

Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte (JWG) 2007/2:

Die bundesdeutsche Massenkonsumgesellschaft 1950-2000/The West German Mass Consumption Society 1950-2000

I. Abhandlungen und Studien

Alfred Reckendrees, Die bundesdeutsche Massenkonsumgesellschaft. Einführende Bemerkungen, in: Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte (JWG) 2007/2, S. 17-27.

Alfred Reckendrees, Konsummuster im Wandel. Haushaltsbudgets und Privater Verbrauch in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1952-98, in: Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte (JWG) 2007/2, S. 29-61.

Britta Stücker, Konsum auf Kredit in der Bundesrepublik, in: Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte (JWG) 2007/2, S. 63-88.

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Abstracts, Classifications and Authors

I. Abhandlungen und Studien

Alfred Reckendrees: Die bundesdeutsche Massenkonsumgesellschaft. Einführende Bemerkungen / The West German Mass Consumption Society 1950-2000. Introduction

Alfred Reckendrees: Konsummuster im Wandel. Haushaltsbudgets und Privater Verbrauch in der Bundesrepublik 1952-98 / The Change of Consumption Patterns. Household Budgets and Private Consumption in West Germany 1952-98

Abstract

Based on a newly constructed time series of homogeneous data on German household accounts for the period of 1952 until 1998 this article analyses the change of consumption patterns of the statistical German model household (four persons, middle income, and two kids) in the second half of the 20th century. By the late 50s this model household spent more money either on eggs or on butter than on an automobile, but in 1998 it spent more on the automobile than on foodstuffs altogether. The transition to the modern consumption society started in the late 50s, but it was especially in the late 60s, and in the 70s, that the average income household experienced a 'consumption revolution'. The main reasons were increasing earnings and decreasing relative prices. In the 80s the average income household, with respect to consumption patterns, had become akin to households with higher incomes. Social difference was no longer signified by the household's ability to buy a product or not, as in the 50s and 60s, but rather by the type of product or the quantity of its use.

JEL-Codes¹: D12, N34; Keywords: Consumption, household, household budgets, consumption patterns, Germany 1952-98

Alfred Reckendrees, geb. 1962, Studium der Neueren Geschichte, Osteuropäischen Geschichte, Deutsche Philologie und Philosophie in Münster (M.A. 1989); von 1990 bis 1993 Wiss. Referent (Rheinisches Industriemuseum, Oberhausen), anschließend freier Ausstellungsmacher und Promotionsstipendiat der Hans-Böckler-Stiftung, 1999 von der Universität Bielefeld zum Dr. phil. promoviert. Seine Dissertation („Das «Stahltrust»-Projekt“. München 2000) erhielt den „1. Preis für Unternehmensgeschichte“ (1999). Seit 2000 Wissenschaftlicher Angestellter am Seminar für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte der Universität zu Köln; aktuelle Forschungsschwerpunkte: Frühgeschichte des industriellen Kapitalismus in Deutschland (1790-1850), historische Unternehmensforschung (18.-20. Jh.), Kartellgeschichte (20. Jh.) und Konsumgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.

Dr. Alfred Reckendrees
Universität zu Köln
Seminar für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte
Albertus-Magnus-Platz
D-50923 Köln
reckendrees@wiso.uni-koeln.de

Britta Stücker: Konsum auf Kredit in der Bundesrepublik / Consumption by Credit in West-Germany

Abstract

In Western Germany, consumptive credit became meaningful for large groups of people during the 1950s. Workmen, clerks, the self-employed, and retirees adopted consumer credit readily; household credits swelled tremendously. The foundation for consumer credit was an array of particular sources of credit. Those offering the largest amounts of credit were retailers and commercial banks, savings banks and specialized credit banks. During the 1950s and 1960s, they adopted new strategies to pursue the potential profit to be made in the consumer lending market and financed consumer goods like clothing, domestic appliances, furniture,

1 Siehe JEL-classification unter: http://www.aeaweb.org/journal/jel_class_system.html.

and, above all, motor vehicles. It is the contention of this article that the expansion of consumer credit illustrates the rise of post-war consumer society in Western Germany.

JEL-Codes: G21, N24, D14

Britta Stücker, Studium der Neueren Geschichte, Deutschen Philologie und Politikwissenschaft an der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, 2000 als wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin im DFG-Projekt „Unternehmenskommunikation“ und bis 2005 am Seminar für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte der Universität zu Köln beschäftigt. Seither in Museumsprojekten und als freie Autorin für das Kölner Geschichtsbüro Reder, Roeseling & Prüfer tätig. Veröffentlichungen zu Unternehmensgeschichte und -kommunikation im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, Konsumkredit und Verbraucherinformation in der Bundesrepublik, Verbands- und Stiftungsgeschichten. Aktuell startet ein drittmittelgefördertes Projekt über die Profilierungsfunktion und Kapitalisierungsmöglichkeiten strategischer Unternehmensmarkenführung.

Britta Stücker
Universität zu Köln
Seminar für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte
Albertus-Magnus-Platz
D-50923 Köln
brittastuecker@gmx.de

André Steiner: Die Veränderung der Verbraucherpreise und der private Verbrauch von Konsumgütern in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1948-98 / The Change of Consumer Prices and Household Consumption in West-Germany 1948-98

Abstract

This paper presents the first steps of a mainly descriptive historical analysis of the interconnection between the development of retail prices and the change in the structure of private consumption in West Germany 1948 - 1998. The first section deals with the sources, difficulties and methods used to construct the required database. The paper then gives a survey of the development of the prices in general. In the third section the price changes are analysed more thoroughly in the different spheres of consumption and their connection with the demand of the respective commodities and services. Finally, conclusions are drawn from the results in hand and links for further investigation are offered.

JEL-Codes: D12, N34; Keywords: retail prices, consumption structure

André Steiner, Prof. Dr., Projektbereichsleiter am Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam und apl. Professor für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte an der Universität Potsdam. Wichtigste Publikationen: Die DDR-Wirtschaftsreform der sechziger Jahre. Konflikt zwischen Effizienz- und Machtkalkül, Berlin 1999; Von Plan zu Plan. Eine Wirtschaftsgeschichte der DDR, München 2004; (Hg.) Preispolitik und Lebensstandard. Nationalsozialismus, DDR und Bundesrepublik im Vergleich, Köln 2006; (Hg.) Überholen ohne einzuholen. Die DDR-Wirtschaft als Fußnote der deutschen Geschichte?, Berlin 2006.

Prof. Dr. André Steiner
Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung
Am Neuen Markt 1
D-14467 Potsdam
asteiner@uni-potsdam.de

Ralf Banken: Schneller Strukturwandel trotz institutioneller Stabilität. Die Entwicklung des deutschen Einzelhandels 1949-2000 / Fast Structural Change despite Institutional Stability. The Development of German Retailing 1949-2000

Abstract

In what follows, I attempt a thorough analysis of the structural development of the retail trade in the Federal Republic of Germany between 1949 and 2000 on the basis of long statistical series on turnovers, profits, and forms of enterprise. Using this data, it can be clearly shown how new types of retailing (supermarkets, self-service, convenience stores) emerged since the early 1960s, when the sellers' market changed into a buyers' market. This transformation occurred in spite of institutional settings that were not consumer-friendly (e. g., shop closing-times, restrictive legislation on sales discount, fixed prices etc.). Price competition in retailing became much fiercer in the 1970s, when consumers' behavior was strongly price-oriented and business concentration increased with an expansion of chain stores, discount shops, and specialist retail chains. Within the space of less than twenty years up until about 1980, a new structure of retailing developed in West Germany, which accompanied the transition into a mass consumer society.

JEL-Codes: N3; N34; N7; N74

Ralf Banken, Studium der Geschichts- und Sozialwissenschaft in Münster, als Wirtschafts- und Sozialhistoriker seit 1990 wiss. Mitarbeiter an den Universitäten Saarbrücken, Frankfurt/M. und Köln zudem am Max-Planck-Institut für Europäische Rechtsgeschichte Frankfurt/M. 2005 Stipendium am Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, Washinton DC. 1997 Promotion „Die Industrialisierung der Saarregion 1815-1914“. Forschungsinteressen: Deutsche und Europäische Industrialisierung, Unternehmensgeschichte des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts, Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Dritten Reiches, Geschichte des deutschen Wirtschaftsrechts, Konsumgeschichte der Bundesrepublik u.a.

Dr. Ralf Banken
Universität zu Köln
Seminar für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte
Albertus-Magnus-Platz
D-50923 Köln
Ralf.Banken@t-online.de

Jan-Otmar Hesse: Komplementarität in der Konsumgesellschaft. Geschichte eines wirtschaftstheoretischen Konzepts / Complementarity and the evolution of the Consumption Society. The History of a Theoretical Concept

Abstract

The article examines the co-evolution of the emergence of the consumer society in West Germany and the corresponding change of economic theory. It can be shown that modern neoclassical microeconomics, as defined by John Hicks and Roy Allen in the UK, resp. by Henry Schulz and Paul A. Samuelson in the US, was taken over into German economic theory in the early 1950s. But different from the Anglo-American models, German microeconomic theory was mainly concerned with the supply side until the rise of the consumer society in Germany in the late 1960s. Complementarity was a key concept of neoclassical microeconomics during the predominance of the Hicks/Allen-paradigma. But whereas it was conceptualised as being an effect of consumers' choices abroad, it was mainly considered a technical quality of goods in Germany.

The paper takes the particular history of German economic reasoning as a clue for the broader economic development. Theoretical innovations correspond with economic structural changes. The debates about microeconomic theory and consumer choices, which became more controversial in Germany in the mid 1960s, reflect an important quality of the structural change, which is usually labeled as 'coming of the consumer society': The proportion of interrelated goods (the article gives the example of the relation between televisions and refrigerators) increased, so that consumers' choices became more and more dependent from their consumptive environment and 'consumer sovereignty' actually shrank. Therefore the paper suggests, that the examination of the proportion of complementary goods in a nations' economy could serve as a scale to mark the beginning of the structural change, that we used to call consumer society.

JEL-Codes: B 21, D 11, N 24, N 30

Jan-Otmar Hesse, z.Zt. Stipendiat am Historischen Kolleg in München. Assistent am Lehrstuhl für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte der J.W. Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt am Main. Dissertation zur Unternehmensgeschichte der Deutschen Reichspost 1876-1914 (München 2002). Veröffentlichung über die Geschichte der bundesdeutschen Volkswirtschaftslehre 1945-1975 in Vorbereitung. Zahlreiche Publikationen zur Unternehmensgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Medien und der jüngeren Geschichte der Wirtschaftstheorie resp. Institutionengeschichte der Wirtschaftswissenschaften.

Dr. Jan-Otmar Hesse
Historisches Seminar der
J.W.Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main
Grüneburgplatz
D-60629 Frankfurt am Main
J.O.Hesse@em.uni-frankfurt.de

II. Diskussion

Rainer Fremdling: German Industrial Employment 1925, 1933, 1936 and 1939. A New Benchmark for 1936 and a Note on Hoffmann's Tales

Abstract

The industrial census of 1936 did not include all industrial firms; for certain industrial groups, data of small firms were not recorded. This article describes the estimation of employment (4 million) which has to be added to the recorded number of 8 million employees. The estimated figure is confronted with the figures of the workplace censuses of 1925, 1933 and 1939 on the one hand and with the compilation by Hoffmann on the other hand. Whereas the estimate is in line with the workplace censuses it deviates significantly from Hoffmann's numbers. Scrutinising them reveals serious distortions in their level, trend and yearly fluctuations. By implication, this objection does not only hold for the employment figures but for time series on production and levels of labour productivity as well. Consequently, one should keep away from Hoffmann's figures when discussing any aspect of economic failure of the Weimar Republic or economic recovery after Hitler came to power.

JEL-Codes: JEL: C43, C80, D57, E01, N01, N14, N64, O47; Keywords: Historical National Accounts of Germany, Nazi-Recovery

Rainer Fremdling is Professor Emeritus of Economics at the University of Groningen. He worked as an economic historian at the University of Münster and Free University of Berlin before he became full professor at the University of Groningen (1987); in addition he held visiting fellowships at the University of Pennsylvania, St. Antony's College, KU Leuven, DIW, WZB and FU Berlin and now as research professor at the DIW. Together with Herman de Jong and Marcel P. Timmer he recently published: British and German Manufacturing Productivity Compared: A New Benchmark for 1935/36 Based on Double Deflated Value Added, in: Journal of Economic History, Vol. 67 (2007/2), pp.350-378.

Prof. Dr. Rainer Fremdling
University of Groningen
Faculty of Economics and Business
P.O. Box 800
9700 AV Groningen
The Netherlands
r.r.fremdling@rug.nl

Paul Windolf: Sozialkapital und soziale Ungleichheit. Vergleichende Analysen zur Unternehmensverflechtung in Deutschland und in den USA (1896-1938) / Social Capital

and Social Inequality. Comparative Analyses of Corporate Networks in Germany and the United States (1896-1938)

Abstract

Social capital is an important resource with the potential to improve the market opportunities of individuals as well as the survival probability of organizations. This historical analysis concentrates on the unequal distribution of social capital among the largest corporations in Germany and the United States for the years 1896, 1914, 1928, and 1938. The statistical analysis compares the unequal distribution of social capital among firms with the unequal distribution of income and wealth among households in Western European societies in the late 19th century (Pareto coefficient). Firms that were able to accumulate large amounts of social capital had the following characteristics: They were the largest ones among the large corporations (size), they were located in large metropolitan areas as, for instance, New York or Berlin, and they had many bankers sitting on their Board of Directors (supervisory board). The causal relationship (regression) hardly changed over the period 1896-1938. The economic elite was able to exploit the relative advantages of social capital incorporated in corporate networks, despite serious economic and political crises (First World War, Great Depression, Nazi regime).

JEL-Codes: L14; Keywords: social capital, inequality, Germany, United States, corporate networks, bank power, power law distribution

Paul Windolf, geb. 1946, Professor für Wirtschaftssoziologie an der Universität Trier. Forschungsaufenthalte in Columbia, Stanford und Harvard. Forschungsschwerpunkte: Unternehmensverflechtung und Netzwerke (embeddedness), Finanzmarkt-Soziologie, Arbeitsbeziehungen. Neuere Publikationen: "Organisierter Kapitalismus" in Zeitschrift für Unternehmensgeschichte 2006; Finanzmarkt-Kapitalismus in Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie (Sonderheft 2005); Mitbestimmung im Institutionen-Wettbewerb, in: Perspektiven der Corporate Governance, hg. Von U. Jürgens et al. 2007.

Prof. Dr. Paul Windolf
Fachbereich IV/Soziologie
Universität Trier
D-54286 Trier
windolf@uni-trier.de

III. Forschungs- und Literaturberichte

Maria Papathanassiou: Approaches to the history of child labour in Europe

Abstract

This paper discusses aspects of the history of child labour in central, western and northern European countries during the 19th and the early 20th centuries, focussing on questions that dominate, implicitly or explicitly, historical literature on the subject. First, it deals with child labour in relation to the industrialization process, examining the extent and forms of children's employment in factories and industrial workshops, as well as the arguments developed around it. Secondly, it examines the presumed decline in children's employment from the late 19th century onwards, and discusses its relation to legislation, schooling, and technology, as well as the change of mentalities and attitudes towards children. Thirdly, it tackles children's role in sectors other than industry: in agriculture, the service sector, the informal or marginal economy, as well as non-wage forms of work. It concludes by pointing to child labour today retaining a considerable, albeit often impossible to measure and thus invisible, part in European economies.

JEL-Codes: J 13, J 21, J 23, J 80, J81, J82, J83; keywords: child labour, child work

Maria Papathanassiou, born in Athens in 1968. Between 1985 and 1996, she studied History at the Universities of Athens, London (LSE) and Vienna (PhD). She is currently teaching Modern European History at the Universities of Patras, Athens and the Hellenic Open University. Her main research interests lie in the history of children, the history of the family, in historical anthropology, rural history and the history of labour. She is, among others, the

author of three books on the history of child labour in Central Europe, the history of children and family in rural Greece and the history of the European colonization process.

Dr. Maria Papathanassiou
V. Amalias 3 C
145 61 Kifissia
Athens
Greece
raptiskm@hol.gr

Gerhard Heske: Neue Ergebnisse einer volkswirtschaftlichen Gesamtrechnung für Ostdeutschland von 1970 bis 2000 / East German Macroeconomic Development 1970-2000 – New Results of National Accounts

Abstract

The system of national accounts is used to present consistent data on East German gross domestic product (GDP), value-added of economic sectors, employment and final consumption according to main usages for the period 1970-2000. These new time series make a comparison of East Germany's economic development before and after 1989 possible for the first time. The economic performance of the GDR and the Federal Republic before unification is compared by drawing on comparable data of GDP and value-added of economic sectors.

JEL-Codes: E01, N14, N30, N34, O47, P24, P27

Gerhard Heske, geb. 1934, Dr.rer.oec, Dr.sc., Honorarprofessor für Statistik, Mitarbeiter der Staatlichen Zentralverwaltung der DDR, Berlin (1957-01.10.1990) und des Statistischen Bundesamtes, Wiesbaden (02.10.1990-1999), zahlreiche Veröffentlichungen insbesondere zu verschiedenen methodischen und organisatorischen Fragen der Wirtschafts- und Sozialstatistik wie z.B. der Industrie- und Preisstatistik.

Prof. Dr. Gerhard Heske
Frankfurter Allee 138
10365 Berlin
Fon/Fax : (030) 55940 22
Gerhardheske@compuserve .de