

“Discovery work” of practical action in different institutional settings

Collaboration Space GB 8/129 at the Ruhr-University Bochum, May 10-11

While the term “discovery” is frequently employed in studies of science to point to empirical findings, novel proofs or models, discovery as a wider practice has received little attention. In particular need of discussion is discovery as a matter of “discovering” novel possibilities of action, as a practical achievement, and of inventing and adapting new instruments and procedures. A further important issue is the assumption, that discovery – as an inherent process of recovering, describing, teaching, and reproducing scientists’ practices – is characteristic also for other professional fields outside the science.

Considerations like these make it reasonable to apply a wider concept of discovery and approach it in a wider empirical context, namely as “discovery work” that is site-specific for each particular locally witnessable work-site. Discovery work can thus be seen as a core component of practices and processes by different ordinary organizational achievements of everyday practical reasoning not only in scientific labs, but also in secret services, in police, in hospitals or in IT-infrastructures.

The workshop regards “discovery work” as a phenomenon and practice, which is shared across different professional fields and settings, with the focus on the main questions: what characterizes the particular local and practical organization of discovery work across different professional practices? And how does discovery work vary across their different local and practical organization? In focus of analysis will be discipline-specific work-site details as ordinary organizational achievements of practical reasoning and practical action. The analysis of special features of discovery work is a main effort and empirical frame of the workshop. Different aspects of discovery work are of interest:

1. **Knowing how to get the phenomenon out of the data:** How are decisions about the collection, management and interpretation of data made in practice? This requires attention to the ways in which participants of a professional practice decide what is data and what is to be recorded, i.e. how they frame and also constitute their discovery work. The focus is on empirical discussion of data collection, interpretation, revision, evidence and inference production within special institutional contexts.
2. **Doing discovering:** Experimenting – improvising – innovating. How is their relationship constituted for discovery work? How much is discovering both constrained by prescribed actions and produced through an experiment praxis at the same time? The aspect of discovery methods is essential for understanding how the concrete instructions, methods, tools, and structures illuminate embodied, praxiological work with data, instruments or materials.
3. **Forms and media:** Discovering is also an achievement of the locally organized work of making it observable and reportable, which is enabled and shaped by material devices and objects.

Workshop format:

The aim of the workshop is to collectively explore the concept of "discovery work." Apart from a keynote by Michael Lynch and shorter talks pointing to specificities of discovery work in different fields, we will engage collectively in empirical analysis of video footage from the GDR intelligence service Stasi.

Wednesday, 10th May

14:30-14:45	Welcome and introductory words
14:45-15:45	Keynote lecture Michael Lynch
15:45 -16:00	Coffee break
16:00-16:30	Input Olga Galanova <i>"Discovery" in Stasi everyday work</i>
16:30-17:30	Movie-evening Film „Revisor“
from 18:00	Dinner

Thursday, 11th Mai

9:00-10:00	Keynote lecture Eric Livingston
10:00-10:15	Coffee break
10:15-12:15	Marathon of short statements: <i>Controversies of discovery work</i> Jörg Potthast Philippe Sormani Michael Lynch Eric Livingston
12:15-12:30	Coffee break
12:30-13:00	Concluding discussion
13:00	End of the workshop

