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Résumé

IIPPE's International Conference in Political Economy

Theme: Envisioning the Economy of the Future, and the Future of Political Economy

AFEP (French Association for Political Economy/L'Association Française d'Économie Politique), ADEK (Association for the Development of Keynesian Studies), AHE (Association for Heterodox Economics) and EAEPE (the European Association for Evolutionary Political Economy)

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Social Capital Working Group

Title: Social capital and rural development: policy options

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Abstract

The main aim of this paper is to seek examples of social capital in the developing world and to assess whether social capital can serve as a useful mechanism to inform development policies.

By looking at a selection of cases, and presenting an overview of the existing body of literature on the critique of social capital, the argument of this paper is that there is a place for social capital in development literature because social capital has the ability to be a useful lens through which disciplines can understand the complex world of social interactions. The eroding of boundaries between disciplines can be regarded as creative tension that exist between scientific communities because new ideas and research continuously cause paradigms to shift their boundaries.

The paper offers a broad framework of nine life lessons, echoing theoretical views of social capital and its relation to practical situations in both developing and the industrialized

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world. By doing so, the discussion aims to deepen the understanding of how social capital is used in different situations by local communities such as rural farmers, informal markets, youth groups and formal institutions to increase social, political and economic production.

The discussion includes a reference to fieldwork done in a rural village in the northeast of South Africa whereby rural people were questioned about their social relations. The results show that social capital manifests in rural communities in qualitative and quantitative ways that often differ substantially from the way social capital manifests in urban communities. Mainstream economy often exclude the hopes and aspirations of people, especially the economic powerless in rural communities and encapsulated communities in cities. By understanding social capital as a resource, rather than a need, an attempt is made to address the challenges faced policy makers in rural and urban communities to benefit societies which tend to alienate people rather than connecting them.

(Key words: Policy, indigenous knowledge, social capital)

Mots-Clés: Policy/indigenous knowledge/social capital