Contribution for the IST 2018 conference.

Two weeks in advance of the conference
there will be a more elaborate version available.

"Institutional entrepreneurship in sustainability transitions - How
niche advocacy coalitions lobby for policy change."

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Contents

1   Introduction

In the literature of the recently emerging field of sustainability transitions (Markard et al 2012), the change towards more sustainable modes of production and consumption are associated with niche technologies that ought replace the current "established socio-institutional framework" (also called the regime) {Kemp 2001 #218D: 276} {Geels 2002 #38D: 1259}. Often these innovative technologies do not align with the institutions of and policy put forward by the regime and are therefore impeded to reach their sustainability potential. To reach their sustainability potential the regime therefore needs to be adapted in ways that enhances the diffusion of these technologies. This adaptation is unlikely to comes directly from the technology in scope, but from the actors, that are for some reason affiliated with these technologies, that need to make use of their agency and adapt institution, since Technology, of itself, has no power, does nothing {Fleck 1993 #457D: 15} {Geels 2002 #38D: 1257}. For this reason, in transitions research, the notion of advocacy coalitions is frequently used to describe the societal processes that are initiated by convinced and passionate people that coordinate and engage in collective action (see table Nr. 1).

In this paper, we want to shed light on collective action in transitions research and conceptionalize the notion of advocacy coalitions that press for policy change, specifically niche advocacy coalitions. We explicitly chose to look at policy change, since we see policy change as an inevitable step to support new technologies in their diffusions process and understand that effective change of policy is a subsequent action of other invisible institutional change.

For the conceptionalization of NACs we start-off (Section 2) with introducing sustainability transitions and how advocacy coalitions are currently understood and utilized in this emerging field of research. For this we will draw on the literature of institutional entrepreneurship ({Battilana 2009 #146D} {Levy 2007 #637D} {Rao 2000 #640D} {Garud 2007 #131I), theories of the policy process including the advocacy coalition framework {Weible 2011 #190D} and research on power in transitions {Avelino 2017 #632D}. In section 3 we derive from the institutional theory 6 indicators that may be utilized as proxies to describe strong advocacy coalitions. In section 4 we draw on the notion of institutional entrepreneurs to display how advocacy coalitions are built up, how they can be maintained and what strategies actors can use to increase power and legitimacy of their coalitions in order to reach policy change and thereby support the diffusion of the technology they are affiliated with. In section 5 we will discuss these

propositions and in section 6 we will summarize the results and construct a research agenda.

2 Sustainability transitions and institutional (policy) change

2.1 Sustainability transitions

Current lifestyles in the industrialized world and parts of the global economy are not sustain-able. They imply negative externalities such as climate change. Therefore a transition to-wards more sustainable practices is needed. From a theoretical perspective, economies are constituted by socio-technical systems that emerge over time to fulfil societal functions such as energy, communication, housing, healthcare and supply of resources (Geels 2005, S. 445). A sustainability transition is therefore defined as the change of one state in one of these functions of a socio-technical system to another more sustainable state. Transitions require technological change but beyond that they rely on institutional change (Edquist 2006; Jacobsson und Bergek 2004, p. 818; Markard und Truffer 2008, p. 598) such as changes in markets, user practices, cultural meanings and policy (Geels 2010, p. 495). Therefore they are also termed socio-technical transitions (Geels 2002, p. 1257, 2004, p. 898). In his multi-level-perspective, Geels distinguishes between three levels of structuration: the landscape-level, the regime-level and the niche-level (Geels 2002, p. 1257, 2004, p. 898). Technologies and innovations that contribute to a sustainability transition always start as niches and need to offer more sustainable solutions and if possible other advantages in contrast to incumbent technologies. These niches are dependent on a window of opportunity that opens when landscape pressures destabilise the current regime. Often these innovative technologies however do not align with the "established socio-institutional framework" (Kemp et al. 2001, p. 276; Geels 2002, p. 1259) or manage to create their own markets. Thus, they need to be supported by policy, since "policies are the answer of the political system to societal problems" (Markard et al. 2015, p. 217). In this paper, policy refers to the following content and substance: goals, programs, regulations, laws, funding priorities, incentives, sanctions, subsidies and taxes {Markard 2015 #169D: 127} {Jenkins-Smith 2017 #512D: 142}.

2.2 The notion of advocacy coalitions in sustainability transitions

- The goal of advocacy coalitions is to influence the socio-technical set up of the regime (Jacobson and Lauber 2006, Bergek et al 2015)
- Advocacy coalitions are constructed out a variety of actors (Geels 2016, Negro 2012) that share the same goal (Ulmanen 2009)

- They need to mobilize resources to execute power (Suurs 2010).
- The more they grow in size and influence the more power they command over (Hekkert 2007).
- They make sure that protective space is made available for niche innovations (Smith and Raven 2012).

Table 1. Mentions of (advocacy) coalitions in transitions research

Jacobsson und Lauber 2006, p. 259	"...early entrants strengthen the 'political' power of a **technology specific advocacy coalition** and provide an enlarged opportunity to influence the institutional set-up."
Smith and Raven 2012, p. 1027	"In sum, we define active protective spaces as those spaces that are the result of deliberate and strategic creation by **advocates of specific path-breaking innovations** to shield regime selection pressures."
Suurs et al. 2010, p. 430	An important effect was Resource Mobilisation as a result of firms lobbying for government subsidies, thereby contributing to the Support from **Advocacy Coalitions**
Geels et al. 2016, p. 904	"The EEG was supported by a broad **advocacy coalition**, which included environmentally-oriented organisations as well as organisations from metal and machine-building sectors."
Negro et al. 2012, p. 3842	"These examples show that support and opposition for renewable energy technologies is not stereotypically bounded to specific actor groups in the innovation system. Unique **combinations of advocates** and opponents arise under different circumstances."
Jacobsson and Bergek 2004, p. 842	"Jacobsson and Bergek recommend support specific groups of system builders and **advocacy coalitions.**"
Hekkert M.P. et al. 2007, p. 425	"If successful, **advocacy coalitions** will grow in size and influence; they may become powerful enough to brisk up the spirit of creative destruction. The scale and successes of these **coalitions** directly depend on the available resources (function 6) and the future expectations (function 4) associated with the new technology."
Bergek et al. 2015, p. 56	"As a result, the various TISs are (indirectly) coupled through this regulation. Indeed, **advocates** of these different TISs **joined forces** and worked together to initiate, maintain and strengthen the feed-in tariff, in spite of the fact that they were essentially competitors."
Ulmanen et al. 2009, p. 1416	"One strategy is to build **advocacy coalitions** with a variety of actors that may have different interests but share the same goal."
Wieczorek and Hekkert 2012, p. 81	"Weak **advocacy coalition** is an interaction/quality problem"
Meadowcroft 2011, p. 73	"The politics of sustainability transitions requires a redefinition of societal interests and this implies political engagement to **build reform**

| | **coalitions**, create new centres of power, buy off powerful lobbies, isolate die-hards, compensate losers, and so on." |

3 **Indicators for strengths and power of coalitions**

We suggest that there are seven factors that can be used as proxies for the power of advocacy coalitions. These are the following size of the coalition, coherence and clear identity, efficacious coordination of the coalition, availability of monetary resources, access to formal authority, outreach and affiliation to powerful organization outside the direct coalition, passionate and well connected leadership, legitimacy and support in wider society.
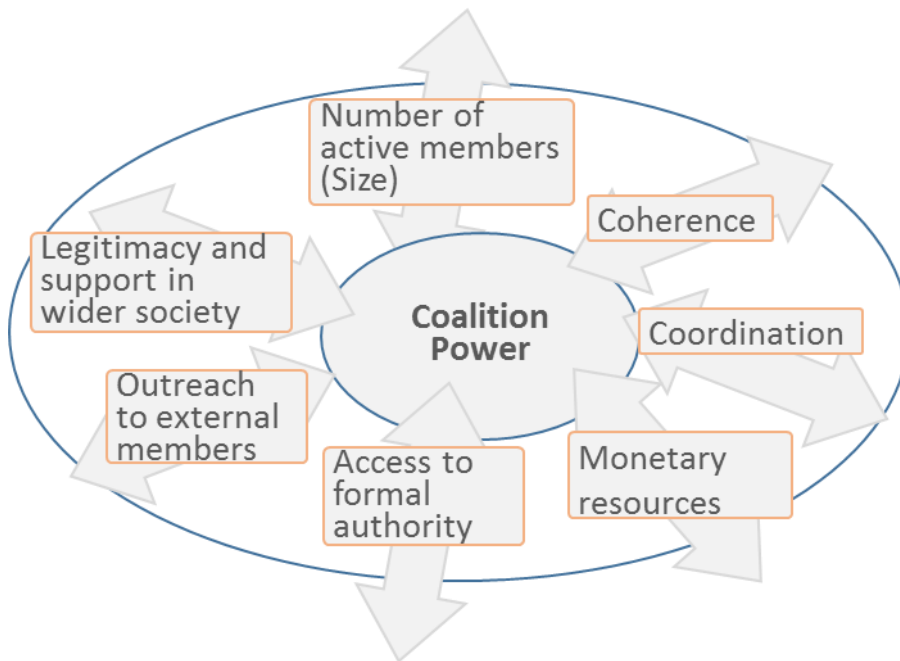

Fig 1. Indicators for power and strength of a niche advocacy coalition.

We acknowledge that these indicators all interact with each other and therefor influence each other. For instance the notion of homomophly {Lazer 2011 #661D: 62} suggests, that actor trust other actors better when they are similar to themselves. Thus they would favor to interact and cooperate with very similar actors. But if a network is very homogenious, than it is rather likely to be small. Thus when it is decided that networks are to be bigger in order to be capable to mobilize greater resources it is likely that they require stronger and more skill full coordination.

4 How to build and maintain coalitions: The arena for institutional entrepreneurs.

4.1 Tasks and skill of policy entrepreneurs

4.2 How to build coalitions

Activities involved in how to build coalitions

- Develop a vision
- Mobilizing allies behind that vision (Fligstein, 2001; Lawrence, Hardy, & Phillips, 2002; Rao, 1998; Battilana 2009)
- Motivating them to achieve and sustain it

Collective action problems that need to be overcome

- Fair distribution of costs and benefits (Schlager 1995).
- Free-rider problem.
- Heterogeneity in the group.

4.3 How to strengthen and maintain coalitions

Activities to strengthen and maintain coalitions

- Implement an incentive structure that appeals to members
- Monitoring and continuously adaptation of this incentive structure.

Conditions for the long-term Maintenance of coalitions
Based on Ostrom 1990 and Schlager 1995
- Those individuals who benefit from the collective goods provided by the coalition are clearly identified.
- The benefits individuals receive from the collective good are related to the contributions individuals make for the provision of the good.
- Individuals most affected by the rules can participate in changing the rules.
- Monitors who actively audit coalition members' behavior are accountable to the members or are members themselves.
- Members of a coalition who violate rules are likely to be assessed graduated sanctions by other members or officials accountable to the coalition.
- Coalition members have rapid access to low-cost local arenas to resolve conflicts among members or between members and officials.
- The rights of individuals to form coalitions and to devise policy are not challenged by external governmental authorities.

The higher the success in resolving these problems, the higher is the likelyhood of exerting influence on policy decisions. enforcement issues centering on ensuring that members carry out promises of support and do not act to undermine the coalition (Schlager 1995, Coleman and Skogstad, 1990a: p. 22).

4.4   Strategies and Instruments to leverage impact

Strategies can be quite fuzzy. For instance is a strategy suggested by Schlager to build peak associations {Schlager 1995 #163D: 261}, while another strategy, suggested by Battilana would be to use discursive methods to wow potential coalition members.

More complex and involved strategies represent greater costs, but also greater levels of coordination. {Schlager 1995 #163D: 262}

What is strategy

"Strategy can be fruitfully viewed as the mode of action by which institutional entrepreneurs engage with field structures in each of the three dimensions" {Garud 2007 #131D: 963}.

What are institutional strategies? Institutional strategies are patterns of organizational action concerned with the formation and transformation of institutions, fields and the rules and standards that control those structures. Although all organizational strategy occurs within an institutional context, institutional strategy is differentiated by its orientation to that context: simply put, institutional strategy is not so much concerned with gain- ing competitive advantage based on existing institutional structures as it is concerned with managing those structures--preserving or transforming institu- tional standards and rules in order to establish a strategically favorable set of conditions. {Lawrence 1999 #639D: 167}

Framing

- Through particular frames, new practices can be justified as indispensable, valid, and appropriate (Rao, 1998). This, in turn, can help mobilize wide ranging coalitions of diverse groups and to generate the collective action necessary to secure support for and acceptance of institutional change (Fligstein, 2001; Wijen and Ansari [2007] in this issue). {Garud 2007 #131D: 962}
- Strategies by Rao Lead efforts to identify political opportunities, frame issues and problems, and mobilize constituencies {Rao 2000 #640D: 238–239}

Discourse influence, Stories & Narratives

- Discourses in institutional entrepreneurship 'Discourses are never completely cohesive and devoid of internal tensions, and are therefore never able totally to determine social reality ... These limits of discourse provide a substantial space within which agents can act self-interestedly.' (Hardy and Phillips 2004: 304) {Hardy 2004 #642D: 304}

5   Discussion

Advocacy action and counter action by established regime members

We see the decision of the composition of coalitions as a social constructivist question

6 Results and research agenda

Need for empirical underpinnings