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Łukasz Kutyló

Assistant Professor

Department of Sociology of Politics and Morality

Faculty of Economics and Sociology, University of Łódź POLAND

A NORMATIVE CAPITAL AND ITS ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The starting point for our reflections is the following question: what factors are responsible for the fact that some societies are able to achieve aims significant for them and other societies cannot do it? It seems that this question is very important in the case of economic development and visible distinction existing, among others, between Western and Eastern Europe. In order to find the answer to this question we decided to focus our attention on the thesis presented by Max Weber in the beginning of the 20th century. According to this thesis, Protestant ethos was among the factors which were responsible for spectacular economic growth of Northern Europe. The ethos based on both specific kind of asceticism, which disciplined individuals and concentrated their activity in the economic sphere, as well as theology, which, in turn, provided explanations for hard work and accumulation of capital (a good example of such narration is Calvinist idea of predestination, proposed by Calvin, but finally developed in the 17th century). This thesis faced criticism, first among German and then also among American scholars, and even today there are a lot of controversies, which are related to it. Some scholars suggested that there were economic changes in the European continent in the 16th century and Protestant ethos was only a consequence of them. According to other scholars, the norms which were coherent with modern capitalism were characteristic of other (than Protestant) religious traditions too. There was also an idea, the most interesting from our point of view, that these disciplining mechanisms, specific for Protestant ethos, existed in other social contexts too and the army is a good example of it.

The thesis presented by Weber became the subject of our more detailed analysis. We discovered that the ‘spirit of capitalism’ described by this German scholar based on more universal mechanisms – mechanisms which are responsible for social mobilization in general (and economic development is only one of many manifestations of this mobilization). The problem is that instead of trying to analyze them Weber paid attention to their cultural expressions. Hence, it became important for us to discover and describe them.

We assumed that some normative and non-normative mechanisms are responsible for social mobilization. In the beginning, we decided to pay our attention to these first. In the case, in which a given society is interested in achieving some goals, it should create social norms that will give it this opportunity. These norms discipline individuals, or more accurately, they discipline the way of playing these social norms, which are functionally significant for mobilization process. How does this process of disciplining look like? A social role is a repertoire of behaviour patterns. Thanks to social norms this repertoire is redefined. Non-expected patterns of behaviour, or more accurately, these patterns of behaviour, which are not coherent with social norms created by the society in the process of mobilization, are excluded from this repertoire. A normative capital is related to the extent to which an individual adheres to these social norms.

We identified some non-normative mechanisms too. According to us, the most important are the following: discourse strategies, social sanctions and configuration of social relations. They increase the probability that a member of a given society will adhere to these social norms (norms which are important in the process of mobilization). Discourse strategies are usually narrations, which motivate individuals to activity and make an interpretation of social reality. Moreover, they often categorize social reality and make distinctions between in and out-groups. Social sanctions are a set of specific stimulus which gratify an individual for expected behaviour and punish him/her for an unexpected activity. In turn, configurations of social relations organize interaction in a given society. This term, in many aspects corresponds with the terms such as organizational culture or nation culture used by Geert Hofstede.

There is an opportunity for a given society to achieve its aims, when these normative and non-normative mechanisms are effective and coherent with people’s expectations. According to us, reflections about

them seem to be significant for developing states, which should create their own ways to improve the life of their citizens. It is important to note too that there are many costs which accompany these mechanisms. They should be a part of discussion, too.

Referances

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Marcin Kotras

Assistant Professor

Department of Sociology of Politics and Morality

Faculty of Economics and Sociology, University of Łódź POLAND

FRAMING AND RE-FRAMING PRACTICES IN DISCOURSE ABOUT TRANSFORMATION IN POLAND

After more than 25 years since the beginning of the regime transformation in Poland, there is a need for identification and description of the present socio-political cleavages in Polish society. Presented paper is the result of the research on the discourse analysis of