

Editorial:

## Structural Constraints and Individual Choices

Structural constraints and individual choices might be the keywords of the articles in this issue of STSS. In sociology, structural constraints are understood as the various political, economic, social and cultural factors limiting individual decision-making ability. These constraints are opposed to human agency, defined as the capacity of an individual to act independently and make any choice in a given structure. Authors concentrate on choices as well as constraints in different areas – in education, labour market and migration.

The first paper by Pöder, Lauri, Ivaniushina and Alexandrov (2016) investigates whether the school level admission policies affect the family background effect on students' school achievement, and whether institutional practices moderate this effect. The authors concentrate on urban and rural differences in various regions in Russia and Estonia. The analysis shows that parental family characteristics have a strong impact on the inequality of educational achievement in both countries. The effect is higher in urban areas. The authors' explanation is related to school admission policies. Schools admitting students by academic record seems to create a stronger family background effect independently from country.

The second article by Goncharova, Krupets, Nartova and Sabirova (2016) studies young Russian employees. Their analysis demonstrates the importance of an agent, experience, interpretations and features for the contemporary Russian labour market. The authors are using the term portfolioability to characterise young Russian employees. According to the authors, portfolioability is expressed in flexibility, experience, transferable skills and multiple employment practices. They conclude that portfolioability is becoming a feature that helps employees to adjust to global and local instabilities, especially in transition societies. They also indicate that in the future it is necessary to examine whether portfolioability is 'voluntary' or if it is 'forced' due to external requirements of the social environment and the effect of social institutions.

In the third article, Saar (2016) maintains that the results from different studies on Eastern European migration are contradictory on the main motives of migrants. She asks, has the individualisation of migration from the East indeed happened? Do socio-demographic characteristics have an impact on migration motives? She concludes that socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, family status and socio-economic status are still relevant for migration intentions. However, her analysis indicates that there are some signs of new mobility patterns. A new group of Eastern European migrants, mainly oriented towards self-development, is emerging. But this group is quite small and includes mainly young, highly educated women. The author argues that there is a contradiction in claiming that migration from Eastern European countries has become individualised, while also suggesting that this individualised pattern is characteristic mainly for the highly skilled. Her results indicate that even the highly skilled are not acting independently of their social surroundings.

The next article by Lindemann and Unt (2016) concentrates on late career workers. They maintain that in the context of institutionalised expectations about prolongation of working life, the key question is how people have adjusted their retirement expectations and preferences. The focus of the article is on questions of which social groups plan to continue working after the statutory retirement age and whether it is voluntary or a forced choice. Their analysis indicates that expectations and preferences of employed people in Estonia rather reflect adaption with the institutionally fostered choice to continue working. However, for some late career workers who plan to prolong their working life beyond retirement age it is a forced choice. The authors separate two groups, who feel trapped

in involuntary work: highly educated people with a low job satisfaction and people who have poor health and a low job satisfaction. The main conclusion of the article is that the distinction between expectations and preferences is important for studying prospective retirement behaviour.

The last article by Kovalčíková and Lačný (2016) has a methodological orientation. The authors discuss the basic theoretical approaches to interpret the concept of trust in the context of social capital. The analysis presented in the article concentrates on elements related to trust in the literature, reflecting methodological approaches for measuring trust. The authors analyse and interpret subjective conceptual maps of trust developed on the basis of respondents' associations obtained in the Visegrad Four countries using the Associative Group Analysis (AGA) technique. They conclude that the outcome of examining the concept of trust using the AGA method could be used in subsequent research, especially in formulating definitions of trust.

Duvanova's book review of *Building Business in Post-Communist Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia* by Sorbello (2016) closes this issue. The book and its review are a welcome contribution to the debate about different types of capitalism emerging in post-communist societies. As the reviewer indicates, the study of business associations lets Duvanova open the Pandora's box of varieties of business associations that emerged in post-communist societies. Duvanova asks what are the determinants of business joining associations and what role do they play in the post-communist business environment.

## References

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