

Social Sciences and Biology

A dummy sample text to be compiled by Bibliographix

There are numerous approaches to assimilate approaches from different sciences to questions that at the first glance have little to do with each other.

Traditionally there are quite a few authors that are hard to classify as economists or sociologists, like [1] who tries to utilize microeconomic mathematical tools to sociological questions, like the conditions under which a group will turn into a mob. On the other hand, economists try to explain economic actions by sociological categories, like [2], [3] or [4]. The latter tries to explain trade union membership motives not by club goods or closed shop arrangements but rather by group pressure, which seems to be a dominant force in various European countries.

A very promising approach that has become more popular recently is to blend aspects of social sciences with biology. On the one hand, economics deal with questions of efficiency which is of great interest to evolutionary biologists, since inefficient behaviour increases the risk of species extinction¹. On the other hand, social scientists may profit from biologists since animal behaviour in groups has a lot in common with human behaviour. An evolutionary approach may lead to new insights, for instance on the emergence of altruism [6] which economists have a hard time to understand, employing their a-historic model of the homo oeconomicus [7].

[1] Coleman JS; Foundations of Social Theory. Cambridge, 1990.

[2] Akerlof GA; A Theory of Social Custom, of which Unemployment may be one Consequence. Quarterly Journal of Economics 1980;749-775.

[3] Aoki M; The co-operative game theory of the firm. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984.

[4] Booth AL; A public choice model of trade union behaviour and membership. Economic Journal 1984;883-898.

[5] Wilson EO; Sociobiology. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1980.

[6] Trivers RL; The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism. Quarterly Review of Biology 1971;35-57.

[7] Frank RH; If Homo Economicus Could Choose His Own Utility Function, Would He Want One with a Conscience? American Economic Review 1987;593-605.

¹ See [5] for details.