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Path Dependence and Hierarchical Inertia

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The modern world - as well as other human societies - is built on the basis of its past. In most of the contemporary sociology, this aspects, however is missed. The time-span can reach to the beginning of modernity in the 19th century but mostly the focus is on the post-war period - or even shorter time. The focus has been on the speciality of the modernity and the change that has happened - from pre-industrialism to industrialism, and now, from modernity to post-modernity. However, along this well established *sociology of change* we also need *sociology of continuity* since some taken-for-granted practices of our societies are thousands of years old[1].

My interest in sociology of the continuity has risen from the findings in welfare-state research. In a nutshell, what Esping-Andersen called Nordic social-democratic model, Central-European conservative model and Anglo-Saxon liberal model, could be rather easily named as Lutheran[2], Catholic[3] and Calvinistic-Anglican models[4]. There is significant correspondence between social ethics of these confessions and social-political solutions of their respective countries.

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[1] The most obvious examples are our frames of time. We still divide our hours and minutes into 60 smaller units - like ancient Sumerians 5000 years ago. We still have basically the same calendar (only with two modifications by Julius Caesar and pope Gregorius) that Egyptians used since the dawn of the written history. We still divide the circle into 360 grades like it was done in Sumer. We use alphabets that are basically in the same order into which Phoenicians put them 3000 years ago.
Along with these technical standards, we have numerous similar examples in our social life. In the field of welfare, the basic responsibility for welfare services for the last 5000 years has been on the family and religious institutions. In the Law of Hammurabi, we can even find the principle of subsidiarity that is the basis of the Central European welfare model. In ideological level, the Western equality doctrine is fundamentally based on the Hebrew creation story where a human was created as an image of God - emphasising that both a slave and a king are ontologically equal in front of God and His law.

[2] Developments in Bismarcian Prussia, which has been generally seen as the early version of the welfare state, were an outcome of Pietistism and its belief that poverty could be overcome. Pietistic social ethics, in turn, has its roots in Lutheran Reformation and Luther's attempts to rearrange poor relief in German cities. Luther, in turn, got his ideas both from Mediterranean towns, from Biblical emphasis on neighbourly love and his doctrine of common priesthood that made everyone responsible for the well-being of others. On Luther and his welfare reforms, see studies of Carter Lindberg (1993; 1994; 2001). On the influence of Pietism on Prussian (and Danish) welfare states, see, for example, Sørensen (1998) and Ipfling & Chambliss (1994, 36).

[3] Catholic model has its roots in pope Leo XIII's encyclia *Rerum Novarum* from 1891, which advocated local solutions to social problems. The social ethics in this encyclia was based on Thomism (theology of Thomas Aquinas), which, in turn, was a combination of New Testament theology and Aristotelian thinking. Catholic Labour Movements in France, Germany and Italy adopted this social ethics as their principles and, from them, it was adopted as social policy of Christian Democratic Parties in these countries. On the contribution of Catholic social ethics Central European welfare model, see Tergel 1987, 39-133. On Catholic social thought, see, for example, Dorr (1992). Subsidiarity principle means, in a nutshell, that there is a hierarchy on who is responsible of individual welfare. It has three basic statements. First, an individual has to take care of himself. If (s)he is unable to do so, it is the

Even in its secularised form, western thinking is basically a combination of three elements, as Peter Berger notes: "Although we would not have modernity without Athens or Roman law, the religious roots of modernity, as Max Weber showed, are to be found in neither Helles nor Rome, but in biblical tradition[5]." Talcot Parsons, in turn, goes even further by noting that the era circa 700-600 BC was the time, which formed the value systems of the great cultures that have guided the civilisation from then on[6].

In this paper, I try to find theoretical explanations to these findings.

Theoretical Frames for Sociology of Continuity

Although most of the sociological theorising has emphasised the change and speciality of modernity, there have been some attempts to see current practises and inherited from past - like Weber, Parsons and Berger did. One of the newest attempts is the path dependency theory that has its roots in institutional theory. Others are a bit older but still useful. First comes in mind the rival of (neo-) institutional theory, ecological organisation theory of Michael T. Hannan and John Freeman.

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responsibility of the family to do so. If the family cannot do it, the responsibility moves to kin, neighbourhoods, voluntary organisations, churches, etc. The state is then the last resort when there is no other possibility. Second, the higher level has a responsibility to make sure that the lower level can carry its responsibilities. Third, the higher level is not allowed to interfere the actions of the lower level if the lower level can handle its responsibilities. On subsidiarity principle, see, for example, Mulcahy (1967), Kelly (1998) and d'Onorio (2002).

[4] British welfare thinking has its roots in the *Statutes of Laborers* under Edward III in 1349 and 1351. In these statutes, the emphasis was, like in the rest of Europe, on the duty to work unless being too young, old, handicapped or ill. The religious legitimisation to this rule was achieved from St. Paul: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat (2 Thess 3:10)." This early legislation was followed by others through centuries until Elizabeth I launched her statute in 1601. This statute is generally considered the basis of the modern British welfare tradition.

The basic aim behind it was, like in Luther's thinking, the total elimination of poverty (Jordan 1959, 18f., 143). The main difference to Lutheran territories was that British used voluntary organisations in this task while Lutherans relied on public funds that were funded by confiscated property of monasteries and fraternities as well as by taxes. British system, however, became part of the maintaining status quo in the country and the other name of the Anglican church, the Established church, tells a lot of church role in Britain. Thus, it is no wonder why social reformists of the 19th century did not get a legitimisation to their protest from Anglicanism but from dissident churches, especially from Methodism.

On British poor law legislation, see Nicholls (1968), Boyer (1985), Brundage (2002) and Fideler (2003). On Scottish poor law, see Cage (1981) and Mitchison (2000).

American model, for its part, has its roots in European refugees who rescued themselves to a new continent. While Protestantism in Europe was fighting for its existence, these early American settlers started to build their version of kingdom of God on earth. It was their experience of being persecuted by the state and church that made them to limit the power of these institutions. For example, Barry D. Karl (1984, 515) argues that still in the 1920's America, "voluntarism became a protection against government, the preservation of the democratic right of individual choice from the regimenting influence of bureaucratic coercion."

Puritan heritage can be seen in American society thoroughly. Later, at the end of 19th century, the Social Gospel Movement had an enormous impact on welfare thinking of American churches. In both cases, the inspiration was drawn from the Bible. However, not all founding fathers were religious. To their ideas, writings of Aristotle, Cicero, Plato, Thoukudides and Xenophon gave the needed legitimacy. (Zvesper 1989)

[5] Berger 1982, 64.

[6] Parsons 1969, 558-563.

Already in 1950's collective behavior theorists Ralph H. Turner and Lewis Killian emphasised the impact of the past experiences even in totally new situations. Later, basically as a continuum of the same tradition, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann argued for the routinisation of thinking. In anthropology, Glifford Geertz presented his thesis of religion as being both a *model of* society and a *model for* society. Recently, I have utilised these theories in my study of the continuity and change of the mission view of the World Alliance of YMCAs.

I will deal, first, the main theses of path dependency theory and the weaknesses that have been pointed by its critiques. Then I will focus shortly on these other theories and theorise how these theories could be combined with path dependency theory.

Path Dependency

Path dependency theory was first used in economics by Paul David[7] and Brian Arthur[8]. They used the success of the QWERTY-keyboard and VHS video-format as examples of the path dependency. According to them, these were not superior formats compared to other alternatives but, in spite of that, were accepted as standards. Their main arguments have been that sometimes some solutions become locked-in already in the stage when "individual transactions that are too small to observe, and these 'random' events can accumulate and become magnified by positive feedback so as to determine the eventual outcome[9]." It is a bit like the classical story of losing the kingdom because of the missing nail of the horseshoe. Once the pattern has emerged, it becomes locked-in the system because of the positive feedback it receives. Moreover, according to their model, first movers in the field have an advantage over newcomers that even increase over time. This is because the cost of extra pieces of the product is cheaper than the first ones and because the manufacturers get more experience in making them more efficiently[10].

As usual, David-Arthur-model has got hard criticism[11] as well as positive feedback and further theorising[12]. Major opponents for the theory have been Stan J. Liebowitz and Stephen E. Margolis[13]. They reject the idea that QWERTY and VHS were inferior and argue that David-Arthur-model does not recognise the role of entrepreneur in marketing. For them, path dependence represents "a world governed not by our stars, not by ourselves, but by insignificant accidents of

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[7] David 1985.

[8] Arthur 1989; 1990.

[9] Arthur 1990, 82.

[10] Arthur 1990, 84. In the QWERTY-case, the positive feedback was because it was cheaper for the manufacturers of the alternative layouts to modify they keyboard than for customers to re-train their secretaries (David 1985, 334ff.).

[11] Altman (2000, 128-131, 139) and Greener (2005, 2-7) review literature of the critics of the theory.

[12] A review of the discussion up to 2000 has been made by Ian Greener (2000).

history[14]." Herman Schwartz[15] criticises David-Arthur-model theses of small historic causes and increasing returns. Other writers have criticised the thin theoretical basis of the thesis and proposed additions to it. For example, Morris Altman[16] has modified path dependency theory with behavioural economic theories. Ian Greener[17] has combined it with morphogenetic social theory. In historical sociology, James Mahoney (2000) has applied the idea of path dependency and developed it from sociological perspective. In any case, the concept has been vividly alive during past 15 years[18].

James Mahoney argues that "path dependence characterizes specifically those historical sequences in which contingent events set into motion institutional patterns or event chains that have deterministic properties[19]." On other words, he argues that there are contingent phenomena that act as 'switchmen' that "determined the tracks along which action has been pushed" as Max Weber put it much earlier[20].

Mahoney also argues that there are three defining features:

1. Early stages of the historical sequences matter more than the latter stages."
2. Early events "cannot be explained on the basis of prior events or 'initial conditions."
3. Once processes are set into motion, they have high inertia.[21]

Thus, there are basically two different processes: the early process that generates the path dependent sequence and the processes of reproduction. The first focuses on the critical junctures, which "are characterized by the adoption of a particular institutional arrangement from among two or more alternatives." The latter, in turn, can be divided into self-reinforcing sequences and reactive sequences.[22]

Self-reinforcing sequences, or as economists call them, increasing returns, "once adopted - delivers increasing benefits with its continued adoption, and thus over time it becomes more and

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[13] Liebowitz & Margolis 1990; 1994; 1995a,b; Margolis & Liebowitz 1998. See also David's (2000) defence.
[14] Liebowitz & Margolis
[15] Schwartz (s.d.).
[16] Altman 2000.
[17] Greener 2005.
[18] With the entry 'path dependence' to Google I got over 70,000 hits of which most seemed to be articles or working-papers.
[19] Mahoney 2000, 507. When we remember that Thomas Aquinas defined that "contingence est quod potest esse et non esse" (contingency is what should be but is not). Mahoney argues that in the case of path dependency, this is also vice versa: path dependency starts from the event that should not be (=cannot be explained by historical conditions and could not be predicted by theory) but still emerges (Mahoney 2000, 508, 511, 513f., 516.)
[20] Weber 1970,280.
[21] Mahoney 2000, 510f.
[22] Mahoney 2000, 508f., 512f..

more difficult to transform the pattern or select previously available options, even if these alternative options would have been more 'efficient[23]."

Still in 2005, Ian Greener argues that "despite the conceptual work of Archer, Arrow, Goldstone, Pierson and Mahoney, we still appear to lack a coherent framework for delimiting what elements might comprise a path dependent system." He makes three fundamental questions:

> First, if path dependent political processes preserve the past in their form, how do we break free from them?[24]…
> How does change occur?…
> Second, what exactly is the role of ideas in path dependence (and historical institutionalism generally)?…
> Third, how can we characterise the feedback mechanism through which path dependent processes prevent changes?[25]

Then Greener explains how the morphogenetic approach divides the task of analysis in three parts. According to him it

> First analyses the structural and cultural 'conditionings' that act as an influence on human actors, and which create 'emergent properties' and 'situational logics' for their interaction with them.
> Second, it explores how these conditioning factors influence actors within the system through their interactions with them.
> The third and final stage analyses the result of these interactions, and the resulting conditioning effects that will feed into the next morphogenetic cycle.[26]

In spite of these attempts to theorise the path dependence, I have been astonished how little these attempts have utilised those general social and anthropological theories on continuity and change. Below, I will introduce shortly their general theses and how they could benefit the path dependence discussion.

Hierarchical Inertia

In 1977, Michael T. Hannan and John Freeman[27] published their article *The Population Ecology of Organizations* in which they argued that the adaptation perspective must be supplemented with a

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[23] Mahoney 2000, 508.

[24] Along with QWERTY and VHS, I could mention examples of the opposite to the first-mover theory. When I started my use of computers with CP/M operating system in the end of the 1980's. In that time WordStar was the most popular word processor. With the development of DOS, it was replaced with Word Perfect. When the Windows emerged, it, in turn, lost its place to MS Word. Other similar examples of breaking the path are, for example, Rank Xerox and IBM - once they were giants among the dwarfs in their fields but now they have lost their leading role and are just actors among others. Also, Arthur's (1990, 83f.) example of the Japanese car industry can be explained against the advance of the first-mover theory: American and European much older companies were, for a while, powerless when they faced Japanese invasion. Actually, the first mover can be in an advanced situation if the field develops fast. In the moment it slows down (and if it is not protected by a patent) others can copy the idea and start to manufacture the products without (or with less) development costs. The break in the photocopy industry occurred when the patents of Rank Xerox expired. In car industry, it has often been just copying almost the whole car. Most obvious it was with Volvo 434 and Mazda 232, which were similar like two berries.

[25] Greener 2005, 'Criticism of path dependence'.

[26] Greener 2005, 'Morphogenetic social theory'.

[27] Hannan & Freeman (1989, xiv) have made their empirical studies on Labour Unions, manufacturing firms, restaurants and newspapers.

selection orientation[28]. Twelve years later, in their book *Organizational Ecology*[29]*,* the authors developed the theses of the earlier article. Important themes in both works were the ideas of competition, niche and hierarchical inertia.

Amos Hawley[30] stated in 1944 that organisational diversity is isomorphic to environmental diversity. Hannan and Freeman supplemented it with ideas of *selection* and *competition theory*. These theories state that the number of organisations depends on the resources available in their environment, especially in their special niche[31]. If there are organisations that depend on the same limited resources, the competition will eliminate those, whose characteristics fit less to the environment. Further, they argue that organisations of different size depend on different kind of resources. This leads to the conclusion that large organisations may be a threat to medium size organisations but not to small ones. Small ones can grow even when the medium size organisations are eliminated.[32]

Organisational inertia, according to Hannan and Freeman, means that organisations have a tendency to resist changes. The authors offer several reasons for this tendency. First, an organisation's investments may not be transferable to other tasks. Thus, one of their claims is that organisations mostly are not capable to change but just die and are replaced by other, more suitable organisations. Second, decision-makers face constraints on the information flow. Third, in organisational changes the political equilibrium is disturbed and that leads at least some sub-units to defend their previous positions and resist the reorganisation. Fourth, the procedures will become sanctified and such normative agreements constrain the transformation. Fifth, there are numerous legal and fiscal barriers on entry and exit from fields of activities. Sixth, the environment emanates certain legitimacy constraints. Seventh, in a world of uncertainty the environment can place high value on reliability and accountability. This in turn constrains everything that disturbs the routines guaranteeing low variance in an organisation's output.[33]

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[28] Hannan & Freeman 1977, 933.
[29] Hannan & Freeman 1989.
[30] Hawley 1944; 1950; 1968.
[31] The importance of resources is stated in two theories. In third sector studies there is the *resource dependency theory* and in social movement studies there is the *resource mobilization approach*. Both underline that the crucial factor in any organisation's survival is its access to resources. These resources can be material or symbolic. One of the main theses of the resource mobilization approach is that the increase of general wealth in society also increases the number of social movements.
[32] Hannan & Freeman 1977,938-943,945f,962.
[33] Hannan & Freeman 1977,931f; 1989,66-69,72ff,75f.

Additionally, individuals seem to have a general fear of change. The first working solution[34] tends to become dear to its users. When this is often accompanied by vague plans about the benefits of the proposed change, and if the proposed new model is not properly tested, people may hesitate to adapt new solutions[35]. Often the change happens with the learning by doing principle or when people see how others use the new ways of doing something. The other way that leads to transformation, as Mayer N. Zald's[36] and Bert Klandermans'[37] studies on the YMCA and Dutch Christian Peace Movement show, is the emergence of new people in the organisation. In other words, the organisation remains but the people change.

Hannan and Freeman state that structural inertia is both relative and hierarchical. *Relative structural inertia* means that the speed of change in an organisation is slower than in the environment around it. However, according to the authors, in another environment the same speed can mean that there is no inertia. For example, a social service association may have high inertia in a fast changing social sector but not necessarily in the nonprofit or commercial sectors where the change is faster. *Hierarchical inertia,* in turn, means that some parts of the organisation are more vulnerable to change than others. The most stable level of the organisation is its mission, which has the highest inertia. The second level is its institutional system, which links the organisation to wider society. The third level is the managerial or administrative system, which uses those decision-making rules that are determined in the institutional level. The fourth level, technical system, has the lowest inertia. The changes in the upper level lead normally to changes in the lower levels but not necessarily vice versa.[38]

Thus, Hannan and Freeman, instead of speaking lock-in processes, argue that organisations are often incapable to change because their resources cannot be used in other environments. In this, their theses are compatible with lock-in thinking. The point, where Hannan and Freeman thinking differ from David-Arthur-model, is the changes in technical level. According to Hannan and Freeman, it is in this level where the inertia is lowest and change easiest. In communication systems, for example, the past 50 years have witnessed a change from telex via fax to email.

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[34] A concept that I learned in the lessons of computer programming. The idea was based on the task to find a path to some target when there is a web of routes. With a systematic analysis of all possibilities it is possible to find the shortest one but it is time consuming. Thus, sometimes it is more effective to use the first found path even if one does not know whether it is the shortest one.

[35] The experience of the Finnish bank crisis in the beginning of 1990s supports Hannan & Freeman's theory. Those banks that believed new economic theories of banking suffered such deep losses that it pushed the whole country to deep regression and extremely high unemployment. Today they do not exist any more as independent organisations. Those who had quite conservative policy survived.

[36] Zald 1970.

[37] Klandermans 1994.

[38] Hannan & Freeman 1989,70f,77ff.

Companies have had no problems in replacing old communication methods with these new devices. The important point, of course, is the time-span we are looking for the change. For example, still in 1960's the 'triumph of communism' seemed inevitable and now there are only China, Cuba and North Korea where it is the dominant system. Moreover, following Hannan and Freeman's thesis, Soviet Union was almost in bankrupt before there was an ideological change. In China we witness today how technical system is almost capitalistic but political system still follows the old pattern.

Miller McPherson utilised Hannan and Freeman's theory in her study of voluntary organisations in 1983. The focus in this study is on the adherency question from the resource perspective. Members are defined as an "extremely important resource for which organizations compete." McPherson's analysis starts with Hannan and Freeman's concept of niche, which in animal ecology

> is the location in multidimensional space defined by the resources in the environment. The se dimensions usually fall into three general categories describing what the animal eats, where it eats, and when it eats.[39]

In organisational ecology the dimensions of niches are location, timing and social characteristics like age, sex, social status, etc. The social characteristics define the membership basis. For example, youth organisations and veteran organisations do not often compete for the same members. According to McPherson, "the physical location of organizations will dictate where their members come from[40]." Finally the time dimension determines, according to the author, the possibilities to participate. The time scale may vary from hours (meeting times of several organisations may be overlapping or the work creates limits in participating) to years (to different ages differing organisations are attractive).[41]

McPherson has also linked ecological organisation theory with network analysis. The study that deals with the size of voluntary organisations shows

> that organisation size is strong1y related to town size, extralocal affiliation, economic activity, stability, and centrality...
> The overall picture of the community which emerges from this perspective is of a web of interconnections among organizations wherein large, economically important organizations with extra-local relationships to parent organizations are at the center, and a successive army of smaller, expressive, local organizations are at the periphery. The large organizations are not only more central, but more stable in their membership.[42]

In general, ecological theory offers much information of the potential forces of an organisation's environment. Its limit is that it ignores the motivational and cultural aspects of organisational actors. Even McPherson's theorising does not touch the crucial question "What services are seen as appropriate to be organised in the voluntary sector and what belongs to the public sector?" One

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[39] McPherson 1983a,520.
[40] McPherson uses the Lotha-Volterra equation to calculate the growth rate of organisation according to the carrying capacity of the community. McPherson 1983a,522.
[41] McPherson 1983a,520f.
[42] McPherson 1983b,1060.

theory field that has been added to ecological theory is the institutional perspective, the focus of which is on the interaction of an organisation with the hosting cultural values.

Applied to the development of welfare thinking, Hannan and Freeman's theses remind that contextual factors influence heavily on which kind of solutions are possible and which are useful. Already Max Weber noted that differences between Egyptian/Mesopotamian co-operative and Greek individualistic cultures were due to the different modes of agriculture: irrigation agriculture required co-operation but rainfall agriculture did not. The crucial point is that once the mode of behaviour has been developed, it is often legitimised by religious values, which, in turn has extremely high inertia. Thus, in spite of moving from Orient to Europe and other parts of the world, Near Eastern religions still emphasise community and co-operation. On the other hand, this co-operational aspect in Christianity has been mixed with the Greek competitive spirit. Therefore, we can see through the European history a tension between Aristotelian and Biblical thinking.

Emergent Norm

In the interactionist string of collective behavior tradition, Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian developed their thesis of 'emerging norm' to explain how new norms occur. They studied how people create legitimate action plans in new, inexperienced situations. They state that new norms are negotiated on the basis of old values that are modified to give an answer to a new problem.

Turner and Killian also state that "collective behavior arises out of a complex societal roots and not of a single condition. Especially they underline that "division of labour, the normative order, and communication are interdependent and interacting features of social organisation. Changes in one are likely to be accompanied by changes in the others." However, Turner and Killian note that social changes are not autonomous but "products of the interaction of individuals."[43]

However, this interaction does not occur in isolation. Societal conditions also influence to collective behavior. Turner and Killian state that there are three

> certain salient features which are relevant to the emergence of collective behavior. Every group is characterised by some sort of division of labor... Out of this division of labor arises a structure of interdependent roles...
> A second, essential basis for group cohesion is a normative order, or consensus as to the behavior that is expected of the group members by each other...
> Both social organization and the normative order, and hence the very existence of the group as a social system, depend upon communication.[44]

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[43] Turner and Killian 1959,16f.
[44] Turner & Killian 1959,20f.

They further point out that there must remain some kind of "we"-feeling in order to keep the communication process on. Without communication, there is no collective action. Social organisation does not fade away in collective behavior but

> just as routine social behavior may be explained on the basis of these characteristics of social organization, collective behavior must be viewed as arising from changes in them.[45]

The issues that create the potential for the change are a break of informal organisation structures[46], value conflicts in society[47], social change and frustration[48], and inadequacy of communication[49].

Authors sum their thesis as follows:

> collective behavior arises out of a complex of societal roots and not from a single condition...
> Human social organization, with its norms, its structure, and its web of communication, provides an indispensable framework for the social behavior of the individual. Within this framework he is able to build up his own actions in terms of what he can expect of other people and what he assumes they expect of him. Changes in the salient features of the social matrix of behavior create for him an "unstructured" or critical situation in which action becomes more problematic than usual. Hence the nature of individual reactions to such situations must be taken into account in understanding how collective behavior develops.[50]

On the other hand, while pointing to the importance of social structures, they stress the actor's importance in sociological theory. They state that

> culture does not "change itself" in an impersonal, automatic fashion... Social adjustment is the product of the interaction of numerous individual responses.[51]

Turner and Killian loan the concept of milling from Herbert Blumer to explain this interaction[52]. They define milling as

> a search for socially sanctioned meaning in a relatively unstructured situation. It is not sufficient, however, that the situation simply be unstructured for milling to begin. The situation must also have importance so that the members of the collectivity are motivated to act or, at least, to understand the situation.[53]

In its simplest form milling can happen with a minimal physical or verbal activity. People just 'read' the body language of each other and interpret their attitudes unconsciously. Turner and Killian call this *incipient milling*. In its more complex forms milling is a process either in face-to-face situations or via communication devices and mass media. Milling is essentially a communication process. One special form of milling is rumour. In the milling process there are two

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[45] Turner & Killian 1959,21.
[46] Turner & Killian 1959,24.
[47] Turner & Killian 1959,28.
[48] Turner & Killian 1959,31.
[49] Turner & Killian 1959,36f.
[50] Turner & Killian 1959,39.
[51] Turner & Killian 1959,40.
[52] Turner and Killian, however, disagree with Blumer's understanding of milling. For Blumer it is mere irrational action the importance of which is that people become aware of each other. For Turner and Killian it is a process of creating common interpretation of the situation.

contingent processes. First is the development of a common mood. Here emotions play a crucial role. Second, there is a development of a common image of the situation, which aims to cognitive clarity of the situation.

Taken to society level, Blumer's thesis of general social movement is an important form of milling. The concept of general social movement explains the emergence of the ideas before they materialise themselves as visible mobility. They are movements in their early stage, without any clear form. This stage is characterised by 'voices in the wilderness', i.e., lonely prophets who articulate the grievances and theorise possible solutions for them. Much of this theorising is based on existing values, which are modified to meet the facts of new experiences. These ideas are like cultural trends[54] that influence in people's thinking. Perhaps the best example to which Blumer's theory can be applied is the environmental movement. In the 1960's when the movement was not yet organised, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* awoke the discussion on environmental issues.

Applied in the field of welfare thinking, Turner and Killian's thesis emphasise that in the milling process people utilise their previous experiences and routines. With their past frames people explain the new situation and try to decide what must be done. Thus, although past experiences influence a lot in people's thinking, previous practices do not enter automatically into solutions in the new situation. We have to remember that past experiences are not only good ones and, thus, the inexperienced situation is also a possibility to change, for example, power structures. There is, thus, a *carpe diem* element always present in these episodes.

Routinisation of thinking

In the social-constructivist tradition, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann argued, in their *Social Construction of Reality*, how behaviour or thinking will routinise[55] but will be reviewed when needed. The importance of routines is that they free our mental capacity and give us possibility to concentrate on other things. Thus, when we ride on bicycle or drive a car, we do not concentrate on the mechanical performance (like we did when we were learning these skills) but

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[53] Turner & Killian 1959,59.

[54] In this point, it must be noted that there is a difference between concepts 'cultural trend' and '*zeitgeist*' (see Mannheim 1972.). Cultural trend is only one stream inside the *zeitgeist* which in turn is a combination of all the trends and experiences presented in some era. Somewhere between them is a concept 'megatrend'(see Naisbitt 1982), which is a powerful trend that is clearly visible in the discussions of the era.

[55] In cognitive psychology, Ulric Neisser (1976, 110-117) has also presented a similar theory of routinisation of thinking. He calls these schemata. According to him, we have different cognitive maps on our environment that directs our observation and action. Then we try to fit this mental map to our present environment. If the reality does not fit to our mental map, we modify it and it becomes a new cognitive map. For example, we have a schemata on 'library' when we go to a new one where we have not yet visited. On the basis of this schemata, we start to seek what we need. However, there are slight variances and when we recognise them, we add them into the schemata.

usually focus on something else. However, sometimes this routine breaks - we come to rough or slippery surface and have to concentrate on riding or driving. We remember what we are told and remember past experiences in similar situations. Our latent knowledge and skills actualise. Then, when the situation is over, we return to routinised mode of making our trip.

Berger and Luckmann argue that in the same way as these mechanical skills routinise, also our other behaviour routinise. We have our morning routines that we don't even recognise. When we wake up in the morning we do not necessarily think that 'now I must get up, go to the toilet, get the newspaper, cook the coffee' etc. Only when there is no newspaper we pay attention to it and start to wonder why it has not came. Or if we are asked on the way to work whether we switched the coffee-machine off, we start to wonder if we actually did it. Most possibly - but we don't remember it.

According to Berger and Luckmann, also our thinking has its routines. Their basic idea is that when something has been dealt or learnt, it becomes an automatic action and it is not even recognised. It is taken for granted. This frees mental capacity for other purposes. Only when the routine is broken or challenged, the 'stored model' is taken into closer focus. When it is again dealt with, a modified model is developed and it can be stored again - and the new thinking and action will be again routinised.[56]

The models of thinking are stored in what they call *symbolic universe*[57]. According to Berger and Luckmann, *symbols* are ways to file information[58]. Symbols are a way to handle the entities. They can be persons (king)[59], items (flag)[60] or actions (rituals)[61]. Symbols can also form sets[62] and chains[63] that people can see as belonging together. Along with these, symbols can also be mental constructions like world views, ideologies or beliefs. A person can say that he is a believer or atheist, a sociologist or historian, vegetarian or philanthropist. These expressions are not just labels but characterisations of the grand scheme of thinking. People do not continuously think that

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[56] Berger & Luckmann 1972, 55-58, 113-122.

[57] Berger & Luckmann 1972, 113-122.

[58] The symbol must be separated from *sign*, which has more exact content (Tillich 1958, 41, 44.). A red light in traffic lights is a sign that has one determined meaning. A symbol, like a flag, has different kinds of connotations to nation, people, cultural basis, religion, political alliances, etc.

[59] Berger & Luckmann 1972, 93f.

[60] It is by purpose that Nordic countries have cross and Islamic countries have half moon in their flags. Even the flag of European Union points to Christianity, "the soul of Europe" as Jacques Delors put it. The stars in the flag namely come from the Revelation: "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars (Rev. 12:1.)."

[61] Berger & Luckmann 1972, 175.

[62] The flag of EU is a set of symbols. It points to the member states and to its own structures and wholeness. It also points, as, to Christianity as the soul of Europe.

[63] A white 'sugar bit' in the collar of a black skirt points to the bands of a pastor and the title (pastor =shepherd) of the

they are communists, believers, etc. but their thinking is based on these general frames. They are ways to see the world but mostly this is only latent. A Marxist sociologist does not all the time think theories of Marx but frames the society according to them. Interactionist, in turn, has her/his frame that differs from Marxian or Structural-functionalist frames.

Looking at the field of welfare, it is significant to note that the welfare regimes of Gøsta Esping-Andersen[64] overlap with the religious divisions in Europe. Nordic countries are all Lutheran. Central European model, as noted, was based on Catholic social ethics and liberal Anglo-Saxon model is a mixture of Anglicanism and Calvinism. Even when European societies have been secularised, the way of thinking has remained because the religious emphases are imbedded in the philosophical tools we are using. The thinking has routinised in cultural level[65].

Like knowledge of mechanical skills and morning routines, these symbols can be activated when needed[66]. Berger and Luckmann, like Turner and Killian, argue that this happens when the routine breaks. It is a moment when a 'mental box' in symbolic universe is sought, opened and processed through. When it is processed and new modified frame is developed, it will be restored to symbolic universe again.

Berger and Luckmann's theory, if applied to social historical research, has certain consequences on studies. First, like path dependency and emergent norm theories, it emphasises the break of routine. However, unlike the path dependency, it does not require that the event is accidental and not predicted. On the contrary, in these events people most probable utilise their previous resources. The outcome is not accidental but an application of previous resources in a new situation[67].

Second, Berger and Luckmann's idea of routinisation helps to analyse longer historical periods. If the symbols change only in the breaks, then a scholar can concentrate on few breaks and leave other periods untouched. However, the problem of this thinking is that there is a danger to lose phenomena of gradual change.

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occupation refers to the story of the Good Shepherd, which in turn points to the way Christ leads His Church.

[64] Esping-Andersen 1990.

[65] The basic cultural divisions in Europe still follow the borders that were drawn in 1054 (when the Eastern and Western churches separated) and in 17th century when the peace of Westphalen cemented the division between Catholic and Protestant Europe.

[66] Berger & Luckmann 1972, 55, 168-175.

[67] In this thinking, the QWERTY-system was logical outcome of the need to write fast dictations in English language. Due to superiority of English and American economic strength, it became a standard also in other language areas - just like Phoenician order of alphabets.

Religion as a model for society

Above, I quoted Weber and Parsons who argued for the significance of ideas in human action. Reijo Heinonen - a bit like Emile Durkheim - has argued that religions are value-memories of culture[68]. Quite often Berger and Luckmann's symbolic universes, in the level of cultures, are equivalent with the dominant religion. This is most evident in the case of Islam, which is not only religion but also a theocratic entity.

Clifford Geertz presented in his *The Interpretation of Cultures* that religions are both models *of* the society and models *for* the society[69]. What Geertz says on the anthropology of religion is valid in the related disciplines (sociology of religion, theology) as well: "My dissatisfaction with much of contemporary social anthropological work in religion is not that it concerns itself with the second stage, but that it neglects the first, and in so doing takes for granted what most deeds to be elucidated[70]." The other extreme is to concentrate on the first and to reduce religion to economic, political or cultural patterns. The importance of Geertz is that he emphasises the need of both. In his *Religion as a Cultural System* from 1966, Geertz defined religion as:

> (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.[71]

Thus, what Geertz is meaning with this definition is that a religion both interprets the reality and creates moods and motivations that influence people's actions. The interpretation of reality is often presented in some form of cosmogony (how the world has emerged), cosmology (how the world functions) and anthropology (what is the role of man in the world). Some religions (Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam) add also eschatology (how the world ends). Rather often these aspects of religious teaching aim to interpret a questions that are fundamental to philanthropy and welfare: "why there is suffering in the world?" and "how should people cope with that suffering?" The last aspect is attached to the ethics of religions.

Along with Geertz, another Talcot Parson's pupil, Robert N. Bellah, has argued the centrality of religion in political thought. In, what he calls civil religion, one can find common beliefs, symbols and rituals. This civil religion is a level of religious thought in which all nations understand

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[68] Heinonen 1997.
[69] Geertz 1973, 93, 123.
[70] Geertz 1973, 125.
[71] Reprinted in Geertz 1973, 90.

themselves and how they interpret their history in front of transcendent ethical and moral principles.[72]

Discussion

What is common to all these theories is that there is some kind of cycle of existing knowledge, map or frame that direct peoples' thinking. When this map does not fit into the present reality, it will be modified as a combination of previous knowledge and new information. This process, then, gives new model that will be routinised and directing peoples' orientation.

This routine faces sometimes new situations that create a potential for the change. If the potential is enough high, the change occurs, if not, the routine prevails. Sometimes, after the change, there may also occur a return to the previous routine[73]. Ancient examples of this phenomenon are the way how conquerors adopted Sumero-Accadian culture in Mesopotamia, how Romans adopted Greek philosophy and Egyptian calendar or how Egyptian kingdoms revitalised themselves after the intermediate periods.

In my YMCA study, I utilised the following organisation onion model. The basic idea is from Hannan and Freeman but I have modified it and added there elements from social movement and world view studies, including the theories presented above.
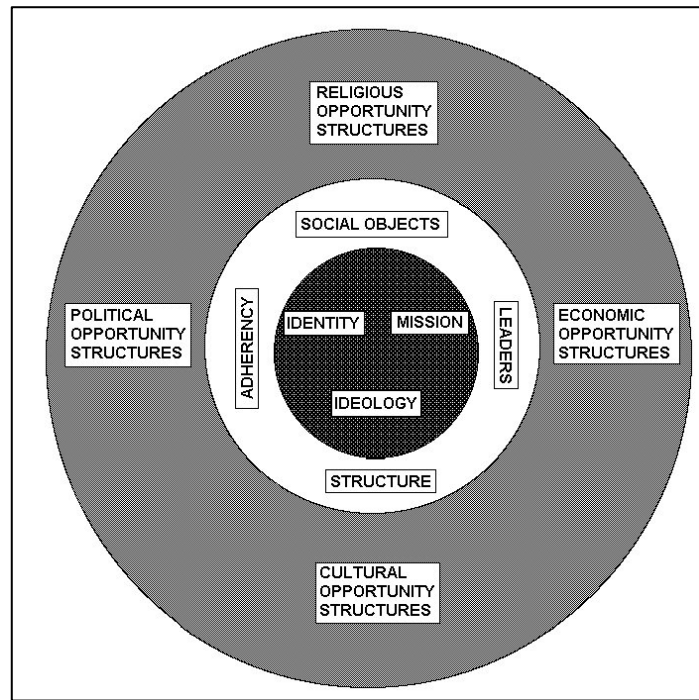
Organisation onion

Theoretically, I focus on factors that influence in the change of the mission view of an international non-governmental organisation. In this model, the core, which has the highest inertia, consisted organisation's identity, mission and ideology[74]. The shell, in turn, was made of

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[72] Bellah 1970. Bellah got the concept from Rousseau's *The Social Contract.*

[73] In my study of the World Alliance of YMCA, I noticed that near the end of the 19th century, the structure of the world organisation slowly started to resemble the organisation of national movements. This change took place in the same pace with the development of the communication and travel devices. When it became possible, the federal model of administration that was legitimised in local and national levels replaced the international central committee model that was created because of necessity some decades earlier. (Muukkonen 2002, 236-248)

[74] On movement identity, mission and ideology, see Muukkonen (2001, 4-10; 2002a, 38-42).

constituency[75], leadership[76], organisational structure and social objects[77]. The context was studied with the help of the concept of opportunity structures, political[78], economic[79], cultural[80] and religious[81].

The basic idea is to identify external and internal changes and evaluate which kinds of change-potentials they create. If the potential is enough high, it overcomes the inertia and change occurs. If not, the routine prevails.

The model can be used in three ways. First, it is an organisation map that enables to define what is the focus of the study and how other elements are related to the main interest. In my YMCA study, I focused on the mission view and looked how changes in lower inertia levels influenced in this core-element. In welfare thinking, the core could be the deep values of the society. They can be in the doctrines of the dominant religion (like in Islam) or in so called *civil religion* of which Robert Bellah has argued.

[75] On the impact of changes in the constituency, see Zald & Denton (1963), Zald (1970, 32-56) and Klandermans (1994). On different types of members, see Lang & Lang (1961, 525s.) and McCarthy & Zald (1977,1221).

[76] On leadership types, see Blumer (1953, 203). On the role of leaders in ideology formation, see Eyerman & Jamison (1991, 98s.)

[77] On social objects, see Lang & Lang (1961, 291-332).

[78] The concept of political opportunity structure was implicitly presented by Michael Lipsky (1968) and developed by Charles Tilly (1978), Doug McAdam (1982), Sidney Tarrow (1983) and Herbert Kitschelt (1986).

[79] On economic opportunity structures, see McCarthy & Zald 1977. Hannan & Freeman (1977; 1989) are in the same lines in speaking of organisation ecology.

[80] The concept of cultural opportunity structures has been presented by Karl-Werner Brand (1990a,b; 1994). He links opportunity structure approach to neo-institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan 1977; DiMaggio & Powell 1983; Tolbert & Zucker 1997) and sees his theory as a combination of Ann Swidler's (1986) culture as a tool kit, Maarten A. Hajer's (1995) discourse coalition, William Gamson's (1975) issue packages, David A. Snow and Robert Benford's (1992) frame analysis and Volker Bornchier's (1988) societal models approaches.

[81] I have used the concept of religious opportunity structures because religion is not just a sub-category of culture. Sure, it is for a great deal overlapping with culture but, for example, Christianity and Islam exist in several cultures. On detailed treatment of the theme, see Muukkonen (2001, 19ff.; 2002a, 51f.)

Second, the model functions as a 'filter of history' that helps to focus only on those action episodes that forced the organisation to review its mission[82]. In this I have utilised Berger and Luckmann's routinisation thesis. Accordingly, I supposed that there were latent periods that I could skip and focus only on the crucial moments. The weakness of this method is that there is a danger to forget gradual development. However, this can be avoided by "rewinding" the phenomenon from the identified change.

Third, when I have identified a critical moment, I used the model as a questionnaire for the sources. In other words, I asked from the sources what kinds of changes had happened in opportunity structures, in adherency, in structure, in leadership, etc., and how they influence in the core.

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[82] Concentration on special events is based on Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's (1972, 55-58) idea of routinisation of action and thinking, and on Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian's (1959, 40, 58-79) idea of emerging norms that are created in new, unstructured situations. Thus, the main argument behind both is that the thinking remains rather stable between reviews.

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