

Abstract

Bragesjö, Fredrik, *Praktiserad Reflexivitet: en studie av forskningspolitisk forskning och vetenskapssociologi* [Reflexivity in Practice: A Study of Science Policy Research and Sociology of Scientific Knowledge]. Ph.D. dissertation in Swedish. Department of History of Ideas and Theory of Science, Göteborg University, 2004. ISBN 91-628-6349-5

This dissertation deals with the notion of reflexivity in the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (SSK). Since the 1970s the SSK has developed theoretical and empirical tools to study scientific knowledge purely as a natural phenomenon. Investigating the very content of science, the objective has been explain why certain beliefs come to be hold true while other beliefs do not without any reference to traditional epistemic factors. While successful in so doing, the relativist researchers of the SSK have paid little attention to how their own knowledge production should be understood. Generally, adherents of sociological approaches to science claim that their knowledge is not epistemologically different from the other scientists. This is, for instance, clearly pointed out by David Bloor in the so-called reflexivity requirement of the strong programme. The Bath school of Harry M Collins, the strong programme's Barry Barnes and reflexivity critics as Steve Woolgar and Malcolm Ashmore also agree on this. They are, however, not in agreement on how – if at all – this should be used in the practice of SSK.

The objective of the thesis is to practice reflexivity. In the frame of the dissertation, this means to make “double use” of the ideas of the SSK. In a first step, SSK is used to study an empirical phenomenon termed institutional beliefs in science policy research. In a second step, the very same concepts and methods are used to study the social conditions behind the research performed in the first step and the thesis in general.

Questions of how to understand a relativist's own knowledge claims are hence scrutinized. While accepting the theoretical foundations of SSK, the study presents the double use as a new method to investigate the problem of reflexivity and relativism within SSK.

Keywords: reflexivity, sociology of scientific knowledge, SSK, the strong programme, Bath school, reflexivism, double use, reflexivity in practice.