

Abstracts

Stefan Liebig and Jürgen Schupp

Effort vs. need-based justice? On a normative conflict of modern welfare states and its relevance for the evaluation of job income

The article analyzes the conflict of social justice norms within modern welfare states – the guarantee of just compensation for individual efforts and the provision of support based on individual need – in order to answer the fundamental question of why citizens accept the financial burden of welfare states. We ask if modern welfare states' governance problems at the macrosocial level lead to perceptions of injustice at the individual level. Based on representative data from a theory-driven supplemental survey to the longitudinal German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) study, we investigate how employed persons evaluate the fairness of their own earnings and the effects of welfare state interventions. An important finding is the high percentage of employed persons in Germany who considered their income to be fair. The article shows – both empirically and theoretically – that the normative conflict between effort and need based concepts of justice posited in the literature at the macrosocial level does not exist at the individual level. An important empirical result is that the subjective perception of being paid fairly is not decreased by a higher tax burden on individual income. Furthermore, high-income earners by no means perceive their income as unjust. A further important result of the analysis is the finding that government transfers do not have a moderating effect on perceived injustice of personal income; openly recognizable transfer payments may even be perceived as discriminatory.

Jan Fuhse

Is There a Phenomenological Network Theory? Story, Network and Identity

The term ›phenomenological network theory‹ designates a body of sociological work from the past 20 years which focuses on the interplay of symbolic forms and social network structure. The approach centers on Harrison White and his students and followers. The essay analyzes whether the approach fits the requirements of a ›school‹ of sociological theory in the sense of an ›invisible college‹. Phenomenological Network Theory is thus applied to itself by describing the interplay of meaning and network structure in the network of its authors. The following questions are examined: Are the authors of this approach closely interlinked? Is there a clear core in the network or a differentiation into various subgroups? Is there a common collective identity? How does the approach emerge from the combination of various theoretical strands and in opposition to other strands in sociology? These questions are examined drawing on the various methods typical of the research associated with Phenomenological Network Theory. The essay comprises a narrative account of the history of the approach (in the context of other sociological theories), a formal analysis of the network of authors, and a qualitative analysis of interviews with the main authors.

Between Flexibility and Security - Current Developments of Values in the World of Work

Against the background of changes in the organization of work and the advance of flexible forms of employment which are accompanied by increasing employment instability, the status quo of value orientations at the workplace is analysed in this paper. In this vein, the current discussion in the literature is introduced and subsequently confronted with recent empirical data. It becomes apparent that the theory of increasing normative subjectivation cannot be upheld in its stringent form. Due to increasing risks or uncertainty, the attention of a large number of employees is primarily focused on the security of their job, as well as on additional qualifications to secure their employability. Based on employees' high security interest and depending on their individual employment opportunities and risks, however, the picture of the value orientations, in which material and immaterial orientations of self-determination and self-realization at work are important, remains heterogeneous and complex.

Helmut Martens

Industrial Sociology - End of Debate doesn't Mean End of Crisis

This article links to M.R. Lepsius' statement about sociology being an »institutionalised permanent crisis«. Referring to his suggestion it is argued here that the debate about the crisis of industrial sociology requires to be taken seriously even though the profession has just declared its end. Hinting at that the successful institutionalisation of industrial sociology and its capacity to adjust its subject area – as H. Minssen has just recently done – does not suffice to declare the debate void. This debate about the critical state of industrial sociology draws attention to the state of the discipline as a whole – especially sociology's alarmingly small resonance in public discourse. This lack of impact is partly due to the complacency and narrowed down focus of many in the profession, who do not see the need for multidisciplinary approaches and do not value the benefits of problem – and application – oriented research. An alternative approach requires sociologists to develop a form of dual professionalism: researchers in the field of industrial sociology must try to systematically link their work to sociology's broader academic discourse. They also need to develop a second form of professionalism, i.e. one that improves their capacity to provide expert advice of a practical relevance to actors in different social fields. Only such an orientation acknowledges the centrality of individual's agency to societal change. This orientation is required in order to improve the state of the profession, which has been criticized by M.R. Lepsius for its self-content, its routine approaches and its dual incapacity to use established, robust concepts and develop new ones. Sociology seems to dither between a belief in »academic freedom« and arbitrariness. In a times of far reaching and drastic societal change sociology needs to systematically relate to socio-political discourse in order to fulfil the function it has been ascribed to by H. Plessner: to be a ferment of criticism and a tool for freedom in an open society.