

MAKING A CHANGE FROM BELOW

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF POPULAR MOVEMENTS FOR REDUCING WASTE AND PROMOTING CYCLING

DAŠA LIČEN AND DAN PODJED

The authors look into two environmental movements that arose from grassroots initiatives. The first is Ecologists without Borders, the leading NGO promoting waste reduction in Slovenia. The second is Critical Mass, an international cyclists' movement that seeks more public space for urban cyclists, which the authors studied in Belgrade and Budapest. Ethnographic analysis indicates that the two movements have had certain common experiences. The authors use these cases to investigate the social transition that such movements support and shed light on how they arise, function, and change over time.

Keywords: popular movements, waste reduction, urban cycling, Ljubljana, Belgrade, Budapest

Avtorja se posvečata dvema okoljevarstvenima gibanjema, ki sta vzniknili iz ljudskih iniciativ. Prvi so Ekologi brez meja, v Sloveniji vodilna nevladna organizacija, usmerjena k zmanjšanju količine odpadkov, drugi pa Krična masa, mednarodno gibanje kolesarjev, ki si prizadeva povečati površine namenjene urbanim kolesarjem. Raziskovanje slednjih je potekalo v Beogradu in Budimpešti. Etnografska analiza kaže, da sta gibanji imeli mnoge podobne izkušnje. S pomočjo vzorčnih primerov postavljata avtorja pod drobnogled družbene tranzicije, ki jih tovrstna gibanja podpirajo, in osvetlita, kako ta gibanja vzniknejo, delujejo in se sčasoma spreminjajo.

Ključne besede: množična gibanja, ravnanje z odpadki, urbano kolesarjenje, Ljubljana, Beograd, Budimpešta

INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on popular social movements at the local and international levels, supported by grassroots initiatives and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We present two cases, both dedicated to addressing global environmental and sustainability issues, and explain how such movements are organized and can be further optimized. We examine the phases these movements go through and shed light on what they have in common to better understand how they arise, function, and change over time. We are also interested in discussing how their activities could be better integrated into society as a whole and how their positive effect could be enhanced.

We first provide a theoretical background for why and how such movements grow from local initiatives, and we discuss the tipping points; that is, the critical moments when an idea starts spreading and starts a movement on a broader scale. We compare the tipping point concept to other social change models, which are useful for explaining the dynamics of popular movements in social systems. We then present our ethnography-based methodology and introduce the two movements that serve as example cases. The first is one of the leading Slovenian NGOs, called Ecologists without Borders (Slovenian: *Ekologi brez meja*). It is best known for holding the popular national campaign Let's Clean Up Slovenia

(Slovenian: *Očistimo Slovenijo*), and for generally striving to reduce waste and carefully management it. The second case is Critical Mass, an international cyclists' movement that regularly meets to hold group bicycle rides and secure more public space for urban cyclists. This article presents cyclists' activities and achievements in Belgrade, where the movement is supported by the association Streets for Cyclists (Serbian: *Ulice za bicikliste*), and in Budapest, where our study was carried out at the Hungarian Cyclists' Club (Hungarian: *Magyar Kerékpárosklub*), which served as the organizing hub of the movement. We also discuss the changes these and other similar grassroots movements undergo; namely, from a fuzzy and unstructured beginning to a more organized but rather less passionate stability.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Jelena Puđak, a Croatian sociologist studying (dis)interest in climate change, emphasizes that an active society is crucial for environmental change or any other kind of social change for the better. Nonetheless, civic movements are not necessarily enough. Civic movements play an important corrective role in society and influence the direction of political changes because they are precisely the practical framework where resistance and alternatives can be offered (Puđak 2014: 97). We share the opinion of Puđak (2014) and other authors (e.g., Tarnow 1996 and Eriksen 2016), who claim that the initiative for positive change needs to come from below, at least initially.

This article presents three theoretical models that could explain what is going on in influential popular civic movements, focusing on the tipping point, social change, and punctuated equilibrium. One could be skeptical of explaining social changes with such deterministic models, which come from the natural sciences, but the interdisciplinary tendency among some contemporary researchers, including Matjaž Perc (see, e.g., Perc et al. 2013), provides an opposite view. Most human decisions do not occur in isolation; instead, people establish connections with others, which can help us predict to some degree how people interact and operate both at the level of an individual and as a collective. Using such models for describing human behavior is often controversial because it assumes that people operate by following algorithmic rules. In fact, people are purposeful and have their own agency; however, their activities can still be understood through models that need to be combined with solid empirical grounds and supported by ethnographic findings to properly explain a research problem.

THE TIPPING POINT MODEL

Despite the fact that many ideas arise “from below” on a daily basis, they are not always attractive enough to inspire a larger number of people to join a movement. In other words, they do not reach the tipping point, to use a term from physics, where it describes an object

displaced from equilibrium to a new stable state that is qualitatively different from the previous one. The tipping point is not the same as growth; instead, it describes small events leading to a sudden change on a larger scale, a change that can occur almost instantly.

In the social sciences, this term was first used by Morton Grodzins (1957, 1958). It was later expanded by Thomas Schelling (1971) and popularized by Malcolm Gladwell (1991). The physicist and science writer Phillip Ball (2005) refers to the precondition of the tipping point in social systems as the “critical mass” and metaphorically presents it as a “boiling point” when small events lead to a completely new phenomenon. In social systems, such changes can be caused by various initiatives, among them also the two grassroots movements presented in this article that aim to transform society. Their goals are not large enough to create a complete lifestyle revolution, but they still have clear intensions of breaking with old habits, be it in waste management, urban cycling, or something else, and to encourage the start of new ones. This article shows that civic movements have the prospect to turn into something momentous, even global. However, it is necessary to first study how such transformations begin and how they can be initiated and supported by prime movers.

THE SOCIAL CHANGE MODEL

To understand how a group of individuals makes a shift into collective action, the Threshold Model (Granovetter 1978) and the Standing Ovation Model (Miller and Page 2004) can be used. Both explore why it is difficult to anticipate people’s future actions. The Threshold Model explains that each person has a threshold of how many people need to join a collective activity in order for them to follow it too. The decision depends on the threshold, which is the number of persons in the crowd that ought to be doing something for an individual to join the activity too. Changes occur more quickly when the threshold is set lower. For instance, if one has a threshold of three, it is enough for only three of their peers to start cycling to work for this person to follow their example. Knowing that it might be healthy, cheaper, and more environmentally friendly is therefore not enough; others have to start doing it too. The Standing Ovation Model by Miller and Page (2004) takes Granovetter’s approach a step further and emphasizes quick reactions to a changing situation in a community, which might persuade a person to participate in a standing ovation or any other group activity. The factors and motives are compound and include a personal threshold, peer pressure, group size, perception of the engaged community, and so on.

THE PUNCTUATED EQUILIBRIUM MODEL

Darwinism as the main paradigm of biological evolution “is the way people have explained everything from geological erosion to skill acquisition” (Gersick 1991: 10). In 1972, Niles Eldredge and Stephen Jay Gould, both biologists and paleontologists, published a landmark text that rejected the gradualism of evolutionism and introduced an upgraded theory called

punctuated equilibrium (Eldredge and Gould 1972). It was later adapted by other scholars belonging to a variety of areas, including organization studies (Gersick 1991; Hudson 2000; see also Podjed and Muršič 2008). The general idea of the Punctuated Equilibrium Model is that changes normally occur rarely and rapidly, in contrast to Darwin's original idea, which assumed that changes occur steadily and continuously. According to Eldredge and Gould's explanation, stability in species that exist in more or less static form (equilibrium) is then only occasionally interrupted by sudden changes.

In the view of Thomas Kuhn (1970) and Michael Tushman and Elaine Romanelli (1985), who described similar processes in social systems as Eldredge and Gould, the spark for a "revolution" within an organization or community often does not come from the members of the existing system because they are not able to steer large changes. For instance, Thomas Kuhn, who speaks about revolutionary thinkers in academia, says that "these are the men who, being little committed by prior practice to the traditional rules of normal science, are particularly likely to see that those rules no longer define a playable game and to conceive another set that can replace them" (Kuhn 1970: 90). As this article shows, we can follow such a rule in the two movements presented. In both cases, the initial spark came from an "outsider."

METHODOLOGY

Our exploration of popular civic movements draws on three months of ethnographic fieldwork carried out in Belgrade in 2015, which included interviews with representatives of the NGO Streets for Cyclists, and two months of research in Budapest in 2016, which involved interviews with people from the Hungarian Cyclists' Club. In both cities, we carried out participant observation, in which the researcher took part in daily activities, interactions, and events to learn the explicit and tacit aspects of life (DeWalt and DeWalt 1998). Therefore, we joined a Critical Mass event in Belgrade and cycled through Budapest, accompanied by the leading activists supporting urban cycling. The part of our study involving Ecologists Without Borders and Let's Clean Up Slovenia took place from October to December 2015 in Ljubljana and Istria. We interviewed two past members and two current members of Ecologists Without Borders and attended their events. The part of study connected to Critical Mass was carried out in Belgrade from October to December 2015 and Budapest from January to March 2016. In Belgrade we interviewed three people connected to the movement and in Budapest three more people. In addition, we attended various events and activities held by the movement and had several informal conversations on the topic. Our findings were further enriched by examining the associations' digital archival data and various media reports.

Throughout the course of our fieldwork, we carried out a number of informal conversations with a number of members of all three associations presented and later analyzed them. Since then we have kept in touch with the associations studied, and in some cases we

continued the conversations through phone calls, e-mails, and further visits. The interviews and other data, including fieldnotes, were later analyzed and used for the purposes of this article. Here we discuss the particular cases not only in their own right, but as examples of a larger phenomenon, thus comparatively. We contrast the three different cases and emphasize what they share.

According to the anthropologist Andre Gingrich (2012), in anthropological or similar social research, a comparison of cases can occur either *a priori* or *a posteriori*. In our case it was *a priori* because the decision to compare the cases studied was made before the conclusion of our fieldwork. We decided to compare the associations in the early phases of our ethnographic observations, which compelled us to note what the associations have in common and to more closely align our research questions in order to optimize the final comparative analysis. Finally, our pursuit of comparison was guided by a theoretically informed problem. Our methods were “grounded” (Glaser and Strauss 1967) in the sense that we built our theory on fieldwork, yet we at the same time we relied on some pre-existing concepts and models regarding popular movements, which are presented below.

PRESENTING THE MOVEMENTS

NGOs are organizations independent from business and are generally structured around a social mission (Quarter and Richmond 2001). Over the last several decades, their role has been expanding and contributing greatly to the empowerment of local communities. NGOs are often focused on humanitarian activities, human rights, or environmentalism. Despite being based on volunteering, NGOs can make significant changes in society (Amagoh 2015) and attract sympathizers that are not satisfied with the current production of public goods (McMurray et al. 2010). The concerns of “ordinary” people are successfully voiced precisely through NGOs, and since the 1980s this has also been acknowledged by anthropologists and became a regular research interest (Schuller and Lewis 2014).

We mostly employ the acronym NGO because it is a rather established concept, although it is difficult to define NGOs with precision. Our terminological framework is loose. At times we describe our empirical cases as NGOs, and on other occasions as grassroots, popular, or civic movements, networks, or voluntary associations, depending on which trait we wish to emphasize. By not strictly sticking to one term, we avoid implying that our cases represent ideal types. Instead, we focus on empirical experiences and terms that properly contextualize them in a particular time and place.

In Slovenian, Ecologists without Borders usually presents itself as an association mobilized around the idea of making Slovenia a “greener” place by reducing the amount of waste produced. In their English presentations, they refer to themselves as a nonprofit organization or an NGO. When our fieldwork was conducted, only a few individuals represented the core of Ecologists without Borders. Furthermore, only some of them were

actually employed by the NGO. However, they were supported by a wider circle of the most active volunteers, who were again surrounded by a larger number of occasional volunteers.

On the other hand, Critical Mass is less formally structured and operates more as an informal international network than an actual NGO, but it is no less active for that reason. The main purpose of this movement is to motivate urban cyclists to meet on a certain day (typically, the last Friday of the month) and cycle through the city to “protest” against inappropriate cycling infrastructure in urban areas. In our case, the movement was closely investigated in two countries, Serbia and Hungary, where it is supported by various NGOs.

LET’S CLEAN UP SLOVENIA IN A DAY

Ecologists without Borders is an NGO that has been making a case for a “world without waste” since 2009.¹ Their mission started a decade ago, when they began planning their first event, Let’s Clean Up Slovenia in a Day, which took place in 2010. They repeated it in 2012 and afterwards in 2018, each time with much public attention and as a part of the global initiative World Cleanup Day. In 2012, they were able to attract and involve in their activities as much as 14% of the Slovenian population. They decided to stop such large-scale cleanup campaigns after the second event. The members of this NGO chose to devote more time to waste prevention and awareness raising rather than cleanup. That goal resulted, at least to some extent, in Ljubljana becoming the first Zero Waste capital in Europe and Slovenia being ahead of the game in recycling in comparison to other European countries; in 2016 Ljubljana was the best-performing capital in the European Union,² and it was awarded the title European Green Capital that year. Ecologists without Borders influenced Ljubljana’s and Slovenia’s success in environmentalism because it has been aiming to facilitate adoption of the Zero Waste³ strategy and expand it to the national level.

To shed light on Ecologists without Borders’ initial steps, we use the words of the Estonian environmental “guru” that first inspired the Slovenian cleanup campaigns. This is what he said when he joined the Slovenian cleanup campaign in 2010:

After the meeting in Finland we were sitting on a tree trunk in a national park and suddenly N. said, “Hey, I want to clean up Slovenia,” and I said, “You can never make a man happier than I am now.” And then N. said, “Well I know a

¹ Ecologists without Borders. Available at: <https://ebm.si/en/> (December 28, 2018).

² The European Commission for the Environment released a report on January 28th, 2016 in which Ljubljana was put forth as a top performer in separated waste collection. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/pdf/29_01_2016_en.pdf (May 11, 2016).

³ The Zero Waste International Alliance aims “to promote positive alternatives to landfill and incineration and to raise community awareness of the social and economic benefits to be gained when waste is regarded as a resource base upon which can be built both employment and business opportunity.” Available at: <http://zwia.org/aboutus/> (November 11, 2017).



Figure 1: Ecologists Without Borders visiting Omaplast. Grosuplje, Slovenia, March 13, 2019. Photo: Boštjan Selinšek.

few good people in Slovenia.” Now I see these good people here, but I’m so happy being able to participate. This will change the history of humanity, this is the evolution of humanity.⁴

The initial idea to clean up the country therefore came from Estonia through a Slovenian environmental activist. Upon returning to Slovenia, he gathered a group of like-minded individuals, who made the decision to carry out this major project together. These enthusiasts did not know each other beforehand and were actually only like-minded when it came to protecting the environment. In fact, the group was very heterogeneous, yet incredibly passionate, and it learned to operate *like a family* as one of the interviewees said. This intense feeling of social togetherness that they experienced and often called to mind during our conversations could, in Victor Turner’s terms, be described as *communitas* (e.g., Turner 1969); that is, the situation of a group of people going through various procedures that confirm the passage from one social status to another. In this liminal state, their relations are unclear and undefined because the new social or organizational structure is in the process of being established.

⁴ This is a transcript from the Ecologists without Borders’ promo video for one of the cleanup campaigns. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHR7KF9-T1M> (May 11, 2016).

The small group of enthusiasts soon realized that they would need to transform from their prior amorphous mass into a more organized community. This was something the members did not particularly desire, yet they found it necessary for holding large-scale events. The large-scale cleanup campaigns that took place in 2010, 2012, and 2018 made Ecologists without Borders a well-known association, regularly present in the media,⁵ and it was even awarded the Order of Merit by the president of Slovenia. Without such meticulous management it never would have borne fruit. Since its two colossal successes in 2010 and 2012, it has been increasingly difficult for this NGO to measure up to its own accomplishments. Some members refer to these two events as their “original sin,” but they did not give up. As one of our interviewees put it: *After finishing the campaign, some of us still had enough energy, vision, and, how to put it, knowledge that work needs to be continued. It would have been a waste to throw away all the moral capital, and so we planned our next activities and became a real NGO.*

The triumphal cleanups that took place in 2010 and 2012 led to the temporary discontinuation of the cleanup campaigns. What is more, many members decided to leave the NGO. This was not because of conflicts or differences of opinion, but rather because of exhaustion. One of the remaining members told us he “turned gray” when holding the campaigns, and a less fortunate one ended up in the hospital. Although they were passionate about the common goal, afterwards many participants did not even want to hear about any follow-up projects because of fatigue. Our interviewees also said that some left the NGO because they felt all of their creative ideas had been drained. *For associations it is best if they live on the shoulders of an enthusiastic young idealist that gives his or her most productive years for something good,* agreed the former president of Ecologists without Borders.

The remaining members realized that one cannot spend years working as an unpaid or low-paid volunteer that can remain dedicated at the same time. As a result, this NGO already started applying for national and international projects in 2010, but it acquired few, and this has remained so until today. Those formally employed represent the head of the organization, but they are intensely supported by a dozen volunteers and many other occasional participants. At the time of our study, this young NGO was going through quite severe times, at least financially. When we carried out our research among them, all six employees had to cut back their working hours.

CRITICAL MASS

Critical Mass is an international movement supporting urban cycling. It originated in San Francisco in 1992. It soon spread to other countries and cities, including Belgrade and Budapest, which were the focus of our study. Their event, which is commonly presented

⁵ According to the members, in 2015 almost four hundred media reports mentioned Ecologists without Borders.

to the public as “celebration” and not a “protest” in order to avoiding intervention by the local police, is usually held on the last Friday of the month. The organizational structure of Critical Mass is at least provisionally decentralized and dispersed, and the event usually does not have any official or visible leadership (for a more detailed description of this and other cycling movements see, e.g., Carlsson 2001; Wehr 2009; Norcliffe 2015). However, in the background there are, of course, individuals and organizations that motivate others to join the movement, prepare promotional materials, spread information about Critical Mass on social media, and so on. In Budapest and Belgrade, we carried out interviews with people that were at the core of the movement, and we tried to focus on the transition from cycling being an alternative mobility style to becoming a mainstream means of transport.

In Budapest, our interviewees told us about the beginnings of the movement. It started in 2004, when they managed to attract over four thousand people during the first campaign. Ten thousand cyclists joined the second edition in spring 2005, twenty thousand for the third in the fall of 2005, and thirty-two thousand in spring 2006. The growth continued until spring 2008, when there were eighty thousand cyclists on the roads and streets of Budapest; this was the largest Critical Mass at the global level. The organizational dynamics of the movement in Budapest were somewhat different from those in other countries; the gathering was held twice a year, in April and September, and not on a monthly basis. Due to its rapid growth, there was a need for a professional institution to stand behind the movement. This is how the Hungarian Cyclists’ Club was established in 2006. As explained by the local organizers, the movement has changed over the years and has turned into a festival. *It was not a hard-core demonstration anymore*, an interviewee told us. In the meantime, cycling in Budapest has turned into a mainstream activity, which was in fact the main goal of the movement; that is, to present cycling as the cheapest and quickest mode of transportation and an accessible alternative to driving.

After ten years, it had become clear that the Critical Mass movement managed to change the cityscape, from both the infrastructure and cultural perspectives. For example, 2% of citizens in the broader metropolitan area and up to 10% of people in the downtown regularly cycle. Because the initiators of the movement reached their main goal, they decided the Critical Mass event in 2013 would be the last one. A year later, they recognized a need for a new cycling festival in the spring. Therefore, they started I Bike Budapest in 2015. They keep holding smaller demonstrations; for example, to make the downtown Széchenyi Chain Bridge in more bicycle-friendly. *What we do now is a mixture of advocacy, lobbying, and communication*, they told us.

The situation in Belgrade is comparable to Budapest before the transformation that was supported by Critical Mass. There were several people supporting the movement and trying to achieve the change, but the number of people joining the activities could not reach the threshold for making cycling a mainstream activity and changing the local infrastructure. Some of these supporters were fully dedicated to the goal, including one of our key informants, who used to work in an IT store. He told us how he had left his

job and became completely immersed in the cycling movement in Belgrade, which in his words was “an interesting experiment” in his life. His main personal goal was to change the system of values in the city, where the “cult of the car” still reigns. In general, people still perceive cycling as a shameful act, as confirmed by other interviewees, who often told us that people in the city believe that cyclists are “beggars” that cannot afford to buy a car or at least purchase a public transport ticket.

The Critical Mass movement, with its purpose of presenting cycling as a “normal” activity and traveling by bicycle as a viable and mainstream transport option, was brought to Belgrade in 2011 by a student from Vienna, who was shocked that the large city was so bicycle-unfriendly. The first gathering he helped organize was attended by a few dozen people, but later hundreds started to join in. In 2012, the organizers wanted to legalize the gathering and register it with the police, who tried to prohibit it with an explanation that there might be snow and ice on the city streets, even though it was a sunny autumn day with temperatures expected over 20 °C. At that time, our interviewee told us, the organizers realized they had to “start rebelling” against the regime by gathering legal opinions, appearing in the media, and so on.

At the time of our study in Belgrade, there were on average three hundred cyclists participating in the movement, which was then held every last Saturday of the month. On October 31st, 2015, we joined an event, the fifty-fifth in a row, as part of our research and cycled on the city streets, escorted by a police car with its lights flashing and siren on. The goal of the campaign was to show that the city’s large infrastructure project Belgrade Waterfront, headed by the Serbian government, was poorly designed for cyclists because they are squeezed into a narrow path together with pedestrians. “More room for cyclists and pedestrians” was the main message of the protest, which was loudly expressed by our interviewee, who held a megaphone in his hand during the campaign and tried to motivate people to support the idea.

DISCUSSION

According to Greiner’s (1972) analysis, organizations tend to pass through a series of developmental phases, defined by creativity, direction, delegation, coordination, collaboration, and alliances. His model of the overall process is only partially applicable to our research because his focus is on companies and, of course, their growth. According to Greiner, the first phase is characterized by creativity, by long working hours that are not rewarded by an abundance of money, but bring pleasure, and by frequent communication among the initiators. This is something we detected in all three movements studied. This phase is followed by the second phase of sustained growth, when a power hierarchy starts to appear. Individuals are increasingly given more specialized assignments, work standards are adopted, and communication is formalized. The empirical material that we gathered also confirms



Figure 2: Critical Mass protest against the Belgrade Waterfront infrastructure project (Belgrade, Serbia, 31 October 2015, photo credit: Dan Podjed).

this. The bureaucratic societies we live in demand precision, and so it is no surprise that the social context forces newly constituted informal groups to somehow formalize their existence, especially if they are in need of funding. If nothing else, the goals need to be accurately defined, a name acquired, a webpage set up, official persons put in charge, and possibly an emblem designed. In another article, Podjed and Muršič (2008) called this developmental stage a necessary professionalization that at times forms a gap between the volunteers and the professionals, and can consequently lead to a decrease in the number of volunteers. This part of development is not very satisfying for the movement's supporters, but—at least in the case of two movements presented in this article—can be followed by a great triumph.

From the previously amorphous mass, a more structured and defined movement starts to form. In other words, the tipping point occurs when the idea affiliating all members seems the most promising and almost irresistibly spreads among those outside of the original group. Gathering together first 270,000 and then 289,000 Slovenians is an astonishing achievement accomplished by Ecologists without Borders, whose interviewed members all referred to these two campaigns when asked about the pinnacle of their NGO. The proud coordinators also experienced exhaustion, as already mentioned, which went hand

in hand with organizing these huge campaigns. The movement nonetheless succeeded in expanding and joining a substantial number of people around an environmentally friendly social mission.

Even through the portrayal of the first two phases and the highpoint suggest we are talking about another leap in development, the following stages imply that punctuated equilibrium could fit the actual events more appropriately. A large step, such as the successes that Critical Mass experienced in Budapest, can hardly be surpassed by another victory and is normally followed by a diminution. In the case of Ecologists without Borders, the great success occurred twice (the second matched the first, but did not outshine it), and the third attempt attracted a lower number of participants. As the interviewees stated, those Slovenians that were not tempted to join the first time generally also remained indifferent at the time of the second and third campaigns. The tipping point was reached with the initial climax, which was occasionally measured up to by subsequent events, but was not bested.

The clichéd emphasis is generally on the capacities of the leader, who supposedly bears most of the responsibilities. However, our empirical data, as well as the research conducted by Jane Howell and Boas Shamir (2005), suggest it is not really about the leader. They stress the contribution of the followers, who play an immense role, although certain individuals often receive more distinctive credit. Above all, at the beginning there is usually one very motivated individual that is taken with a new idea. That said, such movements still seem to be more about a particular group that shares the “collective conscience” of serving the community than about a single hero. Kinyua Kamaria and Alfred Lewis (2009) subscribe to this idea, and their article on nonprofit organizations discusses the importance of the quality of human resources. Our fieldwork experiences witness the same; namely, that to some extent similar members of the NGO can or must possess a range of different qualities and skills. For instance, one specializes in public relations, another in IT skills, yet another in financial matters, and so on. Different areas need to be covered by knowledgeable members that nonetheless function as equals.

The structure of Critical Mass and Ecologists without Borders is rather flat and the decision-making process is democratic, which is another vital part of their successes. Despite the egalitarian structure, the media that normally support such movements “*want a hero*,” as one of the interviewees stated. Even though the Let’s Clean Up Slovenia in a Day campaigns were an absolutely collective achievement, back in 2010 the association’s president was nominated for the Slovenian of the Year award, bestowed by the most popular Slovenian radio station, which ran counter to the association’s strong belief in collective work. The nomination was definitely flattering for the former president, as well as for Ecologists without Borders, yet it reflected a misunderstanding by the media. Media support is nevertheless of key importance. Critical Mass and Ecologists without Borders also have their own internal public relations managers that help with public relations and raise the movements’ profile. Practices and concepts from marketing can promote social change. According to Alan Andreasen, “if marketing can change consumers’ lives, surely it can be

a powerful tool to improve consumers' physical and mental health and the general quality of our society and its environment" (Andreasen 1995: 3). This argument seems to have taken root and is regularly employed by successful movements.

The members of all the movements discussed vary in age, sex, and origin, and, importantly, they have different skills, yet they have been brought together by a particular idea that they can change something. When the values and assumptions about the activities of the movements are shared, the results are richer (Sarros et al. 2011). The hope for something better is collective, and they have confidence in changes for the better; furthermore, they believe that what they personally do can make a positive change on a larger scale. Their optimism encourages other members to invest substantial time, effort, and money into a certain project. Competition is thus not something such movements believe in or talk about, but they rather encourage it. The following episode as related by a member of Ecologists without Borders embodies the discrepancy between those on top and those below, but also the honest liking for positive change, regardless of who carried it out.

Well, in Serbia they had this campaign [Let's Clean Up Serbia in a Day] one year. We persuaded them to hold it. They started the planning when the state sniffed it out, and they just took over, you know. The ministry said, "Okay, we'll do it," and their basketball player, or whatever he was, was the main mascot. Of course, it's cool in a way because they woke up, which was one of the drives of our campaign—"no one does anything, so we should"—but the initiators already had a lot of expenses, the webpage was expensive, and it left a bad taste because the civil initiative had barely started and then they [the national government] said they'd do it. They didn't care, they just pushed them away and never continued with the campaign after that year.

As certain NGO researchers (McMurray et al. 2010; Amagoh 2015) unsurprisingly claim, financial means are important, but they add that other less material values come first. In other words, Critical Mass and Let's Clean Up Slovenia in a Day do depend on financial support, but people do not join the activities for the money. When asking one of the interviewees, who has lucrative programming skills, about accepting one of the tempting job offers he gets, he answered that he does not feel like leaving this "baby" that they collectively created and he wants to continue nurturing what he believes in.

Last but not least, what is needed for starting a popular movement is the right social context. For instance, Critical Mass could not have attracted so many participants if Budapest or Belgrade had originally been bike-friendly cities. The outside need has to exist for dissatisfied people to join the movement (McMurray et al. 2010).

CONCLUSION

This article described several phases that grassroots movements go through and the changes they create in their environment, both locally and globally. Ethnographic analysis leads us to believe that there are certain common phases that successful grassroots initiatives experience. These empirically grounded theoretical findings can help us gather information on how a positive change can occur and perhaps even generate more successful collective actions. To list the causes briefly: the triggers of such “revolutions” come from a foreign milieu and attract a small number of people that soon face the need to formalize their existence in order to be able to make whatever change they are battling for. Eventually, those groups that are doing very well then manage to reach the tipping point, the primary climax, when a real transformational step is made, but this is often followed by a step or two back. The alternating rises and falls continue, but they rarely reach the initial apex and often slowly drain away.

What connects the movements presented in this article are some common features; for example, being inspired by someone from another country, a strong belief in the main objective, an initially irrelevant motivational role of financing, the importance of the group over the individual, and immense optimism. As we observed in our field study, difficulties, challenges, and eventual accomplishments are a normal course in many organizational contexts. Regardless of the initial eagerness and success, less buoyant times may and do occur. However, from the organizational viewpoint it is important to anticipate the trajectories of their development and thus “expect the unexpected.”

REFERENCES

- Amagoh, Francis. 2015. Improving the Credibility and Effectiveness of Non-Governmental Organizations. *Progress in Development Studies* 15: 221–239. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464993415578979>
- Andreasen, Alan. 1995. *Marketing Social Change: Changing Behaviour to Promote Health, Social Development, and the Environment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ball, Philip. 2005. *Critical Mass: How One Thing Leads to Another*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Carlsson, Chris (ed.). 2001. *Critical Mass: Bicycling's Defiant Celebration*. Edinburgh and Oakland: AK Press.
- DeWalt, Kathleen, and Billie DeWalt. 1998. Participant Observation. In: Russell Bernard (ed.), *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 259–299.
- Eldredge, Niles, and Stephen Jay Gould. 1972. Punctuated Equilibria: An Alternative to Phyletic Gradualism. In: Thomas Schopf (ed.), *Models in Paleobiology*. San Francisco: Freeman Cooper, 82–115.
- Fikfak, Jurij et. al. (eds.). 2004. *Qualitative Research: Different Perspectives, Emerging Trends*. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC; Mainz: Universitaet Mainz.
- Gersick, Connie. 1991. Revolutionary Change Theories: A Multilevel Exploration of the Punctuated Equilibrium Paradigm. *The Academy of Management Review* 16: 10–36. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.1991.4278988>

- Gingrich, Andre. 2012. Comparative Methods in Socio-Cultural Anthropology Today. In: Richard Fardon et al. (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Anthropology*. London: SAGE, 211–222.
- Gladwell, Malcolm. 1991. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Glaser, Barney, and Anselm Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Granovetter, Mark. 1978. Threshold Models of Collective Behavior. *The American Journal of Sociology* 83: 1420–1443. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/226707>
- Greiner, Larry. 1972. Evolution and Revolution as Organizations Grow. *Harvard Business Review* 50 (4): 37–46. Available at: <https://hbr.org/1998/05/evolution-and-revolution-as-organizations-grow>
- Grodzins, Morton. 1957. Metropolitan Segregation. *Scientific American* 197 (4): 33–47. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/e24941935>
- Grodzins, Morton. 1958. *The Metropolitan Area as a Racial Problem*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Howell, Jane, and Boas Shamir. 2005. The Role of Followers in the Charismatic Leadership Process: Relationships and Their Consequences. *Academy of Management Review* 30: 96–112. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2005.15281435>
- Hudson, Christopher. 2000. From Social Darwinism to Self-Organization: Implications for Social Change Theory. *Social Service Review* 74 (4): 533–559. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/516424>
- Kamaria, Kinyua, and Alfred Lewis. 2009. The Not-For-Profit General Management Responsive Capability Competencies: A Strategic Management Perspective. *Business Strategy Series* 10 (5): 296–310. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/17515630910989196>
- Kuhn, Thomas. 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ličen, Daša (interviewer), and Thomas Hylland Eriksen (interviewee). 2016. On the Anthropology of Climate Change. A Conversation with Thomas Hylland Eriksen. *Eurozine*, February 9. Available at: <http://www.eurozine.com/on-the-anthropology-of-climate-change/>
- McMurray, Adela et al. 2010. Leadership, Climate, Psychological Capital, Commitments, and Wellbeing in a Non-Profit Organization. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 31 (5): 436–457. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437731011056452>
- Miller, John, and Scott Page. 2004. The Standing Ovation Problem. *Complexity* 9 (5): 8–16. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/cplx.20033>
- Norcliffe, Glen. 2015. *Critical Geographies of Cycling: History, Political Economy and Culture*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Perc, Matjaž et al. 2013. Evolutionary Dynamics of Group Interactions on Structured Populations: A Review. *Journal of the Royal Society: Interface* 10. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsif.2012.0997>
- Podjed, Dan, and Daša Ličen. 2019. Orgunity as a New Form of Cooperation: Case Studies of Two Environmental NGOs. In: Peter Simonič (ed.), *Anthropological Perspectives of Solidarity and Reciprocity*. Ljubljana: Ljubljana University Press, Faculty of Arts, 189–208.
- Podjed, Dan, and Rajko Muršič. 2008. Dialectical Relations between Professionals and Volunteers in a Biodiversity Monitoring Organisation. *Biodiversity and Conservation* 17 (14): 3471–3483. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10531-008-9443-z>
- Puđak, Jelena. 2014. *Koga brigada za klimu? K sociologiji klimatskih promjena*. Zagreb: Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar.
- Quarter, Jack, and Betty Jane Richmond. 2011. Accounting for Social Value in Nonprofits and For-Profits. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 12 (1): 75–85. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.12106>

- Sarros, James et al. 2011. Leadership Vision, Organizational Culture, and Support for Innovation in Not-For-Profit and For-Profit Organizations. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 32 (3): 291–309. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437731111123933>
- Schelling, Thomas. 1971. Dynamic Models of Segregation. *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 1: 143–186. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0022250X.1971.9989794>
- Schuller, Mark, and David Lewis. 2014. Anthropology of NGOs. In: John Jackson (ed.), *Oxford Bibliographies in Anthropology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tarnow, Eugen. 1996. Like Water and Vapor: Conformity and Independence in the Large Group. *Behavioral Science* 41 (2): 136–151. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/bs.3830410204>
- Turner, Victor. 1969. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Tushman, Michael, and Elaine Romanelli. 1985. Organizational Evolution: A Metamorphosis Model of Convergence and Reorientation. *Research in Organizational Behavior* 7: 171–222. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/256669>
- Wehr, Kevin. 2009. *Hermes on Two Wheels: The Sociology of Bicycle Messengers*. Lanham: University Press of America.

SPREMEMBE OD SPODAJ: PRIMERJALNA RAZISKAVA MNOŽIČNIH GIBANJ ZA ZMANJŠANJE KOLIČINE ODPADKOV IN SPODBUJANJE KOLESARJENJA

Avtorja članka obravnavata množična družbena gibanja na lokalni in mednarodni ravni, ki nastanejo na pobudo spontanih ljudskih iniciativ in nevladnih organizacij. Natančneje predstavita dva primera, ki se osredinjata na reševanje globalnih vprašanj, povezanih z varovanjem okolja in trajnostnim razvojem, in skušata razložiti, kako so takšna gibanja organizirana in kako jih je mogoče še bolj optimizirati. Zanima ju tudi, kako bi lahko dejavnosti pripadnikov in pripadnic teh gibanj bolje vključili v družbo in kako bi laho izboljšali njihov pozitiven učinek.

Članek podaja še teoretično podlago za razumevanje množičnih gibanj. Pojasniti skuša, zakaj in kako lahko množična kolektivna dejanja izhajajo iz manjših lokalnih pobud, in opiše prelomne točke oziroma kritične trenutke, ko se zamisel začne širiti med ljudmi in »zaneti« množično gibanje. Zamisli o prelomnih točkah primerja z drugimi teoretskimi modeli, ki so uporabni za razlago dinamike množičnih gibanj v družbenih sistemih.

Prispevek se natančneje posveti dvema gibanjema, ki služita kot primera za prikaz teoretskih modelov. Prvi primer je ena vodilnih slovenskih nevladnih organizacij, imenovana Ekologi brez meja. Najbolj znani so po tem, da so organizirali odmevne akcije za očiščenje Slovenije in si še z drugimi ukrepi prizadevali za zmanjšanje odpadkov in bolj skrbno ravnanje z njimi. Drugi primer je Kritična masa, mednarodno gibanje kolesarjev, katerega članice in člani se zavzemajo za več javnega prostora za kolesarjenje v mestih. Članek tako predstavi aktivnosti in dosežke kolesarjev v Beogradu, kjer to gibanje podpira društvo Ulice za kolesarje, in v Budimpešti, kjer

smo raziskavo izvedli v Madžarskem klubu kolesarjev. Avtorja razpravljata o transformacijah, s katerimi se soočajo tovrstna gibanja. Predvsem ju zanima prehod od nestrukturiranih začetkov do bolj organiziranih dejavnosti.

Kaj pa povezuje gibanji, predstavljeni v članku? Kot razložita avtorja, so to navdih, ki prihaja od zunaj, trdno prepričanje o osrednjem cilju, sprva nepomembne finančne dileme, poudarjanje pomena skupnosti in izjemen optimizem. Seveda pa se navkljub začetnemu zagonu in nagli rasti v tovrstnih gibanjih hitro začnejo dogajati spremembe, posebej ko se organizacijska struktura formalizira. Z organizacijskega vidika je zato pomembno predvideti njihov razvoj in se ustrezno pripraviti na notranje tenzije ter nepričakovane odzive na situacijo v družbi in okolju.

Daša Ličen, MA, Research Assistant, ZRC SAZU, Institute of Slovenian Ethnology, Novi trg 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia, dasa.licen@zrc-sazu.si

Assist. Prof. Dr. Dan Podjed, Research Fellow, ZRC SAZU, Institute of Slovenian Ethnology, Novi trg 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia and University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia, dan.podjed@zrc-sazu.si

The authors acknowledge the financial support from the Slovenian Research Agency (research project L6-9364 - The Invisible Life of Waste ... and the research program P6-0088).