P164 / Comparing Knowledge Governance: Policies, Politics, and Processes

Topic : Knowledge, Science and Expertise in Policy Process

Chair : Jens Jungblut (University of Oslo)

Second Chair : Meng Hsuan Chou (Nanyang Technological University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Knowledge, long identified as the foundation on which societies and economies flourish (Erkkilä et al. 2023), has now again been linked to global competition and even human extinction (Gates 2026). While previously a mainstay of science fiction, these two opposing paradigms of knowledge use—as a gift but also a threat—have been competing for governance attention and solutions recently. How knowledge is, and should be, governed is driving multiple change processes around the world at a transformative pace (Martini and Robertson 2026; Stranger et al. 2024). This is, for example, visible in how governments are now pursuing science diplomacy: Traditionally framed in cooperative terms, it has become an avenue for addressing competition and geopolitical conflicts (Huang and Meng 2026; Pinna 2025, 2026). Similarly, knowledge and research security have been transformed from technical policy concerns into central organising principles in research governance. We also observe a pivot in how governments are exploiting the migration-higher education policy nexus: Migration policies have been previously used to internationalise higher education; today, we see higher education practices contributing to migration control (Brunner 2025; Cerna and Chou 2023). Indeed, universities and faculty are currently employed as new security institutions and agents, poised at the forefront of detecting and preventing knowledge espionage.

These developments can be observed globally, but regional responses differ (Christensen et al. 2014). In the US, the potential for power projection and economic gain inherent in the application of new knowledge is used to secure or expand a hegemonic position through attempted control and exclusivity in access. In Europe, the focus is on the one hand on cooperation among European countries and with interested parties, but also on norms and values such as academic freedom (Maassen et al. 2025); for example, visible in the “Choose Europe for Science” strategy of the European Union. In Asia, the picture is even more diverse. On the one hand, China acts as the main competitor to the US (Landwehr-Matlé et al. 2026) that employs different and, at a first glance, less coercive strategies in their knowledge policies, while on the other hand the countries in the region have to position themselves between the two competing powers, carefully choosing how and when to cooperate with both (Capano et al. 2025).

This panel brings together scholars working on the politics and policies of knowledge around the world. Specifically, the contributions from this panel examine one or several of the following three overarching themes. First, the *politics of knowledge governance* focusses on how governments steer knowledge governance and the tools used to ensure that key sectors and institutions (e.g., universities) meet state and societal expectations. Second, the *framing of knowledge governance* over time explores how governments talk about knowledge use and the linkages they create between knowledge and other issue areas (e.g., economic growth, social mobility, national security). Third, the *varieties of knowledge governance* identify the forms and mechanisms driving scientific and scholarly collaboration. Together, the contributions explain how knowledge governance has evolved over time and under conditions of uncertainty, test the robustness of existing analytical frameworks and concepts of knowledge governance through comparative case studies, and identify knowledge governance specificities concerning the role(s) of key actors, discourses, and structures in policy processes.

CALL FOR PAPERS

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