

The social relation to the environment and the diversity of capitalism: theoretical reflections and empirical explorations.

Author: Louison Cahen-Fourot

Affiliation : Institute for Ecological Economics, WU Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien, Welthandelsplatz 1, 1020 Wien, Austria

Email : louison.cahen-fourot@wu.ac.at

Phone : +43 681 107 164 19

This paper aims at informing the political economy of environmental policies in the context of contemporary national capitalisms as well as to shed light on existing contradictions that may impede the shift to more sustainable socio-economic systems. Drawing on Regulation Theory (Boyer and Saillard, 2002) and the Diversity of Capitalism approach (Amable, 2003), its objective is twofold: Theoretically, it is to advance the discussion on the emergence of the society – environment relation as an autonomous regulating feature, or *regulation*¹, of capitalism relatively to other social relations. Empirically, it aims at analysing the social relation to the environment in the broader context of national capitalisms using exploratory statistical techniques, i.e. geometric analysis of data. It allows to highlight complementarities and contradictions between some kinds of social relations to the environment, i.e. ecology-prone or ecology-adverse, and other kinds of fundamental social relation, i.e. more or less labour-oriented labour-capital relations.

The first part sets the theoretical framework that is applied in the second part. To do so, it tackles the ongoing theoretical debate within Regulation Theory (RT) on the conceptualization of the society-environment relation. Some regulationist authors argue that the latter is the projection on the space of the economy-environment relations of the five institutional forms regulating capitalism as theorized in RT: the monetary regime, the wage-labour nexus, the form of competition, the form of the state and the insertion in the international regime (Boyer, 2015; Chester, 2010). Some other argue that it is a regulating form of its own that cannot be fully reduced to the usual five forms considered by Regulation Theory (Becker and Raza, 2000; Cahen-Fourot and Durand, 2016). In this paper, I argue against this binarity to highlight the historical continuum between these two positions. My assumption is that through the intensifying concrete manifestations of and the increasing awareness about the ecological constraint, the social relation to the environment is going through an institutionalisation process that makes it a regulating feature of capitalism on its own.

Building on this Regulation Theory framework augmented with an environmental dimension, the second part is an empirical investigation devoted to characterising existing capitalisms in a sample of countries (37: OECD + BRICS) integrating the social relation to the environment. The six institutional form are modelled using principal component analysis and clustering applied to raw variables. A multiple component analysis and a final clustering are then applied to the synthetic variables representing the institutional forms. Five kinds of capitalisms are identified, in terms of their social relation to the environment

¹ In Regulation Theory, a *regulation* – or institutional form - is an institutionalised socio-economic compromise between antagonistic social classes or groups that allows to temporarily normalize and solve the contradictions generated by the economic system.

together with their monetary regime, wage-labour nexus, competition regimes, form of the state and insertion into the international regime: the Northern-continental European, the Southern-central European, the Anglo-Saxon and Pacific, the Emerging countries and the Two giants (China and India). A striking, yet not very surprising, result is the correspondence between ecology-prone social relations to the environment, labour-oriented wage-labour nexuses and welfare-oriented states. However, the data also show that countries that are the most ecology-prone are also the ones with the most offshore environmental materiality of their social relation to the environment.

This study then allows to better understand the compatibilities and contradictions between various fundamental social relations defining contemporary capitalisms. It informs on the political economy of the emergence of ambitious (or not) environmental policies and the socio-economic contexts within existing capitalisms most favourable at solving contradictions that currently impede a real ecological transition.

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