

CONVOCATORIA A PONENCIAS

CALL FOR PAPERS

PRIMERAS JORNADAS DE FILOSOFÍA DE LA ECONOMÍA FIRST CONFERENCE ON PHILOSOPHY OF ECONOMICS

La medición en la ciencia económica: un diálogo interdisciplinario

Measurement in economics: an interdisciplinary dialogue

8 y 9 de septiembre de 2010

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Centro de Estudios en Economía y Cultura
Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y Económicas
Universidad Católica Argentina

The distinctive feature of modern science as regards the classical conception is that it focuses on the method rather than the metaphysical principles. This characteristic makes modern science empirical. By saying this we mean that its starting point is not in categories which are previously established by deduction; instead, it recognizes phenomena, it measures them, it establishes correlations, it elaborates theories and verifies these theories with new measurements and/or experiments. This implies that in those fields where the reduction and expression of observed phenomena to a homogeneous unit is possible, measurement is the starting point for knowledge.

This has already become obvious for us and, therefore, the reflection upon measurement in economics may seem a minor activity. Economics does not suffer from the same difficulties as the rest of the social sciences, because its object of study is less complex and heterogeneous. In fact, exchange relationships are expressed in terms of prices, and these are measurable and, therefore, capable of being objectified and mathematically operated. However, the matter is far from lacking a problematic nature. The price system is the language of economic exchange. But in the same way in which a verbal language can be impoverished or unable to express certain ideas, a price system can reproduce diversions which do not show with transparency the productivity relations nor the degree of access to goods (in magnitude and diffusion) that society would desire. It is well-known that in imperfect markets prices are the result of several distortions, which means they can slant the economic behavior towards objectives which are not pursued by everyone. Power imbalances in society are also reflected in markets. This leads to the following question: is there any connection between measurement and values? Should options and value judgments in economic measurement be clarified or can we take economic data as neutral in terms of value?

We can even ask ourselves a previous question: can we reduce the economic phenomenon to prices, which leads to considering that everything can be measurable? What is the nature of measurement? This leads us to reflect, as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas did, on the exercise we practice when measuring. This task can give us clarity in times when the mathematization of our science leads researchers to excessively emphasize the display of techniques, which are only the means, over the debate on the ends of our science. The question regarding the meaning disappeared from scientific debate long ago. But a science can hardly develop without orientation, without a meaning.

We can add other fundamental issues which come from the practice of measurement in the applied field, such as the matter of measuring welfare, the so-called "unobserved economy" and the institutional conditions required for the practice of measurement.

Probably led by A. Sen, the strong criticism on using the GDP as the measure of welfare began several decades ago. The flaws and limitations of such indicator are well-known. Alternative indexes have appeared in this context, which try to add dimensions which had not been included when measuring the economic activity. The

most popular one is probably the Human Development Index from the UNDP. We should also mention the call made last year by the president of France N. Sarkozy to A. Sen and J. Stiglitz to create an alternative measure to the GDP. Without debating about these initiatives, we should mention that their operation does not lack from difficulties, which results from considering phenomena with heterogeneous units and orders of magnitude. On the other hand, there is a calculation in the System of National Accounts which solves many of the objections presented to the GDP –the Social Accounting Matrix. This matrix enables us to relate the production, the distribution of income, consumption and saving, capital accumulation and natural resources. The difficulty in its implementation –or even the lack of interest shown by administrations- has resulted in the fact that very few countries have calculated it, which constitutes a real pending matter for economic measurement.

In an even higher application level, we have the difficulty of quantifying a large amount of the economic production, as in those activities done on the margins of law. The task of capturing the value of those activities which are, in terms of their operation form, unobservable through traditional methods belongs to a developing specialty.

Finally, to the theoretical and practical difficulties we should also add the need to follow certain conditions – institutional, political, etc.- in order to elaborate valid measurements for economic analysis. Nowadays, in our country and in the world, we are bearing the consequences of the expansion wave generated by disappointment.

Without considering the ethical aspects, this opens the debate on measurement and institutions, which constitute an unavoidable ingredient for the possibility of the task we are dealing with.

The elements analyzed above offer a framework for deepening the study of practical, theoretical and even epistemological difficulties, associated with the task of economic measurement.

The conference we present, aimed at those who study economic science and the various social and human sciences, intends to generate a space for reflection upon the theoretical problems and practical challenges implied in measurement. In crossing the conventional limits of economics, we mean to practice an interdisciplinary method which allows us to address the issue of measurement from multiple angles and therefore open new collaboration channels among scientists while giving orientation for action as well.

**Oradores principales:
Main Speakers**

Ricardo Crespo (Universidad Austral)
Juan Carlos Propatto (Universidad de Buenos Aires)
Walter Sosa Escudero (Universidad de San Andrés)
Clyde Charré de Trabuchi (ex directora INDEC)

Fechas límite | Deadlines

30 de Junio/ June 30th, 2010: envío de un abstract (5000 caracteres con espacios y bibliografía incluida). Deberá incluir un título provisorio, una breve descripción del tema, de los objetivos y de la bibliografía empleada.

Submission of an abstract (5,000 characters with spacing and bibliography included). It should include a provisional heading, a brief description of the topic, the objectives and the bibliography used.

15 de Julio 2010 / July 15th, 2010: notificación de la aceptación. / Notification of acceptance

30 de agosto de 2010/ August 30th, 2010: envío del texto completo de no más de 40.000 caracteres con espacios.

Submission of full paper (less than 40,000 characters with spacing).

Envío del abstract
y del texto a:

Send the abstract
and the paper to:

Alvaro Perpere: aperpere@uca.edu.ar

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