Perspektiven auf globale Politik

THE DUALISM OF MOVEMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS. A STRUCTURATIONAL APPROACH TOWARDS THE TWO CONCEPTS

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In studies of social mobilization, the distinction between institutions and organizations is often as blurry as the instant of time from which on we can actually speak of a proper movement. Using the idea of a `duality of structure' as a starting point, this article suggests a way of fixing the boundaries: a brief analysis of the South African Landless People's Movement demonstrates the merit of conceiving of movements as aggregate actors with shared common objectives and common norms, which institutionalize particular modes of cooperation by purposefully drawing on existing institutions in order to shape functioning internal structures.

by David Betge (Freie Universität Berlin)*

Movements are assumed to be key actors in democratization processes and other forms of social change and their role as social actors has been the subject of extensive research projects in the past. Terms like *Labour Movement* or *Global Justice Movement* are common tongue in academia and there is agreement that movements have a significant impact on the institutions of society. But while movements are broadly discussed, the terminology used is heavily disputed: definitions of terms like movement or institution remain vague or implicit and their interrelation continues to be a central point of discussion. A key term in the social sciences, definitions of what an institution is, are far from undisputed. Some authors understand institutions as formalized organizational structures.

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In this perspective, movements are mainly seen as the (potential) creators of institutions. In contrast, I argue that much can be gained analytically, if we understand institutions to be constituted not just by formalized rules but also by social norms. The definition I propose here might be best suited for studies aiming at understanding the process character of movement formation and development. I will illustrate with a brief empirical case study the practical use of such a conception and I am curious as to how others who have put thought into the study of movements will reflect on these propositions.

My approach to the analysis of movements and institutions is based on the concept of the 'duality of structure' as introduced by Anthony Giddens. Giddens describes structures as those rules and resources that influence the actors' action choices. At the same time, actors influence structures through their action, they can perpetuate them or change them. In this context, institutions are understood as norms and rules with structural properties. These norms and rules become 'institutionalized' through practices over time. With his concept of the duality of action and structure Giddens builds on Karl Marx and his dictum that people make their own history but within the circumstances (or structures) they find. His ideas on the individual as a social actor can be traced back to Max Weber, to name just two of Giddens' sources of inspiration. My location of movements and institutions in this realm of structurational theory is motivated by the fact that this theoretical lens, which was developed by Giddens in the 1970s and 80s, aims at transcending traditional orthodoxies in the social sciences by incorporating insights from very different schools of thought. Giddens' work constitutes a project, which once seemed highly promising as it offered a way out of many dichotomies dividing the social sciences, such as the quantitative/qualitative, micro/macro, and the positivist/constructivist dualism. Not least because of this agenda Giddens' work merits further scholarly attention.

Since lack of clarity regarding the empirical use of structurational ideas has been among the most pertinent critiques of Giddens' work, this contribution aims at demonstrating the analytical relevance of the proposed concepts. To that end, I draw on works by Fritz Scharpf and Renate Mayntz who used Giddens' idea of the duality of structure to develop an approach to policy analysis which focuses on composite actors interacting within specific institutional settings. From these authors I borrow the specification that institutions consist of rules in terms of enforceable laws and regulations as well as norms, which are adhered to, because non-compliance would be sanctioned by third parties, e.g., through withdrawal from cooperation or through ostracism.

Movements, in turn, are generally understood to be composite actors, made up by the sum of their individuals. These are often part of different organizations, too, yet united by a certain issue or demand. Such a unifying purpose might be rooted in self-interest or a normative frame,

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but it eventually aims at changing existing institutions, that is, norms or rules (though in some cases, the purpose might also be to conserve the latter). While many analytical approaches understand institutions to (also) mean organizations, I propose in line with Scharpf and Mayntz to fix the boundaries between both for the sake of analytical clarity: organizations should be understood as composite actors with particular structural properties, which allow for collective decision-making and a certain degree of coordination among members. Thus, movements are a particular type of organization, while institutions shape organizations but in the narrow definition used here are clearly distinct from them.

According to this distinction, a movement can target institutions but also use them as resources and guidelines. Hence in contrast to the rather static four-stage model of social movement development, a structurational approach focuses on the constant interchange between norms, rules, and movements as actors, above all, the constant alignment of the latter's internal structures with agreed-upon objectives and positions towards those institutions within a movement's field of engagement. I will illustrate this with a short example drawn from the struggles around redistributive land reform in contemporary South Africa.

South Africa's Landless People's Movement

In the early 2000s, after the land reforms efforts which had started in 1994 had failed to improve the lot of the landless poor a nationwide movement formed in South Africa. It called itself the Landless People's Movement (LPM). Stephen Greenberg has written extensively on the LPM and much of the information I use stems from his works. Central organizing frames of the movement were the norms that formed the basis for the South African land reform policies. These policies were based on ideas of restorative and redistributive justice and aimed at restoring original ownership over dispossessed land and at redistributing land from the white minority to the black majority. Not only did the land reforms not reach their quantitative targets, but many people who were not part of the governing party or who disagreed with implementation were excluded from the reform process. This was one of the core issues that the LPM tried to address by providing a platform on which a vast range of people could voice their grievances and ideas on land reform. Central to its organizing power was the ability to construct people's identity around the issue of landlessness. Redistributive and restorative justice were ideas which could be used to form a movement of people from all sorts of economic and social backgrounds: in the end, the LPM consisted of different organizations from all over South Africa, small farmers and affluent commercial farmers, as well as academics and other individuals who supported the struggle for land. While core norms of restorative and redistributive justice to the benefit of those who had suffered most under the Apartheid regime were accepted by basically all members, internal disputes developed around the best way of addressing

the shortcomings of land reforms. Some members of the LPM strongly promoted land invasions and occupations to create attention for the cause and to acquire land in the short term. They also demanded the expropriation of landholders without compensation. Furthermore, many were reluctant to cooperate with state actors, while others saw dialogue with state institutions as the only way of achieving meaningful outcomes.

Formalization as a Product of Interaction

The social norms, which the land reforms were supposed to adhere to, were the glue bringing and holding the movement together. But the rules on land reforms and the policies for social development provided the concrete matter around which the LPM could eventually form. Not only did these rules explicate the structures of the political process activists intended to influence. They also became the focal points that channelled social demands. Effectively, existing norms and rules relating to land reforms became the central themes around which the LMP materialized. Concurrently, its members had to foster consensus on how to deal with these norms and rules, as well as on how to facilitate their modification. Greenberg has shown how the initial reluctance to forming a movement was eventually overcome through the repeated interactions within formalized settings external to the movement itself: it was events organised by third parties that brought together the core actors who later formed the LPM. An important milestone in this regard was the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in 2001. The WCAR, also known as Durban I, became the setting for the LPM's formal organization, as it not only provided a forum where activists could voice their concerns, but also a dialogue platform for networking and establishing a movement with basic rules and norms that had been explicitly agreed upon. This formalization was a decisive point in LPM's development. Analytically this factor sets it apart from a range of collective actors, which are often prematurely referred to as movements, while they might be more adequately categorized as loose networks. The current nationalist and islamophobic mobilization across Europe provides an illustrative example for the latter: while it is often publicly described as a European movement, it rather seems to be a transnational network of individuals and organizations mobilizing on similar grounds (albeit one that seems to be progressing towards a movement).

Tracing the Breakup of a Movement

Tracing mobilization efforts of collective actors along their reconfiguration vis-à-vis norms and rules thus facilitates determining the critical junctures in the emergence of a movement. In the case of the LPM, it also helps to understand how, when, and why it fell apart. The downfall started with the Landless People's Assembly, which the LPM conducted in the context of the United Nations' 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. Externally, the LPM

was able to capitalize on the donor resources that came with the WSSD in order to create attention for its existence and cause, as it gained widespread media attention. Internally, however, members began to disagree ever more strongly on what some saw as the 'radical' stance on land reform (particularly on questions of expropriation and cooperation with the government). Especially those NGOs in the LPM that depended on foreign funding opted for a more conciliatory approach. The establishment of a national leadership in order to hold the movement together effectively failed in resolving these disagreements. Instead, it led to a reduction of on-the-ground actions and ultimately it resulted in the LPM losing much of its grassroots support.

In the long run, it was the movement's existing structures that were not able to facilitate internal agreement, but contributed to fragmentation: the LPM had early on started a process of bureaucratization through issuing membership cards, establishing provincial representatives and forming a national council. But the disagreements regarding land invasions, expropriation and cooperation with state actors caused several members to call their participation into question. Hence it was ultimately a conflict about norms that affected the building of effective organizational structures within the LPM. Furthermore, the formal structures of the LPM did not function, because at the ground level formal branch structures were missing. This further complicated internal communication and detached the national leadership from its local affiliates. The disconnection became strikingly apparent during the 2004 national elections: the national leadership initiated a No Land! No Vote! Campaign, threatening a boycott of the elections. However, this campaign remained without effect, because people on the ground did not support it. While the LPM formally continued to exist for a few more years, it did so only nominally through a number of local affiliates that still cooperated under its name.

Conclusion

From a structurational perspective, it is important to note that the demise of the LPM came not only as a consequence of norm-related disputes. It also resulted from its lack of internal structures for problem solving. Tracing the development of the LPM along its interaction with internal and external institutions shows that, while the LPM was a complex actor that fulfilled the criteria of a proper movement, its failure to institutionalize modes of action for strategic cooperation, as well as fundamental divergences regarding central norms resulted first in its stagnation, and then its demise. The brief analysis demonstrates the merit of conceiving of movements as aggregate actors with a shared common objective as well as common norms, which over time institutionalize particular modes of cooperation by deliberately drawing on existing institutions to shape their internal structures.

Acknowledging that this short piece leaves more questions open than it answers, I would like to highlight my key point: if we use the idea of the 'duality of structure' as a starting point for the analysis of movements and institutions, this means focussing on the mutual influences between existing structures and movements as composite actors. This perspective holds valuable analytical insights insofar as it points our research to norms and rules and towards the interplay between internal and external structural factors that may influence the trajectory of a movement and the impact of its actions.

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Publications:

Determinants, Consequences and Perspectives of Land Reform Politics in Newly Industrializing Countries – A Comparison of the Indian and the South African Case. Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, Berlin. Forthcoming

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