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**Michał Mielczarek's doctoral viva: *Polityka aktywizacji w praktyce działania pola pomocowego Powiatowego Urzędu Pracy. (Auto)etnograficzne studium krytyczne przypadku (Policy of activation in the practice of Job Center's assistance field operation. (Auto)ethnographic critical case study), Faculty of Education, University of Lower Silesia, Wrocław, September 28, 2015***

The public defence of Michał Mielczarek's PhD thesis entitled: *Policy of activation in the practice of Job Center's assistance field operation. (Auto)ethnographic critical case study* took place on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2015 at the University of Lower Silesia, Faculty of Education. The dissertation was written under the supervision of prof. Bożena Wojtasik and reviewed by prof. dr hab. Krzysztof Konecki (UŁ) and dr hab. Lucyna Kopciwicz (prof. UG).

The author's research project was focused on in-depth qualitative analysis of the practical operation of Job Center's activating assistance field, which is one of the key areas (fields) for implementation of the so-called active social policy (ASP). The aim of author's research was to reveal the practical logic of these actions, carried out under the banner of massive work activation. The theoretical framework for Mielczarek's analysis was the theory of field by Pierre Bourdieu, which allowed him to interpret the assistance practices in in-depth and critical way. He came to the conclusion that these practices are primarily driven by increasing tensions between the world of capital and the world of work.

In order to achieve this overall objective, author formulated – in the spirit of Bourdieu's theory – some fundamental research problems such as:

- ▶ What is the status of Job Center's assistance field (autonomous or heteronomous), in which the policy of activation (otherwise known as ASP) is played, in

relation to the field of power (and, therefore, the field of final decisions defining this policy)?

- What is the structure of objective relations between positions (defined as their place in the distribution of power and different types of capital) taken by acting agents (individuals, groups, institutions) who compete (play) for these resources with each other in this Job Center's field?
- What generative principles of classification and division (especially the principles of perception and evaluation of activity) and practices resulting from them (mainly activation, thus an assistance in achieving disposal for being active) produce / reproduce this structure? In other words, what kinds of habitus (embodied practices, including mental structures – especially in the form of *doxa* and *illusio*), their characteristics and dispositions (forms and resources of specific capital) allow you to enter into this field, to invest in it (be in the position), to create it and reconstruct it?
- What is the meaning of activation (ability for achieving activity) and whether you can consider this disposition as a specific form of resource determining a social status, a taken position (thus, a kind of “activating capital”)?

The whole dissertation consists of three parts. In Part I., Chapter 1., author presents his own research perspective, therefore characterizes the theory of field and various assumptions, concepts and specific solutions of ontological and epistemological and methodological character.

Part II. It consists of two chapters and deals with the phenomenon of activation policy and the role played in it by Job Center. In Chapter 2., the author analyzes and describes the specificity of activation policies, considered by him – in the spirit of Bourdieu's theory – as the field of power, consisting of various subfields: economics (market economic production), cultural production (ideological) and bureaucracy (public policy). He attempts to reconstruct the genesis of the policy of activating and to illustrate its dominant discourse (referring to selected examples, including to scientific research).

Chapter 3. poses autoethnographic performance of Job Center's activating assistance field, taking into account its most important aspects and dimensions, e.g. social interaction, interpersonal power relation or time-space of activation. It is an attempt to present the acquisition process (embodying) of activated habitus and at the same time a kind of (auto)socioanalyzing author's own position within this field.

The last part (III.) consists of chapter 4., which is primarily the analysis and interpretation of stories of Job Center's activators and its clients. On this basis author tries to create an image of relational reality of Job Center's assistance field, reconstruct the practical logic of its actions, and thus capture the field's effect. The argument is conducted so as to reflect the character of practices (relationships) of the appropriateness of objective field's structures (positions) and their mirror

reflections, so the mental structures (dispositions) – and therefore habitus (structures in action). These practices are the effect of “activation game”, which the author reconstructs using such key notions to Bourdieu, as generative principles of classification and division, doxa, illusio, the game rate, symbolic violence and capital.

The dissertation was highly praised by reviewers, who emphasized its interdisciplinary character, novelty and high scientific level. Both, in the thesis, and in the course of its defence, the Michał Mielczarek showed – which was stressed by the reviewers and PhD defence committee members – a perfect mastery of the workshop methodology, knowledge of literature and original perspective on the science. Hence, Michał Mielczarek has not only been awarded of the title of Doctor of Social Sciences, but also the thesis prepared by him was awarded.