MULTIDISCIPLINARY ECONOMICS
Multidisciplinary Economics
The Birth of a New Economics Faculty in the Netherlands

Edited by

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PREFACE

On the occasion of the opening of the Utrecht School of Economics (USE) and the Tjalling C. Koopmans Research Institute an inaugural conference, called a ‘nullustrum’ in Dutch, was organised at Utrecht University on October 21st-23rd, 2003.

Organising a ‘nullustrum’ is quite unusual in the Netherlands, as it is customary to celebrate the first lustrum only after five years. However, because of the history of multidisciplinary economics at Utrecht University, going back to the 17th century, and the fact that the new economics faculty did not have to be built up from scratch, the celebration of a ‘nullustrum’ made sense. It allowed the opening of USE and its research institute to be seen as a milestone in the development of multidisciplinary economics at Utrecht University. At the same time the ‘nullustrum’ created an opportunity to introduce five newly appointed full professors, a unique event in the long history of Utrecht University.

During the research ‘nullustrum’, six seminars were organised where guest speakers presented papers that were related to subjects in the domain of multidisciplinary economics. These seminars covered issues in the fields of international economics, public economics, organisational economics, finance & financial markets, labour economics and applied econometrics. Five of the six seminars were organised by the newly appointed USE professors, who delivered their inaugural lectures during the ‘nullustrum’.

Besides the opening addresses, this volume includes a selection of papers that were presented during the ‘nullustrum’, or that have been published elsewhere by the guest speakers, and the inaugural addresses delivered by the newly appointed USE professors. The contributions of the guest speakers and the USE staff members convey the research perspectives of USE in a very natural way by focusing on themes that are open to multidisciplinary economics research and that are fostered by eminent scholars from the economics discipline. They also make clear how USE is already embedded in an international network of research activities that forms a solid basis for a new economics faculty to develop as an internationally recognised research institution promoting high standing multidisciplinary economics research with a special focus on the Institutional, Historical and Spatial dimensions (IHS-dimensions) of economic problems.
As editors we have the pleasure of acknowledging the very helpful assistance of Brooke Hansen and Dirk Smits for reading the final manuscript, Mariska van Dort for her help with the references and Janet Sartorius who provided considerable secretarial assistance and editorial support. We particularly admire the way in which Janet managed the tedious production of the manuscript patiently and skilfully and how she handled two editors who constantly struggled with the deadlines during the gestation period. Our thanks go, too, to the editorial staff of the Wiarda Institute for their invaluable help in giving the manuscript its final layout.

The editors
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