

## For a holistic social science:

### The NACEVP model applied to the environment, gender and populism.

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- Based on an article accepted to be published in the *Journal of Political Power*. Here: Intro & motivation
- What rules the world = the 6 constituents of the NACEVP model for holistic social science
- Evaluation 1: the recent rise of populism explained by the NACEVP model (certainly)
- Evaluations 2&3: the modern transformation of gender (probably) and climate change (not here; see the paper)
- References to more theoretical accounts, and a tribute to Michael Mann whose IEMP model in his *The Sources of Social Power* has been the point of departure for building the NACEVP model



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## Intro & motivation

Social scientists today are quite good in either

- (a) criticising existing practices or
- (b) providing researched empirical expert information on problems defined by the powers that be but rather bad in
- (c) giving holistic multidisciplinary overviews with policy recommendations on wide problem complexes

However, challenges of our time, such as the already on-going environmental crisis would require exactly that.

- à We need holistic frameworks
- à NACEVP model is one attempt for this



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## Nature rules the world!

- Past three centuries have made it possible for us to forget that we live on the surface of a fragile planet
- What went lost too is that humans are a biological species with certain biological inclinations
- Environmental crisis makes today these misconceptions of modernity visible
- Social scientists should pay attention

In this sense sociobiologists and ecologist are on a right track even if we should not share their reductionism

## Artefacts rule the world!

- However, the human species has been very skilful in developing artefacts, infrastructures and technologies, which extend our field of choice in regard to nature
- Today, usually based on science
- The reverse side: once developed, technostructures have, in addition to the enabling effect also a constraining one
  - à from natural to technological constraints

In this sense technological reductionists are on a right track even if we should not share their reductionism

## Culture rules the world!

- Signification is not an exclusively human privilege but humans are far better with it than any other species
- Culture tells us what the world looks like, who we are and what is good
- Culture enables: artefacts, increased power through collectivity, pure joy & bonding
- But culture also constrains: taboos, habits, lacunas (features of reality not codified in our cognitive maps)

In this sense cultural constructionists are on a right track even if we should not share their reductionism/voluntarism

## **Economy rules the world!**

- Economy in the sense of political economy is inescapable: productive exchange between nature and human societies.
- Economy in the sense of markets is not. However, today it is ubiquitous in both good (global poverty and even inequality have decreased in past two decades) and bad (Oxfam: 1% owns one half; 2008 financial crisis)

That second kind of a market economy can bring forth plenty of good but will ruin the environment and people if not regulated through other power sources (cf. Polanyi). Therefore, economic reductionism is not advisable.

## **Violence rules the world!**

- Organized violence in WW2 brought down all the European empires. It also created the US empire, which orchestrated the institutions of the post-war international community
- The Soviet Union lost the Cold War to the US: thus, today, the US can, unlike other states, go to the Persian Gulf and take all the oil it needs
- Violence does same kind of things in the everyday: criminal motorbike gangs, intimate violence, bullying at school and in the workplace

Violence thus is very important but reductionism (such as 'realism' in IR) is too easy a solution.

## Politics rules the world!

The most influential political power today is that of states

- (1) regional infrastructural coordination within the geographic area of a state
- (2) geopolitical diplomacy between states

THIS is where the difference is made and direction of the world decided.

Requires interest articulation and coalition formation to regulate the creation of the path to the future. Cannot be done without the support of other forms of power.

## NACEVP model for analysing society

- This was the briefest possible and rather non-theoretical intro to the theoretical model.
- For more theoretical discussion and demarcations in regard to Michael Mann, Max Weber, Karl Marx and other social theorists see the paper.
- Now, instead, a brief evaluation in the form of a case analysis.



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## Why populism, why now?

Why do virtually all OECD countries experience a current of potentially violent populist political interest articulation, and why is it occurring right now?

A concise outline of an analysis based on the NACEVP model goes as follows:



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## Natural causation

Evolutionary biology tells that humans (like horses and dogs) are inclined towards

- (1) hierarchic group organization and
- (2) aggression against out-groups, which is combined with solidarity towards in-groups

(cf. Laland & Brown: *Sense and Nonsense: Evolutionary Perspective on Human Behaviour*. OUP 2011).

That is how the human species is biologically wired. Yet it is not a destiny: whether the tendencies are actualized or not depends on the other five power sources.

## Artefactual causation

The emergence of the digitalized social media bring forth a new communication situation in which the gatekeepers having traditionally guarded the good taste in the media lose their influence, and dissemination of messages becomes virtually costless. In the same way as the book brought up the world religions; printing the Reformation, capitalism and the modern state; and radio and film the two World Wars with soldiers who loved their nations, the social media now makes it possible to disseminate the populist wisdom.

However, even if McLuhan had a point in saying that 'medium is the message', the actualization of the capacity of the communicative medium depends on the remaining four social power sources.

## Cultural causation

The semiosphere of most OECD countries is internally contradictory. Even if the abstract ideals of freedom, equality, and human rights are highly valued, more particularistic aspirations to search for the benefit of the family, kin group, occupational group, the local community, etc., at the expense of the out-group are also well understood and highly valued.

Which of these tendencies gets the upper hand is a gamble dependent on the other power sources.

## Economic causation

The collapse of the Soviet Union destroyed the counterforce of capitalism and created the wave of neoliberal economic globalization that has caused a situation in which the upper strata of the working class and the middle and lower strata of the middle class in the OECD countries get into labour market conditions in which they lose (1) material benefits either in absolute or relative terms and (2) their sense of security. This is happening in a society that according to Parsons' (1964) analysis of fascism is characterized by both formal equality and distribution of scarce rewards based on achievement. The result is that the social and psychological climate of society is characterized by 'free-floating aggression', which again can be channelled by political propaganda against a group of scapegoats, be they Jews in the fascist Germany or immigrants and 'social security dependents' of today.

## Violence-related causation

In such a situation, maintaining peaceful conditions in society is dependent on

- (1) the maintenance of the state's monopoly of organized violence and
- (2) its legitimacy based on law.

Erosion of one of these will cause the emergence of and struggle between paramilitary troops and possibly revolution.





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## Political causation

A political system is expected to maintain social security and peace. Its capability to do that is dependent on

- (1) the smoothness of the working of the public organization,
- (2) its legitimacy based on popular support, and on
- (3) whether or not a charismatic political leader emerges and applies the populist strategy to speak in the name of the people, while actually dividing the people into the in-group and the out-group.

Here societies vary. (USA & the UK vs. France & Germany)



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## Second case: gender

Radical cultural constructionists vs. sociobiologists

... and everything in between (technological, economic, political and violence-based reductionisms).

Let's try to find some balance on the basis of the NACEVP model. This is how it goes:

## Natural causation

Gender is a binary cultural code with some variation in the border areas of being 'male' or 'female' (more on this in Point Cultural causation below). Yet it is not just any cultural code but a cultural code based on nature, because the human reproductive organism works so that men can and women cannot produce sperm and procreate, and women have and men do not have wombs making them capable of bearing children and breasts producing milk. Related to this there are also many other physiological differences (Geary 1998) even if, in addition to the mentioned absolute differences in biological reproduction, there are no completely male or completely female character traits but just distributions of features which are more or less biased according to gender (Bem 1993).

## Artefactual causation

In most cultures, the biological differences just mentioned have in most times and in most social strata had a tremendous differentiating impact to the typical life course of men and women. However, development of modern medicine increases the female life expectancy due to reduced childbed mortality, for example. Improved methods of contraception result in a reduced number of children per woman in her lifetime, which in turn provides her with more time free of small children, and technologies producing mother's milk substitute, for example, increase the freedom of the mothers of small children from their offspring. In addition to these banal ways in which technologies change the female universe of choice, there are more exotic and radical ones, such as transformation of the primary and secondary biological gender characteristics through surgeries or hormonal therapies. Children too can soon be made in laboratories and hatcheries outside the female body.

This is how we moderns enter into a completely different gendered reality compared to the people of any previous era.



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## Cultural causation

The technological developments mentioned are accompanied by two opposite cultural currents that can be called **gender voluntarism** and **gender fundamentalism**. The former says that, in a situation in which we have all become 'cyborgs' (Haraway 1991), our gender identity is just a cultural construction based on 'performances' (Butler 1990) and we now are 'posthumans' (Braidotti 2013) who have moved to the time of 'trans' (Brubaker 2016). This kind of queer identity politics drives gender fundamentalists mad, and they try to appeal to nature or religion, or good manners and tradition, or all of them at the same time to reverse the cultural tide. Combined with value conservatism and more contemporary populist movements, which have been cherishing literally patriarchal family values, they have lately been quite successful in the West and particularly in the former socialist countries in Europe and in the Bible Belt in the US. The third alternative would be **gender abolitionism** but it too has its problems: gender is one and probably the most fundamental cultural code with which we bind identities, create meanings and organize interaction situations and do most of this half or fully unwittingly (Goffman 1977; 1979). If gender is done away with, the probable cultural impact will be the intensification of the other sociological 'background variables' such as **ethnicity, age and class**, which serve similar purposes in interaction and construction of identities.



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## Economic causation

The way in which the economy works has been shown to have tremendous gender impacts. Manuel Castells, for example, reduces the whole cultural process of increase in equality between the gender groups to the fluctuating needs of human labour of capital in the OECD countries (Castells 1997). Also Ulrich Beck finds the labour market to be in the centre of the issue about the lacking, yet increasing, equality between the sexes (Beck 1986). And indeed, it is the North-European welfare states with extensive public day care in which the participation rate of women in the labour market is the highest and in which the female positions are, if not equal with men, still the best in the world (The Global Gender Gap Index 2017). In the opposite end of lacking gender equality are not only poor countries such as Afghanistan with its tribal organization of the public sphere but also some affluent countries such as Saudi-Arabia, in which the access of women to the public sphere including the labour market has been prevented by cultural and legally enacted taboos.

## Violence-related causation

In addition to cultural traditions, violence pure and simple is the means of keeping women in their traditional place. One example of this are the Indian type of gang rapes of women who are fool enough to enter the public sphere without being protected by a veil and a male entourage. Another one is a threat of family violence under which the wife of your nice neighbour constantly lives. The possibility of such violence is based on the fact that an average male is stronger than an average female but it is also often supported by cultural habituation and traditions (Husso et al. 2017).

## Political causation

Here too, as in many other cases such as environmental protection or the rise of populism, political power is in the core of the issue. Politics can either create space for equality and choice in our gendered life (i.e., let people choose whether or not they want to live along with gender voluntarism or gender abolitionism) or support gender fundamentalism. The former is most probable in the Protestant countries, but even in them, it only takes place during a libertarian current.

## Coda?

- No coda here.
- This is where the case lies now.
- What will happen next is contingent. Therefore, social theory is only a start. What is needed is empirical social research. – Probably different societies and even different social strata will move to various directions.
- The point here is only the one that can be made on the level of theory: analysing the case requires attention to all six power sources.

## NACEVP model for analysing society

- Risto Heiskala: For a holistic social science: The NACEVP model applied to the environment, gender and populism. – Forthcoming in the *Journal of Political Power* (accepted in August 21, 2018)
- Heiskala: Innovations, power and marginalization. Chapter 2 in Alex Nicholls & Rafael Ziegler (eds) *Creating Economic Space for Social Innovation*. Oxford University Press, (in print; forthcoming in 2018).
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- Also in Finnish: Heiskala: Pitäisikö yhteiskuntatieteet avata? *Ajatus* 74(2017), 205-229. ["Should the social sciences be opened?"]
- Michael Mann: *The Sources of Social Power. Volumes 1-4*. Cambridge University Press, 1986-2013.



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**Want the paper?**

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