



Civil Society, Economy and the State

Political perspective of collective action

Role of politics:

- A) Framework (political process)
- B) Cause (political opportunities, threats)
- C) Tool (mobilizing structures, framing)

Political process model (Tilly)

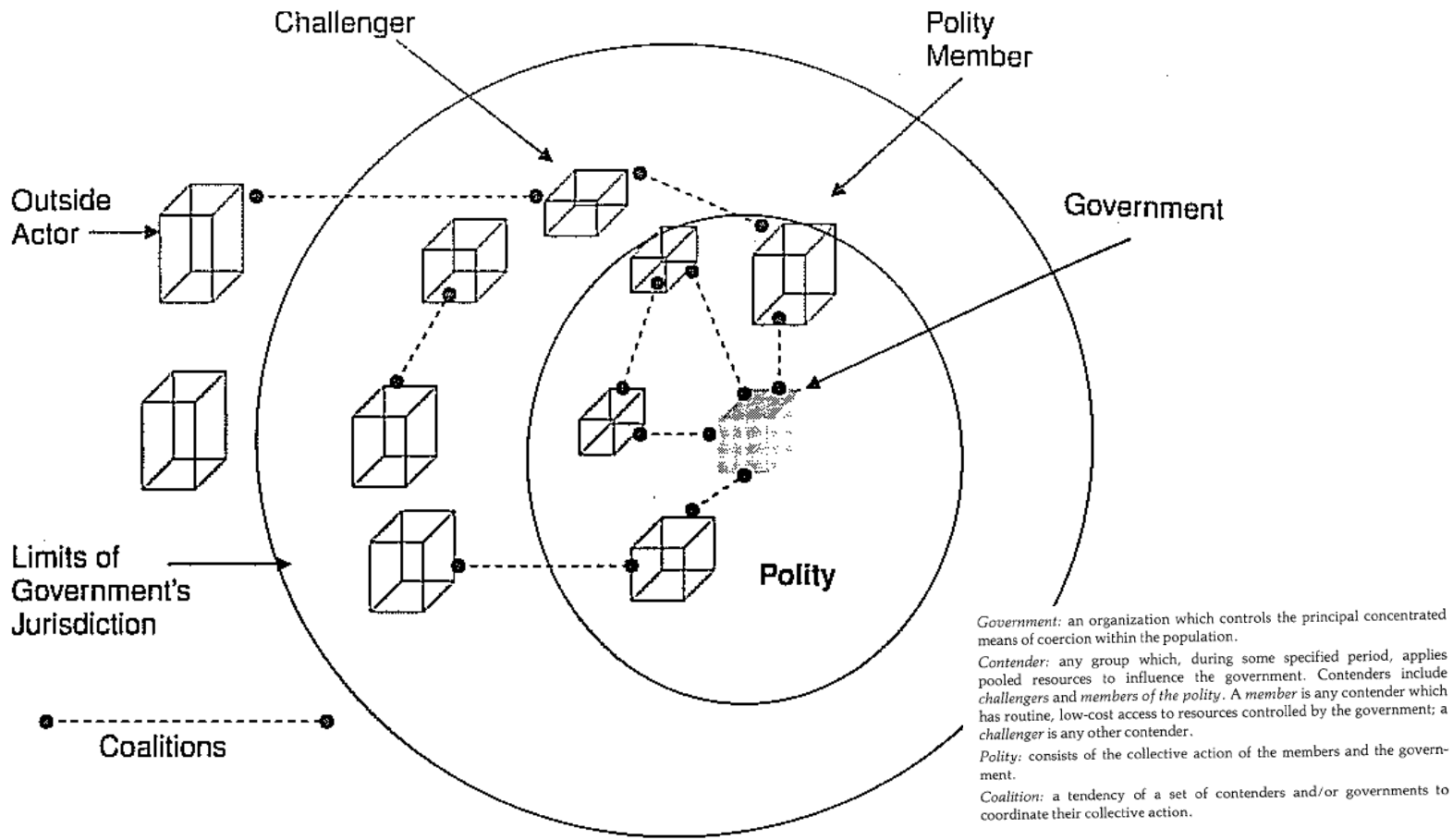


FIGURE 1.1. Tilly's Simple Polity Model. *Source:* Doug McAdam et al., *Dynamics of Contention*, p. 11. Copyright © 2001 Cambridge University Press. Reprinted with permission.

Political threats and opportunities (Tilly)

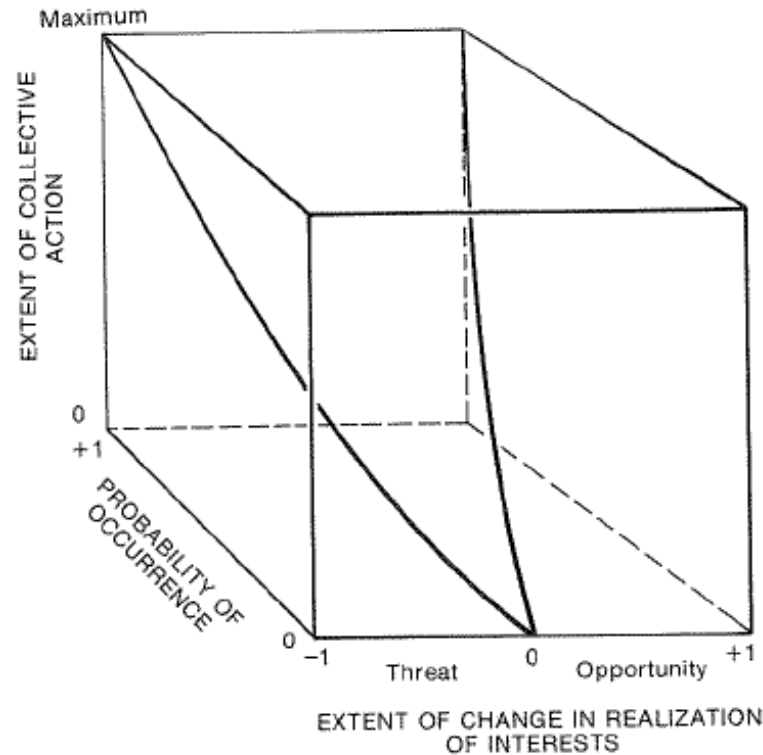


Fig. 4-11
Collective action as a function of threats and opportunities

Political proces model

- What are the conditions for mobilization?
- Mobilization can only be understood in the connection with politics
- Opportunities/threats to challengers and facilitation/repression from authorities

• Tomorrow:

- By political opportunities, I mean consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national – sets of clues that encourage people to engage in contentious politics.
- By threats, I mean those factors – repression, but also the capacity of authorities to present a solid front to insurgents – that discourage contention.

Political context

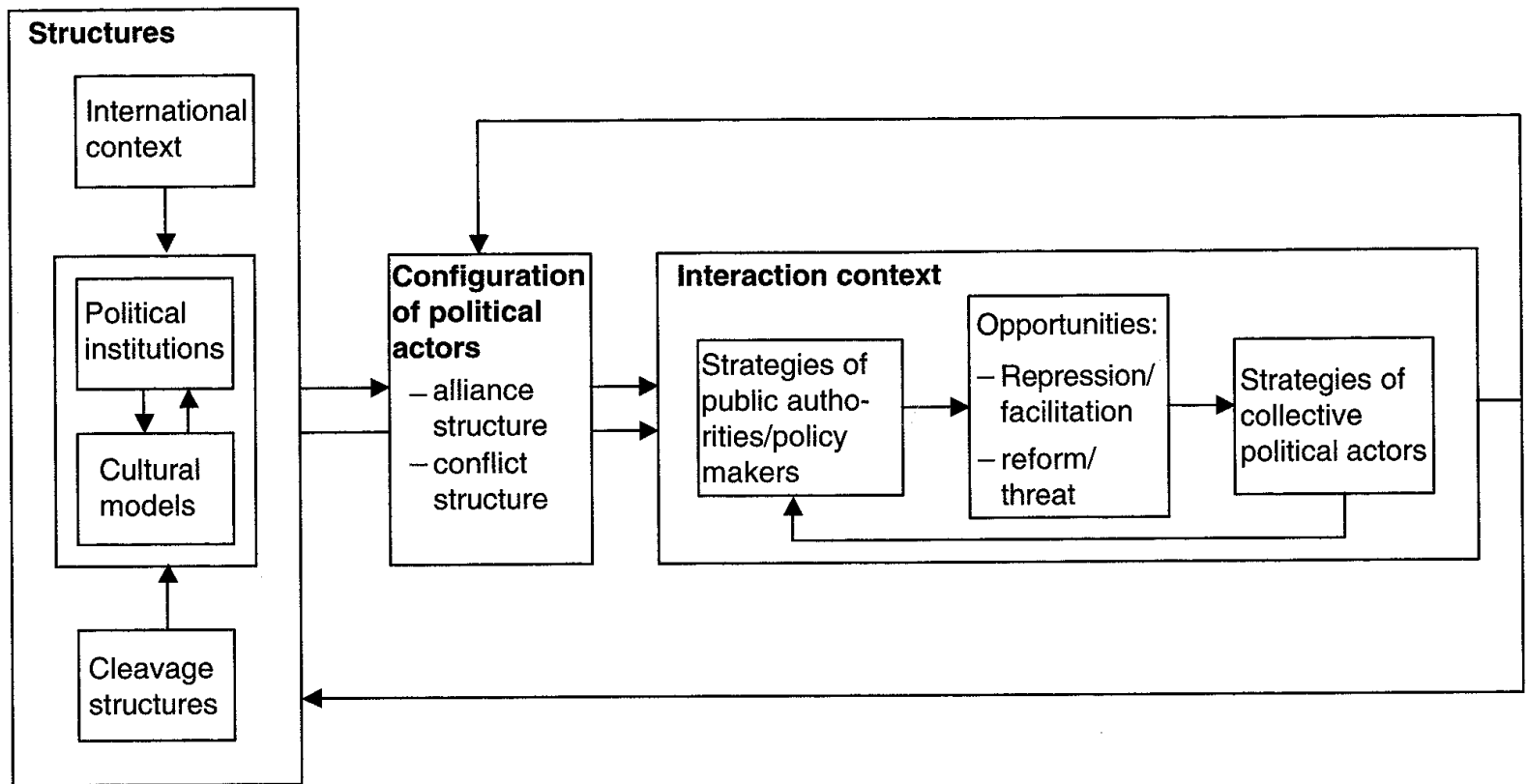


Figure 4.1 A framework for the study of the political context.

Political opportunity structure

- Why does contentious politics seems to develop only in particular periods of history? Why do have movements different forms in different political environments?
- Structuralist account of collective action
- Institutional environment and relations among political actors within polity
- Discursive POS
- International POS

Political opportunity structure

- Number of independent power centres
- Degree of system repression
- Elite disunity; the leading factions are internally fragmented
- Broadening of access to institutional participation in political processes for new actors
- Support of organized opposition by elites
- Changes in any of these

Networks and mobilizing structures

- Social networks and organizations

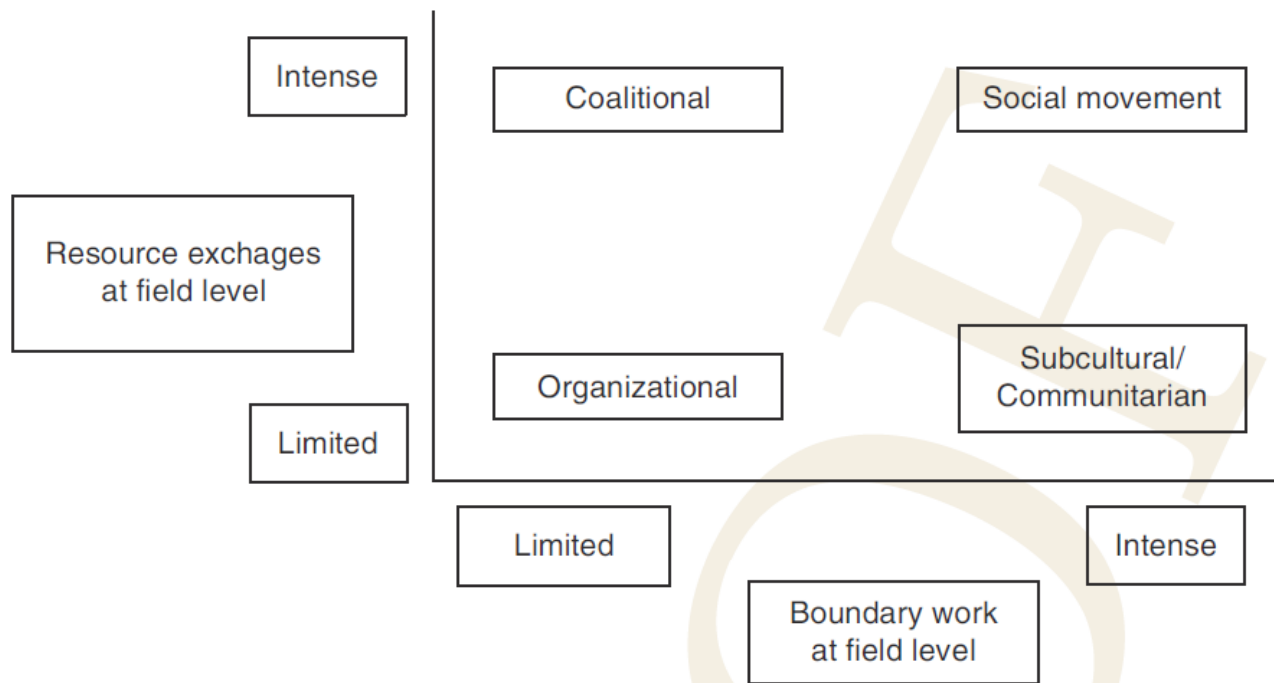


FIGURE 1.1 Modes of coordination of collective action.

Repertoire of contention

Because social movements seldom possess either Olson's selective incentives or constraints over followers, movement leadership has a creative function in selecting forms of collective action that people will respond to. Leaders invent, adapt, and combine various forms of contention to gain support from people who might otherwise stay at home. Economist Albert Hirschman had something like this in mind when he complained that Olson regarded collective action only as a cost – when to many it is a benefit (1982: 82–91). For people whose lives are mired in drudgery and desperation, the offer of an exciting, risky, and possibly beneficial campaign of collective action may be an incentive in itself.

Repertoire of contention

- Once the political opportunity is optimal for protest, social movement organizations (SMOs) have a limited “**repertoire of contention.**”
- restricted modes of protests available to non-violent social movement organizations and their activists
- mass demonstrations, sit-ins, letter-writing campaigns, circulating petitions, encouraging referenda for elections, candlelight vigils, strikes, the commandeering of public buildings and public spaces sustained protests, worker slow-downs, and planned boycotts.

Framing

- Construction of contention
- Cognitive frames, ideological packages, cultural discourses – shared meaning inspiring people to collective action
- Framing – generalization of grievances

Theories of collective action frames

- In Tversky and Kahneman's 1981 "prospect theory" experiments, they found that 72% of participants initially selected Option A and 28% of participants selected Option B. However, when a different set of participants received the same scenario, but framed slightly differently, the results were essentially opposite.
- Apparent inconsistency in choices between the two options is the "framing effect"
- A frame is an ideological device that is used to garner –and expand- support from potential constituents and current stakeholders on contentious political and social issues.

Benford, Snow:

Framing as Meaning Construction

Social movement scholars conceptualize this signifying work or meaning construction by employing the verb “framing” (Gamson et al 1982, Snow et al 1986, Snow & Benford 1988). This denotes an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction. It is active in the sense that something is being done, and processual in the sense of a dynamic, evolving process. It entails agency in the sense that what is evolving is the work of social movement organizations or movement activists. And it is contentious in the sense that it involves the generation of interpretive frames that not only differ from existing ones but that may also challenge them. The resultant products of this framing activity are referred to as “collective action frames.”

Theories of collective action frames

Gamson	Snow and Benford
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Injustice</i>: identify individuals or institution to blame for grievances • <i>Identity</i>: specify aggrieved group with reference to shared interests and values • <i>Agency</i>: recognize that grieving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Diagnostic frame</i>: tell new recruits what is wrong and why • <i>Prognostic frame</i>: present a solution to the diagnosed problem • <i>Motivational frame</i>: give people a reason to join collective action
Entman	
<i>Substantive frame functions</i>	<i>Substantive frame foci</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining effects or conditions as problematic • Identifying causes • Conveying moral judgment • Endorsing remedies or improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political events • Issues • Actors

References

- Kriesi, H. 2004. "Political Context and Opportunity." In *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, eds. David Snow, Sarah Soule a Hanspeter Kriesi. Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 67-90.
- Tarrow, S. 2011. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 3rd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 195-214.
- Opp. Karl-Dieter. 2009. *Theories of Political Protest and Social Movements: A Multidisciplinary Introduction, Critique, and Synthesis*. Abingdon: Routledge.