

Introduction

The frontispiece shows the University of Bielefeld nearly forty years ago – a construction site. Since then, »Bielefeld« has become a trademark in sociology and history. Especially the so-called Bielefeld School is well-known for theory-driven, interdisciplinary historical research. In 2009, Bielefeld University celebrated its fortieth anniversary with several festive events like an exhibition, conferences and ceremonial acts. At that moment of taking stock, a book was published under the title »Was war Bielefeld ?« (What was Bielefeld?), followed by a recently published volume with meanwhile classical texts in social history resp. historical sociology (Hitzer & Welskopp 2010).

The anniversary as well as the foundation of the Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology (BGHS), supported by the Excellence Initiative of the German government, had been one of the reasons why the organizers of the first »Annual Seminar« of the graduate school chose to look at the state of the dialogue between the disciplines, asking if there was an »End of Messages« between history and sociology.

On the one hand, the »Annual Seminar« provided the opportunity to discuss current research in fields of research like »Semantics«, »Communication/Media«, »Knowledge«, »Social Equality«, »World Society/Transnational History« and »Ethnicity« in a truly interdisciplinary fashion. On the other hand, the »Annual Seminar« proposed a temporal perspective, inviting to review past developments of interdisciplinary research and to assess its future prospects. The review firstly revealed how entangled research into history and society had been in the work of canonical authors like Georg Simmel, Max Weber, Émile Durkheim and Norbert Elias. Speakers also reflected on their own work at the interface between sociology and history and offered their estimations on the current state of the interdisciplinary field, suggesting that it resembled far more a busy construction site as depicted on our journal's cover than a

cable from a telephone receiver apparently leading nowhere, which had been chosen as the poster for the »Annual Seminar«. The future prospect brings us back to the frontispiece. In the last weeks the first delves of spade had been done and the first construction works for the new building for the Department for History and Soziology, unified under one umbrella, begann.

The first issue of *InterDisciplines* has taken up the questions and discussions of the »Annual Seminar«. It also takes a historical perspective on the relationship between history and sociology (or the social sciences). The first two contributions start with a short look back before evaluating the current situation and pointing to future prospects. Thomas Welskopp states that recently the two disciplines have shown a renewed interest in each other. The article argues that sociology may profit from history's self-reflective turn during its clash with post-modernism. History's profession to an enlightened constructivism and its insistence both on the temporality of all social practices and on the historicity of all concepts could spark a new consciousness within sociology in regard to its theoretical and methodological foundations. History, in turn, can learn from sociology in terms of the multiple patterns of change, which are discussed there. Although the range of »sociologies« which will be able and willing to cooperate with history may be narrow, there are some approaches that do share important assumptions with history about the inner workings of organizations, the nature of human actors, and development over time. Their interests seem to converge in the general question of how to appropriately conceptualize and explain social dynamics and change.

Jürgen Kocka has the impression that, in contrast to preceding decades, the distance between history and the social sciences has widened in the last quarter of the 20th century. In recent times, however, new opportunities and approaches at cooperation between economic history and economics, between history and the social sciences have emerged. The author discusses these changes and shows in what ways history and the social sciences can benefit from one another.

Klaus Nathaus and Hendrik Vollmer ask for future prospects of a collaboration between historians and sociologists, a collaboration which they perform in practice in their joint article. Employing Pierre Bourdieu's concept of field, the paper distinguishes »oppositional« and »autonomous« interdisciplinarity as two modes of research between historiography and sociology. Whereas oppositional interdisciplinarity is described as a movement of challengers introducing new theories, methods and issues to their respective disciplines and thus perhaps ultimately transforming it, autonomous interdisciplinarity means a sustained positioning at the border between disciplines, requiring intensive commitment with a neighboring discipline. The article sketches the two scenarios with reference to past examples and assesses their conditions and future prospects. This exercise in mapping the field is meant as an invitation to a debate on what kind of interdisciplinarity historians and sociologists want to establish.

Hartmann Tyrell's and Stephen Mennell's paper base mainly on their lecture and the commentary given at the «Annual Seminar». As above mentioned: they look back to the past: Hartmann Tyrell's contribution deals with the history of the sciences of history and sociology. It shows how Ranke formulated one of his essential world-historical insights as definitely closing off from contemporary discourses of the social and the »social movement«. Almost one hundred years later Max Weber integrated this insight of Ranke in his early days into his sociology. Moreover, Tyrell highlights the importance of Dilthey's »studies of society and history« for a joining of history and sociology. Essential for this was his understanding of »social differentiation«. Before and after 1900, that line of history rejected every programme and idea of social or cultural history. Also for this reason, since the 1890s sociology has developed by a clear distance to history. This is illustrated by the example of the sociologists Simmel and Durkheim. The final remark glances briefly at Max Weber's sociology, which rightly so may be called historic sociology.

In the style of Richard Sennett (2002) or Geoff Eley (2006), Stephen Mennell reflects on his own intellectual development as a historical sociologist and sociological theorist and stresses both the need for theory

in the writing of history and the necessity of avoiding the wrong – unhelpful – kind of theory. As a former student of Talcott Parsons, Menell recognized the danger posed by »the fallacy of misplaced abstractness« and the trap presented by the prestige of over-abstract concepts. According to Menell, many sociological theorists after Parsons have fallen into this trap, as have, under their influence, more empirical sociological and historical researchers. Menell recommends the processual thinking of Norbert Elias, another major figure in the history of »Bielefeld«, as more fruitful alternative.

The last part of *InterDisciplines* contains miscellanea. This first issue presents a report on a conference about discourse analysis in the history of science in Zurich in May 2010. A review on the above mentioned anthology »Was war Bielefeld« goes back in history once more, while the short introduction of the Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology could be read as »What is Bielefeld today«.

References

Eley, Geoff 2006: *A crooked line. From cultural history to the history of society*. Ann Arbor MI

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Sennett, Richard 2002: *Respect in a world of Unequality*. New York