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Article

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Westernization of the East or Easternization of the West?

Dear Reader,

The headline of my editorial mirrors the topic of this years' Chemnitz East Forum, held in September at Chemnitz University of Technology.

The overall aim of the East Forum is to establish an exchange of knowledge and experiences between academics from Eastern and Western Europe. Moreover, co-operations between universities should be established in order to bring forward European integration. This years' conference addressed topics like the spread of management practices in CEE countries compared to the West, leadership in international co-operations, East-West joint ventures, as well as governance and board structures of CEE firms or East-West joint ventures.

The presentations and discussions highlighted the fact that East-West-co-operation is still characterized by a transfer of knowledge, concepts and practices from West to East. Taking a closer look, however, reveals that there is not just a simple transfer of solutions. This process is particularly affected by national, regional or organizational culture as well as for example the branch the company is operating in. As a consequence Western concepts are re-interpreted and changed what leads to an altered understanding of their appropriateness and effectiveness. Overall, however, a westernization of the East could be observed. The reverse process, that is the influence of specific Eastern concepts and/or altered Western concepts on Western companies or more generally the Western community, is still at an early stage.

All of the articles in this issue more or less definite address the question of East-West-influences, however, from their very specific perspective. Most of them focus on the transfer of western concepts to CEE countries.

Peeter Vahtra, Kari Liuhto and Harri Lorentz bring up the question of privatisation or re-nationalisation in Russia. Against the background of an increasing state involvement in the Russian enterprise sector witnessed in the recent past they discuss the development of privatisation and corporate governance in Russia in comparison to other countries of the so called Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Referring to the title of our editorial this article is of particular interest as fast and comprehensive privatization is usually seen as a key concept of transforming the economy in CEE. However, is this really the case? Especially regarding Russia and the three company cases provided in the article, doubts could be raised.

Elena A. Iankova addresses the Europeanization of social partnership in EU-accessing countries. She highlights that the candidate countries from the formerly communist region had developed more liberal regimes during the post-communist transformation, and were practicing a rather different kind of social

partnership. As reaction of these circumstances, the EU included special requirements and recommendations for the strengthening of the forms of negotiations among the social partners in candidate countries. The paper addresses four major venues for change of the existing tripartite institutions in accession countries and critically evaluates the development of social dialogue in the new EU member states. The article of Iankova is an excellent example of the transfer of Western concepts to CEE. Clearly, EU is exploiting its powerful position here; however, whether these concepts are efficient (or not) could be questioned.

Christoph Dörrenbächer provides an insight into cross-border management and owner relationships in a German subsidiary in Hungary. The article examines the social relationships in and around a German subsidiary in Hungary during the first 15 years of Hungarian transition to a market economy. One result of the study is that the Western headquarter by and large dominated over the local subsidiary managers' concerns, what seems to be typical for East-West ventures. In this article we again see the transfer of Western ideas and concepts to Eastern Europe. Using expatriates the parent company tries to ensure the development of for example appropriate (Western) management styles, organisational structures and regulations in the subsidiary. However, if that works remains questionable, as could be seen from a lot of cases in other CEE countries.

Michael Clarkson, Matthias Fink and Sascha Kraus focus on industrial clusters as a factor for innovative drive-in regions of transformation and structural change. In their comparative analysis of East Germany and Poland their article investigates the catalyst effect of industrial cluster formation on innovation. The study is based on a sample of small and medium enterprises located in two regions of transformation and structural change. According to the authors the results of the study suggest that cluster formation in Poland is not yet as elaborate as in East Germany. Back to our headline, this article could be considered as good example for the transfer of a particular Western concept, i.e. Porter's Diamond of Competitive Advantage of Regions, to a transforming society. Again it could be asked whether this concept will be adopted one-to-one, or will be adjusted and therefore changed according to the specific context of the Polish region.

All in all, this issue provides interesting articles looking at diverse topics. From the perspective adopted in this editorial, however, they follow a rather similar idea that is the transfer of concepts, ideas and practices between West and East.

Have a nice time reading this issue!

Ingo Winkler
(Member of the Editorial Committee)