

Beyond polycentricity: the constitution of evolving collective action by compound configurations of vertical and horizontal general selection processes and governance techniques

Summary outline of paper for WINIR online conference 6-9 September 2022: Polycentric governance and the challenges of the 21st century.

Polycentricity can assume that mutual adjustments in multiple centres of competitive and cooperative interaction and decision making among independent self-governing individuals and groups in a Madisonian compound republic (Madison, 1788) advance Adam Smith's (1776) "system of natural liberty [which] establishes itself of its own accord" (Bk 4, Ch 9). However, governance involves more than mutual adjustments between multiple decision centres, and a self-governing system of liberty requires more than faith in the blind variations of a spontaneous market order.

This paper draws on general selection theory (Campbell, 1974) together with Dahl and Lindblom (1953) on governance techniques – compound configurations of vertical forms of competitive bargaining and administrative hierarchy and horizontal forms of market variation (market system) and democratic representation (polyarchy) – to go beyond polycentricity in understanding compound varieties of governance techniques for coordinating collective action and addressing their consequences for continuously innovative and sustainable competitive productivity for quality of life.

In summary outline this theoretical paper proceeds as follows. First, a brief context setting introduction on governing collective action. Second, general selection theory is presented from a proposed situated agency and selective retention approach. In this new orientation, from cells to civilisations life's specifically situated agency is constituted, expressed, experienced, and evolved through constant competitive and cooperative interactions which produce continuously evolving variation and continuity in conditions of life.

Third, Dahl and Lindblom's values-based ends for social action are shown to correspond to Schwartz's (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2022) research on the content and structure of personal values across cultures. Schwartz's and others empirical findings provide a deeper understanding of values-based ends, i.e., the "goals that motivate people's actions and serve as guiding principles in their lives" (Sagiv & Schwartz, Introduction).

Fourth, it is proposed that goal oriented personal values are an expression of evolutionary dynamics. That is, personal values are an expression of the laws of evolution (Darwin, 1859). Derived from Darwin (Ch 7) these laws are: i) cooperative multiplication; ii) creative variation; iii) competitive struggle; and, iv) continued existence (survival). These correspond with Schwartz's findings of 10 basic personal values: i) cooperation - benevolence and universalism; ii) creativity - self-direction, stimulation, and hedonism; iii) competition - achievement and power; and, iv) continuity - security, tradition, and conformity. Additionally, drawing on Triandis (1995) these 10 values are organised in relation to cultural themes of vertical and horizontal coordination and control and independent and interdependent identity and motivation. These themes from Triandis are used to provide a simplifying descriptive and heuristic typology to organise a general selection approach to personal values and to explain and research key issues in the evolutionary dynamics of: i) coordinating and governing collective action; ii) human biocultural identity and motivation;

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and, iii) the relationships between the biocultural identity and the collective action of the ultra-social group living individuals of the human species.

On the one hand, Schwartz's findings about personal values and Triandis' cultural themes are conceived as social construals of the internally generated effects of the many ways in which the self-organising dynamics of biocultural evolution find expression. On the other hand, when social construals emerge within a biocultural community of ultra-social group living individuals they can become external – i.e., external to particular individuals or groups, yet internally generated, reproduced, and evolved within a wider group or community – structured, enacted patterns of cultural ideas and institutional rules that shape actions and interactions across contexts: personal, interpersonal, within and between groups, within and between societal communities.

Fifth, it is proposed that Dahl and Lindblom's four fundamental techniques of controlling a political economy – market, democracy, bargaining, and hierarchy – to achieve values-based ends are expressions of combinations of vertical and horizontal coordination and control and independent and interdependent identity and motivation and their associated personal values. For example, market variation involves horizontal coordination and governance of collective action and independent expressions of identity with associated motivational values of self-direction, stimulation, and hedonism. Actual control in a political economy involves different combinations or compound configurations – compatible and/or conflicting - of all four governance techniques. Accordingly, coordination and governance of collective action for values-based ends is a pluralist rather than a unitary process. This pluralist process combines both a vertical, hierarchical power over others emphasis on social relationships and action and a horizontal, equal power with others emphasis. Further, it is proposed that this pluralist compound configurations governance process is an evolving outcome of general selection processes.

A vertical, power over others emphasis is consistent with Dahl and Lindblom's competitive bargaining among leaders (elites) and hierarchy governance techniques and a horizontal, power with others emphasis is consistent with their market variation and democratic representation governance techniques. Further, law involves governance via community legitimated vertical power over others. Individuals and corporate bodies are required to conform with the binding obligations of law with enforced conformity backed as necessary by physical constraint or lethal violence. Market variation without the constructed rule of law would be anarchy. The vertical and interdependent with others rule of law can be the competitive outcome of bargaining among dominant elite coalitions and/or bargaining within systems of democratic representation. Madison's compound republic is an example of a competitive power with and over others system of democratic representation governed (in the USA) by the power over and with others rule of constitutional, state, and federal law.

Sixth, the work of Polanyi (1951; Polanyi & Prosch, 1975) and Ostrom (Ostrom, V. et al 1961; Ostrom, V. 1982) on polycentricity is addressed. For both Polanyi and Ostrom, V. in a free society social tasks and associated problem solving are polycentric (collection action) tasks requiring independent mutual adjustments. In polycentric tasks solutions can only be reached "if they are worked at from many centres, free to interact continually with one

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another in the formation of a system of mutual adjustments” (Polanyi & Prosch, Ch 13.). This is a power with others view of coordinating and governing collective action. According to Cole and McGinnis (2015, Introduction) for Ostrom, V. & Ostrom, E. “power *with* is more important than power *over*” (italics in original). In a power with view politics is seen “as primarily an exercise in collective problem solving, and does not allow politics to be reduced to brute struggles for domination” (Cole & McGinnis). This view of politics, power, and political economy neglects Dahl and Lindblom’s emphasis on the power and vertical control over others dynamics both of competitive bargaining and of government and for-profit corporate hierarchies in coordination and governance of collective action under the rule of law. Dahl and Lindblom emphasise that the two fundamental governance techniques of [vertical] bargaining and hierarchy operate in combination with the equally fundamental techniques of [horizontal] market variation and democratic representation. This is a broader, deeper, and more inclusive biocultural, pluralist, compound configurations approach to understanding coordination and governance of collective action that goes beyond polycentricity. And this compound configurations approach to governance broadens and deepens our understanding of self-governing systems of liberty.

A compound configurations approach to governance can be explained as one of the ways in which the evolving behavioural, group, and cultural selection dynamics of general selection theory (Campbell, 1974; Heyes, 2018; Jablonka & Lamb, 2014) find expression among the ultra-social group living individuals of the human species. In particular, this approach explains how it is difficult to align the idea of polycentricity with the significant vertical power of competing private sector administrative hierarchies – corporate Leviathans – and the severe challenges of increasing inequality and potential risks to public order of this legally approved and protected power. These challenges are unintended outcomes of the exercise of private sector corporate power. Within this new compound configurations approach self-governing biocultural systems are partially managed pluralist systems of liberty under the rule of law with continuously evolving intended and unintended consequences.

Seventh, brief comments on implications and next steps conclude the paper.

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