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Social Movements, Civil Society and Corporations: Taking Stock and Looking Ahead

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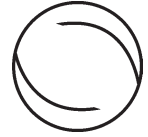
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Abstract

The relationships between social movements and civil society on the one hand, and the corporate world on the other hand, are often shaped by conflict over the domination of economic, cultural and social life. How this conflict plays out, in current as well as in historical times and places, is the central question that unites the papers in this special issue. In this essay, we review the differences and points of contact between the study of social movements, civil society and corporations, and offer an agenda for future research at this intersection that also frames the papers in the special issue. We suggest that three research areas are becoming increasingly important: the blurring of the three empirical domains and corresponding opportunities for theoretical integration, the institutional and cultural embeddedness of strategic interaction processes between agents, and the consequences of contestation and collaboration. The papers in this special issue are introduced in how they speak to these questions.

Keywords

civil society, private politics, social movements, strategic interaction

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Introduction

Organization and organizing are key to our understanding of societal dynamics (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2011; Drori, Meyer & Hwang, 2006), just as insights into society are crucial for our understanding of organization and organizing (Friedland & Alford, 1991). As argued in the mission statement of *Organization Studies*, the field needs to focus on how ‘organizations...are interpenetrated with society and generate specific patterns of how we live in societies, as well as how those societies are actually governed and shaped’ (Courpasson, Arellano-Gault, Brown & Lounsbury, 2008, p. 1386). This imperative reflects not only a desire to build more complete theories of organizations, but also a realization that the boundaries between different societal domains and their corresponding organizational forms have become increasingly blurred. This special issue further develops this research agenda by focusing on the interactions between social movements, civil society and corporations. Traditionally, the study of these three domains, and the organizations they entail, has largely occurred in parallel. Our objective is to strengthen the more recent engagement between scholars that study collective action in movements, civil society and the corporate sector.

Of course, all organizations are ‘interpenetrated with society’. They are so along various institutional dimensions, for example, cultural (Dobbin, 1994; Weber & Dacin, 2011), legal (Edelman & Suchman, 1997) and historical (Stinchcombe, 1965). But this interpenetration also occurs through direct interaction with other agents. Corporations, the predominant organizational form of contemporary market economies, for example, interact directly not only with – in the economists’ language – ‘market’ agents, but also with a whole range of ‘non-market’ agents. In fact, the distinction between ‘market’ and ‘non-market’ agents can be argued to be artificial, as relations with ‘non-market’ agents may have economic consequences (Baron, 2003; Boddewyn, 2003) and relations with ‘market’ agents are in a fundamental way socially embedded (Biggart & Beamish, 2003; Granovetter, 1985). What contemporary research is challenged to offer, however, is a more precise understanding of this ‘interpenetration’, by unpacking more specific relationships and processes. This challenge includes going not only beyond abstract institutional categories such as religion and culture, but also beyond the individualized models of decision making found in mainstream economic or psychological research. Individuals routinely make choices that affect corporations, for example as consumers, employees, entrepreneurs or owners, and when they evaluate the broader reputation of business firms. But such choices can most often not be fully understood without reference to collective dynamics and societal groups, who seek to influence both corporations and the individuals that affect them. One reason such non-market groups focus on corporations is that corporations also fundamentally affect everyday life and how societies are governed (Courpasson et al., 2008).

Out of the many societal dynamics that interact with the corporate sector, we limit our focus to social movement and civil society processes.¹ In current as well as in historical times and places, the relationships between social movements and civil society on the one hand, and the corporate world on the other hand, have often been shaped by conflict over control of economic, cultural or social life. When we speak of ‘conflict’, here, we use the concept neutrally as a ‘perceived divergence of interest’ among various parties (Pruitt & Kim, 1998, pp. 7–8), where interests and conflict may well reflect deeper differences in the cultural logics and value regimes that govern various social domains (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006 [1991]; Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2012). The parties involved may thus also prefer various approaches of conflict management. Van Wijk, Stam, Elfring, Zietsma and den Hond (2013), for instance, distinguish contentious, market-based and collaborative approaches to conflict. Students of social movements have historically emphasized contention and disruption, starting with ‘preference structures directed toward social change’ (McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p. 1218) and concerns with ‘the control that a social group has over its capacity to make

decisions, to control changes and so on' (Touraine, 2002, p. 89). By contrast, students of civil society have emphasized collaboration and stability, equating the term either with the voluntary association of individuals in the public sphere beyond the realms of the state, the market and the family (Ahrne, 1996; Anheier, Glasius & Kaldor, 2001; Schofer & Fourcade-Gourinchas, 2001), or a defining norm of 'civility' for public social engagement (Alexander, 2006; Rucht, 2009). Social movements and civil society therefore not only stand for two distinct bodies of research or societal domains, but also for different approaches for how divergent interests are managed. Yet, just as it has become clear that corporations cannot be understood as solely governed by a market logic, it has also become apparent that social movements cannot solely be understood through the lens of contestation and civil society cannot be reduced to collaborative association.

How conflict arises and plays out between corporations and social movements and civic groups is the central question of this special issue. In addressing this question, researchers can draw on recent advances in several research areas. Management scholars, for example, have addressed the question of how business firms relate to various stakeholder groups (Freeman, 1984), increasingly paying attention to how secondary, or indirect, stakeholders interact with corporations (de Bakker & den Hond, 2008), for instance on issues of corporate social responsibility (de Bakker, 2012; Yaziji & Doh, 2013). Social movement scholars have started to expand their domain of interest from studying contentious politics in relation to the state to studying challenges to non-state authorities, including business firms (Snow, 2004). Political scientists and economic sociologists have developed an interest in private politics and regulation, i.e. informal non-state, cross-sector and often transnational arrangements that govern economic activity (Baron, 2003; Bartley, 2003, 2007). And students of the voluntary sector have observed both a blurring of market and non-profit models as well as the import of market-based approaches to questions traditionally addressed by third sector organizations (Mair, Martí & Ventresca, 2012; Tracey, Phillips & Jarvis, 2011). The boundaries between these fields thus have become more open and fluid, and mutual fertilization, discussion and engagement can increasingly be observed: a point in case is the very *Organization Studies* Workshop on which this special issue is based.

In this essay, we put in context the papers that have become part of this special issue, by taking stock of research at the intersection of movements, civil society and corporations, and by offering an agenda for future research. First, we show how from the perspective of research on social movements and civil society, the study of contentious politics in movements has recently become re-connected with studies of private organizations in market environments, while at the same time incorporating insights from the study of civil society dynamics. We argue that this leads to a corresponding reconceptualization of the corporation and more historical-political theories of the firm. In the following section, we stake out three resulting research areas that demand greater scholarly attention: the blurring of empirical domains and corresponding opportunities for theoretical integration; the institutional and cultural embeddedness of strategic interaction processes between agents; and the consequences of contestation and collaboration. We then present the papers in this special issue in how they speak to these questions.

Social Movements, Corporations, and Civil Society: A Brief History

Studies of Contentious Politics and Corporations

For much of their history, academic research on social movements and formal organizations developed in parallel, with social movement researchers mostly concerned with fleeting contestations in the interest of change, and organization theorists concerned with reliable rational systems of

control (see Weber & King, forthcoming, for a more extensive historical review). It was not until the 1960s, when the late Mayer Zald, together with John McCarthy and other collaborators, started an initially somewhat one-sided conversation between these growing bodies of research, by examining how social movement *organizations* developed, maintained and changed. Zald and McCarthy developed an organizations-focused perspective of social movements, which called scholars to focus on the (social movement) organizations that helped mobilize change-oriented collective action (resource mobilization theory; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). In subsequent years, social movement scholars drew heavily from the organizational theories presented in Zald and colleagues' work. But despite calls to pay attention to how organizations are also contested by social movements (Berg & Zald, 1978; Zald, 1978; Zald & Berger, 1978), organizational scholars studying corporations or non-profits did not, for most of the next three decades, engage much with social movement theory.

By the early 2000s, however, some organizational researchers who studied mainly corporations in the for-profit sector were looking for solutions to conceptual problems in their field (Davis, McAdam, Scott & Zald, 2005), especially for better accounts of organizational and institutional change and for models of contestation around formal organizations. Contemporary social movement theory offered an approach to studying bottom-up change and emergent collective action, which contrasted with organizational theory's emphasis on hierarchy, goals and structural mechanisms of control. The study of movements also provided guidance to conceptualize the intermingling of economic and political aspects in corporations, including the economic impact of social and cultural change emanating from informal and non-elite actors, and the use of extra-institutional tactics and strategies in the process (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2001). Movements are one fulcrum that brings private and voluntary sector organizations into the public political sphere, both in Western and in developing economies (della Porta & Tarrow, 2005; Fleming & Spicer, 2007). As a result of these renewed efforts to connect the two fields, organizational researchers interested in corporations, and to a lesser extent those studying the non-profit sector, have increasingly drawn on social movement research (Walker, 2012).

At the same time that organizational scholars began to pay attention to movements, social movement research itself broadened its focus. The literature on 'contentious politics' has long had a dominant focus on conflicts in which the state is involved (King & Pearce, 2010; Tarrow, 2001). Contentious politics was, in fact, by some scholars explicitly defined as 'collective interaction... when at least one government is a claimant' (McAdam et al., 2001, p. 5). Recently, however, this limited definition of contentious politics as necessarily involving the state has been relaxed, as movement scholars have started to study how movements target other forms of authority, including firms, industries and cultural systems. Social movement researchers have turned from an exclusive concern with 'public politics' to an inclusion of 'private politics', defined by political scientists as means and modes of inter-organizational conflict resolution in which public authorities – the state, the legal system – have only a limited role (Baron, 2003).² Thus, the central concern of this research has broadened from state-oriented social movements to, more generally, conceptions of conflict that lead people to contend or collaborate with different types of institutional targets (Armstrong and Bernstein, 2008).

Social movement researchers have also increasingly paid attention to the role of reformist and other means through which social movement participants advance their causes, expanding the study of movement repertoires to include collaborative and civic forms of engagement that were traditionally associated with voluntary associations and studied by civil society researchers (e.g. Alexander, 2006; Meyerson & Scully, 1995). This is in contrast to an earlier focus on a narrower repertoire of historically emerged forms of public protests that came to be seen as

archetypal expressions of movement mobilization (Tilly, 2004). Tactical innovation and ideological differentiation led movements to expand from seeking change through confrontation to include collaboration with variable partnerships, reformist efforts within institutions, and the development of alternative economic orders (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; McAdam, 1983; Soule & King, 2008). Studies in this realm have examined, for example, the relationship between more radical and reformist groups within a movement (Haines, 1984), or how organizations with strong roots in social movements enter cooperative relationship with corporations and governments as soft regulators (Bartley, 2007; Lim & Tsutsui, 2012; Teegen, Doh & Vachani, 2004). This expanded view of movement repertoires necessarily led to a blurring of the boundaries between 'contentious' forms of conflict in social movements and 'collaborative' management of conflict by civil society organizations.

Towards a Changing Conception of the Corporation

The corporation, as an organizational form and empirical reality, has been heavily contested for a long time and in multiple institutional arenas. Calhoun (2012), for example, claims that the shift of much economic production from households to private and public corporations in the 19th century blurred the distinctions between public and private, leading to resentments among groups in civil society. These grievances at times became manifest in movements that targeted both states and corporations and had extensive cultural effects. A similar suspicion about corporations, and explicitly about American corporations, has been well documented in critical management and post-colonial studies (Banerjee, 2008; Fleming & Spicer, 2007). If anything, the prominence and ubiquity of corporations in social life has only magnified in recent decades, making their interaction with movements and civil society groups even more critical for societal wellbeing. Popular writers have lamented the seemingly limitless capacity of corporations to intrude on social and personal lives (Derber, 1998; Klein, 1999). The global integration of markets and the rise of multinational corporations have demanded a shift in the scale of movement and civil society organizing processes, leading, for example, to the proliferation of transnational movements that often bypass rather than target states (della Porta & Tarrow, 2005; Smith, Chatfield & Pagnucco, 1997).

Davis and Zald (2005, p. 336) argued that 'as corporations have become increasingly multinational and encompassing, they have taken on the character of polities whose "citizens" may engage in collective action to challenge policies with which they disagree'. Inasmuch as the public see themselves as 'citizens' of a society that has ill-defined boundaries and few formal political institutions and is dominated by corporations and markets, decisions such as choosing a job and deciding where to buy groceries take on greater political and cultural import. The entanglement of corporate actors with personal lives through products and service markets has led some groups to mobilize around consumption as a form of political and identity expression (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Knights & Morgan, 1993; Micheletti, 2003) and other groups into creating voluntary organizations that compensate for market failures (Lounsbury, 2001). Yet others seek to construct new market ideologies that reshape how consumers think about their relationship to companies and their products (Balsiger, 2010; Holt, 2012).

Equally important, corporations themselves play an active role in global polities, not only exerting political speech but also seeking to shape society through more direct means. Walker (2009), for example, has chronicled corporations' efforts to mobilize individuals around grassroots causes that are aligned with their interests. Moreover, as Lee and Romano (2013) illustrate, even the purest forms of civic engagement, such as forums of public deliberation, can become infiltrated by

corporate professionals who seek to change public opinion in ways that benefit their corporate clients. In this new conception and reality of politics, corporations join social movements and civil society groups as political actors that *all* seek to influence public and private spheres of life (Derry & Waikar, 2008; Guérard, Bode & Gustafsson, 2013; Knight & Greenberg, 2011).

In view of corporations' nature as politics, and their powerful active role in various institutional arenas, it is no surprise that citizens in turn seek to directly influence corporations through a variety of means, from confrontation to civic engagement. One avenue is from the inside. Several studies have examined the intra-organizational mobilization of constituents, including employees and investors, who seek to change organizational practices and policies or gain greater influence within corporate decision-making channels, through contentious or reformist efforts. Following Zald and Berger's (1978) characterization of organizations as political systems, a number of scholars have also highlighted social movements that mobilize *within* organizations. For example, Lounsbury (2001) looked at the role internal movements played in the adoption of recycling programmes in colleges and universities. Raeburn (2004) showed that gay and lesbian activist networks among employees helped to make domestic partnership benefits an acceptable practice among Fortune 500 companies and Kellogg (2011) studied reformist mobilization inside hospitals in favour of improved working conditions for residents. Davis and Thompson (1994) and Rao and Sivakumar (1999) argued that investor activists changed the way executives and boards handle corporate governance. These and other studies (see Walker, 2012, for more examples) all highlight the extent of conflict in organizations and how the interaction between contending groups can produce organizational change and settlements. Most of this research also emphasizes that the dynamics are not strictly intra-organizational but embedded in external institutions and movements (Weber, Thomas & Rao, 2009; Zald, Morrill & Rao, 2005).

Another intersection between corporations and social movement and civil society groups is through direct interaction of corporations with external groups. Research in this vein often emphasizes the disruptive tactics that movements use to pressure companies to adopt radical changes. Luders (2006), for example, argued that changes in Southern businesses segregationist policies resulted from civil rights activists imposing material disruption costs on targeted businesses. King (2008a, 2011), in contrast, demonstrated that boycotts were effective inasmuch as they threatened a company's reputation by generating unwanted media attention about the firm. Schurman and Munro (2010) argue that activist groups were able to influence European agribusinesses to reduce their reliance on genetically modified organisms, while Weber and colleagues (2009) analysed how the anti-biotech movement altered the internal politics of decision-making processes of German pharmaceutical firms. Beyond such case studies, Scherer and Palazzo (2007) draw on Habermas (1981) to develop a wider conception of corporate control through civil society.

Although these studies and others like them attest of the ability of movement activists and civil society entrepreneurs to influence powerful firms, in many other cases forcing corporations to change their behaviour through non-state channels has proven difficult. As an alternative tactic, social movement and civil society organizations have sought to collaborate with firms and business associations to elaborate governance schemes for the regulation of corporate and industrial behaviour (e.g. Ahrne, Brunsson & Tamm Hallström, 2007; Brunsson, Rasche & Seidl, 2012). For example, Bartley (2003) and O'Rourke (2005) studied how industry-wide, multi-stakeholder standards evolve in interaction between movements and industries, while Potoski and Prakash (2009) collected studies on the development and functioning of voluntary environmental programmes.

Another important pathway for engagement with the existing economic order has been efforts to create new organizational forms (Clemens, 1997), market niches (Weber et al., 2009), or institutional logics (Thornton et al., 2012). For example, one of the strategies of the Populist movement

of the 19th century was to create new forms of association, such as mutuals or cooperatives, that did not require farmers and workers to become dependent on corporations (Schneiberg 2002; Schneiberg, King & Smith, 2008). A by-product of the tendency for movements to cohere around collective identities and build mobilizing structures is that they often spawn new organizational forms and economic practices that sometimes lead to the creation of new markets or industries. For example, Hiatt, Sine and Tolbert (2009) showed that the Prohibition movement helped develop the market for soft drinks by changing the normative and cultural environment of the beverage industry. Weber, Heinze and DeSoucey (2008) illustrate how activists made salient cultural codes that grass-fed beef entrepreneurs used to direct innovation and build a market for their products. And Hensmans (2003) studied emerging Internet challengers in the music industry by viewing incumbents and challengers in that industry as potentially antagonistic social movement organizations that each strive to hegemonize entrepreneurship. There are thus ample areas in which studies of social movements, civil society and the corporate form interact. In the next section we will reflect on three notable developments in the interaction between these domains: the blurring of the three empirical domains and corresponding opportunities for theoretical integration; the institutional and cultural embeddedness of strategic interaction processes between agents; and the consequences of contestation and collaboration.

Emergent Research Areas

Blurring Boundaries and Converging Theories

The conflict over control of economic, cultural and social life that underlies much of the relationships between social movements, civil society and corporations has long been studied by different scholarly communities from the vantage point of one of the participating actors. The blurring of empirical distinctions and growing theoretical engagement described above offers opportunities for advancing theoretical and practical understanding by borrowing from and building upon insights developed in adjacent fields of study (see also Campbell, 2005; Weber & King, forthcoming). If tactical repertoires, identities and interests of different groups become increasingly blurred, and the dynamics of the struggle arise from the interactions of multiple participating parties, theoretical borrowing and integration may yield good results.

For example, stakeholder management scholars have traditionally taken a managerial perspective, by asking how firms and their managers do and should relate to stakeholders in their firms. However, their understanding of stakeholder management can be elaborated, deepened and refined, if they develop a conceptualization of stakeholders that goes beyond the reification of an assumed 'stake' that motivates stakeholder behaviour (de Bakker & den Hond, 2008). Stakeholders are moved not just by their interest in a single stake, but also by their social identity and ideology (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Rowley & Moldoveanu, 2003). In fact, King (2008b) proposed that a full-fledged social movement perspective is useful for understanding stakeholder behaviour, emphasizing the need for collective mobilization in making latent stakeholder demands effective.

Another example is the study of private regulation and the role of social and environmental standards therein. Economic sociologists, political scientists and others have extensively studied such standards as they were developed in collaboration between firms and nongovernmental organizations, conceived as civil society actors. However, many of the nongovernmental organizations involved in these standards can also be productively conceptualized as social movement organizations. From this perspective, standard setting is but one tactic in a wider range of

tactics that – for instance, in the case of the anti-sweatshop movement – also include media campaigns, political consumerisms and urgent appeals (Balsiger, 2010; den Hond, Stolwijk & Merk, 2012). Important dynamics of private regulation include struggles over exactly which standards are to be adopted, over what tactics and counter-tactics are being used in the process (Turcotte, de Bellefeuille & den Hond, 2007), or over the perceived legitimacy of standards (Mena & Palazzo, 2012).

The convergence of historically distinct perspectives and phenomena thus offers opportunities to eliminate blind spots and to develop more comprehensive theoretical and empirical understandings.

Institutional and Cultural Dimensions of Strategic Interactions

Much of the growing research at the intersection between corporations, movements and civil society groups has focused on strategic interactions between participants in struggles over social and economic life. While this work has become increasingly sophisticated, exploring, for example, challenger and incumbent tactical moves, more nuanced mechanisms of interaction and complex multi-party relationships, it takes many institutional and cultural factors as background conditions rather than as important explanatory factors. For example, questions around the formation of interests and identities, the structural embeddedness of interactions in fields and networks, and historical contingencies are not commonly addressed (Johnston & Klandermans, 1995; Poletta & Jasper, 2001). The limitations of this approach become increasingly apparent with the blurring of social domains and action repertoires described above, so that institutional conditions become too fluid and complex to be treated as mere background. For example, analysing framing as a purely tactical choice ignores identity-based and institutional constraints and, without an analysis of broader cultural structures and resources, makes it difficult to understand frame resonance and agenda setting success.³

A more productive lens is to understand strategic interactions as cultural practices that are situated in pluralistic institutional fields; a lens that calls for empirical and theoretical explorations that integrate the study of interactions with the dynamics of institutional and cultural fields. For example, how and when do cultural processes constitute or promote movements and civic engagement? How do movements through their interactions with corporations re-configure or create fields and logics? What norms and identities shape strategic interactions that span sectoral or national institutional domains and cultural understandings? We offer two examples of recent efforts to forge greater integration especially with institutional theory.

Fligstein and McAdam (2012) argued that interaction between institutional domains, including social movements rising up against other more established actors like corporations, takes place in ‘strategic action fields’, i.e. in ‘socially constructed arenas within which actors with varying resource endowments vie for advantage’ (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 10). They elaborate the analysis of strategic action fields and also cast, similar to Emirbayer and Johnson (2008), corporations as both powerful actors in these contentious struggles and as strategic action fields in their own right – arenas of interaction that are not settled, but in which various actors make claims about jurisdictional control, ideological belief and social justice. In a similar spirit, Meyer (2003, p. 17) points out that that students of political opportunities should also take into account ‘the important role that international factors, such as alliances and transnational movements, play in constraining both states and their challengers’. He speaks of nested institutions in this respect and suggests that the characteristics of this nesting affect the options these movements have to influence policies.

Thornton and colleagues (2012) develop an alternative model for understanding interaction dynamics in multi-institutional systems (Friedland & Alford, 1991), by elaborating the idea of institutional logics, with particular attention to connecting micro-dynamics to the level of organizations and institutional fields. Similar to Fligstein and McAdam (2012), Thornton et al. also conceive of fields as arenas in which multiple logics may coexist and vie for dominance. They arguably provide a more elaborate theory of the cultural processes involved in the constitution of areas and institutional agents, while Fligstein and McAdam are more interested in the political process once the field is constituted. Social movements play an important role in both institutional processes, as they engage in struggles with other actors within and across institutional arenas over meanings, resources and practices. Both approaches have garnered significant attention and scholarly debate.

Regardless of how compelling such broad theoretical syntheses are, they provoke researchers to examine how strategic interactions between social movement, civil society and corporate actors may constitute the very fields and arenas in which they play out their conflicts. For example, social movements may well elaborate the institutional arenas that they contest, and by creating new organizational forms, they often provide the cultural and material resources needed to create new markets for corporate actors.

Consequences of Interactions

A final question considers the conceptualization of outcomes and the explanation of 'success' in this regard. What are the consequences of the interaction between movements, civil society and corporation and for whom? Here, we draw primarily on the debate among social movement scholars on the intertwined questions of (a) how to understand movement consequences and (b) how to explain variance in outcomes.⁴

Most studies of movements focus on political, rather than on biographical or cultural, outcomes (Giugni, 1998, 2008), and on intended, rather than unintended, consequences in relation to the movement's goals (Earl, 2000). For example, Gamson (1990) suggests that research should focus on politics' 'acceptance' of movements as legitimate claim makers, and on the acquisition of 'new advantages' for the movement as indicators of outcome (and success). To these, Kitschelt (1986) adds 'structural impacts' as an outcome when movements succeeded in changing the structural conditions they face. Movement outcomes may thus vary in nature and level of impact. For example, the anti-sweatshop movement has achieved various outcomes at different levels of impact. Among these, Bartley and Child (2011) mention: putting the issue on the agenda, raising consumer awareness, engagement in dialogue with brands and retailers, getting brands and retailers to accept specific standards, and affecting their sales and stock prices. Other have pointed out how the consequences of the anti-sweatshop movement, while being influential in these terms, have had limited, partial or temporary impacts on the actual labor conditions for workers or the consumption practices of mass consumers (e.g. Armbruster-Sandoval, 2004). The question of how such 'political' outcomes – as distinct from biographical and cultural outcomes – are achieved has spurred considerable debate.

Various traditions can be distinguished in explaining movement outcomes, and especially movement success. Giugni (2008) argues that initially the resource mobilization perspective was used as a theoretical lens. Such studies had a particular focus on the effects of disruptive tactics and the strength of movement organization, for instance focusing on various disruptive tactics such as culture jamming and the subverting of corporate brands and logos, naming and shaming in the mass media, and boycotting (Bartley & Child, 2011; King, 2008a; Klein, 1999). Several studies

provide overviews of the tactical repertoire of social movements (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004). The relevance of a strong movement organization, for instance, can be derived from Keck and Sikkink's (1998) conclusion that one critical factor for boomerang politics to be effective is the strength of transnational activist networks. Other research in transnational activism (Tarrow, 2001) underlines this conclusion.

The resource mobilization approach to accounting for movements' consequences has been criticized as being too agentic – as if outcomes depended only on the movement – and was consequently complemented with a more structural approach. Later studies called for more attention to contextual factors, such as political opportunities and incumbents' counter-mobilization capacity (e.g. Amenta, Carruthers & Zylan, 1992; McAdam, 1982; Tilly, 1986). Together, they suggest how movement outcomes are 'conditional and contingent on the presence of facilitating external factors pertaining to their social and political environment, such as political opportunity structures and public opinion' (Giugni, 2008, p. 1589). In this tradition, understanding outcomes of social movement engagement in private politics implies looking at various nested opportunities at the firm, industry, country and transnational levels (Soule, 2012b), as conditioned by factors such as changes in the governance of brands, competitive positions and relationships, economic conditions and media coverage (King, 2008a; McAteer & Pulver, 2009). Several studies were able to combine resource mobilization and political mediation factors (e.g. King, 2008a) and thus to address the underlying structure–agency dualism in explaining stability and change.

A more fundamental critique of resource mobilization and political opportunity approaches addressed the structural bias in such explanations at the expense of cultural dynamics (Goodwin & Jasper, 1999). This critique maintains that both resources and opportunities are socially constructed, and it emphasizes 'strategic interaction' (Goodwin & Jasper, 2011; Maney, Kutz-Flamenbaum, Rohlinger & Goodwin, 2012), 'tactical innovation and adaptation' (McAdam, 1983) and the 'dynamics of contention' (McAdam et al., 2001). It is not a matter of structure *or* agency, but one of both combined, so that the most fruitful research approach is one that concentrates on process instead of variance. Indeed, recent research on political outcomes suggest that social movement activity appears to be most influential at the agenda-setting stage – i.e. shaping which issues actors view as important and debate – whereas structural and cultural factors ultimately shape which issues merit action by political decision-makers (Johnson, 2008; King, Cornwall & Dahlin, 2005; Olzak & Soule, 2009; Schneiberg et al., 2008; Soule & King, 2006). Although this approach has yet to be fully developed in the study of the consequence of social movements and civil society, we believe that it is worth considering how social movements' influence varies according to the temporal stage of the change process. Further, inasmuch as scholars become more sensitive to the strategic interaction of movements, civil society actors and corporations, we might begin to develop explanations about the temporal ordering of such contention/collaboration. The papers collected in this special issue make a start in doing this.

Introducing the Papers

The goals of this special issue are to (a) stimulate innovative studies of movement dynamics in a variety of corporate, geographic, temporal and economic settings, (b) develop further conceptual foundations, frameworks and methods for analysing the intersection between movements, corporations and societies, and (c) to advance our understanding of mobilization and civil society processes in the political economy. The papers can be read as case studies of strategic interaction processes in multi-institutional domains. In our introduction of the papers, we focus on three themes, derived from our reflections: field-level dynamics, strategic interaction fields, and

convergence. We introduce the papers in a loose thematic fashion, fully aware that all speak to more than one theme.

How movements matter in the fate of industries, markets and institutional fields has been a vibrant area of research (Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2008, and Soule, 2012a, provide useful overviews). Three studies in this special issue contribute nuanced historical accounts of emergence that pay close attention to the interplay of institutional and interactional dynamics.

Djelic (2013) analyses the institutionalization of an extended, broadly applicable interpretation of the principle of limited liability in English law in the mid-19th century. Nowadays a relatively unchallenged principle underlying the modern capitalist order, it was hotly debated and challenged back then. Intricate social movement dynamics are observed in the case study, including the formation and breaking up of alliances around this topic that could serve multiple, widely diverging interests. Limited liability might make it easier for 'the poor' to pool their resources in an association, and hence to participate in the market economy, with the prospect of increased income and wealth. On the other hand, limited liability served the liberal, mercantilist agenda of enhancing the freedom of contracting and the free flow of capital. Thus, a 'coalition of the unlikely' appeared, albeit a temporary one that was not tightly coordinated, against other parties that opposed to the principle, including bankers and conservatives. The result, unintended by part of the coalition, was a significant institutional innovation with far-reaching consequences. One important contribution of Djelic's paper is to show that the underlying mechanism of 'bootleggers and Baptists' in regulation (Yandle, 1983) can be productively used to interpret interaction patterns in emerging strategic action fields, and thereby to explain outcomes.

Sikavica and Pozner (2013) offer an original analysis of the history of organic farming in the United States. The movement that has been pushing organic farming since the early 20th century has clear elements of being an 'identity' movement. Hence, and in line with expectations from resource partitioning theory, organic farming developed into a specific niche in the overall market for agricultural products. But whereas resource partitioning theory has so far assumed that identity-based niche markets are relatively stable, this study provides qualitative evidence that further dynamics are possible. In the case of organic farming, as this niche market grew in size, traditionally operating farms saw opportunities to enter the niche by operating at a larger scale of production, resulting in a *departitioning* of the market. Further dynamics in the organic farming movement may result in renewed partitioning – *repartitioning* – along a more clearly elaborated movement identity. Thus, whereas this study confirms that movements can be instrumental in the creation and establishment of markets, it also asserts that the dynamics in such markets depends on how traditional, incumbent players in the mainstream market respond to movement-supported niche markets. Such markets are not always stable.

Again taking a historical perspective, Schneiberg (2013) investigates the spread of cooperatives in the early 20th-century US economy and highlights how anti-corporate movements affected the diffusion of politically contested organizational innovations. In doing so, this study examines a basic dynamic of institutional change, the constitution of a population of new organizational forms, and suggests that such change is based on a combination of standard diffusion processes and collective mobilization in support of new practices. Diffusion is a process frequently investigated in both institutional theory and social movement studies (cf. Strang & Soule, 1998) and thus forms a logical connection between both domains. This case study shows that the presence of a strong anti-corporate social movement, the Grange, was a political condition for the diffusion of cooperative alternatives to corporations in the development of capitalism in the USA.

These three papers address how movement and civil society actors affect historical processes in the emergence of industries, markets and fields. Another set of papers in the special issue seeks to isolate

specific mechanisms of how such ‘outcomes’ come about. They more explicitly analyse strategies and ‘strategic interaction’ within and between movements, corporations and civil society actors.

Dubuisson-Quellier (2013) brings together research on social movement tactics and the economic sociology of valuation, providing an example of both theoretical enrichment by borrowing from converging areas of study and new insights into the interaction between social movements and corporations. Movement groups recruit the logic of evaluation devices used by market participants in their choices to convince individuals to act in accordance with their objectives. The interaction of the movement with corporations is indirect and not overtly confrontational, but rather mediated through market dynamics. The study insofar differs from notions of political consumerism (cf. Micheletti, 2003) as the movement does also not directly evoke identities and values, but seeks to affect the calculus of consumer decisions, and through that the calculus of corporations. In this regard the movement organizations studied at the surface act more similar to conventional mediators in a market interface, such as critics and rating agents than to protest groups.

Haug (2013) develops the concept of ‘meeting arena’ as a hybrid of three forms of social order: organization, institution and network. The guiding question is deceptively simple: How do movements ‘decide’ what to do? – an important but understudied outcome. Based on empirical observations of face-to-face meetings, Haug offers a conceptual paper in which he proposes language and concepts to better understand internal movement dynamics insofar as they are being shaped in meetings. This theoretical examination of day-to-day activist activities helps to shed light on how the figuration of meeting arenas in social movement organizations contributes to an infrastructure that synchronizes the dispersed activities of movement actors in time and space. In his work, Haug builds on different strands of research, including Gerhards and Rucht’s (1992) work on mesomobilization and Ahrne and Brunsson’s (2011) ideas on partial organization. The paper outlines heuristic, methodological and theoretical implications of the argument, highlighting in particular the potential of the distinction between organizing and mobilizing.

Lee and Romano (2013) provide an interesting companion point to Haug’s study, by suggesting that staging public deliberation events can be an organizational strategy for co-opting protest, channelling emotions and information, stimulating demobilization, or preventing mobilization from occurring in the first place by hijacking the setting – the meeting space in Haug’s words – from which collective action might emerge. It is a strategy that is increasingly used by contemporary organizations facing resistance to retrenchment, redevelopment and reorganization. Whereas the notion of public deliberation is usually presented as something positive and worth pursuing as it enhances democracy and strengthens civil society (Habermas, 1981; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007), Lee and Romano discuss how public deliberation events can play a role in the repression of social movements. It does so, not by coercion or force, but by proposing the agenda, setting the terms of discussion and framing the issues in particular ways that favour powerful corporations. The paper highlights the potential importance of invisible and difficult-to-observe dimensions of power (cf. Lukes, 1974) in the social control of protest (Earl, 2004).

Yaziji and Doh (2013) point out how resource providers to social movement organizations may shape the strategic interaction between social movements and firms. This addresses an underlying puzzle. Arguably, there are benefits to social movement organizations in being, or becoming, reformative rather than radical in terms of their ideology and tactical choice, or rather, a penalty on being or remaining radical. Typically, according to Yaziji and Doh, reformative groups have access to greater resources, enjoy greater legitimacy and acceptance, and can expect greater organizational longevity, because they appeal to larger groups of constituents in society. Further, and following the arguments proposed by Selznick (1949) and Michels (1962 [1911]), one would expect radical social movement organizations to become more ‘mainstream’, as they rationalize their

internal procedures and develop working relationships with the authorities they challenge. Yet, we observe 'the persistence of relatively small, unconventional and resource-poor social movement organizations and their campaigns against corporations' (Yaziji & Doh, 2013, p. 756). Based on a unique data sample, collected through a survey among social movement organizations, they propose that radical groups operate in 'institutionally circumscribed resource niches', in which the conditions exist for self-reinforcing cycles of radicalism: when a group espouses radicalism, it attracts resource providers that endorse that position, such that continuing resource provision by these providers comes to depend on the selection by this group of targets and tactics that can be interpreted as radical. Thus, how social movement organizations operate vis-a-vis firms and industries cannot solely be explained through the interaction with their opponents, but needs also to take into account the resource niches in which they operate.

Guérard, Bode and Gustafsson (2013) focus on the emergence of a normative institution and the role of social movement organizations therein. They examine a dualistic process model in which fundamental differences between different sets of actors within an organizational field are traced by viewing them as a series of framing contests. Through a combination of social movement theory on framing, and institutional theory, these authors identify 'turning point mechanisms' as shaping the process that leads to institutional emergence. Building on a case study of the emergence of the diesel particulate filter (DPF) as a de facto standard for diesel cars in Germany, the paper connects to recent work on framing (cf. Knight & Greenberg, 2011; Markowitz, 2007) and underlines the relevance of process studies in understanding the interaction between social movement organizations and their targets.

Finally, Kraemer, Whiteman and Banerjee (2013) propose a case study of an anti-corporate social movement in Orissa, India. In the conflict, the Dongria Kondh, a tribe living around the Niyamgiri mountain range, oppose plans for open-pit mining on a mountain in the range that is sacred to them and a source of livelihood. The study traces how local opposition amassed as it gained support from international and national NGOs, and also how the protest coalition did not form a stable front in opposing the plans. Kraemer and colleagues thus challenge some of the assumptions underlying many analyses of transnational activist networks by showing how local strategic interactions, both within the movement and vis-a-vis its counter-movement, are crucial in the evolution of such conflicts. The study is also important in offering a varied selection of 'observable' and 'unobserved' coercion and channelling tactics, employed by thugs and goons, the mining firm and state authorities, and intended to 'stop or contain active protest' (Earl, 2004, p. 63), and in documenting how these tactics as well as corporate-supported counter-mobilization may disrupt protest.

Collectively, the papers in this special issue also offer a glimpse at methodological directions in this field of study. The methods in these studies vary considerably, ranging from time series (Schneiberg, 2013) and standard causal analysis (Yaziji & Doh, 2013) to ethnography (Kraemer et al., 2013), multi-method case studies (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2013; Guérard et al., 2013; Lee & Romano, 2013; Sikavica & Pozner, 2013) and historical analyses (Djelic, 2013), to conceptual pieces (Haug, 2013). Yet, underlying many of these papers is the recognition that process matters and a desire to collect suitable data. For example, Kraemer et al. (2013) turn to process theory to explain interactions between local, national and international actors within transnational advocacy networks, national advocacy networks (NANs) and local mobilization structures. Similarly, Guérard et al. (2013) elaborate the idea of turning point mechanisms that change the course of a conflict and thereby its outcomes. They distinguish three specific turning point mechanisms: local objectification, movement legitimacy and critical actors taking action.

If interactions between civil society, movements and corporations are embedded in institutional fields and cultural processes, then the consequences of interactions are perhaps less determined by

static behavioural and structural variables than by temporal, spatial and situational factors. Perhaps 'we may even need to abandon multivariate models that try to specify independent and dependent variables' (Jasper, 2011, p. 17). Jasper's wording is probably too strong, but he invites us to consider methodological alternatives to what Luker (2008) called 'canonical' research. For example, Haug (2013) discusses meetings as a space for developing and understanding movement strategies. What movements do when they meet – and by extension also what corporations and civil society organizations do in their meetings – may have an internal dynamic that resource mobilization and political opportunities, and even strategic interaction approaches to studying social movements, do not capture. In this issue then, the broad range of methods and analytic approaches makes for a comprehensive whole and allows for diverse forms of contribution.

Conclusion

The papers in this special issue reinforce the notion that corporations are 'interpenetrated with society'. They build on this idea and highlight various ways in which corporations shape democratic processes, modes of cultural reproduction and hierarchies of power. At the same time, the papers demonstrate how civil society actors and social movements alter the conditions in which corporations act. In fact, as several of these studies show, the very history of the corporate form (and its alternatives) is bound up with societal contention over the proper role of business interests in the public agenda, and with debates about the sorts of rights and responsibilities accorded to collective actors. Corporations, from their inception, have always been contested entities. They continue to stand out as targets of discontent for social movement actors that seek to alter societal conditions and create alternative governance structures and new forms of organizing. Their role is heightened by the growth of multinational corporations and markets, transnational movements and global civil society processes, which do not diminish but change the role of the state in societal struggles.

As there is no indication that the contemporary global conflict around corporations will end, organizational scholars are well served to study how social movement and civil society actors interact with corporations around the world.

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Notes

1. Although we highlight the interactions of social movement and civil society actors with the corporate sector, it is important to note that in many instances of private politics the state also plays a role.
2. We note that both forms of politics occur in the public sphere as understood by sociologists; see, e.g., Alexander, 2006, for a more elaborate discussion.

3. For approaches that more directly take into account institutional and cultural factors see, e.g., Lounsbury, Ventresca & Hirsch, 2003; Melucci, 1996; Weber, Heinz & DeSoucey, 2008.
4. Of course, the study of outcomes is fraught with various conceptual and methodological complications (Amenta & Young, 1999), and hence establishing the outcomes of social movements is notoriously difficult (Giugni, 1998). The reflection in this section is based on a similar discussion in den Hond, Stolwijk & Merk (2012).

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