

Abstracts

Michael Schillmeier und Wiebke Pohler

Cosmo-political Events. Towards the Topology of SARS

During its outbreak, the highly contagious and life-threatening viral disease SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) gained acute social relevance. Part of its disturbing effects in the initial phase were due to the fact that its causative agent, its possibilities of diagnosis as well as its future evolution remained utterly unknown. Moreover, SARS was considered a global threat, since it happened to migrate along international air traffic, and the risk was high that the trans-regionally spread disease turned into a pandemic. In effect, the boundary-transgressing migration of SARS can be considered a cosmo-political event, threatening human life as well as questioning and altering societal orderings. Drawing on the ›spatial turn‹ within social sciences, the paper reconstructs the topology – i.e. the socio-spatial re-configurations – of the migration of SARS. The paper argues that the phenomenon ›SARS‹ is inadequately understood if approached with social methodologies that gain explanatory power by distinguishing the realm of ›the social‹ from the non-human and non-social. Rather, as the paper stresses, with the movement of SARS ›the social‹ is constantly contested and changed by the enactment of material connectivity between the non-human and the non-social. Our methodological proposal treats the topology of social complexity of SARS as an ›actor-network‹. The concept of ›actor-network‹ outlines a multiple and processual understanding of space, which allows to conceive of socially relevant agency as the outcome of human and non-human relations.

Gabriele Faßauer und Frank Schirmer

New Performance Management and Anomie – A conceptual Analysis of present Developments in Organizations

The article aims to develop a critical perspective on modern systems of performance management in organizations. It emphasizes and analyses the normative context of performance management. It is argued that modern performance management potentially causes anomic phenomena in organizations. Here, anomie gets defined as weakness of the newly given norms of performing. This weakness results from discrepancies in the normative and factual design of the performance management systems. Referring to this, the article differentiates between four types of discrepancies and discusses relating reactions by organizational members. In general, it is supposed that new systems of performance management bear the danger to destabilize organizational premises of efficient performing and threaten the normative stability of organizations in the long run.

Tilman Reitz und Susanne Draheim

The Rationality of Higher Education Reform. Perspectives on a Post-Autonomous Knowledge Regime

Based on the diagnosis that the German version of the current higher education reform in Europe is about to fail its own goals (more mobility, less bureaucracy ...), the article asks what may be latent functions of the reform process. A first account is summing up political objectives which are not suited for public representation and unintended structural effects which may stabilise: orientation by standardisation, a mid-term reduction of higher education costs

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combined with increased student numbers, a tightened social selection. But since all of these effects are only issues of prognosis at the moment, a second account is asking about reform tendencies which prove destructive of an older, now increasingly dysfunctional model of higher education. Accordingly, the second answer is that the current reform breaks with an academic life form characterised by the virtually anomic reflection of possible world views and subjectivities (as it has been installed in mass scale during the 1970s), turning towards the imperative that education and research permanently have to prove their normality and necessity. Thus the principles of the new knowledge regime are: applicability, control through communication, and marketing.

Rolf Becker und Patricia Tremel

Consequences of preschool education on educational opportunities of migrants' children

With respect to significant disadvantages of migrants' children in the German educational system, the question arises which arrangements are appropriate to guarantee equity of educational attainment. In our empirical study we utilize longitudinal data of the German Socioeconomic Panel in order to get an answer whether preschool education and training could help to improve the unfavorable educational chances of migrants. The results about the effects of preschool and kindergarten are ambivalent for the period between 1984 and 2003. Generally, the education chances of migrants' children will be improved by early childhood education. However, their educational chances become similar to the native children's one without any preschool experience.