

BOOK REVIEW

Fleck, Duller, Karády: Shaping Human Science Disciplines

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Fleck, Christian, Matthias Duller and Victor Karády (2019) *Shaping Human Science Disciplines – Institutional Developments in Europe and Beyond*, Socio-Historical Studies of the Social and Human Sciences, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

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This is a productive book, both in content and organization. The authors demonstrate how a rigorous and theoretically informed analysis of the social sciences and humanities can contribute to our understanding of the historical development and institutionalization of social science in diverse national settings. Historically, the analysis of social science and the humanities has primarily been conducted by scholars of the disciplines themselves, which carries the risk that such analyses primarily serve to provide consecrated accounts of the scholars' disciplines. Furthermore, the history of the human sciences has tended to focus on the ideas and content of the disciplines' research and less on their institutional and demographic structures. The book addresses these historically under-explored structures by analyzing the institutional properties that have framed the changes, and the battles over ideas and techniques within the human science disciplines. As the editors write: "The primary focus of every chapter in this book concerns the institutional development of seven pre-selected disciplines from the social sciences and humanities in eight countries". They follow this with the claim that better knowledge about the institutional conditions, enables us to better understand how the content of knowledge changes.

The book consists of ten chapters focusing on the institutional setting and changes in seven selected social sciences and humanities disciplines across eight countries (the UK, France, Germany, Sweden, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands and Argentina) – each country has a chapter devoted to an analysis of the social sciences and humanities in that country. The book provides a good starting point for comparison with and further analysis of other countries. The book has its origins in the EU-funded project International Cooperation in the Social Sciences and Humanities (INTERCO-SSH) – hence the primary focus on Europe. It forms part of Palgrave Macmillan's book series Socio-Historical

Studies of the Social and Human Sciences. The book analyses the institutional changes that have occurred within the human sciences during their rise, especially since 1945, a period which witnessed the widespread growth of universities and science. The book offers a study of seven disciplines: economics, political science, sociology, psychology and anthropology from the social sciences, and philosophy and national literature from the humanities. Hence, it focuses on the classic social science disciplines, and supplements this with an analysis of disciplines from the humanities. As several chapters show, defining the disciplines is not that easy. National statistics on the human sciences vary in what they record and how they do so. This is compounded by the fact that what constitutes political science or anthropology in one country differs elsewhere. This is one of the points that the book illustrates; how we organize the academic world in disciplines and fields of study varies greatly and is closely associated with political struggles both within and outside the universities. This evokes the puzzling question of how a rather small set of disciplines came to circulate between countries, and to work as the consecrated norm for how to organize social science and humanities research – although the exploration of this is beyond the scope of this book. The selection of disciplines in the book is in many ways justified, among other things by their size and importance both for organizing the internal structures in the social sciences and humanities and for their relations to political institutions. One thing we should be aware of in the studies of the human sciences is that in focusing on the classic disciplines, we risk overlooking other ways of organizing research and higher learning that have emerged in recent years, such as studies in trans- or interdisciplinary programs.

The editors lay out an analytical framework that identifies core variables for understanding the inner life of disciplines as well as their relations to the outside world. They have hence asked the contributing authors for each chapter to present and analyze statistics on the number of educational programs, students and faculty, specialized publication outlets, the financial and organizational support of the disciplines as well as the demand for the disciplines' knowledge and graduates. Alongside these variables, the authors analyze professional associations and the influence of the general political and social situation in their countries. All in all, the editors provide a simple and tight framework for the empirical chapters and hence provide a framework for an implicit comparison the reader can undertake while reading the book or selected chapters. Likewise, this framework can be extended to an analysis of other countries not included in this book.

As one reads the chapters, there are of course many things one learns about the specific country cases: about the way universities have evolved and how they have been regulated; about the sometimes strange routes of the specific scholars and disciplines; and the shifting relations between social scientists and political institutions. There are five central points that run through the eight country chapters.

The general growth of the social sciences and humanities is the first and probably most important institutional change that all chapters report. All the chapters cover the period from 1945 until the present, and all have witnessed growth in the number of students, study programs, journals, and faculty. This picture is of course a part of a general trend of massification in higher education and of growth in all sciences (and forms of education that are linked to the science, knowledge and technologies upon which modern societies rely). The trend is thus related to what some would call the emergence of the knowledge society. The chapters show the variability of the growth between countries and disciplines. So, even though we see the social sciences increase in all countries, the growth is not of the same magnitude. Some of these differences are associated with the contrasting economic conditions between the countries, but this does not explain all the variation.

While we focus on this first central point that revolves around the growth of social science and the humanities, a sub-theme is the shift in size of the disciplines in social science and the humanities in relation to one another. Again, one theme becomes apparent in these chapters, and that is the dominance of economics and psychology at the expense of the classic humanities disciplines, here represented by national literature and philosophy. Despite a numerical growth in students, programs and staff, the humanities have experienced a relative decline in size and prestige. The role of the humanities in general education has been taken over by the social sciences. Between economics and psychology and the humanities, we find the 'soft' and critical social sciences such as political science and sociology. These disciplines have experienced significant growth, but with national variations and occasional setbacks.

A second but still central institutional shift that becomes apparent in the chapters is a demographic one, namely the feminization of academia. In the time before 1945, very few women were allowed into the university and even fewer were allowed to pursue an academic career. In the countries studied, this changed especially after 1960, but with variation between countries and disciplines. Hence, the more conservative countries and disciplines (economics and philosophy) have remained male dominated, while more progressive countries and disciplines have allowed women to pursue education and academics careers.

Thirdly, and linked to the feminization of academia, we have a shift in social structures and the status of the various disciplines. While previously, university education had been an asset reserved for the cultural elite, it has now become a mass phenomenon. Nevertheless, social recruitment varies between the different disciplines. As the chapter on France shows most vividly, the relative dominance of the various disciplines and the strength of their relations to powerful societal institutions, are structurally homologous with regards the social background of the students in the disciplines; dominant disciplines recruit from dominant parts of society. That said, the growth of faculty has also led to a decline in the prestige of the title of professor. This is seen particularly in the case of Germany, where growth and the professionalization of social science has led to the professors now being less the mandarins of the German state and more professional experts who compete with other professionals to create credible analyses of the social world.

Fourthly, the chapters uniformly show the close links between the social sciences and politics. The chapters to a lesser extent analyze the political use of knowledge or the politicization of knowledge production, but do this more in the context of the political steering of universities and particular disciplines. It is clear that the massification of higher education and research have characterized the political climate since 1945. In the UK, increments of growth often followed a shift in policies after a major reform. In Sweden, growth was tied to other political areas, and education was seen as a vehicle for a politics of growth, and internationalization. The political conditions in countries which have experienced dictatorships, such as Hungary and Argentina, obviously frame the institutional possibilities in these countries. In Hungary and Argentina, some scholars chose to leave their country during the reign of the dictator.

The fifth critical point throughout the eight country chapters is more reflexive. In the same way as there is a tendency to group all natural sciences (and medicine, technology and engineering etc. – fields with very different epistemic cultures and rationales) together under the heading STEM, we see the use of the abbreviation SSH for the Social Sciences and Humanities. This bureaucratic category, stemming from the EU, serves to group a large number of small, underfunded and diverse fields and disciplines in order to make them more manageable and hide their differences. As several

chapters show, and as is discussed in the conclusion of the book, the seven disciplines have produced credible knowledge under very different institutional conditions. Disciplines such as economics and psychology have, to a large degree, come out as winners. They are by now well-entrenched disciplines serving the state and market. On the other hand, the humanities are declining, and their mode of knowledge production (library or book research) devalued. The book hence serves as a warning against using bureaucratic categories such as SSH, since they can hide more than they reveal.

All in all, the editors have created a coherent and informative book that provides a simple and productive framework that others can use for studying the institutionalization of disciplines. The chapters closely conform to the framework presented in the first chapter, and this, on the one hand, provides statistics that enable comparison of the disciplines and countries, while still allowing for each country case to be presented with any necessary contextual specificities. The drawbacks of the tight framework are, on the other hand, that the chapters risk reading like a report, are a little repetitive, and in turn risk failing to address the central questions. However, this is not a major problem. One concern I do have about the approach of the book is related to the possible consequences of the focus on institutional factors. For example, focusing on the number of students obviously contributes to an understanding of the life of the disciplines. Nevertheless, this focus on institutional factors is perhaps not the best approach for illuminating why students enroll in specific disciplines and why some forms of social science knowledge appeal to different publics.

One issue that seems unaddressed, both in the theoretical framework and in the empirical chapters, is the international dimension. The book is constructed as a comparative analysis, and much is gained by that. However, research on the history of the social sciences has underlined the importance of international circulation and the colonial legacy of the social sciences. The chapters address the import of US-style social science in the post war period, but the relations to colonies (and for Argentina, the relation to Europe and the US) is less well covered. How did these relations influence the social sciences in the Netherlands and Italy? Related to this is the question of how we can explain the striking similarities in macro trends across the cases. And maybe this is also the puzzle the book leaves for the next one. What kinds of transnational circulation of policies and knowledge between countries have made the national fields of higher education look so similar? Summing up, the book is an interesting and practicable contribution to the sociology and history of the social sciences.