

International Workshop on "Forms of Power in Economics: New perspectives for the Social Studies of Economics between networks, discourses and fields"

6-8 December, 2018 | University of Giessen, Germany

Economics as an academic discipline and a profession has gained influence and power during the last decades, in many countries and in several social spheres. The forms of power, domination and authority that open up different channels of influence for economics are complex and widespread; but economics is not only a source of power, it is also the product of power and domination through discourses, fields, networks and other means and tools.

For example, economists occupy positions at the top of the institutional hierarchy in different sectors, such as banks and firms, the state and media as well as within academia. They serve as consultants and advisors in several policy fields ranging from fiscal to health and social security policy. Economists are appointed to boards of big corporations, as governance experts, high civil servants and central bankers. Economists are also part of consulting teams for newspapers and other media, regularly publish op-eds and lead articles and thus exert influence on public debates. Actually, leading newspapers in the German- Speaking area have started to establish their own economists ranking based on their impact in several societal spheres.

Additionally, economists have become a dominant professional group, compared to traditional professions and other social science disciplines. At the international level, economists work in influential organizations such as the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO and the ECB. They have also been able to constitute one of the most advanced examples of an international scientific field, resulting from a long process of standardization of practices, careers and curricula, as well as an adoption of external technical tools from mathematics and physics.

Yet, economists do not form a homogeneous group and their power is unequally distributed amongst members of the profession. Strong hierarchies, compared to other academic disciplines and professions, characterize economics. There are only few expressions for alternative approaches compared to the dominant orthodoxy in the field. This hierarchy, combined with a strong insularity of their field, helps to define a sentiment of self-confidence and superiority among group members. Economists face a strong imbalance in the distribution of related capitals and this stratification of the profession has implications on some features of their profiles. Economists are clearly under-feminised and it can also be hypothesized that for the most part they come from high social backgrounds. Women, individuals with a working class background and individuals with a particularly local profile are more or less excluded from resources in terms of chairs, research funds, grants and editorial board positions. Nonetheless, such individuals are sometimes able to oppose real challenges to the dominant actors of the field.

The idea of our workshop is to understand economics as a phenomenon that is involved in many different power games. Power, authority and domination cannot be reduced to sovereignty, ideology and strategic capacities. It is rather a complex phenomenon that accounts for the special role of economics in current societies. However, we will discuss the following aspects of power, related to economics as an academic discipline and social profession:

- the power of ideas, knowledge and concepts,
- ideology as a domination device,
- the role of legitimation strategies for authority,
- the power of networks,

- the role of discourses for power games,
- power, authority and domination as strategic resources,
- the impact of structural embeddedness of economics,
- the role of heteronomy/autonomy in economic power games,
- fields of economics, economics as a form of technical or symbolic capital; and the related habitus and illusion and many more.

The diverse forms of power of the profession as well as the various challenges it has been confronted with lately need to be analysed from a critical and interdisciplinary perspective. The support of diverse disciplines such as sociology, history, political science, linguistics or economics are definitely needed in this process, alongside various theoretical approaches, methodological orientations and materials: field analysis, social network analysis, discourse analysis, life-course analysis, interview surveys, ethnography, bibliometrics, historical sources analysis and so many more.

Selected papers of our workshop will be invited to contribute to our forthcoming book project. In order to facilitate this process, we ask everybody to submit a paper proposal of about 6000 to 10.000 words until 10 November 2018.

Please send proposals to jens.maesse@sowi.uni-giessen.de

The deadline for paper proposals is **June 30 2018**

The deadline for full papers is **November 10 2018**

Organizing committee

Pierre Benz (University of Lausanne), Jens Maesse (University of Giessen), Stephan Pühringer (University of Linz) and Thierry Rossier (University of Lausanne).