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“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.