
BOOK REVIEW

Brans, M. & Timmermans, A. (Eds.) (2022). *The Advisory Roles of Political Scientists in Europe – Comparing Engagements in Policy Advisory Systems*. Palgrave Macmillan

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The book is dedicated to the engagement of political scientists as advisors to public policy decision makers and participants in broader public debates. What roles do they play, and what activities do they do in their external, non-academic activities? How do they operate at the intersections of academia and their local political and social environment? What are their motivational factors? What, where, how and for whom do they communicate? These questions are relevant indeed, as relatively few works can be found that are focusing on the role of specific intellectual professions as advisors of policymaking; previous studies mainly focus on lawyers (Miller, 1995; Johnston, 2008) and economists (Hamilton, 1992; Hirschman & Berman, 2014). At the same time, looking at the role of political scientists as suppliers of public policy decision-making would be a question with a self-evident relevance, which has never been asked from a broader perspective. Now, this volume focuses on a novel field of empirical investigation: political scientists who are employed in academia. The book is edited by Marleen Brans (KU Leuven) and Arco Timmermans (Leiden University) and contains contributions from twenty-three researchers in total. The open-access book is based on the work carried out in the ProSEPS (Professionalization and Social Impact of European Political Science), a large-scale cross-national project, financed by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology). The authors provide an easy-to-read text written in a professional, yet understandable style, which increases the accessibility of the messages of this engaging volume.

The book is structured into three main parts. The first part contains an introductory chapter defining the research problem and giving an overview of the main research questions. Then, the second chapter discusses the theoretical and conceptual anchors of the research, in a very logical and comprehensive way. The authors build strong theoretical and conceptual foundations for their work. These foundations are built on the concept of knowledge utilization (Gieryn, 1983), which, in this case, happens in a policy advisory system (Halligan, 1995), specific to each country. A policy advisory system is defined as a locational model, which exists at the junction of three different arenas: the academic arena, the government or policy-making arena, and the public and media arenas. Policy advisory systems consist of interconnected actors crossing through the boundaries of the three

arenas while providing information, knowledge, and recommendations for policymakers and the broader audience. Besides the conceptualization of policy advisory systems, another key theoretical contribution of the book is the construction of the ideal-typical advisory roles of academics as policy advisors: the 'pure academic', the 'expert', the 'opinionating scholar', and the 'public intellectual', each having different knowledge orientation at a higher or lower frequency of advice. Finally, the first part is supplemented by a methodological chapter providing a detailed elaboration of data collection and analysis on which the empirical results were based. The empirical basis of the book is a large-scale survey that collected information from 2,400 academics across Europe, which serves as a representative sample of roughly 12,500 political scientists from the 39 countries, the survey gathered data from.

The second part of the book is composed of twelve chapters containing case studies from European countries (Albania, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Spain, the Netherlands, Turkey, and the United Kingdom), where the role of political scientists in the context of the local policy advisory systems was analysed in a more detailed way. The countries selected for case studies represent a wide geographical range, from North to South and from West to East, and show differences in their cultural, historical, and institutional background, including stable, traditional democracies, countries that went through a democratic transition in the past few decades and also endangered democracies. The individual case studies not only apply the general conceptual and analytical framework developed for this research, while looking at national policy advisory systems as well as empirical patterns of advising and advisory roles but also, contain specific findings for each country, drawing up a more detailed picture of academics as policy advisors within their local circumstances.

In the last part, the book provides a comparative overview of the results, focusing not only on the twelve countries selected for case studies but using the whole sample. Besides the review of the community of political scientists from the perspective of age, gender, and employment status, one key point in the last part of the volume is that the authors were able to empirically distinguish between the roles of policy advisory roles. The interesting result is that almost half of the academics were falling into the category of opinionating scholars, more than a quarter of them were identified as experts, one-fifth as pure academics, and only less than five percent as public intellectuals. Despite the significant differences in the composition of advisory roles in the countries, this is a very strong indication that the majority of European political scientists are not afraid to 'speak truth to power' (Wildavsky, 1979), as they bring normative statements to public debates, and most of them do not refrain from the language of advocacy. The overview presented in the last part also reflects on the channels through which political scientists give advice, the topics they focus on as advisors, and the audience to whom they communicate. Based on the empirical findings, the final chapter is finally providing a revision of the theoretically developed ideal-typical roles of policy advisors as it is pointing out that the broader range of advisory orientations and activities the academics calls for a more detailed multidimensional model of advisory roles.

Some limitations of the study presented in this book also indicate possible directions for future research. The volume mainly focuses on the role of political scientists within their national policy advisory system. However, these systems are not limited to the

domestic level, but they are exposed to internationalization, especially in EU-member countries, where supranational institutions play a key role in several policy areas. The examination of how knowledge flows between domestic and international policy advisory systems would provide a deeper understating of the internationalization of knowledge production and utilization through policy advice. In addition to the findings presented for the whole sample in the summary part and the twelve individual case studies, another interesting step would be to focus on cross-country comparisons within regions (e.g. Scandinavian countries) and even between different regions (e.g. 'old' and 'new' EU member countries), using the original dataset from the 39 countries. During these comparisons, also the influence of internal factors, like administrative traditions or administrative culture on the national policy advisory systems might be pointed out.

This essential volume warns us that the contribution of political science research to decision-making and to public debates has special importance when policy advisory systems are influenced not just by internationalization, but also by the political instrumentalization of scientific information and evidence, which is narrowing the opportunities to speak the truth to power and questioning the role of evidence-based policymaking. The book shows a mirror to the academic community of European political scientists; however, it can be recommended not just to them, but to anyone, who is engaged in decision-making and debates around public policy issues on a broader societal scale; consider credible information, scientific knowledge, and well-grounded suggestions provided by scholars to be important; and concerned about those to whom the book is dedicated: the political scientists whose academic freedom is under threat.

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