Social and Institutional Change
Lecture 9: the role of collective action and social movements

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Anouncements

Course reading list is finalized
no changes since version 5-Oct

Exam = course readings + course materials
incl. lectures 4+5 (Lindenberg)
incl. lecture 8 (Neuijen)
Today’s Lecture:

When institutional structures are no longer legitimate
(or: how do we escape the iron cage?)

Linking two articles to understand social and institutional change in theory and in reality:
2. Arentsen & Bellekom (2014) “Power to the people”: local energy initiatives as new organizational forms
Figure 1  Component processes of institutionalization


Based on Berger & Luckmann

(isomorphism)

(social movements)
Social movements are...

“Collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities

- Sidney Tarrow"
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evanescent forms of collective behaviour</th>
<th>Collective action</th>
<th>Social movements</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Few structured roles</td>
<td>Purposeful collective behaviour</td>
<td>Most organized form</td>
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<tr>
<td>e.g. Panics</td>
<td>e.g. Demontrations</td>
<td>Longer time stretches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Riots</td>
<td>Protests: resistance to genetic modification</td>
<td>Long term goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fads</td>
<td></td>
<td>Creation of formal organizations</td>
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<td>Fashions</td>
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Three important notes on social movements...

1. Social movements are not eternal. They have a life cycle: they are created, they grow, they achieve successes or failures, then they dissolve and cease to exist.

2. At the heart of social movements is the drive to promote, undo or prevent institutional change.

3. Social movements are informal heterarchies, which strongly depend on their context.
We empower you to generate your own sustainable energy. On your own, or together.
2015: ca. 350 local energy initiatives in NL
2014: 285 local initiatives registered on hieropgeweekt.nl
2013: 213 local initiatives registered on hieropgeweekt.nl
2012: estimated 100 local initiatives in NL

Click:
Video on Sustainable Villages Network

Source: hieropgeweekt.nl, accessed 11-10-2014
Local energy initiatives

Backgrounds of their emergence

› Bottom up movement (emerges all over Europe)
  • Doing things ourselves, taking control of everyday life
  • Sustainable development & quality of life
› ‘Participation society’ = everyone takes responsibility for own livelihood and living environment, while national government has no/facilitating role.
› Current societal change (*3rd industrial revolution, Jeremy Rifkin*) based on merging of:
  • Internet technology (‘energy internet’)
  • Decentralized energy production with renewables
Social movements
Institutional entrepreneurs or activists are dependent on:

(Rao 2000, p244)

A. Framing process
   Ability to frame the collective interpretation, grievances and interests of people, diagnose causes, assign blame, provide solutions

B. Mobilizing resources
   Legitimacy, finances, and personnel. Engaging in formal social movement org’s, work and neighbourhood org’s, friendship networks

C. Political opportunity
   Minimize or escape state repression, access to the political system, having allies in elite groups
Framing process

- Collective construction of ideas, goals, concerns, ideologies, doctrines, etc.

- Strategic creation and handling of shared meanings (people must get inspired!)

- Addressing injustice (Amartya Sen): (a) defining an injustice; (b) defining its causes; and, (c) stating solutions

- is done by institutional entrepreneur or activist: Ability to frame the collective interpretation, grievances and interests of people, diagnose causes, assign blame, provide solutions
Mobilizing resources

• The “building blocks” of a social movement: acquiring legitimacy, finances, and personnel

• Internal organization is vital to mobilize resources and support, and thus to reach goals and secure survival

• Importance of (formal and informal) networks, such as work and neighbourhood org’s, friendship networks

• “Bricolage” as organizing principle
• Maintaining relations with the political and institutional context is relevant for the success and survival of social movements: Minimize or escape state repression, having access to the political system

• Crucial events create momentum: crisis, disasters, coups, wars, economic recession or boom, etc.

• Relationship with opposition, having allies in elite groups, and authorities (the “institutional” side)
Local energy initiatives

› **Framing process** (activist leader is needed):
  • Growing distrust of government (welfare state crumbles, school closures) & large energy companies (high energy prices, arrogant attitude), assigning blame

› **Mobilizing resources**
  • Engage community members in action, unite.
  • Forming of a local organization with roles.
  • Using local knowledge, expertise, companies.
  • Subsidies, energy production to generate budget

› **Political opportunity**
  • Gaining political support (municipality, regional)
  • Join nation-wide advocacy org’s (HierOpgewekt, NMF)
Reasons to start local initiatives  
(Oostra & Jablonska 2013)

- concern about energy prices or exploitation costs dwellings in the future
- to improve the quality of the community
- to improve social cohesion (especially in areas with declining population)
- the urge to do something together
- a means to jointly save energy
- control over own energy supply
- concern about the environment
- dissatisfaction with large energy companies
- a group has more power than an individual and organizing the energy supply for a group can be more efficient.
What causes social movements?

Social movements emerge from institutional failure.

The power of disappointment (cf. Hirschman 1982)
Four institutional failures:

1. Positive externalities
2. Negative externalities
3. Influence failure
4. Exclusion

Market failure

State (organizational) failure

Positive externalities

• In case of ‘Free-rider’ problem: Occurs when others benefit (without making or sharing costs) from the investments/costs of someone else

• Normal incentives may not operate, and thus a public good may be underproduced, e.g. emergence of US standard movement

• Social movements may create membership-based groups and “selective incentives” are available to members, free-riders are excluded

• e.g. French farmers movement to protect standards
Negative externalities

- or: “social costs”, e.g. steel company pollutes air in other country, Chinese work conditions
- when some draw all the benefits and others are stuck with the costs
- Market mechanisms may not always work
- Social movements can arise to establish new organizations to reduce social costs
- e.g. advertising ethics, fair trade organizations
Influence failure

- Organizations need to acquire endorsements from powerful actors (state), often through trade associations or elite coalitions.
- Such endorsements imply costs: influence costs (e.g. lobbying).
- When costs are high or in case of disagreement within the association/coalition, social movements powered by activists may emerge to establish endorsement for a new form.
- e.g. automobile fans (1900) influencing legal framework allowing higher
Existing institutions that favor vested interests may exclude (certain) actors from access to resources or influence.

In such cases, social movements create new organizational forms to discredit existing institutional arrangements and provide a ‘voice’.

e.g. Vereniging Effecten Bezitters (VEB) and Stichting Lakeman who fight for the position of smaller shareholders, earthquake-related groups, SME/MKB organizations trying to influence national innovation policy.
Failure as the cause of local energy initiatives

- “Bottom-up innovation dynamics have developed in response to top-down failure.”

- It appears that we no longer trust large multinationals and governments for our food, security, trade, financing, insurance, and energy.

- “Throughout Europe, local initiatives in neighbourhoods, villages and cities have independently adopted the adage ‘think globally, act locally’.”

Increasingly people feel themselves not well represented, excluded

Arentsen & Bellekom (2014), “Power to the people...”
Social movements can create institutional innovations

Institutional innovation: Introducing or modifying ‘the rules of the game’ and the norms in a particular organizational field

e.g.

- New electoral rules
- Environmental regulation
- Positive discrimination
- Minority rights
Construction of new organizational forms

= a political process in which social movements play a double-edged role:

• they de-institutionalize existing beliefs, norms and values embodied in existing forms,
  ‣ and establish new forms that instantiate new beliefs, norms and values.

Crucial … are institutional entrepreneurs who lead efforts to identify political opportunities, frame issues and problems, and mobilize supporting groups.

Core properties of organizational forms (in order of difficulty to change):

- goals
- authority relations
- technologies,
- marketing strategy

New forms that are different in all 4 core properties are called **strong speciation**

New forms that only differ in one or two of the 4 core properties are called **weak speciation**

## Local energy initiatives - a new organizational form

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Organizational Field (energy industry)</th>
<th>Local energy initiatives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td>Central control over energy production and distribution. Supply security (no blackouts)</td>
<td>striving for autonomy and energy independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authority relations</strong></td>
<td>Centralized Hierarchical</td>
<td>Shared ownership Community-based (cooperatives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technology</strong></td>
<td>One-way power grid Few large-scale power plants Predominantly fossil-based</td>
<td>Smart grids Many small-scale sites Renewable energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Served markets/clients</strong></td>
<td>Large organizations Industry parks Households</td>
<td>Collectivities/communities/local networks Prosumer role</td>
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</table>

**Strong speciation**
How innovative are local energy initiatives?

› New modes of organisation and participation
  • Organizing local engagement of population
  • Productive and rewarding business models
› New modes of energy production
  • Small-scale renewable energy technologies
› New products and services
› New community-based financing schemes.
The importance of context

Innovations depend on the institutional context (or: organizational fields) in which social movements operate, e.g. regulatory agencies, professional societies, consumers, suppliers, competitors.

Intersection of multiple fields

Fragmented fields

Hierarchical fields

Intersection of multiple fields

- Resistance and competition: multitude of interests, disciplines and frames, ambiguity & different perspectives

- Early innovators begin to:
  - criticize/label conventional practices
  - develop alternative practices
  - thus increasing their rhetorical portability

- Only successful when:
  - Resonant frames are developed for alternative practices
  - Mass support is mobilized
  - Problems of internal solidarity and resistance are overcome

This creates “legitimated social spaces through the establishment of professional organizations... this can modify the institutionalized narratives and reconfigure the institutional context by creating new organizational forms.” (p252)
Fragmented fields

- No clear center of power
- Institutional fields can be fragmented when there are many conflicting goals, overlapping jurisdictions, professions have weak boundaries, and disorganization among producers, consumers and suppliers.
- Fragmentation offers an opportunity for consensus movements to create new institutions and organizational forms.
- Mass mobilization is needed: somebody needs to unite all the ‘fragments’.
- e.g. total quality movement, advocating the new quality paradigm.
Hierarchical fields

- Distinct dominance order: few actors in the apex, others survive at the bottom.
- Apex of influential actors have strong vested interests.
- Innovation does not originate from the center of the field but from periphery, and conflicts with central interests (cf. dynamic conservatism, Schon).
- Conflict-oriented social movements; attempts to modify the prevalent institutional order.
- e.g. emergence of US micro-breweries revolt against the established beer companies.
'dynamic conservatism’ (Donald Schöhn) 
“a tendency to fight to remain the same.”

1. First the system tries to ignore the presence of a threat
2. If it can not be ignored it launches a counter attack or a preventive attack before the threat has materialized.
3. If it does not succeed, it allows the threatening change a limited scope of activity and keeps it isolated.
4. The fourth strategy is to absorb the agents of change and turn to their own ends the energies originally directed towards change.
5. And finally, if even that appears not to work, the system changes, but it allows the least change capable of neutralizing the intrusive process.
Institutional context: electricity system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liberalized Energy Industry</th>
<th>Local Energy Initiatives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical type of institutional coordination - monopoly</td>
<td>Institutionally autonomous, various types of local coordination/participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positions and functions are integrated in top-down structure</td>
<td>Locally suited coordination and organization of membership and participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core = technological system with production units linked to load centres via the grid</td>
<td>Community ownership of localised production of energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large scale</td>
<td>Small scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrally managed by the grid</td>
<td>Grid connection for back-up reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance = private interests</td>
<td>Performance = community oriented</td>
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**Hierarchical field & conflict-oriented social movement**

• Social movements are a particular form of collective action: collective challenges by people with common purposes in sustained interaction with other actors in an institutional field

• There are three drivers of social movements: framing, mobilization and opportunity

• Social movements (may) arise from institutional failures

• Social movements are important because they challenge current institutions and thus may create institutional innovations
Figure 1  Component processes of institutionalization

End