

Freedom in Economic Sociology

Patrik Aspers

University St. Gallen

Müller Friedberg Strasse 6/8 9000 St. Gallen, Switzerland

Patrik.aspers@unisg.ch

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Abstract

The liber notion of freedom in sociology is almost paradoxical. The core of liberalism is that human beings should be free to act with only a minimal set of constraints if one does not harm others. Sociology investigates how the social—made up of ties, norms, roles, informal and formal institutions, organizations, and the like—is socially produced, learned, and internalized in processes of socialization and structuration. This social fabric makes actors in one sense less free. This text analyses the idea of freedom in concrete approaches in one subdiscipline of sociology, namely economic sociology, looking at the structural and cultural approaches. These two are used to showcase real explanations in the field of economic sociology. It is argued sociology has no inherent normative position that human beings should be free. The sociological analysis shows how peoples’ choices are always conditioned, and in this sense the sociological analysis questions the assumptions of liberalism. The text suggests that freedom is not given but requires an act of reflection and activity of humans to become free to act. To be aware of the issues that forms human being is a step towards acting freely. Free action requires resources to which actors must have access.

Key words: Markets, Network, Culture, Structure, Relation, Socialization