

Conference Report

20th Conference of Young Experts of Eastern Europe (JOE)

1-3 June 2012

Tutzing, Germany

“It is very easy to make fish soup from fish. But just try to make fish from the fish soup!” This idiom-like saying told to me at the end of the conference by Klaus Roth after our session, seems to picture the situation in Eastern Europe after the transformation. Thus, we fished for the fish making up the fish soup in Eastern Europe three days, at two discussion tables, in 42 presentations, housed in a glamorous building in the magnificent ambience of Lake Starnberg.

20 years after the transformation in Eastern Europe there are still plenty of researchers with interest in this region. “Young experts” refers to the fact that the target group of the conference is PhD students or early postdoc’s doing research on Eastern Europe.

There are several reasons to pay a compliment to the organizers of the conference. First, the conference was generously funded by the German Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung and Akademie für Politische Bildung (The Academy for Civic Education) in Tutzing, co-organized by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Osteuropakunde e.V., which enabled participants to attend the event without paying any huge conference fees or accommodation costs. Or to say it little more provocatively: a low-budget conference for each participant. Moreover, a low-budget, but a high-quality event at the same time.

Second, the structure of the conference also deserves a compliment. There were two parallel sessions, demonstrating the interdisciplinary focus of the research presented: the culture session and the economy session. Furthermore, each presentation was not only preceded by the usual discussion, but also by a comment from experienced, i.e. no-longer-young researchers, in most cases professors. With the exception of few cases where commentators pursued a German kind of feedback in an arbitrary style, mainly encompassing snippy or even critically-destructive comments, the feedback from commentators turned out to be well-minded and highly valuable to the authors as well as to the issues researched.

The multi-disciplinary focus of the conference enabled a vital discussion about highly diverse issues, ranging from the domestic workers and trade unions in the Czech Republic to the identity discourses of the Romanian-German minority - and this not only after the presentations, but also in the evening when the Bavarian beer was going round. We gained many benefits in terms of methodological issues as well, as methodical approaches discussed showed a high-variety reach ranging from large-scale quantitative analyses to ideographical or discourse analyses.

Third, the bilingual character of the conference, English and German, is a factor that needs to be positively mentioned. It was surprising to see the easiness with which all participants switched between the two languages plus their mother tongue, be it Russian or Ukrainian. At the final dinner we were asking ourselves what this language-switching might mean: Is this an indication for the immersion into English as the dominating language in the academic field or, contrary, an indication for the cursory acceptance of English as *modus operandi* connected with the subversive pleasure of speaking niche languages?

To be honest, there were few provocative papers in the conference, but a lot of insightful ideas. Which of them were most insightful? In the meantime, research studies on Eastern Europe provide numerous rich descriptions (of the fish soup), but there are only few suitable (theoretical) explanations. Thus, not only empirical, but also conceptual work has to be done in the future. On the other hand, each comparison between Eastern European countries or Eastern Europe and Western Europe requires close scrutiny as the local contexts seem to be highly diverse, if not even idiosyncratic. Thus, the context sensibility still remains an important issue. Otherwise, comparative studies are and will be valuable undertakings enabling relevant conceptual generalizations. However, the question should be raised if the current focus on Eastern Europe is still suitable or if transforming societies of Africa, Asia and Latin America should be taken into account as well. Therefore, the concept of "transformation" and "transforming societies" deserves more critical consideration. Apropos, the regional focus of the conference in Tutzing wasn't really broad in terms of Eastern Europe either, with most papers concentrating on Russia, Poland, Ukraine and Belarus, with only marginal focus on Azerbaijan or Georgia, Serbia and the Baltic States, and other countries of Eastern Europe being barely mentioned.

Furthermore, it was interesting to observe why young researches are concerned about themes on Eastern Europe. In the most cases, as I observed, the private connection to this region turns out to be the most important motivation for this kind of research interests. Either presenters originated from one of the socialist countries or have parents or mates stemming from there or are in touch with Slavonic languages and studies.

The only regrettable aspect of the conference was the lack of leisure time. Thus, Lake Starnberg remains a beautiful, but unknown conference backdrop which one evening entrapped me to absent myself from conference discussion in order to quickly open the swimming season 2012.

Irma Rybnikova



Call for Papers

BASEES/ICCEES European Congress

Subtheme Topic:

Management and organisational change and transformation in the post-socialist societies of Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and countries of the former USSR

Cambridge, UK

April 5-8, 2013

Sub-stream convenors: **Anna Soulsby** (Nottingham University Business School, UK), **Graham Hollinshead** (University of Hertfordshire, UK), **Thomas Steger** (University of Regensburg, Germany)

This sub-stream seeks to bring together researchers from all over the world. The sub-stream will consist of panels of thematically organised papers. We invite empirical industry-based and organisational research grounded in any methodological stance but also encourage purely theoretical contributions.

Potential areas of interest include:

1. Studies on the active role of owners, managers, and other actors and their alliances in designing processes and the re-institutionalisation of management structures, systems and practices.
2. Studies of new, emergent forms of organisation and organising under conditions of radical environmental change, resulting from international, regional and national pressures, including influences such as foreign direct investment, joint ventures, knowledge transfer and organisational learning.

3. Power, resistance and micro-political responses to imposed organisational forms.
4. Processes of organisational identity development and change.
5. Privatisation processes and changing structures of organisational and managerial control.
6. Processes of organisational restructuring and cultural change.
7. Changing relationships between organisations and local community/regional/national networks and government.
8. Organisation and management history.
9. Comparative studies across different countries and different organisational forms.

Abstract (word limit >250 words) are invited by **30 September 2012**.

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Call for papers

Journal of International Business and Entrepreneurship Development (JIBED)

Strategy in Emerging Markets

Deadline for Abstracts: 15 November 2012

Guest Editors: Mike Pettus and J. Mark Munoz

The theme of the Special Issue is "Strategy in Emerging Markets." Specifically, the objective of the journal issue is to uncover contemporary thinking and best practices for business organizations looking to enter or expand their business in emerging markets worldwide. We are looking to publish both theoretically-grounded and practice-oriented papers. All articles will be peer-reviewed.

If you have current articles, or are looking to write papers on the topics below, we strongly encourage you to submit your articles by **November 15, 2012** for consideration. Examples of relevant topics:

- Marketing to emerging markets
- Business development in emerging markets
- Emerging market entry modes
- International/global Strategy
- Strategic alliances in emerging markets
- M & A in emerging markets
- Business challenges in emerging markets and strategic implications
- Business opportunities in emerging markets and strategic implications
- Heightening competitiveness in emerging markets
- Managing competition in emerging markets

Other related topics are acceptable.

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Call for papers

International Business Review

International Business and Society on the Transitional Periphery: Comparative Perspectives

Deadline for Abstracts: 31 December 2013

Context

There has been a growing body of literature dealing with business and management issues in the transitional economies of Central and Eastern Europe. In contrast, a few notable exceptions notwithstanding, the literature on the “transitional periphery” – the post-Soviet economies of the Caucasus and Central Asia is sparse – with existing accounts largely dealing with macro-economic and political developments. Yet, many of these economies are of considerable importance and relevance owing to rich natural resource endowments, combined with strategic locations. However, economies in the region generally battle under weak and corrupt political institutions, with a large number of endemic border and internal ethnic disputes, as well as rising social inequality.

Many emerging businesses battle under chronic failings by governance, even if others benefit from political patronage: another burden is that traditional supply chain routes have broken down following on independence. All countries have faced rising social inequality, lop-sided and underdeveloped consumer markets, and potentially destabilizing levels of youth unemployment. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that organizational outcomes across the region are homogenous: there is evidence, for example, of much difference in managerial practices reflecting variations in cultural setting.

A number of these countries are significant producers of oil and gas, which brings with it dangers of the resource curse: this would include an over-reliance on a single revenue source to the neglect of other areas of the economy, over-valued currencies, regional imbalances, and rising corruption. Indeed, there is much evidence that this process is already well underway, even while oil resources are fast depleting. In addition, all countries have faced rising social inequality, lop-sided and underdeveloped consumer markets, and potentially destabilizing levels of youth unemployment. A further phenomenon has been the rise of quasi-states in the Caucasus (for example, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia), disrupting trade and markets and making for open-ended tensions.

Despite this, natural resource endowments and, in some instances, historic links and/or prosperous diasporas have meant that countries on the transitional periphery have also become important destinations for foreign direct investment (FDI) and multinational firms' (MNCs) operations. FDI flows to transitional periphery not only from western developed economies, but also from other emerging countries and regions (South-South FDI). Given the transitional nature of institutions and complexities associated with governance of organizations, management of relations with governments, political elites, and trade unions appear to be increasingly challenging. Countries on the periphery of transition have administrative heritages which are significantly different than that of other emerging regions.

To date, transitional countries on the periphery are still a *terra incognita* and our stock of knowledge in business and management practices remain mired in anecdotal evidence. Given the importance of these resource rich countries and potential for investment, the neglect of publications focused on periphery of transition is astonishing. Over the last two decades these countries have been undergoing profound and uneven institutional transformations which have ramifications for both emerging and developed country MNCs. Institutional settings in periphery of transition often necessitates MNCs to design different strategies to deal with the complex competitive dynamics in these countries. This special issue will provide insights into the challenges faced by MNCs in the region and develop concepts, models and tools for both policy makers and managers in these countries. The proposed special Issue offers a rare and unique opportunity for scholars engaged in research on these firms to share their findings in such a scholarly outlet.

Key Issues

Papers should preferably involve cross-national comparative analysis; if based on a single country, this should be analyzed within a broader comparative perspective. Comparisons with countries outside the region, particularly with other variants of transitional or emerging market capitalism, are welcome. Papers could deal with the following issues, although innovative work in related relevant areas would be welcome:

- MNCs and the local political economy: trends in FDI and relations with local elites.
- MNCs and political risk management in the region
- In what ways are MNCs affecting institutional changes in the region?
- Coping and beyond: How have firms in the region dealt with adversity?
- How do MNCs engage powerful external stakeholders, such as religious and ideological groups, political institutions, powerful political actors and civil society organizations?

- MNCs and the Quasi-States (South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia).
- MNCs: How are firm practices amended in specific cultural and institutional settings?
- Sunset industries in the region: Beyond redemption?
- Market entry strategies of developed country MNCs compared to emerging country MNCs in the region. Do MNCs use conventional models and methods to enter and operate in these countries, or do they opt out for new approaches?
- How do MNCs select and manage their partners in the region?
- Mergers and acquisitions: challenges on the periphery of transition
- Supply chains and markets: dealing with new barriers and opportunities.
- MNCs and environmental issues in the region
- Doing business in the region: Ethical issues.

The special issue is open and competitive and submitted papers will undergo the normal rigorous, double-blind review process to ensure relevance and quality. The key criteria for acceptance of manuscripts are (1) relevance to the theme of the special issue, (2) scholarly rigor of analysis, and (3) practical orientation. Submitted papers must be based on original work not under consideration by any other journal or outlet. Reviewers for papers submitted to the Special Issue will be drawn from the Special Issue Editorial Review Board and IBR editorial review board. No submission will be reviewed prior to the closing date.

A guide for authors and other relevant information for submitting papers are available on IBR's web page (<http://www.journals.elsevier.com/international-business-review/>)

All submissions should be submitted electronically to <http://ees.elsevier.com/ibr/> choosing 'Transitional Periphery SI' as the article type.

Submission deadline: **31 December 2013**

Guest Editors

Prospective authors are urged to contact the guest editors with their initial proposals or ideas well in advance of the deadline for final paper submission.

Contact details: Geoffrey Wood and Mehmet Demirbag, University of Sheffield (g.t.wood@sheffield.ac.uk and m.demirbag@sheffield.ac.uk)