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Common vision in a non-community: Exploring the role of STS in the changing world

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The conference "STS in the Changing World: the co-production of science and technology" brought together scholars from the Russian Federation, the UK, and the Netherlands. Taking place in Tomsk, the idea of the gathering was to create a forum for scoping the range of Science and Technology Studies (STS) research that could be taken up in the Russian forming community of STS researchers. Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) have made a splash in the Russian STS theorising and informed a number of empirical case studies including analysis of utilities, laboratories, obstetrics practice, and scientometrics (Merton-inspired). The more established in the West STS approaches are still rare in Russia: Russian STS had so far been a home grown set of concepts and approaches informed by Soviet, post-Soviet and Western philosophical thought.

The active "STS centres" that have emerged recently are located in four cities and organised around three or four topics attracting students. So far, STS in Russia has not been ambitious enough to develop its own theoretical stances. The trend still continues to assess the Western frameworks that reach Russian sociological circles, such as SCOT and ANT. Efforts are being made to get to grips with language games, philosophical concepts, and semantic analysis of such frameworks, at the same time developing translation capacities. In some sense, it all looks like a mixture of earlier classic approaches in STS, including the Mertonian sociology of science, with some influence from the nascent approaches such as metaphorics and critical Actor-Network Theory.

The several STS researchers around whom especially Masters students gather are at the crossroads these days: on the one hand, topics suggested by younger scholars challenge their views of how the research ought to be done; on the other hand, many topics seem attractive. As such, the nascent core STS scholars may become growth points for Russian STS. From the conference experience, topics suggested by younger researchers turned out to be more intellectually demanding than research pursued by more established scholars. It might even make more sense to organise the next conference for the younger STS developing community.

A number of philosophers offered their analyses of emerging dimensions in technoscience, including Nano-, Bio-, Information, Cognitive, and Social technologies (NBICS), as in Irina Chernikova's paper, which rather aptly resonated with what Steve Fuller offered in his conference inaugural speech concerning transhumanism. The references to Technology Assessment (TA) in such presentations also touched upon what Arie Rip discussed under the broader umbrella term of "technodreams". In many ways, the TA dimension of the conference can be further pursued in conjunction with the Moscow TA activities in the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The expertise is a hot topic in the Russian sociology generally, as well as in the developing community of those self-proclaimed STS enthusiasts. It was the theme running across many papers in the conference as well. Attempts were noted to rethink the phenomenon itself without drawing on the existing theoretical frameworks. Paper by Andrei Kozhanov extended the notion of expertise and ways of elucidating the nature of expert knowledge through bracketing the notions of experts and

expertise and bringing new sociological approaches to STS in order to develop the concept of "mundane expert knowledge". Expert knowledge, on the one hand, was analysed in the narrow and broad sense, on the other — within "implicit" and "explicit" contexts where expert knowledge is related to the nature of language games or reflexivity (deliberation, pubic debate), accordingly. The same way of reasoning was seen in the paper by Maria Abramova and Olga Melnikova who shifted the focus from expertise towards experts themselves and critically assessed the ways experts are selected and produced. They asked questions about how the emergence of experts in the public sphere might redefine the whole societal notion of expertise as well as about whose responsibility it is to nominate experts.

Mikhail Sokolov discussed meta-expertise and academic power. His paper questioned the gap between research on academic power and research on sceintific expertise, including analysis of the most widespread forms of institutionalisation of meta-expert judgements comparatively in the U.S., Germany, and Russia in terms rankings and tenure. Roman Abramov's paper on the dilemmas of expertise analysed the phenomenon of scientific journalism in Russia dating back to the Soviet science journalism, also critically exploring the transition towards online science journalism platforms such as YouTube, TED, and Postnauka.ru. Marina Zagidullina analysed some of the current ways used by the expert community to look for new ideas, innovative methods, and innovation with a question in mind: Is there a chance to overcome the institutional "normal" science? Dmitry Eremenko's paper also questioned the status of technology assessment between normative ethics and systems approaches in the case of converging technologies.

The section on the sociology of technology was theretically positioned around ANT. Ivan Tchalakov comparatively assessed Russian and Chinese capacities for innovation based on technology transfer from abroad testing the theoretical analysis against the recent developments in space industries in Russia, China, and USA. Innovation politics in the research centres of Siberian branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences was dissected by Anatoly Ablazhei, who paid attention to the analysis of the debates about the future of scientific and educational sectors, academic leadership, municipal authority and the business community. Artem Rykun asked whether in order to stand one must keep to the roots, and illustrated his thesis with the examples of underappreciated masterpieces of Czech automotive industries. Alina Kontareva's paper was looking at data, knowledge, and social mobility developing new formats for science organisation and social mobility. Li Wan's analysis of nantechnology policies in China offered a framework considering policy as calculation in the production of new entities.

One of the highlights of the conference was the round table dedicated to the global governance of science and technology (Evgeniya Popova and Elena Simakova). The discussion focussed on the challenges presented by the global governance initiatives to more traditional approaches in international relations (IR) and its consequences for Responsibe Research and Innovation (RRI). Questions were asked about purposes and values of technoscience (техносайнс) and the potential of global governance-focussed approaches to offer new frameworks for analyses of expertise and Technology Assessment as well as open, transparent and just socio-technical change. Dmitry Galkin looked at the connections between expert requirements and funding applicants to develop new directions in scientific research and assessed the potential of the global *versus* local approaches in funding criteria. In parallel, paper by Olga Zvonareva analysed the production of global scientific knowledge considering clinical trials and bioethics discourse in South Africa and Russia.

The conference concluded with a presentation by Anna Trakhtenberg (the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Ekaterinburg) on e-government. She offered the 7/24/365 framework for institutional legitimation of the state under the condition of the information revolution. She highlighted that the ideology of the electronic government is naturalised, i.e. is taken for granted by the participants in the process of its formation.

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