

Experts in Organizations

Block Seminar (29.10.21, 26.-27.11.21, 17.-18.12.21)
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Overview

Experts are essential to modern organizations. The variety of labels we use to describe experts – technologists, professionals, specialists – reflects the wide array of expert work that is performed in organizations. Some experts maintain the critical technological infrastructures of organizations. Other experts produce convincing ideas that allow firms to compete in knowledge-centered markets. Public institutions also draw on experts to legitimize decisions with wide-ranging social consequences. Organizations provide an important context in which all these forms of expertise thrive and interact. At the same time, being embedded in an organization – its rules, roles, and routines – can pose a challenge to the autonomy and identity of experts. The goal of this seminar is to explore the puzzling relationship between experts and organizations.

To achieve this goal, we will discuss questions such as: What makes an expert? What distinguishes expertise from other forms of authority in organizations? How do experts establish and defend the boundaries of their jurisdiction? How do experts engage with other actors within and beyond the organization? When do experts move to the front in organizations and when do they remain in the shadows? To develop answers to these intricate questions, we will study a broad range of experts and organizations. For example, we will engage with research on medical doctors in a hospital, technical staff in a criminal forensics lab, compliance officers in a university, art historians in a startup, professional strategists in a firm, plant pathologists in the field, and management consultants at a client. Simultaneously, we will engage with different theoretical perspectives on expertise from across the social sciences. Among others, we will draw on analytic resources from organization studies, the sociology of professions, and science & technology studies.

This seminar is divided in one virtual kick-off session and two in person blocks. There are no mandatory readings for the kickoff session. However, there is a fair number of mandatory readings in preparation for each of the two in person blocks. There is plenty of time between the sessions to read, but I recommend that you plan ahead your reading. The readings as well as additional readings (optional) will be made available via *Lernraum*.

	Date	Topic	Time	Place
1	Friday, 29.10.2021	Introduction	14:00-18:00	Online via Zoom
2	Friday, 26.11.2021	Professional experts	12:00-18:00	U2-217
3	Saturday, 27.11.2021	Scientific experts	10:00-18:00	X-E1-107
4	Friday, 17.12.2021	Itinerant experts	12:00-18:00	U2-217
5	Saturday, 18.12.2021	Invisible experts	10:00-18:00	X-E1-103

Certificate of participation (*Studienleistung*)

To get a certificate of participation for this seminar, you are required to regularly attend the seminar, actively participate in the discussions and to submit two literature protocols (upper limit: 1 Din A4 page, ½ page summary and ½ page open questions, criticism, remarks). Choose one mandatory reading from each block. Please upload the literature protocols to *Lernraum* until 11pm on Thursday 25.11. and Thursday 16.12. respectively.

Certificate of examination (*Prüfungsleistung*)

To get a certificate of participation for this seminar, you are required to write a term paper (*Hausarbeit*) related to the topic of this seminar (upper limit: 6000 words). Condition for the acceptance of the term paper is a prior agreement of the topic and the question with the lecturer. Please send the term paper as a PDF document to maximilian.heimstaedt@uni-bielefeld.de. There is no specific submission date, but I advise a submission no later than 31.03.2022.

Detailed plan of the sessions

Friday, 29.10.2021, 14:00-18:00 (Online, via Zoom)

We use this first session for a round of introductions and to familiarize ourselves with the topic, goals, and procedures of the seminar. In particular we use this first session to enter the field of organization studies and the question what an organizational perspective can contribute to our broader interest in scientific experts and expertise. There are no mandatory readings for this session.

Optional readings:

Anteby, M., Chan, C. K., & DiBenigno, J. (2016). Three lenses on occupations and professions in organizations: Becoming, doing, and relating. *Academy of Management Annals*, 10(1), 183-244.

Eyal, G. (2019). *The crisis of expertise*. John Wiley & Sons.

Friday, 26.11.2021, 12:00-18:00, (Room: U2-217)

In this session we focus on **professional experts** in organizations, that is on individuals who claim authority and autonomy due to their membership in a professional or occupational group. The study of professional experts has a long tradition in sociology and organization studies. In this session we discuss three recent studies, which give us insights into situations in which the autonomy and authority of professional experts gets – at least seemingly – undermined by the organizational context they work in. We use these cases to discuss if and if yes how the nature of professional expertise in organizations has been changing in recent years.

Mandatory readings:

Slot 1 (12:00-13:30)

Huising, R. (2015). To hive or to hold? Producing professional authority through scut work. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 60(2), 263-299.

Slot 2 (14:00-15:30)

DiBenigno, J. (2020). Rapid relationality: How peripheral experts build a foundation for influence with line managers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 65(1), 20-60.

Slot 3 (16:00-17:30)

Wilhelm, H., Bullinger, B., & Chromik, J. (2020). White coats at the coalface: the standardizing work of professionals at the frontline. *Organization Studies*, 41(8), 1169-1200.

Optional readings:

Blagoev, B., & Schreyögg, G. (2019). Why do extreme work hours persist? Temporal uncoupling as a new way of seeing. *Academy of Management Journal*, 62(6), 1818-1847.

Kellogg, K. C. (2014). Brokerage professions and implementing reform in an age of experts. *American Sociological Review*, 79(5), 912-941.

Saturday, 27.11.2021, 10:00-18:00 (Room: X-E1-107)

In this session we talk about **scientific experts** in organizations. Departing from our previous discussions we first try to understand the specific characteristics of scientific experts compared to other professional experts. Subsequently we engage in a number of case studies that highlight the different ways in which the work of scientific experts is shaped by and shapes organizations. We use these case studies to reflect in what way an organizational perspective affects our understanding of the way in which science relates to other domains of society.

Mandatory readings:

Slot 1 (10:00-11:30)

Bechky, B. A. (2020). Evaluative spillovers from technological change: The effects of “DNA envy” on occupational practices in forensic science. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 65(3), 606-643.

Slot 2 (12:30-14:00)

Perkmann, M., & Schildt, H. (2015). Open data partnerships between firms and universities: The role of boundary organizations. *Research Policy*, 44(5), 1133-1143.

Slot 3 (14:30-16:00)

Rauch, M., & Ansari, S. (2021). From ‘publish or perish’ to societal impact: Organisational repurposing towards responsible innovation through creating a medical platform. *Journal of Management Studies*.

Slot 4 (16:30-18:00)

Nelson, A. J. (2016). How to share “a really good secret”: Managing sharing/secretcy tensions around scientific knowledge disclosure. *Organization Science*, 27(2), 265-285.

Optional readings:

Porter, A. J., Kuhn, T. R., & Nerlich, B. (2018). Organizing authority in the climate change debate: IPCC controversies and the management of dialectical tensions. *Organization Studies*, 39(7), 873-898.

Friday, 17.12.2021, 12:00-18:00 (Room: U2-217)

In this session we talk about **itinerant experts** in organizations. The shared characteristic of itinerant experts is that they perform their work in or in close collaboration with organizations, but are not as embedded in these organizations as other experts. As we will explore in this session, such a loose coupling to organizations provides itinerant experts with great autonomy, but also comes with a greater volatility in their everyday work and careers trajectories. The readings of this week introduce us to the work of management consultants, professional strategists and a diverse group that has been described as transnational professionals.

Mandatory readings:

Slot 1 (12:00-13:30)

Bourgoin, A., Bencherki, N., & Faraj, S. (2020). “And who are you?”: A performative perspective on authority in organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 63(4), 1134-1165.

Slot 2 (14:00-15:30)

Harrington, B., & Seabrooke, L. (2020). Transnational professionals. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 46, 399-417.

Slot 3 (16:00-17:30)

Whittington, R., Cailluet, L., & Yakis-Douglas, B. (2011). Opening strategy: Evolution of a precarious profession. *British Journal of Management*, 22(3), 531-544.

Optional readings:

Barley, S. R., & Kunda, G. (2011). *Gurus, hired guns, and warm bodies: Itinerant experts in a knowledge economy*. Princeton University Press.

Saturday, 18.12.2021, 10:00-18:00 (Room: X-E1-103)

In this session we talk about **invisible experts** in organizations. Invisible experts have extensive academic or professional training but in contrast to the previously discussed types of experts remain mostly invisible to the organization's environment. In this session we will explore different reasons for this invisibility, ranging from the ethically contested nature of their work to the maintenance of seemingly autonomous technologies. One part of this session will be a guest lecture by Cornelius Heimstädt (Mines ParisTech, Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation) who conducts research on invisible experts in the context of digital agriculture.

Mandatory readings:

Slot 1 (10:00-11:30)

Sachs, S. E. (2020). The algorithm at work? Explanation and repair in the enactment of similarity in art data. *Information, Communication & Society*, 23(11), 1689-1705.

Slot 2 (12:30-14:00)

Ziewitz, M. (2019). Rethinking gaming: The ethical work of optimization in web search engines. *Social Studies of Science*, 49(5), 707-731.

Slot 3 (14:30-16:00)

Guest speaker: Cornelius Heimstädt (Mines ParisTech, Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation)

Slot 4 (16:30-18:00)

Closing discussion and feedback

Optional readings:

Barley, S. R., & Bechky, B. A. (1994). In the backrooms of science: The work of technicians in science labs. *Work and Occupations*, 21(1), 85-126.

Cash, D. W. (2001). "In order to aid in diffusing useful and practical information": Agricultural extension and boundary organizations. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 26(4), 431-453.

Jaton, F. (2017). We get the algorithms of our ground truths: Designing referential databases in digital image processing. *Social Studies of Science*, 47(6), 811-840.

Meyer, M. (2010). The rise of the knowledge broker. *Science Communication*, 32(1), 118-127.