

Anika Noack

Social innovations in Berlin Moabit.  
The communicative negotiation of novelty  
by spatial pioneers in urban contexts.

Abstract

Anika Noack investigates socially innovative action orientations of civil society. She addresses in her research how civil society is legitimized by acting beyond the existing and known, or even by claiming to be socially innovative. While action orientations towards innovations have been analyzed in the economic and technological sciences for many years, the research area of civil society-initiated social innovations remained unconsidered. Using the example of spatial pioneers who are committed to the urban development policy in Berlin Moabit, the author examines these issues and focuses on communicative processes for the creation of social innovations. For this purpose, she methodologically follows a focused ethnographic approach. With her real-time perspective on initial phases of social innovations she characterizes the process of negotiating innovative ideas to be institutionalized as a communicative genre and therefore being part of society's communicative knowledge repertoire. Between the poles of adaptation to structural requirements of the innovation society on one hand and the actors' potential to re-interpret and re-make societal structures on the other hand, the innovation imperative with its focus on construction of novelty and difference is indeed no sine non qua for the legitimacy of civil society action – but already extremely powerful.

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