

NGI101x - 2.5A - The importance of actor analysis

Welcome to this lecture on actor- and network analysis. My name is Bert Enserink and I will be your teacher on this subject. These colorful pictures behind me are maps representing social networks; one shows you the structure of a network of websites that refer to each other and the other purple and red one shows us a pattern of sexual relations in a group of people. Nowadays these maps are popular; for instance on LinkedIn you can create a map of your own social network and there are nice Apps to make such a network map of all your friends at Facebook.

Your Facebook map is for fun but there are serious applications too; Knowing how these networks look like may be helpful in explaining for instance why some websites are more successful than others or how a venereal disease spreads in a population, and the latter may help you to design a smart campaign to cap the spread of gonorrhea. These kind of maps thus can be of interest for policy making; you might map who are involved in the offshore industry; who are influencing the European banking crises or to determine which persons are most influential in the various board of supervisory directors. In this part of the course we will learn what actor analysis is about, why you do it and how to do it in a structured way. We will first discuss WHAT actor network analyses are and why we make them. Then I will walk you through the six steps needed to execute a full-blown actor network analysis. Now when watching this lecture consider yourself to be a consultant who is going to apply this method for mapping and analyzing the network surrounding your case. Think about what you want to remember later; make notes of what you think are the most important elements.

We, people, are “social animals”; people and groups of people operate in networks; we relate to other people and other groups because most of today's problems in society cannot be solved by a single actor; they are too complex and in order to solve these problems we need to cooperate. We are interdependent; governments for instance need the private sector to implement effective policies; and the private sector on its turn needs the government for regulating the markets they are operating in. But often we are not aware of the networks we are operating in; the social fabric of the company or organization we are working in, the people inside and outside our organization we need to get things done, but if you make these linkages and these dependencies explicit , you can use the power and the means of the people and organizations in our network to get things done, and you can think about strategies to prevent that some other actors with different objectives obstruct your plans.

So, knowing more about the actors and the networks in which they operate helps to: Improve the quality of our analysis as we can tap on the wisdom of the crowds and exploit local knowledge. Get better solutions as talking to more people means getting more different ideas We gain insights in conflicts between parties and in opportunities and threats We may gain support for policy implementation as we learn who else want the problem to be solved, who else has means we might use to solve it and because engaged people feel

responsible. And there is a normative argument too as involving people in policy decisions affecting them is a matter of good governance and these are democratic concerns.

By now we already used some terms that need better definition therefore you should remember the following:

'Actors' we define as "social entities that have an interest in a system, and/or have some ability to influence that system".

Actors are often groups and organizations, but also (important) individuals can be considered as actors Networks are more or less stable patterns of social relations between actors, and in this course we will focus on. Networks that take shape around policy problems or programs.

So, WHY actor analysis? I will show you one example to illustrate why actor analysis can be important - in this case for the oil company Shell, who in the 90ties of the past century wanted to dispose of an old oil rig, or in fact a huge buoy that had been used for storing crude North Sea oil and which would be sunk into the deep sea as extensive studies had shown that deep sea disposal would be the most environmental friendly option. But Shell had not been very attentive to other actors who were opposed to this solution and were able to mobilize their network to support a very different solution. Yes, it is an old case , but it is a classical and clear example of a simple project going wrong for neglecting other actors in a policy game. Watch this one minute video and you will see what happened. It is in Dutch but the images are telling the message.

The Brent Spar was an oil storage buoy (platform and reservoir) for holding oil for oil tankers prior to the construction of an oil pipe line connecting the oil field to the main land. The Brent Spar was jointly owned by Shell Oil and Exxon, but Shell UK was responsible for the decommissioning. Preparations started 1992.

Brent Spar was located in British territorial waters of a depth greater than 75 meters and weighed more than 14,500 tons. What to do with such a huge structure?

Shell commissioned no fewer than 30 separate studies to consider the technical, safety, and environmental implications of disposal within four possible options: Disposal on land Sinking the buoy at its current location (acceptable by IMO guidelines).

Decomposition of the buoy on the spot Deep-sea dumping (depth greater than 2,000 meters) within U.K. territorial waters After considering the options, with their risks and benefits, Shell concluded that only options 1 and 4 were viable. Options 2 and 3 were judged as unfeasible or environmentally harmful. Deep sea dumping became Shell's choice because of the relatively low cost and small environmental impact (best practical environmental option - BPEO). On land was estimated to cost four times more and present a high risk (six times higher) for worker Shell got permission to dispose of the Brent Spar through deep-sea sinking from the U.K. Department of Trade and Industry in December 1994. The decision was

published and no nation objected. Accordingly, the U.K. issued the disposal license authorizing deep-sea sinking of the Brent Spar.

Before the disposal could be accomplished, Greenpeace activists and journalists (23 in total) occupied the Brent Spar on April 30, 1995.

Shell security personnel and the Scottish police were dispatched to remove the protestors. That was not easy as Greenpeace activists attached themselves to Brent Spar.

The media predominantly supported Greenpeace in its coverage; one should not spoil our seas! Greenpeace activists were portrayed as heroes defending the environment, fighting Shell and the U.K at sea.

Greenpeace, with the support of other actors in their network, like nature conservation groups, mobilized an effective consumer boycott of Shell gasoline stations in Germany, Holland, and parts of Scandinavia. In Germany, Shell gasoline sales declined by 20%, and fifty gas stations were vandalized, two were fire bombed by activists.

Shell Germany and Shell Netherlands, feeling the pressure of the boycott, publicly criticized Shell U.K. and the U.K. government and questioned the disposal decision. Even the German environmental and agricultural ministries protested the disposal plan to the U.K government, claiming that the land disposal option had not been adequately investigated.

What happened? The story continues: On June 16, 1995, the Brent Spar was again occupied by Greenpeace activists who boarded it from a helicopter as it was being readied for transport. A Shell tugboat sprayed other Greenpeace activists with water as they attempted to board Brent Spar from boats in an attempt to keep them away. Pictures of the Greenpeace activists braving the assault of water cannons adorned the front pages of newspapers throughout the world. At this point, Greenpeace made claims regarding their scientific analysis of the contents of storage tanks on Brent Spar, stating that there were large quantities of heavy metals and other highly toxic organic materials present and that Shell had failed to declare in their analyses. On June 20, 1995, only hours before the scheduled disposal of Brent Spar, Shell announced that it was calling off the deep-sea sinking option.

Behind me you can see how the story ended. Shell towed off the Spar to a Norwegian fjord As an act of restoration and governance It organized a design contests at European universities to think up a practical solution and for generation social support. In the end the walls of the buoy were used as quays in a Norwegian off shore harbor. The claims by Greenpeace about the contamination and heavy metals inside the buoy proofed false and the environmental and health impact of the on-land decommissioning was considerable What do we learn from the story: Communication is crucial Don't ignore your opponents Mobilization power can be very effective Maybe this all could have been prevented if Shell had paid due attention to the social environment it was operating in and had taken along the concerns of their opponents from the start of the process and maybe had organized its

decision process differently - but this is all hindsight; the general message is: know your playing field, beware of the concerns and issues of other actors and keep them in mind when you design your policies and try to create support for your plans and policies. How to explore and map these social and political playing field for policy making is exactly what we will learn to do in this part of the course.