

# Manifesto of the Laboratory for Comparative Social Research

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Now I want to spell out how this project will function.

You know, we have discussed it, of course, with Inglehart, Welzel and Alexandrov and there is a consensus more or less about how things should go. Maybe, there is something for adjustment for the next sessions, but I'll explain how it works now.

At first, I'll say a few words about this session. Tomorrow is the most important day and we didn't alert people about it on purpose, because we didn't want to scare people out of this project. We wanted to attract as many people as was possible and we've got about 90 excellent applications from various regions of Russian Federation and CIS countries. We've selected about 20 of them. Those people have presented their letters of motivation and their resumes; and they were verified by Inglehart and Welzel.

We will give about 10 minutes tomorrow to each of you for a presentation and then Inglehart, Welzel, Alexandrov and I will ask questions and give advice as to how your project could be fitted into the lab's project. This is not an authoritarian situation. I mean, you produce your own ideas; we only advise how to fit those ideas into the context of the project.

Essentially, what we are going to have tomorrow is the seminar/job interviews. It will run from 10 am to 8 pm: the whole day. Sorry about that, but Inglehart and Welzel are leaving on Saturday, so this is pretty much the only chance to work through these papers and projects. Of course, there will be a lunch break; and you don't have to be present through 10 hours, you can come and go, but I think it will be very educational and very useful for you to listen through at least some of those presentations and discussions.

The discussions will take place in the HSE building which is a couple of blocks away from here. This hotel is located on Lermontovsky prospect. If you go 2 blocks up away from the Fontanka river to Dekabristov street, there will be Soyuz Petchatnikov street, you make a left turn and on your left-hand side there will be building #16. There we have reserved room #301, which is the largest room in this building (it is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor).

Someone will meet you downstairs at 9.40 if you are anxious and you don't know how to walk around. This is what tomorrow is going to be about and by the end of the day we'll have pretty much good idea what each of you would like to do in this project.

On Saturday we will work in the same building and same room starting at 10 am and finishing at 5 pm with a lunch-break, of course. Our main purpose for Saturday is to help you finalize your research questions and possibly to put people into groups, not geographically, but by topics if there are people with similar interests. I think it might be useful if they unite into a research group and communicate with each other and possibly use the same dataset or sample. So, this is the purpose for Saturday.

On Sunday, if things go well, we work only between 10 am and 2 pm. Our purpose then is to create individual plans that would include what you have to read in the next few months, what kind of statistical techniques you might want to learn or refresh and what kind of data you can use. As for the data, it does not necessarily have to be the World Values Survey. As it is the

longest survey (series) covering about 90 countries in world, I think that many of you will find it useful. But, of course, you can use other sources of data including the European Social Survey, the World Bank data and so on and so forth. You can create your own datasets by collecting data from one source and pasting it into another dataset etc. So, this will be discussed on Sunday.

And then we set the first deadline for all of you. That would be the 10<sup>th</sup> of January, Monday. By that time you have to submit a full version of your proposal outlining what you're going to do by the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, which is the next deadline.

By the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, you have to submit a report of what you have done. And April will be an important time for us as 2 events will happen then. First, it is quite probable that some people by that stage might drop out and decide that they could no longer participate in this project. Secondly, last week of April, we haven't decided on the dates yet, but probably on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, there will be another session. It will be in St.Petersburg and we will discuss progress reports. So there will be a series of presentations and discussions. You will be presenting and all of us will be discussing.

After that there will be some differentiation within this group depending on how much progress you have made and how promising your project is. We will send about a half of this group to summer schools in the USA and Europe. There is funding for these purposes in this project. Roughly, I think that about 5 people would go to the July session of the ICPSR Summer School of statistics in Ann Arbor. It is a huge school; thousands of people, literally, come there every year. There is multitude of courses; I think about a hundred courses you can choose from for all levels of advancement. You can choose pretty much what you want to learn, and we'll provide advice.

Five more people will go to various European schools. I don't think that we can send 5 people to the same place in Europe, because generally there is high competition there, but I hope we might send one person to Mannheim, Germany, one person to Utrecht in the Netherlands etc.

And then there will be another meeting in August. In August there will be 2 events which will take place one after another. At first, there will be our usual meeting when we discuss progress reports. And then there will be a Summer School on methodology here in St. Petersburg. Probably, it will take place in the town of Tsarskoye Selo (Pushkin), a suburb of St. Petersburg, where HSE has acquired a nice mansion that can fit perhaps 150 people. We hope to attract not only those people who participate in this project but also people from elsewhere to learn methodology.

We are going to invite professors from abroad to teach in that School and we also hope to attract European students to attend that school, this is the idea. This probably will happen in the end of August. At that time, some new people who have answered the new call for applications will probably come. We hope that, by that time, the project will have gained some publicity, so we expect larger number of applications. It means that we'll get even stronger people to participate in this project. And those people hopefully will achieve in one year as much as those who had participated from the start.

Then the cycle will be repeated. There will be one more meeting in December, another meeting in April, another Summer School in July, Summer School in St.Petersburg in August and the final meeting in December 2012. By that time, we hope that we have about 15 very good publishable papers that people could place in good European or American journals.

Now I'd like to say a couple of more words about how we see the further development of this project when this grant is completed. We hope to attract new money and new people to participate in this project. We are going to concentrate on three areas that we think would be easy to branch off out of this project. At the same time these are socially important and scientifically promising areas.

The first of them perhaps is going to be a new laboratory or at least a new group within this laboratory that will work on religion and nationalism, it is something I'm particularly interested in. I hope to invite to this laboratory (perhaps in the year 2012) professor David Laitin from the Stanford University, who is the leading authority on nationalism. He also has very interesting methodology. These are experiments that are not very often used in sociology, more in economics and sometimes in political science. I think he has very interesting protocols that could be replicated in Russia. Hopefully, we will be able to attract some American money to support his work here. This will be a start of a new project that might result in a new lab.

The second area we hope to develop is migration studies. Migrants are hard to study with quantitative methodology as we do not know how many of them are here reliably or how to form a representative sample. People are scared to answer and there are many other methodological problems. But Daniel Alexandrov has done some ingenious pioneering work in this respect. He's heading the laboratory of sociology of education, so he's working with schools. And he found out that such a research is quite easy to do organization-wise, I mean, it is relatively easy to do surveys in schools.

In schools, you can cover all the students, and there are quite a few migrant children in Russian schools these days. And when talking to children you get a god excuse to invite parents. Actually, many migrant parents are very concerned about their kids in schools. They want them to succeed, so they are quite happy to show up to schools and talk about their children. This is where they can be asked some interesting questions by us. And this is what we are probably planning to do. We also hope to attract some interesting people from abroad to help us launch this part of the project.

The principal topic for the two-year project here at this lab is well-being and happiness. It is the central theme. And from that topic, we believe, it is quite easy to switch to physical well-being and health rather than happiness. Social epidemiology suggests that pretty much the same set of variables that explains happiness is also relevant to explain health. We might think of launching this third project out of this one.

One more point that I might add is that although we can support only 20 people simultaneously, this will be a renewable network and there will be repeated calls for applications. I think it is all right if you work with your colleagues on your project, either your students or your fellow researchers. This will be fine. Of course, the finances are limited; and I do not think that Professor Inglehart can review and advise more than 20 projects every 4 months. But involving other people at home in your individual projects is fine, I think it will be actually very good. You will get extra resources, it means perhaps that the probability of success of your project will be higher and also we involve more people indirectly in our project.

This is, basically, my manifesto.