

REGULAR SESSION INFORMATION

Title of Session: Comparative Capitalism in Eurasia: Debates and Challenges for Sociological Inquiries

Name of Session Convener(s): *Andrey V.Rezaev*, St. Petersburg State University;
Richard Lachmann, SUNY, Albany

Chair: *Richard Lachmann*, SUNY, Albany

Comments: -

I) On Comparative Sociology of Capitalism: The Challenge of Transnational Labor Migrants in Eurasia

Andrey V.Rezaev, St. Petersburg State University

II) Macroconditions of Class and Micropatterns of Social Interaction: Studying Labor Migrants' Discontent under Economic Instability in the XXI Century

Dmitrii Zhikharevich, St. Petersburg State University

Natalia Tregubova, St. Petersburg State University

III) Comparative Social Analysis of the Density, Frequency, and the Forms of Social Interaction of the Legal Labor Migrants from Central Asia in the Cities of North Western Regions of Russian Federation

Pavel Lisitsyn, St. Petersburg State University of Economics

Velentin Starikov, St. Petersburg University

IV) Contemporary Belarus: A Modern Social (Welfare) Formation?

Sven Hort, Seoul State University

Nikolay Zakharov, Södertörn University and Uppsala University

V) Science and Capitalism: What are the Risks of Misanthropy?

Gregory Sandstrom, European Humanities University, Vilnius

Session description:

The goal of the 41st IIS Congress Regular Session “Comparative Capitalism in Eurasia: Debates and Challenges for Sociological Inquiries” is to reposition the studies of capitalism expansion in Eurasia within current historical and comparative sociology, economic sociology, social anthropology and to outline the changing context in which sociological inquiries of Eurasian Capitalism/s take place.

The Sessions attempts to stimulate debates on the current state of affairs and the future of Eurasian societies. It will try to examine challenges, to test theories, and to discuss empirical data in the field of historical and comparative capitalism that are of practical concern, with a focus on studying inequalities in Eurasian societies.

The overarching aim of our Session at the 41st IIS World Congress has two foci. The first is to increase sociological understanding of new realities that capitalism brings to the Eurasian countries and to contribute to the global debate on the dimensions, dynamics, perspectives of rising inequality. The second is to stimulate the generation of scholarly proposals, historical and comparative research in the fSU countries dealing with the issues of socio-economic and cultural transformation in contemporary Eurasian societies.

The aim will be pursued through critical review of current sociological research and the examination of the special cases of countries and regions in Eurasia where recent changes can be claimed to have been socially transformative towards capitalism.

We believe that analyses of the current processes, structures and institutions of capitalism in Eurasia will bring new lights and will give new dynamics for sociological scholarship in the framework of IIS principles and objectives.

The conveners of the Session have been involved and continue to work together in a number of co-Projects with scholars from the former Soviet Union countries.

Abstracts:

1) On Comparative Sociology of Capitalism: the Challenge of Transnational Labor Migrants in Eurasia

Andrey V.Rezaev, St. Petersburg State University

Over the course of the last decade we have seen how much the Eurasian societies have changed in economic and political spheres. There is a great deal of certainty that in the next decade there will be even more changes. This will affect both politics of multinational corporations and the policies of local decision makers. However, the real hot issues lie in the sphere of studying reality of capitalism

building in Eurasian countries, specifically those countries that were organized under the centralized planned economy and ideology based everyday life.

The overlapping issue in studying societies of Eurasia is labor migration. The paper tries to portrait the challenges that bring labor migrants from Central Asia to European societies. It is oriented toward an exploration into theoretical and methodological problems of comparative studying the Eurasian societies that are “sending” labor migrants and those societies that are “accepting” them.

The data and materials come from comparative field researches on labor migrants from Vietnam, Uzbekistan in Russia and from the fSU countries in Greece that were organized and conducted by the International Center for Comparative and Institutional Research (InterComCenter) in 2007 - 2012.

II) Macroconditions of Class and Micropatterns of Social Interaction: Studying Labor Migrants' Discontent under Economic Instability in the XXI Century

Dmitrii Zhikharevich, St. Petersburg State University

Natalia Tregubova, St. Petersburg State University

Capitalist inequality in general and waves of economic crises in particular constitute macroconditions of a variety of emotions. However, structural conditions of emotions operate through micropatterns of interaction. From this perspective discontent could be regarded as “class” long-term emotion that is produced and reproduced in chains of interactions influenced by structural conditions. Basing upon sociological theories of emotions by Jack Barbalet and Randall Collins we propose conceptual model of discontent that characterize conditions of its rise amidst labor migrants of Saint Petersburg and of its transformation into collective action.

III) Comparative Social Analysis of the Density, Frequency, and the Forms of Social Interaction of the Legal Labor Migrants from Central Asia in the Cities of North Western Regions of Russian Federation

Pavel Lisitsyn, St. Petersburg State University of Economics

Velentin Starikov, St. Petersburg University

The paper presents an on-going research oriented toward studying current forms of social interaction among transnational labor migrants who are working in the cities of Central and North-west of Russia as well as their interactions with their home counterparts, friends and relatives. We will try to observe specifics, density and frequency of interaction through e-communication and mobile phones. The research is oriented to use methodologies of Computational Social Science. It will be actively exercise qualitative techniques of social analysis as well as survey methods.

IV) Contemporary Belarus: A Modern Social (Welfare) Formation?

Sven Hort, Seoul State University

Nikolay Zakharov, Södertörn University and Uppsala University

What is the state of (social) welfare in contemporary Belarus? What type of state has emerged after the fall of the Wall/Iron curtain? These questions, though limited to a seemingly awkward or exotic case, are intended to raise the stakes and point at some shortcomings in the general achievements of comparative welfare state research: in this tradition of social inquiry, what about it's the current relationship between social classes and welfare societies/states? This paper addresses these issues and argues that Belarus is not an example of the hybrid of the three worlds of welfare regimes called the post-socialist model. In this paper we have discussed its system of social protection and its interdependency, and, thus, preliminary labelled it a welfare mix of Soviet, and post-Soviet global national characteristics.

V) Science and Capitalism: What are the Risks of Misanthropy?

Gregory Sandstrom, European Humanities University, Vilnius

The relationship between science and capitalism was defined during the Cold War largely by policies and attitudes that supported freedom for science (M. Polanyi) or science in an open society (K. Popper) instead of planned science (J.D. Bernal) according to state control. Instead of pitting socialism vs. capitalism in a battle of super-systems, today we can consider alternative ways that science intertwines with ideology in risk societies (U. Beck). This research is important for social sciences to confront situations of excess when capitalistic-driven science potentially threatens humanity and environmental degradation.

Sociology is on the front line defending the 'anthropic' meaning of 'humanity.' There is a danger of sociology bowing to ideological forces that lead to misanthropy (S. Fuller), whether it is the exaggeration of market forces controlling 'big science' or elevation of natural science into scientism. This paper explores science and capitalism especially as they relate to Eurasian countries. It looks at new perspectives in Russia (S. Kirdina) and China (X. Wei) that have grown since the fall of scientific atheist and scientific socialist ideologies. It concludes by discussing new studies in sociology of science and capitalism that can potentially serve to help re-humanise the social sciences.