

Mobilization: Decision Theory

Idongesit Williams

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5398-3579>

Aalborg University, Denmark

INTRODUCTION

Every action or inaction performed by a human being is as a result of a rational process. This is a process that occurs, in some cases, in a manner of seconds. In organizations, it might take a longer time. However, whatever is the case, in the process of rationality involves the weighing of factors, making a decision and mobilizing to make that decision. Ultimately, what is being mobilized are resources. These could be tangible (including human resources) or intangible resources. However, the most common resource mobilized to perform an action is human resources. This is evident in individuals, communities and organization. However, as times change and we move into the age of automation, more machines will be mobilized than humans. Nevertheless, in this chapter, the focus will be in the mobilization of human resources in a broader sense.

The mobilization of human resources to perform defined and collective action is as old as the existence of humans. The mobilization of humans is existent in organizations, societies and families. Furthermore, mobilization is not a spontaneous act even though it might occur in seconds. Rather, there are rational factors that trigger the desire to mobilize. However, understanding what makes us humans mobilize is rarely treated as a subject in literature. There are different studies on behavioral tendencies of humans and in some of these theories, triggers to taking certain actions are identified. However, these are contextual studies and not a generalized theory that actually explains what goes into the process of organizing. As a result, managers, innovators and visionaries have to rely on their guts and inborn talent to attempt to mobilize others to perform a certain action. In most cases, because of ignorance of how to go about the process, their visions and ideas remain dormant. Hence, it is necessary to understand the factors that ought to be in place before mobilization occurs and furthermore it is necessary to understand the circumstances by which another human will submit to being mobilized without coercion. Hence, the guiding question in this chapter is when and why do we decide to mobilize? Furthermore, what are the factors that trigger the decision within us to mobilize humans to perform an action?

In responding to this question, the author will extend the work on his Ph.D. thesis by combining a set of hypothesis (models) from that thesis with social theories to theories, why we decide to mobilize. Due to the word limitation in this chapter, reference will be made to the thesis. The models from the thesis are called the Community Broadband Network Mobilization (CBNM) Models (Williams, 2016). These models, though not developed to explain mobilization, has a clue on why mobilization occurs. The theories used will be Social movement theories, Logic of collective action and the Actor network Theory. The theorization involved a deductive and an inductive process. The resulting theory was the Mobilization-decision theory. This theory provides an explanation on why humans mobilize. The theory as will be explained in the chapter is useful both to individuals, organizations, communities etc.

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This chapter consists of 7 sections. Section 2 is a review on the theories of mobilization. Section 3 presents and explains the CBNM models. Section 4 highlights the transition from CBNM models to Mobilization decision theory. Section 5 highlights the theoretical and practical implications of the Mobilization-decision theory. Section 6 highlights the future research direction. Section 7 is the conclusion.

BACKGROUND 1 - A REVIEW THEORIES WITH CLUES TO MOBILIZATION

There are different theories that identify mobilization as a conceptual process that results in an action. Most of these social theories that explain and analyze social movements (Peterson, 1989). However, social theories that investigate the concept of mobilization are rare. As a result, questions as to why and how mobilization occurs are often left unanswered. Answers to these questions can be induced from social theories. This is because these theories explain and analyze collective behavior. These theories also provide explanations for “*why social movements emerge*” (Peterson, 1989). There are other theories one can rely on. However, in this section, the supporting theories of from which the answers will be deduced are the Actor Network Theory (ANT), and the Logic of collective behavior. The community mobilization approach was considered but later, dropped. This was because ANT and the social movement theories seemed to hold the key to explaining community mobilization. The ANT provides clues as to why and how mobilization could occur and the Logic of collective behavior because it presents a clue on people or groups allow themselves to be mobilized (Olson, 1971).

The Logic of Collective Action and Reasons for Mobilization

The logic of collective action by Olsen (Olson, 1971) is one of the theories of collective action. This theory does not explain why mobilization occurs. However, it does expose what motivates individuals to be part of a large group. The theory indicates that in the exception of the existence of an incentive or coercion, individuals in large groups serve self-interests rather than the interest of the group (ibid). In other words, if the individual is not coerced, they are part of the group because of the perceived value they will derive within the group. This value is domicile in the incentives that exist in the group.

Although Olsen argues that individualism is minimized in small groups as compared to large groups, it could still be induced that the individual agents that signed up to become a part of a small group are also driven by incentives which highlights the perceived value evident in joining the group. Hence, from this theory the role of incentives, such as perceived value is highlighted.

Social Movement Theory and Reasons for Mobilization

Social Movement theories are human-centric theories. However, although mobilization is implied in the social movement theories, reasons as to why mobilization could occur can be deduced from these theories. In order to understand the Social movement theory, one has to understand the concept of social movement. Social movement is a concept with different definitions (Mario, 1992). For example, Mario 1992 indicates that social movements can be identified as a “network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity”. Mario’s classification, though revealing, tends to limit social movements to being political and cultural in nature. This could be that most research into social movements were on political and cultural conflicts such as the civil rights movement, the women’s right movement,

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