

INTRODUCTION

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This issue of *Laboratorium* was not originally planned as a thematic one, but the manuscripts it includes dovetail with each other so well that they almost constitute a special issue on the sociology of knowledge and more specifically the sociology of the social sciences and humanities. Two articles and a review essay examine, respectively, the organization of the disciplinary fields of economics, sociology, and history, focusing in particular on how knowledge in these disciplines is manufactured and disseminated. The third article is about the intelligentsia, a group that is at least partially responsible for the production of knowledge, particularly humanistic knowledge about society. Some of the same themes also appear in the book reviews section, including the spirited discussion of an edited volume on gender practices and identities.

The opening article by Olessia Kirtchik, employing bibliometric analysis—a method rarely used in Russian or Anglo-Saxon sociology but a staple in the French social sciences—scrutinizes the publishing practices of academic economists in today's Russia. She discovers that only a small minority of them publish in top international—which usually means English-language—journals, and it is usually those who received doctoral degrees from top Western, mostly American, graduate programs and are now clustered in one or two Russian research universities. As these Russian scholars join the more or less exclusive club of internationally recognized economists, Kirtchik shows, their published papers emulate Western standards not only in theoretical models and methodologies but also in research questions, which often means abandoning Russia as the subject of study for more “universal” topics. Pointing to the delocalization of knowledge and the bifurcation of the national academic community into those who are “internationalized” and those who remain on the periphery of the field, this article reproaches the growing hegemony of American-style economics and, by extension, the economic neoliberalism that this academic discipline has helped to advance in Russia and throughout the world.

Roman Abramov's paper is also a critique of the encroachment of market logic on the production of knowledge. If Kirtchik highlights how economics departments launched in post-Soviet Russia mimic top-ranked Western institutions,

Abramov describes how Russia's leading opinion survey companies have recently begun to adopt the organizational and managerial standards of marketing research firms—domestic and international. The Russian polling industry has never been entirely non-profit but at its inception twenty-five years ago it was deeply rooted in the academic field, which had important consequences for the way information was collected, processed, and presented and thus what skills (independent thinking and creativity, for example) were valued in its professionals. But the polling companies' recent forays into the sphere of commercial surveys necessitated a reorientation of their organizational strategies and corporate ideology towards neo-managerialism, potentially making this industry, the author warns, incapable of generating new meaning and original knowledge. Some readers might find the methodology of this article somewhat problematic: it is a case study through what can be called "accidental ethnography." This was not a deliberately planned research project, but it gave the author a unique perspective on what was happening inside the polling industry, which he has masterfully grounded in theories of organizations, professions, and the market.

If these two articles highlight the mimicry, imitation, and isomorphism that seem to govern sociology, economics, and perhaps other academic fields in contemporary Russia, Natalia Potapova's review of American history journals demonstrates that diversity within an academic discipline is possible and perhaps even desirable. Three journals, whose contents of the past ten years the author examines in painstaking detail, exemplify three very different models of journal publishing: One is dubbed the "united states of history" because it impartially represents the disciplinary subfields, trends, and positions within the community of American historians, and it strives to work out a consensus and define the discipline's mainstream. Another is compared to an intellectual working on the same trademark topic, albeit from different angles, over the years. And the third reminds the author of a successful firm with a trendy and marketable intellectual product. The analysis suggests that the lack of uniformity and standardization among the journals allows for more flexible knowledge production and distribution, benefiting not only individual scholars in their careers but also the discipline of history as a whole.

The last research article of the issue is not so much about the creation and dissemination of academic knowledge but about a social group that, at least in the context of East-Central Europe and Eurasia, plays a crucial role in the making of social meaning: the intelligentsia. Yulia Antonyan presents us with the key contemporary discourses about the intelligentsia in her native Armenia. While the paper is not deeply grounded in the vast (and hence seemingly unwieldy) literature about this social group—and some might fault the author for it—it becomes clear from the empirical data that the intelligentsia, as it is being constructed in post-Soviet Armenia, is not limited to intellectuals and academics, although some of them are a part of it. Moreover, the intelligentsia plays a different and arguably more important role in that society than the academics, which is to define the essence of the Armenian nation and delineate the boundaries of the Armenian state. What this investigation of discourses about the intelligentsia also shows is that as much as the postsocialist

societies might want or need to escape from their past to join the globalizing world, “the past is never dead. It’s not even past,” to borrow the words of William Faulkner.

The themes of globalization (globalization of knowledge in particular), modernity, the universality of knowledge, and the intellectuals emerge in several of the book reviews appearing in this issue. For example, the volume *Understanding Knowledge Creation: Intellectuals in Academia, the Public Sphere and the Arts*, announced by its editors Nikita Basov and Oleksandra Nenko in “Book Talk,” echoes the texts discussed above when its contributors write about the new challenges and contradictory logics of academic research, describe the growing marketization of the academic sphere, or question the autonomy and independence of public intellectuals. Another edited volume, *Klassika i klassiki v sotsial’nom i gumanitarnom znanii (The Classics of Social and Humanistic Knowledge)*, reviewed by Evgenii Malyshkin, brings up questions about the universal—in different times and different places—character of the canons in the social sciences and humanities and their continued relevance. *Krizis sovremennosti (The Crisis of Modernity)* by Igor Smirnov (reviewed by Dmitrii Golyenko-Vol’fson) not only construes modernity as a “global phenomenon,” but also points out that its conceptions are changing in the current era of neoliberalism and neo-managerialism, which, guided by the logic of market profit, limit cultural production to its near extinction.

Even the forum around the volume on *Praktiki i identichnosti: gendernoe ustroistvo (Practices and Identities: Gender Arrangements)* happens to be as much about the production of knowledge as about gender. Several pieces in this section grapple with the importation of Western social theories into other local (in this case Russian) contexts, especially when those theories originated in different and sometimes even antithetical circumstances (as happened with feminist theory in the West and Russia), and they ponder whether the sciences—social or otherwise—ought to have national boundaries.

It is probably no wonder that as a recently launched publication aspiring to advance cross-disciplinary and cross-national dialogue and, to that end, printing a good deal of its content in both Russian and English, *Laboratorium* would be attracted to—and also would attract—texts examining, from a variety of perspectives, topics related to the production and transmission of knowledge in the context of transnationalism and globalization. With the benefit of the wisdom of the articles and reviews appearing in this issue we hope to become better aware of the pitfalls and take greater advantage of the benefits of our publishing model—and to become a better publication for the growing community of our authors and our readers.