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Examining the Relationship between Emerging and Prevailing Institutional Logics in an Early Stage of Institutional Entrepreneurship

Abstract: This study examines how potential institutional entrepreneurs in the Swedish policy process construct an emerging institutional logic to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the Swedish agricultural sector. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between this emerging logic and the prevailing logics. A case study is used to investigate a project led by the Swedish Board of Agriculture, and qualitative methods are applied to reveal how policy makers reflect upon and discuss prevailing goals and templates. The results demonstrate that templates currently in use are handled in four ways: diffusion (or failure) and translation (or failure). Failures occur when translation or diffusion is discussed but subsequently dropped due to, for example, resistance. The conclusion is that the new logic is less of a divergent break with the prevailing logics and more of a co-mingling containing changed, re-used, and new templates rationalized by preexisting as well as new political goals.

Keywords: institutional logics, institutional entrepreneurship, templates in use, climate change, agriculture

Introduction

Neo-institutional research has increasingly focused on understanding how actors at the micro-level deal with the institutional logics that prevail in their contexts (Reay and Hinings, 2009; Randall and Munro,

2010). Institutional logics provide the organizing principles for an organizational field. They are made up of templates, equivalent to blueprints, describing legitimate and rational practice (Battilana, Boxenbaum and Leca, 2009). As such, institutional logics provide the goals to be pursued and the various templates for accomplishing these goals.

One such example of micro-level activity is agency staff aiming to devise new industry-level policy, which is here understood to be potential institutional entrepreneurs in the policy process. As agency staff attempt to construct political strategies with the intent to implement new goals in a particular industry, a social space is created for challenging prevailing institutional logics and the various templates that these contain. Institutional entrepreneurs are change agents who initiate divergent changes, such changes that break with the institutional logic for practice within a given institutional context (Battilana, Boxenbaum and Leca, 2009). Trying to work out a political strategy containing templates as well as new goals can thus be considered an early stage of institutional entrepreneurship (Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007).

The current study draws on an example from the Swedish agricultural sector in which personnel at the designated expert authority—namely, the Swedish Board of Agriculture (SBA)—try to determine a strategy to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the sector. GHG

emissions contribute to global climate change, and agriculture represents 20% of domestic emissions (IPCC, 2007; Jordbruksverket, 2008). In these micro-level activities, the agency staff challenges templates in use underpinned by prevailing logics, ultimately suggesting various changes within them.

Institutional logics possibly challenged by these activities include both those prevailing in the industry—namely, existing conventional and alternative approaches to farming—and different political logics prescribing various political goals. Conventional farming is distinguished by specialization and intensification in farming practices, thereby mimicking industry, whereas alternative approaches are distinguished by integration and extensive practices, thereby mimicking nature's way of producing. Among the alternative approaches, organic farming has progressed into the most serious challenger. According to KRAV (2011), the certifying organ for organic farming, 12.5% of Swedish arable land was organic in 2010, indicating that this sector (i.e., the organizational field) resembles other examples studied in previous research by containing several competing logics, with one holding a dominant position (Reay and Hinings, 2009; Thornton and Occasio, 1999). Political goals include other agro-environmental issues such as biodiversity, eutrophication, and pesticide use; thus, in determining the new logic, the agency has to consider any potential conflict with these goals. Such goals can be understood as policy makers' earlier attempts to establish field-level

logics. In Sweden, politicians direct their agencies through goal setting (Sundström, 2003). Indeed, currently agencies such as the SBA are supposed to implement 16 environmental goals, including reducing GHG emissions, in their sectors.

Inspired by the recent theoretical debate on institutional entrepreneurship as a way to induce institutional change through shifts in institutional logics (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006; Garud, Hardy and Maguire, 2007; Hardy and Maguire, 2008; Battilana, Boxenbaum and Leca, 2009), this situation raises several questions: What is the relationship between the emerging logic and the prevailing ones? How are templates that are part of the prevailing logics handled in this change initiative? Does this emerging logic diverge from the prevailing ones?

The purpose of the current study is to analyze the relationship between the emerging logic constructed in the policy process and prevailing logics. For this purpose we need to understand how potential entrepreneurs reflect upon, discuss, and challenge templates in use supported by prevailing logics. The paper is outlined as follows. First, the literature on institutional logics, institutional entrepreneurship, and micro-level change (diffusion and translation) is introduced. Second, the methodological considerations behind the choice of a case study are presented. Third, the case is described. Fourth, the different ways that prevailing templates were handled in the project are explored, and

four ways of handling templates are identified. Several conclusions of the relationship between prevailing and emerging logics are also discussed. Finally, the contributions of this study to the literature on institutional entrepreneurship as well as micro-studies of institutional logics are put forward.

Institutional entrepreneurship, institutional logics, and micro-activities of change

Interest in institutional entrepreneurship (i.e., the activities of institutional entrepreneurs) was generated by Paul DiMaggio when he suggested that institutional changes might result as “organized actors with sufficient resources (institutional entrepreneurs) see in them an opportunity to realize interests they value highly” (DiMaggio 1988: 14). This comment was a response to the criticism against neo-institutional theory for not being able to explain divergent change—that is, change that runs counter to the institutional logics of organizational fields (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Greenwood and Hinings, 1996; Dacin, Goodstein and Scott, 2002; Battilana, Boxenbaum and Leca, 2009; 2009; Scott, 2010). Institutional logics “are the bases for taken-for-granted rules guiding behaviour of field level actors” (Reay and Hinings, 2009: 629). As such they contain templates in use that guide actors in performing their daily activities (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996; Battilana, Boxenbaum and Leca, 2009). Logics contain shared definitions of the goals that prevail in a particular institutional context as well as the means by which the templates are designed to meet those goals (Battilana, Boxenbaum and

Leca, 2009). Thus, a divergent change in logics can be understood as a change in the templates alongside a change in the prevailing goals.

Recent studies of institutional logics have accentuated that several competing logics often exist within organizational fields, although one is usually dominant (Thornton and Occasio, 1999; Reay and Hinings, 2009). More or less pronounced tensions and conflicts might exist among actors affiliated with the competing logics (Hoffman, 1999), but accounts of pragmatic collaborations among such actors have also been offered (Reay and Hinings, 2009). As such, institutional entrepreneurship might be understood as promoting the alternative to the dominant logic. Yet institutional entrepreneurship can also be understood as establishing new goals and new templates, similar to a new emerging logic (DiMaggio, 1988). Thus, the micro-activities of potential institutional entrepreneurs when they challenge and reflect upon prevailing logics and templates in use with the intent to construct a new logic can be understood as an early stage of institutional entrepreneurship (Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007; Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). Based on this theoretical perspective, the policy process with its attempts to devise strategies and implement (new) political goals can be understood as a space for potential institutional entrepreneurship. However, this approach raises the question of how much the content of such strategies—namely, the actual changes in templates suggested—diverges from templates already in use or if

new goals are simply used to provide additional purposes and rationalizations to existing practices.

Micro activities of change: Translation and diffusion

Zilber (2006) uses two concepts—diffusion and translation—to describe change activities at the micro-level. In the current study, these concepts are used to analyze how templates in use are handled in the early stage of institutional entrepreneurship. Thus, these concepts relate the content of change to the new logic. Diffusion occurs when templates are unchanged and infused in a new context, adopting them as part of the new logic simply by changing the meanings ascribed to a template. Thus, only the rationalizations of the template are changed, not the template itself. For instance, a template as part of the conventional logic may be unchanged but reframed as “climate friendly” as such arguments are developed. Translation occurs when micro-actors change the templates and the underpinning meanings ascribed to it (Latour, 1986; Zilber, 2002; 2006, Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996; Randall and Munro, 2010). Translation thus denotes the process whereby templates from prevailing logics are modified to fit a new emerging logic, indicating some form of change (Randall and Munro, 2010). Analyzing how potential institutional entrepreneurs change templates in use can provide empirical evidence as to how much a new emerging logic diverges from prevailing ones (cf. Battilana, Boxenbaum and Leca, 2009). Based on this understanding, collecting evidence of these micro-activities provides

clues about the relationship between a new logic under construct and the logics that already prevail.

Micro-activities in early stages of institutional entrepreneurship do not directly contain evidence of shifts in logics equivalent to institutional change. However, logics emerging from the policy process may over time, through the use of various regulative and normative mechanisms, contribute to field-level change. Accounts of earlier stages of institutional entrepreneurship focus on the creation of alternatives and the motivation to diffuse them whereas later stages focus on the activities of spreading them (e.g., through theorization) (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). Thus, in the early stage, the focus is on the content of the emerging logic rather than on how it is being promoted. Yet promoting changes in templates may, over time, come to contribute to wider institutional change through the implementation of agricultural policy.

Methodology

The current study explores activities within the Swedish policy process as potential institutional entrepreneurs within the SBA try to determine a strategy to reduce GHG emissions from domestic agriculture. These micro-activities occur within the confinements of a particular action plan project set up to address a formal request from the Swedish government.

To analyze the relationship between this emerging logic and the prevailing ones, the reflections and decisions of the involved SBA staff had to be investigated. For this purpose, qualitative methods are essential (Randall and Munro, 2010). The data sources for examining the action plan project consisted of qualitative interviews as well as written material produced in the project. The latter included the final report, an intermediary draft, written notes from an open workshop, and the answers to the referential round held at the end of the project. The interviews were carried out onsite as well as over the phone at the end of the project (in spring 2010). The first interviews were conducted onsite in order to develop an understanding of the organization and the personnel involved. Direct observations could not be utilized as some of the activities had already taken place by the time the study commenced. Despite this obvious disadvantage, the rich and detailed interview accounts gave a sufficient description of the activities and discussions that had taken place in the project. Furthermore, ample written material was available that described some of these earlier events, such as an initial stakeholder meeting. The case study was also part of a research project concerned more explicitly with the issue of GHG reduction in agriculture; as such, the action plan project was important to study. The initial interviews also made it clear that SBA staff had done most of their work in the last year of the project, indicating that decision making and discussions had been most intense just before the interviews started.ⁱ

Background materials from earlier projects as well as from trade journals were also used to link the suggestions discussed to institutional logics prevailing within the field. For instance, a newspaper debate in which conventional and organic researchers argued about which logic was most climate friendly gave important clues about the competition between these logics (cf. Andersson et al., 2009a; Andersson et al., 2009b; Björklund, 2009; Granstedt, 2009; Vestervall, 2009). This theme was further developed by reading some of the vast amount of research that has focused on the Swedish organic movement (cf. Milestad, Wivstad, Lund and Geber, 2008; Bostrom, 2003; Bostrom and Klintman, 2004; Bostrom and Klintman, 2006).

The aim was to interview all of the people involved in the project, including both SBA staff and experts participating through an advisory board, which resulted in 16 people: 4 experts, one industry representative, one Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) representative, and 10 SBA staff. Two of these individuals—one expert and one staff worker—ultimately were not interviewed as they declined to participate in the study. The interviews lasted between one and four hours and utilized open-ended questions that were prepared by extensive studies of background material.ⁱⁱ The questions focused on 1) the different templates in use that SBA staff and experts were investigating; 2) how these templates had been

discussed, investigated, and decided upon; and 3) the different goals and logics that were affected by possible suggestions.

The first aim of the interviews was to identify which templates were being discussed in order to reconstruct the discussions and development that each template had gone through until they were either made part of the suggested strategies or dropped. Conducting the interviews at the end of the project was advantageous in this regards in that respondents could reflect upon the entire process. As the interviews progressed, more detailed questions on the activities and the templates could be posed. Two SBA personnel who had played a central role were interviewed once more after the project deadline to validate themes. The interviews were fully transcribed and coded according to the different templates that the respondents discussed. Additional codes were used to identify political goals and applied rationalizations. The same approach was applied to the written material, including the main report that contained a 200-page appendix describing investigated templates in use and reflections upon them (Jordbruksverket, 2010b). Sequences that dealt with the same template were put together to provide a fuller account of the discussions that each template had generated. Thus, accounts of how templates in use were handled were provided from the perspective of both experts and SBA staff. In addition, the obtained notes from the referential round gave yet another perspective on these discussions.

Concepts drawn from theory were then used to categorize the reconstructed processes in what can be labeled a theory-driven thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). These categories were based on Zilber's (2006) definitions of translation and diffusion. Translation was used as a category to describe proposals in which both meanings and the described behavior were targeted for change by the suggested strategies. Diffusion occurred when a template was adopted unchanged, but the ascribed meaning was altered, indicating that a template previously rationalized by other logics was presented as a way to reduce GHG emissions as well. In addition, several examples of discussions of possible translation and diffusion that did not end in any suggestions were included.

The next step was to use these findings to analyze the relationship between the emerging logic and the prevailing ones. The analysis sought to discuss this relationship with the intent to understand whether the emerging logic could be regarded as a divergent break with prevailing logics.

Swedish agriculture: Research site

The Swedish agricultural sector consists primarily of family-owned farms equivalent to one or two full-time employees. Most farmers either specialize in crop cultivation or animal husbandry, especially dairy farming. The main trend is toward consolidation: The number of large farms increases while the number of small ones declines. Farmers specialize in a few grains or animals and rely heavily on

machinery to reduce required work hours (SCB, 2009). Swedish farmers have a strong influence on the food-processing industry as most food processing companies are cooperatives owned by the farmers who deliver to them. This influence is particularly evident within dairy, meat, and grain production. Activities within the cooperatives are coordinated through LRF, which is the industry representative of Swedish farmers. LRF has taken a proactive stance concerning environmental issues compared to farmers within the EU-CAP (Rabinowicz, 2006). Concerns for environmental, health, and animal welfare issues are put forth as added value to Swedish products compared to imported alternatives. Yet in many markets Swedish products are losing out to cheaper imports, especially when it comes to meat.

The farming industry is dominated by conventional approaches to farming that are underpinned by the virtue of thorough specialization as well as the use of synthetic inputs and intensified production. This production logic mimics the industry's way of producing. During the 1960s and 1970s, alternatives to this logic appeared as social movements involving farmers and environmentalists protested against the use of pesticides and non-renewable inputs (Bostrom and Klintman, 2006). These alternatives have crystallized into various alternative logics in which organic farming remains the most important challenger. Organic farming is underpinned by virtues of integration, the abatement of synthetic inputs, and extensive

production (Milestad, Wivstad, Lund and Geber, 2008). By integrating animal husbandry and grain cultivation, organic farmers try to recycle nutrients rather than add synthetic ones from outside the farm. Organic farmers also try to rely on ecosystem services rather than chemical inputs; thus, they can be said to mimic nature's way of producing food.

Tensions and conflicts among actors affiliated with the two logics have been common throughout the food chain, although today many examples of pragmatic collaborations occur at least at the farm level (Bostrom and Klintman, 2006). Some conventional farmers have converted their farms, and organic and conventional occasionally practices take place on the same farm. However, heated debates occur in media and within the research community, where research on conventional farming remains dominant. A political side to the conflicts also exists as both organic and conventional farming practices are supported financially through policy and goals have been set to increase the amount of organic producers. As climate change has emerged on the domestic political agenda, proponents of both approaches have tried to claim "their" approach as the most climate friendly (cf. Andersson et al., 2009a; Andersson et al., 2009b; Björklund, 2009; Granstedt, 2009; Vestervall, 2009). Furthermore, organic farming is promoted by the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), the dominant domestic environmental organization (cf. Bostrom, 2003; Bostrom and Klintman, 2006).

Organic farmers also have their own representative organization, Swedish Ecological Farmers (SEF), although many organic farmers are also members of the LRF.

The Swedish Board of Agriculture

The SBA is the expert authority on agricultural matters; as such, it investigates various issues often on request by the government. The agency is also responsible for developing strategies for dealing with various political goals affecting the sector. Indeed, of the 16 environmental goals set by the Swedish parliament in 1999, several concern agricultural practices. Environmental issues have long been important for Swedish agricultural policy making (Micheletti, 1990; Daugbjerg, 1998; Daugbjerg and Brandt Petersen, 2004). The SBA currently employs strategies to increase biodiversity by supporting templates in use such as the use of semi-natural grasslands and organic farming. Additional strategies to reduce eutrophication include the promotion of catch crops, wetlands and fertilizer optimization as suitable templates. Thus, several political logics are currently being promoted by Swedish agricultural policy.

The SBA also administers the domestic part of the EU-CAP, which consists of the Rural Development Programme (RDP). The RDP runs for seven years at a time and supports farmers who alter templates in use.ⁱⁱⁱ Such support includes financing, which represents a large part of the total income of Swedish farmers. The SBA does not formally decide the content of the RDP; rather, final approval is given by the

EU commission. However, as an expert authority, the SBA creates proposals and staff partake in the decision-making process together with the government.

Farm counseling is a widely used mechanism for trying to alter templates in use in the field. The SBA runs its own farm extension service, which is financed through the RDP. In this service, SBA staff develops knowledge modules that are used to educate farmers.

The action plan project

The purpose with the action plan project was to suggest strategies to reduce emissions from agriculture; the result was to be delivered to the government in the form of a written report. The strategies were supposed to be implemented from 2011 to 2020, but the action plan was also supposed to constitute a tool for a long-term effort to reduce GHG emissions (Jordbruksdepartementet, 2008). The final report should be regarded as a suggestion; on many issues, it is up to the politicians to determine whether the strategies should be implemented. However, suggestions utilizing farm counseling should be implemented immediately in the operations of the SBA's own farm extension service.

In the mission, the government stated that effects on other political goals—whether conflicts or synergies—were to be clarified. However, the government never stated any goal for how much emissions were supposed to be reduced. The strategies were to include suggestions of

what farmers should do and how policy would induce them to do so, including what such policy would cost.

During the project, the SBA staff wrote texts, investigated ideas, and received comments from researchers on an assigned advisory board. The advisory board held four meetings in which they discussed drafts of the report, making comments and voicing critiques.

So the task of the advisory board has mostly been to react to the things that SBA has come up with. We have not been forced—at least I have not been forced to write something myself and I have not understood that to be my task either. (Researcher)

Project activities

The action plan project ran from fall 2008 to its deadline on April 30, 2010; however the work did not pick up any real intensity until the second half of 2009. In March 2010, a draft of the final report was sent out for a referential round to 14 different stakeholders—mostly other state agencies. The written responses revealed objections from SSNC and Swedish Ecological Farmers, who criticized the SBA for not including organic farming as a strategy for reducing GHG emissions.

In general terms, the project can be understood as a selection process whereby the staff tried to determine which templates should be included in the suggested strategy. However, the criteria for making decisions were very informal:

Interviewer: But how did you arrive at the proposals?

SBA staff: I really wish I could answer that. We have an extensive part of the report where we discuss different means, but then not all of them become suggestions.

SBA staff: We read a lot of research. It is some kind of decision process in the project group, we send texts to each other and to the advisory board and also have some direct contact with researchers.

The templates discussed

A broad set of various templates in use were discussed during the project, as shown in Table 1.

Discussed templates in use	Description
Synthetic fertilizer use	Synthetic fertilizers are used by conventional farmers; these are produced abroad in production processes that use large quantities of fossil fuels and also leak GHGs. It is possible to reduce emissions from fertilizer production quite substantially by using cleaner technology (BAT).
Tillage	Tillage is used at various stages in cultivation in both organic and conventional farming; tillage demands fossil fuels and reduces the carbon stored in cropland.
Energy usage	Energy usage at the farm is fairly small part of total agricultural emissions – farmers use fossil fuels for their work machines as well as electricity from the grid.
Energy production	Farmers can cultivate various energy crops and sell them to energy producers; salix and energy grass were most discussed.
Cultivation of organogenic soils	Organogenic soils are particular carbon-rich soils that account for 25% of domestic emissions. Cultivation patterns of these soils affect the size of emissions.
Nitrogen efficiency	Added nitrogen—from synthetic fertilizers or farm yard manure—that is not absorbed in plants either causes GHG emissions or eutrophication. Therefore, it is important to the efficiency of nutrient uptake.
Decaying of farm yard manure	Separation between animal husbandry and crop cultivation creates excess farm yard manure on animal farms; manure is a large source of GHG emissions. Decaying is a process whereby emissions can instead be converted into biogas.
Animal health	Since all animals (especially dairy cattle) emit GHGs during their life, reducing the animals wasted due to illnesses would reduce emissions per unit of produce.
Use of imported protein fodder	Production of protein fodder, usually Brazilian soy, is a driving force behind deforestation. Replacing imported protein fodder could be a way to reduce the “demand” for deforestation.
Food additives	Since ruminant cattle emit GHGs through their digestion, ideas for food additives that might affect digestion were discussed.
Breeding	Better breeding of dairy cattle could increase productivity of animals without raising the levels of emitted GHGs.
Grazing animals	Grasslands used for grazing animals were discussed as potential carbon sinks.

Table 1: Discussed templates in use

The following section describes the four micro-processes observed in more detail.

Translation

In the final report, the SBA staff suggested several changes in templates in use, including inducing conventional farmers to purchase synthetic fertilizers produced with the best available technology (BAT). Fertilizer production uses a lot of fossil fuels and also leaks

N₂O—an aggressive GHG; however, these negative effects can be reduced if BAT is used.

The emissions from production of synthetic fertilizers used in Sweden during the 2006/2007 fertilizing season was roughly 1 million tons of CO₂e (Jordbruksverket, 2008), this could be reduced to 0.5 million tons if all the fertilizers had been produced with BAT (Jordbruksverket, 2010b: 139).

No apparent conflicts emerged with political logics as this change would not affect any other environmental goals. However, BAT fertilizers were more expensive, and cheaper imports were steadily increasing their market share. Protests came from proponents of organic farmers (described below as failed diffusion), who argued that the obvious solution was instead to switch to organic production practices.

In addition, reducing tillage would reduce emissions by either increasing the amount of carbon stored in soils or reducing the need to use work machines powered by fossil fuels, although it was not possible to estimate the increase in carbon storage or the reduction of fuel usage saved, thereby reducing GHG emissions. Reduced tillage was understood as being most appropriate for conventional farmers as organic farmers need to till to reduce weeds (they refrain from using pesticides). However, since reduced tillage might increase the need for pesticide use among conventional farmers, the suggestion conflicted with the political goal to reduce this usage. Yet these potentially adverse effects were never investigated. The SBA decided to promote these changes through its farm extension service.

Imported protein fodder, usually Brazilian soy, is used to feed cattle in conventional dairy farming. This usage had received a lot of negative attention due to the observation that soy production is linked to deforestation (removal of carbon sinks) as well as other reasons. The researcher on the advisory board was well aware of the issue:

When it comes to dairy production, Swedish Milk, which represents the dairy industry, works hard to reduce the usage of soy because, however you calculate it, this is the largest environmental problem with Swedish production. And it keeps popping up—it was in the press just now and it has kept coming back that using and importing soy that is something that is not good and an environmental problem for Swedish production. (Researcher)

SBA staff suggested two different changes: increase the production of domestic protein fodder and increase the knowledge among dairy farmers on how to replace imported soy with alternatives. The LRF representative on the advisory board was positive about the suggestions:

It is positive if we see a change in what the farmers grow; LRF has advocated increased activity concerning this issue. (LRF representative)

These suggestions were also supported by the involved researcher. A potential goal conflict was that increased domestic production could increase eutrophication.

It would seem that these translations challenged the conventional logic as the templates-in-use within this logic were being targeted for change. However, no evidence indicated that the industry representative protested; rather protests emerged in the referential round from proponents of organic farming, who argued that the obvious solution—promoting organic farming practices—had been ignored. Yet it would still be voluntary for farmers to implement the

changes; individual farmers can choose to disregard the information provided by the farm extension service. The SBA staff members were themselves rather pessimistic of actually succeeding in persuading farmers to use BAT pesticides, estimating that perhaps 1% of the approached farmers would change their practices. Increasing the production of domestic protein fodder would also represent new business opportunities for Swedish farmers; this suggestion contained different ideas for financial supports that could make these activities profitable.

Failed translation

At the start of the project, the team had rather advanced plans of modifying the cultivation patterns of organogenic soils (see Table 1). Organogenic soils are identified as a problem in widespread policy reports and research literature (e.g., the latest IPCC-report; IPCC, 2007). One previous SBA report had concluded that they account for 25% of the emissions from Swedish agriculture (Jordbruksverket, 2008). SBA staff had been working on a suggestion for a new policy, even before the action plan project began (Jordbruksverket, 2008).¹ It appeared that the suggestion could significantly reduce emissions:

We have some winners if we can get at the organogenic soils. (SBA staff)

However the proposal ran into trouble as the researcher on the advisory board criticized the idea:

¹ The idea was to reduce tillage of organogenic land by getting farmers to switch to crops that did not demand as much cultivation – such as perennial ley. The idea that less tillage would reduce CO₂ (and N₂O) emissions was drawn both from international research and global policy reports (for instance the last IPCC report).

[The SBA had an idea] to finance the cultivation of five-year ley on organogenic soils to reduce emissions, but I did not think there was any scientific backing for that idea. (Researcher)

What I said was that I cannot guarantee that you will get any effect out of this, and I think it is stupid to launch a support system. And what can I say? The tide turned slowly. But I was already beginning to feel skeptical of the suggestion. (Researcher)

The LRF representative also opposed the suggestion:

I questioned the scientific backing. (LRF representative)

And the researchers agreed, so the current report does not include the idea to put 300 million Swedish Kroner on something that is so uncertain. (LRF representative)

Eventually the critique led to the suggestion being dropped:

Yes it has taken me a few years to get it through, so to speak. Now as they changed project members, X has already done some research in the area so she had a totally different insight. She knows the area. So that was a clear advantage. It is good if the knowledge of those who write is sufficient. (Researcher)

Despite having backed down, some of the SBA staff still thought that the idea was a good one:

There are still many indications of it being a good practice change, but the latest doubts have forced us to back down a little. But there are still experiments, there are experiments in Finland that indicate that [a change to] perennial ley would be a good idea. (SBA staff)

In the previous report, the SBA suggested that modified cultivation patterns would match prevailing political logics:

A decrease in cultivation intensity could also have positive local environmental effects such as reduced eutrophication, reduced usage of pesticides and increased biodiversity (Jordbruksverket, 2008: 68).

The SBA staff remarked that this meant that the suggestion was removed from the internal agenda:

It will take five to ten years before one can return to the point where we start developing policy to implement this. (SBA staff)

Diffusion

Some templates already supported by other goals could be promoted as part of the new logic by reframing them. Increasing the efficiency of breeding, nitrogen efficiency, and animal health has already been

rationalized by many different arguments; GHG reduction was simply added to these arguments. However, the staff thought that the amount of GHG emissions that these suggested changes would save was small. Promoting the production of energy crops (e.g., salix and energy grass) turned out to be the most promising suggestion in terms of saved emissions. Policies for implementing these templates already existed, and SBA staff rationalized these policies using GHG reduction as an argument:

We simply calculated how many GHG emissions the cultivation of salix would save. (SBA staff)

Energy crops would reduce emissions by replacing the use of fossil fuels in other sectors (e.g., transportation and energy). The increased cultivation of energy crops was also backed by various somewhat ambiguous normative statements and recommendations from the government.

In the government budget proposal for 2010 it is stated as a goal that “the green sectors are environmentally and resource efficient and have a key role in the production of Swedish energy”. Furthermore, it is stated that primary products from agriculture and forestry should contribute substantially to the production of renewable energy (Jordbruksverket, 2010b: 100).

The SBA staff interpreted these statements as indicating strong political support for the increase of bioenergy production.

When it comes to goals for salix we have calculated how tremendous the increase is for agriculture to respond to the expectations from society. It is urgent to do everything we can with the policy mechanisms that we already have – SBA staff

The template was adopted as part of the new logic despite the perception among SBA staff that bioenergy production was not uncontroversial.

But I think that we see more critiques against [bioenergy production] than there being great support—at least from the sector. (SBA staff)

The respondents also thought that farmers were reluctant to invest in salix production:

They believe that salix is not profitable. (SBA staff)

There is economy in salix production. It is not really known that one can get really good profitability because of all these failed examples that have been displayed too much. (SBA staff)

Since there were already policies in place in the current RDP to promote salix production, the suggestion was to include these policies in the upcoming RDP as well, serving as a template for reducing GHG emissions.

The SBA staff also chose to suggest some templates that were not currently applied in Swedish agriculture. One example was the idea to start producing biogas out of farm yard manure. Researchers and staff agreed that this was an efficient way to reduce emissions from the manure itself as well as replace the use of fossil fuels. This solution was primarily relevant for conventional producers, who do not simultaneously cultivate crops to which they can apply manure. Such practices render an excess of farm yard manure on some farms; the manure emits GHGs during storage. This problem is reduced by integrating animal husbandry with crop cultivation (e.g., in organic farming). Thus, biogas production would mainly reduce the emissions from conventional practices. This template was simultaneously supported by political goals and the previously mentioned targets to increase the production of renewable fuels from the sector. The involved expert was also positive about both the ideas and the work done by the SBA staff:

Yes, we still need supports to increase and develop biogas production. (Researcher)

My impression is that those who work with these sections are very thorough and that the writers involved are very keen on giving a good and fair presentation of the research material that exists. From that aspect the work contains high quality. (Researcher)

Thus, the project team arrived at the decision to continue or increase policy support for biogas production:

The agency makes a preliminary suggestion to maintain or increase the current campaign with investment supports to manure based biogas [production] (Jordbruksverket, 2010a: 36).

This would mean putting up 75 million [Swedish Kroner] annually from 2014 onwards for biogas investments, making the total amount 225 million [Swedish Kroner] for the period 2014-2016 (Jordbruksverket, 2010a: 36).

Failed diffusion

Grazing animals on natural grasslands is a template in use that is part of the political strategy to increase biodiversity. Semi-natural grasslands are home to many different species and therefore a valued source of biodiversity. Consequently, farmers receive financial support for keeping and utilizing such grasslands for grazing.

We pay out 700-800 million Swedish Kroner annually for the keeping of natural grasslands. (SBA staff)

The SBA staff made a thorough attempt to investigate whether this template could also be adopted as a way of reducing GHG emissions. Ideas were drawn from international research and policy reports supporting the idea that grasslands could be utilized as carbon sinks (FAO, 2009a; 2009b).

We suspect that these grasslands store significant amounts of carbon. (SBA staff)

Therefore, I investigate if they store and how much and how it works and if it is something that we should do anything about. (SBA staff)

However these two logics soon ran into conflict with each other as the researcher discovered that semi-natural grasslands had to be fertilized

if they were to store carbon, which would render them useless from a biodiversity perspective.

There are strong reasons for biodiversity not to do [fertilize] this. (SBA staff)

We absolutely do not want to fertilize them. (SBA staff)

Thus, the two logics were in conflict. The template had to be used either for GHG reduction or for biodiversity but not both:

We, therefore, will not suggest any practice change; we have to conclude that these grasslands do not store as much carbon as we had hoped for. (SBA staff)

Yet various stakeholders argued that these grasslands would prove valuable for reducing GHG emissions.

There have been very large expectations upon the investigations that we have made from the industry cause they really, really hope that these grasslands store a lot [of carbon] because they are working uphill when the animals are portrayed as climate villains. (SBA staff)

In addition, the SBA staff feared that GHG reduction would be prioritized over biodiversity:

In the societal debate, the climate issue is huge and this permeates politics too. It is at the moment much stronger than biodiversity—there is no question about it. (SBA staff)

However, this staff member expressed that he had support from the government in choosing this way of handling the goal conflict:

They know about this investigation and they know that we work with carbon storage in grasslands and, as I have understood it, they appear to hold the belief that biodiversity is more important than climate when it comes to these grasslands. (SBA staff)

Another attempt at diffusion was made not by the SBA staff, but by stakeholders responding to the report sent out in the referential round.

Some actors voicing their criticisms even turned to national media to help spread their conflicting understandings (SR, 2010; Einarsson, 2010).^{iv} The SSNC, the leading domestic environmental group, and SEF both argued that organic farming should be suggested as a template for reducing GHG emissions:

The [Swedish] Society of Nature Conservation finds it extremely remarkable that the action plan chose to disregard the possibilities to reduce GHG emissions by increasing organic production (Naturskyddsföreningen, 2010:1).

To ignore, in an action plan to reduce GHG emissions, the part of Swedish agriculture that does not, for example, use synthetic fertilizers is not correct. Since many of the discussions in the action plan deal with the possibilities within the current policy, organic farming should be included whether it is viewed as separate practice changes or a package (Ekologiska lantbrukarna, 2010:1).

SSNC claimed that organic farming was an alternative solution to the problem of synthetic fertilizer production:

Both the production and distribution of synthetic fertilizers cause GHG emissions, particularly N₂O, an aggressive GHG. The climate impact from N₂O has recently been given a lot of attention, such as in the scientific journal *Science*. The greatest emission source for N₂O is synthetic fertilizers. The production of synthetic fertilizers also demands a lot of energy and, therefore, also results in large emissions of fossil CO₂ (Naturskyddsföreningen, 2010: 4).

SBA staff and the researchers did not disregard the fact that organic farming contained suitable templates, but instead argued that—since productivity within organic farming was lower—indirect land-use effects existed that could offset these GHG reductions:

What one arrives at if one calculates is that it is not possible to show any significant differences [between GHG emissions from organic and conventional production]. There are certain parts of the production chain where organic is better and other parts where it is not as good. This is true particularly of this production level. Organic production—at least on average—produces less output, which makes emissions per kilo of output larger. But on the other hand, they refrain from using these troublesome inputs. (Researcher)

For instance, the earlier report 2008:11 (Jordbruksverket, 2008) concluded that the most important factors when it comes to differences in GHG emissions stem from synthetic fertilizer use (where conventional farmers come out worse) and differences in yields (where organic farmers come out worse). In the report 2010:1 (Jordbruksverket, 2010c), it is concluded that less intensive cultivation with less added nitrogen (e.g., organic farming) on the one hand leads to fewer emissions per hectare, but also produces lower yields. Thus, more land is needed to produce the same yields as before. The effect of organic farming is therefore dependent upon how the land freed by intensified cultivation is used and what this usage means for total emissions (Jordbruksverket, 2010a:10).

In the interviews, the SBA staff argued that organic farming was a market label and contained several templates; as such, they instead tried to investigate the implications on both these production logics for every particular template discussed. They argued that this was a smart

way to escape the dispute over which approach was most “climate friendly,” organic or conventional.²

It felt like we did not avoid the issue but instead escaped the trap that one often finds oneself in when this is discussed. (SBA staff)

Diffusing organic farming as a tool for reducing GHG emissions could be interpreted as support for this alternative logic, thereby making it conflict with conventional logic. It seems that the SBA staff tried to avoid this conflict by arguing that reducing GHG emissions was an entirely new logic that cut across this dispute.

There are changes that conventional farmers can make and there are changes that organic farmers can make. Both can improve. (SBA staff)

However, this meant that increasing organic farming was not suggested in the strategies. This decision was taken despite the fact that a direct political goal exists to increase the amount of organic farming and that organic farming is used as a template to increase biodiversity. Thus, potential synergies with other political goals emerged.

The different processes are summarized in Table 2.

Templates in use	Affected logic	Categorization of change
Synthetic fertilizer use	Conventional farming	Translation; failed diffusion of organic templates
Tillage	Conventional farming	Translation
Energy usage	Conventional and organic farming	Translation
Energy production	Political logic	Diffusion
Cultivation of organogenic soils	Conventional and organic farming	Failed translation
Nitrogen efficiency	Political logic	Diffusion

² The issue of organic farming was not uncontroversial – since there had been several heated media debates where SLU researchers that were proponents of conventional farming had attacked organic farming as failing to show in research the environmental merits (Andersson et al., 2009 a; 2009 b; Björklund, 2009; Vestervall, 2009; Gradvall, 2009; Danielsson, 2009). It was clear from the interviews that staffs were aware of these controversies.

Decaying of farm yard manure	Conventional farming	Diffusion
Animal health	Conventional and organic farming	Diffusion
Use of imported protein fodder	Conventional farming	Translation
Breeding	Conventional and organic farming	Diffusion
Grazing animals	Political logic	Failed diffusion

Table 2: Templates in use and change

The relationship between the emerging and the prevailing logics

The categorization of the discussions and suggestions in the project provide some clues as to the relationship between the emerging logic and prevailing logics. In relation to conventional and organic farming, the suggestions in the strategy did not directly support the challenging logic of organic farming. On the other hand, some suggestions promoted change in the templates applied by conventional farmers. Thus, the suggestions stressed that problems existed with these practices. However, the suggested solutions tried to combine the interests of farmers and policy makers. No suggestions were made to force farmers to implement solutions; instead, these would be voluntary and promoted through the use of farm counseling or financial supports. In some instances, solutions would represent new business opportunities and were actively supported by the industry representative. In other cases, where the suggestions could not be framed as new opportunities for farmers (i.e., the suggestion to change cultivation patterns of organogenic soils), the industry representative appeared less positive.

As such, it seems that in relation to logics prevailing in the industry, the strategy could be interpreted as representing something “new” that cut across the divide between conventional and organic practices. However, it could also be seen as a way to translate conventional practices into becoming more climate friendly by suggesting some translations in templates in use (and having less affect on the logic applied by organic farmers). Some of the problems discussed—synthetic fertilizer use, imported protein fodder, and decayed farm yard manure—did not really concern organic farmers.

From another perspective, the strategy could be seen as a way to reframe policies aimed at increasing bioenergy production as a strategy to reduce GHG emissions. In addition, suggestions were made that would be most costly and were estimated to save most emissions. Thus, the emerging logic could be interpreted as a reframed political logic trying to promote the goals of increased energy production with new arguments. For this purpose, some templates already part of the policy (supports to increase biogas and salix production) were diffused—namely, adopted without changes in the new logic.

Existing political goals were clearly important as a new strategy could not conflict with these. Templates that could not be framed as a solution to many goals—here, the use of semi-natural grasslands—appeared problematic. On the other hand, not all political goals

seemed to carry the same weight; goals to reduce pesticide use or increase organic farming were given less attention.

The emerging logic could thus be interpreted as something of a patchwork or a compromise. It incorporated templates that could be fit to different political goals and templates that would not augment the divide between institutional logics within the industry. However, given the multitude of different political goals, it is perhaps understandable that some political goals had to be interpreted as less important than others in order to make any suggestions at all.

This makes the question of whether the suggested political strategy could be perceived as a divergent break with prevailing logics somewhat complicated (cf. Battilana, Boxenbaum and Leca, 2009). It would seem that the emerging logic introduced a new goal and new way of reflecting upon templates, although on the other hand many of the suggested solutions had already been tried out before. In relation to previous policy, only a few new suggestions were made, and these were rather minor, such as including some advice in the farm extension service.

Perhaps the most important outcome was in actually stopping some of the ideas circling in the debate, meaning the ideas to store carbon in grasslands and do something about the organogenic soils. Both these

ideas were removed from the policy agenda and did not seem likely to return in the near future.

Discussion

Activities within the policy process are a potentially important early stage of institutional entrepreneurship as policy contains both normative and coercive mechanisms for diffusing changes (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Focusing on the early stage, during which time ideas are to be developed and changes in templates devised, provides an alternative to approaching the implementation of ready-made suggestions. The case study has shown that the early stage contains several different features related to institutional constraint, the reuse of previous templates, and some suggestions for change. The importance of being able to frame change suggestions in relation to prevailing logics provides one clue as to the constraint that such logics represent. Not all suggestions can be effectively framed; therefore, sometimes they have to be dropped. However, in those cases in which suggestions could be framed to suit prevailing goals, they are provided with strong arguments. Thus, prevailing logics act as both a constraint and a resource in relation to the change proposals, which also supports the conclusion of earlier studies of institutional logics suggesting that several logics compete within an institutional context (Reay and Hinings, 2009). Furthermore, it points to the existence of different “levels” within the field in which logics are “located.” The actors interpreted some logics as “out” in the field and consequently adapted

suggestions to account for them. Meanwhile, some logics appeared to be part of the political system.

The observation that all prevailing goals were not given the same attention points to the importance of the participating actors in calling attention to goals and goal conflicts. Actors had to call attention to goals and argue for their importance. For example, proponents of organic farming promoted the goal of increased organic farming in their critical responses in the referential round. In the policy context, where multiple goals exist, this may create difficulties in making suggestions if all actors come to guard different goals. This was perhaps particularly important as not all participating actors found it in their role to suggest any actions. It was the role and responsibility of the SBA staff to come up with the strategies; the researchers did not have any such responsibility and could thus safely object to ideas without having to come up with any alternative solutions. In some ways, one could even argue that it was in their interest to stop suggestions as this would mean that more research was called for.

The experts seemed to possess several advantages compared to the SBA staff. The SBA staff had to make suggestions concerning various areas and issues whereas the experts concentrated on one. The experts had a more detailed and complex image of the issues and could present the SBA staff with problems that they had not considered. In addition, experts were more familiar with the existing research that

SBA staff based their ideas and discussions upon. In many cases, the SBA staff also had the same professional background as the experts: educated at the Swedish Agricultural University, albeit at holding lower academic ranks.

This points to the difficulty of describing change initiatives simply in relation to the structural context and the preexisting logics as actors perform an important role in calling attention to goals. At this micro-level, the activities could be understood as interplay among actors, actions, and goals (cf. Zilber, 2002). In this sense, it may be difficult to describe activities within the policy process as being about divergent or convergent change (cf. Battilana, Boxenbaum and Leca, 2009). This theoretical standpoint concerning institutional entrepreneurship conceals the observation that multiple institutional logics are at play at the interlinked levels. Furthermore, this description may conceal the observation that emerging logics may build upon and expand previous efforts. Thus, a change initiative contains both convergent and divergent templates.

These results provide an argument for the continued study of institutional entrepreneurship “before” it has taken place (Scott, 2010). When institutional entrepreneurship is approached before it has taken place, it becomes clearer that “new” logics derive their meaning and content from the prevailing ones and that change suggestions are patchworks containing some new parts, some reused parts, and some

more or less altered parts. By focusing on well-known success stories, the question of the actual content of change is often downplayed; instead, the focus is upon the activities of institutional entrepreneurs. Still, many of these accounts describe the use of framing and attaching several meanings to a new institutional project (Battilana, Boxenbaum and Leca, 2009), making it important to pay more attention to whether templates are actually changed and in what way.

Conclusion

The study has contributed to the previous literature in several ways. First, it has provided an example of how the categories of translation and diffusion (Zilber, 2006) can be used to analyze the content of a particular change initiative in relation to prevailing logics. Second, it has provided an account of how such an analysis of the actual suggestions and discussions can be used to shed light on the relationship between emerging logics and prevailing ones. Third, it has pointed to the importance of paying attention to several competing logics within a context that relate to change suggestions in various ways. Fourth, the findings suggest that—although institutional entrepreneurship is often described as activities indicating a break with the existing institutional logics—at the micro-level this “break” appears ambiguous. A new logic may appear to be more of a co-mingling between different logics, much in line with the observations of Swan, Bresnen, Robertson, Newell and Dopson (2010). In the present study, this co-mingling consists of some new, some reused, and some changed templates. Therefore, researchers need to pay more

attention to the micro-processes involved in challenging and changing templates in use and how this relates to the institutional logics that underpin them. Increased knowledge of these activities and the processes involved would increase our understanding of institutional entrepreneurship and ultimately institutional change. These matters are in turn of vital importance considering, for instance, the severe environmental threats our planet is facing. Therefore, we need additional studies focusing on the micro-level and the change activities taking place there.

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ⁱ The project started in autumn 2008 but did not pick up any pace until the summer of 2009. Thus the drawback of conducting the interviews at the end of the project might be somewhat reduced.

ⁱⁱ Reports from SBA dealing with GHG emissions as well as other environmental or agricultural issues produced outside the project were used along with extensive background material from trade journals and different news letters collected to explore ongoing issues and debates within the Swedish agricultural sector. This data

was used to build up an understanding of prevailing logics as well as the roles and positions of affiliated actors.

ⁱⁱⁱ The current RDP runs between 2007 and 2013 containing funds to a value of 35 billions SEK.

^{iv} The leaders of the organic farmer association turned to media accusing SBA of having re-written one of their prior reports to hide the GHG reduction potential of organic farming (SR, 2010). The particular SBA report (Jordbruksverket, 2010c) seemed to indicate that organic farming reduced GHG emissions as it refrained from relying on energy intense production of synthetic fertilizers and imported soy. In the media coverage of the event the researcher who had been hired to do the calculations complained about how SBA had treated her findings.