

Conference

Contentious Science, Tricky Politics:
Experts and Scientists in Controversial Policy Debates in Europe and North America

20-22 October 2021, Bordeaux, France

Maison des suds – Amphitheatre
12 esplanade des Antilles 33607 Pessac

PROGRAM

Wednesday 20 October

13:30: Welcome

14h00: Conference Introduction by Michael Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, Université Bordeaux Montaigne

14h15-15h40: Keynote 1 by Maya Goldenberg, University of Guelph – Public Trust in Policy-Relevant Science

Coffee break

16h00-18h00: Panel 1 – Evidencing (Discussant: Nicolas Labarre, Université Bordeaux Montaigne)

- Caught the Bug or Born This Way? Viral and Lineal Transmission of Research Paradigms among Scientists - Jeffrey Lockhart, University of Michigan – Thomas Bailly, Sciences Po

- Crafting the Message: The Changing Scripts of Presidential Leadership - Bo Yun Park, Harvard University

- Data science's motives: methods, profits, and ideas for doing things differently - Philipp Brandt, Sciences Po/CSO

- Policy-Based Evidence: Economic Expertise in the Fragmented Welfare State, Zachary Griffen, University of California Los Angeles
Thursday 21 October

Welcome coffee

10h00-12h00: Panel 2 – Authorizing (Discussant: Béatrice Collignon, Université Bordeaux Montaigne)

- Breastfeeding, bodily autonomy, and Unicef’s “call to action” - Kate Goldie Townsend, University of Exeter
- Excel-sheet feminism in leftist activism and in policy-making – Social justice claims with intersectionality between theory and politics - Eszter Kováts, Eötvös Loránd University - Gergely Csányi, University of Pécs
- The Politics of “Site Testing”: Astronomy, Land and Hawaiian Sovereignty since the 1950s - Pascal Marichalar, CNRS IRIS/EHESS
- “Axiologic neutrality” at the French state's service? Activist academics, media opportunism and State racism - Christelle Rabier, Centre de recherche, médecine, sciences, santé, santé mentale, société (Cermes3)

12h00-14h00: Lunch Break

14h00-15h15: Keynote 2 by Mieke Verloo, Radboud University
– Critical Knowledge production and democracy: current struggles in hostile times

Coffee break

15h45-17h30: Panel 3 – Circulating between Sex and Science (Discussant: Cédric Brun, Université Bordeaux Montaigne)

- From HIV/AIDS Infrastructure to COVID-19 Rapid Response: The Reconfiguration of Public Health Expertise During Crisis - Claire Decoteau, University of Illinois at Chicago – Cal Garrett, University of Illinois at Chicago
- Constructing "Global" Standards in Gender-Affirming Healthcare: Thailand and the USA - Alyssa Lynne, Northwestern University
- Deficits, Disorders, and Risks: Where is the Pleasure in Sexual Health Research? - B. Ethan M. Coston, Virginia Commonwealth University
- Gender Studies: Science from the West, for the West? - Eszter Kováts, Eötvös Loránd University
Friday 22 October

Welcome coffee

10h00-12h00: Panel 4 – Empowering Controversies (Discussant: Michael Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, Université Bordeaux Montaigne)

- Gender Sensitive Science for International Development? Navigating Hierarchies, Ignorance and Epistemological Tensions in GCRF Projects - Rosalind Cavaghan, Independent researcher based in Edinburgh – Fiona Mackay, University of Edinburgh
- Origine de la COVID-19 : une controverse entre sciences et géopolitique - Fabien Colombo, Université Bordeaux Montaigne - José Halloy, Université de Paris
- Who has had the power? Opinion based vs evidence informed decision making in Slovakia’s Lesson Learned from Pandemic COVID – 19 - Michaela Dénešová, Comenius University Slovakia - Andrea Figulová, Comenius University Slovakia
- Uncertain knowledge. The production of ignorance in the medicalization of intersex people in France - Michal Raz, IRIS

12h00-14h00: Lunch Break

14h00-15h15: Keynote 3 by Gil Eyal, Columbia University – Mistrust in numbers: regulatory science, trans-science and the crisis of expertise

Coffee break

15h45-17h00: Panel 5 – Arguing climate change (Discussant: Stéphanie Bonnefille, Université Bordeaux Montaigne)

- Se forger un avis et l’arbitrage dans l’administration publique régionale de Nouvelle-Aquitaine : deux processus qui gèrent les injonctions contradictoires du changement climatique ? - Camille Jonchères, INRAE
- Stampeding Experts, Honest Skeptics, and American Families: Character Work in the ‘Climate Wars’ - Olivia Steiert, The New School for Social Research

17h00-17h30: Scientific summary by David Demortain, INRAE
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**Wednesday 20 October – 16h00-18h00**

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Caught the Bug or Born This Way? Viral and Lineal Transmission of Research Paradigms among Scientists

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Abstract

Sex differences have long been a contentious subject of life sciences research. Scientists have sought to identify and enumerate biological differences between men and women with expressly social and political motivations such as justifying gendered occupational segregation and, more recently, denying rights and medical care to trans people. Since the 1970s, however, there has been a coherent counter-movement within the life sciences, an explicitly feminist biology. This counter-movement aims to understand sex not as a simple, categorical distinction, but rather as a complex interplay of many continuous, and potentially incongruous factors. This paradigm also has explicit social and political motivations.

We collected data on dissertation chairs, committee members, postdoc advisors, and graduate students for 3,281 scientists involved in these debates. We also collected data on the timing, subject, and institution of their PhD and their first faculty employment. This network is the result of an exhaustive search for participants in the conflict whose academic heritage is available online, either posted publicly (e.g. CVs on university websites) or in the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses proprietary database.

Using this network, we explore the structural arrangement of scientists in the competing Sex Differences and Feminist Biology paradigms. We compare the resources available to each in terms of institutional rank, quantity of PhDs supported, and students’ career success. We further examine both the paradigms ability to reproduce themselves across generations (as the fraction of students who adopt their advisors’ paradigms), and also the paradigms’ mechanisms for doing so (e.g. lineal from advisor to student, viral from colleague to colleague in a department, or spontaneous adoption without network connections).

\textbf{Keywords:} sex differences, feminist biology, networks, academic advising, scientific careers

\textsuperscript{*}Speaker
Crafting the Message: The Changing Scripts of Presidential Leadership

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Abstract

The elections of unconventional presidential figures, such as Donald Trump and Emmanuel Macron, have shaken people’s expectations of presidential electability. They have defied the scholarly assertions on political eligibility (Lawless 2012), political experience (Simon and Uscinski 2012), and presidential traits (Barber 2009). While social scientists have started to explain what people are frustrated about (Cramer 2016), what they no longer want (Hochschild 2016), and what leads them to vote for different types of candidates (Mutz 2018), scholars have yet to understand what models of leadership voters are hoping to see. Neither do they theorize the mediation processes that happen in the backstage of the political arena between what voters would ideally want and what candidates can actually offer. Using the analogy of the market, one could say that both the demand and the supply sides of electoral behavior have to be systematically investigated. Yet, sociologists have mostly focused more on the demands of the people and paid less attention to the supply-side of institutional politics.

Acknowledging that the two dimensions are intertwined, this study looks at the supply-side of electoral campaigns by focusing on the work of political strategists, or the political experts who have the best knowledge of both the demand and supply sides of presidential elections. More specifically, it investigates how their usage of social media and big data analytics is affecting the production of campaign messages across national contexts. I focus on two democracies under stress—the United States and France—which have faced a similar political trend: the rise of unconventional presidential figures who break established political norms. Drawing on 110 in-depth interviews of high-profile political operatives (e.g., chief strategists, campaign managers, communications directors, etc.), I argue that used in France and the United States initially differed but are increasingly converging as a result of the processes of commensuration (Espeland and Stevens 1998) triggered by the adoption common of metrics and algorithm-based practices. While political operatives in France had followed a hierarchic model of leadership, and their American counterparts channeled a more entrepreneurial type of authority, the spread of social media and data analytics is pushing strategists in both countries to reorient their conventional scripts to fit a more entrepreneurial model of leadership.

This research analyzes the interplay among the long- and short-term cultural repertoires (e.g., Lamont 1992) that undergird the scripts of presidential leadership during “unsettled” cultural periods and societal transformation (Swidler 1986). This study also makes an intervention into the debate on whether new technologies contribute to the erosion of democratic mechanisms in a period of accentuated political polarization and the age of misinformation.

*Speaker
By showing how political operatives rise 1) neu digital plat for me. and 2) the big data that come out of them, to produce unprecedented scripts of political leadership, this study provides empirical evidence that the political practices around big data analytics could have important implications for democratic decision-making. If not monitored more closely, it could potentially pose a challenge to the flourishing of deliberative democracy.

Keywords: political strategist, election, campaign, social media, data analytics
Data science’s motives: methods, profits, and ideas for doing things differently

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Abstract

"Data science” is emerging as a novel quantitative profession. Amid mostly technical justifications, some proponents point at a cultural split from established quantitative work. This idea is sociologically plausible, though odd coming from technical experts, and still simplistic. The paper uses computational hermeneutics to study data science’s curious motives empirically. It analyzes a unique dataset of 1025 tweets on data science issues by 395 accounts, and their ties, as quasi-field observations over two years. Since this view misses observations, the analysis also considers a large dataset of 752815 tweets by those accounts. The small dataset reveals the opportunity to adopt new practical and ethical standards as a motive for constructing data science. The large dataset shows more ideas, commercial and technical, while missing the distinctive motive. These results and the approach offer a cultural perspective on data science and a reflexive strategy for studying emergent areas of work.

Keywords: Data science, professions, computational hermeneutics, missing data, reflexivity

∗Speaker
Policy-Based Evidence: Economic Expertise in the Fragmented Welfare State

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Abstract

Is the purpose of social scientific knowledge to understand the world, or to change it? While Marx famously held the latter view, this question has been a recurrent subject of social scientific debate (Bauman 1987; Hacking 1983). On the one hand, sociologists of knowledge argue that experts—particularly economists—shape our politics, institutions, and everyday lives (MacKenzie 2006; Hirschman and Berman 2014; Eyal and Buchholz 2010; Eubanks 2018). Conversely, scholars of political economy question the extent of this influence when compared to material forces, institutional arrangements, and the logic of capital (Major 2018; Ogle 2017; Offner 2019, 280-89). Focusing on the history of social policy in the U.S., this paper asks: is economics an "engine" that drives institutional change, or a "camera" that describes the existing welfare state (MacKenzie 2006)?

Using cases drawn from the fields of education and healthcare, I argue that if economic expertise previously sought to reinforce the expansion and regulation of the welfare state, in recent decades it has increasingly become shaped by the welfare state. Inverting the familiar formula of ‘evidence-based policy,’ I show that the reorientation of applied microeconomics around methods of causal inference and empirical data (Panhans and Singleton 2017) has focused economists’ interests on incremental policy reform. As a result, they are increasingly constrained politically and use social program design to confirm empirical findings and pursue scientific capital—what I call the production of policy-based evidence.

The paper’s argument proceeds in three parts. First, it conceptualizes the relationship between economic expertise and social policy. Existing scholarship focuses mostly on economization processes (Salişkan and Callon 2009) in which economists establish policy influence (Hirschman and Berman 2014). I propose that we also consider how existing policy arrangements affect economists’ pursuit of scientific capital (Bourdieu 1975). The mutual constitution of economic expertise and social policy is not unilinear, but rather an iterative process that varies by context.

Next, the paper analyzes three comparative cases of economists producing policy-based evidence. These are: statistical techniques for evaluating professionals (Value Added Models for teachers and Value-Based Payment for physicians), private control over public institutions (charter schools and Medicare Advantage insurance), and market design techniques matching individuals to institutions (school assignment algorithms and the National Resident Matching Program). In these cases, economists were not the primary force driving social policy but

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rather got enrolled into the production of policy-based evidence to pursue scientific capital accumulation.

Finally, I explain how this can nevertheless result in policy change. In the cases under consideration, economic expertise and social policy are fragmented in opposing ways. Since its inception, the economics of education has always been a very coherent scientific subfield without having much influence over educational reform - in part because policy is largely set at the local level. Conversely, while health economics is a sprawling, contested endeavor, evidence is more seamlessly incorporated into federal policy. This suggests that even when economic expertise is geared primarily toward academic ends, it can have policy effects - pursuing scientific capital can still change the world.

Author bio:
Zachary Griffen is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at UCLA. His current research project is a comparative and historical study of the relationship between economic expertise and social policymaking in the United States, with a particular focus on education and healthcare.

**Keywords:** Expertise, Economics, Social Policy, Politics of Knowledge
Panel 2 Abstracts - **Authorizing** (Discussant: Béatrice Collignon)

**Thursday 21 October – 10h00-12h00**

Breastfeeding, bodily autonomy, and Unicef’s "call to action"........................................13  
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Breastfeeding, bodily autonomy, and Unicef’s "call to action"

Kate Goldie Townsend* 1

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Abstract

There is a scientific claim used to promote specific behaviours amongst perinatal women: claim - the birthing parent’s breastmilk is the best thing to feed babies; promoted behaviour - post-partum mothers should breastfeed their babies. Sharon Radzyninski and Lynn Clark Callister point out that "Mothers see themselves as having a moral and social responsibility to expose their children to as little risk as possible. Determinants of risk are often guided by the advice of health professionals who are viewed as the parenting experts". 1] So, when making decisions about what to feed their infants, mothers: 1. feel a strong duty to protect their baby from risk, 2. are susceptible to influence by authority figures, eg. health professionals.

The World Health Organisation claims "Breastfeeding is one of the most effective ways to ensure child health and survival. If breastfeeding were scaled up to near universal levels, about 820 000 child lives would be saved every year". 2] In the UK, Unicef has initiated a programme to shift the culture of infant feeding with the explicit aim of increasing breastfeeding rates, which are relatively low. 3] Unicef seeks to promote breastfeeding within the government-funded NHS and uses the language of science and research to discourage women from formula-feeding their children. 4] Unicef’s "call to action" promotes breastfeeding on the basis that it is the best thing for babies. 5] In their campaign they provide the following messages about the benefits of breastfeeding: it supports "loving relationships" "brain development" ... "protects against cancer, obesity, diabetes, infections, sudden infant death."

I argue against this strategy to promote breastfeeding by government associated agencies and international organisations. I am not arguing against breastfeeding per se, but rather seek to suggest that the claims made by Unicef in the promotion of breastfeeding within NHS hospitals have the potential to undermine new mothers’ emotional wellbeing and sense of bodily autonomy. If government-funded organisations tell new or expectant mothers that breastfeeding supports "loving relationships", "protects against sudden infant death" etc., they also tell them that mothers who do not breastfeed put their infants at greater risk of cancer, obesity, and sudden infant death, it implies that it will be harder to develop a "loving relationship" and that they are preventing the child’s "brain development" if they do not breastfeed. The messages, which are given power by the claim of being based on scientific evidence and provided by medical experts within a medical setting, directly and intentionally affect choices women make about their bodies and thus explicitly interfere with their bodily autonomy, and indirectly tell women who choose not to, or are unable to, breastfeed that they are putting their child at risk. This has the potential to enhance post-partum anxiety.

*Speaker
for women who struggle or choose not to breastfeed.

**Keywords:** breastfeeding, Unicef, children’s health, women’s bodily autonomy
Excel-sheet feminism in leftist activism and in policy-making — Social justice claims with intersectionality between theory and politics

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Abstract

‘Women are a heterogeneous group and may face intersectional discrimination based on several personal characteristics. For instance, a migrant woman with a disability may face discrimination on three or more grounds,’ reads the new gender equality strategy of the European Commission, presented in March 2020 for the period of 2020 to 2025 (European Commission 2020).

Nira Yuval-Davis and Flpya Antiyas niticized the additive character of the "triple oppres- sion" approach already in 1983 — way before the term intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 —, and later Helma Lutz's 14 "basic dualisms" (Yuval-Davis 2006: 202) that suggest an 8historical, essentializing and homogenizing understanding of the struc- tures of oppreeion. Crensiaw herself was "not really oonoerned with s hallow questions of identity and representation but ... more interested in the deep structural and systemic ques- tions about discrimination and inequality" (Coaston 2019).

Since its beginning interseftionality has had various interpretations and uses, nevertheless it seems that by now in the alliance of leftist activism and policy-making in the U.S. (and imported worldwide) the hegemonic understanding has become its form concentrating Solely on discrimination (on more than one grounds) and on poaitionality (and on equating the positionality of the spealmr with the content of its talk, Nathwaoi 2014). This approach — we are taking a side — is both theoretically shallow and politically problematic as it doesn't ade- quately grasp the root causes of inequalities, while it undermines solidarity and contributes to the popularity of the right-wing contestations of any recognition claims.

Our theoretical paper attempts to explain the rise and current popularity of this "excel-sheet approach" of interseCtionality on the basis of political economy including global dependencies and power dynamics. Critically assessing its basic assumptions (on oppression, lived experience ae ultimate frame of understanding, positionality and fragmentation) and reflecting on the changes that the basic categories (raoe, clas8, gender and the et cetem problem”) have gone through for the last decades, we are claiming the following: while one cannot and should not return either to orthodox Marxism or to the one-dimensional polities of femi- nism or anti-racism, this current form of excel-sheet intersectionality is a deadlock for leftist politics. We believe gender scholars bear a responsibility for the postmodernist, fragmented turn in politicS, while they could, and should, rather contribute to making sense of injustioes
beyond discrimination and positionalities and attempt to influence policy-making in this regard.

Keywords: intersectionality, leftist politics, gender studies, post modernism, political economy
The Politics of ”Site Testing”: Astronomy, Land and Hawaiian Sovereignty since the 1950s

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Abstract

Since the 1950s, astronomers and other scientists have been building observatories on Hawai‘i’s tallest mountains (Haleakalā on Maui, Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea on Hawai‘i Island). The main reason why they favored the isolated Pacific archipelago was because of what they perceived to be the exceptional “quality” of the mountaintop sites: "probably the best site in the world from which to study the Moon, the planets, the stars”, the famous astronomer Gerard Kuiper stated for example in 1964 about Mauna Kea. "Site testing” reports are expert documents, that mainly measure physical parameters such as atmospheric turbulence, humidity and cloud coverage, to estimate the quality of astronomical “seeing”. To a lesser degree, they take into account more mundane features, such as the site’s accessibility and issues of land tenure.

However, as illustrated by the opposition to the construction of a new giant Thirty Meter Telescope on Mauna Kea in the 2010s, important political issues are at stake in the background of scientists’ prospection for the best site in Hawai‘i: environmental conservation, the right of locals to use the mountain for recreational purposes, and especially Native Hawaiian sovereignty over land that became ”American” after the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy by US-linked business elites in 1893, followed by a unilateral annexation by the US in 1898.

This paper is based on press, observatory, and business archives collected and analyzed since 2019; as well as ethnographical interviews and observations carried out on Hawai‘i Island in January-February 2020. It studies the evolution of site testing reports from the 1950s till today, with the backdrop of the rebirth of a Hawaiian sovereignty movement as of the 1970s. The paper analyzes the role that site testing experts play in the framing of these debates, in particular in the acknowledgement or invisibilisation of contentious issues such as Hawaiian sovereignty.

Keywords: astronomy, science, Hawai‘i, United States, land, sovereignty, environment

*Speaker
"Axiologic neutrality" at the French state’s service? Activist academics, media opportunism and State racism

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Abstract

To what extent the categories activist/ academic/ decision-makers are adequate to describe anti-democratic trends in European societies? My paper will provide a short investigation of the workings and whereabouts of a political and academic sequence in Macron’s France in 2020 and 2021 : that of cultural "islamo- leftism” war and cancel culture as denounced by scholars, parliament representatives, government and public medias, some twenty years after the Sokal affair and its European counterparts (Rabier, 2005). As witness and malgré moi cultural war contender, after the request of an investigation by two French representatives against "harmful trends in French universities” on November 26, 2020, I have been investigating a new site among the “fields of expertise” already analysed (Rabier, 200 ; Rabier ed., 2013): that of academic publishing houses and magazines and their role in the making of a acknowledgedly islamophobic law "conforting the respect due to Republican principles". I will argue, ranging on petitions, manifestes, self-asserted "scholarly" books and tracts, that activist academics and medias played a significant contribution to the anti-democratic moves France experienced. They consistently targeted academics described as "bonimenteurs du postcolonial business en quête de respectabilité académique” (Bouvet and al., 2019) even before Emmanuel Macron accused scholars to “cut the Republic in half” with anti-racist theories and colonial history. Questioning the mechanics of the sequence, from its launching in December 2019 to the passing of the law, and contrasting the public position and media instrumentalization of several scholars (namely Nathalie Heinich, Stéphane Beaud and Gérard Noiriel and Michel Wievorka), I will discuss their institutional position and their epistemological claims of legitimacy and scholarly "neutrality”. As an epilogue, I will show how "axiologic neutrality” flagged by contenders in the current "islamo-leftist” war shed new light on Julien Freund’s translation of Max Weber Wissenschaft als Beruf in 1963.

Keywords: epistemology, islamophia: media, axiologic neutrality, legitimacy, universities, France

*Speaker
Panel 3 Abstracts – **Circulating between Sex and Science** (Discussant: Cédric Brun)

Thursday 21 October – 15h45-17h45

From HIV/AIDS Infrastructure to COVID-19 Rapid Response: The Reconfiguration of Public Health Expertise During Crisis

Origine de la COVID-19 : une controverse entre sciences et géopolitique

WHO HAS HAD THE POWER? Opinion based vs evidence informed decision making in Slovakia’s Lesson Learned from Pandemic COVID — 19
From HIV/AIDs Infrastructure to COVID-19 Rapid Response: The Reconfiguration of Public Health Expertise During Crisis

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Abstract

Epidemiologists and infectious disease specialists have been put in the spotlight, as policymakers seek to promote "data-driven" mitigation responses to COVID-19. In this paper, we examine the ways in which the knowledge infrastructure built in response to HIV/AIDS has informed expert responses to COVID-19 in Chicago. Research on the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the US has shown that, in response to initial lags in state response, activists organized to build a durable structure of public health expertise both inside and outside of formal policymaking institutions. The efficacy of the HIV/AIDS public health response was its attention, directed by impacted communities, to building a wraparound infrastructure. This infrastructure has persisted, including both formal public health programs and comprehensive social services like housing and income for vulnerable groups in many major US cities, including Chicago. When faced with COVID-19 outbreaks in the first half of 2020, Chicago public health authorities drew heavily on expertise and individual experts from the HIV/AIDS infrastructure to assemble testing, contact tracing, case investigation operations and vaccination efforts. These experts not only had the experiences and skills needed for this epidemiological work but had valuable connections to community leaders and organizations as well. Yet, the wraparound services that have been so critical to effective public health response to HIV/AIDS have been slow to materialize in the case of COVID-19, even as the formal public health components of the HIV/AIDS infrastructure are replicated. Based on a qualitative archive of interviews with public health policymakers, scientific experts, and health providers in Chicago alongside relevant policies, we find that while experts understand that addressing the "fundamental causes of illness" are important, they have failed to adequately address employment protections or housing, financial, and food insecurity. We suggest that this might be explained, in part, by four different features of the way that experts apprehend the COVID-19 epidemic in Chicago: (1) funding initiatives targeted toward particular illnesses or vulnerable populations undermine collaboration and broader infrastructural investment across program areas, (2) the singular focus on public health outcomes as opposed to general social welfare, (3) the emphasis on rapid response to fundamental causes of vulnerability during the pandemic rather long-term structural consequences, and (4) the insistence on data-driven responses even when the gaps in needed data are consistent with well-established patterns of inequity. We argue that although COVID-19 has been treated as a health crisis, its societal impact extends far beyond public health and, despite their efforts, public health officials struggle to address these wide-ranging challenges due certain features of their discipline. Without proper welfare, housing, food, and employment

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supports, the crises that COVID-19 has exacerbated will have long-term ripple effects for large swathes of vulnerable communities.

**Keywords:** COVID, 19, HIV/AIDS, wraparound services, public health infrastructure, health vulnerability
Origine de la COVID-19 : une controverse entre sciences et géopolitique

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Abstract

Comment expliquer la persistance de cette hypothèse ? De quelle manière identifier ce qui relève du domaine des” farts scientifiques ” et des” interférences géopolitiques” ? En quoi cette controverse pose-t-elle le problème de la redistribution délicate des frontières entre sciences et géopolitique face à une situation de crise, en lien avec d’autres problèmes globaux, tels que le changement climatique ou les recherches dites de” gain-of-function”,(GOF) ?

Telles seront les questions adressées par cette communication. Plus précisément, elle se basera sur une recherche pluridisciplinaire, afin de cartographier cette controverse. Elle visera à présenter les différentes interactions entre les sphères scientifiques, politiques et médiatiques qui se jouent autour de cette question des origines du SARS-CoV-2, grâce à une analyse des réseaux scientifiques et du traitement médiatique de la controverse à partir de plusieurs méthodes : (a) étude des médias et de la littérature scientifique ; (b) récupération de données bibliométriques (PublishOrPerish) ; (c) récupération de données en lien avec la controverse sur le Web (MyWebIntelligence) ; (d) visualisation des données (VosViewer Gephi).

La communication sera divisée en trois temps : (1) un retour sur les différentes hypothèses du débat, entre zoonose et fuite de laboratoire, et les problèmes d’expertises interdisciplinaires (JH) ; (2) une focale sur la médiatisation du RaTG13, le virus le plus proche connu du SARS-CoV-2 uniquement étudié jusque-là par le Wuhan Institute of Virology depuis 2013 (FC) ; (3) l’importance des conflits géopolitiques sur l’orientation de la controverse et ses enjeux croisés en termes d’avenir planétaire (changement global recherches à risques etc.) (JH FC).

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L’ambition de la communication sera de souligner la difficulté d’ouvrir un débat transparent, interdisciplinaire, et international sur la question.

Keywords: COVID, 19 controverse sociologie des sciences, STS géopolitique
WHO HAS HAD THE POWER? OPINION BASED VS EVIDENCE INFORMED DECISION MAKING IN SLOVAKIA'S LESSON LEARNED FROM PANDEMIC COVID — 19

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Abstract

The task, when there are in stake security and lives of people, the economy is collapsing and you are new in the governmental office, is not easy. And that is the case of Slovakia. The development of pandemic situation in a concrete state has been clearly connected to appropriate policies and decision-making processes implemented under specific circumstances. These circumstances have been different basically for each state and it has been very hard, even impossible to coordinate policies or steps from above such as from the European Union towards member states. What has been the performance of Slovakia without guiding from above? What and who has had leading position in decision making with respect to very this specific crisis? The assumption was that due to specific crisis situation in specific field, which has been since the very beginning connected with strong influence of science, there should be evidence based or evidence informed decision making. "...The] good decision makings should be informed by a range of relevant "best available” evidence, accepting a broad conception of usable knowledge and recognizing the value of relevant professional expertise” (Head, 2015, p. 474). On the other hand, Head (2015) continues, there is so strong influence of political and sociological factors, within the policy debates, that even the best research and data may not be effective enough to change specific direction of policies. COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges for policymakers all around the world. In addition, for many in power within the European Union, the COVID-19 pandemic is a challenge they have never faced before. This proposal focuses on the case of Slovakia, where a newly elected government came into the power right at the beginning of the pandemic. The power thus shifted from leaders with long term experiences to leaders with almost no governmental experiences. While the new leaders were very successful with the first wave of pandemic, they were very unsuccessful with the second one. The proposed article examines the presence and negotiations between the opinion based and evidence informed decision making in Slovakia with respect to policies relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. We specifically focus on the relations between the government responsible for policy making and temporary or permanent involved experts. We scrutinise how the newly elected and inexperienced government has dealt with the role and opinions of experts. Who has had the power? Who has framed the debates and policies? We have found out, that factors such as low level of experience in governance or pandemic situation have not changed approach of the government. We expected that policy makers with low level of experiences and in a crisis, situation would depend more on relevant expert’s advices. However, evidence informed decision making has not played a key role in crisis management and in addition, the responsible leaders created a very hostile environment between them and

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the relevant experts. In addition, leaders of the crisis management based their decisions on
opinion from citizens, not involved experts. Based on Slovakia’s experience, we want to raise
the questions where is the line between the experts’ advices, representing evidence involved
decision making in theory and practice? How is it connected to good governance and what
is the involvement of public in these processes? Where is public level of understanding and
cooperating? We answered these questions within this article.

Keywords: evidence informed, opinion based, decision making, scientists, government, policies,
COVID, 19, crisis management
Panel 4 Abstracts – Gendering knowledge

(Discussant: Michael Stamolis-Ruhstorfer)

Friday 22 October – 9h30-12h00

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Constructing ”Global” Standards in Gender-Affirming Healthcare: Thailand and the USA

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Abstract

This paper analyzes processes of conflict and collaboration among healthcare providers, activists, and patients in gender-affirming healthcare (GAC) on a transnational scale. GAC generally refers to the health services that transgender and gender nonconforming individuals may choose to affirm their gender identity, including counseling, hormone therapy, or gender-affirming surgeries. In recent years, debates among healthcare providers, activists, and patients about standardized clinical practice guidelines in GAC have centered around three sets of tensions: the first set of tensions, which exists between guidelines and practice, is shaped by tensions between professional and lay expertise, as well as tensions between local and global. These tensions converge in a set of guidelines called the ”Standards of Care” (SOC), which is written by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) and attempts to standardize GAC on a global scale. Following calls to ”prorinicialize” the field of transgender studies, this paper studies these three sets of tensions by examining the creation, travel, and local instantiations of GAC in Thailand and the USA in relation to the WPATH SOC. It aims to de-center the USA by asking: How do ”global” standards frame localized and particular instantiations of GAC from the Global North as being universally applicable – overriding those in the Global South?

I employ three qualitative research methods to answer this question. First, I draw on 60 in-depth interviews with healthcare providers, patients, and activists in Thailand and the USA (in progress; number will increase). Second, I utilize content analysis of medical journals (n=201), manuals, and social media. Finally, I incorporate observations of conferences and workshops centering on GAC. Northwestern University’s IRB approved this research protocol in June 2019. I use ATLAS.ti software to analyze data through inductive coding. The findings are organized around three key themes. First, I find that the purported universality of ”transgender” as a category for gender-nonconformity serves as infrastructure for the standardization of GAC on a global scale. Despite significant pushback from lay experts, GAC providers largely overlook diverse cultural conceptualizations of gender nonconformity in constructing standards. Second, I find that GAC assemblages in the Global North are framed as progressive, while Thai GAC assemblages are either omitted from discussion or portrayed as repressive in transnational conferences and medical journal content. Efforts have been made to increase representation across all world regions in the WPATH SOC, but because the vast majority of authors still hail from the USA there is little recognition for how GAC there could actually be considered specific in the context of its distinct healthcare infrastructure. Finally, following from these findings, I argue that the largely unidirectional flow of knowledge between the USA and Thailand prevents GAC providers in the USA from learning about potentially useful models for organizing GAC to reduce tensions between professional and lay expertise.

∗Speaker
Keywords: healthcare, lay expertise, transnational gender and sexuality studies, Thailand, USA
Deficits, Disorders, and Risks: Where is the Pleasure in Sexual Health Research?

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Abstract

Between 1994-2018, scholars in Sociology and the Humanistic Social Sciences have been appealing to—if not demanding that—researchers in Public Health, Psychology, and other biomedical fields utilize queer theory and queered methodologies to seriously grapple with nonnormative identities and practices and resist the tendency to essentialize sexual identities and conflate them with sexual practices. Indeed, we must more adequately contend with how the study of sexualities has focused almost exclusively on sexual risk, disease, and dysfunction and the implicit bias and stigma that is found within this risk discourse. This paper answers these calls by performing a systematic, quantitative meta-review of the public health and psychological “sexual health” assessment measures and scales created, tested, and verified since 1990. This presentation will explore the following questions in detailing the results of the review: according to the "experts", who gets to be sexual and experience sexual health? How is pleasure tied to biomedical understandings of sexual health, if at all? What have been the consequences of framing sexual health as absence of disease/disorder/harm rather than presence of pleasure/joy/flourishing? Ultimately, we will detail how the biomedicalization of sexuality has reinforced the notion that only some people deserve full sexual citizenship and only some sexual practices deserve to be protected therein, creating disparate legal, carceral, and socioecological outcomes for all those who self-identify as queers, kinksters, ethical nonmonogamists, plurisexuals and/or would be biomedically categorized as "sexually deviant" today.

Keywords: health, sexuality, sexual health, LGBTQIA+, pleasure, risk

∗Speaker
Gender Sensitive Science for International Development? Navigating Hierarchies, Ignorance and Epistemological Tensions in GCRF Projects

Rosalind Cavaghan and Fiona Mackay

Abstract

This paper analyses the epistemological tensions involved in efforts to undertake gender sensitive research in UK-government funded Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) projects. On paper, the GCRF attempts to apply cutting edge interdisciplinary research to ‘global challenges’ in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to assist in the development of Low and Middle Income Countries’ (LMIC) research capacity and Higher Education (HE) sectors. All projects are obliged to fulfil commitments to gender sensitivity.

However, UK government policy also emphasises ‘aid in the national interest’ and technology driven solutions - eschewing analyses of global poverty that take account of colonial legacies, racism, social reproduction or capitalism (Berenstain et al. 2021; Issar 2021; Bhattacharyya 2018). We examine the potential of GCRF projects to deliver gender transformative research, given the theory of change underpinning it, the attribution of roles inherent in GCRF projects and contexts in which they are delivered.

Materials are drawn from the authors’ experiences supporting multiple GCRF projects as part of a 2 year Scottish Funding Council funded capacity building project; interviews with UK and LMIC based GCRF project participants; and documentary analysis. Analysis will explore hierarchies structuring knowledge production in GCRF collaborations such as asymmetries in resources, Global North-Global South hierarchies in ‘feminist’ knowledge production (Medie and Kang 2018; Ogbu 2006), disciplinary hierarchies (Lyall and Fletcher 2013) and colonial legacies, and GN based researchers ignorance of them (Wekker 2016; Resurreccion and Elmhirst 2021). We explore how these dynamics effect what kind of knowledge can be produced and what kind of knowledge is valued and the consequences for transformative international development agendas.

Keywords: Gender, International Development, STEhI, Colonial Epistemologies

*Speaker
Gender Studies: Science from the West, for the West?

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Abstract

A defining feature of Orbân's right-wing regime, in place since 2010 in Hungary, is the use of ongoing (publicly funded) fear-mongering and hate campaigns, targeting alleged enemies (migrants, liberals, George Soros or the so-called 'gender ideologists') who are presented as committed to destroy the nation, while the government presents itself as the only true defender and representative of the people against threatening forces. The concept of 'gender' became an enemy image in spring 2017 and since then appears daily in the Hungarian public discourse, mainly outsourced to the propaganda media and other government related sources. The main fields of contestation, where 'gender' is vilified, are the non-ratification of the Istanbul Convention, issues of trans and genderqueer political claims in the West, and the de-accreditation of the MA program Gender Studies on the basis of the claim that it is not science (October 2018). 'Gender' is presented both as not scientific but ideological, and as an import from the West, alien to Hungarian culture. The contents attributed to the so-called 'gender ideology' are, at this stage, imported threats in the Hungarian context, a copy-paste alt-right. Very few Hungarian feminist and LGBT activists have so far publicly exhibited the views that they are accused of, however, to a certain extent these are indeed being imported to an activist scene that presents these issues and their corresponding social justice language as universal (Bajusz & Fero 2018).

Existing analyses describing the rhetorical tool 'ideological colonization' used by the Right (Grafi & Korolczuk 2018), must be complemented by an accurate analysis of the North-South, West-East power relationships that shape gender debates in the velvet triangle of academia, activism and politics (Woodward 2003). We can build on the insights of many scholars in this field. For instance, Susan Zimmermann has long ago described how implementing gender studies in the countries of the former Eastern bloc in the 1990s was less commitment to gender equality and to gaining more knowledge in the field than to the values of liberal democracy and the ensuing social-economic order as enacted in Anglo-Saxon countries (2007). Andrea Peto has emphasized the importance of the fact that "[g]ender as a category of analysis reached Central Europe together with the neoliberal market economy and Anglo-Saxon dominance in science after 1989" (2018: 2). She also stated, "[t]he fact that gender studies was mostly embedded in the humanities and less in the social sciences contributed to the 'cultural turn' in Eastern European gender studies" (ibid.:3), and that this "epistemic community is connected to post-structuralism and the English language" (ibid.:7). Also, routinely applied comparisons in the sense of "the East is still lagging behind" or "they haven't learnt democracy and European values" fall short, both for explaining gender inequalities (Gregor & Kovitts 2019) and for the attacks on Gender Studies (Gagyi & Gregor 2018).
What the Right calls colonization, therefore, can also be reformulated and understood through an analysis of the geopolitical power relations in which emancipatory struggles and gender studies are embedded. The paper aims to apply, for the anti-gender phenomenon, the literature using postcolonialism for understanding the even in social science terms invisible post-socialist region. It attempts to uncover the role of the prevailing East-West inequalities and the epistemic community connected to post-structuralism in the success of the populist and anti-gender discourses (Kováts 2021). The paper aims to make a theoretical contribution to the debate, while the theoretical arguments will be underpinned by empirical data from my dissertation project, on the governmental discourse, including the government close intellectuals, the propaganda media, and materials of GO NGOs and fake-independent think

Keywords: gender studies, Hungary, West, post, socialism, postcolonialism, right, wing populism, anti, gender movements
Uncertain knowledge. The production of ignorance in the medicalization of intersex people in France

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Abstract

The paper explores the mechanisms of ignorance production around intersexuality in relation to the biomedical sphere. Several scholars have shown that the body, particularly the female body, has been the scene of an "epistemology of ignorance" (Tuana 2004). In effect, ignorance, as noted Proctor (2008), refers to a complex political and sexual geography. More recently, this field has been diffused, as shown for example in the book published in 2015 around Ignorance Studies (Gross & McGoey, 2015). Using this theoretical frame, as well as other related concepts, such as "Undone science" (Frickel & al. 2010), this paper focuses on the ways in which medicine, science and technology participate in a continuous process of erasing intersexuality. Another key concept is "sociology of ignorance", suggested originally by Amos Funkenstein and Adin Steinsaltz (1987) and more recently by French sociologists Emmanuelle Fillion and Didier Torny, as a program aimed to examine "the ways of oversight and invisibility" of certain knowledges around intersex that are judged "uncomfortable", using Steve Rayner’s concept (Rayner, 2012).

More specifically, this paper analyzes practices of secrecy, scientific bias and other forms of invisibilization of lived experience (Bastien-Charlebois 2014) and proposes to put into light a larger logic of obliteration. The production of ignorance proceeds in different and more or less conscious ways: Forget; invisibility; erasure; denial; mislead; negligence; or secrecy. After developing some of these mechanisms I wish to concentrate on a specific case in which uncertain knowledge and ignorance are produced: Prenatal diagnosis. Intersex individuals and bodies, by unsettling convictions around the binarity of sex and dominant gender norms, has been and still is, subjected to forms of erasure which aren’t restricted to only ignorance, since it mainly emphasize in a critical way, the shadows of scientific technologies, knowledge and power.

The internal tension contained in the expression "uncertain knowledge" aims to underline that all scientific knowledges, technologies and medical practices on intersex belong to a specific "régime the vérité" (Foucault 2012) whose premises and consequences are left unquestioned. This regime persists in spite of multiple zones of uncertainty and controversies raised from the inside or outside of the medical profession. By unraveling mechanisms of ignorance production, the paper shows that a new paradox emerged: the increasing biomedical knowledge and techniques during the 20th Century mainly produced more and more

*Speaker
questions, dilemmas and political debate. The persistence of the medical monopole over
intersexuality in France can then be understood as a form of continual resistance, trying to
maintain the pathologization of intersex variations.
These reflections grow from my PhD research, tracing an archeogenealogy of the medicaliza-
tion of atypical sex in France since the 1950s through the emblematic example of Congenital
Adrenal Hyperplasia, or CAH. The materials used are both scientific literature analysis and
interviews with medical practitioners who have been dealing with this issue.

Keywords: Biomedicine, Gender, Intersex, Prenatal diagnosis, Controverse, Ignorance, Hormones
Panel 5 Abstracts – **Arguing climate change**  
(Discussant: Stéphanie Bonnefille)  

**Friday 22 October - 15h00-17h00**

 Experts and the Politicization of Climate Change in Congress. A Case Study of the Environmental Protection Agency (1983-2015). ................................................................. 36

Se forger un avis et l’arbitrage dans l’administration publique régionale de Nouvelle-Aquitaine : deux processus qui gèrent les injonctions contradictoires du changement climatique ? ................................................................. 38

Stampeding Experts, Honest Skeptics, and American Families: Character Work in the ’Climate Wars’ ............................................................................................................ 39

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Abstract

More than four decades since climate change was first brought to congressional attention, meaningful climate action in the form of federal legislation has failed to materialize in the United States. With the highest congressional polarization recorded on climate change (Kim and Urpelainen 2017), scholars point to the politicization of the issue and ensuing partisan contest among political elites, as major factors driving the lack of federal climate action (Guber et al. 2020; Jacques et al. 2008; McCright and Dunlap 2003, 2011). A key role in the climate change policy process is played by governmental agencies, which in their function as experts identified the climate issue, developed the science, and brought the facts to the attention of legislators over the course of hundreds of congressional hearings. How did these experts respond to the elite-driven politicization of this issue over time? Have they remained neutral to the process, resisted these efforts, or enabled them?

Understanding the role of experts is important not only because they can shape policy agendas and define policy problems (Eyal et al. 2010; O' Connor 2001), but also because they can influence policy outcomes (Biirstein 2001; Hirschman and Berman 2014; Jasanoff 1990; Keller 2009; Nelkin 1975). Ultimately, assessing expert behavior in a policy domain can provide context about the conditions under which climate policy can emerge (Mildenberger 2020), or in the case of climate change, fail to emerge.

Using longitudinal data derived from the content analysis of testimonies delivered by representatives of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other relevant agencies in climate change congressional hearings between 1983 and 2015, I investigate the nature of the advisory process to understand how the agency responded to expertise demands considering the contentious policy context and the agency’s relationship to the main structures of power that control it.

My findings suggest that as climate change became contested, the agency did not remain a neutral actor. The proportion of climate-related political statements it made in testimonies increased over time, indicating that the agency’s position-taking on the issue intensified as the policy context became more contentious. Furthermore, the EPA’s engagement with the issue represents a form of climate advocacy. The agency actively opposed pieces of legislation designed to hinder climate action, and in some instances, even scolded congressional members for their anti-climate efforts. Most importantly, despite the discordant climate agendas characterizing the sequence of presidential administrations and congressional sessions, I find
no evidence of the EPA expressing climate doubt or denial, not even during Republican administrations.

The agency’s response to the encroachment of climate politicization—a process that had redefined and delegitimized the issue, as well as to the legislators’ failure to carry out appropriate climate action, represent meaningful instances of political engagement and resistance by experts to what some scholars see as the elite-driven political discourse on climate change (Guber et al. 2020; Sunstein 2009).

Keywords: experts, policymakers, expert, policymaker relationship, climate change policy, politicization of climate change
Se forger un avis et l’arbitrage dans l’administration publique régionale de Nouvelle-Aquitaine: deux processus qui gèrent les injonctions contradictoires du changement climatique?

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Abstract

La principale contribution de cette communication porte sur les manières dont les agents de l’administration régionale de Nouvelle-Aquitaine se forgent un avis sur un sujet ou projet. Ce processus est en effet stratégique dans la mise en œuvre des politiques publiques de la Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine, car il intervient dans l’élaboration d’un appel à projets par exemple ou l’instruction d’un dossier en vue d’un financement. Comment les agents de la Région forment leur avis ? Peut-on parler d’expertise et de communauté épistémique ?
Dans un deuxième temps la communication propose d’interroger le processus d’arbitrage au sein de l’administration publique régionale comme mode de gestion des contradictions entre objectifs de développement économique et d’adaptation au changement climatique. Comment est "mise en forme le réel" (Weller, 2018) a travers les documents qui véhiculent ou sont joint à l’arbitrage ? Quelle est la typologie des dossiers qui suscitent un arbitrage ? Quels circuit et protagonistes sont concernés ? Comment la decision est prise ? Quels sont les autres processus qui peuvent ou sont mobilisés ?

Cette communication propose de partager les premiers résultats d’analyse des 50 entretiens réalisés auprès des agents de la Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine entre mars et juin 2021 ainsi que l’analyse d’un corpus de demande d’arbitrage. Ce travail débuté en janvier 2021, s’effectue dans le cadre d’une thèse CIFRE en sociologie qui s’intéresse à la mobilisation, l’implémentation et l’appropriation des savoirs scientifiques sur le changement climatique dans l’action publique régionale. Dans la lignée d’une réflexion dite "Actionable Knowledge" (Kirchhoff et al, 2013) la recherche d’opérationnalité est guidée par le cadre analytique des savoirs d’action ou savoirs actionnables (Mormont, 2007) à laquelle se raccrocherà cette communication pour en dégager des perspectives.

Keywords: Climat, anticipation, contradiction, savoirs pour l’action, administration régionale.

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Stampeding Experts, Honest Skeptics, and American Families: Character Work in the ’Climate Wars’

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Abstract

The paper here suggested zooms in on the rhetorics of two hearings called by the U.S. Congress in 1995 with the declared aim of producing a comprehensive, 'objective’ assessment of diverging views on climate science and ozone depletion. The hearings constituted a turning point in the U.S. debate on climate change from scientific to predominantly partisan as part of a "sweeping attack on established federal environmental-policy procedures" by the republican majority (Edwards 2010: 411). The hearings were tellingly titled Scientific Integrity and Public Trust: The Science Behind Federal Policies and Mandates with the subtitles: Stratospheric Ozone: Myth and Realities and Climate Models and Projections of Potential Impacts of Global Climate Change.

The genre of the hearing presents a prototypical platform of interaction between science and politics, adhering to the ideal of objective perception and rational weighing of factual information that is directly translatable into 'good' policy. I aim to disclose underlying moral meanings, symbolic imagery and collective identities in these performative interactions. Therefore, I approach the transcripts of these hearings from a cultural sociological angle, focusing on the "public characters" on stage in these interactions (Jasper, Young & Zuern 2020). The concept of character work to this end is transferred from the sphere of media and communication to political interactions aiming at public performance. In a critical and in-depth discourse analysis of the transcripts, I will detect these rhetorical devices deployed on both sides and suggest relations to broader national narratives of identity and moral worth that transcended the historical moment of the hearings. Beyond prominent single figures, the role of references to constructed groups like the global scientific community, the American people and families and future generations will be considered as objects of character work.

The binaries of personal interest and honesty, ignorance and academic excellence, irrationality and rationality make this conflict into a veritable scene of the "social drama" that is climate change (according to Smith & Howe 2015) enmeshing moral and instrumental arguments across the aisle. As this dramatization basically hasn’t subsided until the present day — irrespective of modeling progress and mounting empirical data — I hope that the analysis can help to inform our understanding of the performances and public perceptions of contemporary voices like Greta Thunberg and her Climate Strikes. Meanings that were constructed in the early conflict between "the global scientific community" — prominently represented by James Hansen or then-Vice President Al Gore — and "individual skeptics” like scientists Fred Singer, Sallie Baliunas or republican Dana Rohrabacher arguably still resonate and stick with our understanding of and emotions about climate change in the USA and beyond.

*Speaker
As of now, the paper is still a work-in-progress under the supervision of James Jasper and Robin Wagner-Pacifici and final findings will emerge over the coming weeks.

Olivia Steiert is a PhD student in the sociology department at the New School for Social Research in New York, seeking to analyze social reactions to the climate crisis such as the global Climate Strikes movement from a cultural sociological perspective.

Keywords: climate science, climate wars, character work, sociology of emotions, narratives, social drama, social performance, discourse analysis, trust, identity