

## SASE Annual Conference

Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, 23.-25. Juni 2011

In late June, the Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics (SASE) held its 23<sup>rd</sup> annual conference in Madrid. Founded in 1989, the SASE seeks to support the inter-disciplinary research on the socio-political foundations of the economy. By means of its flagship journal, the *Socio-Economic Review*, and its annual conference, it has become one of the major platforms for academic discourse about contemporary capitalism(s).<sup>1</sup> With its overarching motto 'Transformations of Contemporary Capitalism: Actors, Institutions, Processes', this year's conference has put the issue of institutional change into the spotlight. A record number of almost 1,000 scholars participated in over 300 panels. Reflecting the stronger involvement of researchers from countries outside Europe and North America, the organization's regional focus has broadened significantly. A lot of contributions dealt with institutional processes in South American and Asian economies.

The conference was opened with a speech of the Spanish Minister of Labour and Immigration, Valeriano Gomez Sanchez, who presented the challenges to his ministry of finding new strategies to adapt the labour and social protection systems in the face of radical changes in the organization of work. One of the five featured conference speakers, Maria Angeles Duran (Spanish Scientific Research High Council, Madrid), was also concerned with the societal appreciation of work. However, she insisted that this issue stretches beyond the labour market as a lot of socially beneficial work – household chores and voluntary services that are strongly demanded by children, the sick, the elderly and the socially excluded – do not show in conventional labour market statistics. One of the central issues of the conference was the recent financial crisis. Luciano Couthino, President of the Brazilian National Development Bank, discussed the lessons learned from the financial crisis and argued for stricter regulation to prevent asset inflation and strong public banks to counter procyclical credit hikes. Karin Knorr-Cetina (University of Chicago/University of Konstanz) summarized her work on the effects of technological change on norms and routines, information diffusion and processing, and product innovation in the financial sector. The remaining two featured speakers were concerned with the basic tenets of institutional theory. Charles Sabel (Columbia Law School) argued in favour of bringing organizations back into the study of the welfare state. By comparing the education systems of two Nordic states – Finland and Denmark – that are frequently considered to feature similar institutional configurations, he showed that Finland's relative success in educational performance can be traced back to particular organizational choices. Jens Beckert, Director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies (MPIfG), presented his ideas on an aspect of economic action that he finds has received too little attention in contemporary decision theory: the prob-

<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the state of the art see the *Socio-Economic Review's* free virtual special issue on capitalism at [http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our\\_journals/soceco/capitalismcollection.html](http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/soceco/capitalismcollection.html).

lem of how to account for the future in present choice situations. He argued against approaches that view decisions as choices between lotteries defined as given probability distributions over determinate (future) states of the world. Instead, he proposed that assumptions about the future should be understood as fictions, as narratives of imagined future states.

A lot of the papers presented in the course of the conference dealt with Asian – or rather Northeast Asian – economies. Two of the eight mini-conferences consisting of altogether nine sessions, six further panels organized by some of the SASE's 16 research networks, and, all in all, about 75 paper contributions had an explicit Asian focus. The couple of papers concerned with Southeast Asian economies were preoccupied with labour conditions in the apparel industry. Papers on Japan, Korea, Taiwan and China generally engaged in analysis of high-tech sectors such as information technology or semiconductors. Most of them were however united in their attention of cross-border value chains. Both panels, the one on 'Knowledge and Innovation in East Asia' proposed by Geny Piotti (MPIfG) and the one on 'Interaction of Foreign and Domestic Value Chains in China and India' organized by Mari Sako (University of Oxford), were concerned with global and regional economic integration.

In line with the SASE's dedication to the study of national capitalisms, several papers examined the catching-up development and specialization of Northeast Asian economies, in particular, the differences between the Korean and Taiwanese development paths. Another panel 'Capitalist Transformations in East Asia: Institutions, Actors, and Values' organized by Markus Pohlmann (University of Heidelberg) delved into Korea's political economy by examining its institutional continuity and change. The two mini-conferences on East Asia were also concerned with grasping national capitalist systems. Organized jointly by Christopher McNally (East-West Center), Douglas Fuller (King's College London), Jean-Francois Huchet (French Centre for Research on Contemporary China), Jenn-hwan Wang (National Chengchi University), and Tobias ten Brink (MPIfG), the mini-conference 'China and Contemporary Capitalism: Political, Business and Socio-Economic Trends' provided an opportunity to intensively discuss the nature of China's capitalist system. The six sessions addressed the issues of how to combine China's institutional arrangements with concepts of institutional theory and comparative capitalism, the role of the state in China's economic development, labour regimes across different industry sectors (Boy Luthje, Institut für Sozialforschung), specific sector trajectories, and the role of culture and ideology. Moreover, contributors to other panels also added insights to the working of China's capitalist system, e.g. Michael Witt (INSEAD) on China's capitalism, Cong Cao (State University of New York) on state-led development of nanotechnology or Dennis McNamara (Georgetown University) on the role of China's public research institutes for knowledge absorption.

The second mini-conference was organized by Sebastian Lechevalier (EHESS, Paris) and Cornelia Storz (Goethe University, Frankfurt a.M.) in order to provide a forum for discussing the recent institutional changes in Asian economies. Titled "Capitalism in Asia: Sustained Diversity or Increasing Coherence?" the question was addressed whether Asian economies were increasingly converging towards a liberal market economy. The predominant focus was on Japan that used to be the textbook example of a coordinated economy. Hideaki Miyajima (Waseda University), for example, presented his research on the hybridization of the institutional configuration underlying the J-firm. Despite the emphasis on Japan, other Northeast Asian economies were also considered. Unfortunately, the two mini-conferences coincided so that participants were unable to attend each others' sessions. This was most unfortunate with regard to the debate on the nature and evolution of China's capitalism. At the same time that Christopher McNally, Tobias ten Brink and Marcus Conlé (University of Duisburg-Essen/GIGA) presented their papers, Barbara Krug (Rotterdam School of Management) and Robert Boyer (CEPREMAP/Wissenschaftskolleg Berlin) were right next door when they brought forward their ideas on the same topic. Towards the end of the SASE conference, participants of both mini-conferences therefore met in order to discuss how to better coordinate for the next conference, for example by establishing a new SASE network on Asian capitalism. The next SASE conference will take place at the MIT in Cambridge (MA), June 28<sup>th</sup> –30<sup>th</sup> 2012. Given the motto 'Global Shifts: Implications for Business, Government and Labour', the upcoming conference can be expected to provide even more room for debates on economic development in Asia and its effects on the global political and economic order.

Marcus Conlé

## **Menschenrechte in den Philippinen – Entwicklungen und Trends unter der Regierung Aquino**

Akademie der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Berlin, 29.-30. Juni 2011

Angesichts zunehmender Menschenrechtsverletzungen hat der neugewählte Präsident der Philippinen, Benigno Aquino, die Menschenrechte zu einer seiner vordringlichsten Aufgaben erklärt. Das Team Asien und Pazifik der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung hat am 29. und 30. Juni 2011 zusammen mit dem Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte Philippinen in Berlin Bilanz gezogen. Die Fachkonferenz „*Menschenrechte in den Philippinen – Entwicklungen und Trends unter der Regierung Aquino*“ in der Akademie der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung versammelte zahlreiche Experten aus Deutschland, der EU und den Philippinen.

Eröffnet wurde die Konferenz von Ute Granold, Obfrau der CDU/CSU-Fraktion im Ausschuss für Menschenrechte und humanitäre Hilfe. In ihrem Grußwort plädierte sie dafür, auch die positive Rolle der Philippinen im Bereich der Menschenrechte,