

Junior Fellow at the Max Weber Centre
for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies

Visiting Researcher in World Politics and
at the Center for Research on Activity,
Development and Learning,
University of Helsinki, Finland

Feodor Lynen Research Fellowship;
Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation

Dr. Benjamin Bunk
E-mail benjamin.bunk@uni-erfurt.de

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Academic Vita

Dr. phil. Benjamin Bunk (*1981), studied educational science, besides psychology, political science and romance literature studies at the Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena (FSU) and at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, from 2002 till 2008. After starting his PhD at the doctoral school “Laboratory of Enlightenment”, he became research assistant at the chair of “History of Education and Educational Studies” (Institute on Formation and Culture, FSU) – where he finished his thesis on “Self-Formation and Social Movements. The Brazilian Landless Movement and the World Social Forum as Pedagogical Spaces” by the end of 2013 (summa cum laude). After a coordinating position at the “Centre for Teacher Training and Educational Research” (FSU), he became Junior Fellow at the “Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural- and Social Studies” at the University of Erfurt (2015), continuously giving courses in educational studies at the Universities of Gießen and Marburg.

With an “Feodor Lynen Research Fellowship” by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, he has spent the last year doing qualitative field research in Brazil, at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (Centre for Studies in Democracy), and is currently a visiting researcher at the University of Helsinki (in World Politics and at the Centre for Research on Activity, Development and Learning). Benjamin is married and has three children.

Besides doing research on social movements, Benjamin Bunk is dedicated to general questions of self-formation theory (Bildungstheorie) and socialisatory processes, as well as interested in concepts of global learning/education for sustainability, progressive education and pedagogical sociology. Besides coming from an hermeneutical tradition, he has extensive experiences in qualitative research. A regional focus in his studies is Latin America, especially Brazil (where he lived several years).

Current topic: *Formation, Biography and Movement(s)*. Processes of self-formation within the Brazilian landless movement and waste picker initiatives between personal reference and social conditions.

The project parts from the question of ‘how do individuals change within social movements’, trying to deepen theoretically and with qualitative methods (ethnography and biographical research) the understanding of social movement(s) as pedagogical spaces for self-formation

processes. It situates itself as a distinct approach within social movement research and intends to foster and broaden the understanding of social movements within educational research. The interdisciplinary composition of the project is directed towards the fundamental relation between theories of self-formation and of socialisation, through the reconstruction of self-formation processes and biographical development in movements situated in distinct regional settings. Nevertheless, it regards social movements also as a strategic research object to address general questions, like the possibility of social freedom, the local plausibility of egalitarian norms or resonance.

In this sense, the practices of social movements have to be seen as ambivalent and fluid spaces for formation processes, in which normative orientations and individual self-relations are being mediated and fostered, creating situations where world-relations are being constituted – and dissolved, or social orders where (subaltern) world-understandings are being stabilized – as well as questioned. At the same time, it needs to be considered, that movements constitute diverse pedagogical spaces, regardless of different scopes and aims, being successful or not.

Therefore, how do individual subjectivities change in social movements? More precisely, how do self- and world-relations are constituted and transformed within social movements, and to what extend is it relevant for biographical development? From a subject oriented perspective, the personal reference towards the movement differs and changes over life course, as well as the social conditions vary between movements. Due to that, processual case analyses (the case in itself) dominate methodologically. Nevertheless, while contrasting (minimal and maximal) cases within movements, different social movements and also regional settings, the project aims at a comparative perspective between movements as varying pedagogical spaces.

The research objects are the Brazilian landless movement (Movimento dos Sem Terra), and Brazilian waste picker initiatives (Movimento dos Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis) in different regions (Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul/Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais). Future research intends to use these studies in contrast to movements in Germany (or other places).

