



Civil Society, Economy and the State

6. Economic explanations of collective action
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Economic perspective of collective action

Role of economy:

- A) framework
- B) cause
- C) tool

Rational Choice Theory (1)

- *methodological individualist position*
- *attempts to explain all social phenomena in terms of the rational calculations made by self-interested individuals*
- *social interaction as social exchange, modelled on economic action*
- *people are motivated by the rewards and costs of actions and by the profits that they can make*

Rational Choice Theory (1I)

- *there is no single rational choice theory or unambiguous standard for assigning the label "rational choice" to a theory*
- *the rational choice approach to the study of politics*
- *Basic assumptions: utility maximization, the structure of preferences, decision making under conditions of uncertainty, the centrality of individuals in the explanation of*

Rational Choice Theory - assumptions

- *Consistency of requirements: ranking of options, transitivity of ordering*
- *Expected value of payoff (utility)*
- *Agents are individuals*

Rational Choice Theory - criticism

- *Utility maximization: array of options, measurable utility (which? – thin vs. thick rationality; information? – „the agent has to assess the value of information that she does not yet have in order to determine whether it is worth taking the trouble to gather that information“), uninterest in others' fortunes*

Olson's theory of collective action

- Critique of pluralism and *theory of groups*:
- *groups of individuals try to maximize their interests*
- *groups have different interests and may act as "veto groups"*
- *many non-governmental groups use their resources to exert influence*

Olson's theory of collective action

- RAT perspective: rational individual maximalizing its utility
- Maximalization of utility = self-interest/egoism?
- Altruistic preferences?

Olson's theory of collective action

- Public good
- If collective action – achievement of public good
- Definition of public good...
- non-excludable and non-rivalrous (individuals cannot be effectively excluded from use and where use by one individual does not reduce availability to others.
- **... free-rider dilemma (and others collective action problems !!!)**

Olson's theory of collective action

- Any contribution to collective good – collective action
- How? When?
- Assumption: large (latent) group with common interest, contribution of individual negligible
- Need of „selective incentives“ – *first order public good and second order public good*

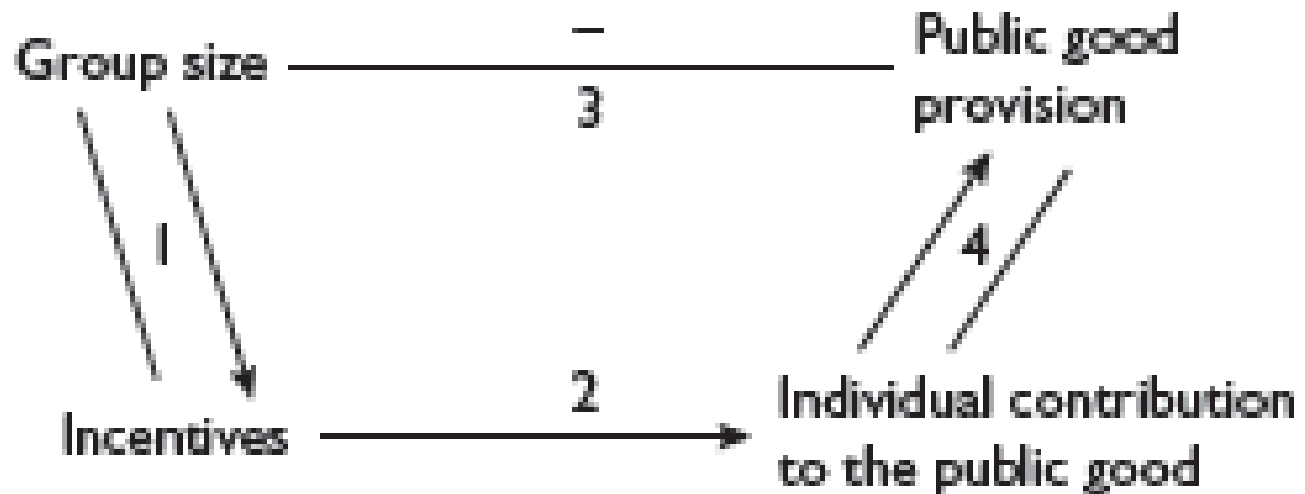
Olson's theory of collective action

- Macro-micro factors
- Macro: size of a group
- Micro: Motivation to achieve public good
- Micro: Impact of individual activity
- Ideology? Nation state...

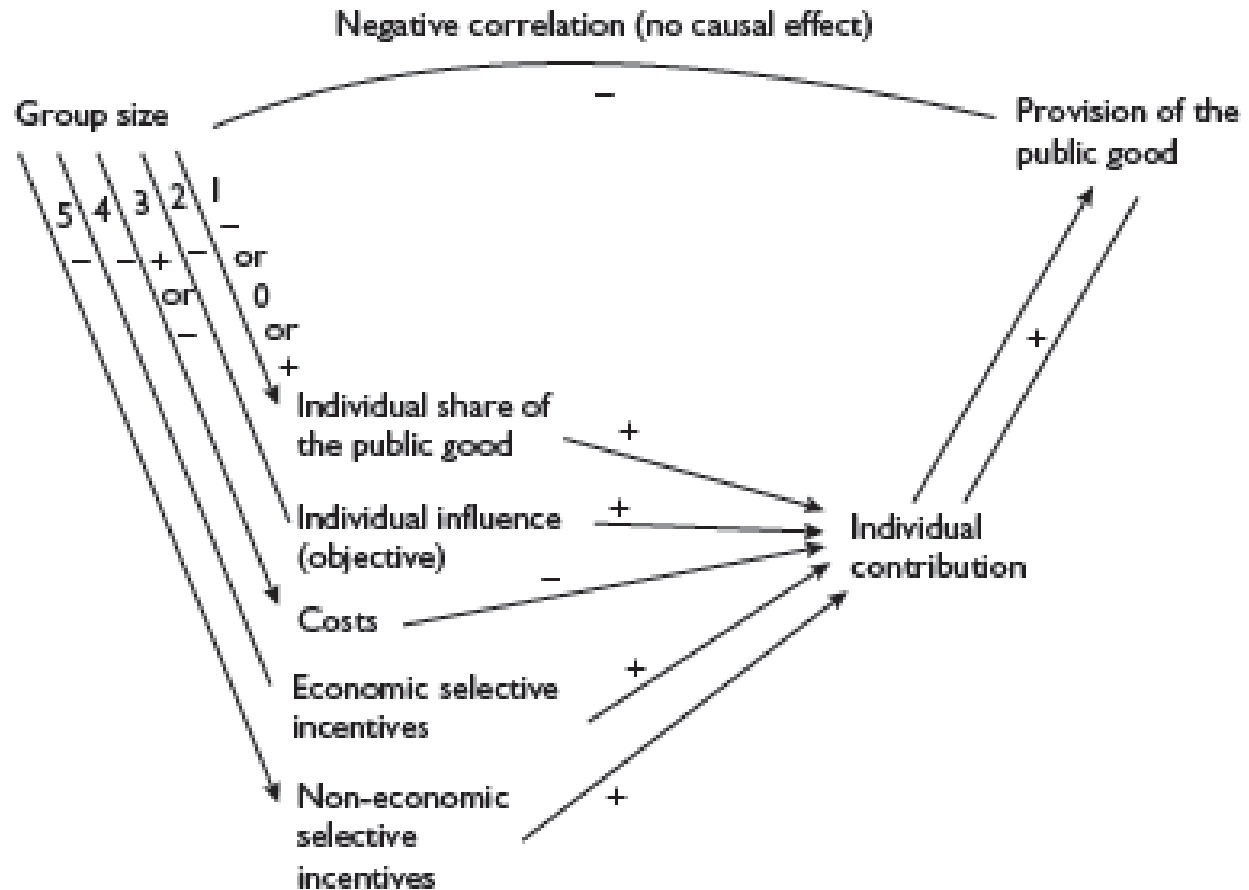
Olson's theory of collective action

- Micro: selective incentives
- Public good motivation vs. effect of individual contribution vs. costs vs. selective incentives

Olson's theory of collective action



Olson's theory of collective action



Economy as a cause

- Economy as a source of strains and grievances
- Poor people mobilization
- „proletarian movements are formed by the dialectical proces reflecting the institutional logic of capitalist arrangements“

Historical materialist account of mobilization

- Theoretical sources: philosophy of Enlightenment (Rousseau), classical German philosophy (Hegel, Feuerbach), former socialist thought (Saint-Simon, More), classical economy (Smith, Ricardo)
- In the social production of their existence (transformation of nature), men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are **independent** of their will
- These **relations of production** - are appropriate to a given stage in the development of their **material forces of production** (i.e. workforce, technologies, science)
- The totality of these relations of production constitutes **the economic structure of society („the base“)** - the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of consciousness
- The mode of production of material life **conditions** the general process of social, political and intellectual life („**the superstructure“)**
- Ergo: It is not the **consciousness** of men that determines their existence, but their **social existence** that determines their consciousness

Historical materialist account of mobilization

- The changes in the economic foundation lead to the transformation of the whole superstructure
- At a certain stage of development, the material **forces of production** come into conflict with the existing **relations of production** or with the **property relations** within the framework of which they have operated
- Then begins an era of **social revolution**
- In studying such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the **material transformation** of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of **natural science**, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic — in short, **ideological forms** in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out
- **Method:** we cannot judge a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions between the social forces of production and the relations of production

Theory of revolution (class struggle)

- Revolution - when forces of production enter into conflict with existing frame/structure of relations of production
- Actors of this antagonism (progressives vs. conservatives) change over time (bourgeoisie against feudalists, proletariat against bourgeoisie)
- Problem of class determinism of individuals – it is not absolute but overwhelming
- Individuals associate into large groups – **classes** – when they are forced to raise the claims against another class(-es), and this classes become independent on individuals – established classes start to determine individuals
- "working class" – **proletariat** – the multitude of individuals who sell their labour power for wages and do not own the means of production
- Classes „**in themselves**“ – objective existence of social groupings
- Classes „**for themselves**“ – they are subjectively perceived (acknowledged) by their members > classes can become

Modification of economy as the cause: neo-Marxism

- Critique of (soft) pathological consequences of capitalism
- The key is not an **enforced** oppression (servitude) of the workers by the economy (power relations of production) but the **subtle** manipulation by the system and its culture (entertaining industry, new mythologies, thorough manipulation of the human needs and instincts)
- Marx's concept of **alienation** (in early works) and **commodity fetishism** (in late economical writings) – separation of the human and his activity/work (separation of the product from his needs and from his work) > re-linking of the interpersonal relations through the market as a relations among things > people loose control of their lives and selves (> modern **economy as a social construction**)
- Concept of **reification** (object-ification or thing-ification) - distortion of consciousness, occurs when relation, context or process is generalized into **abstraction** and thereby turned into concrete or separate (when this is inappropriate because it is not an object or because it does not truly exist in separation) - further developed by G. Lukács

Modification of economy as the cause: post-Marxism

- Abandonment of Marxist paradigm (teleology, economism, trust in universal mission of working class) and the continuity at same time (development of later Marxist concepts Gramsci, Althusser),
- influence of néo-structuralism and deconstruction
- refusal of „grand narratives“ (*Revolution, History, Class*)
- democratic revolution preceded (made condition for) **workers' revolution** > project of radical democracy and **refusal of revolutionary socialism** - Guattari, Jameson, Laclau, Mouffe
- ignoring monolithic utopian or apolitical visions, the need of radical imagination against existing social order
- society as a field of contestation and domination with **multiple rationalities**, elements and no objective standpoint or single evolutionary process (e.g. not one inequality but various incommensurable inequalities among individuals)
- the need of reconstruction of the contemporary Left (not anti-systemic demands, but the balance among the support of the democracy and the ability of positive restructuring of social spheres on the part of subordinated groups)

Modification of economy as the cause: new Marxism

Slavoj Žižek

- (Lacanian) return to the ontology of subject (Cartesian view), the term of **ideology** and the notion of **class**
- Analysis of today's capitalist reality as a socio-cultural whole (F. Jameson, Frankfurt School)
- Class (struggle) as a "radically subjective" position: class as a locus without a positive identity ("world's destitute, displaced and outcast") > rather a signifier of an embodied negativity
- Class becomes the name the basic failure/impossibility of capitalism to constitute itself as a universal cosmopolitan system – ideology as a **mechanism** for a socialization of impossibility
- Critical of the way political decisions are **justified** in contemporary democracies („false objectivism“) - arguing for a **politicization** of the economy and politics as a counter balance to „post-politics“ in liberal multi-cultural society
- Real political conflict - between an ordered structure of society and those without a place in it (non-existing alternatives)

Modification of economy as the cause: new Marxism

Immanuel Wallerstein

- historian and theorist of the global capitalist economy on a macroscopic level.
- theory of "anti-systemic movements"
- intellectual influences: **Karl Marx** (underlying economic factors and their dominance over ideological factors in global politics, dichotomy between capital and labour, the view of world economic development through stages such as feudalism and capitalism, belief in the endless accumulation of capital as a distinctive feature of the capitalism); **Fernand Braudel** (development and political implications of extensive networks of economic exchange in the European world between 1400 and 1800); **dependency theory** (concepts of "core" and "periphery,,").
- importance of the North-South divide
- **globalization** as the age of transition and terminal crisis of capitalism, not a new historical phenomenon
- two time frameworks – 1450 – today (life cycle of capitalist world economy) and 1945 – today (Kondratieff cycle of the world economy, breaking in 1967-1973)
- three trends creating **limits to the accumulation of capital**: grow of real wage as the percentage of the costs of production (de-ruralisation): grow of the cost of material inputs (ecology): taxation

Economy as a tool

- „Resource mobilization“ perspective
- „Resource availability enhances the likelihood of collective action“
- Availability not sufficient: coordination and strategic effort is typically required to pool resources and utilize them in collective action
- Edwards, Zald, McCarthy, Jenkins

Role of resources

- Resources: any social, political, or economic asset or capacity that can contribute to collective action
- Drawing on a rational choice approach to collective action
- Social movements as collective attempts to bring about change in social institutions and the distribution of socially valued goods.

Resource Mobilization Theory

- Grievances stemming from structural strains and relative deprivation are secondary or possibly irrelevant to movement participation
- what changes, giving rise to social movements, is the availability of resources

Resource Mobilization Theory

- Research informed by RMT has focused on three major issues:
 - (a) the microprocesses giving rise to individual participation;
 - (b) organizational processes shaping mobilization; and
 - (c) the political opportunities that guide social movement development and outcomes.

RMT vs. Olson

- A major focus of debate - Olson's theory
- Klandermans (1995) shows that most free riding is due to ignorance, high perceived costs in terms of work and family obligations, weak integration into inter- personal networks which provide both information and solidary incentives, and the perceived irrelevance of participation.

RMT vs. Olson

- Marwell and Oliver (1993): free riding is an option only when individuals perceive that their contributions to the collective good follows a decelerating production function (i.e., each contribution makes others' subsequent contributions less worthwhile).
- Mass mobilization follows an accelerating production function (i.e., each contribution makes the next one more worthwhile).
- > There may be large start-up costs to collective action but there is no point of diminishing returns.

RMT vs. Olson

- RMT: collective identity and solidarity stemming from interpersonal networks provide for participation
- Marwell and Oliver (1993): organizers (movement entrepreneurs) pay much of the start-up costs by building solidary networks, developing injustice frames (Snow et al. 1986), and creating collective perceptions of an accelerating production function.

RMT vs. Olson

- Klandermans (1997): both selective and collective incentives matter with some movements depending more on selective incentives and others on collective commitments to movement goals.
- It depends on the character of movement goal which type of incentive matters more.

RMT: types of resources

Table 6.1 Means of Social Movement and SMO Resource Access and Resource Types

<i>Means of Access</i>	<i>Moral</i>	<i>Cultural</i>	<i>Resource Types</i> <i>Social-Organizational</i>	<i>Human</i>	<i>Material</i>
Aggregation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lists of endorsers • Recruiting celebrity endorsers • Advisory committee members on letterhead • Soliciting statements of support for specific projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social movement schools movement mentoring orgs. • Movement initiated summits and workshops where groups come together to share advice, information, strategy • Working groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building networks • Forming coalitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruiting constituents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member contributions • Emily's list • Individual donations from non-members
Self-Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral authority from the effective use of non-violence (e.g., King, Gandhi) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas • Frames • Tactical repertoires • Music • History 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founding SMOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising and socializing children, • Issue/movement oriented summer camps • Training • Movement Mentors • Women's, Environmental, or Black studies programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grassroots fund raising events • Creating items for sale at events (T-shirts, posters, CDs, coffee mugs, etc.)

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