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III Plenary Session
Adaptation to Climate Change: The Challenge for the Social
Sciences

What can social scientists do
in front of climate change?

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What can social scientists do in front of climate change?

First, to inform themselves on the matter, collecting ***zealously*** materials.

Then, evaluate the **social impact** of the phenomenon (distributive problems, changes in the sociability, questions of public order, loss of well being.....)

After which, *if the social impact is high*, wondering what is the **specific kind of knowledge** a social scientist can bring to the public

I think such knowledge concerns in this specific historical moment for the specific subject (climate change) the description or the explanation of

differences among the territorial communities on the ways they face the problem.

An original social sciences input to climate change matter would be to discover if behind the different rates of CO₂ production there are different social organisations

It is the same question Stein Rokkan put circa 40 years ago:

why, despite a long common history, in Europe there are so many different combinations of political parties?

S. Rokkan's effort to answer that question is interesting for two reasons

- large spatial-temporal scale analysis
- attempt to reduce the great variety of phenomena to a model, made of few variables (i.e. the four cleavages)

Are we able to do the same thing for climate change?

Are we able to summarize the great variety of Europe institutional answers to environmental problems to a few axis?

Of course, the monothematic explanations are outmoded, as well the dualistic models; we can think, like Rokkan, four axis, maybe five; but please, not any more.

Of course, we can say the differences inside Europe are minimal, the real difference is between “great Anglo-Saxon countries” and Continental Europe or between the first ones and Cindia.

We can arrive also to the **theory of convergence**: all the countries are going, although the institutional differences, towards the same model of nature resources exploitation

I hope it is not so; because that means the destruction of humanity. Thus, I introduce an **element of value** in the choice of studying differences:

The hope that differences exist throughout the world and there are virtuous communities!

Note: such value elements are present in every step of social research

Then, I return to the question of differences

The literature that can help us, besides the great historical-comparative frescos of Weber, Barrington Moore, Rokkan, Einsenstadt, is that on the

types of capitalism

The authors (Dore, Amable..), who worked on that subject, ignored the environmental matter. The widest result was to include **welfare state systems** in a overarching economic explanation.

A challenge could be to include a third axis in the type of capitalism model

1- capital-labour (regulation of)

2- universal welfare/corporatist welfare

3- dual ways of facing climate change ??????

We are not forced to use a **dichotomy** for the climate change policies ... just for keeping low the number of factors

I think it should be a fascinating intellectual adventure to find out an “**environmental axis**” in the studies of capitalism type, an axis with the same importance of the historical ones (labour-capital and welfare)

Such effort deserves our energies.

In the search for such axis we can use many **area categorisations** of type of capitalism (north-south, Anglo-Saxon-Rhenish, Mediterranean-Northern European, European-Far Eastern Asiatic and so on

According to the lesson of Rokkan, I can also use different **level of territorial analysis**; I mean it is not necessary to take only the national level (as types-of-capitalist analysis usually did); we can use

-**Regional level** (they have growing importance → transnational clusters of virtuous regions)

-**District or Municipal level** (see for example the studies on ecological performance of industrial districts)

-**Network level** (many rural communities are now discontinuously localised in the space)

Conclusions

- 1) Climate change matters socially
- 2) Intelligent students know social aspects are relevant on the matter (see the unity of technological and social factors, *unique fabric*)
- 3) Social sciences can elaborate models where the ecological, the technical and social aspects are kept together
- 4) Social scientists must know more of ecology and technologies; in such way they overcome their nowadays marginal position in the climate change studies.
- 5) Besides inclusive attitude, social scientists can bring into the interdisciplinary teams the worry for **social justice and happiness**.