

SOZIOLOGIE MAGAZIN

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#1/2015
Sociology in
practice

Sociology in practice: How does (empirical) social research change today's society?

Sociology has two main goals: to describe social phenomena and to explain their causes. Together they represent the basis for social research. What does this research look like? In principle it consists of two parts: theory and practice. To exemplify social processes, structures and phenomena in both descriptive and causal ways various theories have been developed – and are still generated nowadays.

Particularly well known is Luhmann's systems theory which does not only focus on sociology itself, but also on the explanation of the whole world – it is universal. Along with further classics (for instance Weber, Parsons, Habermas or Goffman) there are new academic approaches like Beck's sociology of risks or Rosa's theory of social acceleration. However, are these theoretical analyses really enough to understand society? Other social researchers approach this problem in practical ways: via data collection, statistical analysis and the development of new study designs to adapt to the effects of a dynamic society. What would criminology be without criminal statistics? What would the analysis of social structure be without the Human Development Index?

One thing is clear: In sociology, theory and practice are interdependent. But what is the function of social research and what impact does it have in this matter?

WE WANT TO KNOW: Is social research supposed to make our world a better place (in a moral, economic, political manner)? Should it be used to test existing theories? How can the relationship between classic/new approaches and data acquisition/analysis be characterized? In what way does today's social research change our lives? Are there any historical differences of its use? Do we want this research to change anything at all or should it be entirely descriptive? What significance does social research have in our society and in addition: which significance does it have in sociology?

Have you dealt with these questions in a term paper, a presentation, a research project or in your final thesis? Do you want to present your ideas in the form of an academic essay to a wider sociological audience? Send in your papers up until **1st December 2014** to:

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