

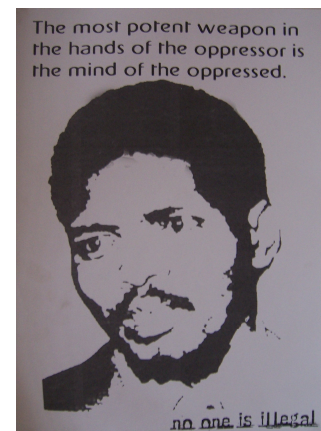
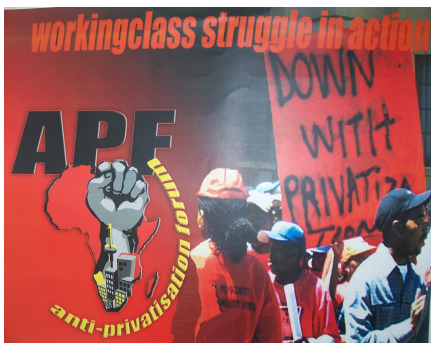
Social movements as development alternative?

The concept of niche applied to social movements



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Summary

Social movements as development alternative? The concept of niche applied to social movements

The thesis draws on the authors' experiences with social movements and their activities. These experiences are rather ambiguous. This ambiguity is also manifest in the literature about social movements. Similarly donor organisations that for a long time have worked with and through social movements are currently reconsidering the relationships. They acknowledge the opportunities of social movements but are struggling to make these come to a practice. The three fields of ambiguity with regard to social movements together with the concept of niche, which is used as a tool to come to a better understanding of social movement practices within international development, are the foundation on which this thesis is build.

The notion of niche expresses alternative practices and discourses of development that produce progressive changes in society. The position of social movements is unclear. Are they an alternative within the development trajectory or is it same meat, different gravy? The main question of this thesis is: what characterises niches in development that could be occupied by social movements?

The resources for the research to the position of the fundamental niche and the reconstruction of the realised niches are threefold; empirical data in literature, supporting data collected during the internship phase and literature on social movement studies

Two different perceptions of niche are possible. The 'fundamental niche' refers to the position a social movement would be able to achieve in the absence of any restrictions. The 'realised niche' expresses the position the social movement actually achieves. The analysis of the position of the fundamental niche and the reconstruction of realised niches showed that the concept of niche is a useful tool to come to grips with ambiguities surrounding social movements. The position of the fundamental niche raised the question whether social movements are a real alternative. A lot of social movements and SMOs do not distinguish themselves from other development agencies. When social movements are perceived as an alternative within international development, as actors who can enforce social change, transforming the existing social order, this is a wrong picture. Social movements can balance on the fragile line between rights-based and counter-hegemonic opposition but in most cases they work within the existing social order. This misperception is causing ambiguity.

The reconstruction of the realised niches showed that social movements have the same issues as other actors in development. Social movements also struggle with issues of representation, internal democracy and lack of resources. The processes of NGOisation can also be applied to social movements. This could be an explanation for ambiguity in social movement literature and policy towards social movements. Perceiving social movements as the ultimate way to transform the existing system is wrong. Social movements do offer an alternative within international development, allowing more space to grassroots than other development actors might do, but social movements are certainly not the goose that lays golden eggs. Overcoming this misperception and the recognition that social movements are susceptible to the same processes which can be applied to other development actors would reduce ambiguity.

Keywords: Social movements, niche, neoliberalism, counter-hegemonic opposition, rights-based opposition, social movement theory, development alternative

Preface

Although it is already more than a year ago since I left South Africa, I am still very much interested in this country. Whenever I see or hear about South Africa in newspaper articles, on television or in movies, my attention is drawn. Writing a thesis about social movements also confronted me again and again with South Africa. Now this thesis is finished, I am able to place my experiences during my internship at the Coalition Against Water Privatisation in Johannesburg in a theoretical perspective.

In retro perspective I am grateful for the opportunity that was given to me by individuals within the CAWP to be part of this organisation. I am also grateful to Paul Hebinck who guided me through the process of writing this thesis and allowed me to take my time and read a lot. I also would like to thank all the people who accompanied me, while I was accompanying them, at the Leeuwenborch. Finally I must thank the ones who pushed me to finish my studies. They were right. It's been good and now it's time to move on.

Despite the struggles during writing this thesis, I am proud of the result. I sincerely hope that reading this thesis is as inspiring to you, the reader, as it was to me while writing.

Gerrit van Vliet

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Motive

After spending four months in South Africa at the Coalition Against Water Privatisation; a local social movement organisation which stand up for the urban poor, a lot of questions arose in my mind about the value, the use and the right of existence these type of organisations.

The original intention of my internship in Johannesburg was to conduct a research on the social impact of prepaid water meters. Instead of conducting and finalising this research with assistance of my internship organisation, I learned a lot about my organisation and ended up helping them with issues they were engaged in. The period after my internship, which I used to conduct some preliminary research on social movements in literature, didn't shed light on how to get grip on this phenomenon. Social movements can be positive agents of development, but there are also disadvantages. A look at the role of social movements within Dutch governmental policy and within development organisations makes things even more complicated; the importance is stressed, but deliberate implications are missing.

Despite the somewhat disappointing experience at the local social movement, mainly caused by organisational dysfunction, I consider social movements to be positive agents of development which can create social change. Social change which has a potential for improvement of the quality of life of deprived people.

Within the domain of international development searching for change for the better to improve peoples' livelihoods is an important field of study and action. Actors that play a role in the action part of development as agents of change are state actors, a range of NGO's, the private sector and many more. They all have their pros and cons. One of those actors are social movements which are the subject of analysis in this thesis.

The thesis draws on my own experiences with social movements and their activities and actions. These experiences are rather ambiguous. This ambiguity is also manifest in the literature about social movements. Similarly donor organisations that for a long time have worked with and through social movements are currently reconsidering the relationships. They acknowledge the opportunities of social movements but are struggling to make these come to a practice.

This thesis sets out to come to grips with this ambiguity. The theoretical angle I have chosen revolves around the notion niche. I will explain the roots of the concept and trace how and why it has become to play a role in social sciences. The notion of niche expresses alternative practices and discourses of development that produce progressive changes in society. The point of departure for my research and thesis writing is that the notion niche is suitable to analyse social movements and to distinguish between them. In addition it is a useful way to deal with the ambiguities related to the actions and positioning of social movements in society and the role these play in development and change processes.

Using the concept of niche to get to an understanding of social movements is relatively new. However social movements are described as organisations producing alternative strategies (Escobar, 2010). Social movements as alternatives within international development is reoccurring in social movement literature (Greenstein, 2003 Sinwell, 2010). I will apply the concept of niche to social

movements to come to an understanding of social movement practices and ambiguities. With the perception of social movements as an alternative within development I place myself in the school of post development thinking.

The notion of niche has been the main driver of this thesis. The concept drives my analysis of social movements to give meaning to my experiences with social movements in Johannesburg, towards questions whether social movements can be understood as niches and if so, what characterises social movements as niche and what conditions are needed to operate as a niche?

1.2 The Concept of Niche

This section introduces the concept of niche. It will describe the origin of the concept of niche in biology and how it is used in other disciplines including social studies. The section will conclude with the way the niche is conceptualised in this thesis with regard to the position of social movements.

Origin and use in other disciplines

The concept of niches is derived from biology. The term niche is used in ecology. A niche is more an idea than an actual place. It is a summary of the organism's tolerances and requirements in which it is able to survive (Townsend, Begon & Harper, 2003). The concept of niches is also used in other disciplines, like economics, and is applied to social movement theory. Nancy Langton "presented ideas taken from niche theory in population ecology, showing how the theory could be used to examine both individual behaviour and group behaviour with respect to social movements. Niche theory improves on current work on social movements by allowing for explicit models of competition" (Langton, 1987, p. 64). studies competition between Social Movement Organisations inspired by ecological niche theory. Social Movement Organisations compete for members which enables them to gather resources in order to survive (Stern, 1999).

Two different perceptions of niche are possible. A 'fundamental niche' refers to the position an organisation would be able to achieve in the absence of any competition. The 'realised niche' expresses the position the organisation actually achieves (Stern, 1999).

Niches are also used as a business concept. This is done in Strategic Niche Management (SNM). Novelties, originally in the transport and energy sector, are being managed and protected in order to create or cause technical-institutional change (Roep, van der Ploeg & Wiskerke, 2003). A niche is defined as "a specific application domain (habitat) where actors are prepared to work with specific functionalities, accept teething problems, higher cost, and are willing to invest in improving the novelty and the development of a new market" (Hoogma et al., 2002 in Roep et al., 2003).

SNM can be used to cause transition in existing production patterns. The concept of SNM is applied to agricultural development (Roep et al. , 2003; Roep & Wiskerke, 2004). It is emphasised that there are some differences between the sectors in which SNM is applied originally and agriculture. Agriculture is an open and uncertain sector and the political-economic structure differs from the transport sector. (Roep et al. , 2003; Roep & Wiskerke, 2004).

The aspect of being able to survive within an environment is important. The niche of a business concept is not given, but the idea is that a niche can also be created. By creating the most suitable circumstances for a business concept, in most cases a novelty, the new concept or strategy is able to

survive within a hostile environment. The hostile environment is usually the mainstream strategy; business as usual.

Niches and Spaces

The concept of niche has similarities with the concept of spaces. McGee (2004) uses the notion of space which in my view is rather similar to the notion of niches. She is using the concept of space in the context of policy.

“The concept of space provides a useful lens through which to view the everyday politics and practice of actors who are engaged in the policy process, and to examine how their power to act is enabled and constrained” (McGee, 2004, p. 15-6).

In the view of McGee spaces are ‘a sustained period of time, or an established social or behavioural institution or norm in which interventions or events throw up new opportunities, reconfiguring relationships between actors or bringing in new ones, and opening up the possibilities of a shift in direction’ (McGee, 2004). This can be applied to niches too. The concepts of space and niche are more or less the same.

Luke Sinwell also uses the notion of spaces. He does so in a social movement context. He distinguishes between invited and invented spaces (Sinwell, 2010). Invited spaces are the opportunities for social movements which are offered and regulated by state or market actors. Invented spaces are the actions by social movements, legal or illegal, in which they create extra space for themselves.

The notion of spaces as used by Sinwell and McGee shows that these spaces are not fixed and given. There is the possibility to create more space: the invented space, but spaces can also be offered or denied: the invited spaces.

The Concept of Niche in this Thesis

The space that social movements occupy within society is conceptualised as a niche. Social movements operate in a certain environment. They interact within the triangle of state, market and civil society. Social movements, in the words of Townsend et al., have certain tolerances and requirements which enable them to survive. The social movement niche is not fixed but constantly constructed and contested because it is subject to other actors in society.

Whereas in biology the contestation of a niche comes from changing climate conditions and other external threats, the social movement niche is contested and constructed in interaction with the state, market and civil society. Social movements derive from civil society and interact with state and market actors. By doing this, social movements try to enforce social change in order to improve the quality of people's lives.

I prefer and use the term niche, rather than spaces, because this concept better expresses the need for protection and refinement and obustness. McGee is breaking down the concept of space in several dimensions that ‘together constitute a policy space and define its potential’ (McGee, 2004, p. 20). The approach of this thesis is also to break down the concept of the social movement niche in order to understand the constitution and its potential.

It is important to distinguish between the two different ways in which the concept of niche is used. On the one hand the niche is already present and more or less fixed and given. This is the 'fundamental niche' (Stern, 1999). In biology this is the summary of requirements and tolerances for a certain species. These are for instance the presence of food, sufficient protection and maximum and minimum temperatures. This fundamental niche can be applied to social movements too. A summary of requirements and tolerances for social movements in order to survive, like the presence of certain freedoms and resources, marks the space of the fundamental niche that social movements can occupy within society.

On the other hand a niche is also constructed, created and protected. This is based on SNM¹ in which novelties are protected and sharpened. The occupied space is experimental and needs refinement and protection in order to mature as viable alternative. This notion of niche can be described as the 'realised niche' (Stern, 1999), where realised does not mean a final position.

In my view there are two possibilities to improve and strengthen the niche for social movements. The first possibility is to strengthen and enlarge the fundamental niche. For instance allowing more freedoms, like freedom of speech and freedom of association, enlarges and strengthens the niche that can be occupied by social movements. The space that can be utilised by social movements can be enlarged and strengthened by improving the fundamental niche.

The other possibility is to strengthen and support social movements in order to improve their presence in the (fundamental) niche. Assist and support is aimed at fulfilling the potential of the social movement, as an effect the realised niche is enlarged, strengthened and improved. This realised niche is a result of action and is generated by, long term or short term, interaction of several actors. For instance state actors, the leadership and the grassroots, international donors and support groups etcetera.

The fundamental niche in which social movements can operate is present in most parts of the world. A fairly democratic context is the sole requirement for the existence of a fundamental niche which can be occupied by social movements. The fairly democratic context is elaborated in chapter 3.1. The fundamental niche holds a potential for social movements to step into that space in order to affect social change. The use of the fundamental niche by social movements is their realised niche. This thesis is searching for the factors that strengthen and enlarge the realisation of that niche.

I refrain from using terms like management with regard to niches because this can be misleading. There can be an improved use of the potential that a social movement holds to occupy the fundamental niche; an enlargement of the realised niche, but this is not achieved in a completely manageable environment. Management has too much the connotation of control, input and output, cause and effect. A niche is an experimental environment but it is robust and needs refinement to strictly apply management tools. A niche requires the acceptance of failure and struggle.

¹ The construction of a niche also takes place in ecology where nature conservation often aims at creating the right circumstances to protect and attract certain species in a certain area.

1.3 Thesis Outline

The structure of this thesis is not a classical one. Most of the time, an incentive leads to a theoretical framework which ultimately presents some research questions. A method is chosen. Data is gathered during fieldwork and after analysing the data, the conclusion can be given with some recommendations for further research.

This thesis has another structure. The motive for this thesis comes from ambiguous experiences during an internship at a social movement in Johannesburg, South Africa. Further research on social movements showed the same ambiguity. The concept of niche was discovered as analytical tool that could be applied to social movements to get grip on the phenomenon of social movements. This is elaborated in this chapter. Chapter two focuses on threefold ambiguity; as experienced, in literature and in policy. This chapter also includes the research questions and method. Chapter three and four are the analytical chapters of this thesis. Chapter three investigates the position of the niche that can be occupied by social movements, while chapter four focuses on a reconstruction of this niche. This final chapter of this thesis is the conclusion and recommendations. The difference with a classical thesis is the use of field data. There is no data specially gathered for this thesis, however this thesis is using a lot of data gathered and presented by others. The experiences forming the incentive for this thesis, are also used to explain ambiguity and support theory.

Chapter 2 Research Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will elaborate on the context of this research. The introductory chapter explained the origins of this research and the conceptualisation of niche with regard to the study of social movements in this thesis. Social movements are experienced by many as ambiguous entities. This ambiguity is present in three different fields: firstly in personal experiences at a local social movement (section 2.2), secondly as described in scientific literature (section 2.3) and finally in Dutch policy towards social movements; in government policy as well as NGO policy (section 2.4). The threefold ambiguity is the subject of this chapter. The chapter concludes with some final remarks on the research context (section 2.5) and the research questions and methods as a result of the research context (section 2.6).

But before we continue with the fields of ambiguity towards social movements, it is important, for the sake of readability and intelligibility, to give a preliminary description on what is meant with social movements and the social movements of interest for this research.

The definition of social movement that is used in this research is given by Ballard, Habib and Valodia in their book (2006) about social movements in post-apartheid South Africa. In their, and my, view, social movements are:

“[P]olitically and/or socially directed collectives, often involving multiple organisations and networks, focused on changing one or more elements of the social, political and economic system within which they are located” (Ballard et al. 2006, p. 3).

Within the range of social movements that fit in this definition, I am interested in social movements that are striving for an improvement in the quality of life of the poor in a fairly democratic development context.

Another concept within social movement literature which needs preliminary explanation is social movement organisations (SMOs). An SMO can be seen as a formally organised component of a broader social movement within which there is likely to be a number of SMOs (Chesters & Welsh, 2011). SMOs structure the direction and activities of a social movement as a whole. SMOs are referred to as the carrier organisations of the social movement aims or the command posts of movements (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1988).

An explanation and elaboration on social movements and SMOs is given in the analytical chapters of this thesis; chapter three and chapter four.

2.2 Experienced ambiguity

For the internship part of my study I spent three and a half month at the Coalition Against Water Privatisation (CAWP). CAWP is a social movement based in Johannesburg, South Africa. CAWP is part of the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF). The APF is a collection of community organisations and progressive NGO's struggling for basic service delivery. The APF tries to unify different parties such as communities and workers who fight against a system that benefits the few at the expense of the majority. CAWP came in to being as a baby of the APF to take up the struggle against the negative

effects of current water policies on the poor. The period I worked with CAWP at the APF was from the end of April 2010 to the midst of August 2010. I had the unique opportunity to experience the daily practices of these movements from a fly on the wall perspective.

Anti Privatisation Forum

The Anti Privatisation Forum (APF) was formally launched on the 6th of July 2000. The APF was a product of struggle, a struggle against the privatisation plans of both the City of Johannesburg and the University of Witwatersrand.² The preamble of the constitution of the APF states that the APF is open to the working class of the world regardless of colour, creed, gender, age, sexual orientation or place of origin. Nowadays deprived communities are also affiliating with the APF. The APF is an umbrella organisation for more than 30 community-based affiliates. The APF is a place of refuge, where those involved in struggle can come and find support and co-ordination.³

Just before I started working with the CAWP, the CAWP and the APF had their Annual General Meeting (AGM) in which new office bearers were elected. The newly elected office bearers had to get used to their new roles. This had its effect on the organisational strength of the APF. On the same AGM on the 24th and 25th of April 2010, a member of the APF was tasked to compile an investigation report about the misuse of APF money. This led to tensions within the organisation. People didn't trust each other and members started to personalise topics. This led to a lot of gossiping. These things all together had a severe negative effect on the organisation. The APF is supposed to coordinate and strengthen local struggles, bind them together and accumulate the struggle on the ground to a massive force of social change.

During my time at the APF there was little action coordinated by the APF. Actions I attended were a FIFA World Cup protest march and a gathering at the department of housing. However, most of the action was locally or regionally organised, by making use of the APF facilities such as computers, internet, phone and printers.

The number of affiliates has grown in the last couple of years. This together with financial constraints that the organisation is facing, is confronting the APF with the question how to accommodate the growth of the organisation taking into account the organisational resources. There is an urgent need for the APF to restructure itself to ensure that whilst it expands a viable and sustainable organisation is ensured.⁴

Coalition Against Water Privatisation

The CAWP was formed in late 2003, bringing together a range of social movements and progressive NGOs in a collective effort to turn the tide against water privatisation. The formation was an outcome of the struggle that begun in 1996 when water had become a commodity under the Growth, Employment & Redistribution (GEAR) policy in which water and other basic needs were located within a neo-liberal macro-economic policy framework.⁵

² Political and Organisational Report to APF's 6th AGM - 24/25 April 2010.

³ Constitution of the Anti Privatisation Forum. Preamble.

⁴ Political and Organisational Report to APF's 6th AGM - 24/25 April 2010.

⁵ Dale T. McKinley, The Struggle Against Water Privatisation in South Africa, 13 January 2005

The CAWP, like the APF, had some organisational troubles. The structure of the executive board was weak. The chairperson stopped attending meetings and the organiser was in the line of fire by the house; the member organisation representatives, and eventually recalled from his position as organiser. This resulted in an executive that effectively consisted of two persons. These persons made an effort to lead the organisation and carry out the program of action. Actions are visits to affected communities, giving workshops on water issues and networking with other organisations which could strengthen the struggle and research.

The meetings of the Broader Structure were held every month. However these meetings were more on internal issues than on external organisational matters. The discussions were concentrated around the allegedly misuse of funds by respectively the organiser and a member of the CAWP. These cases kept coming back every meeting and were not solved in between. The stressing of these topics pressed aside the coordination of the wider struggle and the information sharing opportunity with the affiliates on the ground.

2.3 Ambiguity in Social Movement Literature

The experienced ambiguity during my internship was reason to study scientific literature on social movements in order to come to an understanding of my experiences. Social movement literature also shows to be ambiguous; there is a discrepancy between potential and reality of social movements. The ambiguity in social movement literature is a logic consequence of the experienced ambiguity because social movement literature is based on empirical observations.

Social movements are a thoroughly discussed subject in scientific literature. This section does not want to give an overview of this debate. In stead this section focuses on the ambiguity of social movements as possible agents for social change as expressed by several scholars. The elaboration on the position and reconstruction of the social movement niche is the subject of chapter three and four.

There are several scholars who underline the important position of social movements by emphasising the special position of social movements within democracy. Social movements that critically engage with the government, and operate outside of formal institutions like, for example, the parliament, are regarded as alternative sides of power (Greenstein, 2003). Social movements are generally excluded from direct governance. Therefore they focus much of their energy on opening alternative spaces for participation in decision-making beyond electoral and institutionalised politics (Sinwell, 2010). In line with this argument is the view that social movements represent popular democracy. Democracy is not only about representation by democratic institutions but also about meaningful popular democratic participation and control. Social movements open up this possibility (McKinley, 2004). The emergence of these movements should be seen as the continuation of a pattern of independent mobilisation at times that the ruling party is absent or failing to act on issues that affect a significant constituency (Buhlungu, 2006).

Ballard et al. (2006) also stress the importance of social movements by emphasising their role in democracy. Ballard et al. point at the political uncertainty that is created by social movements, which is the essence of democracy. There are two distinct forms of political uncertainty: institutional uncertainty and substantive uncertainty. Institutional uncertainty is about the rules of the game, like controllable and reliable elections and representation. When there is uncertainty in this area, this is

unfavourable for democracy for instance because of the chance to turn into authoritarian regimes. The other form, substantive uncertainty is about the outcomes of the game. This uncertainty is perceived as favourable for democracy because it keeps politicians on their toes and makes them responsive to their citizenry. Social movements can create substantive uncertainty in several manners. Examples are: presenting alternatives, influencing public opinion, causing social unrest, civil disobedience and, extra-parliamentary action (Ballard et al., 2006). Social movements can change dominant meanings they are the progenitors of change in the form and culture of the state (Gentle, 2010). By doing this, creating substantive uncertainty, social movements are perceived as actors that could challenge the existing institutions, social structures and political economy dynamics that constitute society as it is (Gentle, 2010). Counter-hegemonic social movements could push for state accountability, where other NGOs may be structurally unable to do so (Mueller-Hirth, 2009).

“Social mobilization has the capacity to change that - to re-insert poverty as a national and international priority and, to this end, social movements can change dominant meanings of what constitutes poverty and the issues associated with poverty - lack of basic services, homelessness, HIV/AIDS, unemployment etc.” (Gentle, 2010, p. 365).

In short, social movements challenge the existing social order and are perceived as actors pushing for a real alternative.

“One of the lessons of the social movement literature [...] is that the most important role of ‘social movements’ is that they challenge hegemonic ideas in society about ‘how things should be’.” (Bebbington, Hickey & Mitlin 2008, p. 32).

The ambiguity in social movement literature becomes manifest in questioning the perception of social movements as alternatives in development. Are they a real alternative, challenging the causes of social inequality and poverty, or do they only fight the effects?

“They are challenging the terms of their impoverishment. But they have not as yet begun to challenge the legitimacy of current relations of accumulation in South Africa and the state institutions which reproduce poverty as a requirement for accumulation” (Gentle, 2010, p. 374).

Social movements are not questioning the legitimacy of the state, they rather look to the state for delivery and relief than being anti-state (Ngwane, 2010). Ngwane uses findings of Sinwell to pose this:

“Sinwell laments the extent to which community activism even in the invented spaces fails to question power relations and social structures in a fundamental way. His research findings indicate that community organisations tend to work within, for example, the budgetary constraints set by the state. As a result community groups end up competing among themselves for limited state resources rather than questioning what he regards as the state’s neoliberal framework and its ideological underpinnings” (Ngwane, 2010, p. 384).

Sometimes, this questioning of the current social order may be the objective of social movements, especially for the leadership, but this struggle against the current order is not always at the core of the people who are represented by the vanguard of the social movement. There could be a distance between the social movement representatives and the grassroots. An example is urban poor who

want an improvement in their daily lives. In most cases this entails basic service delivery such as housing, water and electricity. The people on the ground are not always aware of the connection between their struggle and anti-neoliberalism promoted by the carriers of the social movement (Egan & Wafer, 2006). Neoliberalism is seen as the source of lasting poverty by promoting privatisation and self-regulating markets. This ideological point of view has a different effect on the different parts of the movement. The ideals of a real socialist state are not always clear at the grassroots of the social movements (Ballard et al., 2006). The cadre might want to overcome the entire system, while people at grassroots experiencing the daily hardships are satisfied with relief of their difficulties and the reparation of deficits of the system.

Besides a mismatch between ideological demands and the demands at grassroots, another ambiguity is the vague idea of an alternative to the existing social order. The current social order is opposed, sometimes directly, sometimes as a byproduct of a material struggle. Social movements are perceived as struggling for an alternative order, but do not present this alternative.

A final example of ambiguity as expressed in social movement literature is the similarity between SMOs and NGOs. Although social movements are presented as an alternative to NGOs, the same practices and difficulties in working with NGOs can be applied to social movements. Supporting NGOs in developing countries is not simply transferring money from donors to NGOs and getting reports in return. The relationship between donors and NGOs is a complex transfer system of money, information and reputations. Within this complex relationship there is always the threat of manipulation (Ebrahim, 2007). This notion is further elaborated in what Hilhorst conceptualises as NGO-ing or NGOisation. There is more to NGO-ing than the single reality displayed in reports or in interviews with managers (Hilhorst, 2007). Weaknesses that are present, amongst others, in social movements are problems of representation and internal democracy within movements (Gentle, 2010).

2.4 Ambiguity in Dutch Policy towards Social Movements

History

The Netherlands has a long history of using civil society as a channel in development assistance. Civil society in the Netherlands is used to support civil society in developing countries. This channel is one of four channels in development assistance expenditure by the Dutch government; multilateral cooperation via international organisations, bilateral cooperation between governments, partnerships in the private sector and civil society (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2009). Dutch civil society organisations in development assistance can obtain government funds for their work within the Dutch co-financing system (MFS). Internationally seen, this is a rather unique system in which Dutch NGOs can obtain a part of the budget designated for foreign aid. This system can be traced back to 1965. The percentage of development assistance budget through the civil society channel has grown from 4 per cent in 1970 to 20 per cent in 2010 (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid, 2010). The Dutch co-financing system is bound to some regulations. 25 % of the merits of aid agencies must be collected by themselves from for example private donors or sponsoring. Other regulations are related to the amount and way of spending the budget in developing countries. This should be at least 60% and there should also be some joint decision making in development cooperation between the aid agencies and the receiving organisations (Rijksoverheid - MFS, 2011).

Civil Society and co-financing organisations today

The Dutch government is supporting co-financing NGOs. In 2010 co-financing NGOs received around 20 percent of the budget for international development. A lot of these co-financing organisations pay special attention to the development of civil society. The development and strengthening of civil society is integrated in their projects and programs. This claim is supported when we look at the websites⁶ of the four biggest co-financing organisations in the Netherlands; Cordaid, Hivos, Icco and Oxfam Novib. Cordaid speaks about 'participation'. Within this theme, Cordaid focuses on minorities, slum dwellers and women and violence. Icco mentions 'Democratisation and Peace building' as one of their focus points. An example is the support by Icco of Khanya College, an organisation in South Africa which supports other organisations that focus on social justice and social change. Hivos has 'Human rights & democratisation' as one of their themes. Civil Society and social movements get extra attention in their knowledge program on civil society building. This knowledge program enrolled a study on social movements, stressing the contribution of social movements and at the same time giving some considerations and asking questions (Dütting & Sogge, 2010). The aims of Oxfam Novib include 'the right to social and political participation'. This is evidence for the link between civil society development in developing countries and co-financing organisations in the Netherlands. Civil society development is regarded as an important tool in overall development.

Civil Society Paradigm

The strong position of the civil society channel finds its theoretical foundation in the civil society paradigm. From the mid-1980s on, it became clear that development interventions organised by the receiving state did not produce the desired results. This led to a gradual shift to civil society organisations. The scientific underpinning was provided by the social capital theory, which emphasised that a robust civil society was a condition for democratisation and development. This heralded the start of two golden decades for NGOs in both the North and the South (WRR, 2010). This can be called the civil society paradigm. But "as with earlier paradigms, the civil society paradigm has proved not to be a panacea for development problems. Studies have increasingly shown that the role of NGOs must not be underestimated - but also not overestimated" (WRR, 2010, p. 267).

Although it is made clear that the civil society paradigm is not the one and only channel for successful development, the importance of civil society organisations is still stressed in policy memorandums.

"The very wide range of Dutch civil society organisations engaged in international cooperation reflects the clear concern and commitment felt by the Dutch public in this area. CSOs have always striven to play an equal part in international cooperation, alongside the bilateral and multilateral channels, and have found political support in this respect. Civil society organisations are an essential part of life in the Netherlands and an integral element of a plural society in both the North and the South. There are strong arguments supporting their importance; they are rooted in Dutch society and able to work close to the ground via their extensive network of partner organisations in the South. This enables them to tackle poverty more directly and to give poor people a voice. A strong civil society tailored to local circumstances helps to make society more diverse and democratic, and to ensure that

⁶ www.cordaid.nl, www.icco.nl, www.hivos.nl and www.oxfam.nl accessed on 2 February 2011.

responsibility for progress and development is borne by society as a whole. Since a powerful civil society can speak for ordinary people and organise opposing forces, its existence is a precondition for systematic poverty reduction. Civil society organisations play an important part in building a stable and balanced society. In the international arena too, they are generally recognised as a significant factor, whether working alongside or in opposition to the public and private sectors" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009, p. 16).

The Scientific Council for Government Policy is critical about the civil society paradigm, but also emphasises the importance of co-financing Organisations; NGOs from the Netherlands, which can occupy a position that cannot be fulfilled by the Dutch government. Sometimes the Netherlands don't want to work on an intensive political relationship with a country or there is no government in a country. In these circumstances NGOs sometimes are able to work in these countries. This makes NGOs complementary to other aid channels (WRR, 2010).

Development Cooperation Reform

The presentation of the report 'Less Pretension, More Ambition: Development Policy in Times of Globalisation' by the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) coincides (2010) with a new government in the Netherlands and the quest to cut state expenditures in all domains which includes development corporation and aid.

The government agreement of the Netherlands speaks about a 'fundamental revision' of development policy. The report by the WRR on this topic shall play a leading role in this revision. The idea is less aid and more investment which enlarges the ability of developing countries to take care of themselves. Economic growth and trade promotion must become the new pillars in development policy. Civil society is mentioned as one of the fields in which the Netherlands have some expertise and it is one of the domains the Netherlands is good at. That means it will be a point of focus in development policy of the Netherlands (Regeerakkoord VVD-CDA, 2010).

Civil society as a point of focus is not elaborated in other policy documents. Civil society is only referred to as Dutch civil society. Development policy needs to be rooted in Dutch society. Co-financing organisations can represent stands and feelings of their support base which sharpens governments, corporations and institutions. Therefore it is important that these co-financing organisations do not become dependent on government budget.

Although the government wants to modernise and reform the development policy and expenditures, this is going to be a long term process. The decision-making process about the new co-financing system (MFS II) was about to be finalised in 2010. The government wants to be a reliable partner and will stick to the commitment they made to co-financing NGOs. The only reservation was related to the available budget. Due to the necessary overall budget cuts there is also less budget available for the MFS II (Kamerstuk, 26-11-2010). The ideas behind the MFS II grant framework are still related to the civil society paradigm.

"The overarching strategic aim of MFS II is to help strengthen civil society in the South and hence to help lay the foundations for systematic poverty reduction" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009, p. 16).

The WRR has some remarks on the absence of a knowledge base about civil society. There is no solid policy theory on social development through civil society support. Civil society has always been of great value to the Netherlands. Internationally the Netherlands is at the forefront of supporting civil society NGOs. However, systematic knowledge on how investments in civil society can contribute to development is missing. This might be a chance for the Netherlands to make a difference (WRR, 2010).

2.5 Research Context Conclusions

My experiences at the APF and the CAWP were not those of working in well shaped organisations as major forces of social change. The opposite is true. I worked in organisations struggling with internal issues trying to re-invent themselves to become strong organisations representing the poor, as was true in the first years of their existence. This is what causes ambiguity in my experiences. I spoke to people, and saw evidence in reports and newspapers, of a strong organisation, with significant presence in social issues in South Africa. This is what makes me believe in the possibilities of these type of organisations to have an impact on the lives of the poor. Despite the disappointing experiences I became interested in the dynamics of social movements.

In terms of niche, the occupied space of the fundamental niche by the APF and the CAWP during my presence was small. Despite the potential possessed by the social movements, the APF and the CAWP were unable to realise their potential as social movement. The fundamental niche for social movements is present in South Africa. The progressive constitution gives social movements room for manoeuvre. Nonetheless this possibility the social movements I observed were, due to several internal and external factors, unable to realise their niche within the fundamental niche.

The ambiguity towards social movements expressed in literature is present in the statement that social movements, on the one hand, could be a real alternative in pushing for a change in the existing social order. They are perceived as an alternative force presenting an alternative in international development. On the other hand, this statement is questioned. This is causing ambiguity. It seems that the potential of social movements should be de-romanticised.

“Writing on social movements is often normative, with a related tendency to celebrate the potential of movements to transform society as well as the role they play in making the political dimensions of development that much more visible. Yet movements suffer many constraints” (Gentle, 2010, p. 375).

De-romanticising the potential of social movements is also the advice of Luke Sinwell:

“Rather than romanticising poor people’s movements, theorists should seek to genuinely understand, through rigorous theoretical and empirical analysis, the limitations and potentials they offer” (Sinwell, 2010, p. 81).

In terms of niche the position of social movements is unclear. Are they an alternative within the development trajectory or is it same meat, different gravy? The lesson to be drawn from the ambiguity as expressed in social movement literature is the importance of defining the position of the fundamental niche which can be occupied by social movements. What could be the position of counter-hegemonic social movements within the existing social order? It is important to search for

the fragile balance of working within and working against the existing social order. This balance is present between and within social movements.

The ambiguity towards the social movement niche by the Dutch government is expressed in their policy towards these movements. On the one hand the importance and abilities of NGOs working with civil society organisations in developing countries is emphasised, on the other hand there is a warning against unrealistic expectations of the role of civil society in development. Often the value of civil society in building democracy is expressed, but a clear idea on what to do next is lacking. The ambiguity is present in the value which is attached to social movements to fulfil their potential.

An important notion with regard to the support of social movements by NGOs is that this support, especially financial support, is almost indispensable for the existence of these movements. External financial support enables social movements to carry out their programs. In this way, NGOs and the Dutch government, with their MFS program, contribute to the construction of the social movement niche. The relationship between social movements and foreign donors shows that the niche has multiple layers. The fundamental niche is present within the constellation between state, society and market, but the realisation of the niche can be connected to global actors. Global actors can work on the fundamental niche too by pushing authoritarian regimes for to allow more freedoms and thus creating more space for social movements.

The ambiguity which is present in experiences, literature on social movements and in Dutch policy towards social movements can be traced back to questions on the position of the fundamental niche and the reconstruction of requirements to realise the niche. The position of the niche includes questions whether social movements are an alternative. Questions on the realisation of the niche include the factors leading to success or failure of occupying the space which is offered by the fundamental niche. The position and reconstruction of the niche shape the analytical chapters of this thesis.

2.6 Research Questions and Methods

The preceding text presents three fields of ambiguity with regard to social movements: within my own experiences, within social movement literature and within policy. These are the three building blocks that are the starting point of this thesis. Together with the concept of niche, which is used as a tool to come to a better understanding of social movement practices, these form the foundation on which this thesis is build.

Objective

I want to come to a better understanding of social movement practices within international development using the concept of niche as analytical tool.

Research Questions

The main question of this thesis is:

- What characterises niches in development that could be occupied by social movements?

Sub-questions to support the main question are:

- What is the position of the niche that could be occupied by social movements within the constellation of society?
- How are niches occupied by social movements constituted?
- Which conditions are required to fulfill the potential of the niche?
- How are niches constituted and what role does action play in that process? Which conditions are required for the creation of niche(s)?
- What is the meaning, use and value of the different social movement theories and perspectives for the understanding of the niche that could be occupied by social movements?

Methods

The resources for the research to the position of the fundamental niche and the reconstruction of the realised niches are threefold; empirical data in literature, supporting data collected during the internship phase and literature on social movement studies. This literature study is supported with empirical data.

The empirical data is gathered out of research reports on social movements in developing countries. The supporting data is retrieved from my own report about my internship at a local social movement in Johannesburg.

Chapter 3 The Position of the Fundamental Niche

3.1 Introduction

The notion of niche expresses alternative practices and discourses of development that produce progressive changes in society. This chapter sets out the position of the niche that could be occupied by social movements. The fundamental niche is positioned in the fluid space within the constellation of state, market and society. In order to come to a more precise understanding of that position, the interactions between these actors is the topic of this chapter.

The counter-hegemonic position, the position which tries to transform the existing social order, is investigated in theory as well as in practice in section 3.2. The counter-hegemonic position is rooted in the struggle against neoliberalism, which is the subject of section 3.3. The foundations of neoliberalism and the relationship with the emergence of social movements is explained and placed in the perspective of the position of the fundamental niche.

Before we turn to these sections a necessary prerequisite for the survival of the fundamental niche which can be occupied by social movements is laid down. The fundamental niche can only survive in a fairly democratic system which allows certain freedoms and opportunities.

Freedoms and Opportunities

The statement of 'fairly democratic' requires certain freedoms and opportunities. This requirement is borrowed from Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT).

"Although RMT was stated in quite general terms, seemingly applicable to social movements in any society, it had implicit and explicit scope conditions that limited its "untranslated" applicability" (McCarthy and Zald, 2001, p. 535).

The most important scope conditions are: 1) the presence of a tradition of voluntary association; individuals can freely choose to affiliate or participate in voluntary association. The know-how is widely spread. 2) Freedom of speech and freedom of assembly are accepted. 3) There is mass media which is fairly open to report grievances and protest. 4) The electoral system is structured in a way that small groups have little chance to get legal power. In this way mobilisation and action outside of the electoral system is encouraged. (McCarthy & Zald, 2001). The presence of certain freedoms; the freedom of speech and the freedom of assembly are, as well as an open mass media, the most important scope conditions. A tradition of voluntary association and an electoral system that is structured in a way that small groups have little chance to get legal power, are important conditions to stimulate and encourage the presence of social movements, but without these last two conditions, social movements can still emerge. Without freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, this becomes difficult because of the strong repression.

A restriction to the necessary presence of certain freedoms, such as freedom of association, freedom of speech and a fairly open mass media leaves out the uprise of social movements in the Middle-East and Northern Africa. The Arab Spring is beyond the scope of this research.

3.2 The Counter-hegemonic Position

The first step to define the position of the fundamental niche is looking at some definitions of social movements which give some insight in the demarcation of social movements from other actors within international development.

Social movements is a buzz word in sociology. It entails a lot of different aspects, organisations and groups of people. However, a quite accurate definition for social movements in general is given by Gamson and Wolfsfeld. They define a social movement as

“A sustained and self-conscious challenge to authorities or cultural codes by a field of actors - organisations and advocacy networks - some of whom employ extra-institutional means of influence” (Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993, p. 115).

Ballard et al. define social movements in a similar manner.

“Social movements are [...] politically and/or socially directed collectives, often involving multiple organisations and networks, focused on changing one or more elements of the social, political and economic system within which they are located” (Ballard et al., 2006, p. 3).

The definitions of Gamson and Wolfsfeld and Ballard et al. both underline social movements as more or less organised forces striving for change in the social and political realm. This notion strengthens the conceptualisation of social movements as niches. The fundamental niche operates within the social realm as an agent of development that does not have a fixed structure. The social realm is the constellation of all the different actors and institutions that build society as a whole, which is the triangle of state, market and civil society. The fundamental niche can be placed within this triangle. The niche is constructed out of civil society and is trying to reform society in a certain direction, one that facilitates poverty reduction and fair distribution of wealth. This is happening in relation with state, market and society actors.

Another way to come to grips with the position of the fundamental niche is looking at the way social movements are classified, making use of different criteria to distinguish them from each other. McAdam, McCarthy and Zald provide an overview of research on social movements (1988). They categorise social movements in ‘emergence’ and ‘maintenance and change’ and combine this with a micro and a macro level. This distinction is made to study social movements in different stages and at different levels. The scheme can be applied to a single social movement. Macionis & Plummer make use of another classification scheme. They differentiate between the scale of change; specific individuals or everyone and the amount of change; limited or radical. This gives four different kinds of social movements; alternative, redemptive, reformative and revolutionary social movements. (Macionis & Plummer, 2002). This classification can be used to distinguish social movements from each other.

The amount of change, used as an indicator by Macionis and Plummer to classify social movements, is already pointing at an important aspect of the position of the fundamental niche. Political goals have a major impact on the position of the niche. The two idealised positions are rights-based opposition and counter-hegemonic opposition (Ballard et al., 2006). Rights-based opposition is working within the existing system. Rights-based opposition attempts to hold the government to

constitutionally enshrined rights within the current liberal order (Ballard et al., 2006). Rights-based social movements do not oppose the system as a whole but try to overcome the deficits of the system by pointing at the injustice created as by-products of the system. The other end of the possible political spectrum is the idealised position of counter-hegemonic opposition. These social movements want a fundamental transformation of the current order instead of only repairing some deficits.

“The scale of focus is broadened from a particular policy to the state’s economic path. Many of these movements suggest that they draw from class-based ideologies with notable self-descriptions such as: anti-neoliberal, anti-capital, anti-GEAR, anti-globalisation, anti-market, social and Trotskyist” (Ballard et al., 2006, p. 400).

The counter-hegemonic position is creating tension with the existing social order. The political goals of the fundamental niche are a variable which determines the interaction between social movements and the state.

Counter-hegemonic social movements are actors that could push for state accountability, where other NGOs may be structurally unable to do so (Mueller-Hirth, 2009). The counter-hegemonic SMOs that challenge the ruling government represent popular democracy. This makes them a manifestation of a democracy ideal in which the interests of all people are fulfilled. This is what Ballard et al. call the creation of substantive uncertainty which is important for the functioning of a democracy (2006). Counter-hegemonic SMOs operate in an ambiguous arena with several opportunities to confront the state. They can make use of legal activities but can also use extra-institutional ways to oppose the current order. The extra-institutional activities might be illegal which creates extra tension between the social movement and the government.

In order to effect social change which is a real alternative for the existing social order, the position of the fundamental niche must be determined by political goals representing counter-hegemonic action. The counter-hegemonic niche is the only way to effect a major shift in the existing social order.

However, there are some remarks and nuances to be made when one considers the counter-hegemonic position of social movements in practice. The fundamental niche is not occupied by pure counter-hegemonic social movements. The distinction between counter-hegemonic and rights-based movements is not as strict as defined by literature. These two positions go hand in hand in the daily practices of social movements. The realised niche is not always one of a strong force solely striving for an alternative social order. This is illustrated by Egan and Wafer in their case study of the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC) in South Africa. The struggle against the current order is not always at the core of the represented people. The urban poor want an improvement in their daily lives. In most cases this entails basic service delivery such as housing, water and electricity. The people on the ground are not always aware of the anti-neoliberal elements in their struggle and they often even support the ruling party (Egan & Wafer, 2006). The reason to do so is plural. It can be out of tradition and loyalty to the liberation party but also because there is no clear alternative. Fact is that people on the ground are more concerned with the struggle to survive in their daily lives than with a revolution which leads to a new political order.

Another example which illustrates the ambiguity in perception of social movement organisations as counter-hegemonic and their actions is their communication with donor organisations. The programs of action which are translated into fund raising documents are much more gentle and deliberate than you would expect from a counter-hegemonic organisation. The actions like information meetings, conducting research, organising gatherings, marches and pickets and legalising them, perfectly fits within a rights-based approach (personal communication). The reason to do so might be the hesitation of donor organisations to work with counter-hegemonic organisations as described by Mueller-Hirth. The tension between counter-hegemonic SMOs and government can create a difficult position for possible donors. Donors might shy away from supporting SMOs that work with social movements which may be seen as critical of government. (Mueller-Hirth, 2009). The hesitation to support these organisations is despite the recognition of the importance of these social movements within the democratic system.

Probably the best example of a rights-based approach of the CAWP and the APF is the water court case on the justification of the instalment of prepaid water meters in Johannesburg. Together with the residents of Phiri, Soweto and the support of Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) they made a case against the city of Johannesburg to secure the Constitutionally-guaranteed rights of poor people to access sufficient water (Internship Report). This is a real good example which shows a rights-based approach of the CAWP. At the same time, this legal method to challenge the justness of government practices is accompanied by illegal actions such as destroying the meters and preventing people, water company employees, of doing their job. However these illegal actions are not directly pointed at overthrowing the current government. This counter-hegemonic position is more expressed in slogans and other expressions than in apparent actions.

3.3 Neoliberalism

The counter-hegemonic position is most likely against the hegemony of neoliberalism. This current order of neoliberalism is the dominant model in most parts of the world (Allen & Thomas, 2000; Castells, 2000).

A radical shift in this model is highly unexpected to occur. The dominant focus within international development is to prevent and repair pitfalls of the neoliberal system as much as possible.

“Finally, since liberal capitalism is accepted as the dominant model of social organisation and the basis for globalization, it can be argued that development is now thought of mostly in terms of ameliorating problems rather than searching for alternative modes of wholesale social transformation. The importance of seeking an alternative remains, but is not manifest in the activities of any major development agencies” (Allen & Thomas, 2000, p. 10).

Neoliberalism refers to a set of market-liberal economic policies. One of the aspects of neoliberalism is the privatisation of government bodies such as public transport and telecommunications. The main idea in neoliberalism is that the market is a better place to organise social-economic life than the government. The market is more adequate and better suited to deliver services and to meet the needs of the public. The government steps back and allocates tasks to trade and industry (Allen & Thomas, 2000; Macionis & Plummer, 2002). Tasks can also be carried out by NGOs, in this case they become incorporated by the state and part of the neoliberal model (Dagnino, 2008).

“NGOs are frequently seen as the ideal partners by sectors of the state engaged in transferring their responsibilities to the sphere of civil society. For their part it is extremely difficult for NGOs to reject such a role when these partnerships seem to present them with a real opportunity to have a positive effect – fragmented, momentary, provisory and limited, but positive – on the reduction of inequality and the improvement of living conditions of the social sectors involved” (Dagnino, 2008, p. 59).

A disadvantage of this position of NGOs is that they lose their ‘organic’ link to social movements which they claim to represent (Dagnino, 2008). Social movements are just against neoliberalism and a neoliberal policy can be an incentive for the emergence of social movements which is the case in South Africa in the post-apartheid period.

The difficult situation in which people live is an incentive to organise and to be heard in order to achieve a better life.

“The persistence of high levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality, resulting from the restructuring of the economy and the adoption of a cost-recovery model in service provision, has given rise to the upsurge of movements out of such protests” (Mueller-Hirth, 2009, p. 429).

Desai and Pithouse also state that the rise of social movements is due to the fact that

“The poor are progressively squeezed between state repression and the commodification of the basic means of life” (Desai and Pithouse, 2004, p. 258).

The social movements that do emerge are a response to the negative effects caused by neoliberalism. There is often a backlash in the delivering of basic social services, such as housing, electricity and water. Therefore social movements have materialistic demands. Government interference is required to repair shortcomings of the neoliberal system. Social movements try to influence the arena of government, trade and industry for the improvement of the quality of life for the poor who are not served by the neo-liberal system.

“On the one hand, economic globalization has taken on such a tremendous force that it has seemingly relegated the debates over the nature of development to the back burner. On the other hand, global social movements and the deepening of poverty continue to keep issues of justice and development on the agenda. For most of these movements, it is clear that conventional development of the kind offered by neo-liberal globalization is not an option” (Escobar, 2010, p. 33).

The shortfalls of capitalism, one of the pillars of neoliberalism, are widely acknowledged as Allen and Thomas state:

“While global capitalism is seen as having a quality of dynamism that may be necessary for economic development, it is regarded mainly as a system of exploitation which should in the long run be radically altered” (Allen & Thomas, 2000, p. 44).

Altering the current social order is the position which is offered by the fundamental niche. That position not only tries to repair the deficits of the system but to transform the system into another social order which is benefiting the poor and deprived.

3.4 Conclusion

The position of the fundamental niche of interest is fragile. The line between the counter-hegemonic position, occupied by social movements striving for an alternative to the existing neo-liberal order and rights-based opposition is fickle and fluid. Social movements embrace both tactics at the same time without a thoroughly thought-out strategy.

Where basic freedoms and opportunities are present, the fundamental niche that can be occupied by counter-hegemonic movements is allowed. In theory there is no limit for the extent of occupation of the fundamental niche. The more social movements occupy the counter-hegemonic niche, the more chances for an effective alteration of the existing social order.

Although, there is a large array of organisations - NGOs but also social movements - that claim to represent a counter-hegemonic position striving for a social alternative, in practice they only repair deficits of the existing social order. In a way they even support the status quo by doing so.

The question arises whether existing social movements are an alternative in development, or whether these movements are just a makeover of older development agencies.

Chapter 4 The Reconstruction of Realised Niches

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter had the position of the fundamental niche which can be occupied by counter-hegemonic social movements as central theme. Point of departure was the notion of niche. This chapter has another point of departure. It starts with social movements using social movement theory, to look at the way social movements occupy or do not occupy the fundamental niche; the realisation of the niche. The realised niche is a result of social movement action. Internal and external factors facilitate or hinder the realisation of the niche. This chapter is a reconstruction of the factors that are required to fulfill the potential offered by the fundamental niche. The reconstruction is done by analysing several of the most important social movement theories on how and why social movements emerge and survive. In this research these approaches are split in two different sections. A historical approach which tries to explain why social movements emerge in certain periods of time. And a technical approach which tries to explain how social movement niches are constructed, survive and succeed or fail.

This division between a historical approach and a technical approach is made to overcome the difficult position of the theory of New Social Movements (NSM). Reviewers of social movement studies see a diversion between the American approach of Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT) and the European paradigm of NSM (Edelman, 2001; Klandermans 1986). More recently these approaches are not seen as opposed to each other but more complementary (Edelman, 2001; Tarrow, 2011).

I argue too that RMT and NSM theory are not opposed to each other, but exist next to each other. They have a different approach on social movement theory. NSM theory has a historical approach whereas RMT has a technical approach. In practice of social movement study they are often blurred. RMT explanation often starts with marking historical events as starting point for the rise of RMT. NSM theory is pointing at the newness of movements, giving historical arguments, but at the same time giving an explanation why social movements emerge. Both approaches offer specific knowledge for the reconstruction of niche realisation. The historical approach points at the time dimension; social movements emerge in a certain historical context. The technical approach offers insight in more pragmatic requirements to build a social movement.

Section 4.2 will deal with the historical approach of social movement theory. The different stages of working-class movements, new social movements and global movements will be explained and elaborated. Section 4.3 is a reflection on the historical approach. The technical approach of social movement theory is the subject of section 4.4. There will be successively dealt with Resource Mobilisation Theory, Framing Processes and Political Process Models. A reflection on these different technical approaches will be done after each separate theory. The final section of the chapter will be a conclusion and reflection on the reconstruction of niche realisation by social movements.

4.2 Social Movement Theory - The Historical Approach

4.2.1 Working-class movements

The working-class movements of the 1960s are the founding paradigm for social movements (Wieviorka, 2005). The basic assumption for these movements is their origination out of deprivation. Wieviorka is using five criteria to show the differences between the founding paradigm for social movements; the old working-class movement, NSMs and the next phase in social movements, the global movements.

The first criterion is the context in which the social movement operates. For working-class movements this is the context of the nation-state. The second criterion is the adversary. In working-class movements there is a clear adversary which arises out of the context of domination. People who join together in social movements are oppressed by elite groups. Third, in working-class movements the social movement action is embedded in clan relationships. Action is directly related to the social environment in which they live. Social movement action is triggered when this is endangered. The fourth criterion mentioned by Wieviorka is the changing relation to the political. The working-class movements are not political. However they are sometimes represented by actors with political power and ambitions, the movements themselves are more socially oriented. The fifth and final criterion which Wieviorka uses to compare working-class movements, NSMs and global movements is the subject; the actors of the social movements. Within working-class movements the subject is social. The movement is formed out of actors who are bound together on a social basis.

4.2.2 New Social Movements

The working-class movement is the outcome of a relationship of domination (Wieviorka, 2005). This feeding ground for social movements disappeared after World War II. This is the main reason for the emergence of NSMs. This theory sought the explanation for the rise of social movements in the appearance of new grievances and changing values (Klandermans, 1986). These new grievances can be explained by the rise of the welfare state. Increased wealth and a stronger state has altered the dynamics of social action and given way to the emergence of NSMs.

“Because the welfare state permeates more and more reaches of life, it is held responsible for the ensuing problems. At the same time it has created new entitlement needs with respect to government services. Furthermore, increased prosperity has caused the demand for scarce goods to grow. Many of them are positional goods. [...] However, when used extensively, these can be an obstruction to the satisfaction of needs. [...] The result is heightened competition, which leads to more disappointments. Briefly, the welfare state has created new needs which can no longer be satisfied” (Klandermans, 1986, p. 22).

The founding father of NSMs theory is Alain Touraine. In his view NSMs represent new forms of collective action in a, at that time, post industrial society. Nowadays we call it an information society (Touraine, 2002). The newness of NSMs is a shift in the adversary. NSMs are based on cultural claims (Edelman, 2001; Klandermans, 1986; Touraine 2002; Wieviorka, 2005). The adversary is not as clear and distinct as for working-class movements who fought against oppression by capitalists. NSMs often have a more cultural subject than a social object of inequality. Their struggle is impersonal, distant, undefined or ill-defined (Wieviorka, 2005). In an overview of the study of social movements, Salman and Assies also underline the statement that the newness of NSMs is expressed in the fact

that they are inclined toward "identity", "post-material" or "cultural" issues in a context of "post industrialism." Another, related, feature is that these movements in a sense are "post political." Rather than addressing the state or seeking political power, civil society has become a terrain an object of struggle (Salman & Assies, 2007, p. 226).

NSMs also represent reactions to certain dimensions of the modernisation processes in late capitalist societies. These NSMs mobilise resistance to some aspect of the restructuring that is taking place (Allan & Thomas, 2000). The restructuring is referred to as neo liberalism. NSMs are sometimes seen as a response to the politicisation of private life (McAdam et al., 1988). In general, NSMs are anti-modernistic. They have broken with the traditional values of capitalistic society. A great many authors ascribe the rise of NSMs to changed values (Klandermans, 1986).

"The negative effects of economic growth, industrialization and technological development on the satisfaction of important needs have also been held responsible. Self-destructive aspects of western society were pointed to (the exhaustion of natural resources, the growing number of conflicts between industrialised countries, between East and West and North and South), the decreasing efficiency of production (rising economic, social, psychological and ecological costs), and the decreasing problem solving capacity of highly industrialised societies. These developments, in conjunction with the evolution of post material values, are seen as the breeding ground for new social movements" (Klandermans, 1986, p. 23).

The five criteria of Wieviorka also show the newness of NSMs. Although in the first criterion, the context of the social movement, there is no difference between the founding paradigm and the NSMs. Both operate in the context of the nation-state. Of course the struggle can be global, but the direct environment which is opposed by social movements is the nation-state. There are connections but it is not yet a worldwide global campaign. The second criterion, the adversary, is already underlined as the major difference. In NSMs, the adversary is less clearly defined. People of different classes can join in the same struggle. The third criterion, the relation to the environment also changed. NSMs action is loosened from the direct living environment of social movement actors. The action is culturally loaded. The status quo is questioned whether in social movements of the founding paradigm this status quo is defended. The relation with the political, fourth, changed within the NSM framework. More areas of life are considered political. It is even stated that 'everything is political'. Also the parts of life which were considered as private become subject of political action. Examples are domestic violence and raising children. The fifth criterion is the change of the subject; the actors of the social movement. In NSMs the subject is cultural. NSMs are formed out of actors who are bind together as cultural subjects. While social action in working-class movements is class based action, in NSMs the action is broad based. The movement can be constituted out of multiple classes, bind together by cultural issues.

In summary, NSMs theory is that these movements are primary a reaction to modernisation processes. The cultural status quo or changing status quo is not taken for granted but contested. The struggle is not taking place between different classes but often on an impersonal level with cultural subjects.

4.2.3 Global Movements

The rise of global movements can be positioned after the end of the cold war in the last decennium of the 20th century. 'Global social movements are both a response to and an effect of globalisation processes, including the growth of inexpensive and instantaneous communications, new patterns of mobility and cultural exchange and the emergence of global governance bodies and global corporations' (Chesters & Welsh, 2011, p. 88).

Scholars point at two different types or generations of global social movements. First generation global movements are nationally emerging movements that connect transnational with movement fighting the same struggle (Chesters & Welsh, 2011). Examples are the worldwide women's movement and world wide gay and lesbian movements. These movements start off nationally but connect with movements elsewhere for reasons of solidarity and to strengthen the struggle.

Second generation global social movements emerge from their beginning with the idea of globalisation in mind. Though the problems can be locally, there is a global connection. This results in a different organisation of the movement. There will be more direct individual involvement setting the agenda from below and the proliferation of permanent campaigns that are not centrally controlled by NGOs or coalitions of organisations (Chesters & Welsh, 2011).

This second generation global movement is described by Steven Robins, although he does not use the concept of second generation global social movement. "Poor people living under conditions of neo-liberal austerity and the 'downsizing' of the welfare state seem to have developed sophisticated survival strategies by simultaneously enlisting themselves as global citizens and citizens of cities, regions and nation-states" (Robins, 2003, p. 245). This connection as global citizens is used as a tool by poor people to improve their quality of life. The connection is seen as global capital which is important, like social capital, in creating and maintaining social cohesion to make a better living. Robins conclusion is that:

"[c]learly social capital, like global capital under conditions of late capitalism, can be fluid and fickle; here today and gone tomorrow. However, the successes and longevity of many federations in other parts of South Africa, and the developing world, suggests that these innovative organisations can, indeed, meet many of the needs of poor people living under the harsh conditions of neoliberalism and the global retreat of the development state" (Robins, 2003, p. 269).

Global movements might offer a viable alternative as strategy for the improvement of peoples lives, although there is a gap between ideology and delivery. Once there is delivered the fire for a certain ideology may slow down.

Global movements are the final stage in the description of social movements in time by Wieviorka. Using the same criteria as used to describe working-class movements and new social movements, global movements are a different type of movements.

The first criterion is the clearest one because it mentions the context of the movement. There is a decline in the context in which the movement operates. The nation-state as framework is becoming less important. Of course it has not disappeared but the context is more global. Local struggles are globalised and become international. Examples are Armenians trying to obtain recognition of the

genocide in Turkey in other parts of the world than within Turkey itself. Another example is opposing neoliberal policies of global governing bodies such as the IMF and the World Bank by local groups. The struggle can be local but actors are aware to articulate a limited campaign with global vision and are able to link up with transnational networks. The adversary, the second criterion, is still not as clear as it was during the working-class movements.

“[T]he image of the ‘global movements’ is of a loose conglomeration campaigning against a vague, impersonal and poorly identified opponent. As a result, they could hardly be further from the working-class movement one century earlier, which was capable of challenging the masters of labour in a fairly specific manner” (Wieviorka, 2005, p. 10).

Global movements seek for recognition. Culture, the third criterion, has a central role.

“Global movements wish to create conditions which promote the development of forms of cultural life; they do not wish to withdraw into themselves” (Wieviorka, 2005, p. 10).

There is a shift from the central role of the social in working-class movements towards the cultural in global movements. This shift is already taking place in NSMs but is fully established in global movements. The fourth criterion is a new relationship with the political sphere. Global movements do not wish to gain political power, their aim is to be recognised as actor in global processes and participate in decision making. Their desire is to contribute to the construction of political and legal instances even when their role is limited to the role of protester. The fifth criterion might be the most questioned one. The subject of global movement actors is personal. It is not political, social nor cultural. Actors decide for themselves to participate in movements on personal grounds. It is not politics, social struggles or cultural questions which binds people together, not just one of those three, but a personal mixture of reasons to join (Wieviorka, 2005).

4.3 Reflection on the historical approach of social movement theory

What we can learn out of the historical approach of social movements for understanding the realisation of niches by social movements in different time periods is that the dimension of time does matter. Different historic constellations create or can lead to the rise of different social movements. However, an important remark is of course that the different stages cannot be separated as clear as this is done in the above description. Social movements cannot be easily placed in a certain category. Actors in social movements may be connected to global struggles and having cultural claims, while the struggle for daily bread is still the most important one (Egan & Wafer, 2006; Robins, 2003).

Wieviorka also has to admit that the categories of social movements he describes can be blurred. When he distinguishes NSMs from working-class movements he writes:

“They are involved in conflicts in which the adversary becomes impersonal, distant, undefined or ill-defined - except when they adopt anti-capitalist Marxist definitions, but this result in their losing sight of the specificities of their struggles, in effect reducing them to a metamorphosis of the class struggle and a somewhat mythical campaign in favour of the working class” (Wieviorka 2005, p. 6).

Contemporary social movements can still fight against oppression by capitalist and resist against neo liberal policies. At the same time, these movements embrace aspects of NSMs for instance by taking up the struggle for cultural issues.

Placing social movements in a certain historical period is difficult. Contemporary social movements blend the different aspects of historically separated social movement characteristics. One of the reasons for this blending may be that the historical process of social movement is not taking place everywhere in the world at the same time. The context of place of a social movement is also important. In a developing context, it is more likely that there are material demands. Basic service delivery is the object of struggle. These demands can be packed in cultural demands like the acknowledgement of certain rights, but there are still materialistic demands at the core.

Using a historical approach does not seem helpful in reconstructing the occupation of the fundamental niche by counter-hegemonic social movements directly. However, the historical approach can be used as a classification scheme to gain knowledge on certain social movements. It gives insight in for example: their adversary, the nature of their claims, their relationship to the political realm and their social composition. This information can be useful in understanding success or failure in occupying the fundamental niche. An aspect that can be learned from the historical approach of social movement theory is the important role of the state as incentive for social movement emergence. NSM theory shows that the emergence of social movements is a reaction on state activity; the rise of the welfare state created new grievances, class differences were broken down but a cultural subject arose. The impact of state presence is an indicator for the way social movements are constructed. The same is true for the global movement. These are shaped by global events. The historical approach sheds light on 'why' social movements emerge.

4.4 Social Movement Theory - The Technical Approach

Next to a historical approach towards social movements, there is a technical approach. These theory formations look at social movements with a more pragmatic question in mind. Scholars of the different theories try to answer the question, by building a theoretical framework, on the requirements and processes of social movement emergence. These scholars do not look in to the historical conditions, although they are able to place their theory in a historical context, but they look at the technical conditions surrounding social movement rise and maintenance. For this research the question is which factors are required to fulfil the potential of the fundamental niche. In other words; what are the requirements for social movements to occupy the space offered by the fundamental niche.

There are three major theory formations which fit into the technical approach of social movement theory. These theory formations are: Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT), Framing Processes and Political Process Models (PPM). These models will be explained and elaborated. A short explanation of the basic assumptions of the theories and their perspective on requirements to occupy the fundamental niche of counter-hegemonic social movements is given. The main points of critique are reflected and finally there is an assessment of the applicability and lessons of the social movement theory for occupying the fundamental niche.

An important remark is that these theories are connected to each other, especially RMT and PPM. The theory of PPM has it's origin in RMT. Roughly there are two approaches within RMT. The

political process approach associated with Charles Tilly came to be called RMI (McCarthy & Zald, 2001). Movements form because of long-term changes in group resources, organisation, and opportunities for collective action. Power relations are important in explaining grievances (Jenkins, 1983). The variant of RMT with an entrepreneurial/organisational approach was called RMII. In this thesis, the second approach, RMII, is explained as Resource Mobilisation Theory in section 4.4.1. Whereas RMI is explained as PPM in section 4.4.3.

4.4.1 Resource Mobilisation Theory

A dominant theory on social movements in the US political science and sociology is Resource Mobilisation Theory. As earlier theories focused on grievances and deprivation as explaining factors for social movements, whether or not these grievances on society or preferences for social change lead to action, social movement, is dependent on resources (McCarthy & Zald, 2001). These resources can be material, human, cognitive, technical, or organisational (Edelman, 2001). A summary about RMT is given by Klandermans.

“Resource mobilisation theory explains cycles of protest from the combined influence of changes in the availability of resources and in the perceived chances of success. When a societal group with certain grievances has more resources at its disposal and when the chances of success of a protest movement increase, the protest activity increases” (Klandermans, 1986, p. 20).

RMT developed in several directions with different accents. An overview of the broad spectrum of RMT is given by Jenkins (1983). He mentions that there is a rich array of experience, enlisting and an enlarged pool of analysts. This richness is formalised in RMT of social movements.

“These new perspectives emphasised the continuities between movement and institutionalised actions, the rationality of movement actors, the strategic problems confronted by movements, and the role of movements as agencies for social change” (Jenkins 1983, p. 528).

RMT is developed by McCarthy and Zald. The major explaining factor of movement formations is the availability of resources especially cadres and organising facilities. Grievances are structurally given or manufactured by the mobilising efforts of movement entrepreneurs (Jenkins, 1983). Grievances on society and preferences and demands for social change are constructed and defined by more or less institutionalised organisations that shape social movements.

RMT has some general characteristics which are part of a shift in the paradigm of the study of social movements. The traditional theory formulations - mass society theory, relative deprivation and collective behaviour theory - pointed at grievances as explaining factor for social movement participation. The shared assumption by these theories was that movement participation was relatively rare, discontents were transitory, movement and institutionalised actions were sharply distinct, and movement actors were arational if not outright irrational (Jenkins, 1983).

The characteristics of RMT break with these assumptions. Firstly: the already mentioned break with the grievances hypothesis. The amount of mobilisation or movement participation cannot be predicted directly from the level of deprivation or grievances. Participation involves expenditures of time, energy and money. Populations with few resources are less able to act on grievances or

perceived injustices. Second: RMT treats social movement participation as normal behaviour. This is opposed to the assumption of participation in movements as irrational and pathological behaviour. Thirdly: the resources that are mobilised are not only in the aggrieved or beneficiary constituency. RMT locates resources for mobilisation also in the larger society, including governmental and religious institutions. There is also a so called 'conscience constituency'. These are the groups that support the movement's goals, even though its members do not receive the direct output of the policy or political changes that the movement advocates. And fourthly: opposed to prior theories of social movements which focus largely on the interaction of movement and authorities, RMT draws attention to the intermediating role of the media in this process (McCarthy & Zald, 2001).

Social Movement Organisation

RMT highlights the importance of Social Movement Organisations (SMOs) for Social Movements. An SMO must

"[N]egotiate a niche⁷ for itself within the larger organisational environment in which it is embedded. This usually entails the negotiation and management of a complex set of relationships with other organisational actors representing the movement, the state, counter-movements, the media and the general public" (McAdam et al., 1988, p. 716).

These SMOs are more or less formal organisations that are important to manage the different resources. The management entails to combine resources in order to attempt and accomplish social change. In order to do so SMOs can employ different techniques ranging from peaceful, legal to terrorist and illegal. An SMO tries to attract and change bystander publics into sympathisers and sympathisers into adherents. A group of SMOs that pursue relatively similar goals can be called a Social Movement Industry (SMI). (McAdam et al., 1988). SMOs can be beneficiary to the cause for social change but also create problems (McCarthy and Zald, 2001). These problems are related to questions of power and trust.

The literature on social movements and social movement organisations is often blurred. There is not always a clear distinction between the social movement as a whole and their carrier organisations (Mueller-Hirth, 2009).

Critique

RMT is not free from criticism. One of the major critics on RMT is the blindness to the role of culture in social movement processes. RMT is too hardcore rational choice theory; not all actions are based on rational decisions based on resources. Resources matter but it is theoretically and empirically unsatisfactory to base one's analysis of social movements solely on resources. Besides ratio there are other factors at play that are needed to explain how the social movement niche is evolving and creating social action.

The importance of culture in social movement processes is embedded in new social movement theory (NSM). From the point of view of proponents of RMT, NSMs are not truly different from

⁷ McAdam et al. use the notion of niche in a different context than I do in the rest of this thesis. They use it in terms of competition between SMOs; these organisations must create space for themselves. I use niche as fundamental niche, the constellation between state, market and society which can be occupied by counter-hegemonic social movements. The degree of occupation is the realised niche. Of course, competition between social movements can be a factor which facilitates or hinders the realisation of the niche; the fulfilling of the potential offered by the fundamental niche.

earlier movements. Although NSM points at collective interests, collective and individual identity, these were also present in the older movements. Maybe not as manifest as in the NSMs, but they were present in the emerging of movements (McCarthy & Zald, 2001).

Next to NSM there are two other lines of theoretical development that have been important for the study of social movements. Political Process Models (PPM) points at the importance of power relations. This is in line with RMT but with another focus; RMT conceptualises access to power as one of the resources, whereas PPM has these power relation as point of departure. The critique of Framing and Culture theory is that RMT overstates its case; grievances do matter. The question is when and how do they matter? The grievances are defined and constructed. Framing and a cultural analysis is important. The question for RMT is whether this is complementary to RMT or whether RMT should be supplanted by a Framing and Culture theory (McCarthy & Zald, 2001).

The closing remarks of McCarthy and Zald on their review of their own RMT are that although RMT is no longer setting the agenda for many young scholars. RMT is still important in social movement theory because

“Resources matter, they are variable, they come from a variety of sources, and this variety creates problems and contradictions for organisations. SMOs matter and SMOS must be analysed as entities and as components of SMLs. Societies differ in their support of movements and movement like activities. That seems to us to be enough for one paradigm” (McCarthy & Zald, 2001, p. 560).

Reflection: RMT applied to niche realisation by social movements

RMT is useful in reconstructing the realised niche by of social movements because of its practical approach. I agree with proponents of RMT that resources matter. The availability of money and organisational capacity is important in explaining success and failure of social movements. In order words: realising the potential offered by the fundamental niche. Without money and organisational skills the movement will not succeed and the realised niche will be smaller.

An example where RMT can be applied to niche realisation by a social movement is the Anti-Privatisation Forum in Johannesburg, South Africa. This organisation wanted to organise a protest march on the 11th of June 2010, the opening day of the FIFA world cup 2010. The goal of this march was to create awareness of the downside of the FIFA 2010 World Cup. The World Cup is a time to celebrate, yes indeed, but the World Cup brings major cost for South Africa and that raises questions of the justification of hosting an event like this while there is a backlash in basic service delivery.

The resources that were needed are organisational skills to organise a formal application, busses to bring people to the gathering point and acquiring media attention. Money is needed to get people to the gathering because people don't have the money to come to these gatherings at their own expense. The APF needs to provide the busses to collect the people and bring them to the march.

The 11th of June had a major mark in the organisational year 2010 of the APF. But things did not go as planned. There was a march. But it did not had the impact that was hoped for. The organisational explanation for this deception was traffic problems and a non-cooperative government.

Another explanation to the failure of the march could be organisational mismanagement. The practical organisation started too late. The busses to collect the people from the different APF affiliates to come to the march were arranged in the last days before the 11th of June.

RMT can be used to analyse this particular case or the whole organisation. Lack of resources hinders the realisation of the niche. RMT will probably point at a lack of human resources, the capacity to organise. In that case another solution is needed than for example lack of money to pay busses.

Integrating Culture

The criticism of a lack of cultural awareness in RMT is correct. Culture should be an integrated part of social movement theory. Cultural processes are important in explaining why social movements emerge but also to give insight in the way they operate. An example of this is the structure of meetings at local branches of the APF and the APF itself. This is very much dedicated by cultural traditions of how meetings should be organised, including points of order, amendments, the dialogue given to the house and cultural expressions in songs and slogans. Paying attention to the culture of SMOs and social movements as a whole is also important for the reconstruction of niche realisation by social movements.

The importance of integrating culture into social movement studies is also underlined in the concept of NGO-ing or NGOisation (Hilhorst, 2007). Difficulties in dealing with social movement may originate in the culture of these movements. The complex relationship between donors and NGOs is explained in chapter two, the research context. The use of multiple realities in NGOs helps to uncover a simple approach to NGOs and their relationship with other stakeholders (Hilhorst, 2007).

A strict RMT approach for reconstructing the realisation of the niche by social movements would miss these important notions of culture. A theory on culture which can be applied to social movements is Framing Processes. We turn to the theory of Framing Processes in the next subsection. To conclude this reflection on RMT applied to niche realisation, two features of RMT with a relationship to representation are highlighted; conscience constituency and SMOs.

Representation

Another important feature of RMT is the attention for the conscience constituency. The case of social movements is not only supported by direct beneficiaries. People from other parts of society can also support social movements. In dealing with social movements it is important to acknowledge this fact. Social movements can be supported by intellectuals, trade unionist or politicians. This is shown in different case studies of social movement in South Africa (Ballard et al., 2006). The support for a social movement is important to acknowledge. Support can facilitate the realisation of the niche by providing all kinds of resources to movements.

The acknowledgement of SMOs as carrier organisation of social movements is another strong point of RMT. Social movements as a whole are guided by several SMOs. The emphasis on dynamics in SMOs is important to recognise. These dynamics enable or disable the realisation of the niche. The notion of SMOs also gives some questions about representation.

Conscience constituency has a relation with representation. Although conscience constituency does not claim to represent the poorest who are the object and subject of social movements, representation is an important issue in social movement studies in within social movements itself.

The leadership of SMOs is often not a just reflection of the people they represent. Their contribution is acknowledged but the justness is questioned.

“[D]espite the fact that some social movement activists may be reluctant to acknowledge the centrality of leadership and a vanguard cadre, we would be remiss if we did not recognise that none of these movements would be what they are without their leadership and vanguard cadre and the resources these individuals were able to broker from a variety of institutional settings” (Ballard et al., 2006, p. 407).

“Another evident problem is the extent to which movements capture the concerns and interests of the poorest. In this sense movements suffer the same problem as other organisations – namely that the poor, and especially the very poor, lack time and resources to participate in debates and arguments that lead, ultimately, to the formation of movement discourses. Movements, thus, become captured by, or at the very least give attention to the most vocal or the most resourced within their ranks – in South Africa this is often English-speaking, politically-literate, urbanised men” (Gentle, 2010, p. 375).

Besides questions about a just representation of the actual composition of social movements, because of a leadership that exists out of white intellectuals, there are also questions about representation of women (Gentle 2010; Pointer, 2004) and internal democracy, including distrust and (accusations of) misuse of funds (Pointer, 2004).

Issues related to representation can facilitate or hinder the realisation of the niche by social movements in order to occupy the fundamental niche and in the long term transform the existing social order. Social movements as alternative in development are not free from troubles with representation and democracy.

4.4.2 Framing processes

The second major theory formation on social movements is theory about Framing Processes. The use of the concept of frame is derived primarily from the work of Goffman (Benford & Snow, 2000; Chesters & Welsh, 2011; Tarrow, 2011). Originally the concept of framing was not applied to social movements but to individuals. “Goffman’s term “framing” originally applied to how an individual construct reality, but in the social movement tradition that grew out of his work, scholars have focused on how movements frame specific grievances with collective action frames that dignify claims, connect them to others, and help to produce a collective identity” (Tarrow 2011, p. 144, italics in original GvV).

Framing is the interpretation and adding of meaning to circumstances. It can be defined as “the construction of an interpretive scheme that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’” (Tarrow 2011, p. 142). An example of this is poverty which is not an issue for politicians, but social movements use framing to perceive poverty as an issue again and put it back on the agenda (Gentle, 2010). Benford and Snow also point at the giving of meaning as central point in framing theory. “Frames help to render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organise experience and guide action” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614). Tarrow sees Framing Processes as part of a broader framework of making meaning. Framing is one part in the making of meaning. The other parts are identity construction and emotion work. Identity construction is a “constructed set of boundary mechanisms that define who ‘we’ are, who ‘they’ are, and the locations of the borders

between them (Tarrow 2011, p. 143). The last part is the way on how movements reflect, capture and shape emotions to mobilise followers (Tarrow, 2011).

Tarrow and Benford and Snow put framing in the wider concept of the making of meaning. Benford and Snow, as proponents of Framing Processes, elaborate even more on different types of framing. These three core framing tasks are 'diagnostic framing'; the problem identification and attributions. The second one is 'prognostic framing'. This is the proposed solution to the risen problems. "Prognostic framing [...] involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, or at least a plan of attack, and the strategies for carrying out the plan" (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 616). The final framing task is 'motivational framing'. This provides the trigger for collective action. When men become active, the situation will change for the better (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Framing Processes is established as social movement theory. The other two technical approaches of social movement theory, RMT and PPM acknowledge the contribution of Framing Processes to social movement theory (McCarthy & Zald, 2001; Tarrow, 2011). The importance of Framing Processes as social movement theory is the opening to cultural approaches.

Reflection: Framing Processes applied to niche realisation by social movements

Framing Processes as social movement theory is pointing at another aspect of the reconstruction of niche realisation. Understanding the different ways in which circumstances and occurrences are perceived within the social movement and the way in which this construction is communicated to the wider public, bystanders and constituents, might be helpful to understand why the potential of the fundement is realised or not. Framing is something what happens, but when this process can be controlled by social movement actors it can be a powerful tool to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the social movement.

Framing Processes are important for social movements because this is something the social movement can get their hands on. Social movements, can use, and do use, framing as an important tool in their activities towards their adherents and possible followers. An example of framing is the organisation of meetings and the distribution of pamphlets in order to share information on government policies, problems and proposed solutions with (possible) supporters of the social movement (Internship Report). Sharing information, getting knowledge and create awareness are important activities for social movements in order to survive. When a social movement fails to do so, the enthusiasm and level of activism will fade out.

4.4.3 Political Process Models

A theory which is closely related to RMT is Political Process Models (PPM). The focus of PPM is the way in which state actions and the possibility of influencing state action, provide opening or closing for social movement action (McCarthy & Zald, 2001). The rise, presence and decline of social movements is explained in terms of political pressure or tolerance. The political climate is determining the presence of social movements. In terms of niche; the political climate facilitates or hinders the realisation of the niche. PPM can both affect the fundamental niche as well as social movements trying to occupy that niche. An important concept within PPM is Political Opportunity Structure (POS). POS is defined as

"the political and institutional opportunities and constraints that either inhibit or facilitate collective action" (Chesters & Welsh, 2011, p. 136).

The foundation for POS within the PPM tradition is laid by Charles Tilly in the 70s. He was the first to acknowledge that social movements could be studied only in connection with politics and that they would vary in their strategy, structure and success in different kinds of states (Tarrow, 2011). PPM developed in several different directions this led to statements that PPM and POS were becoming to much buzz words including every aspect of the social movement environment. (Chesters & Welsh, 2011; Tarrow, 2011). That is the reason why Tarrow states that

“PPM cannot claim to explain every aspect of contentious politics or social movements and is best seen not as a theory, but as a framework in which to examine the dynamics of contention” (Tarrow, 2011; p. 28).

Proponents of RMT like McCarthy and Zald see PPM as a “correct and important specification” (McCarthy & Zald, 2001). PPM, in their view,

“properly locates a central role of the state and political actions as the source of both collective and individual costs and benefits and the threat or promise of future costs and benefits. Thus, changes in political opportunities lead to changes in the perception of risk/reward ratios for activists. Such changes lead to perceptions of hope that encourage action or despair that discourages action” (McCarthy & Zald, 2001, p. 557).

An easy way of describing the point of view towards social movements of PPM and the relation with other theoretical perspectives is given by Ballard et al. using an explanation by Melucci.

“Political opportunity approaches offer some insight into the question of ‘why?’ But largely form the perspective of factors external to the movements themselves” (Ballard et al., 2006, p. 6).

RMT gives an answer to the ‘how?’ question and theories with a cultural point of view try to answer the ‘why?’ question using factors internal to the social movement.

Examples

A first example is the already mentioned world cup march on the 11th of June 2010, organised by the APF to create awareness for the downside of the FIFA 2010 World Cup. As explained in the RMT section, this march was unsuccessful in terms of meeting the expectations. One of the reasons for this failure given by the APF itself was a non-corporative government. The proposed time and place, just before the opening match, in sight of the stadium, was prohibited. Instead, a compromise was arranged; earlier in the morning, farther away from the stadium where the opening match was played (Internship Report). PPM as explaining framework will underline the statements by the APF that the failure was due to restrictions by the government. The space for exposure was limited, opportunities to make the statement of the APF widely shared were declined. PPM can serve as theory to reconstruct the realisation of the niche. But only using PPM as explaining framework is a one-side approach.

Another example of the way PPM works out in practice is the global campaign for agrarian reform (GCAR) by Via Campesina (Borras, 2008). A combination of factors which can be linked to a change in the international political opportunity structure were at the basis of the launch of GCAR. We speak about international POS because the GCAR is a global campaign. The factors that helped GCAR to emerge were:

“swift externalisation of national issues, emergence of allies with political and logistical resources, forging of a common meaning in the campaign and the emergence of a common concrete and easy target of the campaign, the emergence of faster and cheaper cross-border communication and transportation, and the attainment of greater degree of autonomy and capacity to combine forms of collective actions” (Borras, 2008, p. 269).

These factors helped to give an opening that made the launch of GCAR possible. This example shows why the social movement arises. And indeed most of the factors are external to the organisation. As a matter of fact, the more internal factors that help to open up opportunities are more related to Framing Processes; the forging of a common meaning and the identification of a concrete and easy target.

The success of GCAR by Via Campesina is a different story. The main success is that the managed to put the issue of land reform and its opposition to neoliberal policies onto the official agendas of development agencies and civil society. The campaign has reshaped the terms of the current policy and political debates. And what is also important: it has been able to construct an alternative land policy vision (Borras, 2008). POS opened the possibilities for successful Framing Processes effecting some change, but it is not a complete success.

“However, it has not gained any significant ground in terms of actual favourable policy reforms, internationally and in national settings, nor has it resulted in significant procedural changes or caused favourable behavioural changes among key actors in development institutions” (Borras, 2008, p. 282).

Changing external factors and some internal framing processes have an effect in social change. Political Opportunity Structure allowed the GCAR to create momentum for the social movement to strengthen their case and become an active player within the development trajectory.

The third example of PPM is given by Wolford in a study on participatory democracy in Brazil (2010). The state institutions on agrarian land reform are sometimes lacking the resources and technical capacity to carry out reform and are forced to rely on social movement actors (Wolford, 2010). The weakness of state institutions and state actors is opening the POS for the social movement. Once the social movement has this position, it is able to carry out their own program and demands by moving towards the edges of what is legal, for instance land occupations. As a result,

“areas where the Brazilian state and social movements have come together to conduct the process of agrarian reform, the actions and accountability of the state are improved” (Wolford, 2010, p. 106).

The strong involvement of the social movement in agrarian land reform also has a disadvantage;

“people who are not represented by the movements are forced to work within the formal system of representative democracy, and this continues to be a system embedded in the traditional politics of personal connection and position” (Wolford, 2010, p. 107).

These three examples show that PPM is helpful to understand why social movements emerge and succeed with their actions. Political Opportunity Structures are important to understand why social movements are able to occupy the fundamental niche or not. However, PPM is not the single

explaining theory. An integration is needed to come to a broad comprehensive framework on social movements.

Towards an integration

Started off as a proponent of PPM Tarrow developed a

“broad theoretical framework for understand the place of social movements, cycles of contention, and revolutions within the more general category of contentious politics” (Tarrow, 2011, p. 7).

Within this broad theoretical framework PPM is one of the building blocks. POS is important in explaining the presence of social movements but it is not sufficient on its own. The dynamics of contention of which social movements are part can only be examined through synthesis with insights from other branches of social movement theory (Tarrow, 2011). Tarrow is using RMT as well as PPM but he is also stressing the use of cultural approaches like the making of meaning using framing, identity construction and emotions (Tarrow, 2011). However, a cultural perspective alone would also be insufficient as explanation. It is important to relate text to context.

“[W]e need to turn from framing, identity construction, and emotions to how movements intersect with their contexts. We need to examine, in particular, the structure of opportunities and the constraints in which they operate” (Tarrow 2011, p. 156).

Reflection: PPM applied to social movements of interest for this research

PPM is an important theory in understanding success or failure for social movements trying to occupy the fundamental niche. Power relations are an important aspect of this reconstruction. This is already shown in the requirement of certain freedoms and opportunities and worked out in the theory of Political Opportunity Structure. The examples underline the argument of the importance of opportunity; the room of manoeuvre, acquired or offered, for social movements to successfully occupy the fundamental niche in which these social movements can transform the existing social order. This is true for individual actions of social movement organisations as well as for social movements as a whole.

4.5 Reflection on the technical approach of social movement theory

The technical approach of social movement theory is offering valuable tools to reconstruct the realised niche. It offers valuable tools for understanding success or failure of social movements to fulfil the potential offered by the fundamental niche of counter-hegemonic social movements. Used solely the different approaches are unsatisfactory to base ones analysis. RMT, Framing Processes and PPM must be used together. Each of the theories emphasises another dimension for the reconstruction of the realised social movement niche. Combined these approaches offer a coherent method for reconstructing the realised niche. RMT points at the effect of resources on realisation of the niche. These resources can be material or immaterial. One of these resources is power. This is elaborated in PPM; political opportunities, the existing configuration of power has a major effect on fulfilling the potential of the fundamental niche. The contribution of Framing Processes is the opening of cultural approaches.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and recommendations

This thesis had the objective to come to a better understanding of social movement practices within international development using the concept of niche as analytical tool. The idea for this thesis is born out of experienced ambiguities during my internship at a social movement in Johannesburg. Further research on social movements, in scientific literature and policy towards social movements confirmed this ambiguity. The concept of niche is chosen as analytical tool to get grip on this ambiguity.

The notion of niche is used to mark the space within the constellation of state market and civil society which can be occupied by social movement in order to transform the existing social order. This fundamental niche is present despite and because of the actors that form society as a whole. As an effect the space of the fundamental niche is fluid. The fundamental niche is constructed in interaction with the constituting institutions of society as a whole.

Further research on the position of the fundamental niche showed that, though the space which can be occupied by social movements is present, the amount of organisations occupying the counter-hegemonic position is small. A lot of action of NGOs and SMOs is rights-based opposition. They work within the existing system within the current neoliberal order. Besides the fact that there are few hardcore counter-hegemonic social movements, the social movements that claim to represent the counter-hegemonic position use a mixture of strategies. Social movements embrace both tactics at the same time without a thoroughly thought strategy. This raised the question whether social movements are a real alternative in international development to transform the existing social order.

Once the fragile position of the fundamental niche which can be occupied by counter-hegemonic social movements is laid down, the next step is to look at actual social movements in order to understand why and how social movements succeed or fail to fulfil the potential offered by the fundamental niche.

The reconstruction of the realised niche using social movement literature showed that resources, culture and power within a historical context are important factors in explaining the realisation of the niche. These dimensions must form an integrated approach to come to a viable analysis of niche realisation.

The historical dimension emphasised the importance of the dimension of time. The constellation in time is important in explaining niche realisation. Another important dimension is the availability of resources. This feature is elaborate in RMT. Material, human, cognitive, technical, or organisational resources help social movements to fulfil the potential. The presence or absence of these resources has a major impact on the realisation of the niche. The cultural dimension is laid out in Framing Processes. The way the social movement is perceived has an effect on the size and shape of movements. Diagnostic framing, prognostic framing and motivational framing are helpful to realise the niche. The acknowledgement of this cultural dimension is inevitable for a integrated comprehensible understanding of the social movement niche. The last dimension is the dimension of power relations. This feature is elaborate within PPM. Power might be seen as one of the available resources but because of the importance of the component of power in enabling or constraining the tolerances in order to realise the niche to survive, power is a separated dimension. The analysis of the position of the fundamental niche and the reconstruction of realised niches showed that the

concept of niche is a useful tool to come to grips with ambiguities surrounding social movements. The position of the fundamental niche raised the question whether social movements are a real alternative. A lot of social movements and SMOs do not distinguish themselves from other development agencies. When social movements are perceived as an alternative within international development, as actors who can enforce social change, transforming the existing social order, this is a wrong picture. Social movements can be balancing on the fragile line between rights-based and counter-hegemonic opposition but in most cases they work within the existing social order. This misperception is causing ambiguity.

The reconstruction of the realised niches showed that social movements have the same issues as other actors in development. Social movements also struggle with issues of representation, internal democracy and lack of resources. The processes of NGOisation can also be applied to social movements. This could be an explanation for ambiguity in social movement literature and policy towards social movements. Perceiving social movements as the ultimate way to transform the existing system is wrong. Social movements do offer an alternative within international development, allowing more space to grassroots than other development actors might do, but social movements are certainly not the goose that lays golden eggs. Overcoming this misperception and the recognition that social movements are susceptible to the same processes which can be applied to other development actors would reduce ambiguity.

Recommendations

In order to improve the applicability of the notion of niche in relation to social movements, the propositions that come forth in this research, like fundamental niche, realised niche, the historical approach and the technical approach, should be tested in interaction with social movements. This research made use of existing social research on social movements without the idea of niche in mind. A case study on a social movement out of a perspective of occupying a niche, could improve the notion of niche as explained here which ultimately can lead to a better understanding of social movement practices. The foundations for a new way of perceiving social movements are laid in this thesis, from now on this can be sharpened.

Another recommendation is already given by Luke Sinwell when he calls for a realistic perspective on social movements.

“Rather than romanticising poor people’s movements, theorists should seek to genuinely understand, through rigorous theoretical and empirical analysis, the limitations and potentials they offer” (Sinwell, 2010, p. 81).

This thesis support this call for a realistic perspective. Social movements in common and especially counter-hegemonic social movements are not the alternative in development which is finally going to enforce the desired social change in the existing neoliberal order. This picture of social movements should be de-romanticised. Social movements have advantages in development work, they can be an alternative to other channels, but they are subject to the same processes as other agencies of development. Everyone who works with social movements, out of a scientific or professional stand, should realise this and benefit from this.

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