



8th Zittau Talks on Business and Corporate Ethics,  
likewise workshop of the VHB-commission  
Scientific Theory and Ethics within the Economic Science

## Call for Papers

### **Resocialization of the economic rationality**

Overcoming Methodological Constrictions in Economic and Social Sciences

Zittau, October 25-26th 2013

Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the fields of economics and social science affiliate economic rationality with the concept of benefit-maximizing behaviour that heavily draws on egocentric self-interest (cp. for instance Edgeworth 1881). The actor concept of the Homo oeconomicus (HO) was soon considered to be the ideal-typical representation of economic rationality. This implies that, under varying external conditions, actors steadily strive to optimize the cost-benefit implications of their egocentric behaviour.

Although this narrow view of economic rationality, also referred to as HO-rationality from this point forward, still resembles the current mainstream thoughts in economic sciences (see Sen 1999; Henrich et al. 2005), its validity has been questioned by scholars of economics and the social sciences as well as by supporters of a philosophy of practical rationality (see Ulrich 1993; Nida-Rümelin 1993). The narrowing equalization of economic rationality with an egocentric and self-interested behavioural orientation is not only criticized as inadequate based on action-theoretical considerations, but also challenged by empirical-experimental results gathered from economic research on the decision-making process (among others Fehr/Schmidt 1999; Bolton/Ockenfels 2000). As the main lack of an HO-derived rationality concept is mainly highlighted that it neglects the influence of culturally-alternating altruism and fairness norms which likewise influence economic behavior (vgl. u.a. Henrich 2000). Selected scholars from the discipline of economic sociology further expand those assumptions by arguing that aspects of sociality and culturality not only hold for context conditions of economic behaviour. More likely, socio-structural and cultural factors are rather associated with a constitutive meaning for the kind of economic rationality found within a socio environment (see Fligstein 2001, Dobbin 2004).

Regardless of cross-reference criteria, the discipline of business administration often simply accepts the actor-concept of the Homo oeconomicus along with its derived strategic and operative decision-making theories as self-evident assumptions. Inevitably, it often remains unclear which epistemological status the HO rationality constitutes of: empirical, axiomatical, or normative in terms of a justifiable (good) decision-making ethics (compare for a different emphasis in this regard for instance Hax 1993, 1995; Schneider 1990, 1995, 2001, or Albach 2005). This

epistemological indeterminacy is found to be particularly relevant in practice because the HO-rationality, similar to a self-fulfilling prophecy, has become a profound element of actors' societal action-driven general knowledge in the meantime. In line with these considerations, the American expert of Corporate Governance Lynn A. Stout states that utilizing the Homo oeconomicus as an overall model for economic rationality caused a methodological constriction of the economic and social-scientific thought processes (see Stout 2008). In fact, the sociopathic and autistic-driven Homo oeconomicus – as conveyed by the economic and economic-political governance theories – significantly influences the actions of real economic actors and as a result, can be held fundamentally responsible for the onset of economic crises as experienced in the past or in contemporary European history (regarding this thesis see the recent popular scientific publication of Schirrmacher 2013).

At this stage, the question for ethical reflection of the self-conception of business administration and management sciences on basis of the concept of HO-rationality is formulated. This particular question lays the foundation for the 8<sup>th</sup> Zittau Talks on Business and Corporate Ethics, which are simultaneously conducted as a Workshop of the Commission of Scientific Theory and Ethics in the Economic Science of the German Academic Association for Business Research this year. It should be discussed in this meeting, how the outlined criticism of the HO-conception of economic rationality and reform recommendations connected with it are to be assessed and evaluated from a scientific viewpoint. The variety of topics for possible discussion entries is vast. On one hand, topics range from issues of theoretical plausibility and empirical validity with respect to the contemporary economic crises diagnosis developed from a criticism of HO-rationality. On the other hand, topics also explore which theoretical economic, socio-economic or practical economic approaches can be implemented for the resocialization of economic rationality. Resocialization of economic rationality is hereby defined – along the lines of its criminological definition – as “societal reintegration” of economic rationality or as demand for “social-theoretically new embedment” (vgl. u.a. Granovetter 1985). The conceptual-logical meaning of this will be thoroughly discussed at the Zittau Talks. A publication of chosen contributions presented at the conference is intended. We invite you to submit contributions to the following questions:

- I. How and under which circumstances has the HO-understanding of economic rationality been developed and enforced within the discourse of economic and social sciences?
  - Emergence of the HO-concept of economic rationality in the discourse of Practical Philosophy and Political Economy within the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century
  - Terms and definitions of economic rationality in the context of varying cultural circumstances and processes of societal change
  - Emergence and validity of economic rationality concepts within business administration and management education.
- II. How can diagnoses of the present time, which claim a causal relation between the enforcement of the HO-concept of economic rationality on one hand side and the emergence of recent economic crises on the other hand, be scientifically evaluated?
  - HO-Rationality and economic constructions of reality
  - HO-Rationality and the crises of growth economy
- III. Which alternative conceptions of economic rationality are justifiable from a social scientific viewpoint?
  - Rationalities of economic action
  - Economic rationality from the perspective of normative economics
- IV. Which approaches are provided both by social scientific theory and by given practices of business administration as possible approaches for resocialization of economic rationality?
  - Economic sociology and the resocialization of economic rationality

- Economic rationality and practices of its resocialization in the management areas of production and logistics, marketing, international management, human resource management, finance, innovation management, environmental economics etc.
- Ethical initiatives and programs for resocialization of economic rationality
- Business administration with and without business ethics respectively

The conference attempts to combine theoretical and practical perspectives in order to discuss problems of the resocialization of economic rationality. Because of this both theoretical and empirical papers as well as practice-oriented case study entries are welcomed. Although the conference language in general will be German, presentations in English language are accepted. The registration of contributions, including the title of the paper to be presented, an extended abstract of the paper (about 500 to 1000 words) and a short curriculum vita, is kindly requested until

July 31th, 2013.

A blind-review of abstracts and feedback on the acceptance of your contribution will be given until

August 26th, 2013.

The closing date for applications to attend the Zittau Talks is

September 15th, 2013.

Please upload your abstract and curriculum vita as well as the conference's registration form via the subsequent link. More information about the conference can be found on the same page. . The final program will be uploaded in due course.

<http://www.dnwe.de/regionalforum-sachsen.html>

The participation fee amounts to 100,00 Euro. Presenting a valid certificate of matriculation will reduce the payable amount to a discounted student fare of 30,00 Euro.

A contingent of hotel rooms is charged for you until 15th September 2013:

Hotel Dreiländereck: 11 single rooms at the price of 54 € per room/night with breakfast incld.  
26 double rooms at the price of 64€ per room/night with breakfast incld.

A further contingent of hotel rooms will be charged for you until 01st September 2013:

Hotel Zittauer Hof: 10 single rooms at the price of 54 € per room/night with breakfast incld.

Hotel Dresdner Hof: 3 single rooms at the price of 54 € per room/night with breakfast incld.

For any further questions or queries, please contact:

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