

Conference: The order (s) of work

Venue:
Kulturwissenschaftliches
Institut Essen (KWI)
Goethestraße 31
D-45128 Essen

Date: 07– 09/11/18

CfP deadline: 15/04/18
Feedback: end of June 2018

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Foundation:
Hans-Böckler-Stiftung

Call for papers

The order (s) of work.

Fictions and De/Constructions of an ordered and ordering world of work

Interdisciplinary conference

7-9 November 2018 at Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut Essen (KWI)

Work is attributed to bringing order to human existence on an individual and social level: It is considered to be a source of meaning and structure, a guarantor of social participation and an indicator of social status.

Talking about this ability of work to bring about order and structure gives the impression that it is a stable phenomenon. In fact, work is subject to constant flux, which is re-negotiated and shaped time and again by social actors and institutions, but also by society as a whole and the (mass) media. Work and its orders are culturally and historically highly variable constructs. For several decades now, the erosion of so-called “standard employment contracts” has been the subject of complaints and discussions about the removal of borders and the flexibilization of work. Referring to these debates, the DGB (Federation of German Trade Unions) called for a “new order of work” in 2013. This should, among other things, reinforce the legal protection of employees (e. g. legal measures against stress in the workplace) as well as a better compatibility of work and family life. Thereby, the hope is articulated for a system that will assure against the contingencies and challenges of the neoliberal present and provide orientation in an environment that is increasingly perceived as unmanageable. One symptomatic sign of this striving for orientation is also the German debate on Arbeit 4.0 – discussion about change processes of work after the industrial revolution in digital age – which is currently being driven by politics and business and in which current and future scenarios of the world of work and society are discussed.

In the classical works by Max Weber, Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault, among others, but also by contemporary scholars such as Regina Becker-Schmidt and Saskia Sassen, the concept of order plays a central role in their analysis of changing working environments in various ways. The social order is discussed, for example, as a phenomenon that regulates social life through norms and institutions and is oriented towards social action. An order can be legitimate if it is recognized as a binding regulating structure. However, order is also expressed in recognized and critically questioned forms of power and authority. Against this background, the negotiation, enforcement and establishment of new orders are accompanied by new demarcations and exclusions.

This is where the interdisciplinary conference addresses questions that deal with already established orders, as well as with ongoing processes of order in work on

the micro and macro level. Possible questions could be: What are the different conceptions of work? What is the relationship between work and order? Have discourses about work changed? How were and are old and new normalities (restored) in society as a whole (in the sense of the development of new/different social phenomena up to no longer debated "matter of course")? What constructions of (hierarchical) work order are visible in political debates? What forms of resistance are used in activist movements and artistic works to react to old and new orders in the working society?

These and other questions provide numerous points of reference for thinking and discussing the connections between work and order. Interested parties are invited to submit abstracts for 20-minute impulse lectures.

Possible topics are (among others):

- Work, health and normality(-discourses)
- The order of emotions (e.g. the increasing mobilization of affects in the working world, emotion management in the New Economy)
- Protest forms that are directed against existing orders of work (e. g. Occupy Wall Street movement, Unconditional Basic Income)
- Counter models to neoliberal orders of work in art and literature
- Discoursification or depiction of the topos of the order in media-specific contexts
- Political narratives of order (s) of work
- Regulation of workflows and behavior
- Architecture of work (e. g. design of open-plan offices)

We kindly ask you to submit proposals for presentations in the form of an abstract of max. 500 words in German or English to Ordnungen-der-Arbeit@uni-due.de. The submission deadline is April 15, 2018. The publication of the conference proceedings is planned. We are attempting to reimburse travel and accommodation expenses for speakers, if needed. There is no conference registration fee.