#### **BRINGING INSTITUTIONS BACK IN**

#### A Collective Action Perspective on Addressing Global Challenges

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## What is a collective-action problem?

- A situation in which the short-term self-interest of individual actors conflicts with longer-term collective interests, generating a substantial risk that the collective benefit is not produced at all (Olson 1965)
- Builds on social dilemma theory:
  - Payoff<sub>Defection</sub> > Payoff<sub>Cooperation</sub> regardless of others' actions
  - All individual actors receive a lower payoff if most defect than if most cooperate



#### **Collective-action situations**

- Situations where two or more actors <u>have to</u> cooperate/coordinate to achieve common goals
- But where we often fail to do so...





## **Collective-action theory...**

- ...is a powerful tool to understand and explain problems on all levels of society
- From the major global problems humanity are currently facing





## **Collective-action theory...**

- ...is a powerful tool to understand and explain problems on all levels of society
- From the major global problems humanity are currently facing
- To the small-scale problems of human interaction













"[...] the theory of collective action is the central subject of political science. It is the core of the justification for the state.

Collective-action problems pervade international relations, face legislators when devising public budgets, permeate public bureaucracies, and are at the core of explanations of voting, interest group formation, and citizen control of governments in a democracy.

If political scientists do not have an empirically grounded theory of collective action, then we are hand-waving at our central questions."

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## A key social-science problem

"It is not terribly difficult to know what needs to be done, though it is of course immensely difficult to get the relevant actors (government and other) to do it" (Barry 1999: 166)



Without "coercion or some other special device", rational and selfinterested individuals will not voluntarily cooperate in collectiveaction situations "unless the group is very small" (Olson 1965)

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### Why do we have collective-action problems?

- Because modern societies are characterized by an everincreasing need for *free-access goods*
- Goods which, once produced, are (more-or-less) open for all to enjoy
  - Toll-free roads, a common defense, law & order, new technology, clean air, clean water, natural resources
  - The larger and more complex societies grow, the bigger the need for free-access goods



#### Different goods – different CA problems





### The Individual's Dilemma

Win-Win: mutual reward Everyone is better off if most contributes (limiting consumption or contributing to production)

#### What if noone else does?

- I'll be the only one...
- What will happen with the good?
- Depletion, despite my efforts (and costs)

The Sucker's payoff

Why contribute?



#### Temptation to defect

What if most do? If everyone else contributes, my free-riding will not matter - Access without cost

Regardless of what others do, it is better for me NOT to contribute

> Loose-Loose: mutual punishment

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#### The (very rational) choice of strategy





# **Current challenges in the transportation field**

- An institutional perspective on the green transition of transport
- New modes of behavior
  - Individuals
  - Industry
- New infrastructure
- New need for natural resources
- New (renewable) energy production







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#### **Solving Collective-Action Problems**

"The really big puzzle in the social sciences is the development of a consistent theory to explain why cooperation levels vary so much..." (Ostrom 1998)



## **Volountary cooperation?**

- Rationality, for example in traffic
- Values-based:

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sustainability

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gical Citizens: Identifying Values and Beliefs that Support dual Environmental Responsibility among Swedes

Original Article 🙃 Full Access

SOCIAL SCIENCE

Testing the Importance of Individuals' Motives for Explaining C. Jagers <sup>1+</sup> and Simon Mattl<sup>2</sup> Environmentally Significant Behavior\*

Sverker C. Jagers, Stefan Linde, Johan Martinsson, Simon Matti 🔀



#### **Original Article**

The Environmental Psychology of the Ecological Citizen: Comparing Competing Models of Pro-Environmental Behavior\*

Sverker C. Jagers, Johan Martinsson, Simon Matti 🔀



CHRISTER BERGLUND\* & SIMON MATTI\*\*

Citizen and Consumer: the Dual Role

of Individuals in Environmental Policy

\*Division of Economics, Luleå University of Technology, \*\*Division of Political Science,

Ecological citizenship: a driver of proenvironmental behaviour?

Sverker C. Jagers, Johan Martinsson & Simon Matti

Environmental Politics.

Vol. 15, No. 4, 550-571, August 2006

Luleå University of Technology, Luleå, Sweden

 Conditional cooperation: when we can <u>trust</u> others to do the same – also in the long term

### The importance of scale

#### Small-scale settings

- Limited number of known actors
- Specific resource pool (e.g. a watercatchement area, a common, a stationary fish-stock)
- A joint interest
- $\rightarrow$  Communication and mutual monitoring possible

Self-regulation, without relying on a third-party (the State)

#### Large-scale settings

Although two neighbours may agree to drain a common meadow, to have a thousand neighbours agree on such a project becomes too complex a matter to execute. (David Hume: *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 1740)

Third-party intervention to encourage, regulate, monitor, and enforce compliance - A proxy for trust

<u>of technology</u>

## Why institutions?

Institutions are <u>the rules of the game</u> in society composed of the formal rules (constitutions, statute and common law, regulations), the informal constraints (norms, conventions and internally devised codes of conduct) <u>and the enforcement characteristics</u> of each





"The neccesity of governmental coercion"

Overcoming collective action problems is "the most significant reason for government"

#### The neccessity of a "third-party"





During the time men live <u>without a</u> <u>common power to keep them all in awe</u>, they are in that conditions called war; and such a war, as if of every man, against every man"

"No arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death: <u>and the life of man,</u> <u>solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.</u>"







#### Do we need more institutions?

An increasing need for (a decreasing amount of) free-access goods

→ More collective-action situations to handle

 $\rightarrow$  Institutions as remedies



### **A Second-order Collective-Action Problem**





What can/should government do? Which institutions/measures are acceptable – and why? What is requested from individuals/industry?



## Acceptability in focus

- When do we accept governmental coercion?
- Why support for some measures, but not for others?
  - Individual, interrelational, and contextual explanations



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# Can we change policy attitudes?

- Attitudes change with experience...
- ...with education...
- ...and through information cues



ARTICLE

The evolution of public policy attitudes: comparing the mechanisms of policy support across the stages of a policy cycle

Sverker C. Jagers<sup>1</sup>, Simon Matti<sup>1,24</sup> and Katarina Nordblom<sup>3</sup>

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How exposure to policy tools transforms the mechanisms behind public acceptability and acceptance—The case of the Gothenburg congestion tax

Sverker C. Jagers, Simon Matti & Andreas Nilsson





Hanna Holmquist <sup>a. \*</sup>, Sverker C. Jagers <sup>b</sup>, Simon Matti <sup>c</sup>, Magdalena Svanström <sup>a</sup>, Gregory M. Peters <sup>a. d</sup>

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Higher education, norm development, and environmental protection

Niklas Harring 10 - Sverker C. Jagers 1 - Simon Matti<sup>2</sup>

## Can we change policy attitudes?

#### More importantly: Policy design!

- Addressing the percieved (negative) consequences of a policy



# **Upcoming questions**

- How should the costs for a green transition be distributed?
- The principal/agent problem in environmental policy-making: public opinion or special interests as the major influence?
  - The opinion policy connection
- Procedural fairness, or fairness of outcomes?
- Possible policy-packages/policy-designs going beyond fee-anddividend?
- Attitudinal effects of step-wise policy implementation?
- Policy opportunities in developing countries?
  - Effects of democracy, quality of government etc.



