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Dissertations on Organization and Management in Estonia and Fin- land 1960–1989: Similarities and Differences

The aim of this study was to compare Estonian and Finnish doctoral dissertations in the field of organization and management in 1960-1989 in terms of their topic, theoretical frame of reference, research design/target population, methodology and main results/implications. In all, 62 dissertations (28 published in Estonia or in the former Soviet Union written in Estonian or Russian; and 34 in Finland (written in Finnish, Swedish or English) were reviewed. Further, the impact of the social context, different institutional structure and processes acting under different economic principles and surroundings was analyzed. The chronological study revealed that the 1960s was the start of research in this field in both countries, the 1970s can be considered to mean a wider research perspective and greater variety of themes,

while the 1980s represented a considerable expansion in research activities in organization and management in both countries.

The review showed also that the doctoral dissertations presented in management and organization between 1960 and 1989 represented a rather fragmented landscape, particularly in the case of Finland. The organizational theories in the 1960s and 1970s were strongly embedded in structural determinism, systems approach and decision making, particularly in Estonia. The Estonian dissertations were also more focused in terms of their topics than in the case of their Finnish counterparts. When the amount of dissertations nearly doubled in the 1980s in both countries, the research landscape became even more fragmented with neither clear schools of thought nor mainstream methodological consensus. There were a fairly strong search for alternative approaches in the 1980s particularly in Finland, but it seems to have led rather to theoretical diversification than to an integration process.

As to the differences between the two countries, procedural conformity in Estonia appeared to be strong during the observed time: the legitimacy of the dissertations was confirmed strongly through their pragmatic industrial value and focused more on direct usefulness to the business community. Networking and active agency of single scholars played also a major role in Estonia, while achieving academic legitimacy and credibility was one of the main trends in Finland in the field of organization and management. A good number of the doctoral students in Estonia also came from industry unlike in Finland. There was also more compromising in Estonia – balancing the expectations of multiple constituents including the political ones, which was understandable in a

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centralized planning system that existed in Estonia.

The study showed, however, that in spite of the different economic system research agendas in organization and management emerged at approximately the same time in both countries, developed at a comparable pace and it was possible to conduct research on similar themes in Estonia and in Finland despite of the Soviet regime. ■