

The Dismantling of Unemployment? The Circulation of Scientific Knowledge and Social Policies in Germany, France and the OECD 1965–82

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A. CONTEXT

- My research seeks to understand changing politico-scientific activities and administrative practice that (de-)construct unemployment as a social and geographical category.
- It examines the circulation of scientific knowledge within three different institutional spaces between the mid-1960s when in Germany and France modern labour market research was institutionalised and 1982.

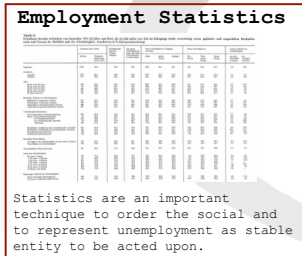
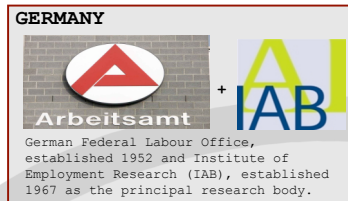


To regard unemployment as a category reveals the competing ways in which it is defined as a social problem operative for political and administrative action.

B. OBJECTIVES

- To explain the history and geography of welfare states as the co-production of scientific knowledge making and administrative practices.
- To understand administrative and scientific attempts to address unemployment as a social category in an era of transition from 'stable' and national welfare states to crisis-ridden and transnational welfare regimes.
- To focus on the interaction between the 'sciences of the state', welfare administrations and the OECD as scientific authority and sponsor of social and economic knowledges.

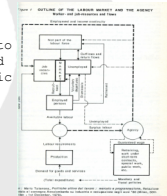
NATIONAL / TRANSNATIONAL CIRCULATION OF KNOWLEDGE



UNEMPLOYMENT
dismantled

Charts and Figures

Models help to structure and prepare public decisions.



Scientific Reports



Reports are powerful instruments to produce coherent and prescriptive knowledge as a basis for public action.

TRANSNATIONAL



Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, inter-governmental organisation that influences member states mainly through surveys and other bodies of knowledge, re-established 1961.

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C. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

- Using discourse theory and the geographies of knowledge allow me to trace how knowledge circulates through space and time beyond institutional frames.

- Historical Sociologists, such as R. Salais and B. Zimmermann regard unemployment not as a mere reflection of a pre-existing social reality but as a practical category and a statistical representation that allows/obstructs public action.

D. METHODS

- Discourse analysis is suitable for analysing institutional arrangements and internal developments of archived knowledges.



Archives in Paris and Koblenz house the social knowledge in form of discursive material.

E. IMPLICATIONS

- To regard the contemporary crisis in Western Welfare states as fundamentally a crisis of established social representations of which unemployment is a very important one.
- To stress the circulation of researchers, objects, ideas and practices making the (re-) constitution of unemployment part of an interrelated history of France and Germany with a view on the transnational level (OECD).

- To challenge dominant economic and statistical interpretations that usually regard such categories and corresponding economic laws as stable through space and time.