



Policy mobilities, territorial knowledge dynamics and the role of KIBS: Exploring conceptual synergies of formerly discrete approaches[☆]



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ABSTRACT

Although contemporary policy making is substantially affected by consultants, little is known about the interconnection of their role inside policy making networks and their key product – knowledge. This paper matches the approaches on Policy Mobilities (PM) and Territorial Knowledge Dynamics (TKD) to fill this theoretical gap. By exploring the synergies of both concepts, a research agenda is suggested that enables to investigate the multifaceted entanglements of knowledge and policy making dynamics as well as what stake consultants have in this complex assemblage. Accordingly, this paper claims appreciation of ‘variegated consultocracies’ rather than global homogeneity of consultants’ engagement in policy making processes by explicating better integration of ‘scale, ‘time’, and actors’ embeddedness into PM. The paper thus primarily aims to provide a solid theoretical and methodological basis for exploring the complex dynamics consultants take part in, and how they in turn impact policy making processes.

1. Introduction

Since the approach of Policy Mobilities challenged the rather unsatisfactory outcomes of Policy Transfer literature, a huge amount of new and revealing insights on contemporary policy making has been gained. Especially the accelerating global dynamics with which policies are mobilized, implemented, and changed were object to numerous articles (e.g. McCann and Ward, 2012b; Temenos and McCann, 2012; Cook and Ward, 2012). This corresponds with what Peck (2011) required by emphasizing that it is not rational decision making that dominate modern politics, but a multi-facet and contested system characterized by power relations and personal interest (McCann, 2013). With the development of ‘Good Governance’ (Peck, 2011: 777) in which politicians work closely with private sector experts, a new group of players stepped in the political arena occupying central positions of modern policy making (McCann, 2008; Prince, 2010a). In spite of their vital role in today’s political systems and the Policy Mobilities approach, relatively little is known about the way that these experts operate in detail, which strategies they pursue, or how they bias politics indirectly and directly. There are some decent exceptions dealing with these actors (e.g. Prince, 2014a, 2014b; McCann and Ward, 2010). However, an in-depth examination of experts’ influence on policy mobilities lacks to date and remains a black box in most studies.

In this paper, we argue that it is necessary to get a deep

understanding of policy making and knowledge related dynamics originating from experts’ work on multiple scales and their interconnections to other involved policy actors. Besides existing empirical lacks we want to highlight and respond to a missing adequate theoretical framing in the Policy Mobilities approach. Up to now, there is no frame that enables to grasp the core product of experts – policy knowledge. Hence, we suggest filling this theoretical gap by employing the Territorial Knowledge Dynamics (TKD) approach (Crevoisier and Jeannerat, 2009; Halkier et al., 2012; Manniche, 2012; Strambach and Halkier, 2013; James et al., 2016). Although this approach developed from geographical innovation research, numerous synergies between PM and TKD can be assumed as both theories focus on the success (and failure) of products in contested multi-scalar markets. The territorial knowledge dynamics approach allows investigation from the individual to the global level and enables, by connecting processes of knowledge change (learning) and policy mutation, examinations of policies over time. In other words, the present notion of policy mutation is extended by a temporal dimension that has been absent to date. The paper, therefore, examines possible synergies of these formerly discrete approaches to overcome existing theoretical and empirical lacks. Building up on this, we derive a proposal of integrating knowledge dynamics in the Policy Mobilities approach to better frame future empiricism in this field.

With this in mind, we address the problem in four sections. Section

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two specifies the approach of PM. It is argued that although investigations on the multi-scalar processes of policy making are frequently advocated, only little is known about policy knowledge, its underlying micro-dynamics and what specific role consultants play in this field. Based on this, section three shows promising approaches of contemporary innovation and KIBS (Knowledge Intensive Business Services) research, that may fill the theoretical gaps revealed before. In section four, a mutual theoretical enrichment of TKD and PM will be suggested embracing the epistemological synergies of conceptual similarities and presenting substantial complements of the two approaches. Establishing this theoretical basis allows further research to shed more light on consultants' work and particularly on their employment of knowledge in the multi-facet field of Policy Mobilities.

2. Essentials of policy mobilities

In the last decades, multiple debates on political science theories on Policy Transfer revealed that to some extent this orthodox concept increasingly suffers from deficient explanatory power (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996). Exemplarily, Evans and Davies (1999) tried to introduce a more holistic view by combining agency aspects, on the one hand, and the wider structures those agents and their actions are embedded in, on the other hand. It turned out that this 'multi-level approach' was indeed beneficial to firmly expand knowledge about Policy Transfer. Even though the theory's structuralistic character did still not tackle important aspects of interconnections between both agency and structure (Marsh and Sharman, 2009: 275), the involvement of new elements in Policy Transfer ushered remarkable theoretic progress leading to the contemporary social constructivist Policy Mobilities approach (McCann and Ward, 2012b). Although PM assumed progressively shape, it is rather a dynamically evolving than a static or final framework for analysis embracing all aspects typically connected to the notions of policy *assemblages*, *mobilities* and *mutations* that dominate today's geographic literature in this field (Temenos and McCann, 2013; McCann, 2011a, 2011b, 2013). Given the fact that processes of policy movement are highly intricate, Policy Mobilities offers a nearly all-embracing theorization of grasping this complexity. Accordingly, McCann (2013:6) defines Policy Mobilities as 'the socio-spatially produced and power-laden inter-scalar process of circulating, mediating, (re)molding, and operationalizing policies, policy models and policy knowledge.' In other words, a differentiated model has been created, focusing on how policies get mobilized, mutate and are realized in places and spaces by the interplay of global flows and local conditions (Swanson, 2013).

2.1. Knowledge and policy mobilities

Policy knowledge – i.e. substantial knowledge about how to solve a specific local or regional problem through appropriate strategies/activities – in PM is considered only one aspect in a wider field that is constitutive for a resulting policy. In contrast, reputation ascribed to specific actors or approved policy contents from elsewhere is perceived far more decisive for creating policies following an established hegemonic 'truth' (McCann, 2008). Yet, multiple studies see that the various interconnections between the two spheres – knowledge and reputation – lead to policies' successful mobilization, mutation and contextualization. The term '*assemblage*' appreciates these interconnections and therefore labels a constructivist way of thinking the composition of 'things' in general. It thus "encourage[s] both an attention to the composite and relational character of policies [...] and also to the various social practices that gather, or draw together diverse elements of the world into relatively stable and coherent 'things'" (Anderson and McFarlane, 2011: 124; Anderson et al., 2012). Awareness of those compositions' unexpectedness and non-linearity is also integrated into the serviceable definition of '*assemblage*' formulated by Allen and Cochrane (2007), as they accentuate the interconnections, dependencies and inducements of the several elements involved in

developing a certain way of governance; also transferrable to the social creation of policies or other entities. They state that "increasingly, it would seem that there is little to be gained about [urban or] regional governance as a territorial arrangement when a number of the political elements assembled [...] are 'parts' of elsewhere, representatives of professional authority, expertise, skills and interests drawn together to move forward varied agendas and programmes [...] There is [...] an *interplay* of forces where a range of actors mobilize, enroll, translate, channel, broker and bridge in ways that make different kinds of government possible" (Allen and Cochrane, 2007: 1171).

Picking up these notions and following Prince (2012a: 198), policies can be considered 'as assemblages of texts, bodies and the networks they are creating'. In fact, he also highlights the gathering of different elements that lead to the result of a certain policy being more than just a bunch of texts on how to handle a specific problem. Insofar, the interplay between behavioral implications of involved actors which are in turn shaped by the circumstances they are embedded in, as well as their social linkages set the epistemological frame for investigating contemporary policy making processes.

However, although knowledge is considered an important factor in policy making processes, it is rather undertheorized in the PM approach. Recent studies primarily focus on political competition and struggle as origins for policy mobilities. As one example, Gotham (2014) highlighted the importance of competition and emulation of cities or regions as 'mechanisms' for policy mutation activities. The study indeed clarifies the inherently power-laden processes that emerged during the functional shift of the 'enterprise zone policy model' – developed for economic development – to an efficient disaster-devastated area policy. Yet, its in-depth analysis concentrates on socio-spatial processes that were central to this transition, without appreciation of learning processes and experience gathering during the policy's local implementations. Frequently knowledge is regarded as taken-for-granted and pervasive through the existence of globally acting consultants (Cook and Ward, 2012). In fact, this undifferentiated perception stands in sharp contrast to contemporary literature on geographical innovation research that conceptualize knowledge as the 'socially constructed outcome of interactive learning processes, communication and mutual understanding among the actors' (Strambach, 2012: 1846). Drawing on this, the central position of consultants in PM as knowledge mediators in policy making networks necessitates theoretical and empirical endorsement to fill this scientific gap.

2.2. Space and policy mobilities

In Policy Mobilities assemblage thinking is also applied to the understanding of space, place and scale. Frequently, specific arenas are appreciated beneficial for examining the various and globally stretched dynamics and processes of policy making. Spaces characterized and produced by conflating processes of multiple scales are in focus of most empiricism in PM appreciating their assembled constitution. In these regards, cities are esteemed compositions of the 'previously unrelated, a constellation of processes rather than a thing, [...] open and [...] internally multiple' (Massey, 1991, 2005: 141) combined with Harvey's (1982, 1985) ideas about the tensional but productive relatedness of capital's fixity and mobility. In fact, this consideration implicates the mediating work of actors like politicians and consultants offering policy packages as moveable solution to local problems and therefore creating relational proximity between cities as these are consequently impacted by the same political strategies (Peck, 2002; Peck and Theodore, 2010a; Robinson, 2011a).

In these regards, another important aspect of policy mobility is the production of so called '*globalizing micro-spaces*' originally inaugurated by Lerner and Le Heron (2002: 765). Evoked by policy agents yielding their specific expertise, skills and interests, these micro-spaces considerably affect the outcome of policy making processes. The term '*globalizing*' is appropriate as the co-presence of actors and face-to-face

learning assembles ideas and knowledge from elsewhere in a specific location (McCann, 2011a: 123). Here, agendas and programs are discussed, renegotiated and changed through accomplishing new information about experiences, interests and local conditions from multiple places (Allen and Cochrane, 2007: 1171). Sometimes this geographical co-location and co-presence of different authorities are termed as ‘temporary clusters’ of policy knowledge (Maskell et al., 2004). As one ‘globalizing micro-space’ that has aroused particular interest in scientific literature, conferences can be employed as a splendid example to illustrate the production of such spaces. First, it involves the character of a face-to-face connection between different representatives of authority and their expertise in a specific topic. This generates a ‘local buzz’ of ideas and knowledge about policies, activates learning processes and permits the evaluation of policy models as well as their transferability to other locations (Hamedinger, 2014). Thus, bringing in new information and debating policies’ transfers from one place to another strongly impairs the conditions under which policies get mobilized and potentially mutate (Cook and Ward, 2012: 141f.). Second, by assembling elements of near and far, conferences – as well as other globalizing micro-spaces – connect different scales and must therefore be recognized as nodes in globally stretched policy networks. Nevertheless, much more research is demanded on whether and what impacts such ‘globalizing micro-spaces’ have on the performances of different actors involved in policy making networks.

Both cities and globalizing micro-spaces clarify the importance of multi-scalarity in the PM approach. In line with this, one of the first studies on the interconnections of knowledge dynamics on multiple scales and its importance for policy mobilities is McCann’s (2008) exploration of how global expertise is crucial for the mobilization of Vancouver’s four pillar drug policy. He stresses the centrality of policy knowledge – embodied in traveling expert and the work of mediating institutions or inherent to the policy model itself – and learning processes during the implementation of policies by appreciating the connection between global circuits of policy knowledge and local conditions. Clearly supporting McCann’s approach of grasping the multi-facet dynamics between the local and the global, we suggest openness to integrate further possible scales aside from local and global that might be produced through the practices and circulation of knowledge among policy actors. Following Allen and Cochrane (2007: 1171) scale is relationally produced by processes and practices of the involved actors. Predefined arrangements of institutional or administrative entities (like governmental agencies) are of course recognized. However, their ‘power plays take place within more fluid, relational institutional settings than any top-down, territorial arrangement can fully convey’ (ebd.).

Nevertheless, to profitably integrate knowledge dynamics in the PM approach – and to structure upcoming empiricism in the first place – it is for the remainder of this paper important to differentiate and define the termini of *micro* and *macro level* as spatial categories. Drawing on firm-centered innovation research literature, micro dynamics relate to the multiple interconnections and processes occurring between actors inside a specific organization or even inside an individual (Leonardi and Barley, 2010: 40). Consequently, all dynamics between agents of different organizations or certain groups are termed as macro. The dichotomy of the rather confining global-local interconnections often applied in PM is therefore neglected. Instead, openness to new, relationally defined scales that need to be considered when analyzing the various practices of agents involved in assembling policies is emphasized.

A greater awareness of differentiated multi-scalarity leads over to ‘mobilization’ as another crucial aspect of policy mobility accentuated in the respective literature. In this regard, recognition of mobilization processes from micro- to macro-level is prerequisite for adequate examinations as the dominant market-oriented structures determine policy making processes (Brenner et al., 2010: 185). For example, by bundling policies to comprehensive packages and market them

worldwide as ‘best practice models’, circuits of policy knowledge have heavily accelerated in the past years (Prince, 2012a: 191f.; Peck and Theodore, 2010a). Of course, policies are not entities existing discretely in space of flows, rather they must be applied “to qualify as best practice – a fact implicitly recognized in the tendency to associate particular policy models with places they are perceived as originated in, such as the ‘Barcelona model’ for urban regeneration” (McCann and Ward, 2010; Prince, 2012a: 192). Specific authorities involved in policy making processes (e.g. mayors) try to promote or ‘talk up’ policy models of their own municipality as ‘best practice’, aiming for higher reputation and positive effects for the city’s marketing. The notion of ‘policy boosterism’ labels this sort of policy mobilization (McCann, 2013).

Given the fact that ‘off-the-shelf’ policy packages (McCann and Ward, 2012b: 327) are primarily transferred, though by no means adapted everywhere in their original form, the process of *homogenization* is not only a concern to multiple studies in contemporary geographic literature (Theodore and Peck, 2012). Nevertheless, consensus about comprehensive convergence or divergence of municipalities’ policies remains unreached in political science literature, for there are studies supporting and neglecting this thesis (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000; Radaelli, 2005). Contrastively, in PM theory policies “do not arrive at their destination in the same form as they appeared elsewhere. Yet they are not entirely different. They still bear a strange familiarity that exhibits and encourages some degree of ‘policy convergence’ across the world” (Temenos and McCann, 2013: 349f.). Mainly, processes of contextualization trigger policy mutation as local or regional specificities require substantial adjustments. Yet, the cooperation and interaction of globally acting consultants and local agents is constitutive for that ‘strange familiarity’ of particular policies causing PM’s appreciation of consultants to play a key role in contemporary policy making worldwide.

2.3. Consultants and policy mobilities

The great impact of consultants in modern policy making is largely uncontested in PM literature. Expressed more radically, Hodge and Bowman (2006) refer to the ‘consultocracy’ denoting the undermining of democratically elected public authorities by few experts that heavily influence politics on multiple scales. These actors, in fact, are not separately operating persons but members of ‘epistemic, expert and practice communities’ deeply entangled in globally stretched networks and the growing sector of policy business (Peck and Theodore, 2010b: 170). Although political science studies are frequently criticized for its paramount concentration on specific transfer agents, it is nevertheless fundamental to engage with those ‘mid-level engineers’ (Larner and Laurie, 2010), as the addressed processes of policy making are inherently social ones. Consultants, seen as globally acting transfer agents, are considered sociologically complex as well, ‘located in (shifting) organizational and political fields, whose identities and professional trajectories are often bound up with the policy positions and fixes they espouse’ (Peck and Theodore, 2010b: 170). Cook and Ward (2012: 140f.) portrayed a detailed picture of transfer agents highlighting that experts like consultants are in turn socially produced by several practices of ascribing certain importance to them. They state, experts’ ability to create or at least shape influential narratives about the ‘truth’ of particular policies heavily depends on reputation attained by them (McCann, 2008; Cohen, 2011). It entails them to bring in new aspects, strike new paths or denounce specific policy contents; processes that will probably provoke policy mutations. Therefore, experts embody superior importance in relation to other representatives of authority, being able to push or mobilize a certain policy with exceedingly compelling power (Cook and Ward, 2012: 140f.).

Consultants’ engagement in several policy making processes is increasingly decisive for successful policy transfer. Bringing back in mind policies’ understanding as assemblage allows grasping the multifaceted processes that constitute specific local governance, economic

management systems and ways of them setting up (Harvey, 2005; Peet, 2007). PM therefore reckons consultants as nodes inside of policy knowledge networks acknowledging the organizational shift of public administrations to a more market-like and networking-focused system, frequently associated with a ‘hollowing out’ of the national state (Jessop, 2002; Prince, 2012a: 188). Accordingly, consultants have great share in processes considered central in PM through their everyday work. For instance, the production of globalizing micro-spaces and relative homogenization tendencies of municipalities’ policies depicted above as well as processes of mobilizing policies and their consequential spatial fixities.

In fact, various actors are interested in mobilizing, i.e. spreading, specific policies for predominantly economic reasons. Representatives of public authorities seek reputation by combining policy ideas with their own city or region and therefore attempt to create positive associations that may trigger economic investments. Consultants, in contrast, try to promote their services. The more certain policies circulate, the more potential projects they can support. As a result, it is essential for consultants to gain reputation and to prevail against competitors. In consequence PM literature focuses globally acting experts perceiving their fame as successful performance. Consultants’ mobilization efforts on a global scale are facilitated by progress in technology inducing new possibilities to connect people and remote places, leading to new relational geographies of policy making. Infrastructures shaping the flows of policy ideas, models and knowledge, are thus tools utilized by policy agents to engage in the related processes and ease the transfer of policies from one location to another (Collier and Ong, 2005; Prince, 2010a). Yet, policies’ processes of ‘arriving at’ a certain place remarks one main source for policy mutation caused by substantial adjustments to local institutional, political, cultural and socio-historical specificities (Robinson, 2011b, 2015). Beyond, these policies also mutate while in motion. The main reason to comprehend those alterations is the forging of connections between multiple actors during the transfer process which constitute several shifts of power-relations and steadily alters the level of knowledge and expertise in the appropriate topic (Ward, 2006).

Attending to the last important processes of policy mobility in contemporary scientific literature it is – for the examination of *spatial fixity* – helpful to involve what assemblage thinking offers for analyzing the geographies of policy. These are: the cross-referential interplay of different elements which constitute the emergence of particular scales of political decision making, debates and conflict as well as the production of space that influences the temporarily definite extent of particular areas and their territorial organization (Brenner, 2001; Martin, McCann and Purcell, 2003). It is therefore an enlargement of what Harvey (1989: 7) refers to by combining the shift from ‘managerialism’ of cities’ administrations to ‘entrepreneurialism’ and the impacts of capitalism on local governance, emphasizing the speculative character of (to this time) new public-private-partnerships and their aims of alluring external funding, direct investments or employment resources. Policies’ impacts, in consequence, range from the emergence of locally specific organization bodies conditioning a certain kind of governance to substantiations like buildings, rooms or papers which disseminate their effects locally.

Both notions of ‘assemblage’ and ‘mobility’ are paralleled by the third central concept in PM theory – ‘mutation’. In this regard, policy mutation can occur at every moment in policy making determined by multiple aspects that may induce policy adjustments and therefore account for its specific development path. Hence, mutation can never be understood as a separated process (Gotham, 2014). Like other aspects already depicted with respects to ‘assemblage’ and ‘mobility’, analysis of the different elements’ interplay is the key to gain insights in the various practices and mechanisms entailing policy change in motion and at distinct places. Nevertheless, specific actors occupy a central position when it comes to mutation processes (Temenos and McCann, 2013: 344). Given that policy models constantly circulate inside networks of experts, mutation can occur during almost every situation,

ranging from mobilizing and transferring to merely topical debates or implementations.

Taken together, assemblage thinking and its various components related to mobility and mutation almost necessitate substantial adjustments of consultants’ professional performances over time (McFarlane, 2009; Prince, 2010b). There are several studies about how and why consultancies utilize the outlined elements of PM to yield or enforce specific policy contents, i.e. how they entail policy mutation (e.g. Prince, 2012b, 2014b). Thus, the notion of constantly new assembled, mobilized and mutating policies corroborates the understanding of policy mobility as ‘one moment in a wider, transformative process, involving the ongoing mutation of policies and policy regimes in a manner that seems to be more deeply cross-referential and relativized than ever before’ (Peck, 2011: 793).

However, reducing policies’ mutation and contextualization to necessary adjustments to external circumstances neglects the inherently social character of this process. Rather, constantly altering knowledge must be considered the decisive determinant for consultants’ efforts of bringing in their expertise and provokes policy adjustments successfully. Interestingly, to this day little work is done on consultants’ impacts on specific policies investigating the interplay of Policy Mobilities processes and the multi-faceted topic of knowledge related processes. As an example, Larner and Laurie (2010) focused on traveling technocrats considered as embodied knowledge that bear in the practical experience to realize (in this case) neoliberal projects worldwide. In fact, the centrality of actors for (policy) knowledge mobilization is likewise essential for the understanding of consultants’ impact on contemporary policy making. Yet, a currently lacking detailed integration of knowledge dynamics surrounding these actors would correspond to the social character of learning processes and therefore accommodate the path-dependent and embedded constitution of an actor’s knowledge base.

While all processes delineated above indicate the appreciation of required highly specialized (policy) knowledge, an appropriate and detailed theoretical involvement of these dynamics in PM lacks to date. Moreover, conceptualizations of consultants in Policy Mobilities theory perceives the heterogeneity of this actor group in size without having ascertained their impact on policy making processes through their work in detail (Prince, 2012a: 196). Hence, PM lacks sensitiveness to the manifold organizational and topical specifications of consultants or consulting groups and their repercussions on policy making processes. It will turn out that research on knowledge-intensive business services (KIBS) offer beneficial conceptualization to overcome this theoretical black box.

Consequently, a complementary employment of an explicitly knowledge centering approach may constitute an expedient way to severely expand examinations on the social aspects and processes of consultants by involving their cognitive backgrounds and the wider knowledge dynamics they are engaged in.

3. Essentials of territorial knowledge dynamics and KIBS research

Analogous to PM, the approach on Territorial Knowledge Dynamics refers to a more relational understanding of processes and dynamics underlying innovation efforts. It emerged as a reaction to fundamental socio-cultural changes (primarily the new economic importance of services) and the increasing mobility of information, people capital and knowledge (Crespo and Vicente, 2016; Jeannerat and Crevoisier, 2015). Especially issues on the ‘creation, using, transformation and diffusion’ of knowledge by specific actors as well as their interactions inside innovation networks came into focus (Strambach, 2012; James et al., 2016). Even though knowledge dynamics occur from macro to micro level, investigation on the latter predominate the scientific literature to date. This is primarily caused by considering knowledge dynamics and learning effects through cooperation as crucial for generating innovation. Accordingly, innovating is an inherently social process that is also

dependent on its environmental surrounding which means: territory, understood as the effect of socio-technical practices, matters (Grabher, 2004; Painter, 2010).

3.1. Knowledge, space and TKD

Involving territorial specificities and considering them as decisive for innovation processes provoked several theoretical and epistemological implications in TKD research. Particularly institutions like routines and organizational capabilities caused distinction between co-evolutionary cumulative and cooperative combinatorial knowledge dynamics (Crevoisier and Jeannerat, 2009; Halkier et al., 2012). While in the former uncertainty of innovative cooperation is reduced through stabilizing institutional commonalities, the latter emphasizes learning potentials dependent on differentiated knowledge bases (Asheim, 2007; Asheim et al., 2011). Especially combinatorial knowledge dynamics aroused increasing scientific interests as it considers the multi-scalar and highly interconnected way conditioning contemporary innovation processes. The predominating notions characterizing these knowledge bases are *analytical* (scientific, theoretical), *synthetic* (technologic, problem solving) and *symbolic* (cultural, creating meaning) knowledge dynamics termed as the SAS model (Asheim and Gertler, 2005). In fact, every notion demonstrates an ideal type model of generating knowledge that practically never stands on its own. Rather, a mixture of synthetic, analytical and symbolic knowledge assembles knowledge bases with a certain type dominating. The dominating knowledge type thus determines the different ways in which learning effects – i.e. the capability of cooperating actors to generate, anchor and exploit knowledge – occur. What is important here is to emphasize the necessary epistemological sensitiveness to this taxonomy of knowledge types and their methodological implications for researching the complex field of knowledge dynamics (Manniche, 2012). According to Strambach (2012: 1851), synthetic, analytical and symbolic knowledge differs in the “mix[ture] of codified and tacit knowledge” over time. Therefore, gaining insights into the ‘closed’ communities of innovation (and policy-making) networks is one key factor to properly understand the various underlying dynamics.

Moreover, knowledge dynamics’ peculiarities do not only vary by the configuration of knowledge types but by time, space and scale. On the macro level, technological progress and increasing specialization of global value chains necessitates and facilitates learning processes in distant places (Crespo and Vicente, 2016). Inside these globally stretched innovation networks certain places or regions show superior innovative activity. TKD assumes local institutional environments as constitutive for this heterogeneity. Frequently, authors try to deduce policy recommendations on the bases of their findings, mostly to create the ‘perfect’ environment (territory) that entails and supports the decisive knowledge dynamics. Thus, successful innovation significantly depends on local institutional conditions and social linkages of involved agents on multiple scales (Vale and Carvalho, 2013). As the theory of TKD also attends to the time-dimension, institutional and socio-spatial alterations are considered crucial for innovation activity caused by the changing character of knowledge and networks configuration along the innovative process. Especially the method of compiling ‘innovation biographies’ (Butzin and Widmaier, 2016; Strambach and Halkier, 2013) represents a promising approach to grasp the multiplicity of changing aspects over time, tracing the institutional configuration of cooperative agents which try to establish new products or services.

3.2. KIBS and TKD

In analogy to PM, all dynamics described above are driven by interacting agents seeking to create marketable innovations. In consequence, these agents are subject of multiple research questions in TKD literature. Comparable to modern policy making, external experts have a great impact on innovation processes. A great amount of literature

therefore examined the role of so called KIBS (knowledge-intensive business services) on innovation processes in general and, in the last years, increasingly on knowledge dynamics in particular (Santos-Vijande et al., 2013; Schiuma et al., 2012; Strambach, 2008, 2010, 2012). Accordingly, one strand of TKD literature is to understand why KIBS act in the way they do in local institutional and social specificities. In this connection, Boschma (2005) points out that there are different types of proximities determining learning processes of cooperating agents. Besides face-to-face interactions enabling access to valuable tacit knowledge – i.e. spatial proximity –, there are also non-geographical factors for successful learning activities between individuals (Mattes, 2012; Aguilera et al., 2012; Hansen, 2014). In addition to geographical and cognitive (converging knowledge bases) proximity, organizational, institutional and social proximity matter as well. It is therefore assumed that ‘actors are supposed to interact more with others when they share similar attributes’ (Balland, 2012: 742). Or as Strambach (2012: 1846f.) puts it: ‘[a]ctors in geographical proximity often share the same culture, the same institutional environment and social practices which create [...] cognitive proximity, the basis for effective communication and mutual understanding.’ Consequently, investigating these proximities helps to understand the micro-dynamics of innovation efforts between the involved actors and complements epistemological implications of knowledge bases and the SAS taxonomy.

Researching KIBS’ role and performance in innovation dynamics then requires positioning these agents accurately in the complex and locally specific social and institutional system that decisively constitutes knowledge dynamics. This – what can be called ‘embeddedness’ – is crucial for understanding KIBS’ ability of exploiting knowledge (Strambach, 2012: 1847). Accordingly, three major dimensions are central for future examinations. First, TKD research focusing KIBS’ behavior in innovation processes must consider the specificities of proximate and distant cooperation and the importance of the different scale on which KIBS operate. Exemplarily, globally acting agents need at least temporary spatial proximity with partners to build trust and therefore get in touch with valuable tacit knowledge (Gössling, 2004; Torre, 2008). Second, as institutional and organizational configurations vary by scale, KIBS’ ability to exploit knowledge do so as well (Grillitsch and Trippel, 2013). It is therefore not only important to focus on internal characteristics like the absorptive capacities of innovative agents but their interplay with external circumstances and changes. KIBS’ competences to adequately customize their portfolio to societal changes are one factor for successfully innovate and tapping new markets (Strambach, 2012). In turn, they shape the material and non-material environment by setting up new buildings or rooms as working spaces for organizational bodies as well as by compiling papers and policies (Strambach, 2012). Finally, KIBS’ ability to react on external changes also depends on success and failure in mobilizing knowledge inside innovation networks as the manifold processes of spreading, adjusting, updating and assimilating can lead to marketable innovations. In this connection, knowledge is made transferrable through codification, gets mobilized and needs to be anchored or (re-)contextualized in locally differing and constantly altering institutional environments of specific places (Strambach, 2012; Crevoisier, 2016; Berset and Crevoisier, 2006). Merging findings of these multi-scale examinations, the interplay between individual and environment, and process-centered investigation creates a detailed picture of TKDs and KIBS’ particular contributions.

However, subjective or individual motivations and values of KIBS – besides mere economical ones – are largely unstudied in geographical innovation research. This is especially remarkable as processes of knowledge mobilization have a great share of shaping particular ‘truths’ reflecting specific communities’ hegemonic and interest-serving notions of subjects, concepts or problems (McCann, 2008). Though, understanding KIBS as socially complex actors integrated in intertwined networks necessitates more research on this topic. Moreover, numerous

examinations on innovation processes in general and KIBS' contributions in particular aim to publish policy recommendation for achieving best possible conditions to support appropriate innovation dynamics (Cappellin, 2007; Halkier, 2012; Dahlström and James, 2012; James, 2012; Cooke, 2012). Enhancements of policies, however, are largely attributed to public institutions acting independently, rational and unaffected by private agents. Considering consultants as one category of KIBS cooperating with public authority in various projects, this notion cannot be maintained. Therefore, connecting conceptions of TKD and PM bears the potential to overcome these lacks by forming the theoretical and methodological basis for investigating the complex set of KIBS' influence on policy innovation and its underlying knowledge dynamics.

4. Enriching approaches – synergies of PM and TKD

The approaches of Policy Mobilities and Territorial Knowledge Dynamics were applied to case studies focusing on quite different scales. Despite setting unequal empirical emphasis, these studies appreciate the accentuated openness towards theoretical and methodological amendments (McCann and Ward, 2013; Prince, 2013; Cook, 2015; Baker and Temenos, 2015). Therefore, both approaches are by no means complete, all-embracing or – partially – even coherent concepts. They are rather characterized by permanent renegotiation, conceptual alterations and combinations with other theoretical frameworks to enlarge and detail investigations of related topics. This basic logic of conceptual openness enables the search for suitable and complementary explanations of underlying dynamics and central subjects' understanding. Due to several conceptual lacks that have been revealed above, grounded examination in the respective social dynamics and consultants' contribution in the complexes of PM and TKD theory are substantially hindered (McCann, 2013; Strambach, 2008). However, this paper considers consultants – as one sub-category of KIBS – the key to show both approaches' conceptual synergies. On the one hand, this perception is based on the great amount of work done on the impact of knowledge-intensive business services and their role for knowledge dynamics of innovation processes mostly at the enterprise level that anyhow bears great potentials for enlarging investigations of analogous dynamics in the public sector, especially in policy making (Strambach, 2010). On the other hand, as consultants primarily trade and mediate knowledge, they act as nodes or conjunctions between policy making and knowledge dynamics. Therefore, especially in times of the 'consultocracy' it is indispensable to analyze the interconnection of both spheres – knowledge focusing micro dynamics and the wider structures of contemporary policy making – that enable to generate a specific 'truth' (Larner and Le Heron, 2002: 762). This section therefore aims to delineate synergetic effects of PM and TKD with a special focus on consultants' works to tackle the fundamental lacks of under-theorization of knowledge and consultants in PM and to clarify following implications for further research in this field.

4.1. Variegated 'Consultocracy'

At first sight, one significant difference in PM's and TKD theory's conceptualization gets obvious: the discrepancy between understanding consultants as primarily global actors which need local linkages to access useful policy knowledge in contrast to institutionally embedded KIBS whose innovative activity largely depends on their local environment and the specific networks they are entangled in. In this connection, it is plausible to question the rather onesided notion of consultants' work in PM recognizing the young and relatively limited investigation efforts in this topic to date. In contrast, KIBS' essential role for modern innovation processes has been appreciated in geographic innovation research for years. Consequently, and bringing back in mind the analogy of policy mutation and innovation, a much more comprehensive understanding of consultants' conceptualization in PM is

suggested that may be termed, in dependence on Brenner et al. (2010) ideas on differentiated neoliberalism, as 'variegated consultocracies'. This theoretical amendment indeed implies fundamental changes for the perception of consultants in PM theory. Three of them shall be delineated in the limited space of this paper in more detail to better discern the explicit additional value for contemporary PM theory.

First, multi-scalarity, nothing new to PM, but largely neglected in PM empiricism, gains higher importance. Appreciating KIBS' involvement in numerous networks necessitates sensitiveness to scales apart from just local or global ones. Deeper awareness of multi-scalar processes of policy making breaks this dichotomy and suggests the existence of case-specific constitutionalized scales.

In fact, while both PM and TKD point out that consultants (and KIBS respectively) are constituted by and take part in social processes inside globally stretched networks (Prince, 2012a: 189), only considerations of TKD theory highlight the different configurations of consultants' entanglement depending on the specific scale in which this networking takes place (Strambach, 2012). The point to make here is, of course, not to abrogate the importance of global flows and local circumstances but to suggest awareness of policy making dynamics that are not exclusively located on a global scale. Rather, pursuing a relational consideration of scale calls for increased awareness of the spatial and social range of policy networks KIBS are engaged in. Accordingly, changing particularities of scale and space go hand in hand. Its empirical appreciation is therefore requisite for appropriate examinations in this field.

The specific institutional environments – i.e. the particularities of 'space' – impact the performance of consultants and policy making processes leading to the assumption of spatial heterogeneity of (policy) knowledge dynamics and therefore to centers of policy making. This claim stays in line with the association of particular cities with 'best practice' models of a certain policy (McCann, 2013: 6). However, the theoretical starting point for this phenomenon is quite different in PM and TKD. In the former, policies (and the cities they are originally implemented in) are 'talked up' for political reasons and the success of regions as well as related policy agents. In the latter, vibrant policy development is determined by the embeddedness of involved actors, to say their social and institutional environment that set the frame for successful knowledge dynamics (Crevoisier, 2014: 556; McCann and Ward, 2015: 829). Consequently, multi-scalarity introduces institutional specificities to local policy making. Apparently, policies' successful mobilization does not only depend on the political will of spreading a preferred strategy to gain reputation. Rather, the local institutional specificities determine central actors' successful cooperation and enable them to boost and mobilize a favored policy.

This leads over to a second implication of considering consultants as locally embedded actors: the case-specific configuration of policy agents' interactions. To appreciate the importance of innovation networks' configuration and the multiplicity of co-operative relationships, contemporary research in TKD focuses on why the involved agents act in certain ways by investigating their specific institutional surrounding (Strambach, 2012; Balland et al., 2014). Here, as stated above, several 'proximities' are regarded decisive for effective collaboration in innovation projects (Boschma, 2005). First, cognitive proximity of interacting agents eases cooperation costs as there is few time and money spent on creating consensus about particular topics. In this respect, TKD tries to investigate resemblances of the involved actors' knowledge bases. Second, institutional, social and organizational proximity facilitates improved knowledge integration through trust caused by the same legal frame as well as concordant personal values, conventions and societal norms. Third, spatial proximity and the 'territorial configuration' of actors clearly impacts the way knowledge dynamics occur. In PM, this point gets endorsed by considerations on globalizing micro-spaces postulating that spatial proximity and following exchange of tacit knowledge causes mechanisms of policy mobilizations and mutations (McCann, 2008). In consequence, the concept of different

'proximities' enables to investigate the specific dynamics of knowledge circulation and policy making on multiple scales.

Correspondingly, consultants' acting inside policy networks gets far more circumstantial in PM research. On the one hand, consultants' individual behavior depends on interpersonal relationships to other policy agents. On the other hand, interrelations with spaces matter as well, especially how spaces are shaped by actors and vice versa. Accordingly, both the PM and TKD approach embrace the difference of spatially proximate and distant cooperation forms. Particularly consultants acting globally are considered reliant on temporary get-togethers with important policy agents to access tacit knowledge crucial to successful work (Torre, 2008; Hier and Walby, 2014: 157). Although technological progress enables long distant communication, it is spatial proximity and the informality in diverse situations that generates the necessary trust for exchanging confidential knowledge (Gertler, 2003). In other words, consultants 'jump' between different scales to gather scale-specifically accessible knowledge.

In view of this, the third central implication of regarding consultants as locally embedded actors is the importance of knowledge for their everyday work and therefore the involvement in (policy) knowledge dynamics. Following these considerations, consultants can be considered as 'nodes' inside policy networks that abstract complex knowledge and policy making dynamics. Beyond that, the 'nodes' themselves vary in their organizational configuration ranging from individual experts to collectively acting consulting groups (Peck and Theodore, 2010b: 170). Indeed, this shows the complexity of the topic, as specific configurations influence the way consultants' ability to exploit knowledge or to react on societal changes (Strambach, 2012: 1858). Nevertheless, unraveling these complexities is the basis for understanding under what circumstances consultants operate successfully or fail to properly spread, assimilate, contextualize and integrate crucial knowledge in the diverse processes of Policy Mobilities.

Taken together, these implications stay in sharp contrast to the current inherent uniformity of consultants' global impact on policy making processes. Appreciating variegated consultocracies in PM therefore refers to and dissolves several theoretical and epistemological lacks. Although PM frequently highlighted the importance of scale so far, contemporary literature largely neglects sensitiveness to the multiplicity of levels, where knowledge dynamics as well as policy mobilities occur. It is important to define consultants' ranges of professional activity since processes of exploiting knowledge do not only depend on individual absorptive capacities but the organizational level that varies by scale (Strambach, 2012). In these regards, place and space shape consultants' behavior as well. Accordingly, and following the notion of path-dependency, the temporary status of a specific place's institutional characteristics must be considered when investigating the micro dynamics of policy knowledge exchange. In turn, these dynamics can change the place's specificity through actors that may set up new buildings, rooms or other material entities as well as give rise to new networks or organizational bodies. Therefore, researching the co-evolution of actors and places they are working in, bear the potential to better understand what impact spatial and institutional proximity may have on knowledge related micro dynamics.

In addition, a changed notion of embedded policy agents and the underlying dynamics they produce amends the intrinsic perception of policies. Analogous to innovations, policies are indeed the obvious outcome of complex knowledge and network-based dynamics over time (Crevoisier, 2016: 191). Policy creation or even mutation can be regarded as an innovation triggered endogenously by local specificities or unintended effects of the multiple mobilization processes referred to in PM. In this context, prevalent PM research focuses on the current state of ongoing dynamics, the TKD approach accessorially integrates the dimension of time and suggests different methodological approaches for its investigation (Crevoisier, 2016). Basically, communication and interactions permanently alter the quality, quantity and configuration of individual actors' knowledge state on specific topics (Asheim and

Coenen, 2005; Fagerberg et al., 2012). Hence, policies are path-dependent. Partial adjustments are based on former outcomes of intricate multi-level dynamics between decisive actors. It is therefore plausible to speak, analogous to the term 'innovation biographies' coined by Butzin and Widmaier (2016), of 'policy biographies'. Though, rather than merely analyze institutional changes over time, investigation must focus on the canalization and employment of knowledge in policy making processes through specific actors. This is especially important as policy innovations must also be considered as products and triggers of valuation shifts inside the societal environment (Huguenin and Jeannerat, 2017). In view of that, policies are regarded temporary fixated strategies assembled by the particular knowledge that is for some reasons taken as the best fitting answer to handle a specific problem. The insufficient recognition of time in PM theory – frequently criticized in corresponding literature – is thereby responded to.

Greater recognition of scale, space and time, of course, does not discard existing findings on consultants' engagement in PM completely but tries to beneficially amend them. According to that, McCann (2013: 9) pointed out that consultants' success also depends on their reputation to a remarkable degree. Reputation, as an act of ascribing superior expertise to specific actors or organizations, is clearly a social construction accepted inside a specific community. It is therefore a macro level phenomenon, rather indirectly dependent on micro level processes and dynamics (Love and Kraatz, 2009). In fact, combining TKD and PM methods for investigating and setting the different scales into relation will shed more light into these complex processes of how reputation evolves. It is therefore of interest what kind of reputation consultants have in their specific policy network as it preconditions to what extent they are enabled to 'shape the truth' characterizing a certain form of consultocracy (McCann, 2008).

An appreciation of variegated consultocracies indeed strongly refers to assemblage thinking, i.e. the individual constitution of entities by its underlying dynamics. Hence, assemblage thinking facilitates detailed investigations not only of individuals' or small groups' acting but of whole policy making networks and their respective contribution to innovative alterations of certain policies. It offers a far more detailed approach for investigating policies as well as innovations in general, giving a useful frame for integrating the multiple processes of (policy) knowledge generation, alteration and refusal over time. In fact, the multiplicity of existing assemblages coevally facilitates and complicates investigations on different scales of policy making, from global to micro level dynamics. Nevertheless, the actors' embeddedness marks the decisive determinant for elucidating specific cognitive backgrounds and their particularities of engaging in policy networks. Hence, in response to requesting 'greater appreciation of embeddedness' (Temenos and Baker, 2015) in PM research, the revealed epistemological lacks that hindered its detailed examination so far must be overcome. Suggesting a possible research agenda is therefore a prerequisite to integrate (policy) knowledge dynamics in PM appropriately.

4.2. Capturing the complexity

The existence of variegated consultocracies that are characterized by their institutional particularities and case specific dynamics indeed strongly enlarges the perception of what Policy Mobilities include. In this section, we want to suggest a research agenda in response to the manifold explanations and following epistemological requirements relating to variegated consultocracies. Consequently, by reflecting the theoretical amendments above, we assume three domains as most beneficial to concentrate on empirically.

First: the micro level including all knowledge dynamics enlacing the individual or a specific group of individuals, examined by pursuing methods of the TKD approach (Kaiser and Liecke, 2009; Strambach and Klement, 2012). In fact, empiricism must center the involved actors, as they embody (policy) knowledge and entail knowledge dynamics through their interactions. Especially investigating the development of

common sense in (policy) innovation networks inside a company or between co-operating partners bears great potentials to understand underlying *intra-organizational* knowledge dynamics in contemporary policy making. Employing the proximities approach in conjunction with SAS analysis enables to detail the differences or similarities between cooperating actors and facilitates to scrutinize strategies of overcoming possible obstacles during the cooperation process. In the end, a coherent consulting product (a recommended policy) represents the temporary accomplished common sense of the involved actors.

Second, processes of combinatorial knowledge generation during specific projects stand in the center of the embedded network analysis. Special focus must be set on macro level processes of contextualizing consulting products with special attention paid to the multiple *inter-organizational* dynamics of PM and TKD. Positioning KIBS inside this complexity will shed more light on the socio-spatial dynamics and mechanisms standing behind variegated consultocracies. From methodological perspectives, a clear investigation blueprint lacks to date. However, some recommendations for grasping the multi-faceted processes of social interaction are given (Cochrane and Ward, 2012; Peck and Theodore, 2012; Schwegler and Powell, 2008). Staying close to the consultant(s) and taking part of their rather ‘closed’ practices remark a promising, but certainly laborious approach to dissect consultants’ everyday work, for instance what their motives and ideological background are or what strategies they employ to impact policy making. The aim is to ‘see like a consultant’ (Prince, 2012a: 197; Scott, 1998), i.e. to become the ‘socially complex actor’ involved in policy making (McCann, 2011b: 143). Indeed, caused by its enormous required investments, empiricism on this level does not exist to date. Nevertheless, ‘following the consultant’ displays a beneficial opportunity to build trust, descry secret aims of the actors and therefore understand the multiple interactions of communication and sense-making during policy making processes. To complement this rather ethnographic approach a delineation of the policy’s ‘biography’ with special focus on surrounding institutional developments over time is suggested. In close analogy to innovation biographies this method sets the frame to embed consultants’ operations in a local context.

Third, analyzing the cognitive adjustments of consultants’ knowledge level during specific projects enables to detail the multiple learning dynamics occurring on different scales. It therefore connects practical experiences with theoretical expectations on the success of the consulting product. As this mechanism is crucial for assembling and developing the consultants’ individual knowledge level, examining these interconnections enables to apprehend the underlying dynamics that are decisive for policy mutation, mobility and successful (re-) contextualization. This certainly requires permanent awareness of how, why and where personal attitudes of consultants towards particular issues change over time. Especially ‘situations’ where multi-scalar interconnections occur in practice must be in empirical focus as micro and macro dynamics meet in those spaces and commonly comprise occasions of maintaining pivotal informal contacts (McCann and Ward, 2012a). Still, knowledge about the involved actors and sufficient trust are the preconditions for accessing informal communication without significantly adulterating them for scientific examination.

In summary, findings of the three domains indeed should not be considered mutually unrelated. The results’ combination creates a broad understanding of the socio-spatial processes ranging from underlying knowledge dynamics to superordinate policy mobility processes and expatiates what stake specific actors like consultants have in this multi-facet assemblage over time. Of course, these empirical accommodations are only a first step toward an inclusive and integrative perspective on the role of policy knowledge in PM theory. Proving and developing them in future studies states a desirable scientific contribution to further increase Policy Mobilities’ explanatory power.

5. Conclusion

Investigating experts’ decisive role in today’s politics must be one vital point in critical geography. In this paper, we delineated synergies of the two approaches of Policy Mobilities and Territorial Knowledge Dynamics which we tried to incorporate in a first proposal to frame empiricism in this field. Setting a focus on multi-scalarity, the integration of time and reckoning the crucial position of policy knowledge dynamics is the key to (1) properly locate experts in policy making networks and (2) to analyze their specific influence on central policy making processes. Connecting PM and TKD enables us to exceedingly consider experts’ individuality (knowledge base, personal background, behavior, etc.) and the peculiarities of the policy regimes they are engaged in. It widens the perception of consultants from primarily globally acting actors to all scales and gives a blueprint to case-based in-depth and comparative empiricism. These issues bear great potentials to further scrutinize the highly differentiated complex of variegated consultocracies. Yet, to receive generalizable results in the future, combining PM and TKD provides a promising tool that enables to conduct systematic comparisons of the unfolding policy making and moving processes in time and space. In addition, it offers a possibility to increase the insights into institutional work and localized institutional changes in such processes.

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