

EXPERTS, MUNICIPAL LEADERS AND POWER IN THE CITY, 1750-1950

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This session will focus on the power relationships between technological experts and municipal officials. While experts are considered to have knowledge, but not the power to decide, municipal officials are believed to have the power to decide, but not technological expertise. The aim of this session is to explore the character and the consequences of the relationship between these two sets of actors. The relationship between experts and officials calls to mind the three models described by Jürgen Habermas. The 'decisionist' model, which was first analyzed by Max Weber, gives primacy to those who have the legitimacy to make decisions, i.e., to elected and appointed city officials. The 'technocratic' model invests legitimacy in the 'scientific' character of expertise and therefore in the expert, while relegating city officials to a subordinate role. Finally, the 'pragmatic' model argues that the proposals of experts are discussed within the public realm of civic debate. Other understandings of the relationship have been proposed, most notably C. P. Snow's theory of the weakness of politicians' science training, and the substantial social studies of science literature. Furthermore, some scholars have pointed out that attention should be paid to the national forms taken by expertise, especially the difference between countries having common law and Roman law. American expertise, for example, usually involves the expression of various actors, and the decision is conceived (at least in theory) as a compromise between different but legitimate opposing interests. The French system, on the other hand, appears to be more technocratic, with a lineage directly embedded in a centralized monarchy, and centered on a cadre of civil servants trained as experts at prestigious state *Grandes Écoles*. While ideas such as these are important for thinking through the character of urban politics, technology and science, our proposal is to explore the question of power, technological expertise and legitimacy through empirical urban case studies.

We are looking for papers that examine several key issues. Who were the experts? How was expertise created? How was expertise diffused and received? What was the relationship between experts and officials? What was the role of other actors, such as consumers, manufacturers, trade associations, etc, in the formation and implementation of expert's advice? How did the agents (such as engineers, architects, city politicians and social reformers) working with expertise and technologies build, structure, and transform cities? We are also looking for case studies of the successful implementation of specific forms of expertise. Here we have in mind studies that probe questions related to, among other things, the building of municipal infrastructures (such as sewers, road control); the development of new municipal regimes (such as cost-accounting, social mapping, surveys); the implementation of expertise for dealing with urban form (such as tenement housing design and new suburban developments); and the search for new forms of expertise to deal with growing urban problems (such as pollution, disease and crime).

The session encourages contributions from a wide range of disciplines, including but not limited to history, geography, planning, law, sociology and the history of technology. It is recommended that authors submit papers in English because they get a larger audience, but papers in French are also welcome.