

Summaries

Martin Heidenreich

Innovation and social security. An international comparison

The relationship between innovations and social security is crucial for the future of the knowledge society. If social security systems should prove to be an impediment to innovation this could lead to an erosion of social security systems; innovations and social security would be incompatible. Otherwise, if social security buffer the social risks of innovations and thus facilitate their implementation, then we should expect stable patterns of social security. The relative explanatory power of the incompatibility and compensation hypotheses is discussed on the basis of internationally comparable macro data for the 80s and 90s. The compensation hypothesis predicts correctly the correlation between public social security and research expenditure. The negative relationship between social security expenditure and patent applications to the European patent office partially confirms the incompatibility hypothesis. There is therefore no reason for political fatalism: Social state security in a global knowledge economy is not a locational disadvantage per se, nor is it an advantage, per se. The fate of social security probably depends on how successfully the different countries manage to walk the tightrope between lower innovation incentives and the higher preparedness to take risks.

Carsten G. Ullrich

Activating Social Policy and Individual Autonomy

Concepts of "activating social policy" enjoy increasing popularity in public and sociological discourses. The underlying assumption of all concepts of activation is that recipients as well as employees in the public service sector should participate more actively in the processes of defining and accomplishing social policy outcomes. One of the supposed advantages of activation programmes is seen in the enhancement of the individual autonomy of welfare recipients. The article critically examines how activation policies in the area of social policy will probably affect the chances of welfare recipients to enlarge their level of autonomy. It is suggested that the effects of "activating social policies" will be contradictory and that we thus should be careful in advocating activation concepts in the name of individual autonomy.

Von Herbert Kalthoff

Banking knowledge and the fabrication of markets. A case study on the Polish banking industry

The paper analyses the fabrication of creditworthiness of enterprises within the context of the introduction of Western banking instruments into the Polish banking industry. By introducing those instruments a big international bank group intends to restructure the interim financing of car dealers in Poland. On a theoretical level the paper critically reviews the perspectives of systems theory and network approaches. It argues against the system-theoretical reduction of banking processes to the binary scheme of payment/non-payment and against the abstraction from knowledge processes undertaken by network analysis. On the basis of ethnographic data the paper unfolds a sociology of knowledge perspective on banking practices with reference to the Social Studies of Finance. It shows that the banking business is constituted by practices and their media of written documentation, calculation and negotiation. The paper analyses the role of the legal framework of the state vehicle registry, the rearrangement of the actors and the financing program, the controversial negotiations within the bank group and the resistance of the local actors.

Andreas Gebesmair

Capital Returns on the Crossing of Borders.

The Relevance of Bourdieu's Theory of Capital for the Analysis of Social Inequalities

Lifestyles of different status groups can no longer be interpreted in terms of the traditional distinction between high and low culture. Among persons of the higher social strata, a cultural practice has emerged during the last decades which is characterized by the crossing of traditional aesthetic borders. Considering these changes, the present article examines the question of whether Bourdieu's theory of capital is of relevance. In the first section, possible connections to current theoretical debates are demonstrated and the potential of Bourdieu's basic assumptions regarding social action is outlined. The empirical application in the second section, however, requires the abandonment of those ideas rooted in structuralism, which regard returns on cultural capital as a consequence of distinction. Distinction is replaced by the conspicuous crossing of borders which nevertheless serves as a cultural resource in everyday interactions. In the last section, conclusions for the understanding of processes of legitimation in contemporary societies are drawn.

Henriette Engelhardt und Ben Jann

Half Speed Ahead? Work Effort, Occupational Segregation and Women's Wages in the Swiss Labor Market

In a revised version of human capital theory, Becker (1985) explains the difference in income between men and women in terms of a fundamental assumption that women's greater household responsibilities mean that they expend less effort on market work than men, even if their market human capital and working hours are the same. To date, Becker's assumption has been tested empirically only in a study by Bielby/Bielby (1988), which found no support for the assumption. Here, we replicate and extend Bielby and Bielby's study using data from the Swiss Labor Market Survey 1998. Although women, in fact, report lower levels of work effort in the bivariate comparison, the dependence of work effort on the amount of household responsibility is rather weak. Furthermore, it appears that the differences in work effort explain neither sex-specific wage differentials nor occupational segregation.