4th & 5th UK Social Networks Conference

Distinguishing between political brokerage & political entrepreneurship

Dimitrios Christopoulosa, Karin Ingoldb

a Department of Politics, UWE-Bristol, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol BS16 1QY, UK
b Institute for Environmental Decisions, ETH Zurich, Universitätstrasse 22, Zurich, CH-8092, Switzerland

Abstract

How can we distinguish between political brokers and political entrepreneurs within political space? Examining the role of individual agents, we can identify a number of definitional weaknesses in the entrepreneurship and leadership literature. This leads us to consider the agency determinants of broadly defined exceptional actors. We argue that accounts of exceptional agency have to incorporate information on the psychology, behaviour and relational environment of actors. However, we recognise that collecting complete data on agents is most often not feasible. Since relational data strongly reflect the choices and behaviour actors have been making we concentrate here on the distinction between brokers and entrepreneurs in relational space. Within relational social science however, brokerage has been often confounded with entrepreneurship. Our aim here is to decouple the underlying assumptions and operationalize this distinction in Social Network Analysis (SNA).

Keywords: Policy change; political entrepreneur; broker; social network analysis; centrality