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Knowledge
Malcolm Campbell-Verduyn

Abstract
This chapter identifies a gap in International Political Economy (IPE) research broadly scrutinizing knowledge from positivist and post-positivist epistemologies. It concurs with the claim advanced by the handbook editors that this gap is not necessarily bad in elaborating deep knowledge on a range of empirical issues. Nevertheless, it finds that better communication and interaction between positivist and post-positivist research can enhance the wisdom of IPE. Three avenues of research—on knowledge governance, historicity, and technology—are identified as useful pathways for communicating IPE insights into the production, dissemination, and control of knowledge across the epistemological divide, as well as more widely with students, policymakers, and the broader public.

Keywords: epistemology, governance, historicity, infrastructure, intellectual property, models, networks, patents, power, technology
Subject: Political Economy, Political Institutions, Politics
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What IPE Scholars Know About Knowledge and How They Know It
Taking stock of knowledge and its production in International Political Economy (IPE), or any field for that matter, is treacherous terrain. As Friedrichs (2009) cautions, “it is much more hazardous to contemplate the way we gain knowledge than to gain such knowledge in the first place.” Such exercise is especially perilous when contemplating knowledge about knowledge. Examining how knowledge is produced, controlled, transmitted, as well as acted upon by individuals and organizations can rapidly submerge analysis into epistemological discussions. Rather than arguing for a certain way of knowing or of resolving difference between epistemologies, this chapter advances three claims in response to the central contentions animating this handbook.

First, this chapter confirms the existence of a gap in knowledge about knowledge in IPE. Although several gaps exist, the most profound divide in knowledge about the generation, control, and dissemination of knowledge is between positivist and post-positivist epistemologies. This chapter confirms the gap noted by other IPE studies between scholarship seeking “generalizable knowledge about robust and objective
knowledge” and scholarship “situating and destabilizing knowledge about subjective and contingent knowledge.” While each investigates how knowledge is produced, controlled, and disseminated, scholarship in the two “camps” of IPE tend to remain siloed from one another. There tends to be a lack of communication—in the forms of citations and engagement with the findings in each camp—linked to a perceived lack of common ground between what are widely considered as “incommensurable” epistemologies (Higgott and Watson 2008).

In a second instance, this chapter supports the claim of the handbook editors that the gap in research investigating knowledge is not necessarily bad. As the following section details, IPE knowledge about knowledge—its generation, control, and dissemination—is quite “deep” in each camp. Nevertheless, the wisdom that IPE “knowledge about knowledge” conveys can be enhanced by better communicating and fostering interactions across this gap. Imparting wisdom from knowledge is an urgent task for IPE given the failures of many economists and experts to convey practical knowledge for addressing interconnected crises facing the planet.

Third and finally, this chapter outlines three avenues for communicating “knowledge about knowledge” across the positivist-post-positivist epistemological divide. Research foregrounding knowledge governance, historicity, and technology provide a trio of paths for navigating between siloed IPE knowledge about knowledge. The multi-laned avenues provided by these research emphases can enable IPE scholars less to overcome epistemological divides than to better communicate “knowledge about knowledge” across the field, as well as beyond it—to communicate not only amongst scholars but also with policymakers, students, and wider publics.

### Siloed Knowledge about Knowledge

IPE scholarship on the production, control, and dissemination of knowledge in the international political economy tends to fall into two “camps.” The perceived irreconcilable epistemological commitments of each underpin the lack of communication, engagement, and interaction across positivist and post-positivist camps. As the next sections emphasize, exceptions and “paths” between these “islands of knowledge” (Odell 2010) do exist. Before outlining these, however, this section first briefly details the debates and insights generated in each “camp,” as well as advancing the argument that there is wisdom lost in the gap between siloed knowledge about knowledge.
Generalizing knowledge about robust and objective knowledge

A first camp of IPE scholarship following positivist epistemologies⁴ seeks to identify the general origins, implications of, and solutions to (unequal) distributions of knowledge across the international political economy. How actors that are more knowledgeable than others are able to profit from knowledge asymmetries or to exploit their less knowledgeable counterparts, and through what processes, is chronicled, for example, in studies of financial markets in the run-up to the global financial crisis of 2008 (Bell and Hindmoor 2015; Nesvetailova and Palan 2020). Similarly, IPE work on “cognitive” forms of “regulatory capture” in which “public institutions lack sufficient resources to generate knowledge and defer to industry-generated expertise” (Campbell-Verduyn 2017) details how knowledge asymmetries lead to the “intellectual shackling of the regulators” reliant on “firms’ models and private knowledge” (Dorn 2012; e.g., Baker 2010; Young 2012). IPE research in this camp further illustrates how the international communication and sharing of knowledge can mitigate the asymmetries involved with “insider knowledge” and enhance the prevalence of “common knowledge” in ways that “reduce transaction costs, thereby facilitating cooperation” (Allan 2018; e.g., Culpepper 2008; Pagliari 2012). Learning and the emulation of policy choices perceived to be successful are highlighted in studies of policy diffusion and transfer (Simmons and Elkins 2004), as well as literatures on global experimentalist governance (Brassett et al. 2012; Campbell-Verduyn and Porter 2014; Posner 2014).

The extent to which knowledge asymmetries—as with other inequalities—are less easily overcome is also stressed in this first camp of IPE scholarship. Central features what Susan Strange (1988/2015) called the “knowledge structure,”, such as power asymmetries, are regarded as persistent and intrinsically difficult to overcome. Strange famously identified “what knowledge is discovered, how it is stored, and who communicates it by what means to whom and on what terms” as one of the four key structures of the international political economy besides finance, production, and security. What she relatedly referred to as “structural power,” or the “power to decide how things shall be done, the power to shape frameworks within which states relate to each other, relate to people, or relate to corporate enterprises” is illustrated across IPE studies of a range of actors and processes. For instance, the “best practices” and international standards developed for the mobilization of knowledge in and across policy areas ranging from international education and “human capital” development to financial modeling and macroprudential governance have been chronicled (Baker 2013, 2018; Bernstein and van der Ven 2017).

A key contribution of this camp of IPE has been to identify the structural power exercised within relatively small groups of expert “knowledge actors.” These “knowledge intermediaries” (French and Leyshon 2004) have been identified as organizations ranging from multinational firms (MNCs) like the “Big Four” professional services firms, to smaller think tanks (Hernando et al. 2018) and foundations (Parmar 2002; Huo and Parmar 2020; Wong et al. 2017). Transnational professionals and knowledge workers (Hartman 2015) staffing these organizations, as well as operating in and across overlapping “knowledge networks” or “innovation networks” are also brought out. IPE studies reveal how these individuals and organizations coalesce in formal gatherings of the World Economic Forum (Elias 2013), the Bank of International Settlements (Westermann 2018), and at international organizations including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Mahon and McBride 2009), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) (May 2006) and the World Bank, which famously sought to become a global “knowledge bank” in the late 1990s (Broad 2006; Stone 2003, 2013; Kramarz and Momani 2013; Robertson 2009).

The degrees of convergence and consensus, as well as divergence and difference, amongst knowledge actors is debated across literatures on epistemic communities (Haas 2016) and professional networks (Seabrooke and Henriksen 2017). On the one hand, individual and organizational inclusion in knowledge networks is regarded as stemming from shared “commitment to certain journals, conferences or other gatherings and organs that help bestow scholarly, ideological and scientific credibility” (Stone 2010), including those
provided by colleges and universities (Mittelman 2016). Technocratic, knowledge-based expert networks have also been identified as “exclusionary male clubs” (Young and Scherrer 2010, 11). On the other hand, asymmetries and degrees of epistemic arbitrage amongst these actors are identified in attempts to gain influence in expert groups, such as those involved in the post-2008 reform of global financial governance (Seabrooke 2014; Seabrooke and Tsingou 2014).

Despite a focus on non-state actors, state power features prominently in IPE investigations of what Mayer (2012) labels “global knowledge power politics.” Countries are revealed to be competing in attempts to “outsmart” rival states in the “global political knowledge economy” by, for example, promoting the “employability”5 of their domestic labor forces (Moore 2012). States are also shown to be key enablers of “Intellectual Monopoly Capitalism” (Durand and Millberg 2020) in which public, or at least more commonly held forms of knowledge, become commodified and privately held through intellectual property rights (IPRs), patents, and trademarks (May 2010; May and Sell 2005; Muzaka 2016; Rikap 2019; Zeller 2008). These legal objects are shown to have not “naturally” arisen as key components of the “global knowledge economy,” but to have gained prominence due to interstate arrangements, like “free” trade agreements negotiated since the US demanded Trade–Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) as part of the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Çoban 2004). Here again asymmetries are identified in the relative power to generate, control, communicate, and act on knowledge between hegemonic states (Schwartz 2019), leading MNCs, and the many less dominant creators and producers who must acquire at times expensive permissions to overcome such “monopolization of knowledge” (Haggart 2017b, 173).

How “knowledge hegemony” can be contested and challenged is further investigated in this initial “camp” of IPE scholarship. Brazil, Russia, India, and China (the so-called “BRIC” countries) are characterized as “emerging knowledge powers” (Muzaka 2018; Mayer 2012) who seek to fill a void left as “infrastructural power” of the US over IPRs is regarded as eroding (Weiss and Thurbon 2018). These state-led contestations are linked to the activities of international governmental organizations in channeling knowledge to developing states (Hannah et al. 2017), as well as the activities of academics in facilitating knowledge transmission and contributing to growing “scepticism concerning the social and economic impacts of intellectual property” (Morin 2014). The generation of international solidarity, as well as forms of “shared knowledge” is emphasized across emancipatory studies stressing how, paraphrasing Robert Cox, “all knowledge is for someone and for something” (Farrands and Worth 2005). For instance, critical, particularly Gramscian, studies identify and promote a number of alternatives to “neo–liberal” knowledge structures (Gill 1994). Despite their varying theoretical approaches, however, these studies tend to share positivist epistemological foundations that stand in stark contrast to studies of knowledge in a second camp of IPE scholarship.
A long-recognized limit to positivist IPE is its understanding of knowledge and information interchangeability (May 1996), or at least regarding knowledge as simply a “more–complex forms of information” (Haggart 2019, 12). This conceptualization is typically linked to Susan Strange’s attempt to develop objective analyses of identifiable knowledge/information against the more Foucaultian understandings of diffused knowledge/power (de Goede 2003, 87–9; e.g., Strange 1990). Power is of course not absent from the Strangean knowledge structure. Yet, as Langley (2009) explains, “for Strange, knowledge (largely as informational resource) is power that is wielded in a constraining manner by rational agents.” The stance taken by Strange in the wider “unresolved debates over the nature of knowledge itself” (May 1996, 182–4) advanced important implicit assumptions still held across much of positivist IPE, including that the generation of more knowledge/information is likely to spread reason and possibilities for achieving enlightenment. Yet, post-positivist IPE emphasizes that the (post-)modern “information age” has been marked less by deficits than gluts of knowledge/information. Contemporary challenges including making sense of over–abundant information and deciphering which information to draw knowledge from. Individual and organizational information management is typically guided by combinations of human emotions and non-human information communication technologies (ICTs) (Andrejevic 2013; Winter 2019). Investigating the complexities of the human mind, as well as that of proprietary ICTs, presents key methodological challenges for positivist research seeking to explain increasingly complex information processing processes. To navigate such challenges, some positivist IPE studies have built on economist Herbert Simon’s (1997) notion of “bounded rationality” to take “into account the cognitive limitations of the decision maker, limitations of both knowledge and computational capacity” (e.g., Odell 2002; Poulsen 2015). However, what has been a largely separate camp of IPE research investigates affect, anxiety, resilience, trauma, and other human emotions (Brassett 2018; Brassett and Vaughan-Williams 2012; Da Costa 2016; Lerner 2019; Widmaier 2010). It is these latter studies that shift from knowledge/information toward power/knowledge. In contrast to the attempt to generate generalizable, robust, and objective knowledge about knowledge, post-positivist IPE research stresses the situatedness and contingency of knowledge production, control, and dissemination. Jettisoned here are positivist assumptions that “a deeper truth is to be discovered, or that underneath ideology the real motivating forces of actors can be detected” (de Goede 2006). Instead, researching knowledge/power is itself regarded as an “inevitably political” (Peterson 2004) activity, one that is fundamentally dependent on the subjectivities of observers, which include IPE scholars. “The norms and standards in the GPE that many hold to be true, essential and universal” are repositioned here as resulting from “historical, culturally specific and highly regulatory discourses of governance” (Griffin 2010, 86–7). Stress is put on how forms of knowledge become accepted, and positioned as acceptable, at specific times and in certain places. In doing so, the goal is to reveal possibilities for alternative claims about power/knowledge that are more sensitive to a world that is, as leading technologists have come to recognize, simply “too big to know” (Weinberger 2011). 6 While attentive to asymmetries in knowledge production, control, and dissemination, research in this second “camp” of IPE tends to stress the limits of “knowledge about knowledge.” Emphasis remains on “the exclusionary production of knowledge about economy” (Langley 2003, 2) by many of the same “knowledge actors” examined across positivist IPE research. For instance, Amoore (2013) investigates attempts by a variety of multinational consulting and technology firms, including Accenture, McKinsey & Company, PwC, and IBM “to incorporate the very unknowability and profound uncertainty of the future into imminent decisions” (Amoore 2013). Building on the recognition of German sociologist Niklas Luhmann
that a “lack of authoritative knowledge, has become an all–pervasive aspect of our lives,” Best (2012, 88) and others (Amoore and Langley 2004; Holmes 2013) foreground ignorance and ambiguity in addressing the cui bono questions of how what is not known can still benefit some over others.

Research in the post-positivist “camp” of IPE also reveals the particularistic nature and effects of acceptable forms of knowledge through a focus on objects and techniques that are typically couched in “scientificness.” For instance, the risk models relied upon throughout global finance are shown to “channel credit access and they create and distribute financial resources” (de Goede 2003, 95). The specific logics and rationalities underpinning such technical objects and further “devices of classification” (Langley 2009) are linked to the “knowability” of formal and informal activities across the international political economy. These, and forms of indirect and diffused knowledge management, are shown to render life amenable to calculation in manners enabling “control–at–a–distance” through governmentality. Building on, and contributing to, a wider “global governmentalities” literature (Larner and Williams 2004), post-positivist IPE studies identify the practices of auditing, credit rating, insurance, micro-lending, and international efforts to promote financial literacy as all promoting the dissemination of individual “responsibilization” (Deuchars 2017; Paudyn 2014; Lobo–Guerrero 2016; Aitken 2010; Guzzini and Neumann 2012; Santos 2017). Liberal governmentality, regarded as cultivating “in its individual subjects a certain responsibility for prudence and self-government” (Best 2007), is revealed to be promoted in the conduct of actors ranging from banks (Amicelle 2011) and countries (Joseph 2010; Vestergaard 2009; Glenn 2019) to diasporas (Kunz 2011).

Emphasis on the idiosyncracies, provincialness, and governance effects of scientific knowledges all contribute to attempts in post-positivist IPE research at opening spaces for alternative forms of knowledge. The centrality of “EuroAmerican techno–scientific knowledge” is contrasted with marginalized “decolonial epistemic perspectives” to foreground “the perspectives, theories and experiences of the colonized as the epistemological viewpoint from where to generate knowledge about the world” (Mantz 2019). Similarly, the biases of “masculine bodies, experience, interests, and knowledge claims” (Peterson 2004, 31) are juxtaposed with gendered “knowledge of social reproduction and informal activities” (Peterson 2004, 37). The “colonial, racist and sexist roots” of “Eurocentric and techno–scientific epistemic monocultures” characterizing academic disciplines, IPE included, are contrasted with ongoing efforts to promote the “pluriversalization of knowledges” by better incorporating “multiple geographical and cultural positions” (Tilley 2016 quoted in Mantz 2019). Throughout these and other studies, cultures are explicitly foregrounded in scrutiny of the expansion of, as well as contingency and alternatives to, “market cultures” (Aitken 2007; Best and Paterson 2010; Jessop et al 2014; New Political Economy 22 (4)).

**Wisdom lost in (siloed) knowledge**

Previous assessments of the generation, control, and dissemination of knowledge in IPE have identified an “insulation or estrangement” between positivist and post–positivist studies (Langley 2009). Overlaps between camps of course exist, such as between post–positivist and critical studies promoting alternative knowledges and insisting that “all knowledge claims imply an orientation towards the matter studied” (Farrands and Owen 2005). Despite some commonalities, however, epistemological differences split IPE knowledge about knowledge into one camp examining asymmetries in the production, control, and dissemination of knowledge/information; and a post–positivist “camp” scrutinizing asymmetries in forms of power/knowledge.

Is this gap necessarily bad? Might the benefits arising from such “silo–ization” outweigh the pathologies of the “silo effect” (Tett 2015)? In a very literal and quite specific sense, generating “knowledge about knowledge” along these “parallel tracks” is not necessarily problematic for IPE. The “constructive non-engagement” identified by the editors of this handbook does not appear to undermine the generation of
Knowledge governance debates and deeper “knowledge about knowledge” in each camp. Yet, in a broader and less specific sense, siloed research undermines the potential for generating “knowledge about knowledge” across camps—particularly in ways that enable IPE to more widely impart wisdom. In seeking to achieve what Wullweber (2019) has called a “fuller analytical grasp of the pressing politico-economic issues of our time,” IPE scholars can strive to better communication and interactions across “islands of knowledge” (Odell 2010). Interactions between camps should strive less to resolve epistemological divides than to provide avenues for more widely disseminating IPE “knowledge about knowledge” in ways that can equally enhance the broader impact of the field, a continual concern of IPE scholars in the wake of the 2007–2008 global financial crisis (Drezner and McNamara 2013; Mosley and Singer 2009; Green and Hay 2015). Insights generated in, yet communicated across and beyond, siloed IPE research on knowledge can be more productively harnessed in addressing the numerous “real-world” problems and crises facing the international political economy. At the very least, IPE might benefit from the types of debates in International Relations (IR) over whether and how to engage with “plural global audiences” (Michelsen 2018) in making “scholarship a more public enterprise” (Mayer and Smith 2019; see New Perspectives forum 2019, 2). The next section identifies three possible paths for improving communication and interactions across these camps in, paraphrasing T. S. Eliot, attempting to locate the wisdom that has become lost in siloed knowledge about knowledge.

Avenues between Siloed Knowledge about Knowledge

Three IPE literatures can be identified as providing productive paths for enhancing communication and interactions between siloed IPE “knowledge about knowledge.” Growing stress on (1) knowledge governance, (2) historicity, and (3) socio-material applications of knowledge each provide useful avenues for not only better circulating knowledge about knowledge amongst IPE scholars, but also more widely to policymakers, students, and the public at large. Before elaborating on each of these paths, a trio of caveats are necessary. First, these paths are neither entirely new, nor unexplored. Rather they are best understood as “greater emerging emphases” in which multiple lanes of research form broader avenues that can enable productive interactions across research silos. Second, these avenues are not manners of resolving gaps between positivist and post-positivist epistemologies. Recognizing the perils of any such “bridge-building” exercise, the multi-laned avenues identified here should be seen as productive paths for communication rather than for fundamentally overcoming or “resolving” epistemological divides. Third, more such broad, multi-laned avenues undoubtedly exist. These can and should be productively traveled upon in ways that can communicate knowledge about knowledge not only within, but also beyond, IPE.

Knowledge governance

Knowledge about knowledge in both IPE camps foregrounds governance. As noted, cognitive or intellectual forms of “regulatory capture” along with interstate agreements like TRIPS are scrutinized in one camp while governmentality and disciplinary logics of “control—at—a—distance” tend to be stressed in the other camp. Overlaps exist of course, such as with a shared emphasis on “knowledge—actors” and efforts to develop alternatives to existing “common sense” and hegemonic knowledges (e.g., Stephen 2011). Yet research in each camp tends infrequently to interact directly in addressing questions of governance. One pathway for enhancing interactions between this siloed knowledge about knowledge is found in efforts to revise Strange’s knowledge structure that foreground “knowledge governance.” Blayne Haggart (2017a) and colleagues have explicitly sought to overcome the “siloing of research and the stifling of dialogue across disciplinary borders” by integrating into Strange’s insights a focus on knowledge/power and post—positivist assumptions that “all knowledge is necessarily partial” and best regarded as “historical constructs” (Haggart et al. 2019, 4). In doing so, Strange’s knowledge structure, Haggart (2017b, 164) argues, can be re-
Historicity of knowledges centered as the “primary vector for the exercise of power in the global political economy.” Instead of being “just one factor among many” (Haggart 2017b, 164)—one of four structures identified by Strange in her analysis of the international political economy—the knowledge structure becomes regarded as the “primary source of power” (Haggart 2017a, 182). By side-stepping Strange’s positivist commitments and positioning “language and knowledge as necessarily prior to the other structures” (Haggart 2017a, 186) yet linking “regulatory aspects” and the “knowledge-production processes” characterizing the knowledge structure into conversation, this research path offers a useful avenue for communicating between siloed “knowledge about knowledge” in IPE. Stress on largely informal knowledge-construction processes in finance, production, and security can be explicitly connected with the more formal “regulatory aspects” of the knowledge structure, defined by Haggart (2017a, 187) as “rules governing the creation, dissemination, and use of knowledge.” Here, wider conversations across silos can be generated by foregrounding how “knowledge production, possession, control, and legitimization are primarily regulated by Intellectual Property law (regulation), which is deeply rooted in Enlightenment notions of the individual creator, private property, and capitalism (knowledge construction)” (Haggart 2017a, 191).

The work of Haggart et al. (2019) exemplifies how political scientists, criminologists, communication, and legal as well as science and technology studies scholars all can be brought into productive conversation in foregrounding knowledge governance across economies of privacy, censorship, and the “weaponization” of copyright (e.g., Halbert 2019). In addition to these interdisciplinary conversations, intra-disciplinary communication across “various knowledge-governance silos” (Haggart 2017a, 182) can productively travel along this path. Various studies at the intersection of knowledge, finance, and security, for example, can interact across epistemological silos by foregrounding knowledge governance (e.g., Farrell and Newman 2019; Heng and McDonagh 2008; Seabrooke and Nilsson 2015; Wesseling et al. 2012). The stress on informal knowledge-construction processes in more post-positivist studies could complement the focus on knowledge-regulation aspects of the knowledge structure. Similarly, knowledge governance could enhance interactions between research on various forms of “regulatory capture” and research exploring the “knowledge practices” and “communities of practice” that include regulators, professionals, and everyday actors (e.g., Broome et al 2018; Rethel 2020). Further attempts to revise Strange’s “knowledge structure” can usefully bridge divides in communicating “knowledge about knowledge” within and beyond IPE, for instance by situating linkages across informal knowledge practices and more formalized knowledge regulation in the theories, concepts, and data through which IPE itself generates knowledge.

Historicity of knowledges

Positivist IPE studies drawing on historical institutionalism, historical materialism, and other well-established approaches usefully trace the origins of the knowledges underpinning accounting standards, IPRs, and pharmaceutical regulation (Review of International Political Economy 17 (4); Blyth et al. 2016; May 2007). Meanwhile, post-positivist IPE studies undertake genealogies of political, economic, financial, and professional knowledges that respond to calls to “look to history as an anchor from which to construct knowledge of the international political economy” (Langley 2003 e.g., Aitken 2006; de Goede 2001; Campbell-Verduyn 2017). Both camps generate deep insights into the historical development and applications of knowledge over time. Yet they have tended only infrequently to interact directly. Communication and engagement across this divide can be enhanced through a second growing research emphasis investigating the histories of the very theories, concepts, and data through which IPE produces knowledge.

Actualized histories, or historicities, of the theories and concepts through which IPE produces knowledge are a first lane in this second broad avenue for fostering interactions between “knowledge about knowledge.” Historical studies of African, Asian, and Latin American thinkers, for example, highlight “how relevant non-Western thought traditions can be reclaimed and cultivated for contemporary IPE” (Mantz...
These and wider efforts to “globalize IPE” (Phillips 2005) and enhance “global conversations in IPE” (Mantz 2019; e.g., Review of IPE 20 (6)). Similarly, actualized histories of capitalism (Anievas and Nisancioglu 2015) and the very notion of markets (Watson 2018), concepts like comparative advantage (Watson 2017a), crisis (Samman 2015) and homo economicus (Watson 2017b) all provide opportunities for engagements between post-positivist research destabilizing accepted knowledge and positivist studies seeking to re-construct foundations of knowledge in far more nuanced and ultimately more historically “accurate” ways (see Hobson 2013a, 2013b). Investigating the colonial, Eurocentric, and gendered legacies of taken-for-granted theories and concepts offers avenues for debates over whether to jettison or attempt to “correct” the foundations of knowledge that positivist studies seek to build.

A second lane in the broader avenue formed around a growing emphasis on historicity involves studies that trace the actualized histories of the data IPE scholarship typically relies upon in producing knowledge. A growing set of studies of indexes, indicators, metrics, and rankings respond to a specific post-positivist critique that IPE fails to “enquire how financial knowledge, including statistics and indices, has been historically developed” (de Goede 2003). These studies are sensitive to the post-positivist scrutiny of “scientificness” in numerical knowledge and the governance effects related practices like benchmarking enable (Broome and Quirk 2015). Yet in largely side-stepping epistemological debates for a stress on the empirical limits and “growing defects” (Linsi and Mugge 2019) of “bad science” (Broome et al. 2018) produced over time, historicities of indicators and indexes offer a path for interactions across largely siloed IPE studies of indicators (e.g., Kelly and Simmons 2015; International Organization 73 (3)). Here debates across camps could generate and disseminate insights into how the “lure” (Alenda-Demoutiez and Mügge 2020) of imperfect economic statistics often remain “good enough” for the pragmatic purposes of bureaucratic decision-making (Rocha de Siqueira 2017).

In their book Savage Economics, Blaney and Inayatullah (2010, 9) stress how the ability to (re-) produce “history—knowledge of times now past—is a privileged vantage point from which to assess human capabilities for future progress.” IPE scholars can best make use of such privilege in better communicating “knowledge about knowledge” not only across the intra-disciplinary epistemological divide, but also more widely to policymakers, students, and the broader public. Recent historicities of IPE theories, concepts, and data sources offer a second multi-laned avenue for enhancing communication and interactions in and beyond IPE. A third multi-laned avenue for interactions across epistemological divides lies in growing emphases on socio-material applications of knowledges.
Socio-material applications of knowledges

Long a mere “passing interest” (Palan 1997, 18) in IPE, technology has received growing emphasis since the turn of the millennium. Positivist studies seek to develop generalized knowledge on whether technology—applications of expert knowledges—influence cooperation or competition amongst state and non-state actors, market competitiveness, as well as business cycles (e.g., Kim and Urpelainen 2014; Reinsberg 2019; Rosenau and Singh 2002). Post-positivist IPE investigations meanwhile seek to reveal the messiness, complexity, and unintended consequences of technological change, which include increasingly dystopian forms of control—at—a—distance (e.g., Amoore 2013; Gabor and Brooks 2017; Flyverbom et al. 2017; Kremers and Brassett 2017; Youngs 2007). While each broadly foregrounds asymmetries in the production, distribution, and benefits of material applications of forms of knowledge, studies in both “camps” only infrequently interact, as highlighted in emerging studies of labor and consumption across digital platforms (Culpepper and Thelen 2019; Langley and Leyshon 2017; Shibata 2020). The lack of communication and interaction can once again be chalked up to irreconcilable epistemological differences. In developing various cycles, waves, and other typologies, positivist studies seek generalization of knowledge and future predictions about the causal roles of technologies, as well as the trajectories of technological change (Weiss 2005; see, e.g., Akaev and Pantin 2014). Post-positivists eschew any attempt to separate technology as a “variable” amongst many, regarding it as fundamentally intertwined with the international political economy. Such exogenous and endogenous understandings of technology underpin a gap in IPE “knowledge about (socio—material applications of) knowledge.”

This third broad avenue for communicating and interacting across camps is exemplified in IPE studies investigating material bundlings of social relations. What can broadly be described as a “socio—material” stress across IPE scholarship on technology is far from new. The international regimes literature long considered the social responses of states to technological changes (Ruggie 1975; Cowhey 1990). Critical IPE also long regarded technology “as being shaped by social forces at least as much as it shapes these forces” (Cox 1987, 21), as well as being an “intersubjective social phenomenon” (Talalay et al. 1997). Post-structural studies have further examined how social practices are entangled with technologies of risk calculation, such as financial models (de Goede 2003; Vestergaard 2009). Yet what Mayer et al. (2014) characterize as “international techno—political economy” builds on the more recent “material turn” and “new materialisms” developed across the social sciences to (re)consider the multi-fold implications of non—human objects in enabling and disabling human activities. Often drawing on insights from Science and Technology Studies (STS), where stress is typically on the often unexpected and fragile ways in which “technology is society made durable” (Latour), a range of IPE studies have sought to “open technological black boxes” (MacKenzie 2005; e.g., Campbell—Verduyn and Goguen 2019; Hansen and Porter 2017; Wullweber 2016). Examining socio—material applications of knowledge enables these studies to “zoom in at the technological micro—practices and macro—processes that perform and stabilize ‘the world economy’” (Mayer et al. 2014). In doing so they are able to offer “certain levels of granularity” (Germain 2019) in analysis that usefully connect key microstructures—computer codes and protocols—with macrostructures—finance, production, and security—affected by socio—material applications of knowledge across an increasingly digitized international political economy (Berry 2012; DeNardis 2009; Hester and Williams 2020; Moore and Joyce 2020).

IPE studies tracing the evolution of technology and the international political economy as an intertwined set of phenomena enable interactions with positivist efforts to identify and advance generalizable claims and make predictions about the past, present, and future of the international political economy. For instance, foregrounding “infrastructures” as the “socio—technical systems enabling basic, often backgrounded functions are assembled out of multiple old and new devices” (Bernards and Campbell—Verduyn 2019), provides paths for discussing the empowering effects of the “turn to technology” (Bernards 2019). Here positivist and post—positivist studies can cut across epistemological divides and situate applications of Big
Data, blockchains, psychometrics, and other information technologies within an informal “habit of authority” (Singh 2019), as well as local networks of debt, reciprocity, and mediating gatekeepers (Rodima-Taylor and Grimes 2019) that underpin intertwined payment, credit, and remittances infrastructures. Studies stressing the agency of both human and non-human agents offer similarly useful paths for engagement across siloed IPE research on knowledge. Kiggins (2018, 229) for instance investigates “state, non-state, and inanimate material objects” as “consequential agents” in seeking to “avoid a crisis of explanatory power brought on by the advent of artificial intelligence-enhanced machines.” Research on applications of blockchain technologies in global finance echoes such arguments, contending that forms of human agency and “techno-agency” need to be considered in parallel in order to understand patterns of authority across emerging areas of transnational activity enabled by rapid technological change (Campbell-Verduyn 2019).

Interactions across epistemological divides in IPE studies of knowledge can be enhanced through recent studies foregrounding socio-material applications of knowledge. Communication amongst IPE scholars through this and the other multi-lane avenues outlined in this section can, in turn, provide the basis for better transmitting “knowledge about knowledge” more widely to policymakers, students, and the general public.

**Conclusion: Knowledge, Wisdom, Imagination**

This chapter confirmed the existence of a gap in IPE production of “knowledge about knowledge” across what has been regarded as irreconcilable epistemologies of positivist and post-positivist scholarship. Several of the debates and “knowledge about knowledge” generated in each “camp,” as well as avenues for enhancing communication across these “islands of knowledge” were identified. Emphasis on knowledge governance, historicities of knowledge, and socio-material applications of knowledge were characterized as multi-laned avenues for sharing knowledge about knowledge across scholarly debates, as well as for communicating IPE insights more widely in ways that can enhance the practical impact of the field on everyday and regulatory decisions alike. Emerging transnational efforts to regulate applications of machine learning, for example, could benefit from both historicized and present knowledge of socio-material applications of expert knowledge and knowledge governance. IPE insights into the potential and the limits of “knowledge solutions” advanced for overcoming the social and material impacts of the digital economy, such as enhancing disclosure and transparency, could also usefully inform growing public and regulatory debates (e.g., Best 2005; Hauffler 2010). Imparting wisdom from “knowledge about knowledge” can be enhanced through the paths described in this chapter, as well as through the intersections of the broad multi-laned avenues identified. Historically situated knowledge about “black” and “white” lists in global governance provide one example of intersections between the avenues allowing for communicating and sharing across epistemological divides (e.g., Eggenberger 2018; Environment and Planning D 34 (1); Morse 2019; Sharman 2009). Research tracing fragilities developed across information infrastructures in global finance also points to how qualitative early warning signal indicators might be developed as the type of “regulatory aspects” of knowledge-based governance (Campbell-Verduyn, Goguen, and Porter 2019).

The wisdom imparted by IPE “knowledge about knowledge” may also be enhanced in better linking research and pedagogy. Decolonizing IPE curricula can inspire students and scholars alike to investigate novel research questions and provide “fresh analyses of ‘old’ IPE problems” (Mantz 2019). Indigenous knowledges that provide practical ways of attending to the various crises that IPE investigates, from currency instabilities and inequalities, to the ecological limits facing accumulation and growth regimes are being explored in IR (Tickner 2015) and other social sciences (Alcantara and Dick 2017; Tekobbe and McKnight 2016) and beginning to receive attention in IPE (Katz-Rosene et al. 2021). Other innovative pedagogical initiatives, such as the “International Political Economy of Everyday Life” website, point to
how research foregrounding key objects and practices underpinning the international political economy can inform novel self-directed knowledge transmission.

Communicating “knowledge about knowledge” across epistemological divides can respond to the call of Review of International Political Economy editors for a “pragmatic IPE” focusing on “real-world developments and recognizes the complex examinations of multi-faceted phenomena demand a commitment to methodological pluralism” (Johnson et al. 2013). In actualizing this kind of impact, however, more imaginative ways of knowing and disseminating knowledge must be developed and applied. Albert Einstein (1931) famously maintained that “[i]magination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.” Imagination certainly needs to be mobilized in researching a world of increasingly privatized and secret knowledge generated by self-learning algorithms that are being continually tweaked to optimize the digital platforms at the heart of contemporary “knowledge ecosystems.” Recent efforts to develop modes of “encircling” sites of secret or classified knowledge (Bosma et al. 2019), as well as “iterative reflexive research” strategies (Montgomerie 2017), offer imaginative paths for generating such knowledge. Further mobilization of collective, interdisciplinary imagination is required for generating and disseminating knowledge about knowledge in and beyond an IPE that is both practical and pluralist.

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Notes

1. The title of this section paraphrases the title of the book What Engineers Know and How they Know It, in which Walter Vincenti (1990) argued for aerospace engineering to be understood as a knowledge-generating activity.

2. For such evaluations in IPE see Weber (2015) and in International Relations see Hamati-Ataya (2010).

3. While concurring with the gap identified by Lake (2009), I avoid the reductionism of this divide to the division between “American” and “British” IPE. While this and any label to these “sides” can be problematic, I adopt the categories of positivist and post-positivist IPE only reluctantly and in recognition, as I later elaborate, of scholarship seeking to bridge these “sides.”

4. Despite variants, positivist research generally entails three “-isms”: objectivism and the notion that neutral and impartial knowledge of the world is possible; empiricism and the belief that knowledge is accumulated through recurrent experience; and naturalism, the idea that human societies are part of the natural world and thus can be investigated following the methodologies of the natural sciences.

5. Defined as how “people are required to take a new form of subjectivity and self-awareness as well as responsibility for learning and self-education in the form of lifelong learning” (Moore 2012).

6. Importantly, post-postivist IPE typically maintains that “[p]ost-positivism is not anti-positivistic” (Wullweber 2017). Rather the focus is on how particularistic forms of knowledge become positioned as “more plausible than others. But not because they are closer to a transcendent reality, but due to the fact that these analyses resonate more than others with a certain horizon of truth” (ibid.). In other words, stress here is on how “[s]ome claims to knowledge become naturalized as ‘truths’ and as authoritative, while other claims to knowledge are not, becoming or remaining, perhaps, folklore, speculation, or superstition” (Cutler 2016).

7. In which knowledge is treated “as something ‘out there’ to be discovered, stored, and communicated or withheld” (Cutler 2016).

8. Whose repeated interactions lead to the translation of abstract knowledge claims into real world outcomes (Rethel 2020).

9. See for instance Petry et al. (2021), the special section of Global Governance 23 (1) “Powered and Disempowered by Numbers: Data Issues in Global Governance,” Review of International Studies as well as the output of the “Fickle Formulas” project at https://www.fickleformulas.org/output.