

Framing Educational Selection: A study from Zurich, Switzerland

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In Switzerland, educational differentiation and transition occur at a time when many young people are struggling to find their identity and their place in a complex world. Especially young people with educational aspirations have to pass competitive selecting procedures, which will set the course for their educational and professional careers. Consequently, educational selection may be considered as the time-space in which youths experience "risk" in all its negative and positive facets.

Drawing on a study of educational transitions from primary education to Gymnasium in Switzerland, I discuss two aspects in detail in my paper.

First, I use the concept of assemblages in order to reflect on the different histories, logics, antagonisms and procedural routines of the selection process. Schools are understood in this context as institutional materializations that legitimize and give form to selective higher education systems.

Secondly, I concentrate on the performative quality of educational transitions involving human as well as non-human agents. Drawing on a case study of a first year-class at a Gymnasium in Zurich, I show what risk implies and does to new students, teachers and the school, respectively. What I intend to illustrate in particular are the interactions between im-/material challenges, school routines and the personal geographies of young students in this competitive environment. Finally, the benefits of conceptualizing educational transitions as assemblages and performings are contrasted to a more subject-centred perspective.

Keywords:

Educational Transitions, Young People, Risk, Actor-Network-Theory