Supported by: University of Warsaw (Institute of Sociology), University of Warwick/EHESS (ERC DISCONEX)

Organisers: Marta Natalia Wróblewska (University of Warwick), Mariusz Finkielsztein (University of Warsaw), dr Izabela Wagner (University of Warsaw) – supported by ERC DISCONEX (University of Warwick /EHESS)

Venue: Library of University of Warsaw (BUW), Dobra 56/66, room 254

The aim of the workshop is to get an overview of approaches to the Study of Higher Education from the fields of Social Sciences and Humanities, including emerging new methods in this field, such as discursive approaches, critical approaches etc. The event would showcase new research in the field of Higher Education focusing on two aspects: problems tackled and disciplinary/methodological perspectives.

The Summer of Science will also be a site of international meetings and exchanges over national and disciplinary boundaries. The event will feature talks from invited speakers. Participation is free and open to an external audience (registration essential).

9.30-10.00 – Registration

10.00-11.15 – Session 1: Discourse and Academia (Chair: Marta Wróblewska)
Welcome and opening:
Marta Wróblewska (University of Warwick)
Mariusz Finkielsztein (University of Warsaw)

Johannes Angermuller (University of Warwick/ EHESS) Valuing and being valued in academia. A process-oriented perspective on ‘academic excellence’
Francoise Dufour (EHESS) How academic profiles on institutional websites “make discourse”

11.15-11.45 Coffee break

11.45-13.00 Session 2: Evaluation (Chair: Magdalena Paul)
Emanuel Kulczycki (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) Field Patterns of Metric-Wiseness
Martina Franzen (WZB, Berlin) Probing the Probes of Impact Assessment in Sociology

13.00-14.30 Lunch break (Rewers, BUW, Ground Floor)

14.30-15.45 Session 3: Macro Approaches (Chair: Johannes Angermuller)
Marek Kwiek (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) What Can We Learn from Large-Scale Comparative Academic Profession Studies in Europe (and What We Cannot)
Krystian Szadkowski (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) Political Ontology in Higher Education Research

15.45-16.15 Coffee break

16.15-17.30 Session 4: Qualitative Approaches (Chair: Mikołaj Mierzejewski)
Mariusz Finkielsztein (University of Warsaw) Boredom in the Work of Academics
Izabela Wagner (University of Warsaw) Where is the Knowledge? Career and–or Knowledge/Science: Inverse Pyramid Phenomenon

Closing Reflections – Emergent Problems in Higher Education Research
Marta Wróblewska (University of Warwick)
Mariusz Finkielsztein (University of Warsaw)
Session 1: Discourse and Academia

Prof. Johannes Angermuller (University of Warwick/ EHESS) Valuing and being valued in academia. A process-oriented perspective on ‘academic excellence’

Text and talk are important social activities in the academic world. Through discourse, academics relate to others and perform social roles. They act as specialised knowledge producers through their publications, as decision-makers in institutional talk, as colleagues in departmental meetings, as teachers in classroom interactions, as blog posters and social media users, as experts in newspapers etc. Yet little is known about how value hierarchies are constructed and established in scientific communities. Against a background in French discourse analysis and sociological approaches, I will discuss how value hierarchies among academics are constructed and established over time. Citing examples from the DISCONEX research, I will focus on how academic careers develop at the intersection of institutional and reputational categorizations. While academics are subject to an increasingly sophisticated evaluation dispositif, a comparative study of academic trajectories can account for valuation practices.

Dr. Francoise Dufour (EHESS) How academic profiles on institutional websites “make discourse”

All scholars having an official institutional status and an academic title have now a page on the website of the institution they are part of. This relatively recent discursive practice can be traced back to the start of the era of evaluation of and competition between universities at the turn of the 2000s (at least in Europe, in the framework of the Bologna Process, the European Higher Education Area and the emergence of rankings: Shanghai…). New types of methods, tools and disciplines (Cybermetrics or Webometrics, Informetrics…) have been developing to measure the “visibility” of the institutions: one of the master words of the new managerial philosophy of the universities in connection with those of “evaluation” and “valorisation” or more generally “impact” (in particular in the English context) arguing for the “social utility” of the research, especially in Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH). Each member of an academic institution has been explicitly or/and implicitly “interpellated” (Althusser 1970) to play the game of the institution, among others, by developing a personal page on the institutional website. More than neutral information technology instruments, institutional websites are “instruments of public action” (Lascoumes & Le Galès 2004) acting as “dispositifs” (Foucault 1975, 1976, 1977), i.e. as sociotechnical intertwinment of heterogeneous elements interacting (discourses, institutions, technology, symbols…).
In my paper I will focus on the different discursive practices at stake on French and English researchers’ webpages. My analysis aims to account for how the actors fulfil an implicit contract with the mother institution by acting according to the rules of the dispositif, in particular by sharing the same “inscriptions” (Latour 1989) or material traces. Discourse is then understood here in an extended sense including all the techno-scriptural traces (Paveau 2015) that are numerical and may be iconic and/or linguistic. Analysing academic profiles on English and French institutional webpages will show how these inscriptions “make discourse” in the sense that they mobilise the interdiscourse of the mother institution. It will also reveal how researchers use webpages as resources for (re)configuring their positioning.

Bibliography
Foucault M. (1976), Histoire de la sexualité. 1. La volonté de savoir, Paris, Gallimard.
Session 2: Evaluation

Prof. Emanuel Kulczycki (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) Field Patterns of Metric-Wiseness

Sandra Rousseau and Ronald Rousseau (2015) have proposed the concept to metric-wiseness which is defined as a researcher’s capacity to use the characteristics and formats of scientometric indicators to present their own research value. Rousseau and Rousseau (2016) conducted a pilot study in the area of agricultural economy and showed various interesting differences in the respondents’ knowledge of important scientometric indicators. The concept of metric-wiseness has not been investigated across various fields of science yet. Thus, the present findings should be a relevant contribution showing how researchers use metrics in various fields.

In my presentation, I would like to share the preliminary results of my research on metric-wiseness in Poland. I have analyzed 3,695 of the so-called self-presentations (over 82,000 pages) within the habilitation procedure in all fields of Polish science in the period of 2011–2016. I have used the MaxQDA software and three relevant frameworks (Identifiers, Metrics, Databases) to code all the documents.

A candidate for habilitation (the highest scientific degree in Poland) has to describe their scientific achievements in a self-presentation. This document is publicly available on the government website and should show how the candidate has contributed to the development of a given scientific discipline.

The results of my analysis make it possible to answer the following questions: Do the candidates use bibliometric/scientometric indicators to present their research output and achievements? What are the differences between the various fields? What kind of metrics do the candidates use? Which types of databases do they use to calculate the values of bibliometric indicators? How do they write about the value of ‘their metrics’? and – finally - How do they understand scientometric indicators when they write about their usefulness and adequacy?

My findings prove that in general there are significant differences between the so-called ‘hard sciences’ and ‘soft sciences’ as far as metric-wiseness is concerned. However, there are also important differences between the disciplines within the field. For instance, education studies scholars use metrics very rarely, whereas psychologists present their outputs almost exclusively in light of scientometric indicators.
Bibliography:

Dr Martina Franzen (WZB, Berlin) Probing the Probes of Impact Assessment in Sociology

The implementation of the Impact Agenda in the UK Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 proposes a new way of assessing research. Higher education institutions (HEIs) were required to submit a number of impact case studies to demonstrate how research impacts society at large. Those nearly 7000 impact case studies available from the REF 2014, offer unique data material to study science-society relations in a comparative manner. In our empirical analysis of the impact case studies we combined topic modeling with qualitative content analysis. As a result, we identified classes of subject-related types of impact. Disciplinary fields that mostly refer to ‘soft forms’ of impact such as societal impact or cultural impact seem to struggle most to provide the evidence required by the REF guidelines. In my presentation, I will focus on the case of sociology to discuss the formal constraints of the generic REF assessment framework and its broader implications for shaping science.
Session 3: Macro Approaches

Prof. Marek Kwiek (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) 

What Can We Learn from Large-Scale Comparative Academic Profession Studies in Europe (and What We Cannot)

This presentation will focus on differentiated lessons drawn from a large-scale comparative international academic profession study (11 European countries, 17,000 surveys, 600 semistructured interviews, 2009-2017). The lessons will refer to team-work type of international research and its limitations; type of research produced within confined periods of time; limitations of international datasets self-produced; limitations of multi-country surveys, multicountry interviews, and their national variations; research funding and project-imposed time constraints; limitations in focus, sample and methods of collaborative academic profession studies. Finally, several selected fields of research conducted in the project (see bibliography below) will be presented, along with their inherent limitations. In particular, the fields studied included: academic collegiality as part of university governance, internationalization in research and international research collaboration, high research performance, low academic research production, patterns of academic salaries, academic working-time distribution and research orientation, and academic cohorts or generations. The prototypical figures shown in a stylized fashion will be “internationals” and “locals”, “research top performers”, “non publishers” or “silent scientists”, “top academic earners” and “academics under 40”, all across 11 European countries. Most surprising findings referred to the academic profession from 11 European systems will be briefly discussed and, specifically, what can and what cannot be learned from comparative research (based on survey-based quantitative data and interview-based qualitative data) will be highlighted. Conclusions for individual academics, research groups, national research councils and policymakers will be drawn.

Bibliography:
Abstracts


Dr Krystian Szadkowski (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) Political Ontology in Higher Education Research

Dualisms can be dangerous. They limit our ability to see and learn, simplify the picture of complex systems, making it impossible to perceive phenomena that do not fit easily within the given field. Most of all, they impede the realization of progressive changes. Their limited usefulness is particularly noticed during the investigation of what extends between the two ideological poles they create (Marginson 2007). Supported by various dualisms, the assumptions adopted in many fields of science hinder productive confrontation with the non-dual socio-economic and political reality (Dow 1990). Higher education research is bounded by all-pervasive power of dualisms – they are rarely questioned despite their proneness to critique and thus distort the research design and unable the clear understanding of complex higher education reality (Macfarlane 2015).
This study presents the methodological framework of political ontology reflection and looks at the current debates within higher education research field to present the extent of the constitutive role of ideas in the determination of political outcomes (Hay 2006). Every political position with regard to higher education and related, concrete activities are based on particular ontological decisions, and every ontology entails certain political consequences.
Political ontology is thus a representation of the ontological (basic ontic and ontological guidelines, that reflects the core features of being and the modes of existence), which sets the framework for the functioning of actors and political institutions. Taken-for-granted status of this ontological decisions creates a problem with most of mainstream higher education research, that share the limits of liberal political ontology.

The paper offers a non-dualistic analytical framework (private/public/common) for understanding the dynamics within glonacal higher education. Its main focus is placed on the public/common distinction. Based on literature review the paper provides a brief systematisation of the use of the concepts of the common, the common goods and the common good vis-à-vis the concepts of the public, the public goods, the public good in higher education. The differences are discussed with reference to concrete examples from higher education reality (at the levels of funding, governance, property relations, benefits). Limiting to a simple ontological opposition between the public and the private is the most problematic when thinking about the future of the university. This paper assumes that the interlink between the public and the common creates a certain starting point for conceiving any viable alternatives to the current neoliberal status quo in higher education. Much has been written on destructive relations between the private and the public in higher education (Berman 2012, Oliveira 2013, Olssen & Peters 2005). However, still little attention has been paid to the commons and the state in higher education (Marginson 2016), the public support and a bottom-up organisation of knowledge production within the university, or public infrastructure and a commons-based everyday reality of teaching, learning and knowing (Winn 2015). Lack of conceptual clarity severely contributes to this situation.

Bibliography:
Abstracts


Session 4: Qualitative Approaches

**Mariusz Finkielsztein** (University of Warsaw) Boredom in the Work of Academics

**Boredom in the work of Academics**

The emotional aspects of scientific work are frequently neglected as not important or not strictly scientific as far as emotions are so subjective. However, subjectivity is constructed via experiences that can be traced and have a major influence on work and well-being of academics, and boredom is one of key elements in that scheme – it could be detrimental for motivation, satisfaction and efficacy of performed activities.

The first reaction of many academics is denying that they have ever been bored, however, after some consideration they often admit that it may be present in their work, even if they do not allow themselves to speak it loudly. Boredom may be connected with every aspect of academic work – research, administration or didactics. In the presentation I would like to focus on the first two.

The presentation aims to show the experience of boredom among academics during performing their duties based on the qualitative research among university teachers of University of Warsaw (in-depth interviews, participant observation). The concepts of boredom and circumstances/causes of boredom will be the main object of consideration.
Prof. Izabela Wagner (University of Warsaw) Where is the Knowledge? Career and—or Knowledge/Science: Inverse Pyramid Phenomenon

The presentation is focused on the hierarchies that are present in the social world of scientific production and HE in EU and USA. Official and unofficial – structural and administrative – all organize the life and career of scientists and scholars in a different way. The basis for the analysis of processes of the construction and maintenance of a given position inside of those different hierarchies is a long-lasting (started in 2003) multi-field ethnographical research conducted in life-science laboratories in France, USA, Poland and punctually in Germany and Italy.

The reflection will be completed by the study of the hierarchies present in social sciences. Large data gathered in various types of institutions (from prestigious American research institutes and universities, French grand-ecoles laboratories to Eastern European institutions and national universities) allows taking into account the specificity of different types of settings and structural features that influence the scientific work. Following aspects will be considered: methodologies, work-cultures, specificities of scientific work organizations (collaborations and competitions), prestige construction, career visibility and longevity. Those elements should provide a deeper understanding of the key task of scholar – the knowledge acquirement, production and transmission process. How are we participating in the knowledge construction? What kind of the work organization is optimal for scientific activity? Finally, could we consider an adequate hierarchy system that reflects the position of scientist in the knowledge construction process?