Preface

Since the conference of the European Association for Evolutionary Political Economy (EAEPE) in Prague in November 1999, discussions of globalization and inequality have increased in prominence and force. This volume combines papers from the conference on globalization and inequality to discuss the impact of another now prominent concept: social capital. The combination of these three concepts in this volume suggests new insights into the roles that formal and informal institutions play in the economy, polity and society. The chapters in the volume make conceptual and empirically based contributions that demonstrate how the interaction between the global and the local both perpetuate and resolve inequalities in the contemporary political economy. The chapters share an analytical focus on institutions, social relations, trust, and knowledge to employ a plurality of perspectives to shed light on these issues.

The volume begins with Lord Desai's keynote speech which investigates the possibility of de-globalization through a comparison with the events that led to the demise of the last period of extended capitalist expansion. The introduction then links the main themes of the volume through a discussion of Polanyi's 'double movement'. Nielsen's chapter then locates the broad literature on social capital through a discussion of the idea of systemic competitiveness. The next two chapters demonstrate the negative and positive effects of societal ties on economic activity with case studies on the Czech Republic economic reforms (Sojka) and Cambridge's technical consultancies (Lawson). The next three chapters examine how rules and norms within an organization reveal diverse responses to the supposed homogenizing influences of globalization. Thus food manufacturing firms in France demonstrate different paths to ISO standards, employment relations in the US multinationals diverge according to national cultures and the privatization of the health service in the UK through market based reforms ignores the importance of values in health provision. The final chapter provides concluding comments on how the concept of boundaries unites the themes of globalization, inequality and social capital.

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