Uncovering the roots of “technological optimism”: paradoxes of attitudes towards technologies in Russia compared to other European nations

Alexey Gusev and Victor Vakhstein

Thursday 23 November, 11.30 - 1 pm

This seminar focuses on the results of a sociological study of attitudes towards science, technologies and innovations recently conducted in Russia. The research was a part of the Eurobarometer series. We find that Russians (along with some other Eastern European nations) generally have more positive attitudes towards science and new technologies despite a lack of respective infrastructure and policy measures in their countries. Yet, according to the survey, attitudes to specific “disruptive” innovations like driverless cars and AI are more conservative. Social, regional and cultural preconditions of this phenomenon will be discussed, as well as policy implications relevant not only for Russia and Eastern Europe but also other countries. The research also sheds light on attitudes towards technologies and economic behaviour, including entrepreneurial behaviour.

Alexey Gusev is Director for Ecosystem Development at the Russian Venture Company (RVC). RVC is the largest venture fund in Russia and one of the key players in Russian innovation ecosystem development. Dr Gusev is a board member several venture capital funds in Russian regions and is deputy chair of the department of hi-tech entrepreneurship at the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technologies. He has authored multiple articles on higher education and the role of universities in innovation ecosystem.

Victor Vakhstein is the Dean of the School of Social Sciences at the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences, and head of the Center for Sociological Research at the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration. He has participated in research projects commissioned by the World Bank, the OECD, the OSCE, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, and a number of European universities. He is the current head of the long-term monitoring project “Russian Barometer” (2012-2017).

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