



ZMO-Kolloquium

“Agency” Reconsidered: Between Life Worlds and World Order

Thursday, 28 October 2010, 6 pm

Strategy versus structure? Corporate labour utilisation, the regulation of reproduction and the (mis-)interpretation of „agency“ in Indo-German software programming

Lecture by PD Dr. Nicole Mayer-Ahuja

Venue

Zentrum Moderner Orient
Kirchweg 33

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Are strategies of individual and collective actors determined by social structures – or are structures simply coagulated social practices with no life of their own? Debates about this question run high in the social sciences. In the talk, it will be argued that strategy and structure are too closely interrelated to be separated analytically. In a first step, a theoretical approach to societal fields of force will be introduced which might bridge the gap between “structuralist” and “agency” concepts. In a second step, these theoretical considerations will be applied to interrelations between strategy and structure which shape the utilisation of labour power in Indo-German software-programming. Drawing upon empirical research on one German producer of standard software (and its Indian subsidiary) and one Indian provider of software services (and its German subsidiary), the focus will be directed towards “politics of attrition” as practised by corporations and employees. It will be argued that corporate as well as individual employment strategies are closely interrelated with the economic, political and social regulation of (re)producing labour power in Germany and India respectively. Hence it is impossible to identify causal relationships: “strategy follows structure” (Hall/Soskice 2001, 15) – but at the same time, structure follows strategy.

PD Dr. Nicole Mayer-Ahuja (born 1973) has studied History and Political Sciences at Heidelberg University and University College London. Since 2002, she is working as a labour sociologist at SOFI (Sociological Research Institute, University of Goettingen). Her research focuses on the interrelations between work organisation and the (re)production of labour power, labour market and social policy, both in an historical and transnational perspective. Currently, she holds a fellowship at the International Research Centre “Work and Life-course in Global History” at Humboldt University, Berlin.

GEFÖRDERT VOM



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