencies. Moreover, issue-related expertise did not – in the case of the Mediterranean working group – replace national state interests; and proposed solutions were discussed in terms of political aspects rather than implemented on the basis of the provided expertise. The chapter, thus, reveals the limits of expertise in foreign policy-making where issues of traditional diplomacy or special relations between states and regions were still at stake. There are, nevertheless, clear indications that the EPC fostered the transgovernmental co-operation between experts and created the preconditions for a sort of Europeanized expertise which, in turn, had an impact on policy deliberation and gradually modified formal and informal decision-making processes, habits and perceptual patterns of the actors involved.

References


57 Cf. Haas, Introduction, pp. 31-33, citation p. 35.


Engineering Expertise and the regulation of international telecommunications in Europe from the 1950s to the 1970s

Christian Henrich-Franke

“To work successfully in this field both professional knowledge and multiple personal contacts are necessary. The latter, however, depends on many years of active participation and experience. Therefore, it is important to consider these aspects when staff for international matters will be transferred.”

Helmut Bornemann, Secretary of State in the German PTT-ministry (1963-1968)

I. Introduction

On October 26, 1966, in a letter to the technical department of the German ptt administration, the secretary of state, Helmut Bornemann, signals the importance of professional knowledge, socialisation within an institutional arrangement of the telecommunication sector and personal networks for the international regulation of telecommunication networks. Implicitly, Bornemann points out that a membership in a transnational community of experts was a prerequisite to negotiate telecommunication standards on the international level successfully. Having been part of that community since the 1930s, he was an insider in the issue and warned his successors in the technical department to comply with traditional rules of expert governance in the telecommunication sector.

Starting from Bornemann’s statement about the key role professional knowledge, personal networks and socialization, this paper asks for the impact of transnational expertise and expert communities for the standardization and regulation of international telecommunications. It raises the

1 Letter by Helmut Bornemann to the German ptt administration’s technical department, Bundesarchiv Koblenz, B257/15523.
2 PTT is the acronym for postal, telegraph and telephone, which often were united into one administration. Usually the administrations were also responsible for radio. Here, I will use the term telecommunication for telegraph, telephone and radio.
overarching question: In how far can an analysis of the regulation of transborder telecommunication infrastructures in Europe between 1950 and 1970 increase our knowledge on transnational expertise and expert communities? How did the community of telecommunication engineers come into being? How did it react to changing external environments? Which was the internal design of the expert community? Why and at which point in time was the expert community accepted as a legitimated standard-setter?

To answer these questions, the paper combines a structural with an actor-centred approach to the topic. It will illuminate three important aspects of transnational expertise and the expert community in the field of telecommunications: (1) The origins of the expert community: The first part of the paper illustrates that institutional structures as well as the norms and guidelines for the regulation and standardization are the result of a long historical process up to World War II. Since the 19th century an expert community of telecommunication engineers emerged which developed its own guideline for behaviour: a ‘standardization culture’. (2) Processes of adaption to changing environments: In the second part the paper discusses two examples for the most important changes in the external environment between 1950 and 1970: the Cold War and European Integration. The first one will deal with the negotiations at the International Telecommunication Union’s (ITU) World Administrative Radio Conferences (WARC) and the second with the standardization of intercontinental switching telephone exchange. Both cases show that institutional structures became redefined to maintain the expert community’s mode of operation. (3) The role of individual actors: In its third part, the paper traces the career of Helmut Bornemann in order to examine the role of individual actors, their socialisation and the interdependencies between actors and institutions. Bornemann’s career is just one typical example among other similar careers from engineers across Europe, which could have been presented here. (4) The fourth part analyses the empirical studies and answers the guiding questions.

The role of experts in the transnational regulation of infrastructure networks has been widely studied in the context of the Tensions of Europe network in the last decade. Expert cooperation and their participation within international organisation have been viewed as one part of the story.
about the ‘hidden’ integration of Europe by infrastructures.\(^3\) Even the telecommunication sector has been analysed in that context.\(^4\) The studies unanimously underlined the particular style of international negotiations amongst engineers, which was either called ‘technocratic internationalism’\(^5\) or ‘epistemic expert regulation’.\(^6\) According to these studies since the 19\(^{th}\) century experts “sought to fill an emerging regulatory gap” for international technology standards with their own expertise and agenda. They formed “stable expert networks” but the “delineation and maintaining of the boundaries with the political world was not always easy”.\(^7\) These studies serve as a starting point, however, this paper will more systematically explain the stability and nature of expert communities.

II. The origins of the expert community

Since the 19\(^{th}\) century international telecommunication standards were negotiated by telecommunication experts (engineers) from monopoly administrations rather independently within the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).\(^8\) The ITU introduced a governance structure that separated politics and expert governance already in 1875.\(^9\) It was composed of two types of conferences: first, the ITU’s plenipotentiary conference,

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8 The ITU was originally formed in 1865 as International Telegraph Union and renamed into International Telecommunication Union in 1932.
where governmental representatives could meet to discuss the Telecommunication Convention, which laid down the organizational structure and fundamental rules for telecommunications; second, the administrative conferences for telegraph, telephone (since 1885) and radio (since 1906), where technical experts (mostly engineers) met to negotiate the Telecommunication or Radio Regulations, which contained more variable regulations and standards that needed to be adjusted to the technical and operational development of telecommunications. This division initiated an enduring process of turning international telecommunication governance into an engineering affair. On the one hand, the plenipotentiary conference was called only once between 1875 and 1947. On the other hand, the administrative conferences were called ever more frequently in order to adjust international regulations to a technology developing rapidly. Experts more and more autonomously governed international telecommunication links.  

Subsequently, a ‘standardization culture’ emerged as a transnational guideline for the behaviour in and the outcome of processes of standardization and regulation of international telecommunication infrastructures and equipment. It was based on two elements that combined professional knowledge of an engineer with national protectionism and sovereignty. First, standardization and regulation within an independent committee of engineers was established as the sole way. Second, international interconnectivity became the major guideline. Interoperable networks and high-level integrated networks were not envisioned. The national (sovereign) right to shield terminal equipment by incompatible national standards was not disputed as long as this allowed international connections. Standards and regulations that were negotiated by following the ‘standardization culture’ were well balanced. The ‘standardization culture’ was ‘politically’ enough to protect national markets and it was ‘technically’ enough to enable the interworking of telecommunication networks. Therefore, the ex-

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10 G. Codding (1952) *The International Telecommunication Union. An Experiment in International Cooperation* (Leiden, Brill).

11 Interconnectivity is the ability to connect technologically separated infrastructural systems at interfaces.

12 Interoperability is the ability to merge infrastructural systems, enabling the exchange of system components between different systems.

pert’s autonomy depended on a ‘tacit political agreement’ between the experts and the political authorities.

The interwar years marked an important period for the consolidation of the transnational telecommunication expert community. Between 1924 and 1927 the ITU members set up three consultative committees (telephone/CCIF; telegraph/CCIT and radio/CCIR) to prepare recommendations for technical and operational standards which did not violate national sovereignty. The European telephone network, for example, which was build up in the 1930s, enabled pan-European connections but, for example, a French telephone could for technical reasons not be used in the German network. To underline the experts’ independency, the CCIs remained independent from ITU, even though their tasks were connected to ITU issues (see graph 1). Internally they brought together experts from the administrations and the industry to address international standardization issues. Professional education as an engineer was the prerequisite to membership in the CCIs and prevented ‘non-experts’ from entering. The national administrations, which appointed staff for the CCIs, kept an eye on this issue. To become an accepted member of the expert community, however, the engineers had to be able to negotiate standards and regulations according to the ‘standardization culture’.

The CCIs and its study groups only issued non-binding recommendations, but these had a significant normative impact. They were “the rules of the road for the world’s telecommunication highways” and often put into national law by the national governments. Each telephone wall jack and each telephone set got a seal of approval by the CCIF (since 1956 by the CCITT). Ministers as well as the Foreign Offices got reports about the CCI’s activities but they hardly commented on them as they saw no reasons to question the output of international telecommunication standardization and regulation. A European telephone network, for example, hardly existed prior to the CCIs. There had been only 28 direct connections be-

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14 In 1956, the CCIF and the CCIT merged into the CCITT.
tween European major cities in 1922 but when the CCIF took up the matter the number raised to 98 in 1928. In the early 1930s one could speak of a truly pan-European network.\textsuperscript{18}

Due to the amalgamation of public and private stakeholders, the CCIs accumulated a vast expertise and accelerated the transnational knowledge transfer. It was another tesserae in a long process of transforming engineering experts into ‘de facto’ decision-makers. The typical ‘expert governance’ style, which had begun to take shape in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, intensified. The ‘standardization culture’ was the lubricating oil of that type of governance.\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{Graph 1: Institutions of international telecommunication regulation in the interwar (source: author)}

\begin{itemize}
\item ITU
\item Plenipotentiary conference
\item Berne Bureau
\item Administrative conferences
\item CCIF
\item CCIT
\item CCIR
\item Private companies
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{18} R. Chapuis (1976) “The CCIF and the development of international telephony (1923-1956).” 
\textit{Telecommunication Journal} 3: 184-197.

\textsuperscript{19} B. Ahr (2013) \textit{Integration von Infrastrukturen in Europa: Telekommunikation, Bd. 3} (Baden-Baden, Nomos).
The setting up of the CCIs was an important step to subdivide the international telecommunication regime into a political and an engineering arena. On the political arena, at plenipotentiary conferences, political authorities defined binding general rules for transborder telecommunications. On the engineering arena, engineers either negotiated binding regulations for transborder telecommunication at administrative conferences or non-binding standards (recommendations) within the CCIs (see graph 1).

The number of contacts between the national experts increased dramatically, as it actually was a small number of telecommunication engineers that met periodically. The several weeks lasting telecommunication conferences, their intensive preparation and the permanent work of the CCIs offered the opportunities for these contacts. Engineers from ptt administrations and the industry met within official meetings as well as within a variety of informal umbrella events like parties or trips to local sights. Bigger conferences even issued their own journals like the ‘Morning Electron’ (Atlantic City, 1947) or the ‘Gazette de Grands Palais’ (Paris, 1949) which were of a more entertaining character to provide the delegates with stories and background information about participants or local particularities. These encounters made telecommunication engineers become better acquainted with each other. Many personal friendships developed regardless of national backgrounds or dividing political ideologies. Sometimes the engineers were accompanied by family members, which also made friends among engineers and their families. Gradually they began to talk about family situations or other private matters. Sharing the ‘standardization culture’ as valuation standard and acting rather independently from political influence the experts had a real transnational character as the common interest was given priority over individual or national interests. Trust and friendship among them emerged and the new cadres that were socialised within ITU became intimate with causal beliefs and notions of validity. Trust in institutions was subsequently complemented by trust in other engineers, regardless of their national background.


To sum up, since the mid-19th century an expert community of telecommunication engineers subsequently took shape. The values of the ‘standardization culture’ were the basis on which norms and rules of behaviour among the individual members of the expert community developed. Having an engineers’ professional education was a prerequisite for membership in the expert community whereas the acceptance of the ‘standardization culture’ served as a ticket. On the basis of a ‘tacit political agreement’ with the political authorities, the engineers were able to independently regulate and standardize international telecommunication infrastructures and equipment because they satisfied the national political authorities. Or to put it into other words: experts ‘de facto’ became decision-makers.

III. The Cold War and European Integration: two examples for processes of adaptation to changes in the environment

a) The Cold War and the World Administrative Radio Conferences

The Second World War resulted in a dramatically changed political environment, especially since the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in March 1947. The political tensions arising from the ideological competitions of the Cold War were a high barrier for the administrative conferences, which were scheduled to evaluate telecommunication regulations. Bloc confrontations between East and West challenged the regulation and standardization activities and made a number of conferences and issues fail in the years 1947 until 1950. Rhetorically well-trained diplomats and militaries disputed non-technical matters like participation of particular countries and voting powers. At the World Administrative Radio Conference (WARC) 1947 in Atlantic City, long debates about individual participation of Soviet Socialist Republics delayed the conference.22 Especially the administrative conferences’ general assemblies hosted numerous ideologically charged discussions driven forward by non-engineer actors like foreign offices’ diplomats. The telecommunication engineers, which hadn’t changed since the interwar, perceived these discussions as a threat to the traditional way of negotiating regulations and standards. On the one

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hand, their trust in the institutions was upset. On the other hand, they feared a denunciation of the ‘tacit political agreement’ between the experts and the political authorities. The Swedish engineer, Erik Esping, for example, heavily complained about diplomats, which were unable to negotiate without political directives from their Foreign Offices.23

At the same time, the CCIs restarted their activities already in August 1945 by following the pre-war style of negotiating standards according to the ‘standardization culture’. Although the political environment surrounding the negotiations had changed dramatically, the engineers, their norms and their routines of behaviour in the CCIs had not changed. The engineers found themselves in a strange situation. They were able to successfully and smoothly negotiate telecommunication standards within the CCIs, even though the official rhetoric at the WARC was confrontational. The key factors were the ingredients of the pre-war expert community. The individual engineers on both sides of the iron curtain still shared the ‘standardization culture’ as valuation standard. This had a confidence-building effect and accelerated the re-establishment of the pre-war expert community. Trust in the expert community and its individual members re-emerged and the engineers’ behaviour in negotiations was again predictable and reliable. The numerous national and international reports from the different CCI meetings between 1945 and 1953 clearly indicate the gradual revival of the expert community.

Recognising the continued effectiveness of the expert community the engineers considered solutions to re-establish the traditional style of ‘expert governance’ even at the administrative conferences. The institutional structure of the administrative conference provided a loophole to escape from the looming political tensions. The engineers began to relocate decision-making from the general assemblies, where decisions about telecommunication regulations were usually made, to the sub-committees or working groups. Over that, the CCIs increasingly prepared recommendations for the topics, which the administrative conferences had to decide upon. These CCI recommendations were increasingly accepted as binding regulation without further discussion. To get the telecommunication and radio regulations signed by all delegations, the engineers purposefully predefined the general assembly’s decisions by using information asymmetries (expert knowledge) on the technical impacts of telecommunication...

23 Letter from Erik Esping to the Swedish Telecommunication Administration, Sveriges Riksarkiv (Arninge), Televerket, Ekonomibyrån, F IV:45.
tions. In their reports on the content of regulations and standards they simply left no room for additional adjustments and justified their proceeding with technical arguments. At WARC 1951, for example, the Swedish engineers successfully negotiated radio beacons for the Baltic Sea with their ‘very congenial’ Soviet counterparts at the ITU’s entrance hall. The results of these informal talks were the basis for a recommendation, which was accepted by the general assembly.

The well-established division between a political and an engineering arena, which prior to the war ran along the line of plenipotentiary and administrative conferences, became implicated in the administrative conferences. The general assembly was in many respects transformed into a battlefield for political issues; meanwhile the engineers in the sub-committees de facto decided on technical regulations and standards. Politicians and engineers tacitly accepted that style of decision-making. On the one hand, controversial discussions within the general assembly were accepted by the engineers as a ritual act because in the changed environment of the Cold War ‘politicians had to do their business and we accepted that.’ On the other hand, politicians and diplomats hardly intervened when the sub-committee reports were put for discussion as long as political objectives like technical progress or the protection of national markets were not violated. The ‘standardization culture’ offered a workable basis. It again equipped the engineers with the pre-war approach to standardization that made standards politically acceptable (national protectionism) and technically sufficient (transnational connections).

24 Report to ptt administration’s director, Sven Gejer, Sveriges Riksarkiv (Arninge), Televerket, Ekonomibyrån, F IV:83.
In the engineering arena, even the informal and private connections were re-established. In one case, the wives of a Soviet and a Western German delegate prepared cookies and coffee together to supply their husbands in a difficult night session of an administrative conference. According to their husbands, these ‘Cookies for ITU’ were an important factor for successful negotiations. The German delegate to administrative conferences between 1959 and 1983, Rudolf Binz, explains it as follows: “It was a community that hardly knew grouping from the parties. Therefore, parties were of such importance as the decisions were made there. And, of course,
long-lasting friendships were made.” A variety of pictures and private photo albums gives evidence of this.

Having been unable to sign the final acts unanimously between 1947 and 1951 – just a limited number of issues like the Baltic Sea radio beacons became international law – the final acts of all World Administrative Radio Conferences from 1959 onwards were signed by all delegations and ratified by all governments.

b) European Integration and the ‘Conférence Européenne des Administrations des Postes et des Télécommunications’

When European Integration challenged international telecommunications in the 1950s the experts expanded the institutional arrangements in a way that the division between the political and the engineering arena was expanded in a way that Western European organisations became part of the engineering arena. After lengthy discussions about the founding of a supranational European postal and telecommunication organization according to the style of the European Coal and Steel Community the interadministrative ‘Conférence Européenne des Administrations des Postes et des Télécommunications’ (CEPT) was founded in June 1959 by 24 ptt-administrations from 20 (Western) European countries as a non-governmental organisation solely composed of ptt-administration. Even though many protagonists of European Integration spoke in favour of a new supranational organisation, the majority of governments saw no reason for a fundamental change as long as the output of the telecommunication engineers’ regulation and standardization satisfied their needs. The CEPT emerged as a second multilateral pillar for standardization of telecommunication infrastructures in Western Europe and complemented the ITU’s activities from a European perspective. It dealt with matters of importance within Europe and coordinated European positions for the ITU. It

was relevant for the regulation and standardization of telecommunication infrastructures as it prepared the negotiations within ITU and dealt with standard setting for intra-European purposes. The separation of the political and the engineering arena was adopted by the CEPT and thus the 'standardization culture' embraced an even larger number of institutions. Within the CEPT the majority of the work was performed by the same engineers of the expert community, which also met at the ITU administrative conferences or the CCIs.\textsuperscript{29}

\textit{Graph 3: Institutions of international telecommunication regulation in Europe since 1959 (source: author)}

The example of the first transatlantic telephone cable will serve as a basis for the discussion that the CEPT adopted the 'standardization culture' as basis for the engineers' behavior. In 1956 the first transatlantic telephone cable was put into operation, which was supposed to be equipped with a common European transit switch telephone exchange for all telephone calls between Europe and North America. This required a governmental and politically binding European agreement on operational questions, on the tariffs/costs and on the technology to be used, which nevertheless had

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{29} R. Binz (1990) “Geschichte der Frequenzverwaltung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland mit Berlin (West).” Archiv für das Post- und Fernmeldewesen 3: 417-478.
\end{itemize}

\normalsize
to be negotiated by the engineers. A proposal on the issue was forwarded by the Swiss telecommunication administration at the CEPT plenary meeting in October 1960 in Paris.

The CEPT appointed a special study group to consider the proposal at its plenary assembly in 1960 and it subsequently succeeded in implementing a common European switching exchange system in 1964/65. After a discussion of the proposal and a series of test trials (pooling trials) the group successfully finalized its study at the CEPTs plenary assembly in June 1965. The same engineers from the ptt administrations and the equipment industry, which also participated in the ITU, were present in every meeting to discuss standards and to search for a common European position. Within the working group, the different national delegates took care of their common technical interest: the successful installation of the switching telephone exchange. It was only a limited number of engineers, mostly from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland, that negotiated for all CEPT members. As they were able to build working procedures on the trust in institutions and persons from the ITU, the British delegate, Andrew, at a meeting in Berne in 1961 was even in a position to ask his Swiss colleague, Rütschi, to act for Britain as he himself was tied up with business.30

The chairman of the working group, who was responsible for a ‘European point of view’, amalgamated in preparatory reports for the meetings of the working group almost autonomously different technical and operational aspects that came up. The group’s members relied on him acting for a common European welfare. The reports were discussed at numerous meetings, between the meetings via mail or phone and even informally at ITU conferences. The CCITT assembly in Melbourne, for example, offered an opportunity to reconsider particular aspects like the methods for data collection during the test trials between the private US Company AT&T, the European equipment industry and the European administrations. The few controversial issues that came up during the whole process (1960-1965) originated mostly from economic interests of the US-American counterpart, AT&T.

During the whole standard-setting process the participating engineers made a number of test trials and build up complex test connections to determine the capacities of the telephone lines that were used for transconti-

30 B. Ahr (2013) Integration von Infrastrukturen in Europa: Telekommunikation, Bd. 3 (Baden-Baden, Nomos).
nental calls and the methods to automatically direct phone calls into the correct national network. The allocation of the transcontinental lines during the periods of high traffic was an equal tricky business as the accounting methods. A side effect was the definition of international telephone numbers.

Governmental authorities hardly took care of the matter, albeit the political and financial impact of the intercontinental switching telephone exchange. CEPT working procedures were accepted according to the ‘tacit political agreement’ in the same way as those of ITU as long as the output satisfied political needs. The autonomy of the expert community in the international arena became obvious when the switching telephone exchange system was made a permanent service in 1964/65. Before having officially resolved the financial impacts with their governments or with high-level representatives, the test trials were turned into a permanent service. The matter was actually settled between AT&T and the CEPT working group before the CEPT’s plenary assembly in Lisbon in June 1965 took place, where a recommendation could be adopted which was non-binding for the governments. The plenary assembly at the Lisbon meeting simply nodded the report through without further discussion. That this non-binding report of the working group was in the next step accepted across CEPT-Europe as a binding rule for all participating states indicates the power of a limited number of engineers for an infrastructure which is the backbone of modern information societies. After all, this standard affected the majority of telephone calls across the Atlantic.

To sum up, in the cases of the Cold War and European Integration the experts adapted institutions to changing environments so that rules and procedures of standardization and regulation maintained constant. The ‘standardization culture’ remained the basis for norms and rules of behaviour in an expanding engineering arena.

IV. The role of individual actors: the case of the German engineer Helmut Bornemann

To open the black box of an expert and to demonstrate the impact of socialisation as well as the individual engineers’ role for the shaping and reshaping of institutions this part of the paper will illuminate the career of the German telecommunication engineer, Helmut Bornemann. Bornemann’s career is neither outstanding nor unique across Europe. He is rather one typical example for the career of a European telecommunication
engineer who was socialised in the expert community in the interwar, became intimate with the ‘standardization culture’ and subsequently shaped and reshaped institutions according to the internalised norms in the 1950s and 1960s.

Bornemann studied engineering at the technical university of Berlin between 1921 and 1925. He was among a new generation of engineers, which was trained in experimental research instead of the older style of theoretical education. At that time, the amalgamation of mathematical, theoretical and experimental research resulted in a new type of (telecommunication) engineer. Bornemann started his professional career at the ‘Reichspostzentralamt’ and became a member of the CCIF already in the mid 1920s. He was a pioneer for international telephone connections in Europe and among that generation of engineers, which made the CCIs an important transnational forum for the standardization of international telecommunications. In the CCIF Bornemann internalized the ‘standardization culture’. Coming to the CCIF as a national engineer for Germany Bornemann’s preferences were redefined in a way that national objectives were amalgamated with a transnational approach to technological efficiency. Throughout the 1930s, Bornemann represented the German telecommunication administration at all Administrative Telephone Conferences and at all CCIF meetings. He became chairman of the CCIF’s study group IX, where he was responsible for the compilation of reasonable compromises that satisfied national needs across Europe and introduced efficient transnational technology.

Being convinced that the regulation and standardization of telecommunications was a purely technical issue Bornemann hardly saw any reason why the CCIs’ activities should be ceased during the war. Together with Giuseppe Gneme, an Italian engineer and pioneer of the CCIF, Bornemann initiated the founding of the European Postal and Telecommunication Union (EPTU) in 1942, which up to 1944 dealt with intra-European telecommunication issues. Both wanted to continue the standardization of telecommunication infrastructures and equipment, especially with regard to the automatization of the European telephone network. The founding of a new organization was a price both had to pay as the Nazi regime rejected a formal continuation of the CCIs’ activities. However, as long as the engineers were able to negotiate telecommunication issues rather autonomously, the price was worth it. Within the EPTU nearly the same engineers continued to negotiate telecommunication standards like in the interwar. Bornemann was the key organiser of EPTU meetings and thus took care that the institutional design of the ITU was adopted and that the
EPTU followed the norms and principles of the ‘standardization culture’. Bornemann managed to keep even those few engineers indirectly connected to the discussions, which for political reasons were barred from participating by their national governments like the Swiss or Swedish colleagues. Remarkably, the ‘tacit political agreement’ between engineers and political authorities was still valid under the Nazi regime during World War II.\(^{31}\)

When the war was over the CCIF restarted its activities with a plenary assembly in London already in August 1945 and a second one in Montreux just a year later. Naturally, Germany was not invited and as a result, Bornemann missed the meetings. His colleagues from the CCIF, however, trusted Bornemann personally and unofficially requested his statements on the technical issues that were on the agenda like the automatization of the European telephone network, which had also been discussed in the EPTU. Bornemann was informally kept informed about the CCIF’s activities. He had hardly any problems when he was allowed to re-enter the CCIF officially in 1949 as the rules and interpersonal relations hadn’t changed at all, even though the Cold War impacted the WARC.\(^{32}\) Experiences of that kind made Bornemann and other engineers resume their trust in the expert community and motivated them to adapt institutional arrangements to the Cold War political environment.

In the meantime, Bornemann climbed up in the German administration’s internal hierarchy and was put into a position to shape European Integration in the telecommunication sector. Being an expert for international telecommunication issues Bornemann was appointed as German representative in the Spaak-Committee that discussed the founding of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1955/56.\(^{33}\) In the Spaak-Committee’s sub-committee for transport and ptt Bornemann and some of his engineer colleagues, which were also appointed by their governments as representatives, were in a key position to influence the decision about a supranational European organisation or a supranational European policy

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\(^{32}\) Personal correspondance of Helmut Bornemann between 1945 and 1949, Bundesarchiv Koblenz, B257/20556.

for telecommunications. In the Spaak-Committee they tried everything to prevent the supranational EEC from entering the telecommunication sector as this was a potential threat for the basic elements of the ‘standardization culture’ and for the independency of engineers.\(^\text{34}\) Engineers like Bornemann rejected everything that seemed to be incompatible with the ‘standardization culture’. That they succeeded in founding the CEPT instead depended on the expert communities shared interests, their unanimous pleading for the traditional way of regulating and standardizing technology and the fact that the majority of governments saw no reason for a fundamental change as long as the output of the experts’ regulation and standardization satisfied their needs.\(^\text{35}\)

Just a year later Bornemann was appointed, due to his expertise and international contacts, as coordinator for all German activities regarding international telecommunications. He still played an active part in the CCIs and became chairman for the CEPT’s working group for telephony in 1959. In that position, Bornemann not only headed the establishment of the intercontinental switching telephone exchange but also established the traditional style of ‘expert governance’ – along the lines of the standardization culture – within the CEPT.\(^\text{36}\) Needless to mention that Bornemann in his leading position guided young German engineers like Rudolf Binz into the expert community.

In 1963 Bornemann finally crowned his career as secretary of state in the German ministry for postal and telecommunications. This was a remarkable step for an engineer and their expert community as a whole because their way of regulating and standardizing telecommunication infrastructures and equipment – the standardization culture – arrived at the highest political level.

To sum up, the example of Helmut Bornemann demonstrates that in many key situations, when political environments changed, the individual engineers, their socialisation, their expert community and their guiding


\(^{35}\) Personal correspondance of Helmut Bornemann between 1955 and 1959, Bundesarchiv Koblenz, B257/25190.

\(^{36}\) Correspondance of Helmut Bornemann about the standardization of the intercontinental switching telephone system, Bundesarchiv Koblenz, B257/16246-16249.
norms were central issues for the maintenance and expansion of expert governance in the engineering arena.

V. Analysis

Empirical research on the expert community in the international telecommunication sector gives us a number of interesting insights into transnational expertise and expert communities. A key element is the relation between (engineering) expertise and the expert community’s mode of operation. Expertise as we have seen has been an important element for the community, however, it doesn’t explain the community’s emergence, stability and the output of its activities in all its facets. Expertise as an engineer was primarily a prerequisite for the community. It was a necessary but not a sufficient condition. The components of the expert community of telecommunication engineers exceed a simple sharing of knowledge and thus, exceeded other cases of professional networks like the ‘communities of practice’\(^{37}\) or the ‘advocacy networks’\(^{38}\). Over that, if these communities or networks are viewed from the perspective of decision-making power the telecommunication engineers and their expert community are even more outstanding, as they did not only influence political decision-makers but were rather ‘de facto’ decision-makers by themselves. The following analysis will, therefore, put into focus the internal and external dimension of the expert community as well as the interdependencies of actors and institutions in a historical perspective. Bornemann himself in the introductory quote implicitly pointed into this direction when he wrote to the technical department: “Years of active participation and experience” were necessary to “work successfully in this field.”

a) The internal dimension of the expert community

Besides having the professional education of a telecommunication engineer, three interdependent and partially overlapping elements that shaped

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the internal structure of the expert community turned out to be crucial: socialisation, trust and habitus.

(1) Socialisation was an important aspect for internal community building. In the process of socialisation, the actors internalised the ‘standardisation culture’ and redefined their preferences in a way that national objectives and transnational technological efficiency became amalgamated. Following a definition by Checkel, socialisation in that context means not just a process in which “an actor requires the knowledge that is necessary to play his role” in a given community irrespective of his personal attitude but a process in which “the actor adopts the interests and the identity of a community being convinced that he is doing ‘the right thing’.” The case of Helmut Bornemann illustrates, that engineers were socialised within an institutional arrangement of the ITU (administrative conferences and CCIs) and so became intimate with it and the general rules of behaviour. Engineers like Bornemann internalised the ‘standardization culture’ and then shaped the process of institutional development by going back to their own dispositions. The relocations of the negotiations at World Administrative Radio Conferences into the sub-committees or the founding and functioning of the CEPT demonstrate the engineers’ role in the shaping of institutional arrangements. Engineers strove to protect the previously internalized institutional arrangements and found a cognitive embedding in these arrangements. They were convinced to do ‘the right thing’ even within a changing environment.

(2) In the telecommunication expert community, the individual members developed a kind of interpersonal trust, which strengthened the ingroup feeling within the expert community. They did so because community members reciprocated trusty behaviour. In his works on social identity Tanis has already elaborated that “reciprocity expectations may be created by interpersonal perceptions of trustworthiness or a shared group membership.” Even in the case of telecommunication engineers interpersonal trust among community members resulted in a shared social identity and a generalized expectation that the members of the community operated reliably at different times and in different situations. Having

more trust in their foreign engineer counterparts across Europe than in their own national ministries of foreign affairs made the engineers’ expert community truly transnational.

(3) The community members were held together by a kind of ‘engineer habitus’ which in the sense of Bourdieu\(^{41}\) must be regarded as a system of embodied dispositions about the perception of telecommunication regulation and standardization. This ‘engineer habitus’ was built around the acceptance of the ‘standardization culture’. Consequently, the experts shared the perception of telecommunication as being above all a technical matter that should foster technical progress under the precondition of maintenance of national monopolies. Non-technical impact of telecommunication standardization was valued as second-class. A sharing of the described dispositions served as a ticket to the expert community even for representatives of the industry. The community provided an opportunity to negotiate standards unaffected by non-engineer actors and their differing interest. Of course, non-engineers hardly had a chance to enter but even engineers which didn’t share the ‘standardization culture’ and its particular mixture of national objectives and transnational technological efficiency hardly entered. The individual members had a distinctive feeling against non-engineers and preferred to discuss telecommunication matters among like-minded engineers. Therefore, they sub-divided the administrative conferences into a political and an engineering arena.

b) The external dimension of the expert community

If the community is placed within its external conditions two crucial aspects have to be emphasised: the acceptance of the expert community by the national authorities and the ability of the community to adjust the surrounding institutional arrangements to changing political environments. Since the 19\(^{th}\) century, the expert community was accepted by the political authorities as a legitimated regulator and standard-setter for international telecommunication networks because the national equipment industry made high profits on national monopoly markets and the telecommunication networks grew constantly up to the 1970s making telecommunication services available for the economy and the society. As long as nobody

Christian Henrich-Franke

complained about the policy outcome, the governments had no reasons to question or cut the community’s power. Political authorities already in the 19th century concluded a ‘tacit political agreement’ with the engineers that enabled the expert community to standardize and regulate international telecommunications independently as long as national political objectives were not violated. Being capable of negotiating standards against the background of Cold War political tensions gave the engineers and their expert community additional credit and legitimacy. Governments not even stepped in when the expert community adjusted the institutional arrangement to changing environments. The case of the telecommunication engineers’ expert community is a remarkable case as the experts were subsequently made to ‘de facto’ decision-makers on policy outcomes and processes of institutional change by withdrawing political authorities.

c) The historical developments

The paper has shown numerous interdependencies between actors and institutions, which were an important factor for the stability of the expert community. These interdependencies can be grasped theoretically by the concept of institutional path dependency. The concept argues that outcomes at a ‘critical juncture’ trigger feedback mechanisms, which reinforce the recurrence of a particular pattern in the future. In its basic model institutional path dependencies are generated by four such mechanisms: institutional learning (socialisation), network effects on individuals (trust in persons), network effect on institutions (trust in institutional arrangements) and specific investments in institutions, technology, capital etc. All these factors played – as we have seen – a key role for the stability of the expert community and the outcomes of its activities. In the 19th century, the ITU has brought a particular style of regulation and standardization, which was chosen at a critical juncture in the interwar. The creation of the CCIs was the final ‘lock in’ into an institutional path that lead to a permanent reinforcement of that particular pattern. Viewed from that perspective, the adoptions of the pattern in the contexts of the Cold War and

European Integration must be seen as the result of feedback mechanisms. While the engineers in the expert community were shaped by the institutions, they themselves shaped the institutions when they directed the process of institutional change.

To understand expert communities like that of telecommunication engineers forces us to go back to their origins and trace their coming into being stepwise. The concept of institutional path dependencies offers helpful tools to understand and explain their development.

VI. A final remark

The case of the telecommunication engineers’ expert community has shown that besides transnationally shared expertise social factors (socialisation, trust and habitus) as well as historical trajectories are crucial to understand the functioning and the policy output of expert communities. Further studies on transnational expertise and expert communities should elaborate on these aspects. Nevertheless, the basic requirement was the acceptance of that style of governance by the national political authorities. It is important to underline that experts were able to regulate and standardize international telecommunications independently as long as the authorities were satisfied by the policy outcomes.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, the engineers and their expert community became pressurized. European equipment companies increasingly lagged behind their US and Japanese competitors on the growing global markets for digital telecommunications. In Europe, the independent regulation and standardization of telecommunications no longer satisfied the political needs. This made the political authorities cancel the ‘tacit political agreement’ with the engineers. Especially neoliberal economists charged the monopoly administrations and their cartels with the industry of the decrease of the innovation potential in Europe. This finally made the European Commission to enforce a liberalisation of European telecommunications markets and a break-up of the ptt administrations’ monopolies in 1987. In that context, also the institutional arrangements of ITU and CEPT were substantially rearranged. In how far this influenced expert governance and the expert community is a story to be told elsewhere.
References


Engineering expertise and the regulation of international telecommunications


Expertise as social practice: The Special Procedures at the UN Human Rights Council and the individual construction of experts

Ingvild Bode

Who counts as an expert and their associated potential for influencing international policy processes increasingly concerns International Relations (IR) scholars. Interestingly, what constitutes ‘expertise’ appears to make further conceptual exploration superfluous: Clearly, experts are actors endowed with sophisticated technical or operational knowledge that becomes the basis for their relevance in international politics. Being an expert is the actor-inherent, essentially static characteristic they bring to the process. Working with this assumption, scholars have focused on the particular conditions making experts more or less crucial, identifying explanatory factors such as issue-framing, networks, epistemic communities, and consensual knowledge.¹

Yet, scholars with an interest in practice theories have begun to question this starting point by considering the social construction of expertise as a process.² Rather than considering expertise as an exogenous quality actors possess before they enter policy-making, expertise is seen as produced in practice, making the particular dynamics of this process an object of study. Despite practice theories’ interest in the micro level,³ experts and


3  e.g. A. Leander, and O. Waever (2015) “Conflict Expertise: Competing Knowledges/Heterogeneous Experts.” (Giardini Naxos), p. 3.
contesting claims of expertise are mostly examined at the group/collective level. This article examines the practical construction of expertise at the individual level, completing practice theories’ move to the micro level.\textsuperscript{4}

I argue that individuals come to be considered as experts by way of two practical construction processes combining formal and situational components. First, individuals need to possess qualifications, professional and educational trajectories deemed sufficient to warrant the ‘expert’ label by a relevant social group. This formal component of ‘expertise’ is therefore still not exogenously given but the outcome of a practical process of attribution and recognition. Second, individuals are further constructed as experts if they are intersubjectively recognized as competent performers of their practices. Their recognized competence or expertise is then the outcome of whether they are situationally able to instantiate relevant professional and social experiences. In other words, if individuals are able to select the ‘right’ practices to perform in particular settings, allowing them to activate relevant parts of their social and professional backgrounds, they are recognized as experts.

These arguments are exploratively used to compare Special Procedures mandate-holders reporting to the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC). Given the official status that comes with their role, IR literature counts them as experts upon entering the process: “The Special Procedures […] entitle experts to exchange information, receive individual complaints, visit countries and submit reports on a particular human right or on human rights in a particular context.”\textsuperscript{5} But, as I will demonstrate, their recognition as experts is constructed in formal terms and produced by how competently they are seen to perform practices.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows: I summarize different perspectives on expertise and outline first, how the constructions of expertise is the outcome of social practices as opposed to exogenously given and second, how this process of construction should be taken to and works at the individual level. Third, I give a brief introduction to the HRC’s Special Procedures system and illustrate how both a particular ver-


sion of expertise is formally constructed in their selection as well as contingent on how competently they are able to perform their practices as mandate-holders. I conclude with summarizing in this argument and pointing to avenues for future research.

I. The practical construction of expertise

Expertise is typically represented in two analytical variations in IR literature: as real or substantive prior to ‘expert’ actors entering social interaction or as attributed and relational. The former perspective has been prominent in IR literature on epistemic communities, for example, that locates the creation of expertise outside the political process. If expertise within these communities is consensual, is based on scientific knowledge and comes with clear suggestions for appropriate political action, they are likely to exert influence on processes of policy evolution. Uncontested scientific expertise is therefore cast as positive and must be given before ‘experts’ have a chance to enter the political process successfully. Comparable claims are made about non-governmental organizations whose role is reliant on their provision of on-the-ground, expert knowledge and their status as ‘experts’ in particular policy fields. These studies thereby take the claim of expertise or the acquisition of expertise for granted and focus on the parameters of the unfolding political processes.

Critical studies contest this exogenous quality of expertise, instead considering expertise as endogenous to political and social processes and therefore essentially attributed. This has two effects: first, expertise ceases to be an agent-based or even agents-based quality but is only valid when socially affirmed. Expertise is therefore not an essential quality that people have when entering the political process that is based on their previous knowledge or experiences. Rather, it is negotiated and ascribed,

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7 Haas, *Introduction*.
8 Keck, and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*.
10 Berling, and Bueger, *Security Expertise*.
making expertise contingent. Second, following this logic, the public sphere becomes the stage for competing expert (and knowledge) claims and expertise itself is contested. The recognition of actors as experts therefore does not necessarily follow from superior technical-factual knowledge but from the privileged positions they occupy within hierarchical international relations, as critical studies on interventions and peacebuilding argue. In this sense, expertise is a process to be studied rather than a cause.

Following this critical tradition, I examine expertise as a procedural outcome. But rather than considering it only as attributed by others, I argue that qualities inherent to the agent remain important. In other words, there are two dimensions to constructing expertise: an agent-based dimension through which experts are associated with substantive cognitive attributes, skills and insights/knowledge and a second, procedural dimension that happens through the interaction of agents with these particular attributes in a social context then generates their expert status. While agent-based qualities are therefore important, which qualities are considered to be relevant qualities experts should have, depend on intersubjective recognition.

Studying the social construction of expertise as a process lends itself to practice theories, which have gained ground in ontologically and epistemologically diverse ways within IR. Practices are patterned action in so-


13 Leander, and Waeve, Conflict Expertise, p. 11.

cision that allow us to study how constructions and power relations are made, reified or change by considering the micro level. In studying practices, the processes sustaining and therefore constituting international relations become the centre of analytical attention. In addition, practice theories also offer an interesting take on the agency-structure debate. Rather than being attached to agency or structure, practices are their meeting point: they are the product of agentic qualities instantiated through actions and utterances performed within a social context/structure that may be conducive or restrictive. This maps well onto the two dimensions of constructing expertise outlined above: Through the lens of practice theories, expertise is neither a purely agent-based quality existing a priori and exogenously nor something that exists through attribution only but emerges out of how agents perform practices.

This understanding of practice and therefore expertise lends itself to study at the individual level. Yet, this is a clear gap for practice theories: Despite their focus on the micro level and their interest in "the innovativeness of reflexive agents", practice scholars tend to analytically bypass whether and how it matters which individuals perform practices. Notwithstanding their bridge-building potential, practice theorists therefore arguably fall on the 'attribution only' side of studying expertise, as Pouliot illustrates: "practices are social possessions and their skilful performance has to be recognized by a community of reference". Varying competence in performing practices is embedded in the very definition of the concept: "practices are competent performances". But the differential recognition of a competent practice and therefore the social recognition of expertise also depends on particular qualities of the performing individual, which

can be instantiated reflectively. This is an important aspect widely neglected in IR practice theories.

Particular individuals are thus more or less likely to engage in practices that are intersubjectively recognized as competent and therefore become recognized as experts because of their personalities. Assessments of competence then depend on whether performers combine ‘fitting’ socialization experiences which enable them to communicate appropriately with relevant actors. Personality, based on a sociological understanding, therefore incorporates an individual’s varied socialization experiences across social and professional settings. If individuals encounter social situations that are comparable to what they have experienced in the past, they are more likely to be recognized as competent performers and therefore as experts.

Bourdieuian practice theories, a widespread variant of practice theories, can often not account for individual differences as Bourdieu’s work portrayed individual socialisation as largely class-based and therefore homogeneous. Following Bourdieu read non-critically, non-reflective individuals habitually perform practices based on their background knowledge. My argument, by contrast, builds on sociologist Bernard Lahire who acknowledges individuals to have plural socialisations, giving them the ability to choose deliberatively whether to instantiate varied socialisation experiences. This can account for variation in how different individuals are recognized as competent performers and therefore as ‘experts’.

The following section offers an overview of the Special Procedures system at the Human Rights Council before considering the practical construction of expertise across formal and situational levels.

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II. Special Procedures at the Human Rights Council through a Practice-oriented Agency-Structure Lens

Independent human rights specialists investigating thematic or country-specific mandates to inform and advise member states have long been a feature of the UN Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and its successor, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). These so-called Special Procedures are either filled by Working Groups or by individual mandate-holders occupying special rapporteur or independent expert positions.26 There are differences between nominating an independent expert or a special rapporteur with the former deemed a weaker, advisory rather than a scrutiny mechanism.27 All Special Procedures mandate-holders fulfil their mandates on a voluntary, unsalaried and part-time basis, while they receive some administrative support from the Special Procedures branch at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

As of January 2017, there are 57 Special Procedures reporting to the Human Rights Council (table 1). Historically, country-specific mandates came first, starting with an ad hoc Working Group on the situation of human rights in Southern Africa (1967), while thematic mandates commenced in 1980 with the Working Group on Disappearances.28 Both types of mechanisms have increased since the early 1990s and were recognized as constituting a system of human rights protection at the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights.29

28 Ibid., pp. 49–50.
Table 1: Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council as of November 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Working groups</strong> (6)</th>
<th>6 with thematic mandates, e.g. on arbitrary detention, on enforced and involuntary Disappearances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special rapporteurs</strong> (39)</td>
<td>31 with thematic mandates, e.g. right to education; extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; independence of judges and lawyers; rights of indigenous people; human rights of migrants; right to privacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 with country mandates, e.g. situation of human rights in Belarus; situation of human rights in Cambodia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent experts</strong> (12)</td>
<td>6 with thematic mandates, e.g. human rights of person with albinism; human rights by older persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 with country mandates, e.g. situation of human rights in Haiti; situation of human rights in Sudan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total # Special Procedures</strong>:</td>
<td><strong>57</strong></td>
</tr>
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When it comes to the performance of individual mandate-holders, the work and impact of these Special Procedures is understudied in IR literature with most scholars pursuing an overall assessment of development, scope, impact, or potential reform of the Special Procedures system, as


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well as assessing particular mandates. This latter category also includes reflections written by (former) special rapporteurs. In a 2014 assessment of the Special Procedures, Limon and Piccone identified six structural determinants of influence: (1) independence and accountability; (2) expertise and standing; (3) flexibility, reach and accessibility; (4) cooperation; (5) implementation and follow-up; (6) availability of resources and support. However, while these are conceptualized as structural, how they map out in practice arguably depends on the individual mandate-holders and “the various tools that mandate-holders use to exert that influence at a practical level.” In other words, mandate-holders’ capacity to exert influence de-


35 Ibid. The reason for this focus on structural determinants may be found in the policy-focus of the study conducted by Limon and Piccone. Their declared aim is to highlight "the importance of strengthening the structural determinants of influence of Special Procedures” which comes across as the “more doable” proposal as opposed to including personality screening. Ibid., p. 3.
pends on how well they are able to instantiate their personal qualities in context.

Some studies demonstrate the analytical and empirical potential of going to the individual level: putting the human dimension of the Special Procedures at the centre of her research, Naples-Mitchell inductively examines three key fault lines special rapporteurs are navigating in their position which have to be ‘resolved’ at the individual level. Some mandate-holders, such as Ben Emmerson (special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism) have received much public and media attention and anecdotal evidence suggests that individual mandate-holders greatly vary in terms of how they exercise their mandates: “[…] it remains clear that even the strongest mandate stands and falls with the choice of the individual”. These observations make them interesting subjects of study for the (individual-level) construction of expertise.

The subsequent sections look at this process in more detail by considering how their expertise is constructed through practices at two different levels - formal and situational. Both levels bring together a different set of actors looking for different things as constituting expertise – therefore, the construction of expertise happens according to different expectations expressed in practices. First, in formal terms, I examine practices surrounding the selection process for mandate-holders. At this level, individuals are screened on the basis of professional and educational qualifications. Selection practices for Special Procedures were reformed in 2005 in order to increase the “quality” and depoliticize the process. As I argue, however, this did not do away with the construction of expertise, which works with implicit definitions privileging particular elite academic (and professional) institutions.

Second, the formal process of selecting an ‘expert’ mandate-holder has little immediate relevance for the situational level of constructing expertise. The situational level refers to the construction of expertise ‘on the job’, in situations where Special Procedures mandate-holders attempt to perform competent practices. Elite educational credentials may matter less for competent performance than they do for formal selection. Actors inter-


37 Hoehne, Special Procedures and the New Human Rights Council, p. 52.
acting with mandate-holders may look for a very different set of experiences and forms of communication than those engaged with formal selection – thereby putting different demands on the selected mandate-holder. In order to be recognized as competent performers of practices, and therefore as experts, individual mandate-holders therefore have to appeal to actors with varying interests at two different levels.

Apart from considering the current (January 2017) Special Procedures mandate-holders as a group in the construction of formal expertise, I will also illustrate the individual construction of expertise at the formal and the situational level with the case of Francis Deng. Deng was Representative of the Secretary-General (RSG) for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from 1992-2004, reporting to the Commission on Human Rights. During his tenure, Deng managed to both raise assistance and protection expectations for the internally displaced and contribute to legal change in the area through the competent performance of practices.

III Selecting ‘experts’: Constructing expertise in the selection process of Special Procedures mandate-holders

The major objective of the Special Procedures system is to appoint human rights specialists, in other words ‘experts’, who are then charged with verifying, promoting and expanding human rights protection in focus areas. Selecting the ‘right’ personnel for these positions in terms of qualifications and experiences should therefore be a given. However, during the time of the CHR, this selection process was “somewhat inscrutable, perhaps even byzantine”: appointments were decided by the CHR Chair after consulting with members of the CHR bureau including representatives of the UN’s five regional groups. The process was not subject to any formal criteria apart from concerns for geographical representation. Selection

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39 The mandate has since been changed to a ‘typical’ special rapporteur mandate.

40 Pinheiro, Musings of a UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, p. 7.
sometimes came as a surprise to the envisaged appointees themselves.\textsuperscript{41} Philip Alston, later a special rapporteur himself, characterized the selection of Special Procedures as “quintessentially political […] which does little to ensure expertise and competence.”\textsuperscript{42} The selection focus tended towards political acceptability rather than suitability.\textsuperscript{43} This question of who gets to count as an expert continues to persist after selection – and even once the special procedures selection process had been reformed with the creation of the Human Rights Council, as I will demonstrate later on.

In 2005, the HRC introduced more transparency and competition into selecting mandate-holders.\textsuperscript{44} There are now six general eligibility criteria (expertise, experience in the field of the mandate, independence, impartiality, personal integrity, objectivity)\textsuperscript{45} and four technical and objective requirements (qualifications, relevant expertise, established competence, flexibility/readiness and availability of time).\textsuperscript{46} Nominations can come from governments, regional groups, international and national non-governmental as well as intergovernmental organizations and the individuals themselves, while all applicants have to complete a comprehensive application form. The Consultative Group, composed of five representatives from the UN’s regional group serving in their personal capacities, compiles a short list of eligible candidates “who possess the highest qualifications for the mandates in question and meet the general criteria and particular requirements”.\textsuperscript{47} Candidates are then interviewed and their potential appointment is also discussed with other UN stakeholders, such as


\textsuperscript{43} Pinheiro, \textit{Musings of a UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights}, p. 8; Gutter, \textit{Special Procedures and the Human Rights Council}, p. 94.


\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., para. 39.


the current mandate-holder. As this overview of the process demonstrates, expertise is assumed to be something that appointees *bring* to the job, something that actually qualifies them for appointment.

However, it is enlightening to consider the criteria constituting ‘formal’ expertise in some more depth. To do this, I compared all current (January 2017) individual Special Procedures mandate-holders\(^{48}\) in terms of their current and previous professional positions as well as their education (table 2) through consulting their completed application forms, published on the OHCHR’s website starting with HRC session 18 (September 2011). This procedure generated detailed data for 46 Special Procedures mandate-holders.\(^{49}\)

**Table 2: Current and former positions of Special Procedures mandate-holders (January 2017)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Current position</th>
<th>Former positions(^{50})</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>29 [63%]</td>
<td>14 [30.4%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International/national NGO</td>
<td>8 [17.4%]</td>
<td>15 [32.6%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental/ domestic political position</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18 [39.1%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International organisations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20 [43.4%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>4 [8.7%]</td>
<td>6 [13%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other(^{51})</td>
<td>5 [10.9%]</td>
<td>3 [6.5%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total #</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 points to a number of interesting observations: first, the majority of mandate-holders hold full-time academic posts, for the most part at US-American or European universities. Second, more than a third of mandate-holders have professional careers that covered the three UN dimensions, e.g. they have occupied academic but also governmental positions. The

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48 This therefore excludes specialists serving in Working Groups.
49 There were no application forms for four mandate-holders and my own research only provided incomplete information on their educational and professional trajectories. In addition, one Special Procedures mandate (right to development) has been newly created and is therefore still vacant as of January 2017.
50 Various mandate-holders have professional experiences in more than one setting.
51 This category includes retired personnel, one medical doctor, and judges.
image of the three United Nations\textsuperscript{52} recognizes the UN as a "social environment";\textsuperscript{53} characterized by "significant interaction" between diplomats (first UN), UN officials (second UN), and NGO representatives and independent experts (third UN).\textsuperscript{54} In many instances, individual mandate-holders combine professional experiences and therefore socialisation across several UNs. For example, the career of Dr Karima Bennoune, special rapporteur for cultural rights, has so far covered stages as a legal adviser for amnesty international, as a consultant for UNESCO and her current role as a professor of international law. The prevalence of mandate-holders whose professional careers covered several backgrounds suggests a diverse approach as to what counts as professional ‘expertise’ in a formal way – while illustrating the relevance of gathering experience across professional settings in order to be considered an ‘expert’ in formal terms within the UN system.

Moreover, figure 1 suggests that Special-Procedures mandate-holders are comparatively well distributed in terms of their regional backgrounds, while the Western Europe and Others (16) and the African group (11) have most mandate-holders. Yet, the group of mandate-holders is less diverse than these numbers suggest if one considers where they completed their university education. Out of 46 mandate-holders, 39 [84.8\%] studied for degrees at European and US-American universities, while only 7 [15.2\%] completed their degrees entirely in their countries of origin. Western ‘elite’ universities, such as the University of Oxford or Yale University, are further represented disproportionately on the CVs of mandate-holders. This illustrates an interesting, institutional twist in the social construction of expertise in formal terms: certain institutions are clearly deemed more valid in terms of recognizing and awarding expert status than others. If individual applicants have studied at these institutions, rather than others, they appear to be more likely to be recognized as experts in a formal sense in a Western context. The presence of 7 mandate-holders

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
with degrees exclusive to their developing countries of origin suggests that an expert recognition outside of Western education is possible. But it comes across as more difficult – not least because mandate-holders trajectories display an inclination to study at Western institutions due to their privileged financial and reputational hierarchical positions.

*Figure 1: Mandate-holders according to regional groups*

This points to a hierarchical tendency in the construction of formal expertise reminiscent of Bourdieu’s writing on the distribution of cultural capital and the reproduction of social inequalities.⁵⁵ Cultural capital refers to embodied cultural competences, education and qualifications, frequently institutionalized in educational degrees.⁵⁶ Individuals may be “endowed” with various types of capital, such as cultural capital, which serves as a contextual legitimation.⁵⁷ Connecting the possession of capital to an unequal distribution of opportunities, Bourdieu notes how an individual’s potential to achieve societal success is tied to their appropriation with capital, with varying combinations of capital being relevant in different societal fields: “the unequal distribution of capital is the source of the specific

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⁵⁷ Bode, *Individual Agency and Policy Change at the UN*, p. 36.
effects of capital”. The data on Special Procedures indicates that certain types of embodied cultural capital, e.g. higher education titles from European and US-American universities, are acknowledged to be particularly relevant when recognizing the formal ‘expertise’ of mandate-holders. Francis Deng’s case illustrates this point: born in Sudan, he completed his undergraduate education at Khartoum University but went on to study for an MA and a PhD at Yale University. This points to a problematic notion of institutional hierarchy within the UN system as it implies that higher education institutions situated in developing/non-Western countries are not attributed with the same value in constructing who gets to count as an ‘expert’ in formal terms.

Apart from these inequalities, the potential performance of mandate-holders once in office – and tied to it their ‘recognition’ as ‘experts’ – also depends on financial assets. Mandate-holders may be criticized for their passive approach to the office or their “inactivity” – which may have more to do with the lack of financial resources rather than their (personal) unsuitability for the task. As Special Procedures are unpaid and only receive limited administrative support, they depend on external financial support in order to fill their mandates in any decisive shape or form. As Naples Mitchell notes, “the OHCHR itself should be more attentive to the resource inequities among mandate-holders when determining how many staff members to assign to a mandate”. As it stands, the present system has two further consequences for the practical construction of expertise: first, it affects, in terms of self-selection, who even applies for the Special Procedures. Only a particular type of person, who either has a well-paid position they can retain as a mandate-holder or has personal financial assets to sustain themselves, can apply. This accounts for the high number of mandate-holders occupying full-term academic positions at European or US-American universities or research institutions: 21 out of 46 mandate-holders are employed at US or European academic or research institutions, often as full professors. Francis Deng’s example underlines this point: at the time of his appointment, Deng was based at the Brookings Institution which specifically created the Project on Internal Displacement in 1994 to comprehensively support Deng’s work. The various regional and country workshops to discuss and develop the Guiding Principles on Internal Dis-

59 Naples-Mitchell, Perspectives of UN Special Rapporteurs on Their Role, p. 243.
placement, Deng’s most important legacy, were thus co-sponsored by Brookings.

Obviously, this system leaves out many interesting applicants who would otherwise be qualified for the position. This is problematic in terms of the construction of expertise as it leads to a particular, circumscribed picture of who counts as experts in the eyes of the Human Rights Council: a Western-educated individual with the financial means not only to sustain themselves but also to invest in the successful performance of their mandate.

**IV. The situational construction of expertise**

Putting the ‘formal’ expertise of potential mandate holders to the foreground was aimed at distancing the HRC from its ‘politicized’ predecessor and limit member state interference. But the preceding section has demonstrated that recognizing expertise in formal terms comes with its own set of problematic assumptions. It remains part of how expertise is practically constructed.

Moreover, the challenges inherent to making the Special Procedures mandate-holders perform in fulfilment of their objectives do not disappear with changing appointment practices: “after all, human rights is still politics and the implementation of human rights is not a politically neutral process that can be approached in an entirely legalistic, bureaucratic and scientific (rational) manner”.

In other words, who is accepted and constituted as an expert among the mandate-holders cannot be separated from whether their practical performance across situations is assessed to be competent.

Successful mandate holders rely on maintaining good working relations with a range of different actors within the UN system, including member states. Their repertoire of “routine transmissions, urgent appeals, on-site visits, and annual reports” depend on whether they are able to gather first-hand information and sustain member state cooperation. This means, for example, securing invitations for country visits. A group of 117 member states and one observer state have issued standing invitations for UN

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61 Ibid., p. 99.
special rapporteurs\textsuperscript{62} – but for the remaining member states, invitations have to be negotiated and their visit has to be organized by governmental authorities.

At the same time, mandate-holders’ capacity to perform also relies on building a close, mandate-specific network with relevant UN civil servants and non-governmental organizations, especially due to the lack of financial resources tied to the mandates. In other words, Special Procedures mandate holders rely on building networks and communicating appropriately with actors across the three United Nations. As the previous section illustrated, this more diverse socialisation has become recognized as something of a prerequisite in the construction of formal expertise.

Creating impact by becoming recognized as an expert, i.e. a competent performer of practices, within this setting therefore cannot only be tied to communicating with member states. There is always a balance to be found between giving a voice to those subject to human rights abuses, negotiating access and behaving in a way that is not perceived as over-stepping their mandate. This is a contingent process, depending on the specific individual in question, and on how well their past experiences equip them with the skill to respond adequately to the social demands connected to their special situation as mandate holders.

Francis Deng’s case provides an illustration of these contingencies. As Deng’s social trajectory shows, he gathered social experiences across all three UN dimensions prior to his appointment as RSG. Notably, he worked as a human rights officer at the UN Secretariat, as an ambassador for his native Sudan, and for US-American based think tanks such as the Woodrow Wilson Centre for International Scholars and Brookings.\textsuperscript{63} Having been socialized into these different environments equipped him with the skills to communicate appropriately with actors across the three UN dimensions and therefore be recognized as an expert – that is as a competent performer of practices. His overall impact as a Special Procedures mandate-holder is therefore tied to his plural socialization, which is inherent to his practical construction as an expert.

Looking at this practical process of constructing expertise is enlightening as it points to its contingency. Despite Deng’s plural socialization,


\textsuperscript{63} Bode, \textit{Individual Agency and Policy Change at the UN}, p. 110.
there was contestation about whether his overall style was a competent performance of his role as a Special Procedures mandate-holder. These diverging assessments of competence can be read as contestation over whether Deng was to be considered an ‘expert’, building on the assumption that ‘experts’ would know how to behave appropriately. Diverging recognitions of competence derive from the different UN dimensions’ assumptions of what mandate-holders should do and how they should behave, with many human rights NGOs favouring a more confrontative approach with regard to ‘deviant’ governments, while member states favourable of the Special Procedures point to the need of maintaining dialogue in order to be effective.

Deng pursued his mandate in a decidedly non-confrontational style:

The choice is, if you take a typical human rights approach, which is to name and shame and shout from the mountain top, be confrontational, most governments won’t even allow you in. And if they allow you in, then it’s also mostly confrontation. And, to me, what was important was, if you had access to a country in a constructive way, you would be in a position to look at the conditions of the internally displaced, and be in a position to engage the government constructively, linking protection with assistance. […] If you can make the government feel that they will actually benefit from doing the right thing – why not? Why antagonize something that would benefit no one?64

The value of Deng’s approach was echoed by friendly member states, such as Austria, with whom Deng worked closely in promoting the cause of the internally displaced at the Commission on Human Rights.65 Moreover, Deng managed to receive invitations to visit twenty-two countries with major internal displacement problems throughout his tenure, convincing some initially reluctant member states, such as Turkey and Russia, to allow visits.66 At the same time, some third UN actors, in particular representatives of human rights NGO, criticized Deng for not being tough enough in confronting governments with their shortcomings when it came

64 F. Deng (2012) Interview with the author on his time as RSG for internally displaced persons, May 1, 2012 (New York).
65 C. Strohal (2012) Interview with the author on Francis Deng and Internal Displacement (Geneva).
66 Bode, Individual Agency and Policy Change at the UN, p. 114.
to protecting the human rights of the internally displaced.\textsuperscript{67} Other third UN actors, however, considered Deng’s approach to the mandate as productive and competent.\textsuperscript{68} In practical terms, these differences highlight contestation on the expert status of Deng as a mandate-holder, with actors across different UN dimensions, in this case human rights NGOs and member states, harbouring varying ideas about what competent behaviour of human rights experts looks like in filling out their mandate. Deng’s positive track record during his term as RSG for internally displaced persons speaks for an overall recognition of his expert status, but rather than seeing this construction of expertise as a chronological, constant process, the performance of his practices indicates contestation and continuous fault lines.

V. Conclusion

Rather than treating expertise as an exogenous quality actors hold before they enter international political processes, this article considered what it means to be an expert a matter of social construction. Based on international practice theories, I have examined how expertise is constituted in formal and situational terms through micro moves, paying particular attention to the individual level. Individuals are constituted as experts when they are intersubjectively recognized as competent performers of practices. Assessments on their competence are made both formally, through assessing relevant educational and professional qualifications, and situationally, through considering whether individuals enact and perform context-appropriate practices.

I compared how the ‘expertise’ of current (January 2017) Special Procedures mandate-holders at the UN Human Rights Council is constructed both in formal and situational terms and used the case of Francis Deng, representative of the Secretary-General (RSG) for internally displaced persons, to protect the human rights of the internally displaced.\textsuperscript{67} Other third UN actors, however, considered Deng’s approach to the mandate as productive and competent.\textsuperscript{68} In practical terms, these differences highlight contestation on the expert status of Deng as a mandate-holder, with actors across different UN dimensions, in this case human rights NGOs and member states, harbouring varying ideas about what competent behaviour of human rights experts looks like in filling out their mandate. Deng’s positive track record during his term as RSG for internally displaced persons speaks for an overall recognition of his expert status, but rather than seeing this construction of expertise as a chronological, constant process, the performance of his practices indicates contestation and continuous fault lines.


\textsuperscript{68} Weiss, and Korn, \textit{Internal Displacement}, p. 35.
persons from 1992-2004, as an individual example. The brief empirical study of Special Procedures mandate-holders only served to illustrate the practical construction of expertise. Developing a more comprehensive understanding of the process would necessitate gathering more data on the wider social and family backgrounds of mandate-holders as well as selection practices, e.g. through participant observation.

On the formal level, this comparison showed a hierarchical element to the construction of Special Procedures expertise in that Western educational credentials and positioning are apparently deemed crucial in selection practices. On a situational level, individual performances have to speak to actors across the three UN dimensions, that is appear appropriate to diplomats, UN officials and NGO representatives, in order to be recognized as competent. Individuals who have been professionally socialized into different UN backgrounds should be more likely to be recognized as experts in this setting if they are able to instantiate their plural socialization in varying ways. The case of Francis Deng also demonstrated that this is not an easy process as actors across the three UN dimensions have different expectations of what competent behaviour worthy of being called ‘expert’ is. Negotiating expertise on the situational level can therefore not be considered absolute but is constantly in motion.

Studying expertise as a procedural outcome that is often negotiated at the individual level brings two analytical benefits: first, by including individual variety we can account for often contingent situations of change. Second, it highlights that what counts as expertise is different among international stakeholders: the three UN dimensions look for and therefore come to often diverging assessments of expertise. This recognition serves to de-construct homogeneous conceptions of international organizations. While this contribution focused on the HRC Special Procedures as an explorative case, these theoretical insights are applicable across various international and regional organizations in which interaction between member state representatives, international officials and NGO representatives and independent experts have become the norm. Further research on these processes constituting expertise is therefore required.
References


Expertise as social practice


A Dilemma of Trust in Economic Expertise – The Regulation of Financial Markets following the Financial Crisis

Carola Maria Westermeier

“The global financial crisis has revealed the need to rethink fundamentally how financial systems are regulated. It has also made clear a systemic failure of the economics profession.” This account of the financial crisis brings together two aspects that are central to this chapter. On the one hand, it identifies a widely shared – though not undisputed – appeal to rethink the governance of financial markets following the financial meltdown of 2008–09. On the other hand, it proposes a systemic failure of the profession of economists before and within the crisis. This chapter aims to investigate why economic experts took part in the (re-)regulation of financial markets, although the crisis had caused an epistemic crisis of their economic knowledge.

Before, and even more so after, the crisis, a number of studies tried to explain why “economics is the most politically influential social science” and why it has remained in this position even though the financial crisis demonstrated its limits. Economics has a special role, which can be described as a “transepistemic field” sitting between science, the economy, the state and the public. Acknowledging this special role, many accounts analyse the external dimension of economic expert authority, whereas relatively few scholars, such as Marion Fourcade, have focussed on its internal dimension. Fourcade has shown how the “global professionalization”

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1 I would like to thank Andreas Langenohl and Sebastian Giacovelli for helpful comments on this paper.


of economics is rooted in the dialectical interaction between the real economy and the profession of economics. Several studies have analysed differing characteristics of the external dimension of economic expertise and how the discipline of economics reaches its impact. Summarizing several of them, Elizabeth Popp Berman and Daniel Hirschman show that economists derive their influence foremost from two sources of power: professional authority and institutional position, i.e., the historically and geographically variable status of economics as an academic discipline, and the presence of economists in policymaking organisations and other elite networks. Economists claim the authority of an increasingly globalised economic profession that dominates within influential international organisations, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Additionally, since academic economics has spread into other studies, such as law and public policy, an “economic style of reasoning” is already prevalent among policymaking elites. Thus, economic experts influence policymakers’ thinking about problems even when policymakers do not follow their recommendations. Moreover, the process by which economists employ economic devices to frame crises limits the scope of options considered and influences how those are discussed. It also determines who can legitimately take part in the process of decision making.

These findings provide insightful examinations of why the discipline of economics maintained a special role despite the financial crisis revealing its limits. This chapter aims to add another facet to these studies describing the relation between economists and policymakers, one that has been largely overlooked in the study of economic expertise – trust.

The following analysis focuses on the specific situation during and in the direct aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008–09. As the epistemic authority of economists was challenged, other sources that contribute to the status of an expert gained importance. One of these sources is trust.

Using the work of Anthony Giddens as a starting point, I will argue that although trust in the abstract system of financial markets was lost, interpersonal trust in individual economic experts was restored.

My analysis is based on a discourse analysis of statements from relevant actors and institutions, as well as some early insights gleaned from interviews with members of expert commissions and central institutions and other participants in the financial regulation process in Germany and on the European level. These in-depth interviews were intended to generate explicit and also implicit, i.e., tacit, knowledge about how policies evolve, as well as to reveal how “experts” and policymakers explain their choices and actions. However, the study of trust is difficult and complex, and its empirical study controversial. As Diego Gambetta noted in 1988, the “pervasiveness [of trust] seems to have generated less analysis than paralysis: in the social sciences the importance of trust is often acknowledged but seldom examined, and scholars tend to mention it in passing, […] only to move on to deal with less intractable matters.”

Acknowledging the complex interlinkages of trust and other sources of expertise, this chapter does not attempt to provide a conclusive assessment, but rather to suggest that the notion of trust needs to be taken into account to explain the role of certain economists following the crisis.

This chapter focuses on Germany as a case study, links its case to the European level, and follows the order of crisis management. First, policy measures tackling the immediate effects of the financial turmoil, such as bailouts or the nationalisation of banks, were adopted on the national level. Subsequently, actions to prevent another large-scale crisis followed on the international level. Political leaders from the twenty major economies instituted the G20 leaders’ forum to manage the crisis internationally. Given that financial markets are organised and interconnected globally,
they demanded fundamental changes to financial regulation to prevent another crisis. Their commitment to international regulatory reform and the creation of the Financial Stability Board (FSB) were the first steps in the re-regulation of financial markets. The recommendations of these bodies are highly relevant for European policymakers, who are responsible for introducing coherent changes on the European level.

On a discursive level, this division of policymaking is only apparent to some degree. In the German case, it has been noted that the causes of and the responses to the crisis were constructed in differing discursive formations: One formation aims at the discourse of financial markets on a transnational level and another aims at the political discourse on a national level. Even though the political discourse on the national level addresses how the consequences of the crisis can be limited, it is not concerned with the causes of the crisis. The causes of the crisis are located outside the national state. These seemingly contradictory findings also affect the focus of this chapter, which concentrates on how German political decision makers interact with national and international experts on financial governance in order to prepare political actions. Immediate actions taken on the national level to manage the crisis also influenced long-term policy measures that were taken on a European or international level, which in turn have effects on the national level.

The analysis proceeds as follows: First, it needs to be explained why, after a long period of deregulation, political decision makers claimed their right to re-regulate markets. While financial regulation had been a domain of “low politics” before the crisis – one dominated by the transnational networks of regulators and influenced by the financial industry’s networks – during the crisis it became a central topic within “high politics”. This was the effect of a securitization of financial stability. It gave political decision makers the legitimacy to enact exceptional measures and initiate financial reform. The securitization of financial stability led to the fact that political decision makers, who had not been occupied with questions of financial regulation before, had to engage with questions of financial governance – and with experts on these topics. In the second part of this chap-


ter, the complex relationship between policymakers and experts will be addressed, focussing on the notion of trust. While several sociologists have addressed trust as a key concept in modern societies, Anthony Giddens provided an insightful analysis that connects trust and expertise. His work helps to understand how different levels of trust played a role in the situation following the crisis. Finally, I will address how, following a phase of desecuritization, the depoliticisation of the topic led to the conviction that experts should be concerned with the seemingly technical details of financial policymaking. During this phase, which ultimately determined the long-term re-regulation on a European level, members of the European Parliament demanded a new body that functions as institutionalised distrust to counter expertise offered by the financial industry.

I. The Securitization of Finance

The events that are today known as the global financial crisis did not constitute a crisis in and of themselves. As several accounts have noted, crises require recognition as such, and that recognition depends on epistemic and reflexive processes. Consequently, crises are continually shaped by the discourses that describe them. Thus, as Marieke de Goede points out, the politics of crisis do not start when politicians and experts assemble to advocate particular responses. Rather, they begin with the pre-existing economic understanding of an economically dramatic situation. Such understanding comes into being when numbers are compiled, losses measured and problems diagnosed. That is, phenomena must be “rendered into information”¹⁴, mostly by economists’ tools. The collected data are presented in the form of graphs, charts, numbers and discursive analyses. Crises responses are based on these “material givens”¹⁵, which make it possible to visualise abstract situations. The material givens bring economic reality into being and already make certain political interventions more likely than others.¹⁶ These “policy devices”¹⁷ include the tools that are employed

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to detect and visualise changes and make them concrete for use in policy-making. Well-known devices for recognising information include GDP and the unemployment rate. In addition, certain models are used to predict the effects of policy interventions. Thus, the economy is not only the object of crisis management but itself a crucial means through which crises are managed.

Already at the early stage of a crisis, when events are happening one right after the other, certain experts step forward to offer narratives of the crisis. These framings of the crisis stabilise the situation and make it “governable”. This role of economics as a way to frame and govern crises is what makes the influence of economics, and economists, in the following process of policymaking possible.

Explanations that show how economic experts gain authority within the public discourse are also applicable to the discourse on the financial crisis. However, within the public discourse on the events of the financial crisis, we also find several accounts that challenge the epistemic authority of the profession of economics. The Times claims that “Academics – and their mad theories – are to blame for the financial crisis”. We find similar thoughts within the German public discourse, especially in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, where differing views on the responsibility of economists were presented. While these public discussions challenged the epistemic authority of economists, another branch within the public discourse on the financial crisis claimed that financial markets should be more strictly controlled. Political decision makers claimed that financial systems had collapsed because they were insufficiently regulated and

thereby proved the antithesis of financial deregulation.\textsuperscript{22} Since the 1980s, the notion of financial liberalisation and deregulation have been central paradigms in the governance of financial markets. However, deregulation did not mean a complete absence of rules.\textsuperscript{23} Yet, until the financial crash, there was a dominant conviction that assumed that using market forces would limit the governance of finance to being used “as set of technical policy-making and institutional-design initiatives that, in turn, are viewed as necessary in order to promote the functioning of assumed market efficiencies”.\textsuperscript{24}

By framing financial market practices as a threat to the general welfare of the state, political decision makers gain the legitimacy to interfere in financial markets and to counter arguments about self-correcting markets. The following quotes from the German chancellor illustrate one prominent example of how the securitization of financial markets gained momentum in the course of the crisis. They are taken from a government declaration by Chancellor Angela Merkel to the German Bundestag before the parliament voted on whether to pass a bill that would “stabilise financial markets” (‘Finanzmarktstabilisierungsgesetz’). The following extracts (translated from the German speech) exemplify three main points. (1) Financial markets were identified as an important public good that needed protection. (2) This public good, the financial markets, was declared as threatened. This threat served as a reason to pass the bill as soon as possible, with Merkel’s last sentence connecting this to the threatened collective: “This [bill] is decisive for growth and employment.” (3) Finally, Merkel insisted on the state’s responsibility to restore and keep order by controlling the (financial) markets.

“The citizens of our country rely on a working financial system which ensures access to credit markets and allows risk-free savings. Our bill


serves to protect this system. Moreover, it serves the general good and common welfare. […]”

“Let me say clearly that the danger to our financial system is not banished. We urgently need to pass this bill as a requirement to calm the markets. This is decisive for economic growth and employment. […]”

“Within the last days I have said this a few times and I am going to repeat myself again: we are dealing with an excess of markets. Within a social market economy, control is the state’s duty. The state is the guardian of order. We decide on comprehensive, and extensive, and radical measures. We must be tough and take the necessary action to prevent from happening again what we have just witnessed.”25

Merkel’s quotes demonstrate a conviction that was shared among German state representatives.26 And they show that the financial crisis was not depicted as a crisis limited to the financial markets. In fact, it tended to be presented as a problem of “security” in a liberal government.27 The financial security of the population and the critical infrastructure of the financial system were commonly depicted as threatened and in need of protection.28 Such use of the language of security, and a rhetoric of protecting the prevailing order within the public discourse, describes what has been coined “securitization” in a “Copenhagen sense”.29 Scholars at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, most prominently Ole Waever, Barry Buzan and Jaap de Wilde, developed a constructivist understanding of security and originated the concept securitization. Against the background of the diminishing importance of the national state since the 1980s, they sought to explain how representatives – especially of western states – acquire the legitimacy to act and, more specifically, the power to employ exceptional measures. Drawing on linguistic approaches, they regarded secu-

26 See also the memoirs of the German Finance Minister: P. Steinbrück (2011) Unterm Strich (Munich, Dt. Taschenbuch-Verl.).
ritization as a speech act whereby “a state-representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means necessary to block it”. According to this understanding of securitization, an issue does not become a security matter because it is an objective threat. Rather, that occurs as the result of an intersubjective conviction about the perceived existence of a threat. Scholars of the Copenhagen School believe that it is mostly state representatives who securitize issues: “In naming a certain development a security problem, the ‘state’ can claim a special right, one that will, in the final instance, always be defined by the state and its elites. [...] Power holders can always try to use the instrument of securitization of an issue to gain control over it.”

In the case of the financial crisis, the financial industry’s practices were portrayed as a threat to economic health, and nearly every action that would restore financial stability was considered legitimate, including billion-euro rescue funds and the nationalisation of banks. The effect of the securitization of financial regulation was to give political decision makers the legitimacy to intervene in the financial markets, claiming to gain control over them. Within the national discourse on the financial crisis, we find several accounts that highlight the dangers of the situation and come to the conclusion that extraordinary measures needed to be taken. A ‘strong state’ should impose control over the markets in order to prevent another financial crisis. Financial regulation, which in most western countries had been dismantled in large part by the deregulation that had begun the 1980s, was a central issue for political decision makers.

As a consequence, political leaders felt the need to act quickly to calm the markets and restore financial stability. Yet while the securitization of finance made their use of exceptional measures during the crisis legiti-

31 Ibid., p. 54.
mate, it also put pressure on them to gain long-term control over financial practices by redesigning and enhancing regulation.

II. Trusting Experts – Trusting their Expertise?

As has been shown, within the public discourse that evolved around the financial crisis, we find several accounts that doubted the epistemic authority of economists. We also find the conviction that the state’s general welfare was threatened and therefore the state needed to more strictly regulate financial markets. At the beginning of the crisis the extent and effects it would have were unclear, but the need to take political action increased when it became clear that the financial crisis would lead to a large-scale economic downturn. While the securitization of finance legitimised political decision makers to take action to prevent future disastrous financial turmoil, it also put pressure on them to find appropriate measures. It has to be noted, however, that in the early stages of crisis management, uncertainty was a prevailing sentiment within the political sphere.

One reason for this uncertainty was a striking lack of knowledge about financial governance within the political decision-making process. External knowledge that could compensate for this internal lack of knowledge was described as indispensable by employees working for the committees in charge.33

In the following, it will be shown why the concept of trust helps to understand how political decision makers remained able to take political actions despite this lack of knowledge. While the financial crisis was considered a crisis of trust in many regards, the focus lies on how the crisis of trust in the abstract system of financial markets influenced the ability of political decision makers to take action in times of high uncertainty.

As Guido Möllering shows, uncertainty and trust are closely related. He defines trust as an “ongoing process building on reason, routine and reflexivity, suspending irreducible social vulnerability and uncertainty as if they were favourably resolved, and maintaining thereby a state of favourable expectation towards the actions and intentions of more or less specific

33 Interview with an employee of the German Bundestag working for the governing party.
A dilemma of trust in economic expertise

Social scientists have studied the ambivalent implications of trust for social life and provided powerful insights into its role. They have explained its social, factual and temporal dimensions, for example, as a means to establish stable frames for social interaction, reduce complexity and suppress ambivalence. A further in-depth study of trust would consider several stages and implications that can only be partly be included in the following analysis, which focuses on the distinction between interpersonal trust in experts and trust in abstract systems of expertise.

In his *Consequences of Modernity*, Anthony Giddens closely links the phenomenon of expertise to that of trust. He asks why most people put their trust in practices and social mechanisms about which their own technical knowledge is minimal or non-existent. He argues that it is a part of modern education that knowledge, especially scientific knowledge, is more or less indubitable. Nevertheless, the attitudes of laypersons towards scientific and technical knowledge are ambivalent. So, Giddens draws a distinction between trust in abstract systems and interpersonal trust. Trust in the abstract political or financial system can be strongly influenced by one’s experiences at “access points” to these systems. Access points connect lay individuals with individuals who are part the system, and they can serve as places of “vulnerability for abstract systems, but also as junctions at which trust can be maintained and built up”. Giddens also discusses “updates of knowledge”. These too can disrupt trust in expert abstract systems. The financial crisis was an event that updated knowledge about the financial system because it revealed that the system was unstable and had broken its promise of efficient and self-correcting markets. It was as much a crisis of trust among the participants in financial markets as a crisis of trust in knowledge about those markets.

In his subsequent analysis of “reflexive modernization”, Giddens explains how reflexivity alters relations between experts and laypersons. In classical modernity, experts provided specific knowledge to solve societal

problems, but this role changes in times of reflexive modernization when their knowledge is questioned and criticized, as it is known to be subject to constant revision. This is part of a transformation of trust in expert knowledge from naïve to “active trust”. At this point, laypersons distinguish between expert knowledge and expert authority, and they use the experts’ knowledge strategically for their own purposes. As a result, experts become the equals of the laypersons to whom they offer their knowledge. 

Other researchers go further than Giddens, with his emphasis on the possibility of deconstructing expert authority, in their thoughts on emancipating the layperson. Nico Stehr and Reiner Grundmann propose that laypersons, such as politicians, even exploit expert knowledge. A main feature of contemporary politics is the strategic use of expert knowledge. This political use of knowledge is part of what has been called “Wissenspolitik”. The practice of such knowledge politics includes applications of specialised knowledge, using the claims of expertise for political purposes, and the selection of experts to advise on decision-making. The process of selecting the members of advisory groups produces the desired recommendations to support political claims.

III. Trust within the Economy and in Economics

Fran Tonkiss sees trust as leading a “double life” in the economy, as both a social value and an economic resource. Trust links social arrangements with economic outcomes. Finance constitutes itself as a knowledge-based economy, meaning that knowledge is an essential resource for its practices. The central importance of knowledge brings with it uncertainty about its limits. In order to limit uncertainty, financial markets have established so-called “intermediaries in trust”; they convert uncertainty into calculated risk and make this useful information available to others for a profit. Mar-

Market participants value this information as it helps guide future action. Rating agencies, which quantify the risks associated with the products and actions of market participants (for example, their creditworthiness), are especially important intermediaries. Trust in their judgement reinforces the tolerance of risk and allows agents to act—despite the uncertainty that complexity causes. Trust in financial markets is essential to use the limits of knowledge “creatively” to shape the future.

Lack of trust within the financial markets led to central events of the crisis, such as bankruptcy of banks. At the same time, however, these events resulted in more distrust. The Nobel Prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz articulated this development at the height of the crisis: “Financial markets hinge on trust, and that trust has eroded. Lehman’s collapse marks at the very least a powerful symbol of a new low in confidence, and the reverberations will continue.” The restoration of trust was, and still is, one of the central aims of the management of the crisis and of subsequent long-term financial supervision.

The financial crisis caused distrust not only within the financial markets but also distrust of their practices and knowledge about them. These different failures had distinct implications for managing the crisis. Fearing that a lack of public trust in financial markets would cause runs on banks, politicians were quick to guarantee citizens’ deposits. However, the distrust of knowledge is most important for understanding the influence of economic expertise. The financial crisis initiated a debate about the limits of knowledge about financial markets, which implies, thus, a debate over the role of economics.

William Davies and Linsey McGoey provide one answer to the question of why economics as an academic profession failed in predicting the crisis. In examining the role of ignorance in neo-liberalism, they found

that the global crisis originated in “varieties of ignorance masquerading as expertise”. Furthermore, they argue that the “epistemological ambivalence of neo-liberalism derives from failures to distinguish between trusting markets (because authoritative knowledge is impossible) and trusting economics”.\textsuperscript{45} This distinction stems from the epistemological foundations of economics, which are rooted in the writings of (among others) Friedrich August von Hayek and several scholars of the Chicago School of neo-classical economics. Hayek was deeply sceptical towards the possibility of centralised, authoritative expertise, as he believed that the market was the best tool for accumulating knowledge.\textsuperscript{46} However, scholars from the Chicago School valued the scientific authority that the discipline of economics provides. So, Hayek attributed scientific authority to markets, whereas the Chicago School attributed it to economics. According to Davies’s and McGoey’s framing of the crisis, many actors, but mainly central banks and regulators, shifted from Chicago neo-liberalism (i.e., confidence in their economic models) to Hayekian neo-liberalism (i.e., scepticism about understanding of markets) as it suited them. They describe these changes in attitudes as a way of avoiding responsibility: “They were always able to claim just enough knowledge to retain power within the system, but just enough ignorance to evade responsibility.”\textsuperscript{47}

The next section will discuss how political decision makers needed to rebuild their trust in the actors who evaded responsibility in order to regain the capacity to act.

\textit{IV. A Dilemma of Trust}

As mentioned above, a striking lack of knowledge about financial governance within the political decision-making process caused uncertainty among policymakers. Before the crisis, knowledge of financial policymaking within the political decision-making process was limited primarily to

\begin{flushright}
\begin{enumerate}
  \item Ibid, p. 67.
\end{enumerate}
\end{flushright}
tax policies. The issues that arose within the financial crisis were seen as far too complex to be tackled within the existing structures of policymaking. External expertise was required to compensate for the lack of knowledge. Hence, policymakers initiated a series of high-level expert groups at national and supranational levels. On the European level, the so-called “High-Level Group on Financial Supervision in the EU”, or the “de Larosière Group” after its chairman, was formed. This group of eight male (financial) economists delivered a blueprint for a new framework of financial supervision in Europe. The group’s advice was swiftly incorporated into legislation as a comparison of their report and the following “Communication from the Commission” shows. Their report included recommendations to widen mandates of European financial supervision and transfer regulatory powers from national states to the EU level. They also advised the introduction of the ESFS (European System of Financial Supervision), which includes major changes to financial governance in Europe. In Germany, the expert group “Neue Finanzmarktarchitektur” advised Chancellor Merkel and her finance minister in several face-to-face meetings on a series of G20 issues on financial governance. Its chairman economist Otmar Issing was also a member of the “de Larosière Group”.

Considering these and other examples, we find a conflicting situation: political decision makers rely on the recommendations of experts in order to act quickly and decisively to strengthen regulation, yet, at the same time, they are aware that most of the experts they consult are connected to...

48 Interview with a Bundestag employee of the governing party.
49 Interview with an employee of the German Federal Ministry of Finance.
52 German Government, Pressestatements von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel, Prof. Issing und Bundesfinanzminister Schäuble ihres Treffens mit der Expertenkommission »Neue Finanzmarktarchitektur", https://www.bundesregierung.de/ContentArchiv/DE/Archiv17/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/201202/2012-02-13-merkel-issing-schaeuble.html (2012) (accessed on 25.06.2014); the face-to-face meetings with Chancellor Merkel and her finance minister were confirmed to the author in an interview with a member of this expert group in Frankfurt.
financial institutions and financial market participants. Most of these experts opposed any financial regulation in the past, when the credo of deregulation prevailed within networks of financial experts working at influential international organisations. The conviction that markets work best when unregulated prevailed in banks, but it was also “in the DNA” of supervisory authorities.53 The role of the state was only to allow markets to operate as independently as possible.

Several analyses that focus on policymaking for financial-market regulation show that many recommendations for change came from a small number of expert groups. These groups, part of a small elite in financial policymaking, were already in place before the crisis. Their members came from a relatively small pool of finance specialists, and were often connected to established regulatory institutions. This form of “club-model governance”54 guided political decision makers’ choices to advise them on financial regulation before and after the crisis. Within these groups, “professional credibility constrained which policy ideas were entertained” in the process of determining regulation policy.55

Although experts on financial policymaking were recruited from the same pool as before the crisis, the experience of the financial crisis had “updated” politicians’ knowledge of financial markets (to use Gidden’s terminology), thereby causing mistrust of this abstract system. In their reactions to the crisis, many political decision makers stated that conviction in the efficiency of the market had misled them in the past, and the crisis illustrated the “antithesis” of this paradigm.56 The crisis provided reasons to doubt the doctrine of deregulation and led to mistrust in orthodox economic theory and in those who had advocated for it in the past. However, those experts were the very same ones who wanted to influence decision-making post crisis. Remarkably, Chancellor Merkel spoke publicly about this sensitive matter of distrust, a problem that is usually discussed only

55 Ibid., p. 342.
behind closed doors. In a public speech to leading members of the German economy, she said:

“We as politicians find ourselves in a difficult situation. On the one hand, we are not financial market experts. That means that in matters of financial regulation one can easily tell us that we are doing something wrong, and ways to circumvent regulation will always be found. On the other hand, we have learnt that it is not always helpful to listen to the banks. If we had not listened to them before, there would have been no financial crisis in the first place.”

Her statement illustrates the dilemma that she considers political decision makers to find themselves in. They rely on expertise from others about how to effectively regulate financial markets. Yet, at the same time, they distrust the expertise that actors in the financial market offer, as it was the cause of the crisis in the first place. Her speech also shows that trust in abstract systems and in people cannot be strictly separated— in empirical observations they often overlap. Politicians faced a dilemma because not trusting the expertise that they had sought out and needed could have rendered them unable to take political decisions. In another public speech one year later, Merkel complained about the problem of finding expertise that was not linked to a particular agenda:

“As we [politicians] are not financial market experts – no matter what we have studied – and most financial actors are themselves financial market participants seeking profit, it is not easy to find in this relatively young area disinterested expertise. That is why the question of who to listen to is one of the most difficult.”

In the same speech, she also warned the financial industry, saying that if it did not give political decision makers “honest advice” they would
have to take political action, which might not be “sophisticated”, i.e., not in consultation with the financial industry. With this statement, the Chancellor publicly demonstrated a strong political will to regulate financial markets and made clear that political decision makers were willing to use their power to act. At the same time, her statement showed, once again, that, because of their mistrust of the expertise that the financial industry offered, politicians found themselves in a position from which it was hard to take any action. They were afraid that the expertise offered could not be trusted because it served financial market actors’ interests. The note of desperation in her statements is also striking. They depict political decision makers’ frustration in not being able to act without trustworthy expertise, an experience that evidently contributed to her threat to take political actions without consulting the financial industry.

Remarkably, the Chancellor’s speeches suggest the absence of any expertise other than that which was offered by those involved in the financial markets. This exposes a lack of explicit knowledge within the government. Explicit knowledge means that one is able to make reasonable refusals of other people’s claims on an issue. It also reveals how the crisis-framings of established experts narrowed the range of responses considered and thereby excluded experts who would have proposed a fundamental rethinking of financial-market policies. It is important to recognise that political decision makers perceived a lack of alternatives. As Jens Beckert claims, it is the lack of alternatives that differentiates trust from hope. Trust involves the expectation that the trusted will act as she promises to. However, a relationship in which one does not expect that the trust one has invested will be fulfilled is based not on trust but on mere hope or

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61 In Germany, for example, the Macroeconomic Policy Institute published several papers that proposed a policy shift, i.e. G. Horn et. al. (2009) “Gesamtwirtschaftliche Stabilität durch bessere Regulierung — Vorschläge für eine Neuordnung der Finanzmärkte.” IMK Report 36 (2009); another important German institution is the German Institute for Economic Research, and on an international level the Paris School of Economics and the Brookings Institution.
even despair. As with knowledge, trust depends on the availability of options. As Georg Simmel points out, someone who has explicit, complete knowledge does not have to trust, whereas someone who is completely uninformed is not even able to trust but can only hope.

Although trust in the abstract financial system and in experts’ knowledge of it had eroded, several of the interviews that I conducted in the course of my research suggest that industry experts had in fact restored trust in their knowledge through “facework commitments”, that is, by establishing personal relationships. Experts become increasingly important when people, in this case policymakers, have to deal with an abstract system whose internal workings they do not understand. In particular, experts need to convince them to trust such abstract systems by means of “appropriate self-staging strategies”. That is not to say that trust was the only reason why certain economists were authorised to be experts. Crisis framing and certain crisis explanations, as well as economists’ professional authority and their position within the policymaking apparatus, are the basis on which trust is built.

Interviews with participants in expert groups also show that experts had updated their knowledge by abandoning long-held convictions, such as the efficient-market hypothesis. Their embrace of new approaches to financial regulation, such as macro-prudential regulation, demonstrated their ability to respond to politicians’ changed perceptions of how markets operated. By personally communicating with political decision makers, fi-


63 G. Simmel (1992) Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesell-

64 A. Giddens (1990), Consequences of Modernity (Stanford, Stanford University Press), p. 83.

65 Eric Uslaner extends the concept of interpersonal trust and distinguishes be-


68 Interview with a member of a high-level-expert commission; Interview with a financial lobbyist.

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Das Erstellen und Weitergeben von Kopien dieses PDFs ist nicht zulässig.
Financial-market experts reduced mistrust in a faceless abstract system and increased trust in the experts themselves. This transformation required personal contact between decision makers and experts, and trust was restored at the access points where the system and individuals met.

Several non-governmental organisations criticised the fact that political decision makers relied on the expertise of advisers who were also related to the financial industry. In the case of the expert group advising Chancellor Merkel, LobbyControl condemned the expert commission as “one-sided” because there were no members who fundamentally questioned financial market practices.69

At the European level, the “de Larosière Group” appointed by the European Commission also met with severe criticism. The Alliance for Lobbying Transparency network and several of its members, such as Corporate Europe Observatory, disapproved of the dominance of the financial industry within the process of policymaking.70 They condemned the practice of legislators consulting representatives of the financial industry – by way of expert groups – before and during the presentation of legislative proposals. After assessing several such groups of experts in the European Union, they found numerous examples of experts with “strong connections to the financial services industry” who were consulted by legislators. In their reports, these NGOs disclose the connections to the financial industry of several experts tasked with proposing reforms for the EU’s financial system. Such connections ensured that the European Commission would be held “captive” by financial-industry interests.71


V. Desecuritization and Institutionalised Distrust

As the critique by the NGOs shows, the subject of regulation was highly politicised during the financial crisis. The need for strengthened financial regulation was widely shared. The period of immediate crisis management, from summer 2007 through the end of 2009, included both intense political pressure to prevent the financial trouble from becoming a full-blown economic crisis as well as a small circle’s crisis-management efforts conducted behind closed doors. This opaque form of crisis politics was the result of adjusting political practices to the requirements of the financial market, meaning that political actors strove foremost to prevent any further financial distress. After 2009, and this time of intense crisis management, the subject of financial regulation was gradually desecuritised, meaning the dramatic dramatization described above lost momentum.

This was partly due to the fact that the public’s attention shifted to the sovereign debt crisis in late 2009. The possible failure of the currency was depicted by political leaders as more pressing than the threat of questionable financial practices. And the resulting possible break-up of the Eurozone seemed potentially devastating, as it implied severe consequences that endangered the continuance of the European Union. Ultimately, the social upheaval that could result if the currency union failed was considered more dangerous than the abstract threat of financial-market distress.

The securitization of the euro crisis thereby leads to a desecuritization of the global financial crisis and the issue of financial regulation, in Lene Hansen’s terms “desecuritization by replacement.” The public depoliticisation of the discourse allowed the subject of financial regulation to be

72 Lene Hansen points out that securitization is a move away from the logic of normal politics, but it can also be seen as “a more extreme version of politicization”, L. Hansen (2012) “Reconstructing desecuritisation: the normative-political in the Copenhagen School and directions for how to apply it.” Review of International Studies 38 (3): 525–546, p. 528.


framed in technical terms, preferably discussed among specialists. It is on this technical level that economists are likely to have the greatest influence.75

After European high politics had set the frames for financial deregulation, the concrete measures were organised on the European level. Subsequently, European policymakers saw themselves in a similar situation to the German policymakers. They also addressed the issue publicly and sought an institutionalised solution to their problem. Members of the European Parliament76 initiated an unprecedented demand for an institution of specialised expertise to counter expertise offered by experts connected to the financial industry:

“[…] it seems to us that the asymmetry between the power of this lobbying activity and the lack of counter-expertise poses a danger to democracy. […] Neither trade unions nor NGOs have developed an expertise capable of countering the banks’ expertise. Therefore, there is currently no sufficient counter-power in civil society. This absence does not prevent us from developing our own expertise, independent from industry, and to do our work, but this asymmetry constitutes in our eyes a danger to democracy.”77

This call for counter-expertise brings together central aspects of what has been discussed above. First of all, it represents the lack of counter-expertise as a threat and uses the language of security (“poses a danger to democracy”). Second, in its complete version, it acknowledges the existence of institutions in other areas of policy that provide counter-expertise to private-sector lobbyists. Third, it indicates that the expertise of the financial industry is not to be trusted to work in the public’s interest. And fourth, it expresses the belief that counter-expertise is lacking in the field of financial-market regulation. This expertise is perceived to be lacking because the subject is framed as particularly technical and complex. Many organisations of civil society and NGOs soon joined in the call, and the organisation Finance Watch was established in 2011 with an explicitly social mission: “Our mission is to strengthen the voice of society in the re-

76 Members of Parliament do not have the same advising resources as members of the executive branch. Therefore, they rely on independent expertise, Interview with an employee of the German Federal Ministry of Finance.
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form of financial regulation by conducting advocacy and presenting public interest arguments to lawmakers and the public as a counterweight to the private interest lobbying of the financial industry.\textsuperscript{78}

By instituting alternative knowledge, Finance Watch fills the epistemic gap that opened after the financial crisis, and it maintains institutional distrust of financial-industry expertise. This means that it builds confidence in a way that is comparable to a lawyer who defends her client’s interests and provides an alternate perspective to the prosecutor’s, or like a revision procedure that acknowledges the possibility that a trial might not have been just. In this way, trust in the legal system is strengthened. Martin Endreß describes the paradox of the institutionalisation of “agencies of distrust” as a confidence-building measure that stabilises the “system” as a whole.\textsuperscript{79} A similar effect is expected in the field of financial regulation.

VI. Conclusion – A “Status Quo Crisis”?

This chapter showed how the two claims that were made at the beginning are connected: The financial crisis laid bare an epistemic crisis of expertise about financial markets and it led to the conviction that financial markets need to be more strictly controlled and regulated.

After the securitization of financial stability gave political decision makers the legitimacy to interfere in financial markets, these decision makers relied on advice from economic experts to take measures in a sphere about which they had little knowledge themselves. The analysis of the specific situation following the financial crisis showed how the authority of experts relies on more than their epistemic authority and institutional position. In times of high uncertainty and doubt about economic expertise, interpersonal trust plays a crucial role in restoring confidence in the authority of experts on financial markets. Political decision makers relied on experts connected to the financial industry, and this was heavily criticised by several non-governmental organisations. They criticised European politicians for their reliance on expertise from advisors who were not trusted to act in the public interest. On the European level, one reaction to the crit-


\textsuperscript{79} M. Endreß (2002) Vertrauen (Bielefeld, transcript Verlag), p. 78.
icism was to establish Finance Watch to fulfil the role of institutionalised distrust.

Nevertheless, overall political efforts to reform financial regulation were largely perceived as disappointing. Although the financial industry claims that major restrictions were imposed on them, many scholars, especially those of political economy, find that these changes do not go far enough. The term “status quo crisis” expresses the widely shared conviction that the event was not used to fundamentally transform financial regulation. Subsequent analysis of why the political aspiration to reform financial regulation largely failed discovered several causes. One is the logic of “competitive deregulation” among national states, which suggests that dominant states in particular are unwilling to raise their regulatory standards if doing so would give “their” financial markets a competitive disadvantage. However, the influence of the financial industry and its lobbying activities are seen as the central hindrance to tighter regulation. Several studies have found reasons why the financial industry’s views dominate financial regulatory policy-making. Focussing on the concept of trust, this chapter contributes another explanation for why and how established financial market experts gained authority despite the dismantling of their epistemic edifice during the financial crisis. The notion of trust should be acknowledged in future studies of expertise, where it should be analysed in connection with other sources of authority.

References


A dilemma of trust in economic expertise


A dilemma of trust in economic expertise


Paradigms, narratives and institutional competition: the role of experts in European research and innovation policies

Robert Kaiser

I. Introduction: Long established patterns of expert involvement in the EU research and innovation policy

Since its establishment in the mid-1960s, the European research and innovation policies (R&I) have been characterized by three main features: firstly, an extraordinary stability of two interfering policy paradigms that at different phases of the evolution of the policy field – dominated the agenda-setting processes. Those paradigms were always initiated in an attempt to strengthen the role of the European level in a competition for competences with the member states; secondly, the development of policy narratives that were established to gain institutional wins by switching from one to the other paradigm; and thirdly, the important role of external actors\(^1\) who have significantly steered and influenced the development path of the European research and innovation policies mainly by providing evidence for the existence of a policy narrative or by defining the argumentative basis on which new narratives could have been created.

Policy paradigms are based on a broad consensus among public policymakers about the nature of a political problem as well as the parameters and instruments that are appropriate to solve that problem. A paradigm is considered as extraordinary stable, because it provides security about how to tackle a specific problem as long as the paradigm does not face a crisis. Therefore, policy-making normally takes place within a dominant paradigm, meaning that the goals of state intervention remain unchanged while

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\(^1\) The term “external actors” refers to representatives of the member states who are formally independent of their governments, to representatives of the European industry and non-governmental organizations who assist the primarily the European Commission by provision of expert advise and information, and to scientific experts mainly from European academic institutions or their national or European interest representations.
there might be some adjustment at the level of instruments. Only in case of a crisis, policy-makers are looking for new ideas (and instruments) in order to preserve the problem-solving capacity of public policies.\footnote{P. Hall (1993) “Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The case of Economic Policymaking in Britain.” \textit{Comparative Politics} 25 (3): 275-296.}

In a longer-term perspective, European research and innovation policies evolved around two paradigms which can be called the “economies of scale” and the “better coordination” paradigms. They are distinct primarily in terms of the role the European Union should play in the policy field.

The “economies of scale” paradigm recognizes a main problem in the inefficient public spending for research and innovation at the national level, because member states do not only duplicate their efforts, but they also very often lack the resources to invest in all relevant technology fields. Accordingly, member states would profit if money is pooled (and spend) at the European level. In contrast, the “better coordination” paradigm accepts that only roughly five percent of public investments in research and innovation stem from the European level and that member states are traditionally reluctant to allow a stronger European role in research and innovation funding. Under the circumstances of national dominance, however, the European Union should therefore support the member states in re-orienting national funds towards common European objectives. Both paradigms thus differ significantly in view of the definition of the European added value. The “economies of scale” paradigm considers the EU an important player (and investor) in research and innovation policies, the “better coordination” paradigm acknowledges the importance of the EU as a framework under which the member states largely keep their autonomy but are still able to use some of their resources for common European initiatives.

Policy narratives always played a decisive role in European research and innovation policies if actors aimed at moving from one to the other paradigm. Narratives provide a “causal story” about a certain scenario that is likely to happen, and they suggest certain actions as the adequate reaction to the given situation. As such, narratives are important elements of policy-making especially in times of uncertainty. Because of that, we can assume to identify a new policy narrative at a time at which a dominant

paradigm forfeit stability. Indeed, the major shifts in European research and innovation policies can be linked to the emergence of new narratives. In the mid-1960s, the member states of the European Economic Community agreed for the first time to coordinate their national policies at the European level since they felt confronted with a serious and widening “technology gap”. The respective narrative constituted a causal relation between Europe’s weak performance in economic and technological development (compared to Japan and the United States) and their lack of cooperation at the European level:

“In all countries, and to an ever-increasing extent, governments are intervening to prompt the development of scientific research and technological progress. It would be helpful, if the efforts of each country could be compared at the European level. It should also be possible to establish optimum conditions in which measures taken in individual countries may complement and mutually reinforce each other; to study ways of improving the spread of information and to maximize the effectiveness of measures taken at the national level by combining the efforts of the member states.”

In the mid-1990s, the narrative of the “European paradox” paved the way for a significant expansion of the European research and development policy which has taken place both in terms of financial investments as well as in view of the scope of instruments implemented by the European Commission. In its green paper on innovation, the Commission claimed that although Europe has in comparison to the United States or Japan an equal level of scientific productivity it simultaneously shows a considerable lack in its innovation capacity, i.e. in the ability to transform research into marketable products and services. In order to cope with this situation, the European Union doubled the financial support for pre-competitive research from the third to the fourth framework programme, while the Commission began to broaden its agenda to a much more comprehensive innovation policy approach.

The shift towards the “economics of scale” paradigm came only few months after an earlier initiative aimed at strengthening coordination of research policies largely failed. In 1993, Antonio Ruberti, Commissioner for research and Education, had proposed the establishment of a “European Scientific and Technology Space” in which national research programmes should be integrated into a “truly European research policy”.6 Although formally endorsed by the member states, respective action was hardly taken, especially because countries such as Britain, Germany and France considered their research investments as a key instrument to foster national competitiveness.

That the European Commission could change its strategy so rapidly can largely be explained by the fact that the organization had developed into an agency (similar to the OECD) in which scientific innovation research and innovation policies became more and more an “integrated, co-evolving interactive process”.7 Especially the disciplines of evolutionary and institutional economics offered a new perspective on the innovation process leading to a situation in which concepts like the “National Innovation System” were developed in close connection between academia and public policy organisations. The European Commission even set up a new funding line explicitly aimed at making innovation research immediately available for public policy action:

“[…] a really major impulse to the development of innovation research in support of policy came with the 'Targeted Socio-Economic Research' (TSER) programme in the fourth framework programme (1995-1999), and the follow-up 'Improving Human Potential' programme in the fifth framework programme. Here the initiatives lay with policymakers and administrators. TSER was large, carefully-designed and rather well-prepared by commission stuff who, in general, were well-informed and rather widely-read within the field. In effect, they took on board the new innovation theories, identified the gaps and weaknesses, and sought to research some of the unresolved problems.”8

The mid-1990s are in a way the starting point for a remarkable shift from industry advisors to scientific experts as the most important groups of external actors in European research and innovation policies. Two decades earlier, the large-scale technology programmes that marked the beginning

8 Ibid., p. 1476.
of funding of research and technology at the European level (such as ES-PRIT, the European Strategic Programme for R&D in Information Technology) were largely developed according to the needs of the leading European electronics companies (the so-called “Big 12”) which, in 1979, defined their preferences in coordination with the Commissioner for Industrial Affairs and Energy, Étienne Davignon. This does not mean that industry or member states' representatives disappeared from the scene, but they were pushed back. Even today, expert and advisory groups established by the European Commission for the current Horizon2020 framework programme for research and innovation (2014-2020) confirm this trend. Most of them are dominated by experts who are individually appointed in a personal capacity, acting independently and expressing their own personal views, a circumscription usually chosen by the Commission for experts from science and academia.

The European Commission's register of Commission expert groups allows for an assessment of the composition of the 65 (by the end of 2017) advisory and expert groups that have been established for the Horizon2020 programme. As table 1 shows, experts appointed in a personal capacity clearly dominate the majority of the groups, apart from the few exemptions in which member state delegates constitute groups of homogenous membership, meaning these are groups in which only experts from member states' administrations are involved.

Against this background, this contribution asks who are the scientific experts who are selected to assist the European Commission in the field of research and innovation policies and what impact do they have especially in phases of major changes in this policy area. The paper thus focusses on the external dimension of transnational expert groups. The main argument is that the existence and potential influence of expert groups can not be explained without reference to the institutional environment in which they are embedded. Obviously, the European Union provides for a highly specific institutional environment in which competition for resources and competences is much stronger than in other transnational arenas. Because of that, expert knowledge and involvement is likely to be an integral part

of organizational strategies that are aimed at improving the institutional position of the organization that appoints the experts (section 2).

Table 1: Composition of EU Commission's Horizon2020 expert groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Group / Membership</th>
<th>High-level Groups</th>
<th>Advisory Groups</th>
<th>Expert Groups**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Membership</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homogeneous Membership</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant Group: *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type B</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type C</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type D</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type E</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Members:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In some of the 65 groups, dominating types are represented by an equal number of members, Type A: Individuals appointed in a personal capacity; Type B: Individuals appointed to represent a common interest (Stakeholders); Type C: Organisations (Companies, NGOs, etc.); Type D: Member States' Authorities; Type E: Other public entities (International Organisations or representatives from third countries)

** Three of the expert groups were established only by the end of 2017, thus no data on membership was provided at that time.

In order to analyze these interdependencies between institutional structure and expert involvement, the paper reconstructs one of the most instructive cases of recent policy change in European research and innovation policies. In 2007, the European Union established, for the first time, a main funding organization for basic research within the structure of the framework programme. The European Research Council (ERC) constituted a breakthrough for EU competence in a field in which member states were traditionally very reluctant to allow for a European involvement. The paper aims at providing evidence for the assumption that the foundation of the ERC under the umbrella of the EU’s main funding scheme for research

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and innovation (and thus under the responsibility of the European Commission) was far from certain and hardly intended especially by the member states. And it was made possible especially by the European Commission's utilization of scientific experts who provided for the narrative that suggested the final institutional solution (section 3). Section 4 then looks a little bit deeper into the composition and activities of the respective expert groups while section 5 summarizes the main conclusions.

II. The role of the institutional structure: transnational expertise within the European system of multi-level governance

As described in the introduction for this volume, we consider the internal and the external dimensions of transnational expertise and the interdependencies between these dimensions a key explanatory factor for the assessment of the impact of expert groups on policy-making. In terms of the external dimension, the specificity of the institutional structure of the respective transnational arena is the most crucial variable. Among scholars it is today widely accepted that the institutional structure of the European system of multi-level governance consists of three distinct features:10

1. decision-making competencies are shared by actors at different levels (i.e. a “dynamic” dispersion of authority);
2. actors and arenas are not ordered hierarchically as in traditional inter-governmental relationships (i.e. non-hierarchical institutional design);
3. consensual or non-majoritarian decision-making among states, which requires a continuous wide-ranging negotiation process (i.e. non-majoritarian negotiation system).

For our discussion, the first and second aspect play the key role. According to the first one, decision-making competencies are dispersed across

territorial levels, i.e. across supranational, national, and regional or local actors, or allocated sideways, to quasi-autonomous agencies, to experts or to non-public implementation bodies.\footnote{G. Majone (1996) \textit{Regulating Europe} (London, Routledge); M. Thatcher, and A. Stone Sweet (2002) “Theory and Practice of Delegation to Non-Majoritarian Institutions.” \textit{West European Politics} 25: 1-22.} Moreover, it has been argued that the European multi-level governance system is a highly dynamic one, in which “the competencies and functions of the different levels have not been fixed precisely yet … and cannot be fixed precisely at all”.\footnote{E. Grande (2001) \textit{Institutions and Interests: Interest Groups in the European System of Multi-Level Governance}. Working Paper No. 1/2001 (Chair for Political Science, Technical University of Munich), p. 9.} What follows is that European governance is not a stable pattern, but varies over time and across policy area. With regard to aspects of authority relocation it is of special importance that in contrast to federal systems, in a multi-level governance system the interactions between the different levels are not disciplined by constitutional norms. As a consequence, the European system of multi-level governance is characterized by a considerable competition for competencies between the different territorial levels.

The idea of the second feature is that actors and arenas are not ordered hierarchically, so that “supranational institutions are not hierarchically superimposed upon the member states; and the member states and their regions are not subordinated to the supranational powers”.\footnote{Ibid., p. 7.} Rather, “political arenas are interconnected rather than nested”\footnote{Marks et al., \textit{European Integration from the 1980s}, p. 346.}, which means, for example, that subnational actors not only operate at the national, but also at the supranational levels. The consequences of this constellation are two-fold: firstly, in the European system of multi-level governance, actors at different territorial levels form “integrated systems of joint decision-making”\footnote{F. W. Scharpf (1988) “The Joint Decision Trap: Lessons from German Federalism and European Integration.” \textit{Public Administration} 66: 239-78.}, leading to a growing demand for policy coordination and a growing importance of interaction effects between the different levels and arenas of decision-making; and secondly, regional – but also private – actors “by-pass” the national level to pursue their interests at the supranational level, so that national governments could no longer monopolize the contacts to the European level.

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13 Marks et al., \textit{European Integration from the 1980s}, p. 346.
These key characteristics of the European system of multi-level governance produce certain consequences for policy-making which are of special relevance for research and innovation policies. In this policy area, the European Union largely lacks competencies for authoritative rule-making while the financial means that are available at the European level represent are still considerably limited. As a consequence, research and innovation policies are probably the European policy area in which coordination and competition between political actors at different territorial levels is strongest. During the 1980s and 1990s, that competition was largely about financial resources and it could be easily won by the European Commission since Europe apparently suffered from a considerable productivity gap vis-à-vis its main global competitors. For the European Commission’s strategy to increase the budget for R&I, the involvement of private actors, especially scientific experts and industry representatives, played an important role. Their participation has always been institutionalized through the establishment of various advisory boards which existed for the different areas of the framework programme. It has been estimated that the European Commission continually has about 1,000 expert groups comprising more than 30,000 experts. The directorate general for research and innovation has established a large number of them. As for 2007, an analysis by Gornitzka and Sverdrup found more than 120 expert groups appointed by the organisational unit responsible for the R&I policies.

This strong reliance on external expertise can be seen as the result of “policy entrepreneurship” of the European Commission, for which the EU’s multi-level governance structure provides ideal preconditions. In public policy research, the concept of policy entrepreneurship aims at providing explanations for the existence and the (sometimes unexpected) outcome of agenda-setting processes in which a political actor (i.e. the policy entrepreneur) succeeds in proposing and pushing through his problem solution strategy even against the anticipated resistance of other political actors whose agreement is needed for the implementation of this solution.


To do so, a policy entrepreneur must have some specific actor qualities as well as the capacity to make use of them. According to Kingdon\(^\text{18}\), there are three main actor qualities:

(1) the actor's status as a recognized expert and a serious leader who acts in the interests of others or has an authoritative decision-making position,

(2) the actor's negotiation and networking capabilities which are mainly based on the combination of technical expertise and political savvy, and

(3) the actor's persistence in the political arena which provides him with the opportunity to wait for a policy window and to make use of it when it opens.

Based on these qualities the policy entrepreneur can initiate change through the coupling of at least two of three separate and independent streams within a political system which “carry” descriptions of problems, several possible strategies for the solution of the problem and a political event which render the agreement on such a strategy more likely (such as a crisis, unexpected election results or interest group campaigns).

For the study of EU politics, Kingdon’s concept of the policy entrepreneur is quite useful as it clearly allows for the characterization of the different EU institutions’ potential to act as a policy entrepreneur. The European Commission’s entrepreneurial capacity stems from the possession of the required information and its technical resources. It also has the prime role in formal agenda-setting procedures and it has established a comprehensive system of standing and ad-hoc committees as well as expert groups that provide knowledge and support for the formulation and/or implementation of R&I policies.

### III. Case study: The deployment of external expert advice for the establishment of the European Research Council

The policy process that led to the establishment of the European Research Council as the EU’s funding organization for basic research started in December 2002. The Danish Presidency of the Council, following on a discussion in the EU competition council on the status of the European Re-

search Area, established the European Research Council Expert Group (ERCEG) which was comprised of senior scientists as well as representatives of different European research funding organizations. In their report, issued in December 2003, the expert group defined a number of core principles for the functioning of a new European body for the promotion of basic research\textsuperscript{19}, but also discussed various alternatives for the legal organization of the ERC. In terms of principles, the experts concluded on:

- the creation of a European Research Council under the auspices of the European Union, to be financed by a European Fund for Research Excellence out of the budget of the EU framework programme.
- the support of investigator-driven research of highest quality selected through a European competition,
- the coverage of all fields of science, including social science and humanities,
- the full autonomy of the Council in research matters, but also its accountability for finance and mission to the European Union.

These organizational principles were translated into different options for institutionalization of the ERC. In this respect, the ERCEG envisioned four alternative solutions:

1. the creation of the ERC as an organization in one of the member states on the basis of the respective national law;
2. the establishment of an inter-organizational body jointly created by the national research organizations;
3. the foundation of a new intergovernmental organization supported directly by funds of the member states; and
4. the establishment of a European executive agency under EU law.

Although the experts did not explicitly favour one of these solutions, they nevertheless made clear, that the last option would be "difficult to combine with the required autonomy"\textsuperscript{20}

In terms of these alternatives, many transnational European research organizations called for the foundation of a purely intergovernmental organ-


\textsuperscript{20} Mayor, \textit{The European Research Council}, p. 15.
ization, like CERN (Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire) or the EMBO (European Molecular Biology Organization). The European Science Foundation (ESF), for example, issued a report in April 2003 in which it claimed that the European Research Council could be established out of the ESF. Such a body would then be governed by a Senate whose members would be largely nominated by an assembly representing national funding organizations. The initial financing of the body would be generated by the distribution of funds from those parts of the EU Framework Programme which did already finance basic research. In the long-run, however, they argued that the budget of the ERC should have to increase to a level comparable to that of the U.S. and would have to be provided by national organizations and by the business sector.\(^{21}\)

Given the direction in which the discussion was already moving, the European Commission had to realize that it could well be the loser of an institutional battle currently dominated by the member states’ governments and Europe’s intergovernmental research organizations. From the Commission’s perspective, even the worst scenario seemed to be a realistic outcome: the establishment of an independent funding organization that would be fully financed at the expense of the Community budget for research and development.

Already in December 2003, the Commission apparently considered the Research Council not only as a danger, but also as an opportunity to provide new momentum to the coordination of national and European research policies. At a conference on the ERC in Copenhagen, the Commissioner for research, Philippe Busquin, told participants that the support of the Commission for such a project would be conditional on a strong involvement of national research organizations. In terms of funding the ERC, Busquin considered contributions from the national level, from the private sector and from the general EU budget appropriate, but not from the Framework Programme.\(^{22}\) The Commission further reacted by publishing a communication on “Europe and basic research” in which it laid down in some details the plans for increasing Community funding for this

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\(^{21}\) European Science Foundation (2003) *New Structures for the support of high-quality research in Europe. A report from a High-Level Group constituted by the European Science Foundation to review the option of creating a European Research Council*. ESF Position Paper, April 2003 (Strasbourg), pp. 10ff.

kind of research. However, this document still treated the organizational question with caution and was almost silent about different institutional options for the ERC.\textsuperscript{23}

Shortly after the submission of this communication, the EU Commission also set up a high-level expert group that was asked to carry out an assessment of the potential benefits of a new Pan-European funding scheme for basic research. The expert group report was prepared by February 2005 and basically characterized the funding of “Frontier Research” as a truly European challenge.\textsuperscript{24} In this report, frontier research was defined as an intrinsically risky endeavour at the forefront of creating new knowledge and developing a new understanding. As such, frontier research pursues questions irrespectively of established disciplinary boundaries. It takes place not only in universities or public research organizations, but also in industry laboratories. And finally, frontier research does not fit in with the traditional distinction between basic and applied research. Although it may be fundamental research it is simultaneously characterized by a much closer and intimate relation between science and technology.\textsuperscript{25} This report undoubtedly supported the Commission’s activities as it defined a specific European goal that could, for various reasons, hardly be achieved by already existing funding agencies or mechanisms at the national level. This is mostly because the requirements for the support of frontier research differ from those established for basic research. Hence, frontier research requires a broader (European) range of knowledge and skills and a higher speed of response (than possible for national funding agencies). By creating a European Research Council that would be solely responsible for the support of frontier research, the European Union would also generate, as claimed by the expert group, an international visibility that better leverages the interest of the business sector in proactively innovating products and processes as well as in developing entirely new industries.\textsuperscript{26}

Due to these activities, the European Commission more and more managed to shape the terms of the political debate not only in view of a gen-

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 18.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p. 19.
eral understanding of the problem, but increasingly also in view of an agreement on the organizational setup of the ERC. In this situation, the European Commission changed its mind and principally agreed that the ERC could also be funded by the EU Framework Programme even if financial means would be delegated to an organization formally established outside the European Union. This was, however, mainly because of the fact that the Commission had already started the planning of FP7 for which it intended to propose a significant increase of the budget. In this situation, the integration of the ERC into the Framework Programme provided good reasons for a budget expansion. In terms of the institutional alternatives, the Commission obviously favoured a solution which would secure at least a certain degree of influence. Accordingly, its position dismissed both an intergovernmental structure as well as a federation of national organizations. Instead, it preferred financing the ERC through Community funds to which the member states could contribute on the basis of Article 169 of the Treaty of Nice by applying a juste retour principle to those additional funds.27

Closely linked to the Commission’s new approach was its attempt to increase networking activities and to enter into strategic coalitions. An early example for such an alliance is a high level working group jointly established by the European Commission and EUROHORCs (European Heads of Research Councils). Philippe Busquin initiated this working group in May 2003 in his address to the EUROHORCs General Assembly. Only a few months later, the Commission called again on the scientific community by arguing that the “signals” the community had given so far in support of a European Research Council were not “strong enough”.28

The joint European Commission and EUROHORCs high level working group issued its report on the ERC in July 2004. The working group agreed upon a number of principles and “operational parameters” for the incorporation of a funding mechanism for basic research “within the portfolio of future Community research”.29 Hence, this report established a

close link between the Commission’s proposal to finance basic research under the Framework Programme and the organizational structure as well as implementation principles of a European Research Council. During the next twelve months, the Commission defined specific measures for the seventh Framework Programme. In its proposal of September 21, 2005, the ERC was considered to be the “dedicated implementation structure” for the Ideas Programme of FP7 which was going to fund investigator-driven frontier research.\(^\text{30}\) Already in July 2005, the European Commission appointed the 22 members of the ERC scientific council who were earlier nominated by an independent panel of senior scientists headed by Lord Patten of Barnes, chancellor of the universities of Oxford and Newcastle-upon-Tyne and EU Commissioner for external relations from 1999 to 2004.\(^\text{31}\)

It does not come as a surprise that the Commission’s proposal for the establishment of the ERC as an implementation agency has immediately come under pressure from the scientific community, the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. The critique focused on concerns about the autonomy of the Council, because the proposal establishes a durable structure in which the scientific council and the executive agency of the ERC as well as the Commission have to act together in a more or less explicitly defined consensual way.\(^\text{32}\) The European Parliament issued a resolution in March 2005 in which it subscribed to this concept only under the condition that it would be established for a transitional period only.\(^\text{33}\) On November 28-29, 2005, the Council on Competitiveness reached a partial

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general approach on the proposal for the seventh Framework Programme. However, the Swedish government refused to support this approach because of the proposed legal ground for the ERC. Whereas the governments of Denmark, France, Hungary, Lithuania and Portugal accepted it only as an interim solution. In the end, however, the disagreement between the Parliament and the majority of member states in the Council paved the way for the institutional solution that was always favoured by the Commission. The final agreement allowed for the establishment of the ERC as an executive agency of the EU with the option to review its status in the process of the mid-term evaluation of the framework programme. This mid-term review, done in 2010 by an independent expert group, considered the initial working period of the ERC as very successful. No comment at all was made anymore on the question of the legal status of the Council.

IV. Institutional competition and the role of scientific expert groups

The reconstruction of the policy process that led to the establishment of the ERC under the roof of the EU’s framework programme for research and innovation has shown, that there was an institutional competition, horizontally, between the European Commission, the Parliament and the Council, and, given the role of the Council, also, vertically, between the European Commission and a number of member states, which were supported by Europe’s intergovernmental research organizations. In this context, two expert groups played the most decisive role:

(1) the European Research Council Expert Group (ERCEG), set up by the Danish Presidency of the Council,

(2) the High-Level Group “Frontier Research”, established by the European Commission,

In this section, we take a closer look into the composition of the groups and the functions the expert had during the policy process. On this basis,


we try to get a better understanding about the background of the experts and the specific impact they had, taking into account their respective institutional preferences.

a) The European Research Council Expert Groups (ERCEG)

The ERCEG was a relatively homogenous group composed of nine members with an academic or science policy background and two observers, one from the European Commission and one from the Dutch organisation for scientific research NWO. Three experts represented public research organisations (universities or research centers) while four members were delegated from private or public research funding organisations. The remaining two members represented the European Parliament and the European Commission’s advisory board EURAB. The latter representative became the President of the European Research Council between 2010 and 2013.

From the beginning, the ERCEG had a clearly specified scope as it was set up on the basis of a mandate defined by Council of Ministers for Competition on November 26, 2002. The task was to explore options for a possible creation of the ERC. In their final report, the experts were convinced that the financial resources for the research council should stem from the EU budget:

“The budget needed for the creation of the ERC should come from the European Union. How this can be done depends on the EU Treaty. As things stand at present, it will have to be via a specific item in the budget for the EU Framework Programme which could be entitled the European Fund for Research Excellence. Other European countries should be invited to participate. In this way, it is possible to establish the ERC with reference to the EU budget, while keeping its management at arms-length from the Commission.”

They were, however, less strict in view of the preferred legal status of the ERC. Looking at the four alternative options the reports presented, only one solution – the establishment of the ERC as an EU agency – was considered less adequate because of concerns about the autonomy of the council:

“A fourth option is to establish it as a European entity, such as e.g. an EU (executive) agency. This agency option will impose organizational, financial and audito-

ry mechanisms and regulations on the ERC, which seems difficult to combine with the required autonomy. It seems also difficult to make the granting procedures simple and non-bureaucratic, as required by the research community.”

The ERCEG report thus showed clear concerns about establishing the ERC as an organization under direct control of the European Commission while the EU research budget should be the primary source for financing the new initiative.

b) The High-Level Group “Frontier Research”

In contrast to ERCEG, the Commission’s expert group on “Frontier Research” was considerably more inhomogeneous. It was comprised of 14 members, nine representatives from academia, two representatives from national science councils, and three representatives from industry. In terms of disciplinary backgrounds, the selection of representatives from academia indicate a highly particular pattern of appointment. Five of them were specialized in the field of research on science and innovation, the remaining four came from different areas of medical studies.

Compared to ERCEG, this expert group also had a different approach towards providing advice on the establishment of a new European funding mechanism for basic research. From the beginning, the groups less concerned with finding an appropriate structure for the ERC, but they aimed at looking at basic research by providing “a clear indication of the types of effects and benefits that may be expected, and their scientific and economic significance”.

On that basis, the experts created the narrative of “frontier research” which is mainly characterized by the fact that it links the traditional concept of basic research (the form of research most distant to industrial application) very closely to innovativeness and competitiveness:

“Europe’s relative slowness in entering and exploiting new fields of technology closely linked to scientific knowledge has adverse consequences for its ability to generate innovations. A new organisation like the ERC is needed to fund the best frontier research in emerging, fast-growing areas, and thereby to help strengthen European competitiveness in relation to technological innovation.”

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37 Ibid., p. 15.
38 European Commission, Frontier Research, p. 9.
39 Ibid., p. 12.
Moreover, the experts also provided the basis for argumentation why the ERC has to be seen in the broader context of the different existing EU distributive politics:

“We cannot stress too strongly, however, that the task of addressing and resolving such issues should not be added to the responsibilities of the ERC. To do so would fatally weaken the ability of the ERC to deliver the various benefits outlined in this report. Instead, the task needs to be seen as the responsibility of other institutions and mechanisms – for example in the case of the EU, of those concerned with regional development and cohesion. This is not to say that the ERC is intrinsically ‘unfriendly’ to cohesion, but that it should be part of a balanced framework programme that retains the existing structure for collaborative research and for addressing issues relating to cohesion. Moreover, there will need to be careful monitoring of the impact of the ERC along with that of other mechanisms for fostering the ERA and cohesion to ensure the widest possible benefits.”

By pointing to the question of the functioning of the ERC in its future institutional environment, the experts addressed an issue fully ignored by ERCEG, but also by many interest groups and actors who were involved in the process. As an organization responsible for the funding of the most excellent research, the ERC had hardly anything to offer for member states which still have a less developed scientific base. Accordingly, they had little incentives to support the financing of the ERC from the EU’s current research budget. In a well-balanced context with the EU’s framework programme and other European funding initiatives, however, the ERC – under the hospice of the European Commission – certainly appeared less problematic. To sum up, the frontier research expert group did not only manage to establish a narrative that brought basic research much closer to the fields of applied (“pre-competitive”) research and innovation that were already funded by the European Union. Rather, it “invented” the rational for the integration of the ERC into the existing EU funding structure which made the decision on its establishment less controversial.

V. Conclusion

The case study on the establishment of the European Research Area confirms a number of aspects that have been identified in the different concepts about expert involvement in policies and authoritative rule-making.

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40 Ibid., p. 49.
Firstly, in terms of common belief systems the case study shows that there was a broad consensus among experts that action should be taken at the European level to increase public investments in basic research. They were convinced that Europe’s lack especially in research and innovation performance in modern science-based industries required European action similar to public policy initiatives that had been taken much earlier in the U.S.-american innovation system. The call for a European Research Council was very much motivated by what was considered the successful model of the National Science Foundation.

Secondly, given that the funding of basic research did not match with the established structures of EU research funding, scientific experts were quite eager to find a justification why the required action was different from traditional basic research funding. In this respect, the creation of the narrative of frontier research has been hailed by the scientific community and began to spread in later position papers of the scientific community. The success of the concept of frontier research can be explained by two facts. First of all, it reduced uncertainty for political actors as it clearly described how public authorities could intervene in favour of more scientific output that would be relevant for innovations. And secondly, given that frontier research was characterized as a new phenomenon within knowledge-based economies, it did not provide any indications for public policy failures in the past (it could not be funded, because it did not exist before).

Thirdly, from the beginning, scientific experts had a clear understanding about how to solve the societal problem of underinvestment in basic research. This holds not only for the organizational structure of a research council at the European level, but also for the sources of funding. At least the majority of experts were keen to get the money from the EU framework programme thus protecting national resources available for “traditional” basic research.

Apart from that, the case study also shows that the role expert groups in the European system of multi-level governance is much more complex that foreseen in many concepts of transnational expertise.

The relation between expert groups and policy-makers is not a unidimensional process in which public actors learn from experts and professionals about how to solve a societal problem. Rather, if all parties in a political conflict in principle agree that professional expertise could be useful to solve the problem, experts become part of the institutional game. Political actors have a number of instruments at hand to regulate the impact of
experts. Some groups become institutionalized advisors, others are recruited for individual events only, still others can also be excluded.

In this “institutional battle” experts who combine knowledge with institutional self-interest are likely to lose the game. This holds, on the one hand, for the the transnational and intergovernmental research organizations, such as the European Science Foundation which indicated quite early in the process that they would be willing to host the research council. On the other hand, experts who support preferences of key political actors are likely to get influence on the concrete solution of the problem. This holds in our case especially for EuroHORCs, the association of national research councils, which was involved in the development of the final regulative proposal of the Commission.

And finally, expert groups can be composed of very different actors among which considerable imbalances in power exist. The case of the establishment of the European Research Council shows that the “scientific community” played a significant role for the realization of the project. It not only acted as an initiator, some organizations did quite successful engage in the institutional competition. Others lost influence very early in the process. However, the reference to the “scientific community” is to some extend misleading as it were primarily scientists from the natural sciences disciplines who have been the most actives actors while other disciplines did not very much engage. However, they were “hindered” to organize resistance against the project insofar as they were assured that the research council would also fund research projects from the social sciences and the humanities.

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Interest representation as a field of expertise: the professionalization of lobbyists in the European Union

Christian Lahusen

I. Introduction

The European Union is no exception to the general observation that lobbying is part of political reality. Numerous studies have shown that the establishment of the European Communities and the European Union has been complemented and assisted by the emergence of a field of interest groups that have tried to influence the architecture of the new polity, and the gradually expanding range of European public policies. Scholarly writing has provided rich insights into the structure of this organizational field.\(^1\) The main focus of analysis has been directed at federations and associations, in particular business associations.\(^2\) However, the scope of analysis has been expanded gradually in order to map the field in its internal complexity, by addressing private company representation\(^3\) and com-

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mmercial public affairs consultants. Additionally, research addressed also the activities of social movement organizations, non-profit organizations and civil society actors within the organizational field of European interest representation.

Research in the social sciences has thus investigated this field of political action intensively and diligently, meaning that our knowledge about European interest groups is very extensive and deep. However, we still lack insights into the people behind these European interest groups: European lobbyists themselves. This imbalance is problematic, because it might paint a partial – and thus also distorted – picture. Indeed, previous research has had an organizational bias, and these findings promote the vision of an extensive and complex, internally redundant, fragmented and segmented field of interest groups. Power structures within the field tend to privilege certain interests (e.g., business and firms), but the internal complexity gives ample room for individual (even smaller) interests to


further their agenda by engaging in venue shopping, alliance building and/or multi-level lobbying.\textsuperscript{8}

This organizational picture is convincing and accurate. However, it misses important aspects, because it has ignored by and large the personnel behind these lobby groups. So far, we know very little about the EU lobbyists as an occupational group. A closer inspection is required, because previous research has corroborated recurrently that professional groups do have an impact on organizational fields and political domains. They are considered to be ‘institutional agents’ capable of influencing the issues and ideas debated within policy domains, the way political processes are organized, and how policy actors act within them.\textsuperscript{9} Moreover, they contribute to the closure and streamlining of policy domains, because they promote a set of shared beliefs and ideas, rationalized systems of knowledge, and an array of practical work routines.\textsuperscript{10} A similar insight is provided by the sociology of professions, which has insisted that occupational groups try (and tend) to structure and monopolize an occupational


field through the establishment of common working routines, stocks of knowledge, certified competencies, professional norms, and identities.\textsuperscript{11} These observations might apply to EU lobbying as well. Indeed, interest representation is more often than not put into the hands of specialists. Consequently, we might assume that this staff has the power to influence the way political interests are represented and how relations with public authorities are established. Recent studies suggest that this is clearly the case. The field of people involved in EU policy making seems to be highly patterned and integrated with regard to task and activities, skills and contacts, and identities and orientations.\textsuperscript{12} European lobbying has become an occupational field exposed to processes of professionalization,\textsuperscript{13} and this means that political interest representation might become a field of activity moderated or controlled by professional ‘gate-keepers’.

A closer look at professional lobbyists seems thus to be a promising venture. In this chapter, I wish to provide empirical answers to a number of questions. Is EU lobbying an integrated field of professionalized activi-

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Interest representation as a field of expertise

Does the field of EU lobbyists mirror the diversity and fragmentation of the organizational field of lobby groups, or does it exhibit a more unified and coherent picture? Is interest representation within the EU an occupation tied to a group of specialists? And do practitioners share the conviction that EU lobbying is a professionalized field of activity requiring specialized knowledge and skills? In order to answer these questions, I will make use of findings from a research project on EU lobbying. In particular, this chapter draws on data from a survey among a sample of European lobbyists conducted between November 2016 and October 2017. The aim of the following analysis is primarily descriptive, because it wishes to substantiate the general proposition about the professionalization of European lobbying.

II. Theoretical concepts and assumptions

This paper is interested in analyzing lobbyism as a professional activity. It is guided by the conceptual and theoretical assumptions proposed by the sociology of professions. Accordingly, we are interested in assessing whether EU lobbying has become an occupational field exposed to professionalization. This process entails two dimensions. On the one hand, professionalization means the monopolization of activity by occupational groups. These processes replace unpaid, voluntary, part-time and honorary activity by full-time, salaried and long-term, career-oriented activities. On the other hand, professionalization means the standardization of activities through shared working routines, stocks of knowledge, and a joint credo of truth, rationality and legitimacy. This process should downplay the role of practical experience in the name of an ethos of professionalism that stresses specialized and higher knowledge. If we follow these assumptions, we can conceive of different scenarios. EU lobbying could be characterized by either a low or a high degree of professionalism on both dimensions (the occupational and the professional side).

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14 The research project is entitled, “The Professionalization of European Lobbying. Conditions, Forms and Consequences of the Formation of Professional Interest Representation in the European Union”, and is being funded by the German Research Council (LA117/6-1).

But what degree of professionalism are we expecting in the case of European lobbying? For this purpose, I propose making use of the two strands of research introduced we nominated in the introduction: political science studies about European interest groups, and sociological studies on professions. On these grounds, we can identify two scenarios that reflect the theoretical assumptions of these studies.

In regard to an expectedly low degree of professionalism, we can take inspiration from two debates. In the first debate, we can question the professionalism of EU lobbying with reference to the institutional structure of the EU itself. As is widely known, scholars disagree about the extent to which the EU has become a political domain detached from the nation state.

Against neofunctionalism, there are scholars who defend the crucial importance of the nation state, and/or place the nation state in a complex system of multi-level governance. These debates have influenced research about interest groups, primarily by insisting on the institutional complexity of the EU. The EU’s supranational and intergovernmental structures translate into an equally complex organizational field of interest groups with an equally complex strategy of multi-level lobbying. This

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institutional complexity, however, might limit the professionalism of EU lobbying. In fact, even though the main arena of activity of EU lobbyists is the ‘European’ one (i.e., Brussels), it is to be expected that professionalism will be limited by two factors. The regulatory impetus of the EU institution in the field of lobbying is restricted, because it aims to ensure transparency without endangering the smooth functioning of EU institutions. Regulation is in part delegated to professional associations, which are weakly developed. At the same time, national routes of influence remain crucial, and this means that European lobbyists need to be firmly rooted in different traditions and networks of political interest representation.

This scenario is echoed by sociological research on professions in modern societies. Classical approaches to occupational groups have argued that some liberal professions have been rather successful in shaping and monopolizing labor markets and societal functions. However, newer studies tend to stress the increasing inability of professions to do this. Established professions compete with new occupations and experts in an environment determined by technological progress, deregulation, privatization, and globalization. Additionally, established expertise is contested by the diversity of available expertise, by protest groups and lay associations. We are thus living in times of a marked plurality of occupations.


with competing claims of professionalism. For newer professional groups, such as lobbyists, it is thus much more difficult to secure higher levels of professionalism.

The second scenario assumes a much higher degree of professionalism in the field of EU lobbying. This scenario builds on two arguments that put different emphases on the factors described before. On the one hand, scholars stress that the EU is a proper policy domain with specific institutional demands, working routines and discourses, even if it is tied into a system of multi-level governance.

The European and national levels of governances are interlocked, as the concept of Europeanization suggests, because policy interests, ideas and practices are downloaded and uploaded between both levels. However, despite these interrelationships and interactions, we are dealing with independent arenas of policy-making, to which interest representation have to conform. Studies have been able to show how national lobby groups reach out to the European level, and how they have to adapt their activities to the agendas, ideas and rules patterning policy deliberations and decision-making processes there. While scholars agree that there is a growing interdependency of lobbying processes across levels, they insist on the fact

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26 Marks et al., European Integration from the 1980s; Bache, and Flinders, Multi-level Governance.


that EU lobbying has a rationale of its own that is clearly tied to the reality of the EU institutions.  

On the other hand, recent literature in the field of sociology has stressed that ‘classical’ professions might be on the decline, but that the ethos of professionalism and the attempts of professionalizing occupational fields is still a persistent aspect of today’s reality.  

If occupational fields are indeed the battlefield of competing occupational groups, and if occupational fields are today under much stronger scrutiny from the public sphere, then we might expect that the need to professionalize – or to defend an ethos of professionalism – is even more constitutive for the structure and development of occupational fields. This applies to the field of EU-lobbying in particular, given that this field of activity is critically evaluated by potential clients, citizen groups and mass media.

The empirical analyses will need to show which of the two scenarios applies in the field of EU lobbying. In order to prepare the empirical inquiry, we propose measuring these scenarios by making use of the two dimensions of professionalism outlined before. On the one hand, we expect that professionalization exerts a strong impact on transforming political interest representation into a full-time and salaried occupation, thus marginalizing voluntary forms of advocacy. The specialist making a living out of this work and developing career interests thus replaces the amateur that is unsalaried, minimally paid and/or temporarily employed. On the other hand, there is a symbolic added value to the occupational status i.e., an ethos of professionalism that is tied to higher knowledge, a shared identity and mission. The expert who claims to have access to privileged knowledge and experience, and to be capable of systematizing and ration-

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30 Fournier, The appeal to ‘Professionalism’; Noordegraaf, From ‘Pure’ to ‘Hybrid’ Professionalism; Evetts, Professionalism: Value and ideology.

alizing work flows, replaces the laypeople, whose knowledge is piece-meal, practical or erratic. In both respects, we are interested in validating whether the field of European lobbying is dominated by professionals or amateurs.

III. Data and methods

This paper makes us of data gathered by a research project dedicated to analyzing the professionalization of EU lobbying, financed by the German Research Council. In particular, we will use data from a survey among European lobbyists, which was conducted between November 2016 and October 2017 with the assistance of a German research institute (the ‘Sozialwissenschaftliche Umfragezentrum’). The construction of this sample required prudent reflection and preparation, because the total universe of European lobbyists is known to be difficult to ascertain. The difficulty consists primarily in the problem of identifying the periphery and/or the borders of the field. In fact, the group of people trying to influence European politics in a direct or indirect manner is potentially very extensive, reaching out to almost everybody across Europe and the globe involved in ‘government relations’ and/or ‘public affairs’ at the local, national, European and global level.

In order to master this problem, we opted for a more strict definition and demarcation of the field. On the one hand, we used the European Parliament’s Transparency Register in order to demarcate the total population of European lobbyists. This source is a good instrument to map the field of people directly involved in European politics. Indeed, individuals and organizations that wish to have regular access to information and staff of the European Parliament need to enroll in this register. Our survey thus excluded all those organizations and people who do not deal with the European Parliament on a regular basis i.e., local or national interest groups with no direct link to the EU and/or lobbyists ignoring the Parliament as a target of their lobbying activities. On the other hand, we delimited the to-


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tal population through the design of the survey itself. In fact, the invitation letter and questionnaire spoke about public affairs, but also addressed lobbyists explicitly. Consequently, the survey targeted respondents who identified themselves as lobbyists. This targeting had a self-selective impact, as we know from fieldwork, because respondents opted out of the survey due to these specifications.

For sampling purposes, we extracted the names and contact details of all individuals listed in the Transparency Register. Once exhausted, we used the names of organizations listed in this register, and contacted relevant respondents through the organizations’ main address. Respondents were contacted in various forms (e-mails, telephone calls, regular mail). They were able to answer the questionnaire online, via telephone or mail. This multimodal approach was chosen because previous experiences suggested that EU lobbyists are very often reluctant to participate in these kinds of surveys. This expectation was confirmed by the rather lengthy fieldwork that extended from November 2016 to October 2017. The total number of addresses extracted was 7,069, the total amount of responses 699. We were thus confronted with a very low response-rate. However, this rate needs to be taken with care because the total universe we identified through the Transparency Register seems to be too voluminous. In first instance, the fieldwork showed that many of the persons (and organizations) listed in the register were no longer active in the field. Hence, the register turned out to be outdated in many cases. Second, many respondents indicated that their membership in the register was motivated by the wish to receive and monitor information, but that their mission was not to influence politics. Both experiences nurture the impression that the field of European lobbying is not as big as the total number from the Transparency Register – and the even bigger numbers discussed in the public sphere – suggest. Hence, while these indications qualify the relatively low response rate, they do underline the need to be cautious about the sample’s representativity. Given the fact that we do not have a very clear picture about the scope and structure of the total universe, it is difficult to assess to what extent the sample is representative, and whether we can generalize the findings beyond the sample itself. To be on a safe side, it is thus advis-

33 Lahusen, Commercial consultancies in the European Union.
34 Courty, Are there 30.000 lobbyists in Brussels?.
able to expect that this sample centers more strongly on the core region of the field of EU lobbying, thus marginalizing the periphery (i.e., non-Brussels-based, national or local initiatives and activists).

The following analysis will make use of questions that measure the two dimensions of professionalization introduced before. On the one hand, I will present data on the occupational status and the type of employment (part- or full-time, salaried/unsalaried). On the other hand, I will exhibit the degree of professionalism with reference to a series of items: the respondent’s access to the labor market (accidental entrance to the field, previous specialized studies), and the importance of specialized knowledge (disagreement with ‘anybody can do a good job as a public affairs professional’), academic credentials, and specialized skills. Before we enter into this analysis, however, we will depict the socio-demographic profile of the sample (gender, age, and residency, citizenship), and the structure of the organizational field these lobbyists work for (i.e., branches of activities and type of organizations).

IV. Findings

The data collected through the survey gives us a vivid picture of the occupational field of lobbyism. Concerning its internal composition, we will start by highlighting a number of features that help to demarcate the backdrop of our analysis.

a) Lobbying as a highly diversified and fragmented field

If we look at the people involved in lobbying activities, we see that they have a pronounced socio-demographic profile. Concerning gender and age, for instance, the sample shows that lobbyists are more often male than female (i.e., 59% against 41%) and rather young. In fact, the mean age of the respondents is around 42 years. The most represented age groups are respondents in their 30s (37%) and 40s (24%), while the proportion of younger and older professionals is lower (12% are in their 20s, 18% in their 50s and 9% beyond 60). Additionally, our sample is dominated by Brussels-based lobbyists, as was to be expected: 67% live in Brussels, 10% commute on a daily basis, 17% on a weekly basis, and only 5% say that it is not necessary to visit Brussels regularly.
Much more diversity emerges when moving to the respondents’ national background. The data reveals that lobbyists come from 40 different nations. The biggest group consists of citizens from Germany (21%), France (18%), Italy (15%), Belgium (13%) and the UK (7%). But respondents also come from Spain, Sweden, Austria, Finland, Romania, or Greece. The overwhelming majority has a European background, and only 5% come from non-European countries, such as Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, the US, Russia, Australia, South Korea or South Africa.

Diversity prevails when looking at the organizations our respondents work for. Lobbyists work for organizations active in very different fields. They operate in the area of communication/information/media (8%), institutional affairs (5%), food/agriculture/consumer/health (8%), energy/environment/transport (14%), finance/trade/employment/social affairs (11%), research/education/culture/sport (6%), development/humanitarian/justice (4%), and public and civil society interests (8%), while the rest is employed by organizations focusing on other or unspecified fields of activities (10%), or have not given information. With regard to the type of organizations represented, diversity and fragmentation is a key feature of the field. Lobbyists work for professional consultancies (6%), companies (12%) and business associations (11%), trade unions (3%), think tanks and academic institutions (2%), public authorities (3%), and NGOs (8%), and other or unspecified types of organizations. We have small organizations with only a handful of employees, but also big entities with several thousand employees.

Overall, these findings confirm the picture previous research has painted about the organizational field of lobbying. According to this picture, we are dealing with a highly diversified and fragmented field of actors. The lobbyists echoed this impression in our survey: 61% of the respondents agreed to the statement that “competition between different interest groups has intensified”, and only 7% disagree.

b) Lobbying as a highly professionalized occupational field

The diversified and fragmented structure of the organizational field should be kept in mind when moving to the contours and structures of the professional field of lobbying, because the latter is marked by a surprisingly high level of professional integration and homogeneity. In the following, I wish to break down this general finding along the various dimensions I introduced in the conceptual and theoretical section of this paper.
With regard to the occupational dimension, it is necessary to validate whether European lobbying has become a professional activity tied to paid full-time employment, thus decoupling it from voluntary engagement and honorary civic advocacy. Table 1 and Table 2 give clear indications that this is indeed the case. Only a small minority of respondents indicates to be involved in honorary work and voluntary activities. The majority of lobbyists are employed and salaried by organizations. The low rate of freelancers indicates that lobbying is not a liberal profession with a high degree of occupational autonomy. Political interest representation is basically a function and task tied to organizations. This is true not only for interest groups, which are in need to recruit specialized personnel in order to further the interests they represent. The field of lobbying also consists of many commercial consultancies that work for a wider range of interchangeable clients. Among these organizations, salaried work has also become the main occupational status of lobbying.

**Table 1: occupational status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>self-employed/freelancer, receiving professional fees</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>directly employed and paid by my organization</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>84.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>receive an expense allowance</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my work is voluntary</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>672</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interest representation as a field of expertise

Table 2: type of employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Employment</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>full-time position, paid</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>84.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 part-time position, paid</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 and more part-time positions, paid</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>full-time position, unpaid</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>part-time position, unpaid</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we move to the professional dimension of lobbying, we wish to validate whether European lobbying has also monopolized the field of activities by means of educational credentials and a professional ethos of specialized and higher knowledge. This assumption is not necessarily what we expect to find when considering the fact that European lobbying is an open and unprotected field of labor, where anybody could offer their services. This expectation is validated by our data, because most of our respondents testify that they have not planned to get involved in European lobbying, and that they have not pursued a related study program prior to that. As listed in Table 3, about 58% of respondents say that they started working in the area of lobbying by chance. Only 24% disagree with this statement, thus indicating that they intentionally decided to work in this field.

Table 3: “I did not actively aim to work in lobbying, it just so happened rather by chance”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>totally disagree</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>82</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>105</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>164</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>totally agree</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t know</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: “To what extent was lobbying/public affairs a special focus of your studies?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>not at all</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 classes on this subject</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more than 3 classes</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>most of my classes (or at least one of my degrees)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t know</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>681</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, we see from Table 4 that the large majority of respondents certified that their vocational training and university course program were detached from their current activity. For 66%, lobbying was simply not a topic during their studies whatsoever.

These indications seem to confirm what recent studies in the sociology of professions are telling us. Occupational groups have a limited capacity to demarcate, monopolize and protect a field of activities and a related labor market. This applies to EU lobbying, because this field of activity is open to various occupational groups. Our data validates this argument in an impressive manner, because EU lobbying does not seem to exclude any occupational group whatsoever. Indeed, if we look at the educational background of our respondents, we get a comprehensive list of vocational and academic study fields: administrative science, law, business administration and economics, accounting, clinical medicine, engineering, chemistry, agronomy, astrophysics, mathematics, geography, history, political sciences, anthropology, languages, theology, and many others.

Against this backdrop, we would expect a low degree of professionalism. However, this is not the case, because a remarkably large majority of European lobbyists subscribes to an ethos of professionalism. According to this ethos, European lobbying requires specialized knowledge not available to ordinary lay people. Table 7 summarizes this finding by listing the proportion of respondents that disagreed with the statement that "anybody can do a good job as public affairs professional". 70% disagree with this statement, while only 11% believe in the ability of anybody to do an equally good job.
Table 5: “Generally, anybody can do a good job as public affairs professional”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>totally disagree</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>220</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>105</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>totally agree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t know</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

European lobbying thus requires specialized knowledge, as portrayed by Table 6. This table summarizes the finding of a battery of questions that asked respondents to rank the importance of various skills on a scale from ‘not at all required’ to ‘absolutely required’. The means show that respondents agree on the unavoidability of networking skills and EU-related knowledge – both items receive a high rank, but also the standard deviation shows that there is general consensus on this point. Skills related to work experience receive less approval, while the low rank for specialized (technical) expertise highlights that lobbying is not about understanding the technical details of the issues to be represented, but mastering the political process within the EU. Differences between gender or age groups are rather small, and are thus not discussed further here.
Table 6: Important skills for the job (means, five point scale: required vs. not required)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>networking skills</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of EU legislative processes</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional experience in my specific sector</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional experience in public affairs</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>existing professional networks</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>administrative skills</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specialized (technical) expertise</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>636</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question: Imagine somebody else would take your current position. Which skills are important for the relevant tasks?

Summarizing the evidence presented so far, we see that European lobbying is a rather open labor market when taking educational background and access points into consideration. At the same time, it is a highly integrated field of activity when looking at the ethos of professionalism European lobbyists have learned to subscribe to. This ethos is firmly rooted in the academic identity shared by our respondents. Table 7 shows that the labor market of European lobbying is monopolized by holders of university degrees: the vast majority of respondents holds a Master’s degree, and additional 9% a PhD. This means that European lobbying has been strongly exposed to a process of academization.
Table 7: *highest level of education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Level of Education</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocational/undergraduate/secondary (high school, lyceum) and lower</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate/post-secondary higher education (e.g., B.A., B.Sc.)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate higher education (e.g., M.A., M.Sc., MBA)</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>82.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate (e.g., PhD., Dr.)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>683</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The academic identity of EU lobbyists is not only a matter of their educational background. Most of them firmly believe that their previous education helps them in fulfilling their professional expectations. As shown in Table 8, the majority of respondents are convinced that their current activities in the area of European lobbying reflect and correspond to the educational credentials and skills acquired during their studies. Basically, the lobbyists’ ethos of professionalism is rooted in the conviction of being highly qualified knowledge workers.

Table 8:  *“The requirements of my current position correspond to my level of education and skills.”*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totally disagree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>99</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>233</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally agree</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>626</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. Discussion and conclusions

European lobbying has inspired research in the field of social sciences for many decades. Scholars have learned that the building of the European Communities and the European Union has attracted a growing number of interest groups, who had vested interests in shaping the institutional architecture of the EU and the public policies it developed. They have learned that the construction of the field of organized interests has evolved unevenly across time, and that the field has been accumulating redundancies and increasing its internal fragmentation.

The findings of this paper expand on this knowledge by raising our awareness of the composition and structure of the lobbying personnel. These findings do not refute insights generated by the study of organizations. The diversity and fragmentation of the field of interest groups is a fact reflected also at the level of the lobbyists. And EU lobbyists refer to this reality when they stress internal competition within the field. However, what has been ignored by previous research is the fact that the field of lobbying is highly patterned and structured by the profession whose job it is to represent group interests. On the basis of a survey among European lobbyists, we learned that this field of activity is highly professionalized. On the one hand, European lobbying is by and large the business of full-time salaried professionals who devote their time and career to the advancement of societal interests. On the other hand, European lobbyists are knowledge workers sharing an ethos of professionalism, because they emphasize that their activity can only be done adequately on the basis of higher and specialized knowledge. The field of European lobbying is thus monopolized by graduates who rationalize and legitimate their work as a non-trivial, rational and abstract undertaking.

The findings of this study need to be interpreted with caution, because the survey was conducted on the basis of the European Transparency Register. We can thus assume that we have targeted the core area of EU lobbying, that is mainly Brussels-based staff working for organizations with a vested interest in maintaining regular relations with the EU Parliament and other institutions. The sample will not be representing the periphery and fuzzy borders of the field, because EU-lobbying extends – in principle – to all (global, national or local) groups being indirectly or directly involved in influencing European politics. However, the intention of this study was precisely to take a closer look at the European field of lobbying. Moreover, findings hold even if we differentiate along the lines of residency: full-time salaried positions are the dominant occupational status for lobby-
ing living in Brussels or commuting from the outside, and the same applies to the conviction that lobbying requires specialized knowledge. At least in this regard, the spatial location of lobbyists does not affect professionalism.

The empirical insights presented in this chapter can only provide a very first impression about the professional contours of EU lobbying. They show that interest representation is by now in the hands of an occupational group of specialists committed to an ethos of professionalism and claiming privileged access to specialized expert knowledge. However, these standardized indicators say little about the specific professional orientations of EU lobbyists and the potential lines of disagreement and contention within the field. Moreover, they ignore the views and judgments of other actors (e.g., employers and clients, EU institutions or the mass media), which will certainly affect the professionalization of EU lobbying. More research is thus necessary in order to enlarge and deepen our understanding about the group of specialists responsible for the daily work of interest representation.

In spite of these limitations, it must be stressed that the picture painted by our data does not diverge from the evidence we have from previous research. Our findings are even not very surprising, because they subscribe to some of the lessons drawn from the analysis of the European field of public affairs and governance. What our study delivers is a missing piece within the larger framework of previous analyses. If scholarly writing is correct in assuming that European lobbying is an increasingly diverse, fragmented and competitive field of activity, then our findings help to identify the ‘glue’ that seems to hold the pieces together. If scholarly writing is correct in assuming that the organizational field of European lobbying is granted differential access to societal interests, then our findings help to ascertain one of the rationales behind this differential access. In fact, if we look at the personnel, we see that European lobbying is heavily professionalized both in its internal dimension (a high integration of occupational patterns and professional dispositions) and in its external dimension (the exclusion of non-professional labor).

35 Kauppi, and Madsen, Transnational Power Elites; Vauchez, and Witte, Lawyer Europe; Georgakakis, and Rowell, The Field of Eurocracy; Büttner et al., Professionalization in EU Policy-Making?.
Professionalism seems to translate into the monopolization of political advocacy work by specialists. Unpaid, voluntary or honorary engagement by non-academics and laypeople has either never played a role in the EU arena, or is on the retreat. This closure might be a natural consequence of job requirements, because newcomers need sufficient knowledge about the EU, European laws, and the vicissitudes of European politics. However, the closure is also a matter of the standing and reputation professional actors aim to secure. In view of their clients, EU lobbyists seem to claim that they have privileged access to the EU’s political reality, and to be in the possession of all instruments for a rational, efficient and effective representation of interests. This does not exclude individual citizens, informal advocacy groups, civil society organizations or protest movements from the European field of lobbying per se. However, we know from research that these organizations see the need to adapt their work to the professional standards of European lobbying, and that their integration into professional networks tends to alienate them from their grassroots constituencies.36 This closure is remarkable, considering that the field of European lobbying is an open and unprotected labor market, that European lobbyists come from the most diverse academic backgrounds, and that most of them joined the field accidentally. The EU institutions and the professional networks on the spot seem to be highly effective in including and assimilating newcomers, and in neutralizing differences between the various occupational groups involved in the field of European lobbying. The forces guiding this successful professionalization, however, are not yet fully understood.

References


Conclusion

Christian Lahusen, Robert Kaiser, Andrea Schneiker, Christian Henrich-Franke

Expertise and expert groups are pervasive factors of social and political life, so the findings presented by the various case studies in this book are neither exceptional nor surprising. However, what we have learned from previous research on the topic and from the evidence generated by this collection is that expertise and expert groups are not simply a given, or "natural," element of social and political reality. Rather, expertise depends on a group’s ability to establish its knowledge as authoritative—a process that is quite demanding and ridden with prerequisites. This book has provided ample evidence of such prerequisites by highlighting the internal construction of expert groups and the necessity of being recognized by actors in their environment.

Internally, many of our contributions have shown that members of expert groups do indeed share a common set of norms, convictions, and values, and that they were educated and socialized in similar ways. In her article on transnational expertise for the UN Human Rights Council, Ingvild Bode clearly shows that not only were a majority of the experts selected by the Council working in academia, but that they had previously interacted with different UN organizations. The same holds for experts who were chosen to support the implementation of the EU’s research and innovation funding program. The analysis of the internal dimension of expert groups presented in Robert Kaiser’s contribution on transnational expertise for Horizon 2020 shows that a background in academic or industrial research is a necessary but not sufficient condition. Experts selected for H2020 ad-

visory groups also had a track record of earlier involvement in EU policies. In cases in which membership is more restricted because of the high policy character of the political agenda (as is the case for expert groups in the European Political Cooperation, EPC), experts have often known one another for a long time through previous collaboration in various transnational groups or forums. Thus, Alexander Reinfeldt, in his article on the EPC, rightly argues that there is good reason to assume that such long-time interactions could indeed have supported a process in which experts became increasingly “Europeanized.” It does not come as a surprise that in fields where specialized technical expertise is needed, such as in telecommunications regulation, experts exhibit similar patterns of education and socialization. More importantly, as Christian Henrich-Franke shows, the existence of a common technical understanding of a regulatory problem allows for the development of interpersonal trust among members of a transnational expert group at a level that is probably even higher than that of their trust toward the representatives of national political organizations who delegated the expert to the transnational arena in the first place.

When it comes to external interactions with the institutional environment, an expert’s role is that of an insider or outsider to a political problem-solving process. In her contribution on expertise in the regulation of the financial markets after the 2008 crisis, Carola Westermeier, provides a good overview of the different roles of insiders and outsiders. During and in the aftermath of the crisis, political actors relied on insiders—that is, experts closely connected to the financial industry—and many nongovernmental organizations criticized this insider involvement for favoring solutions that they said would not be in the public interest.

We certainly need a better theoretical and empirical understanding of the different functions experts have in the political process, and not only of the different roles of experts of the same type (e.g., scientists as experts), but also those of different groups of experts (professionals, industrial lobbyists, lay experts, scientists, etc.). Regarding experts of the same type Roger Pielke\(^2\) introduced a typology of four different functions of scientists. The "pure scientist" has no interest in a specific policy solution, but rather wants to ensure that scientific knowledge plays a role in the decision-making concerning alternative problem-solving strategies. The "science arbiter,” by contrast, is strongly involved in the political process

as an expert who directly provides decision-makers with the expertise political actors deem necessary for resolving problems. The “issue advocate” uses scientific knowledge to convince politicians of an optimal solution strategy, whereas the aim of the “honest broker” is to integrate non-scientific knowledge and concerns into his expertise. We still lack conceptual clarity concerning the honest broker, especially because there are no clear boundaries between the different groups of experts. However, we do have a clear understanding of the differences between professional or technocratic expertise and lay expertise. Importantly, this differentiation implies that political problem-solving may be confronted with different bodies of knowledge that can either complement or compete with one another.

I. State and Expert Groups: A Distant and Close Relationship

Not only have the case studies revealed the internal and external processes of transnational expert group formation and maintenance, the evidence also shows that the internal and external dimensions are intricately interwoven. This complementarity is not least due to the fact that expert groups do not emerge out of the blue; rather, they are a result of complex interactions between members of the expert groups and other actors in their environment who, to a greater or lesser extent, depend on their expertise. Each of the case studies collected in this book centers mainly on one external actor—the state—because our focus is on transnational expertise in the realm of international politics. Lukas Schemper’s analysis of the International Relief Union during the First and Second World Wars, Christian Henrich-Franke’s study of the European standardization and regulation of international telecommunications between the 1950s and 1970s, and Alexander Reinfeldt’s inquiry into the European Political Cooperation (EPC) during the 1970s show how the historical formation of international bodies and the expansion of their regulatory mandates created a demand for expertise that particular professional groups then aimed to provide. The more

recent cases show that expert groups continue to be interrelated with state institutions, as indicated by Ingvild Bode’s study of mandate holders within the United Nation’s Human Rights Council, Carola Westermeier’s analysis of the interrelations between economic experts and political decision-makers during the 2008 financial crisis, Robert Kaiser’s analyses of the role of experts in the implementation of large-scale European funding programs, and Christian Lahusen’s study of the role of lobbyists within the EU.

(Transnational) expert groups and the state are thus strongly interrelated. However, this does not mean that they necessarily form a unified whole, as models of technocratic governance would imply. More often than not, the relationships between expert groups and the state are simultaneously governed by proximity and distance. The distance between the two is a core element of their functional relation, in that experts deliver authoritative knowledge, whereas state actors are responsible for making and implementing binding decisions for which they might be held accountable in future elections. This division of labor actively promotes the de-politicization of expert knowledge, as most case studies in this book show. Indeed, expertise is valuable to state actors only if it is produced and supplied by expert groups as neutral and politically disinterested. State institutions cultivate this de-politicization by establishing consultative bodies and procedures that grant privileged access to expert groups but are detached from formal decision-making. Expert groups emphasize their independence and celebrate their disinterestedness also because much of their mandate and legitimacy depends on these characteristics.

However, the differences in mandates and rationales of the two sides do not rule out proximity. On the contrary, some of the case studies in this book show that expert groups and state actors are engaged in close working relations while constantly reaffirming on which side of the table they are sitting. For instance, expert groups are actively involved in persuading state actors that their definition of problems is accurate and that their knowledge will provide important tools for problem-solving. They are regularly invited to consultative committees or procedures, where they

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translate their abstract knowledge into politically applicable recommendations. Expert groups often maintain close relations with policy-makers and public authorities to build the reputation and trust needed to persuade decision-makers that the expert groups’ recommendations should be followed.

These observations are generally valid; that is, they are true for the relation between expert groups and the state at the local, national, European, and global levels. The case studies presented in this book pay more attention to the international and the supranational level, by analyzing the activities of expert groups in the emerging European Communities, the subsequent European Union, the International Relief Union, and the United Nations’ Human Rights Council. These expert groups primarily differ from similar groups in individual countries in their transnational shape. Their formation, internal architecture, and mandates are strongly determined by the institutional architecture of the international policy arena they address—in this case, the institutional fabric of the United Nations and the European Communities/Union, respectively. Their expertise is often tied, and in part even restricted, to these arenas, because these expert groups have specialized in particular issues under the jurisdiction of these international bodies; because they have built professional networks and relations of trust; and because they have been socialized in these arenas and along with its personnel.

In addition, these expert groups remain transnational both in structure and in scope: They have a transnational structure in that they are recruited from a diversity of countries (although North American and European countries appear to play a particularly strong role). At the same time, they have a transnational scope of action in that they are highly mobile, maintain a wide range of contacts to peers elsewhere, and are used to working with organizations in various countries across Europe or even worldwide. Transnational experts must be acquainted with the institutional architecture, agendas, and work routines of international bodies, but their work must also resonate in the various countries of which these international organizations consist.

In response to the centrifugal forces inherent in this multinational structure and scope, transnational expert groups appear to rely heavily on a variety of elements. They depend on the development of a common language and abstract knowledge base suitable for multilingual settings; they draw on peer networks and professional associations to organize and represent the expert group internationally; and they rely on being accredited by international bodies has being entitled to having access to relevant arenas of
consultation and deliberation. This shows the demanding and contingent character of the formation and stabilization of transnational expertise. Moreover, very often, the reputation and authority of transnational expert groups is contested, and not only by competing transnational expert groups in the same institutional environment (the United Nations or the European Communities and Union), but also at the national and local levels, where other groups question the authority and mandate of transnational expert groups to speak on their behalf.

II. Transnational Expertise: Societal Implications

Analyses of transnational expert groups must take this contingency and contentiousness into account and must remain aware that these aspects have effects on social and political life. To get an idea of these implications, we can build on ongoing debates within the social sciences that have tried to understand the paradoxical dynamics inherent in the development of expert knowledge in modern societies. Of particular interest in this regard are two research debates that have been addressing opposing trends—first, the globalization of expertise and its standardizing impacts and, second, the pluralization and localization of expertise with its de-standardizing effects.

The first debate was instigated by a group of scholars who convincingly argued that (transnational) expert groups have a standardizing effect on available knowledge and the related problem-solving strategies of actors that rely on expert groups. Within the field of sociology, this theoretical argument was first advanced in organizational studies. According to some authors in this field, organizations working in a similar field of activity are faced with the streamlining of their organizational structures and activities—a process scholars referred to as "isomorphism." The main drivers behind such standardization were the state (with its regulatory powers) and the professions (with their authoritative expertise). Expert groups and

professions are "institutional agents"\textsuperscript{6} with clearly defined views on the regulatory, normative, and cognitive dimensions of organizational work. As a result, they have a strong impact on the "institutional substrate" of organizations (i.e., the rules, norms, ideas, and knowledge on which they are based). One reason experts play this important role as effectively as they do is that organizations depend on this institutional input, not only to meet the technical requirements of their operation, but also in respect of the legitimacy of the organizational structures, mandates, and missions. Professional expertise promises to provide guidance in a highly competitive, contingent, and uncertain environment, and thus to lead organizations to make the correct and legitimate decisions. In this sense, expert groups can also become agents of institutional change if they question the regulatory, normative, and cognitive status quo in organizational fields, and if they introduce new ideas, rules, and techniques that organizations might adopt.\textsuperscript{7}

Researchers working in this area soon realized that their findings not only applied to organizational fields at the national level—if nation states were regarded as "organizations," their findings also applied to the political order of nations at the global level. Focusing on the institutional substrate of nation states, Meyer \textit{et al.}\textsuperscript{8}, noted that the "world polity" was exposed to similar "isomorphic" processes of standardization. The pressures on nation states to comply with particular rules and standards of nation-building in terms of its internal institutional structure; the type and range of policy domains; and the relation among the spheres of the state, the economy, and civil society and the citizens are all evidence of the power of highly rationalized, universal models of ordering the social and political life. Given the absence of a super-state that could enforce these models internationally, these scholars drew attention to professions and experts, whose mandate is to develop, disseminate, and implement these rationalized models of seeing and doing things. Empirical case studies revealed that the transnationalization of expert groups promoted the diffusion of


specific institutional role models and the standardization of policy domains across nation states, such as environmental or educational policies.\textsuperscript{9} However, this institutionalist approach has been criticized for over-stretching the argument for a top-down process of convergence and standardization of social and political life down to the local level. Numerous case studies have pointed to the complex interrelations between global and local forces. Convergence and divergence can occur simultaneously, because many nation states develop welfare regimes and industrial relations, but they do so along different clusters.\textsuperscript{10} At the same time, there might be a decoupling of the institutional rhetoric of nation states vis-à-vis the international community from the political practice at the ground level.\textsuperscript{11} However, that expert groups play an important role in international politics is beyond a doubt. They help nation states to identify their interests, rank priorities, and select policy choices. As epistemic communities they play a pivotal role in policy formulation and coordination.\textsuperscript{12} They also provide international organizations and national governments with the ontologies and cognitive apparatus to define the essence of things and appropriate ways of handling them. Thus, they have a standardizing impact on the political discourses within international organizations and across nation states, even though these discourses do not necessarily translate into converging policies that are implemented at the local level.

This caveat is even more necessary in considering the lessons learned from the other strand of sociological research of expertise to be introduced


here, which stresses that there are an ongoing pluralization of professional expertise and a blurring of the boundaries between experts and laypersons, and which explains these processes by the inherent dynamics of modernization. These processes have led to a functional differentiation of society, which also involves processes of differentiation of (expert) knowledge; they have increased the importance of knowledge-based labor markets, which bring about more varied occupational groups that each claim superior knowledge; and they have generalized the demand for knowledge by economic, state, and civil society actors because they live in a society that has learned to be more reflective on its own (detrimental) consequences.13

Expertise also has become an important weapon in political debates, in that governments and political parties use available expertise to support and legitimize their opposing demands.14 Moreover, social movements and citizen groups have increased their commitment to knowledge generation and the mobilization of professional expertise or lay knowledge for their own purposes.15

These processes are structurally unleashed from within: the internal fragmentation of the field leads to an increased number of professional groups and forms of expertise, all of which claim to have superior access to the truth and therefore make competing claims of exclusive expertise. At the same time, these process are induced from outside as well, when contending political or social actors use available expertise selectively and instrumentally to further their interests.16 These structural transformations and the processes they unleash have several implications. First, they have led to a growing pluralization of available expertise and increasing competition among expert groups. As a consequence, the power of expert groups to control the production of a specific knowledge base and non-experts’

access to their fields of activities has diminished considerably.\textsuperscript{17} Second, they have democratized expertise, in that citizens have come to question the exclusivity of professional groups and the knowledge systems they control more often than they used to, and to claim their right to gather know-how and defend their own truth.\textsuperscript{18} Third, these developments entail a crisis of professional expertise in general, because the alleged superiority of expert knowledge is increasingly being put into question, both in cognitive terms (e.g., specialized, accredited knowledge) and in normative terms (e.g., the professional ethos of disinterestedness).\textsuperscript{19} 

As we have seen, the research on the development of professional expertise has identified two opposing trends—that of the transnationalization of expert groups and the standardization of dominant knowledge systems, and that of the pluralization of expert knowledge and the contentiousness of competing claims to possess knowledge. One might be inclined to think that the two processes are mutually exclusive, but this could be a premature conclusion, because we have reason to assume that the role and fate of expert groups are influenced by both processes and their respective pressures. In fact, from the perspective of each expert group, in a situation of competition and contentiousness, it seems essential to maintain the claim to possess and control authoritative knowledge that is universally valid and thus applicable globally. This claim and mission fuel competition among contending expert groups and provoke the criticism of citizens and lay groups. Expert groups might attempt to fence off this competition by monopolizing particular fields of activity, by engaging in cooperation with other expert groups, and/or by increasing their attempts to transfer knowledge to the general public. At the same time, state and policy actors choose multidisciplinary expert panels and develop consultation procedures devoted to specific issues in order to benefit from the wide variety of available expert knowledge and to complement their divergent types of expertise into deliberative processes. However, these attempts do not overcome but cloak the contingencies and contentiousness inherent in expert groups and their claims that they have authoritative knowledge.


The internal and external dimensions of transnational expert groups on which we focus in this volume have a variety of political implications. In particular, we must take into consideration that the internal coherence of expert groups, the dynamics of the transnational socialization of their members, and the interactions of expert groups with their institutional environment can have negative consequences for political problem-solving.

First, there is the danger that expert involvement leads to an inappropriate reduction of the complexity that usually characterizes societal problems. Political actors may instrumentalize experts to de-politize decision-making processes. Some strategies of de-politization pose a significant threat to political legitimacy. In recent years, experts have increasingly become involved in the definition of numbers and indicators used to establish targets and measurements for public policies. Of course, indicators have the advantage that they make policy outcomes comparable, which is why they are regarded as an appropriate instrument of rational policymaking, but they also influence the perception of a given political problem and on the awareness of societal relations and conditions. This is important because indicators are very often applied as a means of “evidence-based policies” in areas characterized by high public investments and considerable redistribution effects (e.g., in health, education and social policies). Critical questions have been asked about the power relations between experts who are included in and experts who are excluded from the definition of indicators; the quality of problem-solving strategies, because indicators prevent strategies that are difficult to measure in quantitative terms; and in view of the political legitimacy of policies that to a high degree become predefined by their orientation toward the achievement of the preset targets. Beyond evidence-based policies, strategies of depolitization often aim at placing decision-making processes out of the reach of actors and organizations that would actually be the competent institutions. A good example is the European Union, which in recent years has established many so-called executive agencies in which experts (inter-

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nal and external) prepare political decisions that are then ratified by the relevant political institutions.\textsuperscript{21}

Second, if we consider what mechanisms are used in the selection of experts, it can be assumed that the argument that the involvement of experts in politics “enriches” decision-making processes with pure scientific or professional knowledge is a myth. On the contrary, as Salter \textit{et al.}\textsuperscript{22} have convincingly shown, there is a difference between scientific knowledge produced in academia and scientific knowledge used to support political decision-making. A major problem for politicians is that they increasingly need (scientific) expertise, but that pure science often produces conflicting answers to societal problems that do not lend themselves to political problem-solving. Practical advice or policy recommendations are therefore often based on “mandated science” that offers solutions for a predefined problem description. Accordingly, Jasanoff\textsuperscript{23} notes that being a scientific expert who also works as a policy advisor is a “hybrid activity” that combines scientific evidence with social and political judgment. The influence of mandated science may even be higher as a result of key institutional characteristics of a political organization. For example, the European Union has rightly been defined as a political system of multilevel governance that allows for expert involvement not only at the central European or the member state levels. Rather, there are good reasons to assume that expert networks may also be established vertically across territorial levels that influence public policy with identical advice and recommendations at different but interwoven levels of authority and at the same time. This assumption holds not only for the EU, but for other federalized political systems as well.\textsuperscript{24}

Third, there is of course the danger that expert groups will work and proceed outside the original mandate of their principals. Involving experts in policy-making very likely causes typical principal–agent-problems, especially in the form of agency drifts, when experts (or executive agencies that rely on external expertise) try to increase their institutional role, their

resources, or their influence on political decisions. The principal’s obvious reaction is to exercise stricter control on the experts than would be done, for example, in many advisory groups of the European Commission that are either chaired by Commission representatives or in which the Commission sets the agenda. The institutional setup of an agency therefore has a major influence on experts’ ability to deviate from the original mandate. In an agency with a strong hierarchical order and clear limitations on the mandate to coordinate activities of the principal’s representatives, it is difficult for experts to pursue their own agenda.

IV. Open Questions and Implications for Further Analysis

Where should we go from here in our research? The individual contributions of this edited volume suggest a number of avenues for further research on expert groups and expertise, but we would like to focus on three aspects that we consider to be particularly relevant. First—and this might sound banal—the chapters in this collection have shown that it is important to study the role of individuals in politics. Whereas historians and sociologists usually study individuals, political scientists generally focus on collective actors, which they often regard as unitary actors, and opening the “black boxes” of state and non-state actors and adopting a micro-perspective to study the internal organizational life of collective actors has been a fairly recent endeavor in political science. However, the methodological challenges it involves extend beyond the boundaries of political science. Regardless of the disciplinary background from which the subject is approached, gathering data on individual experts can be difficult. It requires that relevant data are available and accessible through archives, and that the experts under scrutiny agree to be interviewed and/or observed (ethnographically) for scientific purposes. As Ingvild Bode shows in her chapter, studying the practical construction of expertise requires more biographical data on the potential experts and information on the processes in which other actors recognize someone as an expert. The chapters have

also shown that the role of individuals in expert groups might raise the chicken-and-egg-question of whether it is the individuals who influence the structures or whether it is the structures that influence the individuals.

Second, if one considers expertise as socially constructed, one must take into account that it is contingent and hinges on a variety of factors. This makes it necessary to carry out more (comparative) studies both across different organizational settings and across time in order to identify the factors that determine why, in a particular context, individuals are accepted as experts by their peers and political decision-makers. For example, a systematic comparison of expertise in the context of intergovernmental policy fields and in supranational ones in the EU would make it possible to determine which factors that have an impact on an expert group’s influence are contingent on the institutional setting and which are not.

Third, on a related note, researchers must pay attention to potential selection bias. Whether they study the internal life of expert groups or their interaction with political decision-makers, there is the danger that researchers tend to focus on successful cases of internal cohesion and of external recognition of expert groups. As the chapters in this edited volume show, both the internal cohesion of expert groups and their external recognition by politicians might rely on shared sets of standards of behavior that, for example, promote trust-building among experts and lead politicians to trust experts’ knowledge and advice. If we study successful examples of recognized expertise, we might remain unaware of standards of behavior other than those that are ultimately accepted as appropriate. Studying failures—that is, cases in which experts did not manage to form a group, where the internal cohesion of an expert group eroded, or an expert group was not recognized by political decision-makers—could shed light on factors explaining the influence of expert groups that might otherwise be overlooked.

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