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The transfer of scientific knowledge to decision makers and actors in the public sphere

Doctoral thesis abstract

The aim of the thesis is to analyze the problem of practical significance of political science as an instrument of solving social problems through rational political decision making processes (formulating public policy) which are based on deliberative and participatory procedures. The instrumental function of political science can be seen not as a threat to discipline's autonomy and identity but as an opportunity to enhance its status among other social science disciplines. The research objective of the dissertation is to develop a normative model of scientific knowledge transfer to decision makers and actors in the public sphere by defining desired (optimum) conditions of the process. The normative model can be used as a tool in future empirical research and provide a basis for designing and evaluating knowledge transfer activities. Another research objective is to analyze the limits of scientific knowledge transfer as well as to indicate opportunities that can stimulate activities oriented toward enhancing practical orientation of scientific knowledge.

The background of the analysis of scientific knowledge transfer is the evolution of models of democracy. Theories of participatory governance, calling for 'soft' methods of governing public policies (such as coordination, cooperation and partnership with politically empowered civic society actors) are seen as remedies for modern democracy. In participatory public policy model the role of central government is to ensure that decision making processes are open to all interested parties which have the possibility to deliberate, learn from each other and work on consensual solutions of social problems.

Deliberative (participatory) policy analysis is seen as an opportunity for political science which can provide knowledge useful not only as an instrument of solving social problems within policy making processes but also as a tool of civic education by enhancing citizens and social groups' knowledge about political and social reality.