
APPROACHING KNOWLEDGE

*Uses of knowledge, information, and science
in early modern and modern era*

IHMC's PhD students' Symposium Call for papers

Submission deadline: 10 March 2022

The symposium will be held on 8 June 2022 in Paris (Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University, 5th district).

“Information society”, “knowledge economy”, “fake news”: the fields of sociology, economics and politics have been enriched by expressions reflecting the increased importance given to knowledge in our society. In this context, researchers challenge the definition of knowledge and try to trace its history.

For a long time, the study of knowledge focused on the epistemological conditions of the constitution of knowledge, within the framework of a selective and normative philosophy of science. For the past twenty years, science has no longer been interpreted as a block: the historicity of knowledge is increasingly taken into consideration. Whether through an anthropological or sociological approach, science is no longer perceived as a reified object of study, which leaves room for the study of knowledge in its plurality—whether scholarly, technical, political or popular—and in all its forms (written, oral, gestural, non-verbal). As a dynamic field of research, the history of knowledge takes into account new approaches (spatial turn, object turn and practical turn), as well as all the processes involved in the production of knowledge, from its creation to its use and dissemination. Researchers therefore have a wide range of intellectual tools at their disposal to consider the specificity of the knowledge regimes of each period. This symposium will be an opportunity to strengthen a transperiodic and transthematic dialogue, mixing historians of the Early Modern and Modern eras, specialists in scholarly knowledge and administrative-political knowledge, and thus wishes to be part of the synergy that drives the history of knowledge.

The organizers of this symposium have deliberately chosen a broad definition of knowledge, intended to avoid an interpretation restricted to the intellectual and scientific domains. Of course, these are two essential dimensions of knowledge, which will deserve special attention. But it will also be necessary to address other spheres of implementation of knowledge, conceived in a broader sense as the cognitive baggage acquired by an individual or a group of individuals in and for a given field of activity: market information, diplomatic intelligence, or even the specific expertise of individual actors are thus fully part of the established field of investigation. In this sense, it will also be necessary to reflect on the means deployed by the State in the collection of data in various fields (society, economy, environment) and at different levels (local, regional, national). This implies looking at the institutions responsible for



processing these data and monitoring the use made of the information collected. Indeed, the acquisition of information by the State often aims to ensure better management of the population and territories, which can lead to the creation of new policies and reforms.

In this perspective, “approaching” refers to the ways in which the various types of knowledge are apprehended by the actors who hold them: how they perceive them, what legitimacy they attribute to them, how familiar they are with them, and finally how they intend to use them. Therefore, knowledge should not be considered as a finished product or as an abstract discourse. On the contrary, special attention should be paid to the posture of individuals, social groups, and institutions regarding the knowledge they acquire through transmission or discovery.

The focus on uses invites us to centre our reflections on the articulation between the different knowledge and the practices they induce—intellectual practices, but also social practices and material practices. “Uses” is understood as much as a habit, custom, tradition specific to a given sphere of knowledge, as the usage and implementation of knowledge that result from it. Consequently, contributors are encouraged not to exclude from their reflection any of the stages that mark the creation of a scholarly or informed discourse: observation, elaboration, circulation, dissemination, application. By extension, “uses” also refers to the historian's point of view, i.e. to our own exploitation of the information presented by the sources. One may therefore also develop a reflexive discourse on the way in which historians approach apparently neutral and descriptive discourses, in comparison with documents whose biased nature seems obvious at first sight.

Organisers

Maria Espinosa, Lisa Lafontaine, Costanza Lugnani, Clément Poupard

Submission procedure and timetable

Priority will be given to IHMC PhD students during the selection of participants. However, this meeting is open to members of other laboratories, institutions, or universities: thus, it is strongly hoped that several papers will be presented by external speakers.

The presentations will last from 15 to 25 minutes depending on the number of speakers and will be followed by a discussion with IHMC researchers.

Traveling costs are at the expense of the speakers. Depending on developments in the health situation, contributions by videoconference will also be accepted.

Proposals should be sent to the organizing committee **by 10 March 2022**, to the following address: je-doct.ihmc@univ-paris1.fr. The abstract should be 1,500 to 2,000 characters long (including spaces).