

The State of Governmentality. Current Issues and Future Challenges

(International Workshop, Leipzig, September 14-15, 2007)

The publication of *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* in 1991 marked the beginning of a growing interest in the notion of governmentality in the social and political sciences. In the following years, »governmentality« became a key term that inspired empirical analyses in different subject areas and academic disciplines. The so-called studies of governmentality offered quite a different perspective on state theory and political analysis: They went beyond traditional accounts structured by the opposition between state and civil society, public and private spheres, freedom and constraint by focusing on the interplay between processes of subjectivation and power mechanisms, political rationalities and governmental technologies.

However, the concept of governmentality also engendered serious criticism in recent years which may point to some limitations and shortcomings in this theoretical perspective. 16 years after the publication of *The Foucault Effect* the workshop shall provide the opportunity to discuss the theoretical and empirical achievements, future perspectives and persisting problems of an analytics of government. It takes up three major themes that encountered discussions and also critical attention in recent years.

1. Beyond the nation state: Sovereignty, bio-politics and trans-nationalisation

The role of repression and violence in governmental practices is mostly underestimated. In this context, this section seeks to reconsider the notion of sovereign power, often presented as an »archaic« form of power, and also its relation to bio-politics as a form of power licensing even violent acts in the name of protecting the people. Further, it is the territorial sovereign state that serves as the implicit or explicit point of reference, whereas political strategies and tactics exercised in the name of security seem to go beyond the scope of national law and according concepts defining the modern nation state. How should transformations of state power and the changing role of law, for example, in the context of security policies and humanitarian interventions be theoretically addressed? How are we to analyse the political role of those Non-Governmental organisations and inter-, supra- and transnational organizations or networks rarely being an object of consideration in governmentality literature?

2. Biological citizenship and the government of life

The two central Foucauldian notions of government and of bio-politics gave rise to separate lines of reception. As a consequence, studies of governmentality often exclude the question of how the government of individuals and populations interacts with biological categories and concepts of life and death, health and disease, normality and pathology. This section focuses on convergences between the questions of embodiment, concepts of nature and life on the one hand and an analytics of government on the other. Is it possible to analyse bio-politics as an »art of government«? How do biological constructions of gender and race relate to conceptions of citizenship? Is there a biological basis for notions of national identity? How are we to conceive the »vital« existence of the citizens within the political rationalities of state agencies? In which sense do biological identities give rise to forms of political articulation and engagement?

3. The economy of government

Foucault took up the formation of a »political economy« as starting point for his considerations of liberal practices of government, an issue that studies of governmentality accommodated in their analyses of present neo-liberalist regimes. They nevertheless rather neglected the question of how to relate current transformations in governmental rationalities and technologies to changes in the capitalist economy. This section seeks to examine the differences and parallels between contemporary accounts of »the« economy and endeavours of »decentring the economy« (William Walters) put forward in the governmentality literature.

Structure and aim of the workshop

Venue: University of Leipzig, Dept. of Political Sciences, September 14-15, 2007.

The international workshop provides a forum for the discussion of the current state of governmentality and the prospects of an analytics of government in a critical exchange of scholars from Germany and abroad. .

Three speakers per section will be invited for a paper presentation, followed by a commentary and a short reply by the author. To leave sufficient room for discussion,

the papers will be circulated prior to the workshop. The number of participants will be restricted to 25. A publication of the papers is planned.

Deadline for paper submission: June 30, 2007.

Invited Speakers:

Panel 1: Mitchell Dean (Sydney), William Walters (Ottawa), Wolfgang Fach (Leipzig)

Panel 2: Herbert Gottweis (Wien), Didier Fassin (Paris), Petra Gehring (Darmstadt)

Panel 3: Peter Miller (London), Urs Stäheli (Basel), Stephan Lessenich (Jena)

Workshop language is English.

Organizers:

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The workshop is funded by the Research Initiative “Cultural Theory and Theory of the political Imaginary” at the University of Konstanz.