Nina Jany

“To each according to work”? 

The social idea of merit-based distribution: A case study on Cuba

Abstract

The aim of this PhD project is to investigate the social idea of merit as a rationale for the legitimation of social inequality by means of a case study on Cuba. Research-leading questions of the case study are: How are the ideas of merit and merit-based distribution interpreted in Cuba? How do prevalent interpretations of merit affect the evaluation and worth assessment of different work activities? By integrating the case study results into a broader field of research on merit-based distribution systems, this PhD project will further analyse how and why Cuban interpretations of merit-based distribution resemble or differ from those prevalent in other countries. Owing to its special historical and socio-economic context, I argue that the Cuban case is an unusual or extreme case, which is highly interesting for the analysis of the social idea of merit. The results of the PhD project will contribute to a better understanding of cause-and-effect-chains between interpretation patterns of merit and particular characteristics of the Cuban state-led socio-economic system. This system is still, at least in part, embedded within the ideological framework of the Cuban revolution of 1959, but has also faced important socio-economic changes over the past decades. Analytic generalization will allow for the Cuban case study to be integrated in and to contribute to a broader international research field and debate on the social idea of merit underlying the distribution of social recognition, i.e. of salary and social esteem.