

Abstract Book

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ABSTRACTS

Jessica Kim

Put Your Money Where Your Mouth is? Normative and Monetary Democracy Assistance and Democratization

Over the last several decades, two seemingly contradictory trends have emerged: a rise in democracy assistance and a decline in democracy. What explains this disconnect? Although existing work provides some insight about democracy promotion's mixed effects, more work is needed to understand the impact of additional, often understudied forms of assistance. I explore this puzzle on a panel of 136 nations from 1981–2015 by assessing how two types of democracy promotion – democracy promoting international nongovernmental organizations (DINGOs) and democracy aid – impact governance. By specifically examining their impact on nations' policies, practices, and the disconnect between them, I also shed light on the recent expansion of hybrid regimes, which use democratic institutions to mask authoritarian practices. Results reveal the complex effects of democracy promotion, with DINGOs negatively impacting suffrage but democracy aid positively impacting civil liberties. Interactions examining these efforts' combined effects additionally suggest that DINGOs' effects vary by level of aid.

Ivan Kislenko

Between North and South: Anti-Eurocentric Isolationism of Russian Sociology in the State of War and Beyond

This report examines the possibility of the emergence of unique Russian sociology concerning the current claims for full-scale isolation, both – from inside and outside of the country. It interrelates with the state of the international discussion on the variability of sociological practices in different parts of the world, and the possibility of the emergence of local indigenous sociologies.

The Russian case is accompanied by the rather specific tradition of sociology in the country, which often strives to provide a state with an ideological project or refer to so-called 'aboriginal science'. Such a state of affairs received criticism from the adherents of Western sociology in Russia: mostly because of the intentions to invent a purely ideological enterprise and due to the lack of the proper academic quality.

Currently, Russia finds itself in a state of war, which turns Russian social science into isolation. Vladimir Putin claims that Russia is 'a leader of the anti-colonial world', fighting eurocentrism. This rather symptomatic attempt to use the current sociological trends to cover the actual imperial intentions.

The epistemocide of the western means of knowledge production brings Russia paradoxically closer to the 'decolonization' of social science and the education system itself. Such a project pushes Russian scholars into full-scale isolationism, using paradoxically similar arguments of the left intellectuals on the necessity to decolonize science and education. Such ideas are anti-colonial and counter-hegemonic, but what will happen if they emerge in the heart of the Empire?

Tomoko Okada & Liwei Shen

Politicized Science and Rural-Urban Divides: Exploring How Rurality in the Place of Residence and Red and Blue Media Use Affect Views toward Scientists Pre- and During the COVID-19 Pandemic

World Society theory (WST) regards science as a highly globalized aspect of the liberal world order. Recently, however, the authority of science has been contested, as part of the rising populist agendas throughout the world. This paper focuses on the case of the U.S to explore the local dynamics of anti-science attitude formation.

Following recent arguments surrounding rural-urban divides in values and place-based social identity, we tested a hypothesis: rurality in the place of residence can resonate with relative deprivation among rural residents toward urbanities and elites, leading to less positive attitudes toward scientists. We found supporting evidence for this by analyzing datasets from the 2016 American National Election Survey and our 2021 survey, which was conducted to explore Americans' health/political behaviours.

Moreover, we examined how conservative/liberal media use moderated such associations. Results demonstrated that conservative media use was significantly correlated with more negative attitudes toward scientists among residents in the most urbanized areas in 2016 (pre-pandemic election year). In early 2021 (during the pandemic), residents in rural areas were most receptive to the impact of conservative media use, showing the least positive attitudes. We discuss the implications of our findings for WST.

Kalle Pajunen

No rhetoric lives in a vacuum: The embeddedness of organization-level maintenance of work rationalization logic in Finland

Maintenance of institutional logics under societal challenges and crises is a process involving various actors at different analytical levels. It is also a process closely shaped by the use of rhetoric, particularly when these logics face the pressure of challenging ideas and practices. Our study extends previous research on these issues by examining how maintenance of an institutional logic providing meaning and guidance for organization-level activities becomes formatively embedded in and interlinked with rhetorical language enacted on field and governmental levels of the societal system. Based on unique historical evidence on maintenance of work rationalization logic over multiple decades in Finland, we demonstrate how the meaningfulness and eventual effects of the rhetoric enacted to maintain the logic challenged at the organizational level are conditioned by related rhetoric enacted to tackle or address the same challenge on the field and governmental levels. Our emergent theorization explicates three inter-level rhetorical mechanisms--selective value-backing, buffering, and translation--that capture how this embeddedness materializes in logic maintenance.

Ali Qadir & Pertti Alasuutari

Epistemic fields and power in the world polity: Accounting for new institutions in new institutionalism

While world polity theory has been tremendously successful in explaining how codified organizational models spread, it has been criticized for not explaining how new models arise in the first place. Entailed in the critique is the charge that world polity theory overlooks power as an initial condition determining formation and uptake of globally diffused models. In this paper, we show how this charge relies on a resource theory of power that is incompatible with new institutionalism and argue instead for a more suitable, Foucauldian or field-theoretic approach to power. Based on this, we argue that a discursive take on sociological institutionalism offers conceptual tools that can account for how new institutions and models come about. We propose that elements of what may be termed “epistemic fields,” comprising the fundamental codes of a culture or an era as reference points that inform people’s imagination and practices, are picked up and crafted into new rationalized models that, when circulating across the field, may rearrange it. The paper describes these reference points not as individually tangible “scripts” but rather as essentially relational elements of present conditions of possibility. Although these elements and how they hold together must be traced in individual cases, we draw on some examples to hypothesize how epistemic fields might be structured and propose a research agenda to test that.

Marjaana Rautalin & Pertti Alasuutari

Navigating in global discourse: Swedish COVID-19 strategy as a case

Social scientists have been increasingly interested in policy decisions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been argued that as the pandemic spread, governments introduced adjacent policy measures (often on very short notice) with which to mitigate the pandemic and its socio-economic consequences. As to why such herd behavior in policymaking occurred has often been explained by policy mimicry. For instance, the diffusion studies start from the premise that national COVID-19 strategies are guided by globally shared ways of interpreting the novel pandemic and measures available. When information on the pandemic and its mitigation was limited, governments glanced at other countries, particularly their neighbors, in their attempts to find cues of how to mitigate the pandemic in a rational and hence, efficient way. Consequently, a policy field with rationalistic COVID-19 responses occurred consolidating the interdependence of policies. This theorization is problematic when we look at countries which in the throes of the national COVID-19 crisis ended up in introducing policies that are at odds with those enacted in other countries in the field. Sweden is one such country. In spite of the fact that the novel coronavirus landed in Sweden nearly at the same time as in its neighboring countries, and that the number of national COVID-19 deaths has been high, Sweden opted a corona strategy that involved fewer and looser restrictions than, for example, the ones adopted by its neighboring countries. In this paper, we argue that the strategy adopted by Sweden is not a deviation of a global field and the rationalistic pandemic responses it advocates. Instead, we argue that Sweden’s strategy was an outcome of a creative usage of a global discourse that spread as the pandemic spread. With our analysis of the Swedish media debate, we itemize the elements of this discourse and show how it has been used (and also collided) when the Swedish COVID-19 strategy was constructed and justified in 2020. With our case study we also seek to add to the existing theories on policy diffusion and interdependent policymaking. We argue that interdependence of policies should not be conceived of as rationalistic policies diffusing in modern world society. Instead, we propose that such interdependence, evident in national COVID-19 policies, is an outcome of a global discourse that evolves as nation-states vindicate their respective policies, giving birth to ever new policy models that become part of the global episteme.

Nir Rotem & Elizabeth Heger Boyle

Multiple scripts: A world society approach for women's empowerment

Women's rights are a priority in world society, but what they mean for women is malleable and differs substantively across cultures. In this research, we address complexities within global scripts by focusing on multiple dimensions of women's rights simultaneously. With information from 25 countries, we explore enactment of women's rights scripts using two dimensions of women's empowerment: a woman's household decision-making power and her attitudes toward intimate partner violence (IPV). The principal analysis uses a multinomial logistic regression to study the effect of global norms, local institutions, and household bargaining power. The results reveal that exposure to global scripts links women to both the ideation and practice of women's rights. Notably, and eyeing partial enactment, household bargaining power provides women with more access to decision-making but does not make them opponents of IPV. In turn, certain religions on the individual and communal levels, representing local group norms and cultural practices, are associated with partial enactment of women's rights in terms of rejecting IPV but not providing women with household decision-making power. Finally, household wealth and high education is positively associated while employment is negatively associated with rejection of IPV without playing a major role in household decisions.

Marja Helena Sivonen

Securitising zero-carbon energy transitions in Estonia, Finland, and Norway

The zero-carbon energy transition is rapidly expanding in many countries. While security of supply has played an important role in traditional energy policy making, little attention has been paid to whether and how broader security connections of zero-carbon energy transitions have been addressed, and what this means for the development of decarbonising societies. By drawing on interviews conducted with security/foreign policy and energy/climate experts in Estonia, Finland and Norway between 2020 and 2021, we analyse how 'security' was framed and constructed in this context. With sociology of security, we utilise the securitisation framework which allows the study of the way the phenomenon is discussed in 'speech acts'. We connect the research to sustainability transitions literature to address large-scale socio-technical changes that are needed to solve "grand societal challenges", such as climate change. We fulfil a gap in sustainability transitions literature pertaining to security perspectives as well as sociological thinking. For sociology of security, we discuss another empirical dimension, less established in the field and aim to develop the securitisation framework further. We argue that the broader security issues related to zero-carbon energy transitions have different emphasis according to the sector, the issues are not yet addressed in policymaking and, despite similar global pressures on countries, the level of securitisation varies.

Jukka Syväterä, Marjaana Rautalin, and Attila Kustán Magyari

From where do legislators draw scientific knowledge? Organizations as scientific authorities in four countries' parliamentary debates

Organizations far beyond traditional academic institutions have become prolific science producers, with many now providing evidence-based advice for national governments and policy-makers. Neo-institutional sociology explains organizations' growing investment in research activities and research-based policy advice by the all-embracing scientization and the expansion of the educated population, phenomena observable throughout the world. There is, however, considerably less knowledge about how the organizations' increased knowledge production and the supply of science-based policy advice are reflected in national policy-making, including the legislative work of parliaments, and to what extent distinct organizations are deemed authoritative in different countries. In this paper, we examine how different organizations are used as scientific authorities in parliamentary debates over new legislation. Drawing on analyses of 576 parliamentary debates from Australia, Finland, Kenya, and the United Kingdom, we study what organizations are acknowledged as scientific authorities and the relative weight of different organization types in the context of political debates over new legislation. The results reveal that while organizations in general are frequently evoked as scientific authorities in all four countries, there is remarkable variation in the types of organizations considered authoritative in different national contexts. We elaborate these findings by analysing ways in which politicians evaluate organizations as sources of scientific authority. While the same set of evaluative schemas are used in all four countries, each is typically applied to certain types of organization. The results suggest that both the supply of scientific policy advice and political culture shape legislators' rhetorical practices when drawing on organizations' scientific authority.

Irem Tuncer-Ebetürk & Yasemin Soysal

Global Diffusion and Contestation of Disease: The Case of ADHD

The sociology of health is a growing subject within global and transnational sociology. One of the critical discussions includes the social construction of disease at the global level and how these constructions are reproduced and contested. In this paper, we contribute to this debate by focusing on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). By examining the case of ADHD, we first review larger debates around mental disorders' universality (Global Mental Health movement versus cultural psychiatry) and the scholarship on global processes of defining and treating mental diseases, ADHD, in particular. We then contribute to these debates in two ways: first, we construct a longitudinal dataset of global ADHD prevalence using existing data sources. We also collect comparative data on state policies of mental health and the history of mental health institutions, approaches, and traditions in a selected sample. Our goal is to understand different responses to ADHD in terms of definition and treatment. We seek to explain variation in these responses using world society theoretical concepts such as isomorphism and decoupling. We also discuss alternative theories such as McDonaldization and commercialization (bio-medicalization) to understand the variation in responses to ADHD.

Olga Ulybina

World culture and the pendulum of childcare reforms

The idea paper will discuss the general dynamics of out-of-home childcare in Finland and Russia since the 18th century, and how these dynamics may relate to changes in the world culture. Specifically, we will highlight the pendulum of reforms that repeatedly takes orphan care in opposite directions - towards family-/ community- versus institutions-based care. World culture scholars explore how the global cultural context changes over time and generates waves of reforms in diverse policy areas. In our case, we are puzzled not so much by the fact of repeating waves of reforms but rather by the fact that waves of orphan care reforms swing towards opposite care models and wonder how this pendulum of orphan care practice /policy relates to the world cultural dynamics.

Szymon Zylinski

Bhutanese media system through the lens of the World Society Theory

Bhutan is the Himalayan Kingdom that for centuries remained in self-imposed isolation. Only the geopolitical tensions forced it on the path to modernization, which included society reorganization in many areas, especially in media production and consumption. Bhutan is one of the last countries on the planet to introduce Television and the Internet in 1999, therefore it needed certain guiding concepts that would structure the ideas presented to the wider audience.

First of them is the idea of Gross National Happiness (GNH) - uniquely Bhutanese theory that proposes to measure the progress of society not in monetary gains like Gross Domestic Product does, but in the overall happiness of an individual.

The second one is Middle Path Journalism (MPJ), a concept coined by Dorji Wangchuck that draws from GNH and Bhutanese social values. It proposes a four-dimensional approach based on community, compassion, commitment, and contentment. The media should be more human-centric, instead of thriving on conflicts, tragedy, mercantilism, etc.

In this presentation I would like to discuss how GNH and MPJ have shaped Bhutanese media system and how World Society Theory explains certain approaches that culminated in bringing the Bhutanese nation to a peaceful and modern existence.