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REPORTS FROM PAST EVENTS:

Economic Sociology Conference in Moscow

by

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The conference «Economic Sociology at the Edge of the Third Millennium» took place in Moscow on January 14-15, 2000, and the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences (Russian-British Post-graduate University) was the host. This was an Interim Conference of the International Sociological Association (RC02 «Economy and Society») and the European Sociological Association (Economic Sociology Research Network). It was the first economic sociology conference of this type in Russia. It brought together more than 100 participants from the 16 countries of Europe, the U.S. and the 14 regions of Russia.

The basic idea of the Conference was to present the major theoretical perspectives in economic sociology and to share views on its future developments. A variety of new institutionalist, network, and substantive economy approaches were presented.

The introductory Russian panel included presentations on ”Economic Sociology in Russia: Current Status and Prospects” by Vadim Radaev and ”Russian Reform through the Prism of Economic Sociology” by Tatiana Zaslavskaya.

The first session was devoted to new theoretical perspectives in economic sociology (keynote speakers: Nicole Biggart and Mitchel Abolafia). Nicole Biggart’s paper ”Social Organisation and Economic Development” shows that development depends on utilising the historically developed patterns of social organisation. The paper by Mitchel Abolafia, ”Interpreting Market Cultures”, shows how elements of market culture carry meanings about transparency, collectivity, competition, and conflict in relationships.

In the ensuing discussion Peter McMylor spoke on ”Markets, Morality and Disembedding: Alasdair MacIntyre's Moral Philosophy and Karl Polanyi's Economic Sociology”, and Rafael Marques posed the following question: ”Is There Really A Gresham Law of Sociology? Towards A Reciprocity Based Theory”. Peter Lindner drew attention to ”Institutionalisation as a Space-Patterning Process: The Example of Entrepreneurship”.

The second session dealt with sociology and the transformation of markets (keynote speakers: Harrison C. White and David Stark). White’s paper ”Markets and Firms” depicted the production market as a signalling mechanism across firms which spreads the risks and uncertainties in their successive commitments. The paper of David Stark - ”Heterarchy: Distributed Authority and the Organization of Diversity”- discussed the emergence of a new organisational form characterised by lateral accountability and heterogeneous principles of resource evaluation.

In the discussion there were several papers on the different aspects of labour markers, including: ”The Labour Market and Social Re-Ranking in Countries under Transition” by

Vladimir Gimpelson; ”Institutions, Social Networks, and Labor Market Opportunities: Matching Workers and Jobs in Russia” by Valery Yakubovich; ”Labour Markets and Social Embeddedness: The Social Constraints of the International Migration of Labour” by Joao Peixoto. Juergen Feldhoff’s paper dealt with ”Network Relations in New Industrial Districts” and used the case of Eastern Germany. Duco Bannink’s paper focused on ”Institutional Capacities in Dutch Social Insurance Reform”.

The third session was devoted to sociological aspects of the informal economy (keynote speakers: Jonathan Gershuny and Enzo Mingione). The paper by Jonathan Gershuny - ”Economic Sociology: Markets, Lags... and Culture” - gave an outline for the political economy of time, based on time budget analysis. Enzo Mingione’ paper ”The Transformation of Employment Systems in the Post-Fordist Age and the Question of Informal Work” demonstrated how informal resources and contacts may shape new opportunities and compensate for the decline of standardised regulation and identities.

In the discussion Claire Wallace made broad cross-cultural comparisons in her presentation of ”Informal Economies and Economic Development”. Endre Sik discussed the measures of corruption in his paper ”Corruption of Inspectors”. Sara Busse offered some ethnographic evidence from the Novosibirsk region of Russia in her paper ”Networks and Social Capital: Strategies of Everyday Life”. Slobodan Cvejic traced ”The Decline of Society in the Process of Dual Structuring” in case of Yugoslavia. Olga Fadeyeva described ”Rural Labour Markets and Family Strategies” in the rural areas.

The fourth session dealt with the issues of actors, social structures, and the state in the economy (keynote speakers: György Lengyel and David Lane). Lengyel presented a picture of the new action potentials in Eastern Europe in his paper ”Economic Actors and Attitudes: The Newly Emerging Entrepreneurial Class and the Economic Elite”. In the paper of David Lane, ”The Transformation of State Socialism in Russia: From "Chaotic" Economy to State-Led Cooperative Capitalism?”, society was analysed in terms of forms of company structure, patterns of social integration, elite and class fragmentation.

In the discussion Christian Haerpfer presented a study of 21 post-communist societies in the paper ”Transition Patterns, Social Capital and Economic Performance”. Bernard Convert used one of Bourdieu’s concept for analysing ”Economic Dispositions and Firm Policies”. Christele Dondeyne tried to develop societal effect theory in the paper ”The Effects of the Multidivisional Form of Modern Corporation on Workers Behaviors and its Effectiveness”. Raimo Blom and Harri Melin gave a paper entitled ”Classes and Class Reproduction in Russia in the 90s”, which resulted from their 10-year project on Russian class structure.

The conference concluded with a roundtable on the agenda for the future development of economic sociology. The speakers included Russian and CIS members from different regional research teams: Tatiana Bogomolova (Novosibirsk), Vladimir Ilyin (Syktyvkar), Irina Kozina (Samara), Olga Kutsenko (Kharkov, Ukraine), Yana Roschina (Moscow), and Yuri Veselov (St. Petersburg).

The John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation funded the Conference.

For the papers, see the website: http://www.msses

Workshop in Economic Sociology in Budapest

On September 24-25, 1999 an international workshop was organized with the title of **"New economic actors, institutions and attitudes in Central and Eastern Europe"** in Budapest in the framework of the Hungarian Sociological Association's conference on the experiences of the '90s. The aim of the workshop was to highlight some of the newly emerging topics of economic sociology challenged by the transformation. Akos Rona-Tas (San Diego) did reinterpret the concepts of risk, uncertainty and trust in this framework. Endre Sik (Budapest) analyzed the findings of a research on a local labor market. (His paper is available in the last English issue of the Hungarian Sociological Review.) Vadim Radaev (Moscow) dealt with the attitudes toward market building. Silvano Bolcic (Beograd) summed up the findings concerning the spread of entrepreneurship in Serbia. Krzysztof Jasiecki (Warsaw) dealt with the institutional reasons of the weakness of business associations during the transformation. Mladen Lazic (Beograd) and Balazs Vedres (Budapest) analyzed the changing structure of economic elites and the constellation of economic power. David Lane (Cambridge) applied the term of "chaotic capitalism" on the description of the Russian economic system. Krzysztof Zagorski (Warsaw) analyzed the trends and social explanations of expectations concerning living conditions. Alexander Stoyanov (Sofia) presented the methodological tools and substantive findings of corruption monitoring.**Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.**
A workshop proceedings volume is planned to collect the papers.

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