

Abstracts

Manfred Stock

The Expansion of Higher Education and the Academisation of Employment

The paper addresses the relationship between the expansion of higher education and the employment of graduates in Germany. Since World War II the numbers of higher education graduates have dramatically increased. In spite of ambitions to deduce and channel these numbers according to the various qualification demands of the labor market, the expansion is not the result of political steering. Rather, the employment system absorbs higher education graduates to a large extend independent of concrete qualification demands. In general, these graduates obtain placements appropriate to their education level. By discussing the historical developments and by applying an explanation from organizational sociology the paper argues that employment positions are created in adaptation to the expansion of higher education.

Andreas Folkers

Politics of life beyond itself. Towards an ecological biosociology with Deleuze and Guattari

The article contributes to current attempts in the social sciences to (re)establish life as a model for and an object of inquiry. It discusses the ecological thought in the works of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari to arrive at a concept of life that allows describing social processes in vital terms but avoids the essentialist and reductionist pitfalls of older biosociological approaches. For Deleuze and Guattari life is not encapsulated in a single living entity and not reducible to “life itself”, but is a fleeting process enveloped in a complex environment and distributed among territorial assemblages. Such a theory of life is well equipped to recognize the hybridization of biological and technological, social and natural entities and processes. The article reconstructs this theory of life and discusses its purchase for current debates in the social sciences. An ecological concept of life provides critical conceptual resources to address the analytical and ethical shortcomings of current debates on biopolitics that all too often merely focus on the “politics of life itself”. Instead, an ecological understanding of life challenges researchers to pay more attention to the politics of life beyond itself, phenomena of environmentality and symbiopolitics. Additionally, the peculiar notion of ecology discussed in this paper as complexly folded relations of habitats aligns network theories with theories of worldliness.

Stefan Bär and Sebastian Starystach

An Institutional Analysis Approach to Working Conditions in Hospital Nursing

In the context of an increasing orientation on performance and competition within the health care system, the worsening working conditions of the hospital staff are regularly explained as an effect of a proceeding economization. In contrast, this article presents an institutional approach, according to which the hospital is not only (1) a service provider, and therefore governed by economical imperatives, but also (2) a total institution, (3) a bureaucracy, and

furthermore (4) shaped by the profession of medicine. The heuristic value of this approach is presented on the basis of a cross-sectional survey on working conditions of nurses at a major hospital. The data-analysis shows that economical orientations within the hospital shape the working conditions of nurses by increasing already institutionalized pathologic forms of work. The influence of the economy on the hospital can be specified empirically if its relation to other institutionalized logics is theorized.

Katharina Hörstermann

What is the social consensus regarding the financial support of unemployed? A focus group-based reconstruction of the social discussion about a minimum income level

Based on focus group discussions this study analyses the extent of financial support that members of society are willing to grant unemployed people. The participants of the discussions defined a minimum income by specifying basic goods and services and thus calculated the costs of covering a minimum of acceptable standard of living. The comparison of the estimated minimum income with the level of the security benefit for unemployed people in Germany (Regelbedarfe des Arbeitslosengeld II) suggests the support of an increase in public transfers. The estimated needs of a single person exceed the public benefits by almost 30%, that of children of different ages by 24% up to 52%. In particular, the discussants criticised the reduction of the spendings on alcohol and tobacco, recreation activities, education and cars.

Oliver Berli

Disciplined interpretations. A praxeology of joint data analysis in qualitative research

The joint analysis of data in interpretation groups is well established in qualitative research. Many researchers argue that it allows for securing as well as improving the quality of empirical results. Moreover, interpretation groups are regarded as being useful for introducing young researchers to the practices of data analysis. The article begins with a discussion of current literature on this work arrangement and analyses how interpretation groups jointly work on the quality of interpretations. More specifically, I will focus on negotiating readings as well as methodological questions. Against this background, interpretation groups can be regarded as productive settings which allow opening up data, preparing empirically grounded interpretations and also help to immunise these interpretations against possible criticism.