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## Evolution is everywhere. New book on Human Evolution by Jeroen van den Bergh



*Human Evolution Beyond Biology and Culture: Evolutionary Social, Environmental and Policy Sciences* (Cambridge University Press, October 2018) is a new book written by ICREA Research Professor Jeroen van den Bergh of at ICTA-UAB. It offers a complete account of evolutionary thinking in the social, environmental and policy sciences, while creating bridges with biology.

Both natural and cultural selection played an important role in shaping human evolution. Since cultural change can itself be regarded as evolutionary, a process of gene-culture coevolution is operative. The study of human evolution - in past, present and future - is therefore not restricted to biology. An inclusive comprehension of human evolution relies on integrating insights about cultural, economic and technological evolution with relevant elements of evolutionary biology. In addition, proximate causes and effects of cultures need to be added to the picture - issues which are at the forefront of social sciences like anthropology, economics, geography and innovation studies. This book highlights discussions on the many topics to which such generalized and extended evolutionary thought has been applied: the arts, the brain, climate change, cooking, criminality, the environment, philosophy, futurism, gender issues, group processes, humour, industrial dynamics, institutions, languages, medicine, music, philosophy, psychology, public

policy, religion, sex, sociality and sports.

The book addresses the concerns of the sceptics and critics of evolutionary social-science approaches, clarifying that genetic and non-genetic evolution share many similarities - justifying the term evolution - while they also differ in important ways. At the same time, it presents the material in an accessible, not overly technical way, using a 'box format' to address specific topics and detailed explanations. Readers will find concise accounts of both generalised evolutionary thinking and evolutionary biology, including non-technical treatments of advanced topics.

The book includes 16 chapters spread over five parts that jointly offer a close to complete view on topics that have been addressed from an evolutionary angle, with a focus on social science. Part I deals with generalized evolution, discussing, among others, its philosophy, reception in the social sciences and relevance for practical matters and public policy. Part II provides a brief history of evolutionary biology and identifies main recent advances in it. Part III represents a bridge between biology and the social sciences, addressing the evolution of social behavior in animals and humans as well as the dynamics of social groups. Part IV is the core of the book, giving attention to evolutionary thinking in sociology, anthropology, economics, organization theories and technological innovation studies. Part V recasts human biological, cultural and industrial-technological history from an evolutionary angle. Finally, Part VI presents ideas about policies and politics motivated by genetic-cultural evolutionary considerations, with applications to environmental and climate studies. A broad readership, including academics from natural to social sciences, and a general audience, are guaranteed to find a lot to their taste in the book.

Evolutionary thinking can contribute new and fundamental insights to the social sciences by connecting proximate to ultimate explanations. To understand the potential reach of evolutionary thinking, we have to appreciate and learn from its rich history in biology. The main argument of this book is that by using evolutionary thinking, we will be better able to tackle a variety of public policy issues at the interface of economic, technological, social and environmental systems.

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### **References**

Jeroen C.J.M. van den Bergh (2018). **Human Evolution Beyond Biology and Culture: Evolutionary Social, Environmental and Policy Sciences**. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

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