

EDITORIAL

The articles in the current issue cover two areas: we have three articles on issues relating to ‘Risk, Trust, and Policy’ and four articles on aspects of ‘Class, Status, and Ethnicity’.

The first article on ‘Risk, Trust, and Policy’ is by Lotte Holm and Bente Halkier from Copenhagen and Roskilde Universities. Their article ‘EU food safety policy: Localising contested governance’ investigates central issues in food safety since the 1996 BSE crisis – the moral panic around so-called ‘mad cow disease’. They use case study evidence to investigate regulatory changes in various EU countries (Denmark, Germany, Italy, Norway, Portugal and the UK) and across the whole EU. Although governments in all countries sought to restore consumer confidence in the food production and processing industries, the particular conditions and practical mechanisms have varied. National cultural variations and differences in national food markets have shaped institutional forms of regulation, despite the existence of a European food safety policy, a convergence over the recognition of a common problem, and the increased global integration of food production.

Aytül Kasapoglu, Yonca Odabas, and Nilay Kaya of the Ankara University Department of Sociology discuss a related issue of public regulation in their article ‘The case of avian influenza in Turkey’ – a discussion highly relevant to current concerns over Swine Flu. Their main concern is with public knowledge of the risks involved and they use data from a Turkish survey to examine this. While there were significant variations by gender, education, and class, there was found to be a consistent negative correlation between the extent of knowledge and fatalistic attitudes. The authors draw conclusions for government and WHO policies on pandemic diseases.

Nikoleta Jones and Iosif Botetzagias of the Department of the Environment at the University of the Aegean with Chrisovaladis Malesios of the Department of Statistics at Athens University of Economics and Business extend this discussion by looking at the willingness of people to support expensive government regulatory and interventionist policies. Taking the case of environmental policy, they use the European Value Survey to construct a measure of social capital, which they relate to expressions of policy support. They find a general willingness to contribute financially to environmental policy initiatives, this willingness

varying positively with social capital. Those who are well embedded in social networks and develop a high level of institutional trust are the most willing to make financial sacrifices. The trust generated through social capital helps to overcome the 'free rider' problem and builds a willingness to be part of altruistic policies in the common good.

The selection of articles on 'Class, Status, and Ethnicity' begins with a study by Meltem Karadag of cultural capital and taste among high class Turks. She shows how culturally formed distinctions of consumption and education contributed to the status distinctiveness of economically powerful groups in Turkish society. Using data from the city of Gaziantep, she shows how change during the twentieth century led 'new wealth' to challenge both the power and the distinction of the 'old wealth'. With rich ethnographic observations and interview data she traces the reactions of class members to these changes.

Also taking a historical approach, Iris Wigger of Loughborough University presents a powerful study of racist discourse among Rhinelanders towards black French colonial troops during the post-war Occupation of the early 1920s. The use of black troops was seen as a deliberate French affront to white women, the German nation, and western civilisation. Racists used the 'white woman' as an iconic symbol of the German nation in the discourse of the participants.

In 'Social status and religiosity in Christian Europe', Sergej Flere and Rudi Klanjšek of the Department of Sociology at the University of Maribor, Slovenia, use World Values Survey data to show that there is a correlation between low social status (education and income) and religiosity within Christian nations. Their interpretation is that this shows support for the idea of religion as a response to deprivation and that there is some evidence for the view that increased education is associated with greater 'enlightenment' or secularism.

The final paper, by Lydia Morris of the Department of Sociology at the University of Essex, on 'Civic stratification and the cosmopolitan ideal', concerns asylum seekers and the welfare rights of citizenship. Using theoretical ideas from David Lockwood, she shows that the growth of non-citizens in Britain has resulted in a growth in civic stratification. Asylum seekers are socially excluded from the welfare rights available to others within a national polity, and Morris examines the impact of Human Rights challenges to policies and practices of exclusion. This leads her to reject Beck's recent suggestion of a cosmopolitan 'blurring' of status differences, though the growing impact of Human Rights legislation and discourse does indicate some strengthening of a cosmopolitan outlook.

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