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BOOK REVIEWS

Organizational Transformation and Scientific Change: The Impact of Institutional Restructuring on Universities and Intellectual Innovation (Research in the Sociology of Organizations, Volume 42), edited by: Richard Whitley and Jochen Gläser. Bingley: Emerald, 2014, pp. 406.

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During recent years, an increasing number of academics have focused on analyzing formal changes in the governance of higher education and scientific research systems in developed Western societies. These changes concern research funding systems, state-university relationships, university management, and research commercialization. Against this background, in line with their previous cooperation, editors Whitley and Gläser (Whitley & Gläser 2007; Whitley et al. 2010) in their 2014 volume propose going one step further to analyze how these changes are affecting universities as strategic actors, the conduct and content of research, and how the latter contributes to organizational change of universities and research organizations. Labeling their approach as “bringing work back in” (Barley & Kunda 2001) to the organizational analysis, the main idea of the volume is to link the theory of or-

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ganizational sociology with the sociology of science. Twelve contributions are divided between two parts of the volume.

The first part of the book addresses the question of organizational transformations: how they are shaped by and how they shape the nature of scientific work. The opening chapter by editors compares universities with organizational forms of enterprises and concludes that the former differs from the latter through delegation of authority over the conduct of research and teaching granted to academics. Subsequently, Musselin formulates an original theoretical approach on the example of French universities by connecting the literature of institutionalism and organizational theory with the concept of professional norms. She shows how the utilization of external peer-reviews as management tools could legitimate university leaders' formal power, which they gained due to the introduction of managerial norms. The following three contributions concentrate on actor analysis in organizational contexts. Edler et al. outline tension between organizational interests of universities as strategic actors and the individual logic of the European Research Council. Laudel and Wayer take the perspective of authority relations and investigate how increasing State pressure for Dutch universities to build their profiles affects scientific communities and generates shifts in scientific disciplines. Finally, Barrier, while linking the concepts of institutional myths, organizational structures and practices, shows through the example of a merger of two French research units how symbolic responses to institutional pressures may have consequences on research practices through the agency of actors who strategically use their empirical interests. The second part analyses the impact of changing authority relations in the public sciences on conditions supporting the development of different scientific innovations. Empirical examples concern four innovations corresponding to the main scientific branches: the Bose-Einstein condensates, the evolutionary developmental biology,

the large-scale assessments of student performance, and the computerized corpus linguistics. Innovations in these areas are analyzed on the example of Dutch, German, Swiss, Swedish, and Spanish research organizations and universities. While the first six contributions mobilize these empirical examples in different configurations for studying causal links between authority relationships and intellectual innovation, the concluding chapter proposes the overall framework for analyzing changes. Building on previous analysis, he proposes two variables: the level of ‘protected space’ and the ‘flexibility’ of dominant intellectual standards for explaining how changing authority relationships in research government affect the development of different intellectual innovations.

By aiming an articulation of different research objects and literature, notably organizational change and scientific practices, the book provides theoretical innovation in the sociology of organizations by showing the importance of the work of actors. Second, it offers an original approach for better understanding ongoing changes in academic systems that should be analyzed, not only through their formal changes, but also in the context of scientific work. Chapters cover a wide range of methodological approaches, inductive case studies, or more deductive large-N analysis and theoretical considerations. Nevertheless, a more transversal analysis of this rich variety of contributions has been left to the reader. The limit of the book lies in its weak operationalization of some important contextual factors described as important. While the academic context was integrated to analysis by most authors, others, such as political, economic, or international global context and their impacts on discussed developments remained subsidiary. These factors are addressed in some recent works relying on a more sociological approach of public policy analysis (Benninghoff et al. 2017). It now remains to take another step towards even more active interdisciplinary considerations.

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