

*Crisis, Ideas and Policy Transformation: Experts and Expertise in European International Organizations, 1973-1987.* University of Portsmouth; Maastricht University, 30.01.2014-31.01.2014.

**Reviewed by** Anna Stawinski

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The current financial and economic crisis has blatantly revealed the important role of experts in international organizations (IOs) in addressing global and structural issues. The developments in Greece, where experts from the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank have been steering and controlling the country's fiscal policy and structural adjustments is one instructive example of the crucial role of experts and expertise in IOs in discussing and providing possible solutions for crises with a transnational scope.

Jointly organised by Carine Germond and Wolfram Kaiser on 30-31 January 2014, a two-day workshop brought together scholars from the Netherlands and Europe to discuss the nature and role of experts and expertise in European IOs in the crisis-ridden period between the first oil shock in 1973 and the coming into force of the European Single Act in 1987. The workshop was organised with the generous sponsorship of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS), the Department of History and the Research Stimulation and Valorization Fund at Maastricht University, the Centre for European and International Studies Research (CEISR) and the Expert Strategic Research Group at the University of Portsmouth, and the SWOL/Universiteitsfund Limburg.

The workshop was divided into six panels. The first panel explored cross-sectoral institutional expertise with a focus on economic and statisti-

cal expertise and auditing. The subsequent five panels dealt with specific policy sectors. All presentations addressed two main questions. First, they investigated who were the experts active within international organizations and what type or form of expertise did they have and draw upon in agenda-setting, policy deliberation and decision-making. Second, based on a case study analysis, they examined what was the role of experts in policy-making in and across international organizations, and how they affected policy outcomes.

In the first panel, MATHIEU LEIMGRUBER and SAMUEL BEROUD (both Geneva) put the spotlight on the Economic Policy Committee (EPC) as one of the Organization for European Cooperation and Development's (OECD) core sites of economic expertise. They argued that the OECD underwent a two-fold transition, both in terms of the nature of expertise with an increasing predominance of (macro-)economic experts and in terms of its influence as politicians took over economic policy in the G7. Looking at the final years of the Audit Board and the first decade of its successor, the European Court of Auditors (ECA), PAUL STEPHENSON (Maastricht / Paris) showed that the first priority for the newly established institution was to be recognised as an independent body and to achieve a common approach to auditing while expertise would be acquired over time. He suggested that greater emphasis placed on fighting fraud in policy sectors such as agriculture during the

1970s and 1980s offered a possibility for the ECA to build up competences and expertise. In his comment, KIRAN PATEL (Maastricht) stressed the need for more boundary work on the concepts of expert and expertise and welcomed that both papers contributed to 'de-centre' the EU. He observed that both papers also displayed competing forms of expertise within and between IOs. As food for thought, he finally recommended further investigating what the crisis was about, what caused a fundamental change or reorientation of IOs and whether, and if so to what extent, these developments were path breaking.

With the second panel, the discussion moved to the agricultural sector. CARINE GERMOND (Maastricht / Portsmouth) explained that experts from various professional and disciplinary backgrounds were brought into close cooperation into the institutional settings of the European Community's (EC) and OECD's experts committees and groups. She drew attention to the gradual shift towards an expertise based on physical and social sciences linked to agriculture rather than technology. Analysing the involvement of experts in the contested reform process of the Common Agricultural Policy, she argued that experts were deeply divided on the nature and depth of the policy changes required to remedy to the problems of the CAP. CLAIRE DUNLOP (Exeter) could not attend the workshop but demonstrated in her paper that the contribution of experts was crucial to the construction of an international scientific consensus on hormones safety, which made it impossible for the EU to successfully defend its ban at the World Trade Organization. Discussing the paper by Germond, SOPHIE VANHOONACKER (Maastricht) stressed that the growing complexity of economic and social issues created a demand for experts and specialised knowledge both at the national and European levels. She furthermore raised the question of the greater politicization of expertise in times of crisis when urgent and difficult decisions have to be made.

The third panel looked at experts in the industrial and service sectors. Examining the steel industry, WOLFRAM KAISER (Portsmouth) explained that a diversification of expertise was necessary to cope with technological, economic, political and environmental issues in the European IOs. However, the dominance of cartel and market-related issues resulted in a strong continuity in the importance of mixed technology-business expertise. He argued that, although scientific knowledge became increasingly important for issues of health or pollution, this expertise did not impact on the work of steel experts who kept the environmental agenda under control. In her analysis of liberalization attempts of the European telecommunication sector, ARTHE VAN LAER (Leuven) pointed out that the European Commission mobilised two types of experts to acquire specialised knowledge and legitimize its policy: Representatives from the Member States' administrations and consultancy agencies. Yet, this plurality of expertise created strong competition between expert groups, thus delaying the emergence of a genuine European-level telecommunication policy. VINCENT LAGENDIJK (Maastricht) pointed out in his comments that the linkages between global and European developments stirred the need for new expertise. Comparing both sectors, he observed that while experts in the telecommunication sector provided specialised technological knowledge to legitimize European policies, they coped in the steel industry with questions of coordination rather than nationalization. He furthermore emphasised that expertise remains an elusive concept in need of further definition and operationalization.

Staying in the realm of the industry and service sector, the following panel focused on new policy fields, such as Health and Disability. SALLY SHEARD (Liverpool) argued that a significant transformation occurred in the ways in which health experts and their expertise were used within the World Health Organization (WHO) and the EC. Health economics increasingly became the

preeminent expert discipline challenging the dominance of biomedicine. She stressed the importance of individual profiles, as embodied, for example, by health economist Brian Abel Smith, that were characterised by multiple, often overlapping professional positions, shared interests, informal networking and international experience. MONIKA BAÁR (Groningen) explained that the very definition of disability underwent a major change in the time period considered, while there was also a fundamental shift from a medical to social expertise. A reason for this shift, she argued, was the increasing contestation of the expertise of professionals by the emerging disability movement as she exemplified in her case study analysis of the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981. Commenting both papers, KAREN HEARD-LAURÉOTE (Portsmouth) remarked that both policy areas were characterized by shifting as well as competing expertise and were affected similarly by pressures on the welfare state as a result of the economic crisis. These pressures triggered not only a more economic management of resources but also a “social reconstruction” by experts at the transnational level.

In the fifth panel, experts in the environmental and development aid policy sectors took centre-stage. JAN-HENRIK MEYER (Aarhus) argued that the development of an EC environmental policy went hand in hand with a politicization of expertise: Experts not only dealt with technical issues such as defining environmental standards but were also used to provide legitimacy and support for EC action. However, he showed that the Commission came to realize that experts frequently had their own agendas. Drawing on cases of bird protection and nuclear power, he discussed the politics of expertise and the emergence of governance through expert committees. CHRISTIAN SALM (Portsmouth) explained that while the EC lacked a genuine development aid policy, the United Nations (UN) provided a transnational forum for debating development aid at expert level. Focusing on Jan Tinbergen, a renowned academic

and active socialist, he analysed how Tingerben, through his involvement in transnational expert groups and socialist networks, set up ideas on the agenda of IOs and contributed to reframing international development policy debates. Commenting both papers, RAF DE BONT (Maastricht) emphasised the twofold role of experts as re-shaper or re-framer of policy issues but also as promoter of new ideas and solutions to address policy problems. Raising the issue of technocracy, he called attention to the necessity of establishing a distinction between the objectivity and neutrality of experts when assessing their motives for getting involved in policy-making and debates.

The sixth panel explored experts in the emerging policy fields of banking supervision and foreign policy cooperation. ALEXIS DRACH (Florence) argued that in the highly technical and rapidly growing banking sector the skills of the experts of the European Economic Community (EEC) Groups were essential to the transformation of international financial governance at the G10 and EEC level through the circulation of information and ideas. Their expertise was based primarily on professional activity, international experience and networking. ALEXANDER REINFELDT (Hamburg) argued that experts in the European Political Cooperation (EPC) working groups were not expected to act as mere diplomats, but also as experts. With the institutionalization of the working practices of increasingly “Europeanised” experts in the EPC Political Committee, experts played an important role for the functioning of the EPC. Yet, limits existed to expertise in foreign policy-making where traditional diplomacy or special relations between states and regions were still important. The discussant, ANETA SPENDZHAROVA (Maastricht), highlighted that the 1970s to 1980s were more dynamic than what the “Eurosclerosis” label which has come to define this period as one of stagnation would suggest. Expert bodies operated as transnational networks and fora for exchanging information and ideas and fostered early policy coordination. She

pointed out that the different terminologies used to refer to experts (for example supervisors or diplomats) in these transnational arenas have important consequences for our understanding of who is an “expert” and what is “expertise”.

The last panel, organised as part of a Maastricht University-based interfaculty cooperation on experts and expertise in policy-making, brought together academics from three faculties (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Law, Health) and four academic disciplines (Politics, History, Law, and Health, Medicine and Life Sciences) to debate the benefits and barriers to interdisciplinary studies of experts.

To conclude, the workshop provided a captivating and rich comparison of the involvement, role, and influence of experts across different IOs and policy fields and showed the depths and breadth of the expertise that was mobilised to address crisis situations during this important and critical period of Western European history. By looking at experts active in IOs with different spatial scope and legal powers, the workshop made a valuable contribution to de-centring the present-day EU. It also showed the benefits of longitudinal studies of experts and expertise across time and created a suitable basis for future collaborations in this emerging field of research.

#### **Conference overview:**

Introduction by Carine Germond (Maastricht University / University of Portsmouth) / Wolfram Kaiser (University of Portsmouth)

*Panel 1: Cross-sectoral Institutional Expertise*  
(Chair: Carine Germond)

Mathieu Leimgruber (University of Geneva) / Alix Heiniger (University of Lausanne) / Samuel Beroud (University of Geneva), A Pilot Fish Ahead of the Sharks? Economic and Statistics Experts

Paul Stephenson (Maastricht University / Sciences Po Paris), Starting From Scratch? Experts and the Rise of Auditing

Discussant: Kiran K. Patel (Maastricht University)

*Panel 2: Experts in the Agricultural Sector*  
(Chair: Wolfram Kaiser)

Carine Germond (Maastricht University / University of Portsmouth), Advocating or Opposing Reform? Agricultural Policy

Claire Dunlop (University of Exeter) Epistemic Communities and Policy Learning in Europe's Hormones Saga

Discussant: Sophie Vanhoonacker (Maastricht University)

*Panel 3: Experts in the Industrial and Service Sectors I*  
(Chair: Carine Germond)

Wolfram Kaiser (University of Portsmouth), Globalization, Economic Transformation and the Environmental Challenge: Heavy Industry

Arthe van Laer (Leuven), Technological Innovation and Policy Change: Telecommunications

Discussant: Vincent Lagendijk (Maastricht University)

*Panel 4: Experts in the Industrial and Service Sectors II*  
(Chair: Wolfram Kaiser)

Sally Sheard (University of Liverpool), Equity, Effectiveness and/or Efficiency: Health Policy

Monika Baár (University of Groningen), From Social Welfare to Human Rights: Disability Policy

Discussant: Karen Heard-Lauréote (University of Portsmouth)

*Panel 5: Experts in Environment and Development Policies*  
(Chair: Carine Germond)

Jan-Henrik Meyer (University of Aarhus), The Myth of the Independent Expert: Environmental Policy

Christian Salm (University of Portsmouth), Accelerating Economic and Social Progress: Development Aid Policy

Discussant: Raf de Bont (Maastricht University)

*Panel 6: Experts in Banking and Foreign Policy Cooperation*

(Chair: Wolfram Kaiser)

Alexis Drach (European University Institute),  
Networks and Financial Globalisation: Banking  
Supervision

Alexander Reinfeldt (University of Hamburg),  
Between Cyprus and Afghanistan: European Political  
Cooperation

Discussant: Aneta Spendzharova (Maastricht  
University)

Conclusion by Wolfram Kaiser and Carine  
Germond

*Studying Experts from an Interdisciplinary  
Perspective: Potentials, Challenges and Pitfalls*

(Chair: Wolfram Kaiser)

Tannelie Blom (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,  
Maastricht University) / Carine Germond  
(Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Maastricht  
University) / Ellen Vos (Faculty of Law, Maastricht  
University) / Kai Michelsen (Faculty of Health,  
Medicine and Life Sciences, Maastricht University)

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