

Abstracts

Martin Schröder

In for a Penny, in for a Pound. How Initial Moral Justifications Restrain Companies in the Pursuit of their Economic Interests

Do people behave in accordance with moral norms because they want to or because they are forced to do so? This question is ultimately irresolvable, as the “real” motivations of individuals are hidden from scientific analysis. This article carves out the mechanism of “argumentative coercion” that circumvents this problem. The basic conception is that company managements publicly justify their actions by referring to widely accepted values and social norms. This might reflect real moral scruple, or they might only do so pro forma, to satisfy social demands. Regardless of this, such legitimations develop a momentum of their own. Justifications might simply have been made to immunize self-interested actions against a critical public. Nonetheless, they can be used to hold actors accountable to their initial promises. Thus, as our first case study tries to illustrate, the question of whether people act morally because they want to do so or because they are made to act morally loses some of its pertinence. Our second case study shows that argumentative coercion also exists because costs are incurred upon actors if these do not justify their actions with widely accepted social norms. This mechanism of “argumentative coercion” helps to explain how trade unions and works councils influence companies over which they cannot exert much formal power.

Walter Bartl

Demographisation of Local Politics? ‚Population‘ as a Frame of Local Self-Government

In mass media, demographically shrinking communes have come to be regarded as a social problem. But how exactly does local population decline cause communal problems and what can be done about them? Based on expert interviews in East Germany, West Germany, and Poland it can be shown that different institutional contexts set demographic changes with a specific relevance for municipal decision making. The lower population-dependency of municipal revenues and expansive political programs in West Germany and Poland resolve the often-assumed positive relationship between population decline and municipal decision-making. However in East Germany such a relationship seems to be the case. Nevertheless, it cannot be explained with reference to the population discourse. Rather, it appears more plausible to emphasize path dependent institutional conditions after the reunification with West Germany (high participation rates in institutional child care and an broken down economy) which made expansive solutions rather impossible.

Christian Baier

Governing Science – A Discourse Analytic Study of the Science Council’s Research Rating

The article presents findings from a discourse analysis of the German science council’s research rating based on textual material published by the science council. The research rating is interpreted as a practice of governing science that aims at a systematic restructuring of scientist’s and scientific organization’s self-assessment and thereby engenders a new form of scientific

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self-regulation. In this process, new criteria of scientific quality are introduced, e.g. efficiency, differentiation, internationality and applicability of standardized measurement. The technology of the panopticon and procedures of normalization are employed in this new practice of government. While recent analyses indicate trends toward “academic capitalism” and the “entrepreneurial university”, two complementary processes are emphasized here: Practices of calculation, accounting and economization can only be applied if science is subjected to normalization; universities can only act according to entrepreneurial rationality if they are endowed with agent-like qualities.

Axel Franzen and Katrin Botzen

Associations and the Wealth of Regions in Germany

This contribution investigates the relation between the number of associations in Germany’s 413 regions and several indicators of their economic and social wealth. As indicators of wealth we use the regions’ gross domestic product per capita, the unemployment rate, the participation in the last national election, and crime rates. The analyses are based on our own data collection of the number of associations registered at the 398 local courts. Furthermore, we use the official statistical data about regions’ population density, age structure, and educational enrollment. Overall, we counted 554’394 registered associations which are heterogeneously spread over the country. Our statistical analyses control for spatial dependencies. We find a strong correlation between the number of associations within regions and their GDP. However, there was no connection found between number of associations and unemployment rates, electoral participation, or crime rates. Our analyses use for the first time rather accurate and reliable information about the number of associations in a region.