

## [CFP - Biopolitical expert - Quaderni storici - deadline May 10, 2017](#)

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Call for Papers

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Contemporary History, Government and Public Service, Health and Health Care, History of Science, Medicine, and Technology, Intellectual History

### **Biopolitical experts**

Call for papers for a monographic issue of «Quaderni storici»

Social sciences have long focused their attention on the profile and the role of experts, considering their emergence and the role they acquired into the decisional processes of national and supranational political institutions as an occasion to investigate transformations in the relationship between practices, knowledge and powers.

The expert is involved in uncertain situations, for the neutrality recognized to his own capacity to get a deeper level of truth. According to the research of social sciences, talking about experts is equivalent to discuss the process of legitimization of knowledge, starting from the relationship with the concrete experiences and the statutes of truth that define the knowledge. In these terms, the processes of selection and identification of experts appear as a complex and full social process, mobilizing different requests through which criteria and profiles of belonging and identity are replicated.

Although the presence of experts is testified in different time periods, literature has identified the Nineteenth century as a turning point, mainly for the definition of the forms of government and for the launch of the professionalization's process. In this period the use of terms as experts and expertise started to spread significantly, in regard to technical and scientific competences at the service of public administration and institutions of modern state.

The main European dictionaries ascribe to the expert's knowledge a cognitive foundation linked to a practical experience, repeated over time and derived from a knowledge which is operative, efficient and able to achieve the result. This cognitive foundation enables to make the distinction between the expert and the technician, figures that often have been considered as synonymous. Although experts have emerged in various fields (art, medicine, economy), the research has focused mainly on the technological and scientific knowledge because of its relationship with sharper and more

recognizable statutes of truth. Experts dealing with life and the living have been investigated mainly into more formalized decisional processes, as those concerning tribunals and the role of legal medicine.

Following the gradual crisis of the representative state and the growth of decisional power of supranational institutions, the recourse to experts has spread, throughout institutional or para-institutional networks, considered as the option to resolve doubts and promote decisions based on assessment considered as impartial and scientifically founded. The increased social and administrative intervention on life's spaces favored the recourse to experts coming not only from biomedical knowledge or health-related knowledge, but also to the creation of specific knowledge, as in the case of bioethics. These practices are considered part of the so-called biopolitics, an inspiring theoretical category, which, however, requires to be tested for the concreteness of various experiences of intervention on life and on specificity of different involved actors.

Considering the suggestions and the results of social sciences' research on experts and expertise, this issue of *Quaderni storici* intends to investigate genesis, paths and profiles of the subject involved in decisional processes through which institutions act on human bodies and life. Who are the life's experts involved in questions concerning life, its origin, its end? How those figures are selected? Which are the priorities guiding the selection of knowledge for the decision concerning the biological and physiological dimension of human life? What is the relationship between the nature of political decision on the issue of life and the contents analysis of the experts?

The aim of this issue is to contribute to a critical reflection on experts and their role, capable to get the variety of profiles included in the term "expert" and, at the same time, able to add elements for a better understanding of this figure whose profile maintains elusive aspects.

*Quaderni storici* asks for the submission of proposals considering different aspects of this story: characters of legitimization and selection process; privileged knowledge; disciplinary construction of bioethics and biomedicine; spaces of action and decisional roles; relationship with law and religion; relationship with national and supranational representation. The proposals (around 500 words) accompanied by a brief CV should be sent by May 10, 2017 to the editor Emmanuel Betta ([emmanuel.betta@uniroma1.it](mailto:emmanuel.betta@uniroma1.it)). The issue will be published by 2018.

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