



SWEDISH  
COLLEGIUM  
for ADVANCED STUDY

**Saturday, 18 February. 14:50 – 16:20. Room: IIC Main – Conference Room II**  
**REGULAR SESSION**

**Session:** Sociology of Post-Soviet Countries: Myth or Reality?

**Session Convener(s):** Zhanna Andreasyan, Yerevan State University

**Chair:** Zhanna Andreasyan, Yerevan State University

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I) *Sociology in Modern Russia*

Valeriy Mansurov, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow

II) *Sociology of Post-Soviet Countries: Reality of Contribution*

Hovhannes Grigoryan, Institute for Political and Sociological Consulting, Yerevan

III) *Systematic Review of Two (Post-)Soviet Longitudinal Research Programs and Their Impact on the Market Transition Theory*

Karmo Kroos, Tallinn University

Indrek Soidla, University of Tartu

IV) *Shadow Sociology in Post-Soviet Countries*

Zhanna Andreasyan, Yerevan State University

## ABSTRACTS

### Session description

Social Sciences have a very "politized" role in Soviet Union. The methodological principles of social sciences have been presented in the form of marxizm-leninism and real methodological- theoretical issues haven't become a topic for scientific discourse during the whole Soviet period. Sociology has implemented the function of legitimization of social, political and economic structure of Soviet Society. As a result of this approach the Another specifics of Soviet Sociology was the prevailing role of quantified approach, as the qualitative approach makes available to gather deeper information about people and to hear their own words, opinions about reality while the quantitative approach let them only repeat the answers we want to hear through using of closed answers technique and so on. So the sociology of Post Soviet countries inherits these Soviet specifics. In addition to this inheritance, Post-Soviet reality brings its' own specific to the picture of sociological science in Post-Soviet countries. That is what I called Shadow Sociology. This term is very similar to shadow economics characterizing post-soviet reality.

Here are the main questions to be discussed during the session:

1. Do the Post-Soviet Sociology has a potential in terms of theoretical or empirical approaches?
2. Why yes or no?
3. What can suggest Post-Soviet Sociology for the world sociology in terms of scientific progress?

### Papers

#### 1) *Sociology in Modern Russia*

Valeriy Mansurov, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow

During the years of 1990-1999, there were some institutional changes in sociology in Russia. The first one consisted of the rapid spread of sociology into the realm of higher education. In 1991, the department of sociology was opened at Moscow State University. Later, similar departments were set up at the prestigious Academy of Management and the Higher School of Economics, the University of Saint-Petersburg, Altai State University, and in some others. Today, every university in Russia has either a department or a chair of sociology.

The fast growth of the departments and faculties of sociology, along with the discipline's inclusion among the list of obligatory subjects at most higher education institutions, created a demand for more teaching materials. Initially many institutions chose a strategy of using manuals and textbooks written by Western colleagues. Then, Russian authors started to publish their works with the valuable assistance of the Soros Foundation. Nowadays, many universities issue their own manuals. During this period, the first full-scale sociological dictionary was published, as were a number of other sociological reference. In analyzing the institutional change of sociology in Russia, it is difficult to bypass the role of private research and marketing organizations. Most of them came into being in the early stages of the reform process, as a result of cooperation between relevant Western networks and Russian researchers. A larger part of the latter came from the Academy of Sciences and other scientific institutions seeking a means of survival in the new era.

With the birth of the contemporary Russian State, there was an abolition of all bans on social theory, and the community of social scientists was given free access to contemporary sociological theory. This access occurred through two major channels. First, colleagues from Western countries flocked to Moscow and exposed Russian social scientists to their theoretical perspectives.. Further exposure to theory was made possible by the active participation of Russian scientists in various international events. In addition, new laws of publications and the growing demand from teachers and students led to the release of a flow of translations of sociological classics onto

the Russian book market. To date, most of the classical works of sociology have been translated into Russian, and more modern works are being constantly introduced to Russian readers. .

The institutionalization of sociology and the upgrading of its status gave a boost to the emergence of new theoretical approaches. A multi-paradigmatic approach to the study of social processes is gradually gaining ground, providing for a broad definition of moving forces, and dominant factors and prospects. Society is treated as an objective-subjective reality and the individual is regarded as a product of the system, resulting from a complex interaction of various factors, economic to psychological. At the same time, society is defined as an entity resulting from individual actions integrated into the social process in various ways. It is in the process of social action by individuals that society evolves, not as a result of some unknown mystical or fatalistic forces.

Though the structural paradigm is enjoying widespread popularity in the community of Russian sociologists, it is not the only framework of social investigation. Alongside various linear concepts of development (formational, industrial, post-industrial), there are polycentric and multi-linear concepts based on the civilization approach that sees the world as a cluster of poles representing various civilizations. The obvious tendency that these cases point to is the move from a monotheoretical research field with a curtailed range of discourse towards a science that employs a broad variety of methods and theoretical approaches, and that spreads beyond specialized institutions into the limelight of public debate. Russian sociology is gradually reducing the distance that has for many years separated it from Western sociology, and its sociologists are finding common footing with colleagues from many countries. After the first enthusiasm caused by the collapse the Soviet Union dwindled, a new situation has emerged with incentives for the exploration of new issues and methods.

## II) *Sociology of Post-Soviet Countries: Reality of Contribution*

Hovhannes Grigoryan, Institute for Political and Sociological Consulting, Yerevan

Post-Soviet sociology, somehow inheriting the methodology and rules of the Soviet era sociology, has, on the contrary, very intense and real basis for developing its core principles and offer some new methodological approaches and theoretical grounds for world sociology (if something like that that can ever be defined as so).

First of all, this assumption is determined by the very logic of post-soviet societies, that is the long and sometimes complicated passage from planned to market-oriented economy. This passage, having its roots in economy, is typical also for social structure and human nature, in other words, a passage from homo-sovietikus towards homo-economicus is a must-observe phenomenon, with some aspects of particular interest. Aspects like, social responsibility, involvement into public domain, differentiation of individualistic and communal patterns of behavior, as well as perceptions of rationality and values can be those of key focus for sociologists.

Second, it is the variety of pace various countries of post-soviet area show in developing and integrating into capitalist world. Obviously, one can follow differences not only in the huge distances covering from Baltic sea to Baykal lake, but also in the smallest regions, such as for example Caucasus, where three countries, dwelling aside, show various orientation not only in the economic, but also cultural and religious sense (Georgia, more oriented towards Europe in the senses of values and of social order, Armenia proclaiming Russia as a dominant partner and Azerbaijan seeking it roots in Islam and pan-turkism).

Third, in fact could be the very methodology of social researches, which can be considering passing a way from true

disaster in soviet times (politicized, biased party tool) to over-liberated in the recent times (new survey methods, taken from western world, which have serious difficulties in complying to the still-to-be soviet mentality of people, lack of interest and sincerity in being actually respondents to social surveys). Indeed, it is very interesting to observe empirical sociology growing in those countries, from the very viewpoint of theory and methodology of sociology. Societies, where the word sociology itself is something new and unexplained, often discriminated and devalued because of false heroes and media pumping, are very close, and thus interesting, in trying to gather information through applied methods. How people actually answer the questions asked by sociologists, how sincere they are, how rational they are, how much they are able to differentiate private and public domains (once in absolute opposition towards each other) – those are the key points which show, how much to do the sociology in post-soviet societies still has, and how much offer to the world it can.

The paper will cover those topics, as well as some practical examples of applying sociology in Armenia and curiosities it can arise, while aligning the worldly well known methodology to a post-soviet society, with somehow innovative understanding of social life and individual inclusion in it.

### *III) Systematic Review of Two (Post-)Soviet Longitudinal Research Programs and Their Impact on the Market Transition Theory*

Karmo Kroos, Tallinn University

Indrek Soidla, University of Tartu

Market Transition Theory (MTT) is arguably one of the most important conceptual treatments of the post-communist transition within sociology as well as political economy. On the basis of the results of Ivan Szelenyi's decades of research, Victor Nee formulated the "ten commencements" of MTT in 1989. To explain who wins from the transition from the socialist system to market economy and why, this theory states that during the post-communist political and socio-economic changes the importance of political capital decreases and the significance of human capital and entrepreneurship increase as the determinants of people's economic success. As a result of a large number of empirical studies with somewhat conflicting results, MTT has given birth to much wider market transition debate (MTD), which has still not lost its acuteness, despite the number of attempts to reach consensus and to formulate a synthesis based on these empirical investigations of former socialist countries, because of the ongoing changes in China or topicality due to the "creeping transition to capitalism" in socialist countries like Cuba, Vietnam or even Libya. Despite the "politized" role of social sciences in the former Soviet Union (FSU) in general and sociology in particular, some efforts to escape the officially acceptable ideological frame were made. The typical survival strategy was to follow the quantitative tradition that some have called "social statistics". As an example of this, Prof. Mikk Titma started the longitudinal research program, first of its kind in the FSU, about Estonian high school graduates in 1966 and from 1983 onwards led another Soviet-wide longitudinal study in various parts of the Union (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan). The idea behind the longitudinal research design is to collect quality data over the life span of the research subjects which would allow one to draw causal inferences of their opportunities/choices and outcomes. Because of its casual power, the longitudinal approach has also been nick-named as the Rolls-Royce of social science methods. As the wider (theoretical and international) scholarship on the MTT and MTD seem to have tackled similar research problems but have lived an almost completely separate life from the (Post-)Soviet / Estonian longitudinal studies and vice versa, there are two main questions that this paper seeks to answer. First, we are interested to find out how much (if at all) have the publications that have been written on the basis of the Estonian longitudinal datasets aimed to contribute to the MTD. Second, we would like to learn what one could learn from the publications that have been published on the basis of the longitudinal data sets with respect to the MTT and MTD – i.e. what is the contribution of the best of (Post-)Soviet empirical sociology to the world sociology understood in this case as the MTT. More particularly, we are interested to learn what the lessons of the longitudinal studies with respect to the

MTT and MTD are, which publications are important in the MTD context, and which research efforts could be reinterpreted within the MTT (and could potentially contribute to the MTD). As the working hypothesis of the paper, it is expected that the Post-Soviet publications that have been produced on the Estonian longitudinal data have a limited and superficial knowledge of MTT, have hardly contributed to the MTD and, hence, to the universal theory development so far. As their authors have not framed their research papers on the basis or in dialogue of the MTT, they seem to have been left out from the MTD altogether. Or to put it differently, some of the contributions seem to have only limited knowledge of the MTT/MTD and, hence, they have not affected the research at the theoretical level or forced the researchers to tackle the questions directly derived from the theory or the debate. The research that has been done on the basis of the longitudinal studies seems to have been data (not theory) driven which has greatly limited its contribution to the wider sociological knowledge. With respect to the second set of questions, it is expected to be learned from the systematic review of the longitudinal publications that there are just a handful of publications that are (compared to others) more-or-less directly associable to the MTT and MTD. Nevertheless, we expect there to be a considerable number of publications the research agendas of which could have benefited from the theoretical frame of MTT and if they could be reinterpreted retrospectively, they could potentially engage in dialogue and make a contribution to the MTD. In other words, the contribution of some of the best examples of Soviet empirical tradition to the world sociology (understood in this case as the theory about the market transition) has been negligible but the potential for the Post-Soviet Sociology is there. The sociological knowledge about the history, one party rule, command economy and social change of Central and Eastern Europe and FSU is an irreplaceable part of the contemporary European social thought – something allowing us to understand her socio-economic, political and cultural reality. It is only logical that sociological scholarship about this should make its contribution to the contemporary Western social thought. The best of (Post-)Soviet empirical research does have something to say to the sociological theory even if it has been by and large data driven. At its minimum, it should allow us to test (reject or fail to reject) the hypotheses derived from the existing (universal) theories; at its maximum, it should allow to build new theories about social change and the agents in it.

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#### IV) *Shadow Sociology in Post-Soviet Countries*

Zhanna Andreyan, Yerevan State University

The term shadow economy is a well-known one in contemporary scientific and political discourse. It describes a situation when the economy of a state operates in two measures: one part is operating in legislative-formal level according to the legislation of the country and the other part is operating beyond the legislative level according to the non-written, internal laws. Shadow economy is reported to be a serious issue in many countries in the world and in most of Post-Soviet countries in particular.

What we mean when we talk about shadow sociology? According to some Russian sociologists, such as Yuri Kachanov or Genadi Batigin, the role of sociology during soviet period was to legitimize the existing political, economic and societal regime, reality, not to describe or to explain it. To describe the situation with sociology in post-soviet reality, Genadi Batigin uses the term shadow sociology, in analogy with shadow economy.

My intention here is that we can broaden the cognitive potential of this term and bring a specific meaning for that in addition to the analogy with the shadow economy. To implement this I have analyzed the situation in regard to sociology in Post-Soviet Countries using the set of main standards of professional ethics suggested by Robert Merton, famous American sociologist and largely acknowledged by the international sociological community.