

Panel 14:

Coping with complexity by (mis)using knowledge

Modern day policy problems seem more complex, or wicked, than ever before. Long gone are the days of clear-cut problems and undisputed solutions, if they ever existed (Rittel & Webber, 1973). Governments have to deal with multi-level and multi-actor problems that involve a great deal of inherent uncertainty and controversies with respect to their causes and solutions. This holds for problems in a broad range of domains, such as, but not limited to: the economic domain (Euro-crisis); the social domain (welfare reforms); the environmental domain (global warming) and the spatial domain (mega infrastructure projects).

Although we know that no such thing as value-free knowledge exists (Majone, 1989; Fischer, 2000; Stone, 2002; Sarewitz, 2004), 'evidence based policy' is nevertheless on the rise. When dealing with highly complex problems, knowledge becomes an especially powerful tool for political actors (Hajer, 1995; Flyvbjerg, 1998). After all: knowledge is power and power is knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 1998).

This panel addresses the question of how we make sense of the way knowledge is (mis)used in the governance of wicked problems? We aim to consolidate and further develop these ideas by reflecting on the following sub questions: **First of all**, how is knowledge used in dealing with complex policy issues? Is knowledge used instrumentally solve policy problems, tactically to underpin claims to power or legitimacy or as a means to depoliticize contentious policy issues? (Weiss, 1979; Boswell, 2009); **Secondly**, what kinds of knowledge are used, and which actors are involved? Can we hold lay-knowledge in the same esteem as expert-knowledge, and is this division even still meaningful?; **Third**, if knowledge can never be value-free, how should scientists position themselves in complex political issues? **Fourth**, should complex issues be 'descientized' by introducing more politics into technocratic bureaucracies (Mouffe, 2009), or depoliticized by more evidence-based policies? **Fifth**, what is the role of social media in generating and (de-) legitimizing knowledge for wicked problems?; And **finally** which boundary arrangements between science and policy are promising and why?

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Chairs:

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