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Dezalay Yves and Garth G. Bryant (2002), *The Internationalization of Palace Wars, Lawyers, Economists and the Contest to Transform Latin American States* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press) (IPW)

Drori, S. Gili John W. Meyer, Francisco O. Ramirez and Evan Schofer, (2003) *Science in the Modern World Polity: Institutionalization and Globalization* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press) (SMWP)

Stone, Diane and Denham Andrew (eds) (2004) *Think Tanks Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press). (TTT)

Slaughter Anne-Marie (2004) *A New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press). (ANWO)

Has Plato's republic of the philosopher-king finally come of age? The growth in the role of experts and expertise in the policy process, the rise of the 'information society' and of the 'information economy', the expansion of the education system, and above all the 'scientization' of human problems indicate that something is changing in the way the world is governed. The diffusion of 'best practices', the framing of international institutions as institutions of knowledge (e.g, the World Bank; see Stone, 2000; 2003), and the use of expertise as a source of legitimacy in the policy process (Majone, 1989) offer ever more indications of the changing context of policy-making. Curiously, we may miss the increasing role of knowledge in our policy process since we tend to take for granted the role of 'knowledge' and 'expertise' in our governance systems. 'Knowledge', and especially 'scientific knowledge', is so entrenched in the way we approach political, social and economic issues that we often underestimate its role in framing and shaping a new world order and a new public policy. Convergence and diffusion are nowadays driven largely not by anonymous economic or technological forces but rather by agents

of knowledge: actors who rely on their expertise (or often their claim to expertise) as the major source of the legitimacy of their role in the policy process.¹

Not only are 'agents of knowledge' important for understanding political choices, they are also inherently social and political. For all the growth of science, of knowledge communities, of knowledge networks and the 'knowledge actors', the production of knowledge, its diffusion and its application are hardly devoid of politics in general or of interests and normative choices in particular. By way of reviewing four recent books on the diffusion of knowledge and on its role in policy and governance systems, I offer some insights into the roles of agents of knowledge, networks of professionals and organizations of knowledge in regulatory and policy-making processes. As I will demonstrate, the books concur with three fundamental approaches to the study of political, social and economic change: realism, functionalism and constructivism. Yet, while they offer different perspectives on the role of knowledge in the public policy process, they agree that that role is increasingly relevant to political and policy analysis.

I. Critical Realism and the Diffusion of Professional Knowledge

For realists² (or interest-centred approaches to the study of politics) the expansion of the role of knowledge agents, the multiple forms of their organization, and above all their increasing autonomy reflect social and political competition and conflict over scarce resources. Their success and prestige make them proper objects of critical scrutiny, proportional to their influence and power of abuse. Dezalay and Garth's *The Internationalization of Palace Wars: Lawyers, Economists and the Contest to Transform Latin American State* [IPW] is the clearest example of a critical study of the role of experts in

¹ This was aptly put in a recent paper by Martin Marcussen that explored the implication of the rise of agents of knowledge on the shift in authoritative status of bureaucratic agencies: "Scientificized bureaucratic agencies do not only base their legitimacy on delegated, rational-legal or moral authority. Scientization implies that public agencies are being endowed with scientific authority" (Marcussen, 2005, 3).

² The label 'realism' is intended to distinguish a wide variety of interest-centered approaches to the study of politics from constructivism, which emphasizes the primacy of framing processes over pre-defined interests.

this process. The book explores the process of global change and its frustrations from the point of view of the sociology of professions. 'Professional competition' among experts assumes a global form. Importers and exporters of hegemonic ideas compete and collaborate across the 'North' and the 'South', adopting strategies of political action that reflect their interests in the context of structural constraints, most notably different trajectories of state formation.

In Africa, Asia, eastern Europe and Latin America a burgeoning group of consultants, think tanks, philanthropic foundations, and national and transnational agencies has come to the conclusion that, whatever the problem is, an essential part of the solution is the promotion of the rule of law. According to some estimates, organizations such as the U.S. Agency for International Development and the World Bank spent over \$1 billion on legal reform efforts (Upham, 2002). Another estimate by Trubek (2003) suggests that the World Bank alone has supported 330 'rule of law' projects and spent \$2.9 billion on this task since the 1990. The promotion of the rule of law depends on 'legal transplants', that is, the importation of legal techniques, concepts, and solutions from their original birthplace in the North to the South. This process of legal or 'knowledge' export is impressive in scope, and IPW discusses the process of exporting and importing knowledge, legal as well as economic, from cross-national and international perspectives on the politics of professions. What makes this book unique is its ability to forge links between elite theories, state theories and the sociology of professions. It thus extends the sphere of interest-based interpretation of politics and policy to the study of professions. Its broad theoretical scope is accompanied by a research design which includes an analysis of four Latin American countries with different state structures (Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico), two highly important professions (lawyers and economists), two major knowledge institutions (World Bank, Ford Foundation), two international regimes (the post-war regime – 1940s-70s – and the neoliberal regime since the late 1970s) and diverse arenas of change such as human rights and corporate governance.

IPW conceptualizes professions as elites who compete in 'the sphere of power', largely over the control of the state. The term 'palace wars' (a notion derived from the work of

Pierre Bourdieu) reflects a political perspective that focuses on wars between elites, especially professional elites, as the critical agents of change. Elite wars are nowadays international in the sense that they are carried on across nations and continents. The strategies of younger and older generations of aspiring professionals are international, and they use 'foreign capital', such as university degrees, contracts, legitimacy, and expertise as a currency of power. IPW reflects a growing scholarly recognition that the sociology of professions (and public policy in general) should move from the local and the national to the global and that knowledge actors are critical agents of diffusion as they produce new 'operating rules' for governance in the name of their expertise. Two competing knowledge actors—the economist and the lawyer— are at the centre of the analysis. Both actors speak skilfully in the name of democratization (human rights, judicial reforms) and economic liberalization (privatization, trade agreements and foreign direct investment) but in reality both are in the business of competing for power. The result of this competition is a shift from 'gentlemen politicians of the law', who represent an aristocratic ideal of government, to economist 'technopols', who represent a meritocratic and technical ideal. According to the aristocratic ideal of government, learned law graduates draw on their general legal training and practical wisdom to act as intermediaries between the public and the private, between the learned world and the world of affairs (IPW, pp. 18–19). The new technopols are much more 'internationalized' in the sense that to have legitimacy and credibility as economists, they earn doctorates in the U.S., they publish in journals with international credibility (which means particularly U.S. journals), and many of them teach at U.S. universities (IPW, p. 30). Their expertise is international and the product of a highly competitive process. In this sense they represent the growing impact of internationalization on the new political order in the periphery.

The disappointing results of the legal reforms in these countries should have led their proponents to rethink their reform strategy. Yet 'the efforts continue and are even gaining momentum' (IPW, p. 16). The rationale behind this puzzling behaviour, IPW suggests, involves an argument about the agents of 'foreign' knowledge as well as an argument about the enduring effects of state structures. At the actor level, the argument is about the primacy of power considerations and the gains that individuals are making

from their access to 'US legal technologies, U.S credentials, and US contacts' (IPW, p. 3). These US-based assets are turned into impressive careers by individuals who act as brokers between their home countries and foreign actors, such as multinational business investors, development agencies and international non-governmental organizations. Lawyers in particular have acted as compradors serving to connect the local and the international – speaking first for one side and then the other. The personal gains are contextualized by reference to the social background of the actors involved. IPW suggests that these strategies of internationalization are class strategies. The people who follow them are most likely to come from cosmopolitan families who speak English well enough and have sufficient material resources to take advantage of foreign opportunities. Their failure to establish the rule of law, paradoxically, provides an opportunity for new generations: each new cosmopolitan generation coming to power can invest in the need to complete the previous generation's unfinished business (IPW, p. 250). The process can continue indefinitely, producing a new and newly idealist law and reform agenda for each successive generation.

The partial success of the efforts to reform through expertise and the political and professional activity of lawyers are interpreted not only through the lens of interests but also by means of a structural perspective. The key variable for comparative analysis, the authors suggest, is the structure of the state as 'imported state' and the problematic relations between the state and other social actors that constrain the 'autonomy of law' (and experts in general). The import and export of dominant U.S. expertise is shaped by national agendas and national histories in the four countries studied. Lacking professional autonomy, the experts from the countries under investigation are 'dollarized': 'their value in the South is determined by their buying power in the U.S. The key feature of the expertises promoted by and through the technopols is their link to what is acceptable on the campuses and in the think tanks in the US' (IPW, p. 44). Since the value of expertise (and of the experts) is determined far away in the 'North', there are natural tensions with local conditions in the 'South'. The tensions create a two-tiered structure of political interaction: one characterized by grand principles, the other by clientelism. The price is the fragmentation of the state: 'The state was maintained, as a

general rule, through a pattern that required the cosmopolitan elites, to form tacit alliances with people who would do the nitty-gritty work necessary to maintain political and economic power. There were, of course, many local variations' (IPW, p. 249). The new 'importers' of cosmopolitanism (who are often the descendants of the earlier importers) continue to ground their hegemony in their internationally legitimized expertise and promote top-down recipes for change. In this process they must confront deeply ingrained practices at all social levels and the people who sustain those practices: 'few of the cosmopolitan elite are willing to work in and build the ties with local favelas... [Yet] refusal to form such alliances makes it even more difficult to implement the reforms. The best of intentions cannot ignore the local structures and the power relationship they sustain' (IPW, p. 250). IPW therefore offers a critical and pessimistic outlook on the extent of human 'progress' and on the nature of the agents that promote it. Its pessimism touches on the role of 'Northern' knowledge not only in the 'South' but also in the 'North'. Law, economics and other forms of expertise are currency in a power struggle between elites. The tendency of these elites *not* to 'question their own universals' and consequently their ability to get away with their own power games are increasing, since 'international strategies are typically played out in a space where the borders and categories are blurred' (IPW, p.8).

II. Networks of Expertise: A Functional Solution for a More Effective Global Order?

If realists focus on interests and power in their interpretation of the increasing role of knowledge actors, 'functionalists' discuss change as reflecting the growing complexity of the world's politics, economy and society. Global problems require global collective action. Among the books under review Ann-Maire Slaughter's *A New World Order* [ANWO] comes closest to this approach in exploring the role of networks of government officials in shaping the current world order. Networks of government officials are presented as an alternative mechanism of control and governance in a world where the problems and opportunities are global in scope but the major institution of democratic governance is the nation-state. The functionalist element of Slaughter's analysis is grounded in the explicit assertion that networks of government officials are products of

new social, economic and political challenges and are also the proper and effective answer to the common problems of the human race.

ANWO is a study of the global networking of government officials. Networks of government officials are portrayed as a constitutive element (as well as a manifestation) of a new world order. We are often aware that terrorists, arms dealers, money launderers, drug dealers, and women traffickers operate through global networks. We may also be aware of transnational networks of think tanks (Struyk, 2002) or in general of transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink, 1998), but ANWO alerts us to the transnational networks of government officials: '[t]hese government networks are a key feature of world order...' (ANWO, p.1). Taken together, they provide the skeleton or infrastructure for global governance. Unfortunately, they are 'underappreciated, undersupported and underused to address the central problems of global governance' (Ibid.). ANWO aims, therefore, 'to point out their proliferation in every place we have eyes to see... [and] to explore their potential, highlight their advantages and warning of their disadvantages, in constructing a world order that is better fitted to meet the challenges of the world we share' (ANWO, p. 11).

Networked threats require a networked response, suggests ANWO, and thus the globalization of capitalism, terrorism, crime, and environmental degradation require the common response of government officials. These officials are working together, outside the traditional framework of the foreign office, to promote trade rules, stabilize the world financial system, freeze terrorists' assets, share information on criminals, devise ways to combat infectious diseases, and react to the problem of global warming. These regulators - from central bankers to utilities commissioners - are the new diplomats. Embassies around the world have become regular hosts to regulators coming to meet other regulators. Regulatory networks span a wide range, from informal bilateral and multilateral networks to more institutionalized trans-governmental regulatory organizations such as the Basel Committee. Networking across borders is not confined to regulators. Even 'parochial and domestic centred' officials such as judges and legislators are increasingly looking and moving across borders; and ANWO devotes as

much space to the networking in various international forums of judges and legislators as it does to that of regulators.

While the literature usually informs us about a dual movement (from national to global and from government to governance), one should be aware of a third one: from the unitary state to the disaggregated state (p. 12). Slaughter argues that states become increasingly disaggregated, a reflection of the need for and capacity of different domestic government institutions and actors to engage in activities beyond their borders. This implies a deep conceptual shift in the way we think about the state and about the international system: 'Stop imagining the international system as a system of states - unitary entities... [s]tart thinking about a world of governments, with all the different institutions that perform the basic functions of governments... interacting both with each other domestically and also with their foreign and supranational counterparts' (ANWO, p. 5). Indeed, this is the conceptual shift that lies at the heart of the book. These interactions occur through various channels that disaggregate the state into ever smaller sub-units of decision-making.

The networks of government officials expand their regulatory reach, allowing them to exert some control on corporations, non-governmental organizations and criminals. They build trust and establish relationships, and thus facilitate long-term cooperation. They exchange regulatory information and develop best practices, offer technical assistance and professional socialization to members from less developed nations (ANWO, pp. 3-4), and increase the capacity of less developed countries to comply with common rules. ANWO identifies three contexts in which these networks develop. 'First are those networks of executive officials that develop within established international organizations. Second are networks of officials that develop under the umbrella of an agreement negotiated by heads of state. And third are the networks of national regulators that develop outside any formal framework' (ANWO, p. 45). Slaughter also distinguishes between information, harmonization and enforcement networks. Information networks are created and sustained by the valuable exchange of ideas, techniques, experiences, and problems. Harmonization networks provide the infrastructure for complicated technical negotiations aimed at harmonizing one nation's

laws and regulations with another's. Enforcement networks aim to enforce specific regulations against specific subjects. These networks appear with two basic forms of power dispersion – hierarchical and horizontal – but ANWO is particularly interested in the horizontal networks, where power takes a 'soft' form. It is the power of persuasion and information, and it is the kind of power that is exemplified in the European Union's pioneering systems of 'regulation by networks' (Dehousse, 1997) and 'regulation by information' (Majone, 1997). While military and economic power still matters a great deal, the new world order which Slaughter portrays is at the same time a world order which is potentially more effective and more just than today's. Indeed, the new world order is capable of solving the globalization dilemma: the need for more government on a global and a regional scale against the reality of the national organization of political life. ANWO is a book for pessimists written by an optimist. Whereas IPW presents a world where problems, successes and failures are recurring and are used to legitimize relations of domination, ANWO is a book with a positive outlook which presents successful venues for 'global action'.

III. Think Tanks and Varieties of Knowledge Societies

In between the critical realism of IPW and the functionalist perspective of ANWO stands Diane Stone and Andrew Denham's edited collection *Think Tanks Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas* [TTT], which explores the development of think tanks in various countries and arenas as a basis for inquiring into the role of ideas and expertise in decision-making.³ The book discusses the spread of think tanks in the twentieth century and in particular their spread from Anglo-American countries to the rest of the world. TTT captures the middle ground between the realists and the functionalists as it is attentive to both the evidence-based problem-solving purpose of think tanks and the political realities of power considerations and competition.

TTT is an edited collection by scholars who have made a considerable investment in the issue (Stone, 1996; 2000; Denham, 1996). The book reflects a gradual shift in interest from

³ See also Stone (1996; 2000); Denham (1996).

the national and comparative aspects of think tanks to the international dimensions (e.g., chapters on think tanks in the European Union and on transnational networks; see also Struyk, 2002 as well as McGann & Weaver, 2000). 'Think tank' is a slippery term, especially when it travels across countries and continents. On the one hand think tanks have been described as universities without students (Weaver, 1989, 564); on the other hand they are probably much more political, more heterogenous in form, and much less autonomous than universities. The Anglo-American understanding of the term refers to relatively autonomous organizations engaged in the analysis of policy issues independently of government, political parties and pressures groups (TTT, p.4).⁴ As think tanks proliferated in the 1990s from their point of origin in the U.S. (see Ricci, 1993) to other countries and regions, the notion has been stretched and the concept loosened. In some countries the term has even been applied to government research units that lack autonomy from political masters. Increasingly, Stone writes, 'think tank' is equated with a policy research *function* and set of analytic or policy advisory practices rather than with a specific legal *organizational structure* as a non-profit or private sector body (TTT, p. 4). This may well suggest not only the stretching of the concept but also the varied ways in which research, science, knowledge and ideas became increasingly important parts of the policy process. Indeed, they are portrayed as 'one set of actors in "knowledge networks" that incorporate professional associations, academic research groups and scientific communities organized around a special subject matter or issue' (TTT, p. 12).

TTT suggests that some important conclusions can be drawn from the comparative study of the role and function of think tanks in different countries. Beyond the obvious and regrettable constraints on their activity in oppressive regimes (in Egypt, for example, a local think tank, the Ibn Khaldoun Centre was closed and four of its scholars were imprisoned; p. 5), there are great variations in the 'autonomy' of these institutions even in democratic countries. 'Think tanks need to have some kind of engagement with government if they are to succeed in influencing policy. However, their desire to preserve intellectual autonomy means that most try to strike a delicate balance between dependence on government and total isolation from it ...' (TTT, p. 4). In practice,

⁴ Readers with a particular interest in think tanks may want to learn about the Think Tank and Civil Societies Program: <http://www.fpri.org/research/thinktanks>

however, 'cultural understandings of independence, the degree of think tank autonomy, and the extent of interest in policy and political issues vary dramatically not only from country to country but from one institute to another' (TTT, p. 5). Parmar's chapter, for example, suggests that, while many Continental think tanks were modelled largely on the British Chatham House, they deviated from it in an important respect since they relayed on state funds (TTT, p. 24).

Written mainly by political scientists, TTT is highly aware of 'the false ontological divide between knowledge and power that denies the inherently political nature of research' (Stone in TTT, p. 4). Thus, Abelson's chapter suggests that U.S. American think tanks were transformed from non-partisan research institutions to avowedly ideological organizations committed to influencing Washington's political agenda (Abelson in TTT, p. 215). Rather than being organizations for 'rational' knowledge utilization in policy, the development of think tanks in the U.S. suggests a politicization and contestation of knowledge. Denham and Garnett argue similarly with regard to Britain, that the development of British think tanks indicates the politicization of knowledge and in effect the 'hollowing out' of British think tanks. The arguments about politicization are accompanied by some sceptical analysis of their political impact; and the authors caution that 'Think tanks are not only a source of policy ideas and innovation but also symbolic of intellectual authority that can be used to support entrenched policy prejudices and political causes' (TTT, p. 14). As for the impact of think tanks, the contributors' tone is sceptical. Being part of the 'policy network' and part of the 'policy community' does not suggest power: 'the informal access that networking might afford does not mean that decision-makers pay attention to think tanks. Networks may generate intense activity that does not necessarily translate into policy. Careful analysis is required to distinguish instances where think tanks are providing real input into policy deliberation from those (more frequent) occurrences when they do not' (TTT, pp. 14-15).

IV. Science, Rationalization and the Making of a New Order?

Finally, a constructivist perspective is offered in Drori, Meyer, Ramirez and Schofer's *Science in Modern World Polity: Institutionalization and Globalization* [SMWP]. From their

perspective, social and individual needs or interests are social constructions. Their particular version of constructivism focuses on the 'scientization of society' as a framework for the study of change, and portrays social and political convergence as a form of institutionalization. Growing similarities across nations and sectors are driven by the symbolic and even religious authority of science. The book represents the collaborative effort of a cohesive group of sociological institutionalists at Stanford. Unlike the books reviewed so far, with their realist and functionalist perspectives, SMWP perceives political and scientific agency as a product of the 'culture of science' whereby science acquires a position of authority in society and in this role both constitutes interests and allocates resources. Science is acquiring a position of power in society and this is reflected in the creation of worldwide bodies of authoritative knowledge (universities, research centres, think tanks, etc.) constructed by authoritative personnel (scientists, consultants, advisers, etc.) governed by common professional standards. Science is therefore not principally a set of sound techniques or smart technologies, nor is it a tool for the promotion of some interest on the expense of others; rather, it is a powerful culture that pervades the world and makes it more homogeneous. We tend to perceive this situation as given—indeed, we 'take it for granted'—but in effect SMWP argues for the existence of other options. One could imagine a world society built around economic or political organizations dominating a 'thin culture' - a world with a culture involving limited science, no universities and a marginal role for expertise in the policy process. In such a world government and governance would be remarkably different.

SMPW starts out with the observation that there exist 'striking similarities' and common models or scripts that increasingly govern 'world polity' and 'world society'. Countries appear to be adopting common models or scripts of what is a 'good' polity, a 'good' practice and a best standard. This holds true across many domains, such as national constitutions and state bureaucracies (for example, statements of purpose and goals, cabinet structure and agency formation), socio-economic progress (for example, emphases on economic growth and population control), and egalitarian citizenship models. Indeed, the authors, with the help of additional contributors, provide evidence

of a significant degree of convergence across state administrative structures (ministries of science and technology), primary schools, women in science, science policy, economic development environment and democracy. The observed similarities are puzzling given the diversity of interests, resources, histories and cultures of these countries; above all, they are underestimated and under-theorized. When theorized, they are too readily understood as outcomes of dominant economic and political interests. Indeed, much of the literature stresses coercive mechanisms (for example, the structural adjustment policies of the World Bank) or mimetic processes driven by a functional need to 'close the gaps' with the more 'advanced' countries (for example, copying textbooks of the former colonial powers). These, it is argued, are untenable premises given the diversity of conditions, histories and problems across the world.

Change is less the outcome of coercion than of influence, and influence is exerted in the name of science and 'Western rationality'. SMWP sees the manifestation of power in the diffusion process that makes the world so similar in these terms: 'Instructions flow into the third world from global centres on the widest variety of issues: how to produce economic development, how to raise and educate children, how to preserve health, which aspects of nature require protection and how to protect them, or how to manage organizations' (SMWP, p. 1). These instructions do not take the form of commands from the powerful, although covert interests are undoubtedly involved. Instead, they are borne by communities of scientists and experts and by organizations that offer technical assistance, as if based on scientific knowledge divorced from the interests of these epistemic communities and organizations. They are influential because they are deeply grounded in the authority of science and not because they carry guns or even because they have deep pockets. Indeed, '[t]he same processes, of course, routinely go on within more developed countries themselves, where scientific knowledge backs up social practice in even wider range of domains' (SMWP, p. 1). The relatively free flow of expertise and subjects of study is not compatible with a picture of concentrated economic and political power: a world really controlled by a single dominant political or economic organization would have little use for the sorts of free-floating knowledge systems that flow in our present world. On the contrary, note that in our world the

ability of small groups of authoritative scholars to define, explore and frame 'global commons' attests also to the soft and dispersed aspects power in our world.

The alternative to the interest-centred view of the role of agents of knowledge is not a functionalist view of the power of science in the name of human advancement. While SMWP does not deny that science and its applications are useful, the triumph of science is not a simple function of its utility in a variety of contexts:

The value of science is dependent on a wider culture and does not merely mirror its benefits for individuals, organizations, or societies... For example, the knowledge requirements of progress as social justice are difficult to make sense of from the point of view of costs and benefits. To be sure, even in this domain, some justifications for the extension of the principle of equality to women or for the formation of environmental ministries are rationalized accounts of the value of equality in society or the importance of sustainable development as sound ecological policy. But once a principle or policy has gained the scientific high ground, its affirmation and acceptance is more driven by the authority of science than by an assessment of the result of its application. (SMWP, p. 297).

SMWP obviously supplies another perspective on the role of agents of knowledge in policy-making. Yet, beyond the different perspectives as they touch on the sources of the rise of 'knowledge politics', and beyond the variations in the degree of their pessimism, the four books share some important commonalities. All speak either directly or indirectly to the notion of change as a process of diffusion; and all would agree on the growth in the importance of agents of knowledge, their organizations, their discourse and their shared worldview. At the same time all the authors suggest that a core issue for the coming century is the study of the politics of knowledge and its agency. This is an exciting research agenda, and future studies of change, diffusion and convergence may want to raise questions about the framing of knowledge, its monopolization, its dissemination and its malaises.

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