

Analytical Sociology and Social Mechanisms

Mechanisms are very much a part of social life. For example, we can see that inequality has tended to increase over time, and that cities can become segregated. But how do such mechanisms work? Analytical sociology is an influential approach to sociology which holds that explanations of social phenomena should focus on the social mechanisms that bring them about. This book evaluates the major features of this approach, focusing on the significance of the notion of mechanism. Leading scholars seek to answer a number of questions in order to explore all the relevant dimensions of mechanism-based explanations in social sciences. How do social mechanisms link together individual actions and social environments? What is the role of multi-agent modelling in the conceptualization of mechanisms? Does the notion of mechanism solve the problem of relevance in social sciences explanations?

PIERRE DEMEULENAERE is Professor of Sociological Theory and Philosophy of the Social Sciences at the University of Paris-Sorbonne.

Analytical Sociology and Social Mechanisms

Edited by
Pierre Demeulenaere



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-19047-3 — Analytical Sociology and Social Mechanisms
Edited by Pierre Demeulenaere
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521190473

© Cambridge University Press 2011

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2011

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Analytical sociology and social mechanisms / [edited by]

Pierre Demeulenaere.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-521-15435-2 (pbk.)

1. Sociology. 2. Sociology—Methodology. 3. Social systems.

I. Demeulenaere, Pierre. II. Title.

HM585.A526 2011

301.01—dc22

2010052189

ISBN 978-0-521-19047-3 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-15435-2 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

This volume was published with the support of the Université Paris-Sorbonne.

Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>List of tables</i>	viii
<i>List of contributors</i>	ix
Introduction	1
PIERRE DEMEULENAERE	
Part I Action and mechanisms	
1 Ordinary rationality: the core of analytical sociology	33
RAYMOND BOUDON	
2 Indeterminacy of emotional mechanisms	50
JON ELSTER	
3 A naturalistic ontology for mechanistic explanations in the social sciences	64
DAN SPERBER	
4 Conversation as mechanism: emergence in creative groups	78
KEITH SAWYER	
Part II Mechanisms and causality	
5 Generative process model building	99
THOMAS J. FARARO	
6 Singular mechanisms and Bayesian narratives	121
PETER ABELL	
7 The logic of mechanistic explanations in the social sciences	136
MICHAEL SCHMID	

vi	Contents	
8	Social mechanisms and explanatory relevance PETRI YLIKOSKI	154
9	Causal regularities, action and explanation PIERRE DEMEULENAERE	173
Part III Approaches to mechanisms		
10	Youth unemployment: a self-reinforcing process? YVONNE ÅBERG AND PETER HEDSTRÖM	201
11	Neighborhood effects, causal mechanisms and the social structure of the city ROBERT J. SAMPSON	227
12	Social mechanisms and generative explanations: computational models with double agents MICHAEL W. MACY WITH DAMON CENTOLA, ANDREAS FLACHE, ARNOUT VAN DE RIJT AND ROBB WILLER	250
13	Relative deprivation <i>in silico</i> : agent-based models and causality in analytical sociology GIANLUCA MANZO	266
	<i>Index</i>	309

Figures

2.1	Belief, emotion and action	<i>page</i> 51
2.2	The ultimatum game	59
6.1	A narrative	126
6.2	An action skeleton	126
6.3	Colligation	130
6.4	The decomposition of hypotheses A_0 and $\neg A_0$	131
8.1	Causal relations and ideal intervention	166
9.1	Hempel's explanation schema	192
10.1	Sources of correlated behavior among individuals	204
10.2	Hypothetical benefit difference between being unemployed and employed	207
10.3	The influence of social interactions on the local unemployment level	209
10.4	Social interaction indices before and after regression controls for individual-level differences	213
10.5	Hazard ratios for leaving unemployment with statistical interaction effects between individual attributes and the unemployment level in the peer group	222
10.6	The effect of peer group unemployment on the hazard ratios for leaving unemployment, before and after controls for confounding variables	223
11.1	Neighborhood structure, social-spatial mechanisms, and crime rates	236
11.2	Ecometric typology of neighborhood properties and measurement	237
12.1	Multicultural preferences	254
13.1	Relative deprivation in an artificial society, situation 1	277
13.2	Relative deprivation in an artificial society, situation 2	284
13.3	Relative deprivation in an artificial society, situation 3	290
13.4	Relative deprivation in an artificial society, situation 4	295

Tables

1.1	Types of system of reasons page	<i>page</i> 37
2.1	Belief–emotion connections	53
2.2	Emotion and action tendencies	57
10.1	Cox regression, hazard ratios of leaving unemployment (z statistics in parentheses)	216
10.2	Cox regression, hazard ratios of leaving unemployment (z statistics in parentheses), with statistical interaction effects	221
13.1	Average degree of agents experiencing RD ² and percentage of these agents who do not have any neighbors in RD ²	300
13.2	Average degree of agents experiencing RD ¹ and percentage of these agents who do not have any neighbors in RD ¹	301

Contributors

PETER ABELL, Copenhagen Business School and London School of Economics.

YVONNE ÅBERG, Stockholm University.

RAYMOND BOUDON, Institut de France, Académie des sciences morales et politiques.

DAMON CENTOLA, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

PIERRE DEMEULENAERE, University of Paris-Sorbonne.

JON ELSTER, Collège de France.

THOMAS J. FARARO, University of Pittsburgh.

ANDREAS FLACHE, University of Groningen.

PETER HEDSTRÖM, Nuffield College, University of Oxford.

MICHAEL W. MACY, Cornell University.

GIANLUCA MANZO, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris and University of Paris Sorbonne.

ROBERT J. SAMPSON, Harvard University.

KEITH SAWYER, Washington University in St Louis.

MICHAEL SCHMID, Bundeswehr Munich University.

DAN SPERBER, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris.

ARNOU VAN DE RIJT, State University of New York at Stony Brook.

ROBB WILLER, University of California at Berkeley.

PETRI YLIKOSKI, University of Tampere and University of Helsinki.