

**The Knowledge of intelligence.
Scientification, Data Processing and
Information Transfer in Secret Services,
1945–1990**

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The organisers of the conference „The Knowledge of Intelligence. Scientification, Data Processing and Information Transfer in Secret Services, 1945–1990“ chose for the flyer the photo of a young woman in the 1970s, apparently entering data into an IBM console of the NSA. A picture very unlike the image popular culture draws of the work and practices of intelligence agencies but very much befitting the topic of the workshop, which took place at the Centre for Contemporary History (ZZF) Potsdam in June. It focused on the handling and processing of information within intelligence agencies and placed a special emphasis on the impact of digitalisation and the global dimension of these issues. Taking knowledge as a perspective of historical analysis as well as the concept of the scientification of social problems during the 20th century have become increasingly attractive in the last three decades.¹ Thus, the field of intelligence history, which focuses on institutions designed to generate knowledge by collecting and processing information, is starting to apply such a perspective as well.² As simultaneously research into the implications of the beginning digitalisation with special focus on its introduction to the mass market and the broader public in the 1970s is growing³, the conference set out to not only scrutinize intelligence work after the Second World War under the perspective of the history of knowledge but to also show the connections with the history of digitalisation. Through including case studies from Eastern and Western Europe, North Amer-

ica, Brazil, and Australia, the organisers gave the opportunity to challenge the assumption that US-American and Western intelligence agencies should be seen as the default

¹ See for example Daniel Speich, David Gugerli, Wissensgeschichte. Eine Standortbestimmung, in: Karine Crousaz / Michael Jucke et al. (Eds.), *Kulturgeschichte in der Schweiz. Eine historiografische Skizze. L'histoire culturelle en Suisse. une esquisse historiographique*, Zürich 2012, pp. 85–100, here p. 85. Also William Clark / Peter Becker (Eds.), *Little Tools of Knowledge. Historical Essays on Academic and Bureaucratic Practices*, Michigan 2001. Also the process of scientification, setting on in various fields in the late 19th century and early 20th century, has been subject to substantial research (widely received have been e.g. Margit Szöllösi-Janze, *Wissensgesellschaft in Deutschland. Überlegungen zur Neubestimmung der deutschen Zeitgeschichte über Verwissenschaftlichungsprozesse*, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 30 (2004), S. 277–313; and Lutz Raphael, *Die Verwissenschaftlichung des Sozialen als methodische und konzeptionelle Herausforderung für eine Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 22 (1996), S. 165–193). For example, the professionalization and scientification of criminology until 1945 has been subject to history of knowledge approaches in the early 2000s (e.g. Petter Becker / Richard Wetzell [Eds.], *Criminals and Their Scientists. The History of Criminology in International Perspective*, New York 2006).

² For example Lisa Medrow / Daniel Münzner / Robert Radu (Eds.), *Kampf um Wissen. Spionage, Geheimhaltung und Öffentlichkeit 1870–1940*, Paderborn 2015; Thomas Großbölting / Sabine Kittel (Eds.), *Welche ‚Wirklichkeit‘ und wessen ‚Wahrheit‘? Das Geheimdienstararchiv als Quelle und Medium der Wissensproduktion*, Göttingen 2019. Also recently during the *Deutsche Historikertag 2016* Kirsten Heinsohn / Gerhard Sälter / Bodo Hechelhammer / Jens Gieseke / Klaus Weinbauer / Beatrice DeGraaf discussed under the title „Gefühltes Wissen“ (Perceived Knowledge) the construction of knowledge and enemy concepts in German intelligence services between the world wars and the fall of the wall (see Anna Warda, „HT 2016. Gefühltes Wissen? Konstruktion von Realität in Geheimdiensten und Sicherheitsbehörden zwischen Weltkrieg und Mauerfall.“, in: *Historisches Forum* 20 [2017], p. 226–232.) The broad field of intelligence studies, especially in the US, being a part of the research field of international relations has produced substantial research and publications in general on the political function and technicalities of intelligence, often from a viewpoint of the practitioner or the political scientist (e.g. Mark M. Lowenthal, *Intelligence. From Secrets to Policy*, 5th edition, Los Angeles et. al. 2011.).

³ See for example Frank Bösch (Ed.), *Wege in die digitale Gesellschaft. Computernutzung in der Bundesrepublik, 1955–1990*, Göttingen 2018; or David Gugerli, *Wie die Welt in den Computer kam. Zu Entstehung digitaler Wirklichkeit*, Frankfurt am Main 2018.

type. RÜDIGER BERGIEN (Potsdam) and DEBORA GERSTENBERGER (Berlin), two of the convenors, outlined three themes for the following presentations: Firstly, the impact of the general scientification of social issues in the 20th century on the intelligence sector. Secondly, the effect of digitalisation on data storing and processing, as well as the influence this had on the perception of potential threats. Thirdly, the organizers highlighted the notion of „interconnectedness“, standing for different forms of intelligence exchange and cooperation.

Following this initial roadmap, the first panel's presentations addressed both direct and indirect international interactions between intelligence services, covering three corners of the globe. ANANDA SIMÕES FERNANDES (Porto Alegre) focused on secret service work in Brazil and the contact to Uruguay during periods of dictatorship. Using just recently released files, Fernandes analysed the Brazilian CIE's (Foreign Information Center) diverse means of observing Brazilian asylees in Uruguay: observation, interception of mail, and agents, who infiltrated the expat communities. In her case study she concentrated on one agent and illustrated the methods used and to what extent his personal connections to the Uruguayan intelligence services aided him in his work. DAVID SCHAEFER (London) elaborated on Cold War Australia's networks of bilateral relations. With regard to signal intelligence, Australia cooperated with other states within the UKUSA-Agreement. Thus, the network was based on a group of highly specialised and trained officials on either side and was based on mutual trust. Schaefer emphasised that the degree of interaction was ultimately decided by the practitioners, and not only by diplomats. He argued that, for states such as Australia, these liaisons offered the opportunity to improve technology and methods. SASCHA GUNOLD (Potsdam), the third speaker, explored the West German and American intelligence relationship. He asked to what extent the change from a „need to know“ to a „need to share“ approach within service interaction applied. He focused on the relationship between the BND and the CIA and examined what was revealed to each

side about the stationing of nuclear warheads in the GDR from the 1950s until the 1990s. Gunold identified the turning point from a „need to know“ to a „need to share“ relationship as late as in the 1990s as, beforehand, primarily finished intelligence had been shared with the German partner. Finally, JENS WEGENER (Philadelphia) picked up on the three earlier presentations' common theme of liaison across borders. He characterized the 20th century as a time of continuous globalisation and blurring of borders. Additionally, the 1960s saw a greater socio-cultural diversification in urban spaces as well as transnational social movements. The tool of databases helped intelligence services and police agencies deal with this transformation as they enabled them to link spatial and social information. Both MICHAEL WALA's (Bochum) commentary and the discussion concentrated on the interaction of international intelligence services and the relevance of trust as a category of analysis. Subsequently, the question arose whether „raw“ data was more readily exchanged than „finished“ intelligence, especially as there were both symmetric as well as asymmetric types of contact. Schaefer and Wegener added, that in the 20th century (signal) technology and data seem to have developed into a sort of *lingua franca* for the services in the English-speaking countries.

The second panel concentrated on the process of digitalisation within intelligence agencies and how this affected the processing of data. In his presentation, FRANCISZEK DĄBROWSKI (Warsaw) used the example of the Polish communist security police's (Służba Bezpieczeństwa) card indexes. The indexes were one of the central operative tools. Dąbrowski showed that several different indexes and filing systems existed, providing a varying degree of information and protected by a system of hierarchical secrecy levels with corresponding access rights. The introduction of electronical systems meant that cross-referencing of the different indexes could be sped up significantly and thus improved the evaluation process. MARCELO VIANNA (Osório) contextualised the digitalisation process in the security sector within the broader national developments in informatics. He elaborated on how, in the 1970s

and 1980s, different institutions in Brazil competed to gain influence over the national computing policy, namely the Commission for Coordination of Electronic Data Processing activities (CAPRE), later the Special Secretariat of Informatics (SEI) and the national intelligence service (SNI). The SNI realized the relevance of computing not only for the national economy but also for national security and thus tried to gain more power in this sector by various means. At the same time, the digital infrastructure within the service progressed by integrating different electronic data processing and retrieving programs. Shifting the focus back to Europe, the conference's third convener, CHRISTOPHER KIRCHBERG (Bochum) discussed the rise of social movements and the way public attitudes towards domestic intelligence changed concurrently with the institution's first steps toward digitalisation. Kirchberg showed that, from the 1960s onwards, data processing became more accelerated and more centralized as well as more standardised in the West German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution. This enabled a standardisation in the processing and modes of evaluating information, but simultaneously gave way to more static knowledge and thus new blind spots. In his commentary, Rüdiger Bergien emphasised that the societal attitude towards digitalisation in general had an impact on its effect within the intelligence services. Thus, the degree of digitalisation varied across the different political systems. However, a common goal to all agencies was to create overarching databases. Both the commentary and the discussion made clear that the comparison with other institutions processing data such as police organisations would prove fruitful.

The presentations of the third panel focused on the services' images of society and possible threats. ANDREAS LUTSCH (Berlin) concentrated on analysis compiled by the American agencies and the interaction of the US intelligence community with policy makers during the cold war. Through the example of the NIEs (National Intelligence Estimates), Lutsch showed that the USA applied a competitive assessment system as different analyst groups with experts from different professional backgrounds contributed to esti-

mates of the Soviet power. Whilst Lutsch focused on estimates as a product of the analysis, MARCEL SCHMEER (Bochum) presented a different type: the annual reports on the protection of the constitution in West Germany. The annual reports which started to develop as a non-public publication in the 1960s, represented a form of governmental security communication. Later they were published openly with the intention of having an impact on the general public's opinion. This was in correspondence with an increasing demand by society for more transparency. Though, in the first two cases surveillance remained – albeit subject to scrutiny and discussion – very much the unchallenged task of the state, the third presentation focused on private endeavours in Switzerland in the late 1970s. LUKAS NYFFENEGGER (Zurich) presented his research on the dichotomy between private and state institutions as providers of intelligence in Switzerland in the 20th century. After the Swiss state strike in 1918 private state protectors and state agencies cooperated regarding the state security. However, this relationship came to a halt in the 1970s, as the affair surrounding Ernst Cincera's private intelligence agency unfolded. Thus, leaving official security institutions as the only acceptable intelligence providers. In his commentary, GERHARD SÄLTER (Berlin), highlighted that the source of information as well as the actual way in which the data is processed are crucial in order to understand how threats were conceived and became established. Connected to this, he put special emphasis on taking the analysts' and intelligence officers' professional pasts into account when analysing the different threat perceptions.

Accordingly, the last panel focused on intelligence agencies' staff, the scientification of their work, and professionalization. THOMAS WOLF (Potsdam) presented his findings regarding the work of the so-called „Ostforscher“ within the Organisation Gehlen – the BND's predecessor. The members of the so-called „Professor Group“ were recruited as experts on Eastern European culture and history, as they had established themselves as such during National Socialism. Although they were enlisted because of their academic qualifications and contin-

ued to publish, their relevance and footing within the organisation dwindled in the 1950s as they failed to make their knowledge accessible to the agency. JANE LEZINA (Potsdam) discussed the development of counter-intelligence in the KGB from the 1960s until 1990, by comparing and relating the change within counterintelligence policies with general party developments. She highlighted, that even though the information gathering processes improved continuously, for example through the use of digital infrastructures, the analysis failed to satisfy the needs posed to and by the agency. While efforts were made for the academisation and professionalisation of the intelligence cadre, the analysis fell short, particularly when the 1980s brought on a new form of instability. The last presentation by SAMANTHA VIZ QUADRAT (Niterói) turned the focus back to Brazil and the training of staff within its intelligence community. She highlighted that the transfer of training from the Higher War College to the newly founded Escola Nacional de Informações in the early 1970s changed various aspects of the intelligence education. For example, training was now centralized and more based on real case studies and own research. JAN BEHREND'S (Potsdam) commentary and the discussion were likewise concerned with the questions regarding the development of training and daily practices.

CONSTANTIN GOSCHLER (Bochum) summarized in his final commentary that the history of knowledge has proven to be a productive perspective on the subject of intelligence studies, as shown by the presentations. He elaborated on three pairs of antonyms which could be fruitful for the discussion of the relationship of scientification, computerisation, and professionalization. Firstly, „fact – fiction“. He pointed out epistemic differences within intelligence studies as different schools might evaluate categories as for example „enemy“ or „danger“ as either a service's constructed reality or a true fact. Secondly, referring to Luhmann and Frevert, he named the antonyms „trust and distrust“. He asked if the digitalisation had an impact on the emotional layer of organisational structures. With the conceptual pair „old and new“, he raised the question how the

change from card indexes to digitalised forms of knowledge production and processing actually transformed practices and means of interaction with society and third parties.

The second commentary by JENS GIESEKE (Potsdam) emphasised the significance of trust in liaison cultures. Connected to this, he also emphasised the relevance of a common spirit and alignment of political mindsets within the organisations, which, in his experience, could be even more relevant in recruiting than academic qualifications. Additionally, he pointed out two further fields of interest. In his opinion the changes within technology and through computerisation in the period from the 1950s until the 1980s might not have had a drastic change on their products immediately, but can be understood as a precursor to Big Data processing. Lastly, he touched on the specifics of knowledge within the field of intelligence. Gieseke highlighted the need for comparison with other forms and fields of knowledge. For example, he proposed that intelligence is not as concerned with developing theories as academic research is. He emphasised that, based on his own research, the aspects of exclusiveness and time are crucial to the significance of knowledge within the intelligence sector. Gieseke concluded that even though knowledge in the intelligence sector shares aspects with, for example, journalistic or diplomatic knowledge, it is still distinctive from these.

As the presentations showed, the use of electronic infrastructure started to become state of the art for the intelligence services around the globe in the early 1970s, to varying degrees. Undoubtedly, digitalisation accelerated the services ability to access and process information. Through analysing this process, the presentations did not only contribute to a deeper understanding of information processing within the individual agencies but opened up the discussion of other topics such as organisational culture and relationships with other services as well. This became especially apparent through the comparison between different countries. To assess this impact further it might prove fruitful to compare with the practices of knowledge production and processing within security and intelligence agencies before the late 1950s as

well as in other institutions of knowledge production and administration. The conference enabled an international perspective and an engaging, academic exchange and thus, gave many impulses for further research.

Conference overview:

Introduction: Debora Gerstenberger/Rüdiger Bergien

Panel 1: From „Need to Know“ to „Need to Share“? Inter-Service Knowledge Transfer

Ananda Simões Fernandes (Porto Alegre): Knowledge Circulation and Shared Information between the Brazilian and Uruguayan intelligence services under National Security

David Schaefer (London): Intelligence Liaison and Professionalism: Shared Secrets and Knowledge in Cold War Australia

Sascha Gunold (Potsdam): The Hidden Nukes: Inter-Service Knowledge Transfer About Soviet Nuclear Weapons Storages in East Germany

Jens Wegener (Philadelphia): Enhancing or Obscuring Patterns? Intelligence Services and the Circulation of Computer Knowledge within the Transatlantic Alliance, 1964–1980

Discussant: Michael Wala (Bochum)

Panel 2: Becoming a Part of Information Society? The Digitalization and its Impacts

Franciszek Dąbrowski (Warsaw): Data storage and indexing systems: Information circuits in the Communist Security Police in Poland, 1950s–1989

Marcelo Vianna (Osório): From Darkness to Explicit Control: Brazilian Informatics under the National Security Doctrine, 1977–1984

Christopher Kirchberg (Bochum): Between Advanced Information Gathering and New Blind Spots: The Impact of Data Processing in the West German Domestic Intelligence Service, 1965–1985

Discussant: Rüdiger Bergien (Potsdam)

Panel 3: Creating Images of Societies and Enemies: Intelligence Knowledge as a Resource of State Power

Andreas Lutsch (Berlin): On the Evolution of

Analysis and Policy Relations in the U.S. Intelligence Community during the Cold War

Marcel Schmeer (Bochum): Popularizing Domestic Intelligence? The Annual Reports on the Protection of the Constitution: Between Security Communication, Transparency and Public Relations

Lukas Nyffenegger (Zurich): Surveillance and Transfer of Power: The Disenfranchisement of Swiss Citizens and the Governments' Monopoly Knowledge Production and Organisation in the 1970s

Discussant: Gerhard Sälter (Berlin)

Panel 4: Towards „Social Sciences Branches“? Professionalization and Scientification of Intelligence Collection and Analysis

Thomas Wolf (Potsdam): 'Brain Trust': Cooperation between West German 'Ostforschung' and the Gehlen Organization, 1946–1956

Jane Lezina (Potsdam): Scientific-Technical Progress and the KGB: Attempts of the Soviet Political Police to Improve its Technological and Academic Base in the 1970s and 1980s

Samantha Viz Quadrat (Niterói): The Serviço Nacional de Informações (SNI) during the Brazilian dictatorship: The Professionalization of Agents in the 1970s

Discussant: Jan C. Behrends (Potsdam)

Conference Resume: Constantin Goschler (Bochum) /Jens Gieseke (Potsdam)

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