

Abstracts

Ulrich Beck

Beyond Class and Nation: Individualization and Transnationalization of Social Inequalities

Individualization theory has been understood as a way of challenging the common paradigms within the studies of social inequality. This shift also addresses how the transnationalization of social inequalities challenges and alters the given framework of institutional settings – nation state (parties), trade unions, welfare state systems and the national sociologies of social inequalities. In this essay I will test the ‘cosmopolitan perspective’ and how it relates to social inequality focusing on three cases: (1) the inequality of global risk; (2) the European dynamics of inequality; and (3) transnational inequalities, which emerge from the capacities and resources to transcend borders. Before that I will tackle the questions: What exactly constitutes individualization and to what extent is it displacing class structures?

Cornelia Koppetsch

The Market of Ideas. New Ways of Professionalization: The Case of Culture and Media Industries

Education and theoretical knowledge have become more and more important in global societies. But not all occupations will profit by this development. While the classical professions have lost legitimacy and prestige, experts in modern knowledge industries have become more and more influential also on a global scale. However, rarely these occupational groups have been object of profound research or analysis. This article reconstructs the rise of the creative people (designers and texters) in the field of advertising in Germany. It suggests that the group of creative people have developed a new type of profession. The central institution of their professional culture is the award system that selects talents and ideas. The award system functions two-folded. On one hand, it is an institution of professional self-evaluation and career selection. On the other, it legitimates insecure employment and career patterns. The creative people represent a new ideal figure of a symbol analyst addressing profitable ideas. It is an open question, if other occupational groups will approach to this ideal as global markets become more and important.

Sylvia Kämpfer

Regional Inequality in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in the Course of the EU Enlargement

The European Union strives, besides the goal of political and economic integration of member countries, for the emergence of a European society. According to the EU, this goal can only be achieved, if socio-economic differences between member countries and regions are reduced. Yet, empirical research indicates that, so far, interregional convergence has not been reached. The growing regional inequalities in the Eastern and Central European member states have proved most problematic. In these countries, the accession negotiations for

EU membership were a major factor triggering off a rapid development of regions and regional disparities. This article analyzes the development and the causes of regional disparities during the enlargement process (1998-2003) in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. As main resource for the analysis serve the regional database of EUROSTAT complemented by data from the regional statistical offices of both countries. Results show an absolute growth of economic strength in all regions. But also a strong regional polarization could be diagnosed between the capital cities Prague and Bratislava, the regions around Brno and Plzen, as well as the Krkonoše (mountains) and the Eastern Slovak regions. As causes of regional disparities, the analysis confirms only the positive influence of infrastructure and the share of employment in the service-sector.

Norman Braun

Theory in Sociology

It is argued that other disciplines and the scientifically interested public largely ignore sociological theory because of its lack of clarity, its frequent focus on descriptions and typologies, its incompatibility of various perspectives and approaches, and its neglect of empirical results. A re-orientation of sociology with respect to the concept of theory and theory formation is suggested which draws heavily on the practice of more successful disciplines. Accordingly, a theory is designated as a hypothetico-deductive system with empirical content - that is, a set of propositions within which deductive chains from assumptions to conclusions can be constructed and at least one hypothesis is subject to possible refutation by empirical data. The paper discusses this concept and its background.

Gunnar Stollberg

Informed Consent and Shared Decision Making – Modern Myths of Medicine?

The roles of the consumer using health or wellness offers, of the patient within health care systems, and of the citizen in a welfare state intersect. According to Kickbusch these roles are changing when the 'health system' is restructured. It is trivial to realise that consumers make economic decisions, and citizens make political decisions, which are decisions that aren't based on science. For the patient however it does appear trivial. Nevertheless structural changes of the health system imply the expectation that patients at least become involved in the decisions to be made. This expectation seems to mix characteristics of the medical and the political systems together. Defining society as a health society demands patients to participate and to decide in a way that they cannot meet directly, but have to become empowered for. I will introduce the concept of 'shared decision making' as a myth, as a practicable scheme offering a promise (cf. Vogd / Saake): an uncertain situation cannot directly be solved by a medical definition and intervention, but becomes less uncertain acknowledging participation.