

Economic principles and scientific practice

The case of research groups in the field of advanced materials research

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New Context of Science

During the last 20 years research governance in European countries has been transformed. Germany is a recent case for this transformation, leading to a more market oriented research governance. All Institutions of the publicly funded research system in Germany such as Universities as well as publicly funded Research Organisations are affected by this process, which is driven by "initiatives" from the political field. One can identify two main objectives of these "initiatives", one is directed at the organisation of scientific practice, where in order to achieve excellence through competition, economic principles are implemented as organisational principles following the idea of the market-form as best organisational principle. The other objective is directed at the commercialisation of research results, which should be increased in order to achieve economic growth for the society through innovation. A popular approach to characterise this transformation is the term "Economisation" (Ökonomisierung) (e.g. Schimank 2008, Weingart 2008), describing it as a process of adoption or enhancement of economic principles of action into non-economic social spheres.

Research teams have to organise their day-to-day- practice in this changed organisational context, where economic principles seem to gain influence.

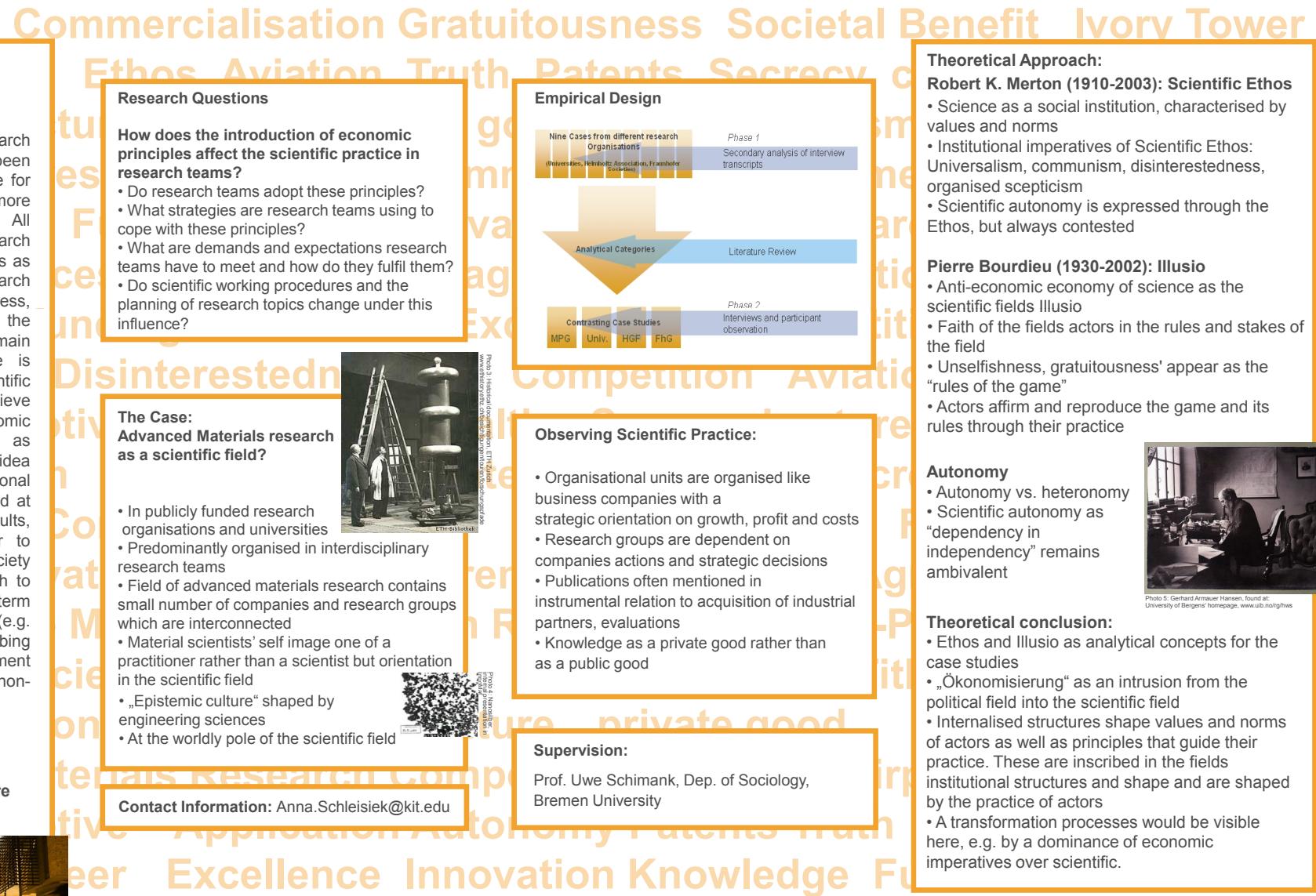


Photo 3: Peter H. Hansen, found at: University of Bergen's homepage, www.uib.no/rghws