

ROUNDTABLE: Internationalisation: Meanings and Practices of French-Speaking Political Scientists”

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ABSTRACT

This round-table collection of articles explores the diversity and variation of French-speaking political scientist practices and meanings of internationalization in Francophone Belgium, Canada, Switzerland and France. Based on individual trajectories, choices and experiences, this collection illuminates the different shapes that French-speaking political scientist practices of internationalization can take as they are embedded in different professional contexts, that is, their department, their university and their regional or national professional community. Four main themes structure each contribution: first, the meanings of internationalization and the scope and the types of related practices; second, how ‘internationalization’, with its different meanings, impacts teaching and research activities; third, how ‘internationalization’ is part of academic career development and how universities, departments or national research agencies support the internationalization of early-career and tenured scholars; and, fourth, the issues associated with internationalization that are discussed in each contributor’s work environment.

Introduction

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We started a discussion on French-speaking political scientist practices of internationalization in July 2022 in Lille during the conference of the French political science association (AFSP).

In an APSA-AFSP sponsored panel, colleagues from major French-speaking universities in Belgium, Canada and Switzerland convened to discuss what internationalization means both in their departments and in their national and/or regional professional communities and how they put internationalization in practice in their everyday professional life, including both the teaching and research side. As the conversation unfolded, both among the roundtable participants and with the public, mostly political scientists based in a French university or ‘grande école’, it became very clear that, while sharing a language, French-speaking political scientists frame internationalization and practice in strikingly different ways. Taking up Amy Mazur’s, Editor in chief of *French Politics*, generous offer to expand the audience of this conversation to the readership of *French Politics*, the main motivation of this round-table collection of articles is to explore this diversity and highlight the variation of both meanings and practices.

This roundtable intends to offer a textured portrait of internationalization as it is understood and experienced by colleagues in French-speaking countries of the Global North. It is composed of individual accounts by colleagues from Belgian, Canadian, French and Swiss French-speaking universities, Jérémy Dodeigne from the University of Namur (Belgium), Laurence Bherer, from the Université de Montréal (Canada), Fabienne Greffet from the University of Lorraine (France), and Oscar Mazzoleni from the University of Lausanne (Switzerland). The intent is not to offer a comprehensive or systematic depiction of the meanings and practices of internationalization in these four countries, and not even in each contributor’s university. Rather, based on individual trajectories, choices and experiences, the objective of this roundtable is to illuminate the different shapes that French-speaking political scientist practices of internationalization can take as they are embedded in different professional contexts. These contexts are defined as a combination of (at least) the context of their department, their university and their regional or national professional community. Professional

contexts feature meanings and shared norms pertaining to relevant and practices of internationalization, both positive and negative, as well as incentives as to how to define teaching and research practices with respect to internationalization. The contexts for the practice of internationalization is also characterized by varying instruments of institutional support targeting specific practices of internationalization while overlooking others. As political science research has shown, we also acknowledge that individual practices are explained by a combination of both structure and agency. This collection of round-table articles, thereby, gives room for the presentation of individual trajectories and how their context-specific idiosyncrasies shape internationalization practices.

Each individual account sheds light on a set of similar themes which may be articulated differently by the four contributors. A first theme is the meanings of internationalization, both within each department/ university and in the broader regional or national context when relevant, and the scope and the types of related practices. A second theme pertains to how ‘internationalization’, with its different meanings, impacts teaching and research activities. A third theme examines whether and how ‘internationalization’ is part of academic career development and how universities, departments or national research agencies support the internationalization of early-career and tenured scholars. Last, a fourth theme explores the issues associated with internationalization that are discussed in each contributor’s work environment. Among these issues, the environmental costs of traveling, sometimes frequently, sometimes long-distance for short periods of time, feature prominently. Gender-related inequalities do as well as the social division of domestic and care labour and internationalization may exert contradictory pressures on women political scientists.

Reading through Dodeigne, Bherer, Greffet and Mazzoleni’s contributions, both convergent and divergent dimensions emerge. Interestingly, a comparative outlook on their practices of internationalization suggests a double orientation, both ‘outside-in’ and ‘inside-

out’ as coined by Elgie, Grossman and Mazur (2016). The ‘outside-in’ approach examines how much French-speaking political science is shaped by developments in international scholarships (Elgie et al., 2016, p. 6). Each of the four contributions to this roundtable stresses that internationalization understood minimally as contributions to international debates and publication in international outlets is a defining feature of the everyday practices of each contributor, albeit to a varying extent and with different levels of institutional support. They also emphasize that universities push for further ‘internationalisation’, with its context-specific meanings, which impacts specifically the career development and practices of younger generations of scholars.

In parallel, each contribution also highlights an ‘inside-out’ approach which generally taps into how developments with French-speaking political science have ‘shaped developments with the discipline of political science elsewhere’ (Ibid., p. 7). The four contributions suggest that French-speaking political scientists are also concerned with contributing to a French-speaking political science. In that respect, the ‘out’ in this approach is defined by the boundaries of Francophone scholarships. Specifically, a twofold dynamic in the practice of French-speaking political scientists occurs. On one hand, publishing in English is understood as crucial to get visibility, build a high-profile track-record, and get competitive fundings; on the other, publishing in French, or in non-English languages, is oriented toward teaching purposes and grounds contributions to the public debate in one’s society.

Overall, we consider that reflecting upon our practices of internationalization and its meaning in various professional and national/ regional contexts contributes to a broader discussion on the conditions under which political science knowledge is produced. With this roundtable discussion among French-speaking political scientists, we hope to spark a similar conversation among other communities of political scientists, in the United States, other European countries and beyond.

Reference

Elgie, R., Grossman, E., & Mazur, A. G. (2016). A Framework for a Comparative Politics of France. In R. Elgie, E. Grossman, & A. G. Mazur (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of French Politics* (pp. 3-10). Oxford: Oxford University Press.