

THE WEB OF POWER:  
Elites, Social Movements, and  
Structural Change,  
A Method of Analysis

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## **I. Introduction**

The relation between macro-social structure and individual-level action is a central problem of sociology (Giddens). A fundamental sociological premise is that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts;" this is the essence of the term structure. Structural analysis promises to reveal general principles by which social change occurs. And, given the ecological, military and other crises the world faces today, the discovery of such principles seems imperative.

Yet, debates about structure often argue past each other; they start with different assumptions and seek to attribute causality accordingly. Some, for instance, assume that structure means class relations (Althusser), others that it means income distribution (Blau and Duncan), bureaucracy (Dahrendorf), or symbolic codes typical of a culture (Eisenstadt). These disparate definitions allow for no comparison of structural causality. Consequently, they weaken the empirical utility of sociology as a discipline.

Part of the problem is methodological; no satisfactory way has been found to operationalize the concept of structure in terms of individual action, in a way that would permit distinguishing between different types of structures. In this paper, I propose a method that takes a step towards resolving this problem. The method combines the structural and individual levels through the use of network analysis. With this, I hope to find some empirical way of testing for the presence and relative causal importance of various types of structure.

One common employment of the term structure is in studies of the distribution and use of power in society. However, the methods used in this area often focus on a single set of actors, such as "the power elite," and hence do not fully address macro-structural questions (Hunter, Mills). Fundamentally, social power involves a relationship. The most basic model is the dichotomous division between elite and mass, a rough distinction often used in sociology. This model cannot be encompassed by reference to one set of actors alone. The distinction between the two sides becomes sharper if we counterpose them as elite and challenger: the grassroots social movement arising from the mass. Acting upon each other, these actors impose limits that structure, or limit the options of, the actions of the other.

Recent work in the resource mobilization school of social movement analysis emphasizes the influence of elites on movement mobilization (McCarthy and Zald; McAdam; Useem; Schwartz). In this view, the very ability to mobilize depends greatly upon freeing people and resources from the dominant institutions. McAdam shows how elites adjust their strategies of social control to new movement strategies, slowing them down until a new strategy appears. In the same vein, but couched in more general terms, a few works deal with the "political opportunity structure" created by

dominant institutions, as it facilitates or hinders movement mobilization (Lipsky, Eisinger, Tarrow). Skocpol's work constitutes the most large-scale example of this perspective.

In most of these works, however, the elite and dominant institutions remain something of a "black box." They appear as foils for the social movement, as the structure which movements target and bounce off of. Implicit in these works is the assumption of considerable structure among the elites, while movements are seen as fluid, mobilizing around the issue of concern. This image of a fairly solid central polity provides a generic "structure" against which movements take shape (Gamson, Tilly, 1978). The dominant institutions and the movements are implicitly portrayed as the two extremes of a spectrum of institutionalization.

However, the dominant institutions may themselves be more fluid than that image conveys. The pluralist tradition captures some of this fluidity. In New Haven, Dahl found many types of elite coalitions. Mayor Lee had recently put together one type of coalition, but his predecessor had used a different style. Dahl did not look in depth at social movements. But his pluralist model assumed that strong grassroots movements would find some voice in the polity. This model has been well criticized (Mandel), but it raises important questions. Does a class or state-based power structure exist as a constant "governor" over society? Or are sections of it activated intermittently according to the issue? Does its basic nature change with the change in issues?

Following those hints, tracing the course of interaction between elites and social movements (challengers from outside the polity) would provide a better understanding of how dominant structures reproduce themselves and change. To do so necessitates thinking of elites and movements as a system: a pattern of influence relationships in dynamic interaction over time. Recent work in the resource mobilization school focuses on such an interactive model (Zald; Tilly, 1985a, 1985b). The most explicit effort has been made by McAdam and by Burns and Midttun. The latter present a detailed flow-chart of interchanges between institutions over time. These constitute approaches to a method that will allow the analysis of change in structure over time.

Another approach to this task comes from the paradigm of network analysis. A network is a set of points and the lines joining them (Berkowitz, pg. 2). One type of network, the pattern of relations between organizations, provides a promising model for thinking about elites and social movements. Research in this area generally focuses on networks of alliances among elites (Schwartz and Mintz; Walton) or between organizations (Benson; Cook; Laumann, et. al.; Stern). But it could be expanded to look at negative ties, at

social conflict, as well. This would require redefining the meaning of "tie" to include a wider range of sanctions.

Other problems remain in applying the inter-organizational network perspective to elite and movement analysis. Models of community power structures using the network method, while contributing many insights, remain static snapshots, taken at one point in time (Breiger; Laumann and Pappi). Patterns of center and periphery are described by clustering and block modeling (Berkowitz, pp. 125-141). Furthermore, the qualitative types of ties such as, negative and positive) between actors are rarely specified (for a partial exception, see Laumann and Pappi). Usually, just the existence of one type of tie is noted. For a sensitive analysis of structure and change, different types of ties must be distinguished.

This paper sketches out a method for the dynamic analysis of social conflict and structural transformation incorporating network concepts. While not quantitatively sophisticated, it provides a conceptual and qualitative framework for dealing with these issues. The method, called "sequential frame analysis" (SFA), evolved through dealing with field work data about social conflict over time. In itself, it is simply a qualitative, data-ordering device. But through the ordering, it helps the analyst understand the structure present in the interactions.

The SFA method diagram a political interaction, an event, on a "societal frame." The frame is a matrix composed of all the potentially relevant types of organizations in the society, arrayed along center to periphery on the vertical axis and any convenient ordering scheme along the horizontal axis. Any given event is composed of a unique pattern, or set of organizational actors and their ties. Each event forms one point in a sequence of events, and provides the sociological foundation for the next event to arise. A major change in the pattern at time X signals the change to a new event. The sequence, then, is composed of genetically linked changes in patterned events, each forming the basis for the next. The sequence as a whole comprises a "case," the life-course of an issue over time in a community or society. Suffice it to say that the sequence of frames provides a systematic way to analyze mobilization and counter-mobilization over time at the several levels of society.

Ties are defined as the exchange of sanctions between actors. Here, sanctions are defined as desirable or undesirable "values" which actor A may give to or withhold from actor B (the types will be defined later). Careful attention to the types of sanctions exercised between organizational actors provides clues to the type of "structure" one may call "dominant." That is, if a cultural and symbolic "structure" is the dominant organizing principle, the actual social organization among the actors will be held together by a common belief in the same symbols. The same is true for a class structure, in which the common interest is profit from a common type of means of

production or system of ownership. The symbol or profit which actors exchange or collectively strive for is the sanction, which vitalizes the tie between the actors.

For example, the Ayatollah Komeini may use religion to bind together his inner core of leaders, but they in turn evidently enforce their will through violence, through state terrorism. The core dominant structure here is religious (cultural), as defined by the type of tie integrating the center of the polity. But this changes into coercive ties, and hence a "political" structure, within a short expansion of the circumference of the core. Opposition movements may attack the outer edges of the dominant institution with counter-violence, or try to delegitimize the inner core by questioning the beliefs of Sunni Islam (or both).

The sequential frame analysis enables us to trace the dominant structure at a given time, and how change is initiated in it and carried through. This sensitivity to structural location of the precise sanction which broke down, allowing the disintegration of the old structure and the production of a new one, offers the possibility of a deeper understanding of the actual nature of power in society, and how it may be changed.

## **II. The Societal Frame and Sequential Frame Analysis**

In order to adequately analyze the mobilization of a social movement and its impact on the status quo, then, we need knowledge of the following substantive phenomena: 1) structure of (latent) resource distribution, 2) the issue at hand and the potential it has to cause a redistribution of resources, 3) the groups whose resources are subject to potential redistribution, 4) the consciousness of those groups concerning the issue, 5) the internal resources a given group can potentially mobilize (turn into sanctions) to pursue the issue, 6) the value (to other groups) given to those sanctions by the issue, 7) the configuration of structures (seen as specific inter-organizational networks) which confront a given group as obstacles to its purpose, 8) the course through time of interactive mobilization and struggle. All these can be simultaneously portrayed and accounted for in the societal frame and its sequential analysis.

The closest graphic portrayal of the societal frame in the extant literature is found in the theoretical work of Charles Tilly. He portrays a field of politically oriented organizations, some of which are inside the polity and some outside it. The polity is conceived of all those organizations which have routine, low-cost access to decision-making and its benefits. Groups which try to break in to that polity to get their own share are "challengers." Tilly's diagram is presented in Figure One:

(Figure One about here.)

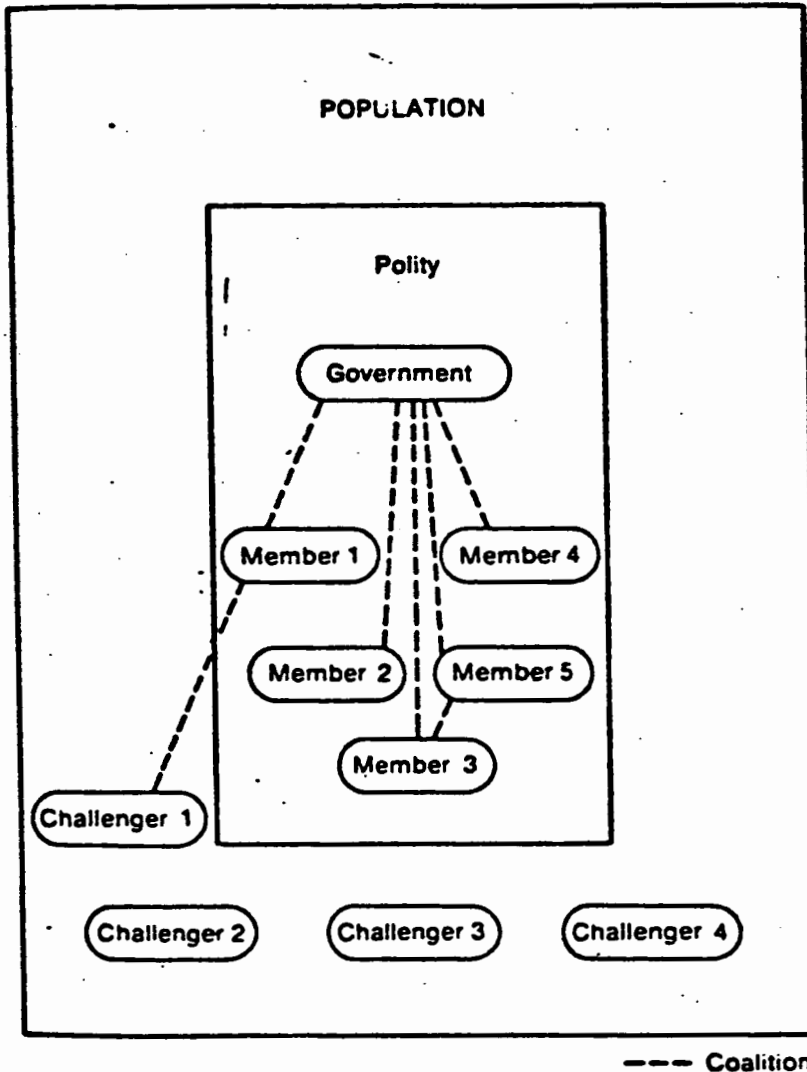
His analysis concentrates upon the challengers, in particular the events of collective action they engage in. Therefore, the analysis of the polity, of the relations among elites that compose it, remains rudimentary. In his scheme, the entry of elites into the process of mobilization is represented by a box labelled "repression/facilitation."

However, if movements have some relation to the particular "shape" of the dominant structure, then its details must be taken into account. Furthermore, the boundaries of the "polity" must be given theoretical definition. As is already evident in Tilly's schematic, many organizations occupy the field in which polity members and challengers contend. In order to define the dominant institution and structure, the polity, their inter-relations must be carefully reconstructed out of constituent elements. Then, they must be traced through transformations.

The best way to array and visualize this complex number of elements is on a "societal frame." A societal frame consists of an array of all the organizations in a society potentially involved (directly or indirectly) in a given issue or sequence of issues through time (see Figure Two).

(Figure Two about here.)

FIGURE ONE: The Elementary Polity Model



Source: Charles Tilly,  
From Mobilization to Revolution,  
Addison-Wesley Co., Reading, 1978,  
pg. 53.

**Figure Two: The Societal Frame**

	left party	union	legislature	ministries	capital	right party
national	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
prefectural	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
town	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	(extensions of above as well as voluntary orgs. and movements)					
citizen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Note: this simplified example does not include the full range of institutions)



These organizations are arrayed vertically along the center and periphery dimension. The horizontal arrangement of the institutions is arbitrary, but should be convenient for drawing arrows, and remain constant throughout a sequence. Each vertical column represents an institution, constituted of substantive organizations in a hierarchy. Each box represents a concrete organization. The organizations involved in a given event are indicated by coloring them in a way which indicates a common stance on the issue, and drawing arrows between them. The arrows are numbered, with notes below indicating the type(s) of sanction creating the tie.

Theories of "structure," implicitly or overtly, argue that a given actor is dominant because it controls certain resources. In creating social power, an actor uses a resource as a sanction, to affect the actions of others (to determine their social role). The major kind of sanction used by the dominant elite indicates the dominant "structure," which effectively determines the overall pattern of influence and power. Those sanctions and their use play a crucial role in holding the system together. Of course, structural theories differ in which sanction they single out as crucial.

There are numerous typologies of sanctions (Etzioni, Parsons). These types of inter-actor sanctions define the different ways "ego" can get "alter" to do something. Basically, sanctions range from intrinsic(symbolic) to extrinsic (material). Roughly, they may be categorized as political, economic, social and cultural. For each type, a characteristic type of sanction is used: coercion, inducement, persuasion, and commitments, respectively. <sup>1</sup>

Exchange theory contends that sanction exchanges build up into social structures through exchange and choice, much like markets (Homans, Blau). In this view, while the ties that bind people or organizations into repetitive patterns consist of combinations of these sanctions, there always remains an element of free choice. The actors are not "over-socialized." This produces a tentative, negotiated quality to structure. A constant dialectic between structure and consciousness (Giddens) makes both somewhat indeterminate. Social actors are on the lookout for something better, if the costs are not too high.

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<sup>1</sup> Parsons presents this typology in one essay (see bibliography). But many others also exist. French and Raven define five types of inter-actor power resources, which I refer to here: reward, coercion, expert, legitimate, and referent. Reward is provision of economic incentives; coercion the use of force. Expert refers to the possession of crucial technical knowledge; legitimate, the ability to persuade that agreed upon "rules of the game" are being adhered to. Referent is the ability to establish identity between alter and ego, so that ego acts on behalf of alter as for "self."

On the other hand, social structures may be highly coercive. The sanctions controlled by dominant elites often are so powerful, and the alternative choices so costly, that other actors have little real choice but to obey. Theories of power usually conceive of structure in this way. In some cases, if these structures are under the control of amenable elites, they may be subject to negotiation or respond to protest. Other structures, however, may result from obstinate elites or natural forces, such as resource scarcity. These are less amenable to negotiation.

In any case, the latitude of choice, the response to structure, differs for each actor in each particular role or conjunction of sanctions. Analysis must proceed with sensitivity to this latitude. Structure and institution must not be prematurely concretized into a monolithic object. They must be defined for each case.

Social movements may be placed within this structural context by the types of ties they break or redefine. Breaking with the defined role structure is a fundamental act of mobilization. In order to join a movement, especially one that opposes the interests of the elites, one must be prepared to suffer the sanctions that will come. If, however, the institution one is protesting or trying to change applies no sanctions, the only costs are the expenditure of personal resources.

Of course, not every aspect of the social process can appear on the frame. The appearance of each organization in the arena of contention, the societal frame, presupposes long preparation, mobilization and organizing. In addition, a given actor, like the Chamber of Commerce, may represent the interests of many member organizations. Classes, strata and other less definable social phenomena (public opinion) can only appear through these concrete (formal and informal) organizations, which embody their views or respond to their demands.

Thus, the societal frame only deals with the concurrent collective action of groups and organizations mobilized around a particular issue. The squares within the frame remind one of a chess-board. The organizations array like chess pieces, each with certain latent powers and overt moves. These latent powers are generally brought into active engagement only when their holder thinks it useful to the overall strategy.

But the political game indicated in the frame is more complicated, many and ironic than chess. Each piece has some autonomy (an important empirical question). To that extent, each must conceive its own best strategy facing the shifting pattern of the other pieces. Unlike chess (except in Alice in Wonderland), the powers allocated to the political pieces shift over time. Queens become pawns. And to add to the confusion, even the side a piece allies with may change. Chess pieces are "institutionalized" into black and white, permanently. But political knights change color from white to black.

Or they look black until you pick them up, when they suddenly turn white. Rooks revolt, and join the "enemy."

Evidently, then, the array of organizations itself tells us little about the game. Several other elements must be included in the frame. These include, as mentioned, the issue position of a given involved organization (including ideology and political values if relevant), and arrows representing the ties and sanctions applied by one organization to another in the effort to elicit compliance. But we also need to include the context, that is, the wider pattern of political contention in the society: the issues which capture the elite or public imagination, the broad distribution of latent power and its direction of change, and the impact of foreign powers. This context gives value to the resources held by a given actor. It enables their conversion into sanction and power at a certain rate. For instance, money talks louder to the poor than the rich, so patrons are more powerful in poor societies. This contextual effect is assessed by the qualitative analysis carried out by the investigator.

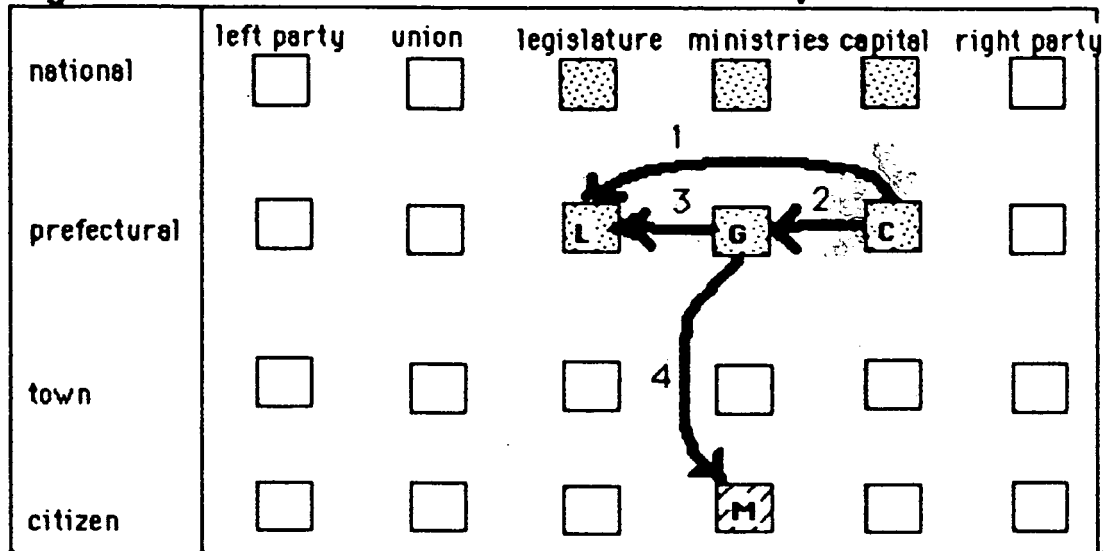
A new frame must be constructed for each major event within the history of struggle over the issue. Or, if several issues are considered in sequence, or the first generates the next, each new issue-phase must be placed on a separate frame. This procedure will generate a sequence of event and issue-context frames. Hence it is called "sequential frame analysis." A sample sequence of three frames, including all these elements, is presented in Figures Three, Four and Five.

I will draw an illustrative example of the use of this method from my research in Japan. In Figure Three, the governor of rural Fukuzaki Prefecture continues his predecessor's policy of heavy industrialization. A gigantic steel and oil refinery project had already been built, and the governor proposed to double its size by adding on more of the same plus processors like synthetic fiber factories. In this, he has the implicit accord of the local capitalist class and the branches of national capital located there. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) represents that class in the prefectural legislature, and rubber-stamps the governor's pro-development policies. But it lets much of the initiation of policy up to the governor (as is common in Japan).

(Figure Three about here)

In Figure Three, sanctions are not overtly exchanged between the major actors (the prefectural government, local and national capital, and the LDP) because they operate under a temporary consensus about the virtues of industrialization and no other major groups oppose them. Initial objections by a small citizens' movement are ignored by the governor. The context is

**Figure Three: Elite Consensus on Development**



**G** = Governor

**L** = LDP in Prefectural Legislature

**C** = Local and Branch Capital

**M** = Local Citizens' Movement

Issue: Industrial Development

= Pro-Development Stance.

= Pro-Environmental Protection Stance.

Context:

1. National fervor for rapid economic growth.

2. Prefectural government pride in successful development.

Sanction:

1. Capitalists influence LDP through campaign financing.

2. Capitalists influence Governor through electoral power.

3. Governor has institutional power over the legislature, where he initiates most of the bills.

4. Governor has institutional ability to reject citizen demands.

one of high-speed growth in Japan as a whole, and most parties feel it necessary for Fukuzaki to follow the trend.

In Figure Four, all this changes drastically. The citizens' movement appeals to the newly-formed Environmental Agency (EA) in the central government. More than simply appeal, they eventually go to the EA en masse to protest the governor's industrialization policies, reputedly intending to stage a riot and throw chairs through windows if they don't get some satisfaction. This action would publicly dramatize the environmental pollution of Fukuzaki already caused by the project, and cause the EA loss of legitimacy by implying that it wasn't doing its job (political sanction).

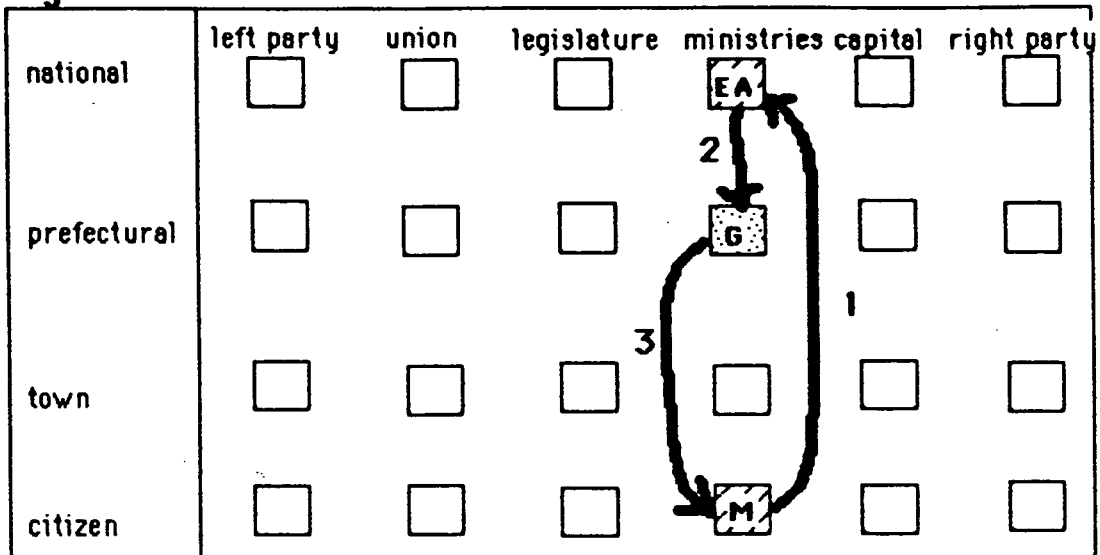
In turn the EA called the governor and strongly suggested that he conduct a formal environmental impact assessment of the planned expansion of the industrial project (political sanction with economic implications in terms of government funding and approval). The governor did not want to anger the EA, nor to look like it could not control its citizens (here the movement applied cultural sanctions on him, based on the traditional yet still strong ethic that the governor should be the "paterfamilias" of the prefectural citizens). In a panic, he called together his staff that morning and decided to compromise with the EA and citizens' demands. He issued a pronouncement that the industrial project was temporarily "shelved" until three conditions were met: environmental impact assessment, citizen consensus, and peaceful relations among the fishermen.

(Figure Four about here)

Figure Four finds many strong sanctions exchanged between the actors. The movement outflanks the governor by appeal to the center, which in turn imposes new sanctions upon the latter. Here, the movement cleverly uses intrinsic sanctions involving loss of face to achieve extrinsic sanctions, the threatened loss of political and economic support (positive sanctions) between members of the polity. A fading public belief in rapid growth and growing worry about pollution forms the context. The national elites themselves are divided over the issue. As a consequence, the major economic ministries (Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Ministry of Construction) decide to allow the weaker EA to try an unprecedented test case of impact assessment in Fukuzaki.

Figure Five presents the conservative backlash. The local capitalist class had grown accustomed to construction contracts and growing markets derived from the industrialization project. National capital as well already had its branch plants in the project, and had plans to expand these on the new landfill. As soon as these classes understood the implications of the governor's compromises for their interests, they issued a vociferous public criticism of the governor through the LDP. In this way, they threatened to

**Figure Four: Citizen Movement Outflanks Governor**



**EA** = Environmental Movement

**G** = Governor

**M** = Local Citizens' Movement

Issue: Should Fukuzaki Prefecture stop its industrialization plans due to the threat of pollution?

= The threat is insufficient to stop the project.

= The threat is sufficient reason to stop the project, at least until an adequate check can be done.

Context:

1. National hysteria about pollution dangers.
2. International criticism of Japan for pollution.
3. Elite division over what to do about pollution.
4. General loss in local elections by LDP.

Sanction:

1. Citizen movement threatens EA and governor with loss of legitimacy if they don't stop the industrialization project.
2. EA puts institutional pressure on governor, threatening loss of legal permission to continue industrialization at all.
3. Governor compromises by shelving industrial policy.

withdraw their crucial support from his upcoming reelection campaign (political and economic sanctions). This pressure forced the governor to quickly backtrack on how much real content he put into those three compromises. He ended up conforming to their letter, but not their spirit. This amounted to a symbolic adherence to the demands of the EA and the movement, but a de facto rejection.

(Figure Five about here)

The sanctions exchanged between capitalist classes and the governor are primarily economic and political. They involve the threatened withdrawal of real resources needed by the governor to win his reelection. The context of growing citizen doubt about the virtues of heavy industrialization gave added importance to the retention of capitalist support. Their resources helped fuel a broad network of patron-client relations supporting the governor. But in order to preserve the appearance of government as a neutral body, the governor cannot simply renege upon the agreed to compromises. Instead, their symbolic continuance maintains the general legitimacy of the prefectural government, even while behind-the-scenes consultation (nemawashi) with the capitalist class and the LDP reassure them that no real obstacle to further industrialization will arise from it.

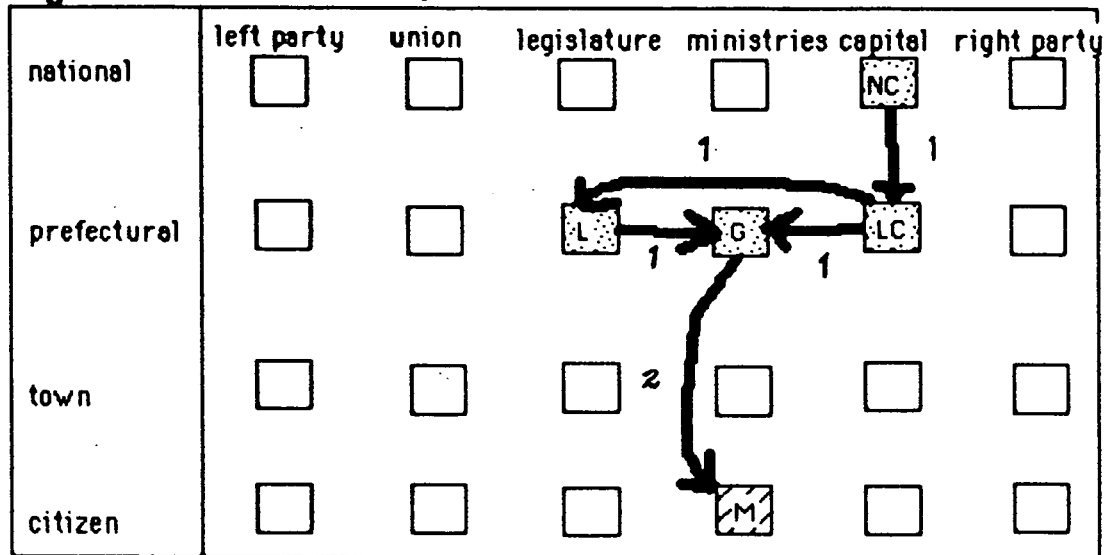
Several interesting theoretical points emerge from this short sequence of event-frames. For instance, the "structure of power" is not solid, monolithic and constant. The governor had several alternatives. In a different context, he might have decided to use police to suppress the movement. But citizens favored their cause, the ministries were divided, and the LDP had only a slim majority. The particular context and conjunction of sanctions brought him to compromise with the movement, in this instance. An analysis without sequential frames, however, might have missed this fluctuation in structure from event to event, and latched on to one event as symptomatic of the whole. Indeed, this is not to deny that a dominant structure may exist in the long run. But the very fact of its temporality, not constancy, has important implications.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the kinds of sanctions used in exchanges do not remain constant between all the organizations which comprise a structure. Personal

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<sup>2</sup> This bears upon the debate about whether the economic or class structure determines politics "in the last instance," even if not in the short run. That is, with SFA we may analyze at what point a given structure, such as the economic, impinges upon the decision-making process, and to what ultimate effect. See Broadbent, 1985, for a fuller exploration of the importance of time upon structural theories of the state.

**Figure Five: Local Capitalist Backlash**



**LC**=Local Capitalist Class

**NC**=National Capitalist Class

**G**=Governor

**L**=LDP in the Prefectural Legislature

**M**=Local Citizens' Movement

Issue: Capitalists resist anti-development compromises.

= More industrial development is needed in Fukuzaki.

= Industrial development will harm Fukuzaki's environment.

Context:

1. Large class of local capitalists has become dependent upon contracts from the government for infrastructure.
2. National capital still finds Fukuzaki harbor attractive.
3. Continued high public fear of pollution.

Sanctions:

1. National capital and local capital give financial support to the LDP, and it represents their interests, so they can sway the reelection of the governor.
2. Governor uses symbolic politics to appear to be fulfilling the compromises, while in fact following the demands of the capitalist classes.



and symbolic sanctions, such as the assertion of moral superiority, may be important to weld certain actors together, but may have little relevance to their allies. They prefer the provision of economic and political resources. In itself, the pattern of transformation from one to another sanction between actors has great significance. It differs from society to society, and from context to context. What in one society will lead to the use of economic reprisal, will in another lead to symbolic ritual.

Also, the political effectiveness of a given resource (its convertibility to a sanction) varies by context. The context "valorizes" the resource as it is employed. For example, the demonstration at the EA by the movement, if done in a more conservative time, would have brought police repression down upon their heads, and probably much worse suffering than if they had borne the original insult without complaint.

Lastly, we see that third party organizations or publics may act as allies even if they are not "convinced." While more or less neutral to the original issue, they may do so because they are inconvenienced by the fracas it is causing. This is obviously a very temporary sort of alliance, but an effective one for the moment nonetheless.

I developed this method of analysis in order to analyze "societal decision-making" for the case of regional industrialization in southern Japan mentioned above. In full, I use seventeen frames to trace the struggle through twenty-five years, from 1955 to 1980 (see Broadbent, 1982). The method evolved in the following way. It proved difficult to conceive of the changes in elite and opposition alliances and their interaction over such a long period. Most studies focus on one institution, or a very limited set of them: elite alliances, public corporations, specific policies, citizens' movements. Or, if struggle itself is focused on, the actors are made into categories: "the state," "the movement." I became aware of a much more differentiated process, in which actors moved from latent to active engagement with the issues and struggles. This process in itself was so complex that looking at it sequentially proved the only way to grasp it. After arranging the action in that way, I became aware that the process was genetic; that one action sparked off or activated another. This differed from my previous impression of the political process, in which set actors held to set positions.

Looking at the sequence of events, the similarity of each to a network of ties between actors became apparent.<sup>3</sup> The actors engaged with an issue in any one event were too few to justify a quantitative network analysis. The network perspective, however, sensitized me to systemic, interconnected qualities of the whole frame. Distinguishing between different types of sanctions used by actors pushed this network perspective in a way that connected narrative empiricism and individual action with the concept of structure.

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<sup>3</sup> I owe this insight to the suggestion of Dr. James Ennis, now of Tufts University.

### III. Discussion

Sequential frame analysis itself and the illustrative examples suggest certain new perspectives on movement and elite mobilization as a societal decision-making process. Briefly, these are:

1. Resources are not fixed quantities, but are "valorized" by issues.
2. Resources are not activated as an automatic reflection of interests, but require the mediation of "play," discourse and judgement, usually through leaders.
3. Movements develop their strategies incrementally.
4. Movements encounter different structures at different stages of their careers. These constitute "opportunity structures" in a number of possible dimensions. Therefore, attention to the process of interaction between elites, third parties and movements is needed.
5. The ties between elites which make up authoritative structures are not solely composed of political and economic sanctions. Hence, elites may be vulnerable to social and cultural sanctions if appropriately applied.
6. Actors tend to use the "cheapest" sanction effective for a given set of relationships. This implies several "layers" (producing a "front" and "back") of types of sanctions around any given actor, producing a lack of close correspondence between ideology and action, particularly in the case of third parties.
7. The dominant power structure, and hence the "political opportunity structure," is not monolithic. It changes according to the issue, and may be composed of a variety of sanctions and structures.
8. The core elite which dominates a given coalition, and imposes structure, has a base in one type of resource. But this is readily exchanged for other resources. Hence, as their power extends, the bonds between actors change. Movements may strike at these peripheral bonds if it controls more of the resources upon which it relies.
9. The interaction between issues and emergent actor coalitions produces unintended consequences. These become new issues which produce new actor coalitions. Hence, the process is genetic and stochastic.
10. The underlying distribution of resources between classes changes more slowly than the particular emergent dominant and oppositional coalitions. Hence, a latent hierarchy of power exists. But this only becomes socially evident when activated by an issue.

To explain these points in more detail:

1. The resources held by a given group, including a social movement organization, are not fixed but vary for two reasons. The first has often been noted: historical social change such as industrialization reallocates resources between classes. The second has not been noted to my knowledge: the issue-context "valorizes" the resources held by a given group. That is, the resource

a given actor has may suddenly become more in demand because it helps resolve a new social issue.

For instance, the vote of the blacks in the North became "valorized" by the weakness of the national Democratic Party and the decline of the Dixiecrats in the South. Likewise, in the Japanese example, the political potential and costs of disruption changed in the movement's favor due to the issue context. Just as the structure is not monolithic, so too with resources. Resources achieve crucial power because the context defines them to be so. The power of the church to legitimate a king is negligible until a powerful restorationist movement arises. Then the king needs the church, and suddenly, the church has new bargaining power. Resource mobilization theory (Zald and McCarthy) posits that a change in the distribution of resources (time, money, land, knowledge,...) allows movements to mobilize. But a truly market-oriented interpretation would look to the demand for those resources, too.

Hence, the process of conversion of resources into power, which is posited as a function of the movement entrepreneur by McCarthy and Zald, is more complicated than that. They imply that the entrepreneur mobilizes latent resources that have been redistributed by the process of historical structural change. The spread of education puts knowledge into more hands; later this is useful to the womens' movement (Freeman).

While this is certainly a insightful, it does not encompass the entire process. According to the frame analysis perspective, the issue itself may up the value of a resource, even one that had been there all the time. The potential of an issue to do this may help explain the sudden appearance of social movements with no apparent relation to an equally sudden increase in historically-derived resources.

2. The power of a given group depends upon its ability to convert latent resources into effective sanctions. This conversion occurs when the actor becomes aware of an opportunity, or is pushed by a new threat. Many forces condition awareness, including cultural traditions and habits, and the social relations one has. One who does not wish to cut ties with neighborhood friends, may not take action that might arouse their criticism. Hence, the use of sanctions is no automatic reflection of one's "objective" interests. Furthermore, actors often calculate potential gains and costs, and the probability of success depending upon the potential of one's sanctions upon the opponents. Sometimes symbolic sanctions will serve to halt an opponent, in which case an economically powerless group can wield considerable political power.

Cultural and social structures based on intrinsic sanctions help define the "opportunity structure," just as do the political and economic. Hence, any study of power and protest must systematically include them.

Tarrow's initial inquiry into the importance of "discourse" for generating social movements addresses the symbolic structural aspect. The relation of these structures to those built of extrinsic sanctions may be more than "epiphenomenal." Sequential frame analysis gives a systematic method for investigating the empirical relationship between them in a given event series.

The ability to distance oneself from the set roles and sanctions of the society, to ignore the benefits derived therefrom, is perhaps the crucial quality of a movement leader. This allows the leader to avoid cooptation back into the dominant institutions. In social play, social roles are inverted and temporarily rejected. Thus, the play process is perhaps the seed bed of oppositional thinking. When grievances get strong enough, it is during periods of play, of which unstructured intercourse such as in a bar is one example, that reflection, criticism and new strategies evolve.

3. Movements encounter the power structure incrementally. They engage in a developmental process in which the strengths of each are felt out by the other. The encounter with dominant elites is most evident in the political and economic arenas. There, extrinsic sanctions are used: workers strike, farmers chase away tax collectors, police charge demonstrators. However, enormous effort goes into delegitimization of each other and building social ties with allies, as well.

However, collective action is preceded by a long period of mobilization. In the earlier stage, cultural and social structures play a crucial role. If dominant elites can control those intrinsic sanctions within the social groups where the movement develops, they may be able to defuse or prevent collective action.

The theory of collective action and resource mobilization tries to portray movements as rational politics; "politics by other means." This is a healthy corrective to the "unruly mob" perspective stemming from Le Bon and continued in the collective behavior school. However, many of the actions of movements seem to take on symbolic aspects which are hard to account for. Tilly interprets this as the slow change of a "repertoire" of protest.

Sequential frame analysis suggests that movements (and often elites) do not know the full field of opposition that they will encounter, nor do they always try to work out long-range strategies for success. They act for rational reasons, but based on their immediate interests and situation. Strategic rationality evolves during the process of encounter with dominant structures and authoritative elites.

Movements continually test elite structures in small ways. If they achieve a little success, they try more. A strong success becomes a model and spreads to other similarly situated groups (Morris). There is a gradual

escalation or de-escalation according to the early interactions between movement and power structure.

Active engagement over an issue seems to have a short range quality. Many groups do not keep comprehensive watch over potential issues, although this differs with their degree of institutionalization. Many act only when directly threatened. When one group threatens their interests, they react. They try to mobilize the necessary resources, apply sufficient sanctions, to fend off the threat. In this sense, they are all "reactive." Of course, in certain lines of speciality, they may actively seek new benefits, such as profits for the capitalist concern. But even there, most companies are very conservative. Thus, the process exhibits a stochastic, random quality. Each reaction juncture is defined not only by the intrinsic interests of the organization, but by the conjuncture of resources, sanctions, interests, and issues.

4. Sequential frame analysis is especially pertinent to the study of social movements, because the field is now awakening to the importance of context. That is, more and more we see that social movements do not arise in a vacuum, but in delicate response to a structure of opportunities that define the costs and benefits of collective action. And that actors conceive of these costs and benefits within limited ranges, with "bounded rationality" (March and Simon).

Therefore, there is great need for a more detailed approach to the "*process* of responding to protest—particularly as it is mediated by the political allies and support groups who make the protestors' case in policy-making institutions..." This process "inevitably affects the content of reform." (Tarrow, pg 48). The methods of research proposed here strike directly at that problem, albeit on a case basis. However, the structures which present "opportunities" to a movement differ according to the stage of its development. That is, if an elite can control the cultural symbols of resistance, it can exercise an "ideological hegemony" (Gramsci) that undercuts the will to mobilize. Similarly, if elites can control the personal interaction within the subject group, perhaps through patron-client networks, it can undercut the collective solidarity and discourse necessary to mobilization.

Since this early repression may take place through cultural or social structures, the rational strategy of the movement may also emphasize those sanctions. Movements may chant religious prayers in order to counter the claim of elites to divine right. Movements may preach self-reliance in order to counter the old social reliance upon patrons that is making people fearful to join. These strategies may seem irrational and unrelated to penetrating the structure of power, to entering the polity, unless the analysis includes the several dimensions of structure.

Tarrow notes three components of the strictly political opportunity structure: "the openness or closure of political access;...the stability or instability of alignments within the political system; and...the availability and strategic posture of potential alliance partners."(pg. 28). These three factors determine the "rules of the game" in the political structure, what resources and actors win and lose. They refer essentially to the coherence and unity of the elites who run the major institutions, and their control over the formal and informal channels of policy-making. The movements "bounce off" these structures and take shape. The resource the elites hold is seen as, essentially, the power to make law and establish policy. Law and policy refer to the formal rules of participation in decision-making, and to the distribution of benefits from the state budget. Given the wide powers of the law, it is no wonder that the state is the target of many movements.

Movements are seen as a response to opportunities, to openings, in this power structure. The openings allow them to penetrate it, to be heard. If successful, they get a bigger share of the pie. This certainly constitutes an advance in the understanding of movement and structure as a dialectical interchange.

However, there exists at present an unnecessary identification of the polity with political means of social control. While the primary resource of control held by capitalists is economic means, such as firings, they certainly are not confined to that. The state has often been at their service. Why then must the struggle between movements and the state be seen as only political? Rather, the dominant elite institution may include control of a wide variety of resources, and use them selectively to suppress, coopt, divert, and demobilize movements.

Hence, a wide range of structures exist in society, and channel the course of change. To understand the context of mobilization, we need to include all four dimensions of "structure;" economic, political, social and cultural. We need to see these as they form role-sets, and as the mind of the role-taker accepts and rejects them. Furthermore, we need to understand the mixtures of sanctions, how the structures interpenetrate at different levels of the society.

In other words, the institution through which elites control the actions of subordinates may be based on a mix of sanctions, or on strictly social or cultural ones. It need not logically reduce to political-economic power at all important junctures. The function of the institution defines the basic mix of sanctions over which it has control: a political party has influence over the legislature through its control over votes; a union has influence with the employer through its power over labor. However, this basic sanction may be traded by the institution (concretely, the organization) for others, to extend its reach. The political party may enhance its legislative potential through using dramatic appeals to patriotism (cultural symbols, as dealt with

in Edelman). The union may enhance the economic loyalty of its members through supporting social ties and solidarity among its members (social resources). This is a matter for empirical research in each case. Therefore, we need a methodology flexible enough to encompass the potential dimensions of power.

5. The strength of coalitions between dominant elites are an important factor in controlling entry to the polity. While these bonds are often of mutual economic and political self-interest, they may also be composed of cultural and social bonds. It may be possible for movements to de-legitimate those alliances and create public withdrawal of support.

6. Each actor will try to produce the desired effect as easily as possible. This sometimes pushes them toward dissimulation, the manipulation of others. Deals cut at one point may be renegeed in effect, while not overtly violated. Politicians' use of "symbolic politics" (Edelman) is one example: what they promise and what they deliver may be very different.

Lukes proposed an entire typology of macro-power relations. His first is decisional, the kind Dahl presumes to govern a pluralistic polity. Issues reach the public arena, where they are decided upon by majority vote. "Non-decisional" power means that certain elites have the power to keep issues off the serious public agenda, through suppression of its advocates, delegitimization of the issue through the media, or control of the legislative agenda setting process (Crenson, Bachrach and Baratz). Ideological hegemony refers to the control of popular preferences, the shaping of their interests and sense of the possible (Gramsci). Finally, social hegemony, a term I have coined, refers to control of political action through the control of local influentials, who apply their prestige and friendship "capital" on locals (Broadbent, 1985a). Actions on an issue taken publicly may be countervailed by backstage deals, and the public numbed into acceptance. Much foreign policy seems to operate this way, as the story of the Vietnam War reveals (N.Y. Times, The Pentagon Papers).

This is especially evident in the case of third party "allies." If the necessary sanctions are applied to a given actor, it will often react to minimize costs if this does not contradict its own basic interests. Thus, third party allies can be created if the necessary resources can be applied. Third parties come to the aid of movements or other actors not so much through conversion (cultural sanctions) as through being inconvenienced by the actions of the movement.

7. As an issue, such as industrialization, looms closer and takes on actuality, different groups get a clearer idea of their potential costs and benefits from its social effect. Then they re-evaluate their stance on it. Hence, the support alliance may shift. In this way, cattlemen and environmentalists find themselves against strip mining in the South-West.

Local capitalists and the Communist Party may both oppose local heavy industrialization, though for different reasons. Hence, while the issue itself stays fairly stable, the groups supporting or opposing it may shift.

We need to reject the notion that the "power structure" itself is static, homogeneous, or monolithic, for all its asymmetrical possession of resources. In my own research, I found the distribution of power resources to be a latent quality of a society, as Dahl maintains. Issues activate the interests of groups, who then mobilize their resources in order to pursue those interests. If issues of interest do not arise, those groups tend not to become involved. Thus, the process by which a grassroots movement of the powerless mobilizes cannot be charted against a constant dominant elite (state, class, etc.). Rather, the process of opposition and repression/facilitation must be seen as dialectical, as mobilization and counter-mobilization.

This view offers a solution to why the "power structure" seems to change with each issue, as Dahl pointed out. But it should not lead to his conclusion--that no continuous power structure exists. It does, but it is latent. Thus, a hierarchy of potential powers exist for any given issue. Change occurs most readily, structure is weakest, where powerful groups lack sufficient concern with the issue at hand to fight for it, to maintain the status quo. Or, with issues of potential objective interest to them, they miss its significance. So they let weaker groups fight it out.

Emergent organization refers to new ones created by people to meet the needs of the time. They emerge from the process of coping. Pluralists like Dahl favor this point of view, because it rejects the notion of a solid dominant class. Dahl sees the dominant coalition as shifting according to the issue, with little continuity. Yet, many other findings report great consistency in the dominant groups (Hunter, Domhoff, Miliband). The distinction between active and latent structures of power helps resolve this paradox. Groups do activate according to their interest. But they still maintain a hierarchy of potential power, of resources and sanctions. Thus, relatively powerless groups may achieve success on issues which do not arouse the concern of more powerful ones. But this should not be taken to imply that the polity is pluralistic.

The concept of "structure" is used in many ways in social science. But basically, as its architectural image suggests, it refers to a social force or situation that is beyond the power of an individual actor to change easily. Hence, it confronts the actor and conditions its actions. The actor must take it into account in order to accomplish something.

Concepts of structure range from the cultural, seen as deep symbolic "codes" that condition the very way people perceive, to various types of the social, such as social networks, income distribution, sectoral distribution of industry, and class structures based on the ownership of the means of production. These various concepts of structure are usually treated as



separate paradigms, within which independent and autonomous analyses of society occur. This leads to an unfortunate Balkanization of the social sciences, with each sub-discipline plagued by a nagging feeling of incompleteness.

The method of sequential frame analysis provides a step toward the resolution of that problem of Balkanization. It operationalizes the concept of structure in a way that can distinguish between its different types. That is, it assumes that a "structure" is an ongoing exchange system between social actors (individual or organizational) that has achieved sufficient regularity to appear stable. Several types of structure may interpenetrate each other, as in the earlier examples of the Khomeini regime and Japanese industrial development. The SFA method can distinguish between them by looking at the constituent ties of inter-organizational system, and tracing out which are dominant within an alliance of actors.

Using the typology of sanctions, one can look at the exchanges between the organizations and decipher the constituent bonds. Elites which are bound together by the power of money from the capitalist class may be called class structures of domination. Those in which the coercive power of the state is primary: "statocentric" structures. Those in which social ties bind together the elites: status structures. Those in which the force of a common ideology or set of values: "symbolocentric" structures. This broad consideration of structural power provides a wider range of "templates" against which movements may take shape. In its light, the notion of "rational opposition strategy" takes on wider significance.

The theory of collective action tends to assume that the polity and the economy form the crucial authoritative structures against which movements emerge and act. This may be true in broad outline, but the micro-processes which circulate influence may not be confined to political and economic sanctions. And junctures within them may possibly exert great influence on the macro-structures over time. These micro-junctures may reflect social and cultural structures.

8. Dominant political groups and "the ruling class" are often characterized as if they ruled by control of one resource alone, usually money. Conversely, powerless groups are assumed to be so because of the lack of resources. What emerges from sequential frame analysis is the transformation of sanctions. That is, a decision reached for political necessity may be carried out through social connections.

In a very general way, the principle of the relationship of structures in this process seems to be "concentric." That is, economic issues spark interests which then apply pressure on other groups. This creates politics; politics mediates interests. But within strata where a sufficient alignment of interests is present, negotiation can occur informally, through social networks. Social networks (affective and kinship ties) are usually stronger

within such strata, because interests do not conflict. The process of informal negotiation creates and reinforces them. Within such socially integrated circles, discourse occurs which builds up common symbolic sub-cultures justifying the identities, interests, and pursuits of that group.

Yet, examples may be found where the social or cultural structures played crucial roles in the motion of the political-economic. As Weber says, ideas are the "switchmen of history;" they can sometimes switch the hurtling freight train of political-economic structures (and their impelling interests) on to a new track, going to a new destination (Bendix).

9. The sequential frame analysis presented in this paper shows that unintended consequences spring up from the actions of elites as well as social movements. For instance, the governor did not expect that his compromise with the environmental movement would cause the enraged reaction of the capitalist class. This destroyed his fragile agreement with the movement, and reasserted the previous structure of power. To trace the sequences of interaction which actually generate unintended consequences and consequent structural change constitutes a major sociological task.

10. The latent hierarchy probably follows the inherent force of the sanctions controlled, in the order of coercive, economic, social, and lastly cultural. Thus, an essentially Marxist concept of hierarchy is followed in the latent hierarchy. These powerful latent resources are distributed by long-range processes of social change, of which the sequential frame analysis can only catch the shortest instances. However, at times cultural or social sanctions and structures may intervene in the process of historical development so as to affect the very distribution of extrinsic resources.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Sequential frame analysis offers a qualitative method to analyze the micro-interactions between individual actors as indicative of the macro-sociological structures which they compose. Because of its generalizing tendencies, structural analysis suffers from hypostatization, or misplaced concreteness attributed to abstractions and concepts. These structural abstractions cannot capture the details of real interaction, and hence a division between empirical analysis and structural theory sometimes arises. Yet, both are necessary wings, if the bird called sociology is to fly. The solution lies in breaking down or operationalizing the concepts of structure into component types of interactions, so that a connection between structure and micro-interaction can be made. However, the number of micro-interactions is so vast that most analysts have focused on one level or the other, and if the latter, on micro-interactions between one very limited set of actors. What is needed to bridge the gap is a method for selecting the most relevant sets of interactions throughout the community or society, and linking

them together as they interact over a common issue. The societal frame purports to do that.

In addition, it is both fascinating and necessary to understand the process by which structures reproduce themselves and change. Macro-structures, like the structure of government-business interaction, reproduce themselves over time, or usually change more slowly than micro-interactions. If the societal frames are looked at in sequence, the precise location of change or stability may be pinpointed. The precise micro-interaction which began a change in structure may be located. In this way, the origins of both stasis and change may be clearly located. Hopefully this method will make some small contribution toward the resolution of the perennial debates within sociology about these matters.

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