

Abstracts

Shalini Randeria

Legal plurality and overlapping sovereignties: Globalisation and the ‘cunning state’ of india.

The article addresses the issues of legal plurality, overlapping sovereignties, the consequent fragmentation of state action and the increasing unaccountability of international financial and trade organizations, transnational corporations as well as of states and NGOs which characterize the new architecture of global governance. It will be argued that the widely prevalent diagnosis of the irrelevance of the state and an erosion of its sovereignty overlooks the continued importance of the state as its laws and policies play a key role in transposing neo-liberal agendas to the national and local levels. The article introduces the idea of the cunning state in an attempt to shift the focus of study from a consideration of state (in)capacity measured against a Western ideal to a delineation of state strategies. It is argued that whereas weak states lack the capacity to protect the interests of vulnerable citizens, cunning states show strength or weakness depending on the domestic interests at stake. The paper focuses on the dynamic of legal politics against impoverishment and dispossession caused by the new global designs of intellectual property protection, biodiversity conservation and privatisation of the commons in India. The case studies point to the emergence of intertwined structures of rule, overlapping sovereignties and complex processes of legal transnationalisation that have reconfigured the relations between law, state, and territoriality. They also reveal pragmatic issue-based alliances between civil society and the state. Finally, they point to the need to ground the study of globalisation in a fine-grained ethnography, linking the little to the large and to explore the specificity of various trajectories of legal plurality and its transnationalisation in particular contexts and cases.

Jörg Rössel

Omnivores in the Cinema? Distinction through cultural variety in Germany

In the description of cultural change in postindustrial societies sociologists refer increasingly to the thesis of the development of cultural omnivores, first introduced by Richard A. Peterson in the United States. The central idea of the concept is, that an exclusive orientation towards high-brow culture has lost its social function, e. g. in the educational system or on the labor market, and is increasingly replaced by a preference for cultural variety, that in addition to classical culture also includes elements of popular culture. In this article, firstly, three different interpretations of this phenomenon are introduced, secondly, the previous empirical evidence concerning the transferability of this concept to Germany is critically discussed and thirdly, a new empirical analyses on the basis of an audience survey of moviegoers is presented. Although there are theoretical reasons to expect strong support for the omnivore thesis in the field of movies, the actual results provide only weak evidence for the applicability of the concept in Germany.

Thomas Gautschi und Dominik Hangartner

Size Does Matter. Body Height, Human Capital, and Income

Econometrical efforts to predict employees' wages earned on the labor market are normally based on a Mincer wage function. Consequently, human capital, such as education and job experience, are assumed to positively influence productivity and thus an employee's wage. Apparently, labor markets do not only pay its employees according to their human capital but seem to additionally pay a wage premium for a non-productivity effective characteristic, namely a person's body height. Analyses using the Swiss Health Survey 2002 (Swiss Federal Statistics Office) show that the »return to body height« for male Swiss employees is about 6% and approximately 5% for female Swiss employees. Similar results on the influence of body height on income have been demonstrated for the United States of America, and with certain reservation, for Germany. Attempts to explain this – at least from the point of view of human capital theory – irrationality of the labor market emphasize that body height is a signal of power, respect, and perseverance and is therefore paid accordingly. Even though there is lack of empirical evidence for a causal relation between body height and power (i.e., perseverance and respect) beyond the animal kingdom, the Swiss labor market nevertheless seems to believe in such a correlation.

Martin Schmeiser

Sociological Approaches to the Analysis of Professions, Professionalization, and Professional Action

In the last decades, a vibrant and ramified field of research in sociology of professions has been established in Europe as well as in the US. This becomes evident in an ever growing publication activity which does not easily lend itself to systematization. The problem becomes especially acute in teaching »sociology of professions.« To be sure, German speaking sociology of professions has, in the past years, contributed to a systematization of the field. However, these efforts are not particularly helpful when it comes to teaching purposes since, falling short of developing a genuine terminology, a genuine set of research questions and designs, they eventually present sociology of professions as a sheer duplicate of generic sociological theories. The article aims at systematizing perspectives genuine to the sociology of professions. It is argued that three such perspectives can be identified: The trait approach, the structural approach, and the power approach.