The Institutional Entrepreneur as Modern Prince: The Strategic Face of Power in Contested Fields

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Abstract

This paper develops a theoretical framework that situates institutional entrepreneurship by drawing from Gramsci's concept of hegemony to understand the contingent stabilization of organizational fields, and by employing his discussion of the Modern Prince as the collective agent who organizes and strategizes counter-hegemonic challenges. Our framework makes three contributions. First, we characterize the interlaced material, discursive, and organizational dimensions of field structure. Second, we argue that strategy must be examined more rigorously as the mode of action by which institutional entrepreneurs engage with field structures. Third, we argue that institutional entrepreneurship, in challenging the position of incumbent actors and stable fields, reveals a 'strategic face of power', particularly useful for understanding the political nature of contestation in issue-based fields.

Keywords: institutional entrepreneurship, strategy, hegemony

Introduction

Institutional entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in creating or changing institutions (Clemens and Cook 1999; Fligstein 1997; Greenwood and Suddaby 2006). As a specific mechanism for institutional change, '*institutional entrepreneurship* represents the activities of actors who have an interest in particular institutional arrangements and who leverage resources to create new institutions or to transform existing ones' (Maguire et al. 2004: 657). This emphasis on the dynamics of political contestation contrasts sharply with the more traditional focus on structural pressures inducing convergence, conformity, and stability among relatively passive and homogeneous actors. Drawing from eclectic sources such as social movement theory, the 'old' institutional theory, and discourse theory (Greenwood and Hinings 1996; McAdam and Scott 2005; Phillips et al. 2004), institutional entrepreneurship literature has made valuable empirical and theoretical contributions to our understanding of institutionalization as an ongoing political process that engages the agency and strategies of institutional entrepreneurs (Washington and Ventresca 2004).

Building on these foundations, we develop a theoretical framework that draws from Gramsci's concept of hegemony as the contingent stabilization of socioeconomic systems and his discussion of the Modern Prince as the collective agent who transcends such systems through critical analysis, organizational capacity, and strategic deployment. This framework advances our understanding of institutional entrepreneurship in three respects. First, to understand how institutional entrepreneurs effect change within institutional fields, 'an intermediate level between organization and society' (Greenwood et al. 2002: 58), it is vital to characterize field structures and instabilities. Our framework highlights the interlaced material, discursive, and organizational dimensions of field structure. Second, institutional entrepreneurs are 'interest-driven, aware, and calculative' (Greenwood and Suddaby 2006: 28). We contend that institutional entrepreneurship must take strategy seriously as the mode of dynamic interplay between entrepreneurs and fields. Third, we argue that institutional entrepreneurship, in challenging the position of incumbents and overcoming field stability, reveals a 'strategic face of power'. This framework is particularly useful for considering institutional entrepreneurship within controversial 'issue-based fields' (Hoffman 1999) in which non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engage with business actors, though it also holds relevance for understanding processes of political contestation in fields where competition is ostensibly commercial or technological (Garud et al. 2002; Munir and Phillips 2005).

The following section reviews the institutional entrepreneurship literature and identifies three areas of weakness, relating to field structure, strategy, and power. We then introduce the Gramscian concepts of hegemony and political strategy, noting points of connection with institutional theory. The third section discusses the implications of these ideas for our understanding of field structures and strategies, and develops a strategic conception of power by which institutional entrepreneurs, even if located in a subordinate position, can shift field structures to their advantage.

Theoretical Background

Field Structure

The increasing attention paid by institutional theory to politics, interests, and strategy has been accompanied, somewhat paradoxically, by a growing emphasis on the discursive structure of fields. Institutionalists have made valuable contributions to understanding the embeddedness of technologies and markets in institutional structures (Fligstein 2001a; Garud and Karnoe 2001; Granovetter 1985). In rejecting economic determination of the social, however, institutional theory has tended to neglect the role of the material dimension in structuring fields.

Institutionalists have traditionally sought to understand organizational behaviors that could not be attributed to competitive market pressures (Scott and Meyer 1994). 'To survive, organizations must accommodate institutional expectations, even though these expectations may have little to do with technical notions of performance accomplishment' (Greenwood and Hinings 1996: 1025). Since Meyer

and Rowan's (1977) study of the legitimation of school practices, researchers have focused on how 'the persistence of institutionalized practices and structures cannot be fully explained by their technical virtuosity or unparalleled efficiency' (Colomy 1998: 266). Rather, institutions persist as 'socially constructed, routine-reproduced programs or rule systems' (Jepperson 1991: 149), undergirded by 'models, schemas, or scripts for behavior. Consequently, institutions endure because these models become "taken-for-granted" through repeated use and inter-action or "legitimate" through the endorsement of some authoritative or powerful individual or organization' Clemens and Cook (1999: 445). This hint of coercive, or regulative pressure, complements cognitive and normative forces in stabilizing institutions (Scott and Meyer 1994).

The organizations inhabiting institutions are often distinguished from more abstract institutional governance mechanisms (Greenwood and Suddaby 2006: 28). Scott and Meyer (1994: 56) defines organizational fields as 'a community of organizations that partakes of a common meaning system and whose partic-ipants interact more frequently and fatefully with one another than with actors outside the field'. Increasingly, however, scholars employ a more expansive conception of field that includes 'two constitutive elements: a set of institutions, including practices, understandings, and rules; and, a network of organizations' (Lawrence and Phillips 2004: 692). This more encompassing definition sug-gests the mutually constitutive nature of organizations and institutions, and per-mits greater heterogeneity and even conflict within fields. Social movement (SM) theory has been influential in developing a conception of fields as politi-cally contested terrain (McAdam and Scott 2005). 'More than a mere aggregate of organizational players, however, fields exhibit distinctive "rules of the game", relational networks, and resource distributions that differentiate multiple levels of actors and models for action' (Rao et al. 2000: 251). Hoffman's (1999: 352) analysis of environmental practices in the chemical industry illustrates how 'field constituents are often armed with opposing perspectives rather than with common rhetorics. The process may more resemble institutional war than isomorphic dialogue.'

Institutions are increasingly understood as discursive constructions. 'Discourses, put simply, are structured collections of meaningful texts' (Phillips et al. 2004: 636), including the meaning systems embedded in routine practices. Discourses are thus closely related to 'institutional logics', defined as the 'belief systems and associated practices that predominate in an organizational field' (Scott et al. 2000: 170), or 'taken-for-granted, resilient social prescriptions' (Greenwood and Suddaby 2006: 28). The concept of discourse is more than a semantic substitution, as it opens up a range of theoretical and methodological approaches (Fairclough 1992).

The poststructural connotations of the term present some limitations, how-ever. Discussions of institutional conformity have traditionally included an ele-ment of rational choice; non-compliance could risk formal sanctions, social ostracism, or economic costs. The concept of discourse is more diffuse and pen-etrating, constituting identities and interests, while leaving little room for dis-cretion or sovereign authority. Moreover, a discursive focus risks obscuring material dimensions of field structures and strategies. For example, Munir and

Phillips' (2005: 1669) examination of Kodak's transformation of photography into a simple consumer practice proceeds from the premise that 'institutions are social constructions produced by discourses'. They consequently 'focus on how Kodak managed to strategically embody its interests in the evolving institutional framework through carefully planned and executed discursive practices' (2005: 1667), rather than the development of low-cost roll film cameras. Similarly, the development of Canadian whale watching was contingent not just on the emergence of a positive macro-cultural discourse, but also on commercially viable techniques for whale location (Lawrence and Phillips 2004). A limited focus on discursive dimensions of field structures thus constrains theorization of strategies to transform them.

Strategy

Institutional entrepreneurship can be understood as strategic action: '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' (Lawrence 1999: 168). Similarly, Fligstein (1997: 398) describes 'strategic action' as 'the attempt by social actors to create and maintain stable social worlds'. In elaborating these strategies, the literature has drawn from SM theory to examine how institutional entrepreneurs 'lead efforts to identify political opportunities, frame issues and problems, and mobilize constituencies' (Rao et al. 2000: 240). A discursive conception of institutional structure, however, has led to a focus on discursive strategies (Hensmans 2003; Lounsbury et al. 2003; Maguire and Hardy 2006). If fields 'are not objective, predetermined structures, but *processes* of social construction and meaning creation, wherein social order is negotiated' (Hardy and Phillips 1998: 218), then one key strategic task is to forge awareness of relationships among actors. Maguire et al. (2004) identify three strategies used by successful entrepreneurs: the occupation of positions with wide legitimacy and bridging diverse stakeholders; the theorization of new practices; and connecting these practices to stakeholders' routines and values. Institutional entrepreneurs actively import and translate discourses from other arenas (Boxenbaum 2006; Creed et al. 2002; Lawrence and Phillips 2004: 693). Though frequently motivated by competitive pressures (Greenwood and Suddaby 2006), their strategies are usually conceived in discursive terms. One notable exception is the study of radio broadcasting by Leblebici et al. (1991), which describes how entrepreneurs developed economic strategies, including advertising and ratings systems, to profit from a public good.

Institutional entrepreneurship presents a 'paradox of embedded agency' (Seo and Creed 2002: 226), the puzzle of how actors can 'change institutions if their actions, intentions, and rationality are all conditioned by the very institution they wish to change' (Holm 1995: 398). Institutional scholars locate agency and dynamics in the interstices and contradictions of plural, overlapping, and incomplete logics (Barley and Tolbert 1997; Clemens and Cook 1999; Phillips, et al. 2004).

'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)

While this perspective creates theoretical space for strategy, it is not a *theory of strategy*. The centrality of strategic action at the interface between agents and institutions warrants a deeper analysis of strategy as a theoretical construct and political activity, indeed, as a form of power.

Power

Power is clearly implicated in the political contestation to reshape institutions, though it is rarely examined explicitly. It has long been recognized that institutions reflect and reproduce power relations (Seo and Creed 2002; Stinchcombe 1965: 194). Fields exhibit a 'dominance hierarchy' (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) or 'dominance order in which a few groups of actors operate at the apex while others survive on the bottom' (Rao et al. 2000: 262). Institutional entrepreneurship highlights that: 'Institutional change is thus a political process that reflects the power and interests of organized actors' (Maguire et al. 2004: 658), whose goal is to reconfigure power relations and distributional outcomes (Fligstein 1997; Greenwood and Suddaby 2006; Lawrence and Phillips 2004). SM theory has contributed to a political perspective of 'how entrenched, field-wide authority is collectively challenged and restructured' (Rao et al. 2000: 276). It has also provided a greater appreciation of the different positions of field 'dominants —; those individuals, groups, and organizations around whose actions and interests the field tends to revolve', and 'challengers —; those individuals, groups and organizations seeking to challenge the advantaged position of dominants or fundamental structural-procedural features of the field' (McAdam and Scott 2005: 17). While field dominants have superior material and network resources to engage in entrepreneurship (Greenwood and Suddaby 2006), challengers generally have stronger incentives and fewer institutional constraints (Clemens and Cook 1999: 452; Rao et al. 2000: 262). The strategic implications of their differential resources and locations have not been thoroughly explored, however.

At the core of institutional theory is a structural theory of power (Clemens and Cook 1999; Jepperson 1991; Sewell 1992). Institutions reproduce themselves by establishing routines, disciplining deviance, and constructing agents' identities and interests (DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Phillips et al. 2004). McAdam and Scott (2005: 10–11) note the Weberian roots of 'institutionalized power: power coded into structural designs and bolstered by widely shared cultural norms and ideologies'. By contrast, they observe how SM scholars draw from more critical traditions to analyze 'change efforts that require the conscious mobilization of marginalized or disenfranchised elements'. Institutional entrepreneurship has drawn upon SM theory to consider the strategies of institutional entrepreneurs, but has not linked these strategies to an agent-based theory of power. Implicit in several studies is a notion of power based on institutional location and access to material and discursive resources. Hardy and Philips (1998: 219), for example,

have argued that 'formal authority, the control of critical resources, and discursive legitimacy' are important sources of power for institutional entrepreneurs. Similarly, Fligstein (2001b: 123) observes that 'the basis of a group's power [is] its claim over resources and rules'. Yet field dominants will generally have superior access to these resources of power on account of their structural location. What is lacking is a theory of how institutional entrepreneurs can overcome structural power by outmaneuvering field dominants.

Fligstein (1997) argues that challengers need to rely on 'social skills', such as bargaining, framing, and alliance building (Garud et al. 2002: 203). SM theory offers a more overtly political 'collection of skills, from persuading others on an idea or tactic to maintaining commitments and morale, from allocating resources to recognizing potent weak points, from writing and speaking to taking initiatives in moments of decision, from forming alliances … to issuing authoritative commands' (Barker et al. 2001: 6). Alinsky (1971) uses the metaphor 'political jujitsu' to describe turning the force of the power structure against itself. We suggest that these skills represent a strategic repertoire, and we draw from the classical tradition of Machiavelli and Gramsci to develop a strategic theory of power that enhances our understanding of institutional entrepreneurship.

Hegemony and Political Strategy

Antonio Gramsci was an Italian Marxist who rejected economic determinism and emphasized the political significance of a cultural 'superstructure' in dialectical tension with material forces. Gramsci has been profoundly influential in many areas of social theory, particularly cultural studies (Hall 1986) and labor process theory (Burawoy 1979). Recent scholarship on social movements and political strategy has drawn from Gramsci's conception of hegemony and political contestation (Barker et al. 2001; Hardt and Negri 2000; Sanbonmatsu 2004). Though Gramsci has received barely a mention in institutional theory, his influence is discernible in the scholarship stream that draws from dialectical Marxism, with its attention to contradictions and praxis (Benson 1977; Clemens and Cook 1999; Seo and Creed 2002; Sewell 1992). Our exploration of Gramsci's work reveals a deeper relevance for institutional entrepreneurship and continues a tradition of appropriating key Gramscian ideas while shifting the focus from class conflict toward more local struggles.

Critical to our perspective on field structure is Gramsci's concept of hegemony, referring to the contingent stability of a social structure that protects the privileged position of a dominant alliance, or 'historical bloc' (Gramsci 1971). Hegemony relies on coalitions and compromises that provide a measure of political and material accommodation with other groups and on ideologies that convey a mutuality of interests. Crucially, the values and interests of the dominant group are represented as those of society as a whole. For Gramsci (1971: 328), ideology constitutes 'a conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, in law, in economic activity and in all manifestations of individual and collective life'. Ideology thus represents a relatively coherent and politically charged discursive structuring of the social. Dominant groups

exercise power through the coercive and bureaucratic authority of the state, dominance in the economic realm, and the consensual legitimacy of civil society. When hegemony is established, 'the development and expansion of the [dominant] group are conceived of, and presented, as being the motor force of a universal expansion … In other words, the dominant group is coordinated concretely with the general interests of the subordinate groups' (Gramsci 1971: 181).

As with institutions, hegemonic stability entails a balance of coercion and consent, though the discursive component receives most attention (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Mumby 1997). Williams (1980) has described hegemony as 'the central, effective and dominant system of meanings and values, which are not merely abstract but which are organized and lived … [and] appear as reciprocally confirming'. Hegemony implies the articulation of discourse into a coherent ideology and an array of institutions that project the moral and intellectual leadership of dominant elites. Many theorists are wary, however, of instrumentalist interpretations of this 'dominant ideology thesis' in which elites unilaterally impose ideologies to induce behavior inimical to people's interests (Abercrombie et al. 1980; Clegg 1989). Poststructuralist sensitivities countenance neither the implication of objective interests in the 'false consciousness' of passive dupes nor the sovereign subjectivity of elites, who somehow stand outside ideology. Attempting to rescue hegemony from these charges, Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 67) assert that ideology is 'an organic and relational whole, embodied in institutions and apparatuses, which welds together a historical bloc around a number of basic articulatory principles'.

Gramsci's hegemony represents a nuanced notion of consensual stability in which even dominant ideologies remain fragmented and contradictory. Parallel to the institutional literature, the persistence of competing ideologies opens space for agency and resistance, in which people can develop a 'critical conception of the world' (Gramsci 1971: 324). For Laclau and Mouffe, hegemonic politics are premised on 'antagonism', described by Contu (2002: 166) as 'the experience of the limits to any structuration, order, symbolization, legislation'. This contestability leads Mumby (1997: 344) to assert that the 'equation of hegemony with the notion of "domination through consent" elides the extent to which Gramsci's formulation is dialectical, emphasizing a complex interplay between power and resistance'. The burden of securing hegemonic stability does not lie with ideology alone, however. Gramsci proposed a dialectical relationship between society's material 'base' and ideological 'superstructure'. Crucially, hegemony is rooted in an alignment of material, organizational, and discursive forces within a complex social matrix. Gramsci describes the interaction of these factors in securing workplace consent:

'it was relatively easy to rationalize production and labour by a skilful combination of force (destruction of working-class trade unionism on a territorial basis) and persuasion (high wages, various social benefits, extremely subtle ideological and political propaganda) … Hegemony here is born in the factory.' (Gramsci 1971: 285)

The dialectical perspective suggests that fields are at once more entrenched, as the economic and discursive dimensions are mutually reinforcing, yet also more rife with contradictions. Markets and technologies are constructed within particular

cultural contexts (Bijker et al. 1987; Callon 1998), as has been well recognized in institutional theory (Fligstein 2001a; Lawrence and Phillips 2004; Munir and Phillips 2005). Yet, discourse does not reproduce itself in a vacuum, but rather within a political economy of advertising, consumerism, and academe (Golding and Murdock 1991; Morgan 2001).

The third pillar of hegemonic stability lies in the organizational domain. Gramsci used the term 'historical bloc' in a dual sense: to refer to tangible organizations and alliances among dominant actors, as well as the alignment of economic and ideological forces undergirding them. Historical blocs thus resemble organizational fields in their more expansive conception. SM scholars have particularly emphasized how 'mobilizing structures', such as industry associations and unions, actively channel economic and ideological forces (McAdam and Scott 2005: 14). International relations scholars have employed Gramscian concepts to examine the ideological and strategic function of transnational industry organizations in generating policy consensus, forging coalitions, and socializing professionals into business values, language, and practices (Cox 1987; Gill 1995).

The nature of consent and stability is conditioned by a variable balance of forces, sometimes more tethered to dominant ideologies, other times more anchored in economic incentives. Marginalized groups might express more overt opposition but lack the resources or organizational capacity to mount a challenge. From this perspective, consent is a multifaceted, contingent concept that connotes strategic acquiescence as much as ideological colonization. Tensions within and between the dimensions of hegemonic structures generate opportunities for strategic agency, giving rise to a dialectical dynamic, 'a relation of forces in continuous motion and shift of equilibrium' (Gramsci, 1971: 172).

Understanding hegemony was, for Gramsci, a prerequisite to political action. Inspired by Machiavelli, Gramsci posited the Modern Prince as the collective agent of praxis, of 'political action embedded in an historical system of interconnected yet incompatible institutional arrangements' (Seo and Creed 2002: 3). For Gramsci (1971: 133), 'the Modern Prince is at one and the same time the organizer and the active, operative expression' of the collective will. Gramsci demonstrated a keen awareness of the importance of strategy and organization if subordinate groups were to outmaneuver those with superior material and coercive means. Effective strategy requires skillful analysis, so the Modern Prince 'must be able to map, as accurately as possible, the complex terrain of parties, movements, institutions, economic forces — in short the dynamic balance and relations of will and force — in order to exploit places in the hierarchical network of power nodes, where hegemony is unstable or breaks down' (Sanbonmatsu 2004: 135). To this end, the Modern Prince would also provide decisive leadership to exploit critical windows of opportunity.

The Modern Prince would be active on two levels. In the realm of 'grand strategy' Gramsci (1971: 233) used the term 'war of position' to suggest how subordinate groups might avoid a futile frontal assault against adversaries entrenched in the 'fortresses and earthworks' (1971: 238) of civil society. Instead, the war of position entails a longer-term strategy, coordinated across multiple bases of power, to gain legitimacy, develop organizational capacity, and

win new allies. Led by 'organic intellectuals' serving as educators and organizers, the Modern Prince would also act more locally to enhance the capacity of core organizations fomenting change. In Gramsci's epistemology, lived experience is a source of knowledge and consciousness, but in the tradition of the Frankfurt School and Freire's (1972) radical pedagogy, organic intellectuals could facilitate the emergence of a critical worldview that links diverse experiences to an emergent ideological framework (Clemens and Cook 1999: 449; Sanbonmatsu 2004: 192). Far from being an external elite imposing its own ideas and agenda, organic intellectuals are immersed in 'active participation in practical life' (Gramsci 1971: 10), facilitating an emancipatory process. The Modern Prince thus represents the unity of philosophy and politics, of theory and practice (Fontana 1993; Gramsci 1971: 333).

Implications for Institutional Entrepreneurship

Many parallels exist between the role of the Modern Prince in challenging hegemonic structures and institutional entrepreneurs in shifting fields. A common focus is the nature of contingent stability in complex socioeconomic systems comprising networks of actors interacting with structural forces. The following section discusses several contributions of the Gramscian framework to our understanding of field structures, and the strategies and modes of power wielded by institutional entrepreneurs as they contest them. We illustrate our argument with the case of the international distribution of AIDS drugs to developing countries, which we briefly introduce here (for details see Sell and Prakash 2004; Spar and Bartlett 2005; Vachani and Smith 2004).

The rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in the USA during the 1980s provoked activist groups such as ACT UP to pressure pharmaceutical companies and health authorities to devote more resources to combating the disease. By the early 1990s, new antiviral drugs had dramatically cut mortalities, but the annual cost of treatment was around US$10,000–15,000 per person. Infection and mortality rates in developing countries soared during the 1990s, affecting more than 30 million people by 2000, with several countries in sub-Saharan Africa suffering infection rates of over 15%. The cost of patented antiviral drugs was clearly prohibitive for widespread use in these countries. In the latter 1990s, Thailand, South Africa, and Brazil developed plans to issue compulsory licenses to enable local companies to produce generic versions of the drugs, reducing the cost of medication to about US$350 per person.

At the urging of western pharmaceutical companies, the USA responded by threatening trade sanctions, invoking TRIPS (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights) clauses of World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements. TRIPS entered the WTO framework in 1994, following a well organized campaign by more than 1,500 companies from various sectors interested in extending international enforcement of intellectual property rights (IPRs). In response, an international group of NGOs, including gay rights activists, African American organizations, and generic drug manufacturers, developed the Access Campaign

to advocate for low-cost drug access in developing countries. The multilevel alliance enrolled the support of developing country governments and key multilateral organizations like the World Health Organization. The Access Campaign successfully pressured the Clinton administration to reverse its position in 1999, forcing concessions from the pharmaceutical industry. We return to this case as we develop our framework below.

The Nature of Field Structure

We propose that the concept of hegemony is a fruitful way of understanding the contingent stabilization of politically contested fields. Indeed, institutional theorists in the dialectical tradition employ a similar conception of fields characterized by contradictions and competing logics (Clemens and Cook 1999). Seo and Creed (2002: 225) draw from Benson's (1977) interpretation of dialectics in which fields are 'part of a larger whole composed of multiple, interpenetrating social structures operating at multiple levels and in multiple sectors. However, the linkages between the components are neither complete nor coherent.' Stability in such fields is more precarious than is usually portrayed in institutional theory, requiring ongoing political efforts. McAdam and Scott (2005: 18) acknowledge this precariousness in their effort to synthesize SM and institutional theory: 'The stability we have in mind is rather the hard fought for and fragile state of affairs that Zysman (1994) terms an "institutional settlement" — an agreement negotiated primarily by the efforts of field dominants (and their … allies) to preserve a status quo that generally serves their interests.' From this perspective, field stabilization does not rest narrowly on isomorphism and normative consensus, but rather on a negotiated outcome reflecting a balance of forces. For McAdam and Scott, a particular institutional settlement is based on an alignment of the institutional logic, actors' interests, and the governance structure of the field. These forces broadly map onto the discursive, material, and organizational dimensions of hegemony. Indeed, an institutional arrangement that commands widespread consent but serves particular interests embodies the essence of hegemony.

The key contribution of the concept of hegemony is to view field stabilization as an *alignment* of forces within an organic totality. Garud and Karnoe (2001: 11) display an appreciation for this when they describe how 'constituent elements of a technological field begin working with one another, they become "aligned" and begin reinforcing one another. Meanings of objects constituting these fields emerge through a process of negotiation and provisionally stabilize.' They describe the dialectical development of technological artifacts and supporting cognitive frames as the 'coevolution of minds and molecules' (2001: 18); we would suggest that the inclusion of economic interests points to a coevolution of 'minds, molecules and money'.

These dynamics and fragile institutional settlements are illustrated in the AIDS drugs case, in which diverse actors have shifting and only contingently aligned interests. Prior to the 1990s, the pharmaceutical industry was generally willing to overlook patent infractions in developing countries, because of their small markets. Moreover, patents were still widely viewed as a privilege rather than an

absolute property right (Sell and Prakash 2004). Rapid growth in some emerging economies, combined with the growing importance of IPR-based international trade, led key industrial sectors to push for a new settlement that extended IPR enforcement internationally. In the process, IPR infractions were reframed as piracy. Industry successfully exploited concerns about competitiveness to graft its agenda onto multilateral trade institutions. The stability of this settlement was secured, temporarily at least, through the organizational capacities and governance structures of the WTO and issue-specific industry associations.

The growing AIDS crisis energized actors whose material interests diverged sharply from branded pharmaceutical companies and who did not share the discursive construction of IPRs as sacred property. Indeed, increasing awareness of the relationship among the pharmaceutical industry, public health, and trade governance exacerbated tensions over defining relevant boundaries for the shifting field. The institutional settlement that emerged after 1999, achieved a degree of hegemonic stability by accommodating the interests of major actors and providing a common discursive framework. Branded pharmaceutical companies protected their profitability by limiting their concessions to a small group of existing antiviral drugs for a specified set of markets. Simultaneously, they deflected more serious regulatory and reputational threats. Developing countries were able to manufacture and even export generics, while greatly expanding access to low-cost drugs. IPRs gained broad recognition and protection, except for specific public health emergencies. New tensions soon arose, however, as the HIV virus mutated and older drugs became ineffective. Pharmaceutical companies again attempted to enforce patents on newer drugs, and some developing countries with growing IPR-based industries are now more reluctant to challenge them (Lakshmanan 2007).

Strategy

The strategies of institutional challengers and defenders need to encompass the multiple dimensions in which fields are structured. The complex, multidimensional nature of fields also creates more opportunities for field dominants to stumble and for challengers to apply strategic skills and identify contradictions and points of leverage. Discursive moves that project common interests constitute an important component of strategies to build alliances. Maguire et al. (2004: 658) argue that: 'Key to their success is the way in which institutional entrepreneurs connect their change projects to the activities and interests of other actors in a field.' Material and organizational facets of strategy are also crucial, however.

The Access Campaign illustrates how smart strategy encompassing discursive, material, and organizational elements could outmaneuver a coalition of well resourced multinational companies. While business castigated IPR violations as piracy, the Access Campaign advanced the framing that patents caused death and represented a form of 'medical apartheid'. The campaign found a point of economic leverage at Yale University, which owned a key antiviral patent and organized students to pressure Yale to waive its rights. The campaign successfully mobilized the material interests of generic drug companies, health

agencies, and developing country governments, while offering a compromise to branded pharmaceutical companies that only marginally affected their profits and secured substantial reputational benefits. The careful construction of a broad alliance and the execution of specific tactics required considerable organizational and political capacity. The Access Campaign leadership demonstrated strategic vision and skill in shifting the struggle away from the corporate-dominated WTO forum and into the media and public health arenas, while leveraging the vulnerability of politicians around the 2000 US elections.

Institutional entrepreneurs, like the Modern Prince, must attend not only to external 'grand strategy' but also to enhancing the agility, adaptive capacity, and creativity of organizations leading institutional change efforts (Eisenhardt and Martin 2000; Mintzberg 1990). Organizational agility could constitute an advantage for challengers when field dominants are securely embedded within existing institutional logics, technologies, and practices (Greenwood and Suddaby 2006: 29). Ganz's (2000) study of the successful organizing of Californian farmworkers sheds rare light on the role of 'strategic capacity': movement leadership teams that are flexible, imaginative, knowledgeable, well networked, and accountable. They develop strategy through dialogue with their membership, 'each participant drawing on their specific knowledge about the overall situation, about other movements, about potential supporters and their values, about tactical matters' (Barker et al. 2001: 10). Effective leadership teams serve, in effect, as Gramsci's organic intellectuals.

Institutional Entrepreneurship and Power

Our discussion of institutional entrepreneurship points to a *strategic* face of power. While Gramsci's hegemony is widely understood as a form of structural power, much less attention is given to his analysis of strategies for challenging hegemony. If institutional entrepreneurs successfully shift the asymmetries of influence and resources within a field's web of relations, they clearly exercise power. It is a facet of power that transcends the possession of material resources, formal authority, or discursive legitimacy; rather, it relies on the skillful coordination and deployment of resources, a sophisticated analysis of field structures and processes, diplomatic acuity in constructing alliances, and creative agility in responding to evolving circumstances (Levy et al. 2003). The Access Campaign, for example, lacked the financial resources of the pharmaceutical industry or the authority of the WTO. Yet, it was able to envision and construct a new field configuration by shaping, mobilizing, and aligning the material interests of diverse actors while promoting a discursive frame to underpin the new settlement. In the process, the campaign developed the organizational and strategic capacity to shift field boundaries, mobilize new actors, and leverage the formal authority of states and multilateral organizations.

Our focus on strategy as a form of power draws from the classical theoretical tradition of Sun Tsu and Machiavelli (Fontana 1993). Clegg comments that, within this tradition:

'power is simply the effectiveness of strategies for achieving for oneself a greater scope for action than for others implicated by one's strategies. Power is not any thing nor is it

necessarily inherent in any one; it is a tenuously produced and reproduced effect which is contingent upon the strategic competencies and skills of actors who would be powerful.' (Clegg 1989: 32)

Fleming and Spicer (2005: 95) suggest that Clegg's integrative 'frameworks of power' model reflects 'what we might call a Machiavellian theory of power. This involves conceptualizing power as a network of relations in which actors are embedded.'

Our invocation of a strategic face of power invites comparison with other 'faces of power', to employ Lukes' (1974) metaphor. Lukes critiqued the conceptualization of power as a resource possessed by A that coerces B to do something that B would not otherwise do (Dahl 1957). Lukes viewed this 'first face of power' as overly behavioral and episodic, neglecting systemic aspects of power. The second face was based on Bachrach and Baratz's (1962) observation that dominant actors frequently manage agendas to exclude certain policies from any consideration. Lukes advocated a 'radical view', his third face of power, in which 'the sovereign power exert[s] dominion over the very ingredients of individual consciousness: the appetites, passions, and especially *interests* that these individuals have' (Clegg 1989: 29). Foucault's poststructuralist critique shares Lukes' interest in the constitutive power of discourse, but breaks sharply from the notion of agents consciously wielding power over others. For Foucault, sovereign agency dissolves as identities and subjectivities are themselves constituted and disciplined by discursive texts and practices that suffuse everyday life. Sanbonmatsu (2004: 137) contends that, as a result, Foucault undertheorized strategies for challenging power.

Our conception of strategic power is relational, systemic, and dialectical, in that agents are institutionally constituted and constrained, yet have the capacity to transform these fields of relations. Institutional entrepreneurs are primarily concerned with shifting field-level norms, routines, and rules rather than directly coercing a particular adversary (Garud et al. 2002; Lawrence and Phillips 2004: 690). Actors may exert episodic agency and exploit the resource dependencies of others, but these instantiations of power are rooted in a wider context. For Gramsci (1971: 172), strategy is the domain of the 'active politician who wishes to create a new balance of forces' rather than the 'diplomat' whose 'specific activity is not the creation of some new equilibrium, but the maintenance of an existing equilibrium within a certain judicial framework'. Jepperson (1991) makes a similar distinction between 'human behavior', which reproduces existing institutions, and 'human action', which entails deliberate, reflective departures from institutionalized practices. Strategic power resonates with Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) conception of counter-hegemonic politics as the struggle to articulate diverse social grievances and contests into a more coherent formation. Strategy can thus be a generative form of power, expanding the scope of action and freedom for broad sectors of society.

Strategic power is both constituted and constrained by the indeterminacy, contingency, and inertia of fields. The social world possesses sufficient regularity to enable purposive action, yet is not so structurally rigid that it extinguishes meaningful agency. Moreover, bounded rationality in the face of complexity and uncertainty prevents the calculation of rules yielding deterministic outcomes;

strategy is necessarily a form of 'satisficing' (Simon 1962). Some strategies will yield superior outcomes, though we can never be sure *which* ones will succeed a priori. This indeterminacy is critical, because if field dominants held the levers of power in a deterministic world, there would be no scope for political contestability. Yet, the same indeterminacy constrains the power of institutional entrepreneurs, as they cannot fully comprehend and control a complex field (Lane and Maxfield 1996). Their power is also constrained by field inertia and path-dependence. In Garud and Karnoe's (2001) terms, strategy is a process of 'mindful deviation', of steering an evolving field rather than creation de novo. A range of alternative futures is possible, but not an infinite set of possibilities. In Gramsci's words, (1971: 172): 'The active politician is a creator, an initiator; but he neither creates from nothing nor does he move in the turbid void of his own desires and dreams.'

The counter-strategies of institutional defenders trying to protect their position within a field present another constraint on the power of institutional entrepreneurs. SM theory has paid limited attention to the activities of 'incumbent social movement organizations' (Hensmans 2003) or 'counter-movements' (Rao et al. 2000: 268), while empirical research on institutional entrepreneurship provides several examples of institutional defense, such as Microsoft's efforts to block Sun (Garud et al. 2002) and competitors' opposition to Kodak's moves (Munir and Phillips 2005). Attending to the agency of defenders avoids the problematic asymmetry of viewing entrepreneurs as external agents endeavoring to change institutional fields stabilized by impersonal, structural forces. Although defenders enjoy systemic advantages from their location in a hegemonic system, both defenders and challengers are institutionally embedded agents employing similar strategic repertoires, suggesting a degree of theoretical equivalence (Sell and Prakash 2004).

Power and Hegemonic Accommodation

The interaction between the strategies of institutional entrepreneurs and defenders frequently gives rise to a characteristic pattern of limited accommodation while preserving, or even reinforcing, the essentials of field power structures. Pragmatic entrepreneurs, seeking to legitimize their claims, frequently use insider language and practices to drive change (Meyerson and Scully 1995) and 'embed calls for change within accepted models' (Clemens and Cook 1999: 459). Dominant groups typically respond with material concessions that address the most serious grievances, discursive strategies that co-opt challengers' linguistic forms, and organizational moves to build 'partnerships' with moderate elements while zmarginalizing more radical groups (Barker et al. 2001: 7; Levy 1997; Levy and Egan 2003). These strategies generate 'a continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria between the interests of the fundamental group and those of the subordinate groups' (Gramsci 1971: 182).

The interaction between Canadian AIDS activists and the pharmaceutical industry illustrates this process of hegemonic accommodation. Maguire et al. (2004: 668) describe how 'treatment advocacy' activists successfully established

a national institution for the pharmaceutical industry to exchange information with the AIDS community. Instead of challenging industry dominance with radical language, treatment advocacy 'was presented as a new style of activism, focused on working with the pharmaceutical industry rather than fighting against it'. In agreeing to establish a forum for consultation, industry not only enhanced its legitimacy but also gained financially from the marketing value of this information and from expanded insurance coverage. Moreover, the new Canadian forum represented a minor, local concession in the contemporaneous context of the bitterly fought war of position waged by AIDS activists against IPRs. Though the Access Campaign is generally credited with having 'won' the struggle to allow low-cost generic drugs in developing countries, this institutional settlement was also a hegemonic accommodation. The campaign was successful precisely because it focused pragmatically on a narrow set of drugs for a small group of countries and relied on a loophole in the TRIPS legal framework allowing exceptions for medical emergencies (Sell and Prakash 2004). The campaign thus implicitly reinforced the overall legitimacy of IPRs and the WTO, while conceding the dominant role of pharmaceutical companies in key aspects of field governance, such as pricing and research priorities. Indeed, pharmaceutical companies quickly moved to claim credit for expanded drug access and embraced the discourse of corporate social responsibility. The power of even the most skillful institutional entrepreneurs is constrained by the nesting of issue-level fields within wider, well entrenched institutions. Institutional entrepreneurship has been characterized using salient episodes and discontinuities but is an ongoing, situated process.

Conclusions

This paper extends the Gramscian concepts of hegemony and political strategy to provide a richer and more coherent view of the engagement by institutional entrepreneurs with field structures. Fields are viewed as networks of actors within a contingently stable alignment of material, organizational, and discursive forces. These elements mutually reinforce each other to enhance field stability, yet the tensions within and between them open space for strategic agency. The existing literature on institutional entrepreneurship resonates with many of the themes in this paper, yet does not address them directly in a sustained, analytical manner. Our framework connects with an established theoretical tradition to provide a more integrative and nuanced understanding of institutional entrepreneurs, who, like Gramsci's Modern Prince, develop and deploy strategies to transform field structures in the face of institutional inertia and resistance from institutional defenders.

The significance of strategic action by institutional entrepreneurs points to a strategic face of power, which relies on skilled analysis, deployment, and coordination to outmaneuver dominant actors with superior resources. Simultaneously, an understanding of the nesting of fields within more firmly entrenched institutions highlights the limits of strategic power and illuminates the contours of hegemonic accommodation. The achievement of immediate goals might reveal

deeper power structures, creating strategic dilemmas and obscuring conceptions of interests. One implication of viewing institutional entrepreneurship as an ongoing strategic contest is that success or failure is difficult to assess in absolute terms at any specific juncture, given the indeterminacy of field dynamics and the fallibility of strategy.

Viewing a field as an organic totality provides a useful corrective to the tendency to posit a sharp distinction between institutional and competitive, or technical, environments. Lawrence (1999) pursues this distinction into the strategic domain, arguing that competitive strategy operates within existing rules and structures, while institutional strategy is geared toward changing them. Yet if economic forces are important in structuring institutions, then competitive strategy is simply one component of institutional strategy, equally as imbricated in politics. Recognizing the multiple and interdependent dimensions of a field, institutional entrepreneurs frequently pursue integrated strategies across these dimensions in an attempt to reconfigure the field and gain a measure of advantage within a complex web of relations.

Gramsci's conception of the Modern Prince offers a number of insights and paths for future research into institutional entrepreneurship. On a theoretical level, the role of the Modern Prince as a catalyst for auto-emancipation suggests a path out of the structure-agency imbroglio, one that locates the kernel of change within an internal process of organizing and education rather than external shocks or the importation of foreign discourses. More pragmatically, it encourages a deeper exploration of the relationship between institutional entrepreneurs as leaders and their organizations (Barker et al. 2001). Existing literature either personifies entrepreneurs as individuals or as unitary organizational 'black boxes' devoid of internal processes.

Strikingly, the Modern Prince is an emotive leader as much as a calculating strategizer, a mythological figure reminiscent of some contemporary business heroes. For Gramsci (1971: 126), the Modern Prince exemplifies a Sorelian myth, a 'concrete phantasy which acts on a dispersed and shattered people to arouse and organize its collective will'. Eyerman and Jamison (1991) similarly refer to the 'cosmological tasks' of social movement leaders, who generate a mobilizing vision of the future. The Modern Prince both creates and embodies this vision, a 'myth-prince' (Gramsci 1971: 128) generating passionate identification toward this fusion of idealized leadership with its cause. Jones and Spicer (2004: 236) suggest, using Lacan, that the mythical, undefinable character of the entrepreneur serves 'to structure phantasmic attachment'.

Though the emotive, mythical character of the entrepreneur might well be critical to a project of institutional transformation, we need to remain alert to the discursive power and strategic implications of the term 'entrepreneurship', particularly for theorizing progressive projects of institutional transformation (Zald 2002). 'Entrepreneurship' conjures masculine images of heroic individuals amassing wealth rather than collective action toward more democratic, egalitarian goals. Entrepreneurship discourse successfully mobilizes capital and people in 'reproducing the current relations of economic domination' (Jones and Spicer 2004: 237). Since the 1990s, most top business schools have centers or programs on entrepreneurship, predictably crafted from institutionalized logics; most are

funded by and celebrate financially successful entrepreneurs, the very emblems of a contemporary nobility constructed on a gendered discourse of charismatic achievement. The organizational literature offers several alternative terms: 'bureaucratic insurgency' (Zald and Berger 1978), 'grassroots activism in the workplace' (Scully and Segal 2002), and 'tempered radicalism' (Meyerson and Scully 1995). The SM literature offers terms conveying more radical images of activism. Substituting terms legitimated within the mainstream is precisely a clever strategic move, but one that highlights the strategic dilemmas discussed in this paper; the pragmatic approach risks diversion from deeper structural change unless connected to a longer-term strategic project.

Note

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