

## Written Exam Economics Summer 2019

### **Economic Sociology**

Take-home exam

From 19 June 10 am to 20 June 10 am

#### Guidelines for answering the questions:

According to Portes power represents an omnipresent factor in economic transaction and organization This should be clarified and explained by the student. Weber defines power as the ability of individuals or associations of individuals to impose their will on others ‘despite resistance’.

Among the classics, Durkheim emphasized the external and coercive character of social phenomena that compel actors to follow certain paths of action and not others, despite their own wishes or inclinations. Durkheim located the source of this power in a diffuse ‘collective will’. Marx located the possession of power in the capitalist bourgeoisie and its source of effective control of the means of production. For Marx ‘collective will’ and similar ‘laws’ of society claimed as scientific discoveries by many of his nineteenth-century contemporaries were just fantasies. They simply masked the reality underneath – the ‘hidden abode’ – where holders of wealth compelled not only the workers but also the rest of society to their bidding. Weber essentially accepted Marx’s definition of power, but extended its source beyond the means of production to the possession of scarce skills that confer differential levels of market power. The good ‘answer’ to the first question should reflect this.

In modern sociology, Bourdieu has arguably been the most prominent follower of this tradition by distinguishing sources of power attached to various forms of ‘capital’. These forms of capital ‘social’, ‘cultural’ should be explained and the concept of ‘symbolic violence’ as a tool of power should be explained.

The simple answer to the last question is that Aspers concept of ‘economic identities’ is not based on power. The notion of identity acknowledges the social constitution of one identity by other identities. Identities are foundations for what has been called relational sociology. According to Aspers actors have different identities in different markets. The identities are generated in different ways, depending on the type of market they operate in – and a main point is that the actor has to take into account what she wants to be in the market or the situation in the market including her own identity – when acting. This should be reflected in the student’s answer.