

PANEL 3 / MONOGRAPHS

“The research boom is excellent news for humanity, which will eventually reap the benefits, and for scientific researchers. But the social sciences and humanities are not faring so well. They tend to be at a disadvantage in rankings because there are fewer soft-science or humanities journals, so hard-science papers get more citations.”

Neither the Shanghai rankings nor the Times Higher Education rankings count social sciences and humanities output in the form of books, and the rankings count only work in English. (The Economist, May, 19th, 2018, p. 47)

In many fields within the humanities and social sciences, large monographs continue to determine the international scholarly discourse. Monographs are the result of many years of scholarly research, usually exceeding the third party funding periods. The vast majority of researchers consider it as very important to publish monographs. Monographs still constitute the main criteria for academic careers. The importance of monographs in scholarly discourse and as the primary medium of communication is due to several factors:

- 1) The relevance of the topic: Monographs allow addressing fields of major interests for politics, education and the public, for instance on interactions between societies, nations and continents, the development and significance of the rule of law and democracy, demographic developments and migrations, standards of living and diseases, questions of food security and energy provision, manmade climate change, the internal and external security of states and regions, religion and secularisation, forms of culture and their transformation, the development of “mental maps” and positive and negative stereotypes.
- 2) The sourced based interpretation: monographs allow to take a broad approach and to explore the interdisciplinary nature of many subjects. They are based on the entirety of the available sources – including the international state of research. They give access to a wide range of manifold sources and allow to trace the documentary basis of the presented research results.
- 3) A monograph should serve as orientation and a reference point for a long period of time. It should be borne in mind that the reception of monographs requires several years of continuous absorption in order to enter the scholarly and public discourse. In the ideal case scenario, it then belongs to the canon of university education. Furthermore, monographs published in Open Access could at least in certain fields provide a quicker and wider dissemination of research results and so increase their uptake.