

TOK Exhibition: Knowledge and Politics



For this exhibition I focused on the question **“What role do experts play in influencing our consumption or acquisition of knowledge?”** and I decided to focus my exhibition only on [REDACTED] examples found within Geneva.

1. The first photo is of the four main statues of the cities' famous reformation wall depicting the four main proponents of Calvinism, that is William Farel, John Calvin, Theodore Beza and John Knox. While this may seem to be an object more useful to understand knowledge and religion, in the context of Geneva's history it is also quite important to the politics of the canton. Ignoring the fact that the wall has statues of other statesmen such as Oliver Cromwell and William of Orange, even the main statues were important political thinkers, such as Theodore Beza who was incredibly famous for his opposition to absolute monarchy as a form of government. As such, the reason this object belongs in the exhibition is because it shows how we celebrate those experts that seem to expand our political knowledge (most notably by building 5-meter-tall statues of them in this case). It shows the significant role of the individual expert in political processes and in shaping how we think about politics.
2. The second photo is a picture of the Chancellerie d'État, or the seat of all the canton's government affairs. This is where knowledge in politics is applied to institute change for whatever reason. Parts of the issue of knowledge generation in the field of politics could be drawn from the Chancellerie d'État, due to the necessity of further knowledge for progress to be made in assemblies like those that take place there. Switzerland is split into 26 cantons each with its own local government officials. In Geneva the local government consists of an executive council of five magistrates. However the canton also allows for direct votes on many decisions, which is why there are so many referendum votes. This shows that in Geneva it is not just experts who are important in politics and in how we acquire knowledge about politics. The normal people are seen as important too, and they have power to veto or change things passed by the political leaders.
3. Finally, the last photo is a picture of a political advertisement in a Geneva city street. It is in my exhibition because it is an example of how those more closely involved in politics attempt to impart knowledge or convince the rest of the population to share their view. This shows in politics there is a lot of focus on people who are experts or who are really committed to a certain political position trying to persuade other people to agree with them. This advert is something that any modern-day person would be involved with more directly than they would with the first photo. Because it is far more relevant to the present day, the audience of this exhibition might find it more compelling than the aged statues as they would be closer to them. This shows that experts can sometimes seem disconnected or distant from people, whereas this advert is more accessible to the audience and might be more likely to influence them.