**Not Just Small Potatoes:**
**Social Partnerships as Relational Spaces that Bridge Social Movements and Organizational Change**

by

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**ABSTRACT**

Social movements are a key source of novel practices that challenge the status quo and provoke organizational and institutional change. Sweeping narratives of exogenous social movement influenced change (e.g. protests, demonstrations, media attacks) have been complemented, more recently, by accounts of change that highlight insider activism. While undoubtedly contributing to a richer understanding of social movement induced change, such a dichotomous outsider/insider perspective nonetheless evokes the same long-standing critique of extant institutional change literature for taking either an overly socialized or an overly heroic stance on change. Indeed, neither perspective could account for the change that occurred within the large organizations in my research setting – a four-year field ethnography of a cross-sector collaboration to support food buyers for hospital systems, universities and conference centers in incorporating the sustainable foods movement. By documenting how participation in a community-level cross-sector collaboration enabled the food buyers to incorporate sustainable foods ideals and practices, my research extends work on relational spaces to develop a novel process model of how interstitial organizing shapes the ways in which broad movement ideals and practices become tailored, by organizational insiders. Based upon my findings, I suggest that our extant, dichotomous view of change might be expanded upon with a relational approach. I also caution that social collaborations can result in symbolic as well as substantive outcomes. My dissertation research is particularly important in light of the increasing need for organizations to respond to social movements in attending to pressing, complex social and environmental issues.

**Keywords:** Social Movements, Moral Markets, Sustainability, Relational Spaces, Field Ethnography, Cross-sector Collaborations, Institutional Theory, Institutional Change, Social Innovation, Social Entrepreneurship

## PREFACE

This dissertation represents an original research project conducted by Leanne Hedberg. It has not been published as a book or in a journal. This project received research ethics approval [No. Pro00064894_REN1] under the title “Cross Sector Collaborations in Community Food Systems”. Except for the interview transcriptions, for which I hired a freelancer transcriber, I conducted all the other activities of the research by myself. I received ongoing feedback from my supervisors, Professor Michael Lounsbury and Professor Royston Greenwood, and my internal committee member, Professor Trish Reay. However, any errors are mine.

## DEDICATION

My dissertation research is dedicated to my daughters, Madeleine and Logan. You have been my inspiration to stretch beyond what I thought I was capable of. I have wanted to show you that you cannot know the extent of what you are capable of unless you reach beyond your current comfort zones and self-perceived capabilities and are willing to enter a space that is unfamiliar and that even stimulates a sense of insecurity, the very thing most people live their lives running from. Such a stretch takes courage. I hope that by completing my PhD, I have shown you such courage and that I might serve as a mirror to you, reflecting the same capacity for courage within you. I am so very fortunate to have been blessed with your presence in my life. I am deeply proud of both of you and look forward to the stretches that you enter into. I will always be behind you, cheering you on and reminding you that you are capable of more than you imagine.

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- Brayden King, Organizational Science Winter Workshop
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To my mother, Rita: Your constant encouragement and flow of Starbucks gift cards pulled me through many difficult times. By beginning your undergraduate degree at 54, and completing a Masters degree at 60 to become a gifted psychotherapist to many, you provided a stellar

example for how it is 'never too late'.

To my two brothers, Kurt and Jeff: thank you for not saying, even once, that it was crazy to stop working for five years to get my PhD. Instead, all you ever said was that you were proud of me. You encouraged me to hang in there and to complete my PhD at times when I was discouraged. You said I was smart when I felt otherwise. You were the voice of our father, Robert Brown - steady and strong. I can hardly believe how fortunate I am to be flanked, in birth order, by such great men, and for the close friendships between us.

To my father: I thank you for your love and care beyond your life on earth. You have always been close to me and I feel your presence especially in the most challenging of times. Thank you. I love you.

Last, but not least, I want to thank my dear friend and colleague, Keri Higgins-Bigelow. Keri, I remember so clearly when we met in our undergraduate program at Old Dominion University and become immediate friends. The endurance and depth of our friendship is because of you. Thank you for always believing in me, for being family to the girls and I, and for letting your family (Jaime, Livie, Linda and Larry) also become our family. Your support of me in completing this PhD has been rock-steady and has meant the world to me. You mean the world to me.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

My interest in this research was sparked by my involvement with a community food system initiative in the United States prior to entering University of Alberta's SMO PhD program. At the time that I became involved in the initiative, I was an assistant professor in a business school where I taught the core courses of management and organizational behavior. During that time, I also worked to bring an emphasis on sustainability into the business school. I perceived then, as I still do, that organizations are the largest lever for much needed, large-scale social change. Also at that time, however, I perceived corporations as largely only being focused on profit, thus externalizing the well-being and sustainability of the environment and society.

While teaching at the university, one of my students asked me to provide consulting support for a flailing non-profit greenhouse. In the process of providing strategic planning and board development for the non-profit, I became the President of the Board of Directors. Working alongside several key members of the community from multiple sectors (government, healthcare, education, for-profits, non-profits), we re-envisioned the greenhouse as a community initiative for developing a sustainable food system. It was during this time that I began to see the importance of food in society. Food is connected to nearly every wicked problem or grand challenge from environmental degradation to food insecurity.

During my involvement with this initiative, I was hired as the Chief Operations Officer for a human resources consulting firm and stepped away from academia for a time. Consulting for a large number of businesses in various industries began to change my perceptions of business. I began to see, firsthand, that employees, and even leaders, want for the businesses

they worked for or lead to do well by society and the environment but that there were larger constraining or shaping forces at play.

Because of my PhD training, I now understand that these large constraining forces can be articulated as the institutional environment that organizations, and the individuals inside them, are embedded within. Organizations play an immense role in society and are increasing invocated to address the complex social and environmental issues that the world faces. Yet, it is not organizations per se, but the individuals inside them who can enact change towards a more sustainable future. This is no small feat, however, given the institutional constraints in which market values of profit and efficiency dominate. Certainly, it is not a feat that one individual or organization can work towards alone. Rather, it seems that it is only through collaborations that we will move towards a more sustainable future. Fortunately, I was able to gain access to an ideal setting to study the role of social collaborations in organizations efforts towards sustainability.

**Research Setting and Access**

I received a research internship during the third year of my PhD program that connected me with an ideal research setting for better understanding this interplay of the good intentions of individuals inside organizations amidst the larger constraining or shaping forces. My research setting involved a cross-sector collaboration, the Sustainable Foods Procurement Lab (the Procurement Lab)[1]. The Procurement Lab was a group of food buyers for large organizations (universities, hospitals, conference centers) who were trying, within the purview of their limited

[1] Pseudonyms are used throughout this study to protect the identities of the individuals and organizations involved.

roles, to do better by society and the environment to shift their food procurement ideals and practices to be more sustainable. The Procurement Lab also involved a broad array of diverse actors from across the localized foods system (e.g. nonprofits, government agents, farmers, distributors). Because of this research internship, I was able to follow the collaboration for nearly three years, engaging in participant observation, conducting interviews and gathering archival data from the inception of the collaboration. The data that I was able to gather was invaluable to the theoretical contribution of my dissertation research, which I now turn towards.

**Theoretical Relevance - Social Movements and Organizational Resistance to Change**

Research over the past couple of decades has depicted social movements as a key source of novel practices that often challenge the status quo and provoke organizational and institutional change (Davis, McAdam, Scott, & Zald, 2005; McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2003; Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2018). For example, the equality movement provoked the emergence and spread of human resource policies to support fairness, diversity and inclusion within organizations (Creed & Scully, 2000; Kalev, Dobbin & Kelly 2006). Social movements also spur organizational change by imbuing society, including market actors, with social and environmental values from which moral markets emerge, and in which mainstream organizations often try to participate (McInerney, 2014). The environmental movement, for example, gave rise to the moral markets of recycling (Lounsbury et al., 2003), grass-fed beef and dairy (Weber et al., 2008), and sustainable energy (Sine & Lee, 2009; Pacheco & Dean, 2014). Similarly, my study focuses on the sustainable foods, or locavore, movement, which has recently given rise to the moral market of local foods. As a whole, there has been a rich

accumulation of studies at the interface of social movements and organizational change, largely at the level of organizational populations, that has documented key broad channels through which movements enable once marginal practices to become mainstream (e.g. Strang & Soule, 1998).

While this accumulation of insights has richly illuminated the exogenous, top-down processes by which social movements affect organizations, it has also left "theoretical fuzziness about the *microprocesses* involved in the diffusion of practices" (Strang & Soule, 1998, p. 269, emphasis added). Understanding the microprocesses involved in how field level practices, like those introduced by social movements, spread is of great importance. In particular, a more fine-grained understanding is important if we are to move beyond a view of diffusion in which ideals and practices spread like wild-fires with members succumbing to pressure to adopt them without adjusting or manipulating them to fit their localized needs or contexts (Wooten & Hoffman, 2017).

Addressing the lack of attention to the microprocesses of social movement induced change, subsequent research began looking *within* organizations to gain a better understanding of how social movements influence organizations to change. At this closer level of analysis, scholars observed that, in addition to affecting organizations from the outside, societal-level movements also promulgate novel practices by spawning representation *inside* organizations, albeit through more conventional approaches (e.g. Creed & Scully, 2000: Dobbin, Kim & Kalev, 2011; Briscoe & Gupta, 2016; Kellogg, 2009; Lounsbury, 2001). Employees who were previously students, for example, played a key role in how universities participated in the recycling movement and its resultant moral market (Lounsbury, 2001). Likewise, managers have been

shown to play a key role in participating in the moral market for CSR information technology or "green IT", which emanated from the environmental movement (Carberry, Bharati, Levy & Chaudhury, 2017).

Despite the many documented accounts of successful social movement inspired change, however, many so-called challenger practices actually fail to gain traction because of organizational resistance to change. A readily available example includes the largely symbolic adoptions of Equal Opportunity Employment (EEO). Another example is the lack of decreased greenhouse gas emissions despite significant social movement efforts (Boden, Marland & Andres, 2017; Edelman, 1992). Amid the multiple dominant perspectives on organizational resistance to change, an institutional perspective attributes organizational resistance to change to organizational embeddedness in the broader institutional context (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Embeddedness within institutional fields, particularly those with high levels of institutional infrastructures (e.g. Zietsma, Groenewegen, Logue & Hinings, 2017), makes change a highly difficult process that has generally been thought to occur only through episodic interventions in the form of either exogenous shocks or endogenous efforts of institutional entrepreneurship (Micelotta, Lounsbury & Greenwood, 2017). Furthermore, change is especially difficult for large bureaucratic organizations (Barnett & Carroll, 2001), like the organizations in my study setting

**Empirical Puzzle Not Explained By Extant Theory**

My research setting presented a puzzle related to these extant conceptualizations regarding change. During my research internship, I followed food buyers for large, mainstream organizations. My initial broad purpose was to better understand the challenges faced by

individuals inside organizations who want to incorporate ideals and practices related to sustainability. I began to observe how difficult it was for the individual to make changes, despite a strong desire to do so. Yet, the food buyers in my study *did* achieve success in changing organizational ideals and practices to become more sustainable.

Although the changes that occurred were relatively small, change nonetheless occurred within conditions where it would not have been predicted to occur. The changes did not result from exogenous shocks. For example, social movement pressures related to sustainable foods were not enough to induce change. Nor were the changes initiated through heroic acts on the parts of individuals inside organizations. Rather, the food buyers in this study were specialists within their respective organizations with limited organizational decision-making or influence. They had tried, on their own but with little success, to integrate ideals and practices from the sustainable foods social movement.

This setting thus presented me with an *empirical puzzle*: How can the changes that occurred in these organizations be accounted for or explained? As I began looking into the literature on social movement related change, I realized that the empirical puzzle of my setting illuminated an important missing piece within the social movements literature. While we have begun to understand the ways that social movements influence organizations from the either outside or the inside, we still don't know very much about how broad social movements connect inside organizations where they are able to be tailored to meet local needs and contexts. This missing piece in the literature kept drawing my attention back to the cross-sector collaboration of my setting, which until that point, had been merely incidental to my data gathering.

This missing piece of the social movements literature (i.e. how broad movements connect inside organizations) is significant for two primary reasons. First, this blind spot surfaces a long-held critique of the institutional change literature, namely that it has alternated between portraying individuals as either "cultural dopes" or as "hyper-muscular". Such portrayals, Wooten & Hoffman (2017) assert, have resulted from a lack of attention to the micro-macro interactions that are endemic to fields, which they refer to as highly interactional 'relational spaces'. Secondly, yet on a related note, this blind spot points to a glaring lack of attention on the role that community infrastructure and networks are likely to play in making the connection between broad social movements and organizational change. Such attention is particularly warranted given the waxing institutional perspective that organizations, being embedded in their environments, are subject to the aspects of the communities in which they exist (e.g. Galaskeiwicz, 1991, 1997, Greve & Rao, 2012, Marquis, Lounsbury, & Greenwood, 2011). Specifically, community-level infrastructures and networks have been shown to be a source of key mechanisms that would likely play a role in enabling the translation of social movement values and practices to resonate with local circumstances (Marquis, Glynn & Davis, 2007; Marquis & Lounsbury, 2007).

The omission of the role of community-level infrastructure and networks, related to how outside social movements connect inside organizations to affect change, is particularly baffling in light of the recent, rapid rise of social partnerships (Gray & Purdy, 2018). Social partnerships are collaborations among differing organizations and are referred to by multiple names, the most prominent of which include cross-sector social collaborations (CSSPs) and multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs). As a social innovation, social partnerships have arisen as

a way to address the complex social issues or grand challenges that social movements bring awareness to and motivate action upon (Tracey & Stott, 2017).

The level of complexity of current pressing social issues or grand challenges, like environmental degradation and poverty, is such that no single stakeholder can adequately understand, much less address, such issues alone (Gray & Purdy, 2018). Rather, these types of issues cut across multiple fields and sectors, resulting in the development of issue fields (Hoffman, 1999; Wooten & Hoffman, 2008; Zietsma, 2017). The aim of social partnerships between diverse actors (e.g. for-profit, non-profit, government, civil society) is to combine the multiple diverse sets of perspectives, resources and solutions, within an issue field, in a way that creates a richer, more comprehensive appreciation of social issues (Gray & Purdy, 2018). Despite the increasing prevalence of social partnerships, however, surprisingly little attention has been paid to understanding, or theorizing, the influence that these forms likely have on how organizations collectively shape what constitutes an appropriate, localized response to broad social movement pressures.

Although not a focal point, a handful of studies have hinted at the importance of interorganizational connections, like those provided by social partnerships, for intra-organizational activism. Scully and Creed (1998), for instance, commented how employees from different organizations drew upon one another to advocate for domestic partner benefits within their respective organizations. Similarly, additional research on the LGBT workplace movement has noted the role of cross-organizational networks that were created and used by employee activists in order to share information on strategies and tactics to instigate same sex partner benefits within their respective organizations (Briscoe & Safford, 2008; Raeburn, 2004).

Within the recycling movement, Lounsbury (2001) highlighted how recycling coordinators from different universities worked together, along with social movement organizations, to share knowledge and to help each other understand how to further increase the effectiveness of their respective recycling programs. Aside from these hints, however, there has been a general lack of understanding about how interorganizational connections, like those enabled by community-level social partnerships, shape the relationship between social movements and organizational change.

**Sustainable Foods Movement – Practical Relevance**

Understanding the role of social partnerships in shaping how social movements connect inside organizations to affect change is increasingly important from a practical perspective as well as from a theoretical perspective. Taking the sustainable foods movement as an example, changes by organizations to adopt sustainable ideas and practices for food procurement matter a great deal. Over the past century, the world's food system has become increasingly focused on efficiency, centralization and homogeneity, ultimately being controlled by a handful of corporations (Hendrickson & Heffernan, 2002; Hinrichs, 2003). Food system industrialization and corporatization has significantly contributed to many of the world's most pressing grand challenges, directly impacting food security, disease, soil degradation, greenhouse gas emissions and fossil fuel depletion (Davis, 2015).

Emphasizing the significance of the industrialized food system, the most recent report from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2014) warns that only twelve years remain during which "urgent and unprecedented changes" must occur in order to avoid the grand challenge of global warming in reaching catastrophic and irreversible

levels, including food insecurity for hundreds of millions of people (IPCC, 2014). To avoid these risks, greenhouse gas emissions - of which agricultural production is the second largest contributor, next to the energy sector - must be decreased by 40-70%. The IPCC asserts that the required reduction in GHGs calls for significant practice change along with increased, effective *collaboration across boundaries*.

In response to the harms wrought by the industrialized foods system, the sustainable foods social movement has recently emerged. In stark contrast to the industrialized food system, the aim of sustainable food systems focused on the relative proximity in which food is grown, processed, distributed and consumed. Also in contrast to the industrialized foods system, the aim of sustainable foods is to enhance social equity and democracy while being ecologically sound, culturally sensitive and economically viable for both farmers and consumers (Allen, 2010; Feenstra, 2002; Hinrichs, 2000).

The sustainable foods movement has gained traction among consumers, NGOs and community organizations, and to an extent, among local and regional governments. However, the movement is argued to have little, if any, transformative impact unless it reaches the level of scale enabled by changes to the institutional procurement of food by universities, hospitals, conference centers, etc. (Cleveland et al. 2014, Izumi et al. 2010, Mount 2010). However, despite external pressures from stakeholders (e.g. customers) and internal motivations (e.g. on the part of employees) to incorporate more sustainable approaches to food procurement, many established organizations encounter significant challenges in responding to such pressures because it seemingly requires a massive transformation in established procurement practices including a reconfiguration of the supply chain (Rosin et al., 2012; Clapp & Scrinis,

2017).

**Research Question and Setting**

The practical relevance of the sustainable foods movement is one of the factors that motivated the development of my research question. Another important factor was the missing theoretical piece of how broad social movements connect with sympathetic insiders to affect change despite generalized resistance. Last, but not least, my research question was motivated by the empirical puzzle presented by my setting in which change occurred where it was not predicted to occur. As my attention kept being drawn to the role of the cross-sector collaboration as a potential answer to the empirical puzzle, I landed on my research question: *What is the role of social partnerships in connecting broad social movements to actors inside organizations to affect organizational change?*

To answer this question, I draw on a four-year field ethnography of the Sustainable Foods Procurement Lab, a cross-sector collaboration aimed at constructing a localized settlement of the sustainable foods movement. The research setting of the Procurement Lab is ideal for beginning to shed light on how social partnerships might importantly shape the relationship between broad social movements and sympathetic individuals inside organizations. The buyers in my study had been trying on their own, but with limited success, to integrate the sustainable foods movement by purchasing more local foods. To deal with the challenges they faced, several food buyers coalesced in the community-level cross-sector collaboration, the Procurement Lab, as a way to collectively brainstorm how they might bring sustainable food procurement practices into their own organizations, and more generally into the geographic setting they cohabited.

During my research internship, I was been able to gather multiple sources of rich data dating back to the beginning of the Procurement Lab. Drawing on this data, I develop a novel process model to develop theory about *how* and *to what end*s (e.g. outcomes) community-level social partnerships shape how social movements can become locally tailored into organizations. Consequently, I conceptualize the Procurement Lab as a kind of open relational space (Kellogg, 2009) that provided the food buyers with both the physical space and relational interactions with which to collectively cultivate concrete responses to perceived pressures related to a societal-level social movement.

Paralleling Kellogg's (2009) account of an *intra*organizational relational space, I document how the *inter*organizational collaborative space in my setting enabled *relational mobilizing* via *relational efficacy*, *relational identity* and *relational framing* (Kellogg 2009). I also examine the specific ways that individuals leveraged the relational mobilization enabled by their participation in the cross sector collaboration to reflect sustainable food ideals and practices within their individual organizations. I highlight three mechanisms – *innovative revising, pragmatic redefining* and *non-reflexive reinforcing* - that shaped the extent to which the food buyers created both substantive and symbolic practices.

**Three Primary Contributions**

I aim to make three primary contributions with my research. First, for the social movement literature, this study significantly expands upon previous outsider/insider notions of how social movements influence organizations. By bringing attention to the role of community-level social partnerships, this study begins to open up critical understanding about how broad social movements connect with sympathetic organizational insiders. Second, this study contributes to

the institutional change literature by opening up our understanding of how field membership and interactions aid intra-organizational processes. This contribution advocates for a *relational approach* within scholarship on institutional and organizational change. Third, my research contributes to the social partnerships literature by more firmly bringing it into the social movements and institutional theory literatures to mutually beneficial ends. By zooming closely into the micro-dynamics of social movement inspired change in the context of a cross-sector collaboration, this study suggests that outcomes of social movement induced change may not be as dichotomous as previously thought. Rather, symbolic and substantive change can both occur and can even occur simultaneously, shedding important light on the inner mechanics of both decoupling and of social partnerships.

The remainder of my dissertation is structured by first reviewing the three areas of literature, in Chapter 2 (theory), that are relevant for this research. My study is primarily situated within the social movements literature, which I review as it relates to my particular research question. Namely, I provide an overview on what we know about the ways in which social movements try to change organizations. Secondly, because organizations resist change, including change efforts by social movements, I review the literature on resistance to change and what we know about how resistance is overcome. I begin with a broad overview of this literature and then I focus on institutional theory because of its particular agility at explaining change. Lastly, I review the literature on social partnerships. After reviewing the broader social partnerships literature, I focus on an institutional theory perspective, which is most appropriate to my dissertation.

Once I situate my dissertation within the three relevant bodies of literature, Chapter 3

(methods) opens by providing an explanation of why a *field ethnography* was an appropriate study design for my dissertation. Also in Chapter 3, I explain the multiple types of data used for this study, how each data type was obtained and for which purposes(s). I close this chapter by describing how the study data was analyzed.

In Chapter 4, my study findings are presented in three main parts. First, the empirical setting is explained, beginning with the broader field setting of the sustainable foods movement and followed by a detailed account of the Procurement Lab, which is situated within this broader field setting. In part two, I present my findings related to *how* the Procurement Lab, as a cross-sector collaboration, served to enable organizational insiders in collectively articulating a localized settlement of the sustainable foods movement by enabling them to participate in the local foods moral market. In this section, I show how the Procurement Lab served as a relational space (Kellogg, 2009) through the mechanisms of relational efficacy, relational identity and relational framing and how, together, these mechanisms enabled relational mobilization.

While part two focuses on *how* the Procurement Lab enabled food buyers to tailor the sustainable foods movement in their respective organizations, in the final third part of my findings chapter, I focus on the *ends to which* (i.e. the outcomes to which) the Procurement Lab served as a relational space. In this third part, I show the ways in which the Procurement Lab enabled the sustainable foods moral market to be locally tailored. The tailoring of the sustainable foods social movement occurred in substantive ways, which I refer to as *innovative revising*, as well as in symbolic ways, which I refer to as *pragmatic relabeling* and *non-reflective reinforcing*.

In Chapter 5, I discuss implications of the study findings for the three literatures that this study joins together: social movements, institutional change and social partnerships. In particular, I present a model of how social partnerships shape the relationship between broad social movements with organizational insiders. My model depicts the mechanisms by which social partnerships shape social movement inspired change as well as depicting the outcomes of these mechanisms.

I close my dissertation with Chapter 6, which summarizes my dissertation research, discusses the limitations of my study, and suggests future research based on my dissertation. Here, I also highlight the need to further probe the importance of social partnerships for shaping social movement outcomes. Lastly, I discuss the practical implications that this study offers related to the sustainable foods movement and to the sustainability movement at large.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

My dissertation research directly connects with three relevant theoretical literatures. Recalling, my research question is: *What is the role of social partnerships in connecting broad social movements to actors inside organizations to affect organizational change?* Given this research question, the first body of literature that I review is the social movements literature. After defining social movements, I review the extant literature on the ways in which social movements induce organizational change. Despite social movement efforts to motivate change, however, it is understood that organizations are generally resistant to change. Thus, the second body of literature that I review is the literature on organizational resistance to change and the ways that such resistance is overcome. After discussing the literatures on both social movements and change, I point out the parallel gap in both bodies of literature, particularly as it relates to my empirical puzzle and research question. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, I review the literature on social partnerships, which I segue into by briefly reviewing scholarship on the importance of community networks and infrastructure for the ways that organizations behave.

### Social Movements as a Key Source of Change

This first section of the theoretical background for my dissertation research focuses on our current understanding of the ways that social movements influence organizations to change. Within this section, I first define social movements. Next, I review what we know about how social movements influence change from either the outside or within organizations. Lastly, I point to a blind spot of this literature.

#### *Social Movements as a Source of Initiating and Theorizing Change*

Social movements are defined as "collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional channels for the purpose of seeking or resisting change in some extant system of authority" (Soule, 2009: 33). Similarly, McCarthy and Zald (1977) define a social movement as a set of opinions and beliefs in a population, which represent preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society. The activities of social movements are referred to as social activism and are defined as the actions of individuals or groups who, in lacking full access to institutionalized channels of influence, engage instead in collective action to remedy a perceived social problem or to stimulate change to an existing social order (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016; King & Soule, 2007; Tilly, 1978).

A well-known example of a social movement and its impacts on organizations includes activism for, and the diffusion of, domestic partner employee policies (e.g. Briscoe & Safford, 2008; Raeburn, 2004). Another well-known example is activism against sweatshop practices (e.g. Bartley & Child; 2011). Other examples of how social movements have impacted organizations include the rise of recycling and corporate social responsibility initiatives, both of which have become relatively mainstream (Hoffman, 2001; Lounsbury, 2001; Soule, 2009).

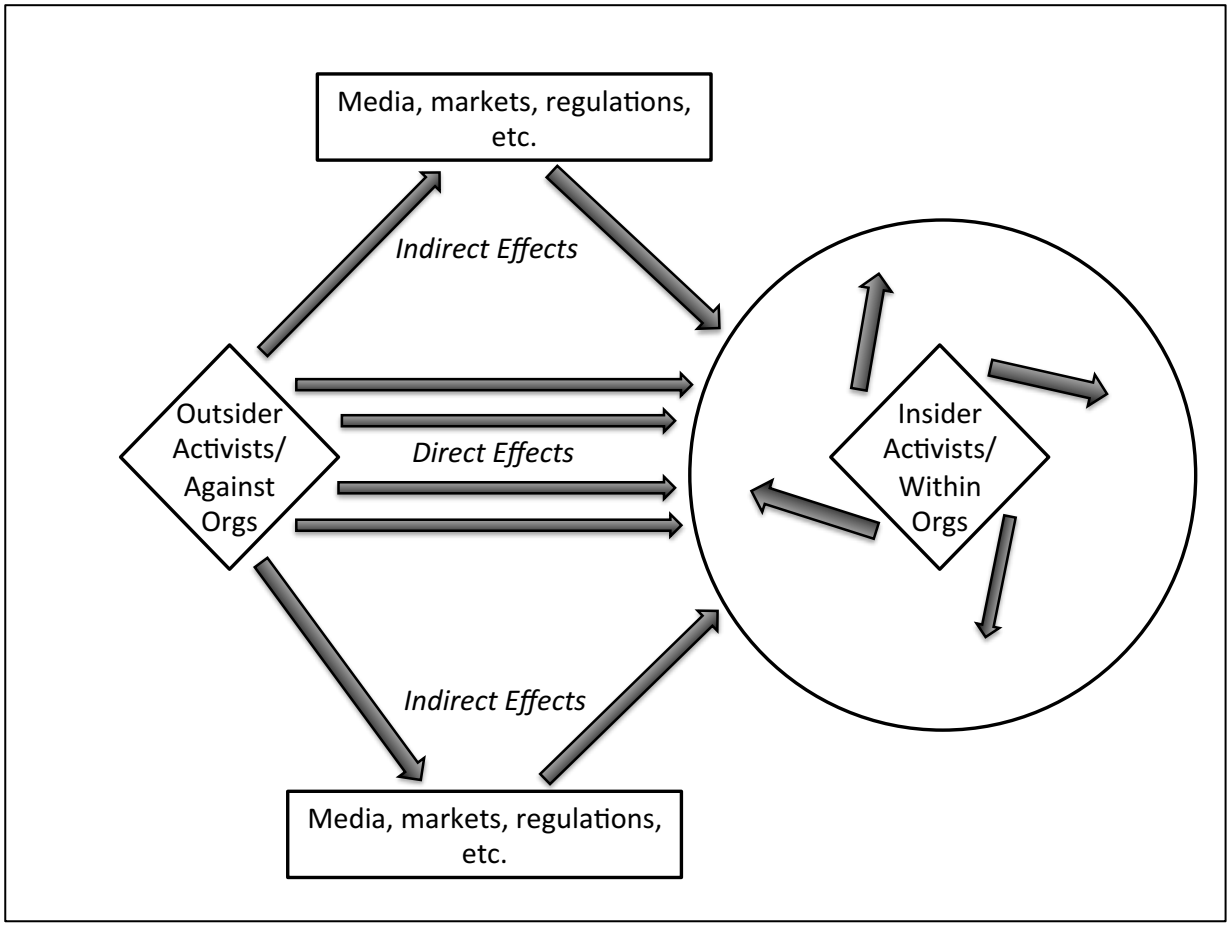
As these examples highlight, social movements represent a key source of institutional and organizational change. Change that is inspired or motivated by social movements is of increasing importance insofar as it enables organizations to meaningfully address complex social and environmental issues (e.g. Davis, 2017). Broadly speaking, social movements evoke change by challenging established field frames (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Lounsbury, Ventresca, & Hirsch, 2003; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010), delegitimizing previously institutionalized practices, and questioning the values and belief systems that undergird them

(den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Hiatt, Sine, & Tolbert, 2009).

Scholarly advances have recently drawn important key distinctions between two views of social movement induced change (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016; Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2017). First, the traditional, yet still dominant view is that social movements change organizations through contentious efforts that are positioned against organizations by *outsiders* (e.g. McAdam, 1982; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Tilly, 1978; Snow & Benford, 1992). More recently, however, another view of social movement induced change has emerged. In addition to motivating change from outside organizations through contentious tactics, social movements have also been recognized as motivating organizational change by spawning representation within organizations through *insiders* who engage in more conventional approaches (e.g. Meyerson, 2001; Meyerson & Scully, 1995; Scully & Creed, 1998).

Aided by recent insider/outsider delineations in social movement activism, scholars have recently noted how these differing locations of activism enable or constrain differing sets of opportunity structures (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016). The differing sets of opportunities that are available based on the types and directions of activism (i.e. either form outside or inside), will in turn determine the types of tactics (i.e. direct or indirect) that are both available and effective (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016, Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2017). Figure 2.1 integrates these recent key insights regarding social movement locations, types of activists, and the resultant types of effects, which I will next explain in more detail.

**Figure 2.1: Outsider & Insider Movement Effects**



*Social Movements from the Outside*

Traditionally, movements have been thought of as activities of contestation positioned against organizations by outsider activists from social movement organizations (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016; Schneiberg & Lounsbury 2017). In this view, social movements are viewed as largely using direct, contentious practices including boycotts, lobbying, demonstrations and media attacks. This line of research has explored how organizations react to social movement pressures from the outside, richly delineating the various mechanisms by which social movement inspired practices diffuse across organizational populations (Strang & Soule 1998).

Schneiberg and Soule (2005), for example, trace how anti-corporate groups contested the corporate liberal model, based on for-profit organizations, national markets and unregulated industry. Instead, these anti-corporate groups fought for regional decentralization and a cooperatively organized insurance economy. Similarly, Bartley and Child (2011) study the anti-sweatshop movement of the 1990s. Their study analyzes how social movement activism affects non-targeted organizations as well as targeted organizations. As another example, Hyatt, Grandy and Lee (2015) documented how firm responses to climate change activism was dependent upon whether public activism directed at the state (e.g. lobbying for regulatory change), or private activism directed at organizations (e.g. boycotts, protests and blockades) was engaged. An example of public activism directed at the state is the creation of the Stockholm Convention in which the use of certain pollutants, like DDT, were globally eliminated or reduced by government mandate (Hardy & Maguire, 2010).

While social movements on the outside are largely viewed as having direct effects on organizations through contentious or disruptive practices, outsider social movements can also

have indirect or “spillover” effects in organizational fields and markets (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016). The indirect effects of activism can spur changes in existing organizational fields as well as spurring the creation of new organizational fields. As an example, Haveman, Rao, and Paruchruri (2007) found, in their study of the progressive movement of nineteenth century, that the effects of social activism were transmitted to other non-targeted organizations through the rise of institutional intermediaries. They found that institutional intermediaries like the news media, policy analysts and researchers augmented social movement activism by helping to construct locally appropriate accounts of movements.

Another example of the indirect effects of social movements is the creation of market opportunities. For instance, the environmental movement gave way to the rise of recycling (Lounsbury, 2001), grass-fed dairy and meats (Weber et al., 2008), and sustainable energy (Sine & Lee, 2009; Pacheco & Dean, 2014). Markets that are shaped or created when social movements infuse markets with social and environmental values are referred to as *moral markets* (Balsiger, 2012; McInerney, 2014). On the demand side, social movements promote moral markets by increasing 'ethical consumerism'. On the supply side, social movements motivate market providers towards 'caring capitalism' (Barman, 2016). Other examples of moral markets include the organic foods market, environmentally friendly cleaning products, and ethical fashion (Balsiger, 2016).

*Social Movements from the Inside*

The indirect effects of social movements, including the creation of moral markets, are new arenas of research on the effects of social movements, as is the topic of insider activism. Although pointed to years ago by Zald and Berger (1978), the topic of activism that takes place

within organizations only began gaining recognition in the management field in the 1990s through the work of Meyerson, Scully, and colleagues (Meyerson, 2001; Meyerson & Scully, 1995; Scully & Creed, 1998; Scully & Segal, 2002). An insider view of movements illustrates that, in addition to creating change through disruption, contestation and conflict, movements can also effect incremental and embedded change (Schneiberg, 2007). Internal activists, as opposed to outsider activists, benefit from established networks and the resources and practices with which to advocate for and create change (Fligstein, 1996, 2001; Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2017).

Within the field of management, Meyerson and Scully (1995) conceptualized insider activists as "tempered radicals". Tempered radicals are employees with dual commitments to both their organization and to a cause that often conflicts with the organization's dominant culture. As employees, tempered radicals “earn the rewards and resources that come with commitment and complicity” vis-a`-vis their employing organization. As activists, tempered radicals are critical of certain organization’s practices and policies but are tempered in the types of activities with which they can promote change (Meyerson, 2001; Meyerson & Scully, 1995, p. 589).

Others have followed with studies that increasingly illustrate the importance of insider activism for social movement effectiveness. Lounsbury and colleagues, for example, show how eco-activists first pursued recycling as part of a broader anti-capitalism project (Lounsbury, Ventresca, & Hirsch, 2003). However, recycling did not become institutionalized until a national coalition entered mainstream policy negotiations, forged ties within the solid waste profession, and repositioned recycling as a for-profit service that complemented, rather than competed with conventional waste management. Likewise, Lounsbury (2001) showed how internal

student activism was crucial to the establishment of more substantive, and effective, university recycling programs that were aggressively developed by new, full-time recycling coordinators.

While the management literature had largely considered internal activists as secondary stakeholders (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016), this view appears to be shifting. Employees and workers are increasingly recognized as a central stakeholder group with significant influence on the extent to which organizations respond to social movements. Within the literature on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), for instance, employees, as internal activists, are viewed as having the ability to operationalize, comply with, or disrupt CSR efforts (Aguilera, et al, 2007; Margolis & Walsh, 2003; Risi & Wickert, 2017). Internal activists can thus create what Wickert & de Bakker (2018) refer to as an “internal social movement". The increasing recognition of the efficacy of employees to affect social movement related change has given way to a “micro-turn”, in which greater attention is being placed on internal actors, related to the organizational integration of social movement ideals and practices (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012).

Within this "micro-turn", it is recognized that not only top management, but also middle and lower level organizational actors may be pivotal when it comes to the adoption of organizational practices and policies that align with social movements. Yet, many questions remain about how internal actors, especially those not in influential positions, are enabled to engage their own ethical assessments and, beyond that, to shape the local interpretations, within their organizations, of broad social movements (Morsing, Spence, Wickert, & Walsh, 2018). My dissertation research setting on food buyers who work together to shape local interpretations of the broad sustainable food movement is highly relevant given these questions.

*Contrasting Outside and Insider Activism*

Insights on the types of activism, while important on their own, have also enabled broader, comparative theorization between outsider and insider activism. In particular, Briscoe and Gupta (2016) observe that the location of activists, either outside as part of social movement organizations or inside as employees, affects two key qualities of social movement effectiveness: resource interdependence and knowledge of the target organization. Because insider activists are resource dependent (e.g. reliant upon a paycheck), the incentive to voice grievances and to engage in disruptive tactics is reduced (e.g. Taylor and Raeburn, 1995). Insider activists, however, also have a higher level of knowledge about the target organization of which they are members. Knowledge of resources, routines, values, culture and informal structures increases the effectiveness of insider activists in framing claims and goals to affect change within the target organization (Baron & Diermeier 2007, Briscoe et al. 2015, Weber et al. 2009).

These key qualities of social movement effectiveness – resource dependence and knowledge of the target - are particularly important given the increasing recognition of the critical role of internal actors related to social movement induced organizational change. It therefore becomes important to understand how internal actors are able to overcome the constraints of resource dependence (i.e. lack of voice and breadth of tactics), as well as to harness the organizational knowledge they possess, to integrate social movement values and practices.

In summary, the identification of outsider/insider activism, along with the challenges and resources unique to each, has greatly enhanced our understanding of how social

movements influence organizational change. Our current understanding however begs an important question: How do broad social movements connect inside organizations to foster change? The gaining of such an understanding necessitates a focus on the interactions and relations between organizations and the fields they are embedded within. I elaborate on this further within the following section.

**Organizational Resistance to Change and Overcoming Resistance**

While we know that social movements elicit the adoption of new practices, we also know that organizations generally resist change and that, as a result, social movements often fail to gain traction. One example is how equal employment opportunity and affirmative action (EEO-AA) efforts have thus far failed to close the gender pay gap practices of organizations (Weichselbaumer & Winter-Ebme, 2005). Instead of promoting substantive change, the formalized human resources structures developed in response to EEO-AA regulations have been little more than symbolic gestures (Edelman, 1992). Similarly, despite growing activism on part of the broad environmentalism movement, greenhouse gas emissions have continued to rise rather than abate (Boden, Marland, & Andres, 2017).

In this section, I review the primary perspectives on organizational resistance to change before focusing on the institutional perspective of embeddedness. Next, and because change does occur despite resistance, I review our understanding about the ways that resistance is overcome, again focusing on an institutional perspective to change. In closing this section, I argue that the gap in the literature on institutional change parallels the gap in the social movement literature and I propose a *relational approach* as a way to address both gaps.

The idea that organizations resist change, including the types of change that are induced

by social movements, has been established and explained through multiple perspectives. Among these, the dominant and enduring perspectives include imprinting, inertia, path dependence, formalized structures (bureaucracy) and embeddedness. In what follows, I provide a brief overview of each perspective before elaborating on the perspective that most closely aligns with this study – the institutional theory notion of embeddedness.

*Imprinting*

Imprinting remains as one of the primary explanations for why organizations resist change. An organization's founding conditions and initial structure have been theorized as having a powerful and enduring imprinting effect that restricts subsequent change (Stinchcombe, 1965). According to Stinchcombe (1965), the groups, institutions, laws, population characteristics, and sets of social relations of the environment upon an organization's founding form a lasting imprint upon the organization. Stinchcombe (1965) supported this idea by drawing on anecdotal examples from a large variety of organizations including unions, fraternities, and savings banks. A number of studies have since lent empirical support to Stinchcombe's imprinting hypothesis. These studies elaborate upon how founding conditions affect various organizational outcomes including organizational mortality in the brewing and news industries (Swaminathan, 1996), strategies of semiconductor manufacturers (Boeker, 1988), and personnel procedures in governmental agencies (Meyer & Brown, 1977). More recently, Powell and Baker (2017) explored how the patterning of founders' social and role identities shapes early structuring processes and how this, in turn, influences the construction of a collective identity.

*Structural Inertia*

Another dominant explanation for why organizations resist change is that, as organizations age, ossification occurs from an accumulation of routines, history, traditions, and practices. Such ossification results in structural inertia (Hannan & Freeman, 1984), also referred to as cognitive sunk costs (Oliver, 1997). Hannan and Freeman (1984) argued that two advantages of formal organizations - reliability and accountability – support structural inertia. Reliability refers to products and services being delivered at the time and quality level promised and is valued by stakeholders, even over efficiency. As an historic example, Eastern Airlines once deployed an aircraft for a single passenger who could not be accommodated on a scheduled flight (Davies, 1972). By holding to the airline's guarantee of a seat for every passenger, the positive news coverage more than made up for the financial loss of the additional flight. Accountability means that organizations document decisions, rules, and the use of resources. For instance, people want to be treated by a licensed doctor using accepted medical procedures, whether or not that may be the best treatment available.

Reliability and accountability require that organizations remain stable over time. Ongoing stability is supported by the reproduction of structures, including the formalization of goals and the standardization of patterns of activity (Hannan & Freeman, 1984: 154; Nelson & Winter, 1982). However, while formalization and standardization offer the advantage of stability, they also generate pressures against change because organization members seek to protect their interests by maintaining the status quo (Kelly & Amburgey, 1991). According to Hannan & Freeman (1984), large organizations are especially resistant to change due to structural inertia.

*Path Dependence*

Similarly, past decisions, rather than structure, can accumulate over time in a way that narrows present and future decisions in what is known as *escalation of commitment* (Staw, 1976) or *path dependence* (Sydow & Schreyögg, 2009). A path dependence perspective of organizational resistance to change stresses the importance of past events for future actions. In other words, current and future decisions are conceived of as historically conditioned and "bygones are rarely bygones" (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997: 522). The QWERTY keyboard provides a prominent example of technological path dependence (David, 1985). Counter-intuitively, the QWERTY keyboard was actually designed for mechanical and sales reasons (typewriter salesman could easily type the word "type writer" using the top row of keys) rather than for efficiency. Despite other keyboard designs that were far more efficient for typing, the QWERTY keyboard has remained the predominant keyboard for over 100 years and has spread around the globe for reasons of standardization (David, 1985). Like the QWERTY keyboard, organizations are prone to a lock-in of decision-making that is based on historical decision-making, rather than efficiency or effectiveness, thus making them resistant to change.

*Formalization and Bureaucracy*

For another primary perspective on organizational resistance to change, I turn to the enduring work of Burns and Stalker (1961) who observed that large, highly structured or bureaucratic organizations are unlikely to adapt to a changing environment. These organizational types are referred to as mechanistic, as opposed to organic, and are characterized by strongly embedded formalized roles and routines, functional silos, and multiple bureaucratic layers, all of which insulate the organization responding to changes in the environment (Mintzberg, 1978). Mechanistic organizations are contrasted with new ventures in emerging sectors that are

generally small and flexible, lacking formalized roles and routines, and in which employees frequently interact with customers.

Although the formalized organizational roles of mature organizations prohibit change, highly formalized and specified roles are beneficial in reducing work ambiguity, enabling individuals to focus and to learn a specific role, which decreases the cost of coordination and increases efficiency (Perrow, Reiss & Wilensky, 1986). Weber, in his classic text (1947), praises the bureaucratic organization with its clear-cut division of activities, assignment of roles, and hierarchically arranged authority, because of how such bureaucracy enables greater precision, speed, task knowledge, and continuity, while reducing friction and ambiguity.

A number of studies have since examined and confirmed Burns and Stalker's proposition that large, mature organizations that are highly structured and bureaucratic are unlikely to change in response to environmental shifts, like those imposed by social movements (e.g., Aiken, Bacharach & French, 1980; Barnett & Carroll, 1995; Covin & Slevin, 1989; Hull & Hage, 1982). These studies have confirmed that the breaking down of tasks into specialisms, a common aspect of formalization and bureaucracy, decreases organizational adaptability by attaching specified duties and powers to each functional role (Burns & Stalker, 1961). In formalization, “everyone knows exactly what to do” which decreases coordination costs by defining who can, and who cannot, make decisions to reduce, predict, and control variability (Mintzberg, 1979: 83).

*An Institutional Perspective: Embeddedness in Fields*

Of the multiple perspectives that undergird organizational resistance to change, this study adopts an institutional perspective. From an institutional lens, resistance to change is attributed

to organizational embeddedness in the larger institutional context (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Seo & Creed, 2002). Institutions are "social structures that have attained a high degree of resilience [and are] composed of cultural-cognitive, normative, and regulative elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life" (Scott, 2008). Organizations tend to conform to the templates that are presented in the institutional environment. The purpose of conformity is to gain and maintain legitimacy, which enables access to resources from the institutional environment (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The self-activating and self-reinforcing nature of Institutional arrangements exerts considerable pressure on organizations towards continuity (Lawrence, Hardy & Phillips, 2002; Jepperson, 1991). Alternative arrangements are rendered unthinkable or even inappropriate (Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2017).

An institutional perspective on resistance to change is elucidated by the concept of institutional or organizational fields, an “increasingly useful level of analysis” (Reay & Hinings, 2005, p.351). “No concept is more vitally connected to the agenda of understanding institutional processes and organizations” (Scott, 2014, p.219). Related to processes of change, the concept of fields outlines a more precise shape to the previously generalized notion of organizational embeddedness.

This more precise shape, however, has evolved over time. DiMaggio & Powell initially defined fields as "sets of organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life; key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products" (1983, p. 148). For DiMaggio & Powell, actors constrain and are constrained by the organizational fields in which they are embedded.

While DiMaggio and Powell's initial definition alludes to commercial contexts and exchanges, Scott's (1995) subsequent and more broad definition of fields is that they are: "a community of organizations that partakes of a common meaning system and whose participants interact more frequently and fatefully" (p. 56). Furthermore, where these earlier definitions alluded to fields as relatively static, Fligstein (2001) ascribed dynamism to fields, which he portrayed as terrains within which pre-existing social order is either reproduced or subverted through social action. Throughout the evolution of how fields are defined, a key point has remained steady: fields are the level at which institutions are developed, maintained and changed. Thus, given that organizations are embedded in fields, organizational change is largely enabled or constrained by changes at the field level (Clemens & Cook, 1999; Meyer, 1982).

The rise of scholarship on fields gave way to a natural and important question: are there conditions or characteristics that make a particular field more or less conducive to change? In response, scholars have developed helpful frameworks (Zietsma, Groenewegen, Logue & Hinings, 2017). The initial framework differentiated fields in a rather simplified manner as being either 'emerging' or 'mature'. Subsequent studies of institutional change, however, made it clear that even mature fields can become unsettled and change over time, which called for a more nuanced framework (e.g., Greenwood, Suddaby & Hinings, 2002; Munir, 2005; Reay & Hinings, 2005; Sauder, 2008). This more nuanced framework emphasizes the *institutional infrastructure* of a field (Hinings, Logue, & Zietsma, 2017).

*Institutional Infrastructure: Elaboration and Coherence*

A field's institutional infrastructure is its basic underlying structure. In other words, institutional infrastructure is the interwoven sets of institutions that prevail in a field. The sets

of institutions include the range of subject positions, relationships, practices, events and governance mechanisms within a field (Hinings, Logue & Zietsma, 2017). Specific examples of a field's institutional infrastructure include certifications, awards, codes and standards, regulations, and field conjuring events like conferences and festivals (e.g. Anand & Watson, 2004; Bell, Filatotchev & Aguilera, Compagni, Mele & Ravasi, 2015; 2014; Raaijmakers, Vermeulen, Meeus & Zietsma, 2015; Sauder, 2008; Waddock, 2008). These interwoven sets of structures importantly shape interactions and institutional activity amongst actors within a field.

The degree of institutional infrastructure within a field determines how institutionalized the field is, which, in turn, determines the degree to which a field is open or resistant to change (Hinings, Logue, & Zietsma, 2017). Fields with a low degree of institutional infrastructure, for example, are less institutionalized than fields with a high degree of institutional infrastructure. The degree of a field's institutional infrastructure correlates to two primary characteristics: the level at which a field is *elaborated* and the level at which the field is *coherent (*Zietsma, Groenewegen, Logue & Hinings, 2017).

A field's *elaboration* refers to how "thick, overlapping, and reinforcing" the field's sets of institutions are (Zietsma, Groenewegen, Logue & Hinings, 2017, p.402). Fields are also elaborated by the presence of collective actors (i.e. professional associations, collective interest groups, social partnerships) by which institutional infrastructures are shaped and maintained (Greewood et al., 2011). In short, a field's elaboration refers to the degree or amount of mutually reinforcing structures and enforcements for the 'ways in which things are done' in a field. It follows, then, that highly elaborated fields will feature widely accepted and clear

conceptions about what types of behaviors are appropriate or allowed (Hinings, Logue, & Zietsma, 2017). Conversely, fields that are not very elaborated will be ambiguous and subject to debate.

The second primary element of a field's institutional infrastructure is its level of *coherence*, which is the degree to which the field's institutional logics are settled (Hinings, Logue, & Zietsma, 2017). Logics are settled when the arrangements within a field become taken for granted as the status quo (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). In settled fields, actors are provided with rules and scripts for appropriate behaviors and these rules and scripts serve as the foundation for elaboration, which provides a basis for evaluating the appropriateness of behaviors (Hinings, Logue, & Zietsma, 2017). Thus, a unitary, dominant (i.e. settled) logic within a field lends high coherence, which promotes relative stability or propensity towards continuance rather than change (Zietsma, Groenewegen, Logue & Hinings, 2017).

Where settled fields have a unitary, dominant logic, fields with institutional complexity have multiple logics that conflict with one another (Dunn & Jones, 2010; Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011; Reay & Hinings, 2009; Thornton et al., 2012). The rise of social entrepreneurship, for example, in which organizations aim for social benefit while adhering to a business or market model, is representative of a field with multiple, conflicting logics (Battilana & Dorado, 2010). The presence of multiple, conflicting logics represents a field that is unsettled and, thus, has lower degrees of field coherence which translates to lower degrees of stability (Zietsma, Groenewegen, Logue & Hinings, 2017). In other words, settled fields restrict behaviors to within the range of the taken-for-grated status quo. Conversely, unsettled fields allow for a wider range and variety of behaviors and, thus, opportunities for

change.

In summary, by paying attention to the level of institutional infrastructure of a field, which can be determined by considering the degree to which a field is elaborated and coherent, an assessment can be made of the feasibility of change within a field. For example, we can assess that highly elaborated and highly coherent fields will be especially resistant to change. Thus, given pressures to maintain conformance with the institutional context, change is considered to be highly difficult, particularly in fields with a highly established institutional infrastructure.

To summarize the theoretical background of my dissertation to this point, we know that the aim of social movements is to induce change and that inducements stem from either outside or inside organizations. Organizations are, however, generally resistant to change due to imprinting, structural inertia, path dependency, maturity and bureaucracy, and most importantly institutional embeddedness in fields. Despite generalized resistance to change, however, we also know that change somehow occurs. It is, therefore, important to understand how generalized resistance to change is overcome, which I discuss next.

*Overcoming Resistance to Change*

Initially, the idea of change represented a serious challenge for the core tenet of institutional theory, which had been a theory of isomorphism (similarity) and stability related to organizations and the fields in which they are embedded (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). The recognition that change is indeed part of the institutional landscape ushered in a new era of institutional theory scholarship (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Micelotta, Lounsbury & Greenwood (2017) recently categorized the three primary waves through which scholarship on

institutional change has evolved: (1) through exogenous shocks, (2) through institutional entrepreneurship, and (3) through changes to micropractices and meaning making. In what follows, I explain each of these waves and suggest the fruitfulness of a relational approach to scholarship on institutional and organizational change.

*First Wave: Exogenous Disturbances*

The initial and long-held view was that institutional change occurred through exogenous disturbances, often in the form of shocks or jolts strong enough overcome the powerful inertial effects (Haveman, Russo & Meyer, 2001; Meyer, 1982). These disturbances initiate change by upsetting certainty and prompting "unorthodox experiments that diverge from established practice," throwing "entire industries into the throes of quantum change" (Hoffman, 1999, p. 353). Fligstein (2001) provided an example of a disturbance-induced change by showing how a crisis in the European Union enabled the European Commission to develop the Single Market Program. Broad examples of exogenous disturbances include radical technological innovation (Romanelli & Tushman, 1994), shifting political regimes (Clark & Soulsby, 1995), regulatory change (Bacharach, Bamberger, & Sonnenstuhl, 1996), and economic crashes (Haveman, Russo & Meyer, 2001). Exogenous disturbances stimulate various types of change within fields including the entry of new players, the rise of pre-existing players, and the shifting of intellectual climates or ideas (Greenwood, Suddaby & Hinings, 2002; Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006).

In response to exogenous disturbances, it was long-thought that organizations had only two responses: to either adapt to changes (e.g. Ruef & Scott, 1998) or to be subject to selection processes (e.g. Allmendinger & Hackman, 1996; Lamberg & Pajunen, 2010). The

development of the institutional logics perspective, however, all but dissolved this previously binary notion of responses. In its place, the logics perspective began to illuminate an array of responses to triggers of change (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012).

Institutional logics are field-level "socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, and beliefs, by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences" (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2012, p.2). In other words, institutional logics are taken-for-granted belief systems that guide decision-making and shape cognition, serving as social prescriptions for what constitutes appropriateness in terms of gaining and maintaining legitimacy and, thus, resources (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999).

According to the logics perspective, change can be triggered by shifts in institutional logics, which are subject to emergence, rise in prominence, and then waning and even disappearance, and often in an unpredictable manner (Micoletta, Lounsbury & Greenwood, 2017). When shifts in logics interject incompatible prescriptions for behaving, institutional complexity results, which is marked by significant tensions and challenges (Greenwood et al., 2011). Tensions and challenges arise because the combination of conflicting organizational logics, such as a market logic and a social welfare logic (e.g. Pache & Santos, 2013), represent a deviation from socially legitimatized templates for organizing. The introduction of conflicting logics at the organizational level can be brought on by logic shifts at the field level. For example, field level shifts have occurred in recent years giving rise to social enterprises that attend to

both business and social agendas (Tracey, Phillips, & Jarvis, 2011; Vasi, 2009).

Institutional complexity can be dealt with in many ways including domination, integration, differentiation and co-existence (Greenwood et al., 2011). When a single logic dominates, mission drift can occur (Ebrahim, Battilana, & Mair, 2014; Santos, Pache, & Birkholz, 2015). In study of microfinance organizations, for example, Battilana and Dorado (2010) observed that employees tended to identify with either a finance or a social welfare logic. The domination of one of these two logics significantly shaped policies and operations. Institutional complexity can also be dealt with through integration, in which logics are blended. Mars and Lounsbury (2009), for example, demonstrate how aspects of both market and activist logics eventually blended together to resolve ideological impasses between actor groups in a college student environmental movement.

With differentiation, on the other hand, differing logics are maintained within separate components of a field or organization. Studies have also shown that logics can co-exist in both competitive (segmenting) and cooperative (facilitative or additive) relationships (e.g. Reay, Golden-Biddle & Germann, 2006). Lastly, as an example of co-existence, Reay and Hinings (2009) studied a healthcare field that had been previously dominated by a healthcare logic but that was imposed upon by a management logic. The authors demonstrated, in this study, how conflicting logics can eventually come to co-exist in what they refer to as an "uneasy truce".

In summary, this first wave of thought asserted that resistance to change is overcome by exogenous shocks, including shifts in institutional logics. Such a view was not without critique, however. Namely, this view presented an overly socialized perspective of individuals as 'cultural dopes' (Garfinkel, 1967), completely subject to their environments and with little to no

agency. Related to my dissertation research, the view asserted by this first wave of thought coincides with the idea of social movements as ushering in, or imposing, shifts in logics to which nearly amorphous entities are at the mercy of and left to respond to. As my setting attests to, a shift in logics brought on by the sustainable foods movement was not sufficient for inducing change.

*Second Wave: Institutional Entrepreneurship*

While initial ideas of institutional change focused on exogenous disruptions including shifts in field-level institutional logics, the second wave was informed by the agentic turn institutional analysis (DiMaggio, 1988; Hirsch & Lounsbury, 1997). Scholarship on both institutional entrepreneurship and institutional work began to account for the intentional efforts of actors to transform existing institutional arrangements or to create new ones (Maguire, Hardy, & Lawrence, 2004, p. 657). Maguire, Hardy, and Lawrence (2004), for example, showed how individuals took actions that resulted in significant changes in the organizational field of HIV/AIDS treatment. Similarly, Mutch (2007) studied how Sir Andrew Barclay Walker pioneered the practice of directly managed public houses in England.

As studies of actor-initiated change continued to grow, so too did criticism related to an overly heroic view of agency that fails to account for the "paradox of embeddedness": if actors are embedded in an institutional field and thus subject to its regulative, normative and cognitive pressures, how are they able to envision and champion institutional change? (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Seo & Creed, 2002). As a redress, research began to illustrate how structural positioning within a field is associated with the ability of actors to challenge institutions. Field positioning determines access to important resources as well as opportunities

to challenge existing rules and establish new ones (Battilana, 2006; Wright & Zammuto, 2012). From the perspective of field positioning, institutional entrepreneurs do not 'have' power per se. Rather, the subject positions that institutional entrepreneurs occupy (or fail to occupy) enable (or constrain) an exercise of power within – and on – a particular field (Hardy & Maguire, 2017). Three field positions – central, peripheral and outside –enable differing types of resources with which to marshal change.

Empirical studies have found that, as expected, actors located in central, dominant positions, particularly in mature fields, are able to initiate institutional change using their positions as key, power players in the field. Townley (2002), for example, demonstrated how a provincial government was able to impose, by fiat, business planning practices on government departments. Similarly, the largest accounting firms in the Canadian accounting field were able to initiate the multidivisional form to be adopted (Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002; Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006).

Conversely, research has shown that actors in peripheral, rather than dominant, structural positions, or even those outside a field, are also able to initiate change. Although not limited to positioning at a field's periphery, this position more readily allows for boundary spanning between institutional boundaries (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006). Burt (2004) shows, for example, how actors at the periphery of social boundaries are more likely to produce new ideas. Likewise, Vedres and Stark (2010) show how occupying spaces of overlap facilitates entrepreneurial opportunities. As an example, large Danish organizations were able to introduce diversity management practices from the U.S. because of employees and consultants with experience from other fields, including working overseas and involvement in the feminist

movement (Boxenbaum & Battilana, 2005). Peripheral positions uniquely enable opportunities for change by affording access to new practices or the ability exploit multiple identities.

Finally, actors positioned outside of a field are also able to initiate change. Outsiders are able to challenge institutions because their position renders them unconstrained by existing stakeholders or rules (Maguire & Hardy, 2009). Outsiders, like actors at the periphery, are also able to import practices into organizational fields by transposing them across institutional boundaries (Boxenbaum & Battilana, 2005). For example, Lounsbury et al. (2003) demonstrated how activist organizations, like environmental NGOs, were critical to the institutionalization of recycling practices although they were not initially a part of the waste field. Another example of institutional entrepreneurship from outside the field is provided by a study of how Rachel Carson's book, The Silent Spring, was instrumental in provoking changes to the institutionalized practices associated with DDT use (Maguire & Hardy, 2009).

In summary, the literature on field positioning defines the differing types of resources available to differing field positions (central, peripheral or outside) each position. I briefly review this literature because the concept of field positions evokes an interesting point related to social partnerships that has not yet been made, to my knowledge. This point is that cross-sector collaborations would seem to convene a diverse array field resources due to the potential of bringing together actors from central, peripheral and outsider field positions. Because of this, cross-sector collaborations would seem to be well-suited to enabling institutional change to address complex social issues, as my study indicates.

*Third Wave: the Microdynamics of Change*

While the first two waves of thought differed from one another dramatically in conceiving of *where* change was triggered – either forced from outside or activated within – both waves assumed that change was both large-scale and intended. Such assumptions were subsequently critiqued as "overly simplified narratives of change, with little appreciation for the complex (and typically collective) nature of institutional change" (Micelotta, Lounsbury & Greenwood, 2017). These critiques called for more adequate understanding of “meaning making,” - the process of constructing meanings that guide the behaviors of social actors (Brown, Colville, & Pye, 2015; Mitnick & Ryan, 2015; Zilber, 2016). Such understanding, however, requires attention to how diverse sets of actors propagate or dampen an initial impetus for change in meaning and practices (Gray, Purdy & Ansari, 2017; Vaccaro & Palazzo, 2015).

Recent studies have begun to address these critiques and calls, opening up a third conceptualization of how change can be triggered. These studies suggest that change can also be triggered unintentionally and can even occur developmentally through bottom-up changes in micropractices and meaning-making (Purdy, Ansari & Gray, 2017). Regarding changes in micropractices, Smets et al. (2012) illustrated how field-level institutional change can emerge from the mundane activities. In their study of banking lawyers who struggled, in a newly formed international law firm, to provide cross-border services, the authors show how efforts to fix a local challenge had unintentionally accumulated to effect field level change. Regarding meaning-making processes, Purdy, Ansari and Gray (2017) offer a theoretical framework to explain how meanings, as frames, can be created at the micro-level and can then scale up to the meso-level, through amplification, to eventually become widely institutionalized.

These recent and highly contextual investigations into the bottom-up and interactional dynamics of change have begun to foster a deeper understanding into the previously uncharted processes underlying institutional change (Meyer & Höllerer, 2010; Purdy & Gray, 2009). In this third wave, actors actively struggle to shape micropractices and meaning, which produces ongoing tension, persistence, and/or change to institutions (Reay, Goodrick, Waldorff, & Casebeer, 2017*).* This line of study highlights that, while logics tend to be treated as constraining at the societal and field levels, they are treated as malleable, negotiable, and differentially interpretable at the individual and organizational levels (Reay et al., 2017; Thornton et al., 2012).

In summary, the scholarly understanding of institutional change has evolved in three primary waves, with criticisms of each wave stimulating the next. The first wave - attenuation to the capacity of the institutional environment to emit exogenous shocks - received criticism for portraying institutions as ‘‘disembodied structures acting on their own volition’’ with actors that are ‘‘powerless and inert in the face of inexorable social forces’’ (Colomy 1998, p. 267). In response, the second wave featured highly agentic and skilled individuals able to leap tall buildings and spur change through institutional entrepreneurship. This wave has been criticized for its imagery of heroism harkening back to the atomistic, utilitarian, rational-choice model of methodological individualism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Maguire, Hardy & Lawrence 2004).

The recent third evolutionary wave of conceptualizing institutional change manages to navigate the dire straits between accounts of 'cultural dopes' on the one hand and 'heroic actors' on the other. The fresh conceptualizations of this third wave have begun to open up more of the complexity involved in change by importantly situating actors amidst their larger

institutional environments. The third wave has been particularly nuanced in portraying change as both developmental and sometimes even unintentional (e.g. Smets et al., 2012; Purdy, Ansari & Gray, 2017).

*Atomistic Conceptualizations of Change Persist*

While representing rich progress, I propose that this emergent third wave can even more fruitfully address the critiques of the first two waves. In particular, this most recent wave of conceptualizing change carries forward the threads of the first two waves in perpetuating atomistic conceptualizations of agency and interests in which an organization's self-interests are developed internally, even if in response to an exogenous shock, and cause the organization to take some action (Oliver, 1991; Wooten & Hoffman, 2017). Such an atomistic perspective directly contradicts Scott's (1991) insistence that the ends and means by which interests are determined and pursued are defined and shaped by institutions (Wooten & Hoffman, 2017). Similarly, Wooten and Hoffman (2017) declare that the formation, much less the pursuit, of interests must be viewed as resulting from field-level engagement. In other words, these scholars argue that neither interests, nor the pursuit of interests, are internally sourced (e.g. within individuals or organizations); they do not occur in isolation. Rather, interests and the forces to pursuit them, are formed only in the context of *interactions and relationships*.

Widening back, and as a related aside, we can understand this atomistic perspective as a holdover of a worldview that was formed and perpetuated through Newtonian physics. Mesle and Dibben (2016) point out that although Newton did give a start to modern science, it was "at the cost of vastly oversimplifying the fundamental character of nature as atomic, materialistic, and mechanical" (p. 31). This oversimplification, they state, remains as a set of blinders, unable

to be shaken despite the recognition, decades ago by Einstein and other quantum physicists, that even space and time are relative (relational) and processive. To wit, physicists continue to speak of elementary 'particles,' even though this early notion of a world as composed of 'tiny hard things' has been thoroughly rejected (Griffin, 1998; Mesle & Dibben, 2016).

The pervasiveness or the 'stickiness' of Newton's atomistic worldview, despite ample evidence of a vastly different relational account of the world, has permeated and persisted within organizational analysis. For example, although highly fitting at the time, it is under the umbrella of Newtonian physics that Weber articulated the enduring ideas of the rationalization of society, which are highly reflective of an atomistic view (Cobb, 2007). Another example of the pervasiveness of an atomistic worldview within organizational studies is the taken-for-granted nature of the field's notion of power - *unilateral power*. A notion of power as unilateral is rooted in the foundational philosophies of Plato in which the power *to affect* is primary, while the ability *to be affected* is viewed as defective or weak (Mesle & Dibben, 2017). Although myopic, this atomistic, Newtonian view of power, as *power over*, seems to have been finely knitted into the DNA of organizational studies (e.g. Emerson's (1962) view of power).

A profoundly alternative vision of power – *relational power* – has been proposed by process relational thinkers (e.g. Mesle, 2008; Mesle & Dobbin, 2017; Whitehead, 1921). Drawing on Whitehead's work, Mesle and colleagues define relational power as the capacity of individuals to be actively and intentionally open to the world around them. Relational power is the ability to creatively synthesize new insights and experiences and to sustain relationships that can deepen community with the ideas, experiences, and people with whom we are related. In contrast to the *power over* notion of unilateral power, relational power evokes the

notion of *power with*. Such a view of power reflects what is currently known about the reality of the world (i.e. quantum vs Newtonian physics) as being fundamentally relational.

I bring in the notion of relational power versus unilateral power as part and parcel of a much broader distinction between relational and atomistic approaches within organizational studies, and more specifically within institutional conceptualizations of change. Circling back to criticisms of the third wave of scholarship on institutional change as being atomistic, I lean on the scholarship of Wooten & Hoffman (2008, 2017), as well as by Hallett and colleagues (Hallett, 2001; Fine & Hallett, 2014; Hallett & Ventresca, 2006), to argue that the emergent third wave of conceptualizing change might fruitfully address criticism by embodying a decidedly *relational approach* as it continues to take form.

*A Relational Approach*

For certain, I am not the first to argue for adopting a relational approach within organizational analysis. More than a decade ago, for example, Emirbayer and Johnson (2008) argued that, while certain concepts associated with Bourdieu are widely known, such as field, the specific ways in which these terms have been used "provide ample evidence that the full significance of his relational mode of thought has yet to be sufficiently apprehended" (p. 1). A primary advantage of such a relational approach, they argue, is the "central place accorded therein to the social conditions under which inter- and intraorganizational power relations are produced, reproduced, and contested" (p. 1). Such an approach, Emerbayer and Johnson assert, "has the potential to help us overcome a number of unfortunate dualisms in the literature, especially that between micro- and macro-level research foci" (p.4).

Despite recent efforts to overcome such dualism and to "inhabit" institutions (Hallett & Ventresca, 2006) by bringing the individual back in ways that do not rely upon accounts of heroism, there has nonetheless remained a rather perplexing neglect of attention at the "supra-individual level of analysis" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991, p. 8). Such attention would bring a focus on *interactions* or *relationships* (Hallett, 2010) or a concern for what "people do together" (Becker, 1986). In other words, despite many exciting advances in institutional theory, the advances have generally lacked an explicit sociology of the group (Fine & Hallett, 2014). Attention to interactions, particularly at the field level, is particularly important if the goal of scholarly research on organizations is to link an understanding of the micro and macro foundations of institutions (Fine & Hallett, 2014) by extending sociological models of interaction (Fligstein 2001, Hallett & Ventresca 2006, Barley 2008).

Wooten and Hoffman (2017) similarly assert that pushing past atomistic accounts requires attention to the ways in which fields provide the context through which organizations enact agency. They encourage scholars to move away from the current focus on field *outcomes* and towards an understanding of *field-level interactions and relations*. "Fields must be seen, not as containers for the community of organizations, but instead as *relational spaces* that provide an organization with the opportunity to involve itself with other actors" dictating that we "take a closer look at the way in which actors relate to one another" (Wooten & Hoffman, 2017, p.63). This closer look necessitates a focuses on the processes of field participation, by organizational actors, and what such participation means for the inner workings of organizations (Hoffman, 2001; Wooten & Hoffman, 2017), which is precisely the focus of my dissertation research.

Encouragingly, recent work has begun pointing in this direction. For example, Reay and colleagues show the importance of social interactions and relations for collectively shifting professional identities at the field level (Reay, Goodrick, Waldorff & Casebeer, 2017). The vibrant and emerging body of work on emotions also points in the direction of a relational approach. Ziestma and Toubiana (2018), for example, assert that institutional theory needs to consider people more seriously. Social bonds, emotions and commitments tie people to institutions, shape the resources available to them, make their lives meaningful and prime how they think and feel (Lok et al., 2017; Voronov & Yorks, 2015).

Taking a relational approach to change also offers theoretical leverage for addressing the question that is begged of a dualistic insider/outsider approach to social movement induced change: *how do outsider movements connect with sympathetic insiders to promote change?* This question is particularly salient given our understanding that the complexity and heterogeneity of institutional environments in which field-level pressures, such as those imposed by social movements, "do not just 'enter' an organization; rather, they are interpreted, given meaning, and 'represented' by occupants of structural positions" (Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011, p. 342).

While the localized tailoring of broad social movement ideals and practices is a given, we actually know very little about the micro-processes of such localized tailoring. Given this lack, increased attention is needed on the organizational contexts in which social movements elicit the adoption of new practices (Briscoe & Murphy, 2012; Carberry & King, 2012; Fiss, Kennedy, & Davis, 2012). Attention on macro context amidst the micro-level adoption of practices can be achieved through the relational approach that I propose in which attention is

placed on the interactions between fields and the organizations embedded in them. One potentially fruitful avenue for better understanding this interplay of context (i.e. field) and localized tailoring is to leverage existing research that showcases how change is likely to be enabled or constrained by the *communities* within which organizations are embedded (e.g. Galaskiewicz 1985, 1997; Marquis et al., 2007). For the purpose of my dissertation, my focus is on geographic communities.

**Social Partnerships as an Important Community Network and Infrastructure**

Now that I have reviewed the social movements and change literatures, this final section of my background theory focuses on the third primary focal area related to my dissertation – social partnerships. In what follows, I first establish the importance of community networks and infrastructures in terms of shaping the ways in which organizations behave. I then draw attention to social partnerships as a rapidly growing form of community network and infrastructure, reviewing what we know about social partnerships, particularly related to institutional fields and change. I bring this chapter to a close by fore-fronting research possibilities, not only for extending the social partnerships literature, but also for how scholarship on social partnerships can appreciatively enrich both the social movements and change literatures.

*The Importance of Community Networks and Infrastructure*

Throughout institutional theory, community has been noted as an important aspect of the organizational context, although only recently has this been given explicit attention. On the whole, institutionalists have long agreed that organizational action is shaped by the geographic communities that organizations are located within. Early institutional researchers showed how

geographically local sources of power are influential of organizations (e.g., Selznick, 1949; Zald, 1970). Meyer and Rowan (1977), for example, suggested that communities, by serving as a context for social connections among actors, provide the contexts and processes by which rationalized myths arise. Likewise, DiMaggio and Powell (1991) suggested that an organization's surrounding "penetrate(s) the organization, creating lenses through which actors view the world and the very structures of action, and thoughts" (p. 13).

Early empirical studies demonstrated that community shapes corporate citizenship by creating geographic boundaries that enable influential social networks, which importantly shape and reinforce the social norms among organizational actors. In his numerous and influential studies of the Minneapolis-St. Paul corporate grants economy, Galaskiewicz found that corporate contributions to non-profit organizations are a strategy that chief executive officers use to gain approval and respect from local business elites (1985, 1991, 1997; Galaskiewicz & Burt, 1991; Galaskiewicz & Wasserman, 1989). Similarly, others have shown that social action is more prominent within the communities where located or where firms with multiple locations are headquartered (e.g., Besser, 1998; Guthrie, 2003; McElroy & Siegfried, 1986).

A question that naturally arose from this earlier work on the importance of communities was: What is it about geographic communities that matter for organizations? Put another way, what are the specific characteristics of community that have a clear shaping effect on the organizations within them? Marquis, Glynn, & Davis (2007) pursued this question, theorizing the important community level factors interact with factors at the organizational level to produce more or less active and engaged corporate citizens. Their central proposition was that

“standards of appropriateness regarding the nature and level of corporate social action are embedded within local communities, and organizational conformity to these institutionalized practices yields systemic patterns that vary by community" (p. 926).

Empirical support followed for their proposition that the standards of appropriateness, or the behavioural norms, within a given community are important in terms of the differing ways that organizations respond to the diffusion of practices. Marquis & Lounsbury (2007), for instance, demonstrated that the density of professionals in a community enabled resistance to conglomerate banks being established. Similarly, Lounsbury’s (2007) study of how mutual funds developed much differently in two cities suggested that that there are factors of locale that relate to, but go beyond, geography boundedness alone, in shaping organizational decision-making. Likewise, Greenwood et al. (2010) showed that the tendency of Spanish firms to join in the movement of downsizing (e.g. laying off employees) was dependent on the families and religions of the particular geographic communities in which the firms were embedded.

Furthering our understanding of the role of community for organizational behaviour, a study by Lee & Lounsbury (2015) on toxic waste emissions demonstrated that the political leaning of a community (politically conservative vs. socially progressive) determined levels of compliance with environmental regulations. Two years later, Attig and Brockman (2017) provided evidence that the attitudes of local residents play a significant role in determining a firm’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) engagement. They found that firms headquartered in areas with large senior citizen populations and where a large fraction of the population makes charitable donations are more likely to engage in CSR initiatives. Conversely, firms are less likely to engage in CSR initiatives when they are headquartered in areas with large

religiously affiliated groups.

In short, there are significant implications for organizations related to the communities in which they are embedded and these implications are clearly connected to community-level interactions and relations. However, despite the lucid significance of community related to how organizations behave, the potential role of community networks and infrastructures on how social movements diffuse and are made locally resonant has generally been overlooked (Gavetti et al., 2012; Thornton et al., 2012). The handful of related studies that I've cited have only just begun to open up our understanding.

Furthermore, while the nascent body of research, conducted at the level of analysis across organizational populations, has demonstrated *that* communities matter when it comes to organizational behaviours and decision-making related to social movements, and has also identified some of the community factors that matter, there is still little to no understanding of *how* or *in what ways* communities matter. What are the mechanisms by which values and ideology from the community, in which organizations are embedded, affect how organizations locally negotiate and configure social movements ideals and practices? This question remains unexplored, calling for further theorization and empirical investigation (Friedland, 2013; Lee & Lounsbury, 2015; Voronov & Vince, 2012). My dissertation setting provides such an empirical investigation.

Having established the important of community networks and infrastructure for the localized tailoring of social movement ideals and practices, I now turn to social partnerships as a highly salient and rapidly growing type of community network and infrastructure. While a few scholars have noted the importance of social partnerships by which insider activists engage

with others in the community to tailor social movement practices into their respective organizations (e.g. Scully & Creed, 1998; Briscoe & Safford, 2008; Raeburn, 2004; Lounsbury, 2001), this has yet to be made this a focal point of the social movements literature. This lack of explicit focus is particularly unfortunate given that the topic of social partnerships, as interstitial spaces, is recognized for holding much theoretically generative, but sadly neglected, potential (Zietsma, et al., 2017). A deeper appreciation of social partnerships, as a form of community networks, stands to greatly enhance our understanding of how social movements enable organizational change (Davis et. al., 2005) in addition to contributing to a more general understanding of social movement processes and outcomes (Giugni, 1998; Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2017).

*A Review of the Social Partnerships Literature*

In what follows, I review the social partnerships literature by first defining social partnerships for the purpose of my dissertation. Following this definition, I review the recent, remarkable surge of social partnerships in both practice and scholarship. Next, I discuss what we know about social partnerships within institutional theory's relatively recent attention to this topic, focusing on the importance of fields for enabling social partnerships. Here, I assert that social partnerships are inherently *multi-organizational hybrids*. In closing, I discuss how Kellogg's concept of *relational spaces* (2009) might fruitfully be lifted to the field level where it can adeptly support theorizing about the role of social partnerships in the relationship between broad social movements and organizational change.

*Defining Social Partnerships*

Despite the increased growth of social partnerships, this organizational form remains a poorly

understood phenomenon (Selsky & Parker, 2005), and the difficulty in defining social partnerships is well acknowledged (Googins & Rochlin, 2000; Mandell & Steelman, 2003; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Tomlinson, 2005). The literature on social partnerships is still in the formative phase and is dispersed across a number of academic fields where it is referenced by multiple terms. It is, therefore, important to define what is meant by the term "social partnerships" for the purpose of my dissertation research. To provide such boundaries around the use of the term social partnerships for this study, it is necessary to first provide a broad overview of the term – what the term social partnerships encompasses and what it does not. Next, it is helpful to limit a literature review to within the field of organizational studies and, even further, to within the field of institutional theory. Lastly, social partnerships are elucidated as a potential avenue for beginning to address a significant gap in social movement theory.

The term “social partnerships", as it is used in this research, denotes a broad range of social collaborations, both formal and informal, including activist networks across multiple organizations, multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) and cross-sector social partnerships (CSSPs; Gray & Purdy, 2018). I use the Wood and Gray definition of collaboration "as a process that engages a group of autonomous stakeholders interested in a problem or issue in an interactive deliberation using shared rules, norms, and structures, to share information and/or take coordinated actions" (Wood & Gray, 1991: 11). As is typical in a new and evolving field, the terminology for social partnerships varies. While some authors use the term social partnerships (e.g. Waddock, 1991), others use terms like intersectoral partnerships (Waddell & Brown, 1997), and social alliances (Berger, Cunningham, & Drumwright, 2006; Warner & Sullivan, 2017).

Waddock (1991), one of the initial scholars to focus on social partnerships within organizational studies, characterized social partnerships as inherently cross-sectoral. Waddock defined social partnerships as "the voluntary and collaborative efforts of organizations in more than one economic sector with an agenda of cooperatively attempting to solve some social issue of mutual concern" (Waddock, 1991, p. 481-482). Technically, cross-sectoral partnerships refer to partnerships between organizations from more than one of the following sectors: for-profit, non-profit, and government (Gray & Purdy, 2018).

For this particular research, however, the use of the term social partnerships encompasses not only partnerships between organizations from differing sectors, but also partnerships between different types of organizations within the same sector. Although the social partnership in this study is indeed a cross-sector collaboration, study findings would seem to generalize to any social partnership that exposes partnering organizations to differing organizational identities, goals, values, procedures, stakeholder groups, organizational and industry "lingos", as well as resources and regulatory bodies (Fiol et al., 2009; Gray, 1989; Gray, 2004). For example, a social partnership between higher education, healthcare, and a grass-roots organization, while contained within the non-profit sector, nonetheless exposes actor from to largely differing perspectives, resources and field-level interactions and relations.

Social partnerships are narrower than many routine relationships between and among the sectors, largely because of their ongoing nature (Selsky & Parker, 2005). The definition of social partnership does not, for example, include arm's-length corporate philanthropy to the nonprofit sector or service contracts between government and nonprofit entities. Nor does the definition include short-lived, collaborative policy-level efforts to "fix" social ills (Selsky &

Parker, 2005). Lastly, my research focuses on social partnerships within a geographically bounded community.

*The Rapid Rise of Social Partnerships and Increased Scholarly Attention*

The formation of social partnerships has been rapidly increasing in prevalence (Gray & Stites, 2013). Thorny issues (i.e. wicked problems, grand challenges) are so complex that no single organization or stakeholder group has the full knowledge and resources needed to effectively address them. Hence, collaboration between dissimilar organizations that are somehow connected to a social issue is recognized as critical for gaining a more comprehensive perspective of a complex social issue, which allows for more robust solutions (Selsky & Parker, 2005).

Evidence of the rise of social partnerships is marked by the United Nations having made this a distinct Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) in its own right:

> *Over the recent years, the importance of multi-stakeholder partnership has been increasingly recognized by UN member States as well as by different stakeholders including leading institutions in international development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – the blueprint for global sustainable development – explicitly acknowledges multi-stakeholder partnerships as major drivers of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; United Nations, 2018).*

The growing prevalence of social partnerships, in practice, has been responded to with a growing academic body of literature that is widely dispersed across disciplines: organization studies, public policy and administration, economics, nonprofit management, health care, education, and the natural environment (Selsky & Parker, 2005). As appropriate, the focus on

social partnerships for my dissertation is limited to the field of organizational studies (for recent reviews, see Gray & Purdy, 2018; Selsky & Parker, 2005). Within organizational studies, social partnerships have been the subject of a number of special issues of journals in recent years including the Journal of Business Ethics (JBE), 2007 and 2010, Business in Society (BIS), 2010, and the Journal of Management (JOM), 2010 and 2017. The wave of studies on social partnerships has also produced a concomitant set of overview articles (e.g. Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a, b; Selsky & Parker, 2005) as well as a research handbook (Seitanidi & Crane, 2013).

Before focusing on the social partnerships literature within institutional theory, I first touch on social partnerships within the larger field of organizational studies. This enables me to point out a surprising omission that my research begins to address. Within organizational studies, the literature on social partnerships has largely focused on two levels of analysis (Kolk, Vock & VanDolen, 2016). The first, and primary, level has been at the macro-level analysis investigating the societal implications of partnerships. The second level of analysis has been at the meso level, particularly on the partnering organisations themselves and also focusing on the factors of success during the stages of collaboration: formation, implementation, and outcomes (Kolk, Vock, & vanDolen, 2016).

To date, research on the factors of success of social collaborations has highlighted processual factors (trust and communication), structural factors (power and resources), and, more recently, purpose and goal similarity (Cloutier and Langley, 2017; Gray & Purdy, 2014; Gray & Purdy, 2018; Hibbert, Huxham & Ring, 2008). Taken together, this body of research suggests that collaborations marked by high trust, good communication, sufficient resources, and a shared purpose are more than likely to be successful. For collaborations, success is often

measured by the ability to endure over time as many disintegrate before the aims of collaboration are achieved (Bryson et al. 2006, Gray 1989, Huxham and Vangen 1996). The disintegration of collaborations is not unexpected given the institutional complexity that arises upon bringing together organizations with differing logics (Ansari, Wijen and Gray 2013, Reay and Hinings 2009).

Based on our study, we argue, along with Gray and Purdy (2018) that success (longevity) and failure (disintegration) are not optimal performance evaluations for collaborations. As our study indicates, even in collaborations deemed successful by multiple accounts, decoupling can occur to the dilution or even deletion of initial purposes. In fact, our study suggests that the very processes of collaboration that are intended to enable participants to more fruitfully address social and environmental issues than each could do alone, may inadvertently facilitate decoupling.

Surprisingly, given the nature of social partnerships, there has been little attention given to understanding the meso- to micro-interactions between social partnerships and the organizations that participate in them. There remains, for instance, a striking lack of understanding of the dynamics and mechanisms through which social partnerships possibly shape organizations. More so, there has been very little research, to my knowledge, that has investigated the micro-level outcomes for organizations that participate in social partnerships. Such research, which seems important, would readily fall under the umbrella of institutional theory's emphasis on organizational embeddedness in fields, which I review next.

*An Institutional Theory Perspective of Social Partnerships*

Only in the past decade has the topic of social partnerships emerged within institutional theory

(Vurro & Dacin, 2014; Vurro, Dacin & Perrini, 2010). This recency is surprising given that social partnerships, particularly in so far as organizations participate in these types of collaborations, would seem be a more or less significant element of an organization's environment in which it is embedded, as I touched upon earlier. Furthermore, social partnerships, as interstitial forms of organizing, exist at, and would seem to be an influencing factor upon, institutional fields (Gray, Purdy, & Ansari, 2015; Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2000). Given this, it would seem that social partnerships would be a fertile topic of scholarship within institutional theory.

Next, I review the institutional theory literature, which focuses on the field conditions that give rise to social partnerships and the role of social partnerships in issue fields. I also propose social internships as multi-organizational hybrids. Although contributing to the literature on hybrid organizations by establishing social partnerships as multi-organizational hybrids is not the focus of my dissertation, outlining a view of social partnerships as multi-organizational hybrids provides important context for understanding the significance of the important role played by social partnerships.

*Field Conditions for Social Partnerships*

From an institutional perspective, what we know so far is that the conditions under which social partnerships are more likely to form have much to do with the level of institutionalization, or maturity, within the field that a social partnership is related to (Gray & Purdy, 2018; Hinings, Greenwood, & Suddaby, 2003; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2000; Purdy & Gray, 2009; Vurro & Dacin, 2014). For example, highly institutionalized fields, or fields with high levels of institutional infrastructure provide mature field contexts with collectively agreed upon rules, norms, and behaviors that are well established and highly embedded into organizational

structures, practices, and role models (Zietsma, Groenewegen, Logue, & Hinings, 2017).

Conversely, fields that are low in institutionalization are marked by fragmentation and little to no consensus around the norms, rules, or practices that guide appropriate behavior and conformity (Zietsma, Groenewegen, Logue, & Hinings, 2017). In short, these fields have low levels of institutional infrastructure. In fields with low levels of institutionalization, in which contradictions often exist, actors are enabled to set the rules of the game rather than having to adhere to existing arrangements (Davis and Marquis, 2005). While decreased levels of institutionalization are characteristic of newly emergent fields, decreased levels also occur during periods of disruption within established institutional fields (Zietsma, Groenewegen, Logue, & Hinings, 2017).

Such disruptions, including those induced by social movements, challenge the once taken-for-granted ways of behaving among actors and give rise to problems, opportunities, and conflicts (Gray & Purdy, 2018). The emergence of the sustainable foods movement, for example, can be seen as posing disruption to the highly institutionalized field of institutional foods. Social partnerships are more likely to arise in this context as a way to address problems and conflicts and to make use of the opportunities available within conditions of decreased institutionalization (Gray & Purdy, 2018).

*Issue Fields: Social Partnership Incubators*

Furthermore, some field disruptions impact multiple fields, particularly those born of a collective motivation to address complex social issues. Disruptions that impact multiple fields can create “issue fields,” or fields formed around issues that are inherently cross-jurisdictional and will remain so over time (Zietsma, Groenewegen, Logue, & Hinings, 2017). Within issue

fields, the need for interacting across multiple fields thus becomes important (Ansari, Wijen & Gray, 2013).

Social issues, like food insecurity, environmental degradation, inequity, poverty, and climate change are so complex that they impact multiple fields, thereby blurring, or interconnecting, previous fields and creating issue fields. The emergence of the sustainable foods movement is exemplary of an issue field. Not only does the sustainable foods movement represent potential disruption to the established, or highly institutionalized, field of the industrialized food system. The sustainable foods movement also interconnects the industrialized food system field with other institutional fields related to social welfare (i.e. food insecurity), economic development, animal treatment, environmental preservation and climate change.

Social partnerships are highly relevant to issue fields because of how these forms of organizing convene diverse organizations (for-profit, non-profit, government) towards enabling field transformation (Gray and Purdy 2018). Social partnerships are necessary insofar as no single organization or stakeholder group has sufficient knowledge and resources to fully analyze and take action on complex social issues (Ansari, Wijen and Gray 2013). Because of the level of complexity of social issues like poverty, environmental degradation, and food insecurity, there is a high incentive for collaboration between differing types of organizations. According to Gray (1989), collaborative processes transform interactions among diverse actors into a mutual search for common ground, lending a pooling of resources towards outcomes that no single actor could have achieved alone.

*Social Partnerships and Multi-organizational Hybridity*

Also related to institutional theory, I argue that social partnerships are best seen as field-level organizations with *multi-organizational hybridity*. The primary understanding of social partnerships, as mentioned before, is that such forms are likely to be more effective at addressing complex issues by bringing together diverse organizations, each of which contribute relevant, but incomplete, perspectives and resources. The heterogeneous resources and capabilities of partners, if shared, can hold promise for producing collaborative advantages and creating impact which no organization could create on its own (Huxham, 1993).

For example, within social partnerships, businesses generally offer financial capital and market knowledge (Waddell, 2002; Dahan et al., 2010). By participating in social partnerships, businesses thus have access to enhanced reputation, local knowledge, and increased CSR performance. Social partnerships are also particularly valuable for market actors in overcoming a liability of substantial and symbolic foreignness in social arenas (Vurro and Dacin, 2014). Non-profit organizations, on the other hand, generally contribute valuable issue knowledge, along with social legitimacy and community relationships. Conversely, social partnerships provide NGOs with access to important technical, organizational, and financial resources (Arts, 2002; Teegen, Doh, & Vachani, 2004).

The fact that social partnerships convene diverse organizations would make them ideal settings for understanding a different type of organizational hybridity than has been understood to date. Where hybrid organizations have been studied as single organizations that generally try to incorporate two conflicting logics (e.g. Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Jay, 2013; Reay & Hinings, 2009), I see social partnerships as having *multi-organizational hybridity*. In this view, social partnerships are faced with two distinct types of complexity. One type of

complexity is imposed by the difference of logics between each collaborating organization and the social partnership as a whole. For instance, in my case, the majority of participants, including the food buyers, were embedded in a market logic. The Procurement Lab, however, was embedded in a logic related to community or sustainability. Therefore, one type of complexity faced by social partnerships is the distance between the logics of each of the partners and the partnership as a whole.

The second type of complexity inherent in a social partnership is the complexity that is likely imposed by the challenge of navigating among the many, diverse logics of each organization that participates in the social partnership. Again, where our understanding, to date, of organizational hybridity is of a single organization that is faced with two conflicting logics, multi-organizational hybrids, in contrast, are likely challenged with dealing with as many conflicting logics as there are differing organizational types involved. Put another way, social partnerships face two types of complexity, one type is between each participating organizations and the social partnership as a whole. The other type is the complexity *among* participating organizations

In summary, while the conversation on organizational hybridity has been limited to a single organization with two conflicting logics, social partnerships stand to open the conversation to conceive of other types of organizational hybridity. For instance, the very nature of social partnerships would appear to present a situation of multi-organizational hybridity. Viewing social partnerships as multi-organizational hybrids gives rise to an important question, related to my dissertation. How do the diverse actors of a social partnership, which necessarily have diverse logics, navigate the inherent complexity to move towards shared

meanings and how do the resultant shared meanings affect the participating organizations? This question is particularly important given the assumption that social partnerships, by their nature of exposing each partner to differing logics, would likely play a role in disembedding members from their home logic (e.g. van Wijk, et al., 2019) and in creating proto-institutions (e.g. Lawrence et al., 2002).

*Social Partnerships and Social Movements*

It is surprising that, while studies on social partnerships have drawn insights from the social movements literature (e.g. Gray, Purdy & Ansari, 2015), such interstitial forms of organizing have rarely been focused on in the literature on social movements and organizations (e.g. Van Wijk, Stam, Elfring, Zietsma, & Den Hond, 2013). Due to the recent rapid rise of social partnerships, however, these forms of organizing seem to warrant a much more centralized place within the social movements literature (Davis et al., 2005). As previously stated, social partnerships would seem to hold promise for understanding the mechanisms by which broad social movements are made locally-resonant and connect with organizational insiders to affect change.

*Opportunities for the Social Partnerships Literature*

Despite the recent surge of scholarly interest within organizational studies as a whole, and particularly within institutional theory, much ground remains for better understanding social partnerships. While the literature on social partnerships within organizational studies has offered rich insights at both the macro-level and the meso-level, there has been a lack of attention to the micro-level, and the micro-dynamics, of how social partnerships shape the ways in which organizations behave. Such micro-level attention would clearly necessitate

simultaneous attention to interactions and relations between organizations and the social partnerships (i.e. field level organizations) in which they participate, which institutional theory is particularly adept at.

While an institutional approach to social partnerships has been fruitful in explaining the contextual field conditions of formation as well as the relevancy of social partnerships in addressing issue fields, social partnerships, as study settings and theoretical phenomena, can also richly contribute to institutional theory. For example, we can study the ways in which social partnerships facilitate the dynamics and processes of issue fields. We can also study social partnerships as multi-organizational hybrids; there has been little research on how social partnerships navigate the institutional complexity that is particularly inherent in inter-organizational forms of organizing (Toubiana, Oliver & Bradshaw, 2017). Finally, there has been surprisingly little research on how social partnerships, themselves, serve as enabling or constraining contexts for organizational and institutional change.

Further investigation of the role of social partnerships has, therefore, much to offer to the institutional change literature. Social partnerships are rich sites for taking relational approach to change, considering that social partnerships are rife with interactions and relations among organizations and between organizations and the fields they are embedded and that social partnerships exist for fostering field-level change. Next, I propose that a beneficial way to theorize social partnerships related to change dynamics and processes is by drawing on Kellogg's concept of relational spaces.

*Social Partnerships as Relational Spaces*

To investigate the role of social partnerships in shaping the relationship between broad social movements and organizational change, I draw inspiration from Kellogg (2009) to conceptualize social partnerships as *field-level relational spaces*. While Kellogg used relational spaces to describe specific *intra*-organizational spaces, I use relational spaces at the *inter*-organizational level. In her study of hospitals attempting to incorporate a challenging practice change to reduce the number of hours that interns worked, Kellogg (2009) identified relational spaces as a critical feature that facilitated practice change.

Kellogg's notion of relational spaces drew upon the social movement concept of "free spaces". Within the social movement literature, free spaces are small-scale settings in which social movement reformers can interact with one another in isolation from defenders of the status quo. Free spaces enable activists to develop an oppositional sense of efficacy, an oppositional identity and oppositional frames with which to challenge defenders (e.g. Ewick & Silbey 1995, Polletta 1999, Snow et al. 1986, Taylor & Whittier 1992). Examples of free spaces are the women-only consciousness raising groups in the feminist movement or black churches in the Civil Rights movement (Kellogg, 2009). Free spaces have been identified as crucial for social movement efforts in offering activists isolation and protection, sometimes physically, from defenders of the status quo.

Although inspired by the social movement concept of free spaces, Kellogg's (2009) concept of relational spaces differs on important points related to the setting and the nature of the spaces. Where free spaces are spaces of *interaction* and *isolation* for social movement activism, relational spaces are spaces inside organizations that are relevant for complex change efforts. In Kellogg's study of relational spaces, a regulation had called for a reduction in the

number of hours that surgical residents worked. Because the change affected roles that were interdependent, the change could not be accomplished by individuals in any single position. Rather, the change, which Kellogg (2009) refers to as a "cross-positional challenge", required coordination among reformers from multiple different work positions. Kellogg found that that in order for inter-organizational spaces to facilitate a cross-position challenge, the spaces must therefore allow not only for isolation and interaction, as with free spaces, but also for *inclusion*.

Kellogg identified relational spaces as an important condition that enabled a unified, cross-position collective building that Kellogg refers to as *relational mobilization* (2009). In contradistinction to the social movement notion of *oppositional mobilization* (resource mobilization against defenders; e.g., Polletta & Jasper 2001), Kellogg posited that in the context of organizations, resource mobilization occurs via relational mobilization that enables potential reformers to coalesce in networks of support.

Relational mobilization is enabled by three mechanisms that relational spaces provide for: relational efficacy, relational identity and relational framing (Kellogg, 2009). In Kellogg's study, *relational efficacy* was the assurance that reformers in different work positions would each complete the diverse tasks required for the reduction in resident hours (the change) to be enacted. Relational efficacy is the collective identification of practice problems and jointly negotiating solutions.

*Relational identity* is the development of a new sense of self, a collective identity, in which reformers saw themselves in relation to reformers in other work positions. A study by Chreim and colleagues (2019) supports the importance of developing a sense of "who we are" (relational identity) as well as "who we are not" (oppositional identity). In Kellogg's study,

relational identity was created by using a particular language and by demonstrating a demeanor in front of one another that supported the new task allocation. Relational identity was also enabled through personal interactions (conversations about non-work topics) and the development friendship bonds.

The development of *relational framing* involves the justification of new tasks and role relationships, followed by the legitimation of the new tasks and role relationships (Kellogg, 2009). Kellogg's (2009) study importantly suggests that, when it comes to change that crosses multiple positions, commitment to a change is not enough. Relational spaces may be necessary for the type of mobilization needed to enact change among multiple positions, each of who play a role in change.

While Kellogg (2009) focused on mobilization inside an organization, her conceptualization of a relational space seems to capture well the value of social partnerships that I focus upon. It provides a similar mechanism for the uniting of potential reformers across organizations that are connected, in some way, to an issue field. In my case, the reformers included the food buyers who were personally enthusiastic about the sustainable foods movement, as wells as non-profit organizations grappling with food insecurity and food waste, large food distributors grappling to gain market share in the growing local foods category, government agencies focused on social and environmental issues related to food as well as the potential benefits to economic development, and farmers who embraced the ideals and practices of the locavore movement.

Another key difference between Kellogg's relational spaces and the inter-organizational relational spaces that I theorize has to do with what the relational spaces are providing

isolation from. In the case of the Procurement Lab, participants were not opposing tangible defenders of the status quo, but rather the dominant and highly institutionalized logic of industrialized foods that ran counter to the sustainable foods social movement. My study seeks to unpack exactly how this inter-organizational kind of relational space works as a mechanism linking societal-level social movements to organizational change—an important kind of social movement outcome. The concept of relational spaces would therefore seem very useful for theorizing about a relational approach to institutional change.

**Summary of Theory**

The aim of Chapter 2 was to situate my research within the three relevant bodies of literature - social movements, change and social partnerships – related to my research question of *What is the role of social partnerships in connecting broad social movements to actors inside organizations to affect organizational change?* In summary, the social movements literature, like the literature on institutional change, has tended towards either overly-socialized (social movements influencing organizations from the outside, exogenous shocks) or overly-heroic (insider activism, institutional entrepreneurship) accounts of change.

Scholars suggest that such dualistic and atomistic accounts of change can be overcome by rightfully placing attention on the interactions and relations between organizations and the fields in which they are embedded. My dissertation places attention on these interactions and relations by seeking to understand the role of social partnerships in the relationship between social movements and organizational change. By placing attention in this arena, my research aims to address a key question that is raised by extant social movements literature (how to movements connect inside organizations), as well as addressing a key criticism of the

institutional change literature (the persistent atomistic approaches).

Related to the social partnerships literature, there has been a lack of micro-level attention on social partnerships. Thus, we don't know much about the outcomes of social partnerships for the organizations that participate in them. How do social partnerships change foster organizational change? What are the outcomes for organizations? Also, while it is understood that social partnerships are likely to arise within field conditions of low institutional infrastructure, and that social partnerships are likely to play a key role in issue fields, we know little about these roles.

Relatedly, social partnerships convene diverse organizations, which clearly presents institutional complexity, yet we know little about how social partnerships deal with such complexity in fostering shared meanings and coordinated actions. Lastly, while the social partnerships literature has drawn on the social movements literature, it is striking that the reverse has not occurred because social partnerships would seem to play a key role (e.g. as relational spaces) in the ways that social movements become locally tailored inside organizations.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY, A FIELD ETHNOGRAPHY

The aim of the methodology chapter of my dissertation is to explain my choice of a qualitative research design, and in particular, my choice of a field ethnography. In this section, I also detail the types of data that were gathered for my dissertation. Finally, I discuss the process of data analysis.

### Research Design

My research design follows the assertion by Lee (1999) and Marshall and Rossman (1995) that qualitative research is highly appropriate when the focal phenomenon is not well understood in the literature. Given that the aim of my study - to understand the potential role of social partnerships on how broad social movements become locally tailored inside organizations - is not yet understood in the literature, I appropriately chose a qualitative design. Furthermore, qualitative research is increasingly called for within social movements scholarship as being very helpful in identifying details about activist influence tactics (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016). In particular, work on employee activism has been criticized for lacking detail on the precise mechanisms of influence. Although insider activism is often envisioned to occur though influence and education, studies typically lack detail on the cognitive, affective, or group dynamic processes of such influence and education and qualitative research attends to.

Because of the exploratory nature of my research topic, I elected to conduct inductive qualitative research in the form of a longitudinal, ethnographic case study (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013; Langley & Abdallah, 2011; Zilber 2015), aiming for a contextualized approach to theory development (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010; Pettigrew, 1990). The choice of an ethnographic case study is relevant because I am studying a bounded system or setting

(Creswell, 2007). In my case, the bounded system is the Procurement Lab and its members within the larger context of the food system. Additionally, the choice of an ethnographic case study approach is important for understanding shared beliefs, languages and patterns of behavior (Creswell, 2007), which participant observation allows for.

My specific choice of a field ethnography is relatively unique but highly appropriate given my research question, my research setting, and how uniquely adept field ethnographies are for studying the relationships and interactions between fields and organizations (Lounsbury & Kaghan, 2001, Zilber, 2015). The choice of a field ethnography is therefore highly suitable give my aim of understanding the interactions of organizations participating in a field-level collaboration to support the broad sustainable foods movement.

Although field-level ethnographies are fairly new to organizational studies, they are increasingly called upon as a way to better understand institutional, field and organizational change dynamics and processes (Micelotta, Lounsbury, & Greenwood, 2017; Lounsbury & Kaghan, 2001; Wooten & Hoffman, 2017; Zilber, 2015). Much of the drama of organizational reality unfolds in the organizational fields wherein networks of actors negotiate meanings, through ongoing and context-bound efforts, to form collective understandings (Wooten & Hoffman, 2008; Zilber, 2015). This is precisely the case of the food buyers, who along with other field actors within the context of the Procurement Lab, were faced with negotiating the meaning of sustainable foods within their geographic context and in a way that would meet their collective aims and needs. An organization's “reality"  - norms of conduct, structures, and practices - is rarely born within the organization or copied directly from other organizations or from society at large (Zilber, 2015). Rather, the reality of an organization is largely borrowed, in

a locally translated fashion, from the wider institutional field that mediates between organizations and societies (Scott, 2013).

Because organizations and fields constitute each other in an ongoing process (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006), organizations cannot be fully understood without exploring the fields within which they are embedded (Zilber, 2015). On one hand, however, the vast majority of field-level studies are conducted at the macro-level and follow the changes of a field over time (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012; Scott, 2013). Ethnographies, on the other hand, focus on the micro-level processes within organizations (Zilber, 2015). As a result of this methodological divide, very little is known about the important micro-foundations of field-level processes, including the negotiation of meanings, the formation of roles and interrelations, and the development of rules and norms (Powell & Colyvas, 2008; Zilber, 2015).

In order to capture the micro-dynamics of relationships between organizations and fields, it is necessary to identify social arenas, such as field-wide organizations, field-wide agreements, and field-wide events in which the textual activity that constitutes the field can be followed (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004; Zilber, 2014, 2015). Although "archival residue" (Gephart, 1993, p. 1469) is left behind by field-wide organizations and agreements, field-wide events are most suited to ethnographic inquiry (Zilber, 2015). Referred to as field-configuring events by Lampel & Meyer (2008), these field-level study sites uniquely allow for the observation of field-level dynamics in situ (on site) and in vivo (within; Zilber, 2015). Such events include conferences, committees, and tournaments, which form "temporal organizations" in which "people from diverse organizations and with diverse purposes assemble periodically or on a one-time basis" (Lampel & Meyer, 2008, p. 1026).

Field-configuring events enable the spread of ideals and practices by providing times and places for stakeholders to meet (Meyer, Gaba, & Colwell, 2005). By convening stakeholders, field-configuring events allow actors to tell their stories and to provide narratives, which accumulate and become shaped into shared meanings, collective action (or relational) frames, and collective (or relational) identities (Chesters & Welsh, 2004). Shared meanings, frames and identities contribute to the introduction and institutionalization of new ideals and practices (Anand & Watson, 2004). I followed Zilber's (2015) approach for closely exploring field level events by first contextualizing the Procurement Lab within its broader institutional order of the sustainable foods social movement and institutional procurement. Also following Zilber (2015), I contextualized the Procurement Lab by detailing who organized the Procurement Lab and what that person's interests were.

The reason why there are so few field ethnographies in organizational studies is because they present two unique, inter-related challenges: finding an appropriate site and gathering broad data. Of the few field ethnographies that have been published, most were conducted at a single conference. While conferences provide access to a field level setting, conferences provide only a snapshot of a field. Furthermore, because conferences typically involve multiple concurrent sessions, a researcher or team of researchers are rarely, if ever, able to gather data on an entire conference (Zilber, 2015). Also, it is recognized that no single event (e.g. a conference) can encompass the entirety of the conversation that constitutes a field (Zilber, 2015). Rather, fields are ongoing achievements that take place over long periods of time (Scott, 2013).

The research internship that I was awarded gave me access to a highly advantageous

setting that overcame these two primary challenges typically associated with conducting a field ethnography. First, I was given access to comprehensive data (participant observation, interviews, documentation) for the Procurement Lab over a long time period (over four years). I was therefore able to study the unfolding of relationships and interactions between the organizations and the field and I was able to study this unfolding over a period of years and through multiple data sources. Furthermore, in addition to being an ideal setting in which to conduct a field ethnography, the institutional procurement of sustainable foods was an ideal, revelatory setting because it richly captured the time when a social movement has grown to the degree that mainstream organizations experienced motivation or pressure to adopt social movement ideals and practices that conflict with established ideals and practices (Eisenhardt & Graeber 2007).

The ontological assumption with which I approach this research is that reality is subjective and socially constructed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Thus, from an epistemological standpoint, my aim was to reduce the distance between myself and that which I studied and to understand the subjective construction of meaning, which necessarily occurs through interaction. My choice of data sources for this study - a mix of participant observation, interviews and archival data - reflect these ontological and epistemological assumptions.

From an axiological perspective, I acknowledge that my research is values laden and that biases are present (Creswell, 2007). For example, before I began conducting interviews, and at the urging of one of my committee members, I asked a colleague to interview me about my views related to sustainable food systems and the role of mainstream organizations. This interview made it clear that I had a number of normative ideas about sustainable foods being

"good" and mainstream, industrialized food systems being "bad". The interview process made these ideas more conscious so that I was able to acknowledge them and be consciously open to hearing and considering differing perspectives by the interview subjects, thereby allowing for more objective interpretations of study data.

From a methodological perspective, I take an inductive approach, which means that I study the topic of the role of social partnerships within its context and used an emerging design. For example, I entered the field setting knowing only that I was going to study a group of food buyers who were participating within a cross-sector collaboration as a way to integrate ideals and practices from the sustainable foods movement. I did not know specifically what I would find. Some of my early ideas about what was happening and what to focus on included the way that sustainable or local food was defined. I also considered focusing exclusively on the ways that the buyers tried to integrate the ideals and practices, nearly excluding the role of the cross-sector collaboration. Over the two and a half years of participant observation, however, during which I cycled between findings and theory, I was fortunate enough to be able to present early findings at conferences and workshops. Based on the feedback that was provided at conferences and workshops, it became clear that what was unfolding in this setting was a rich picture of how a social partnership shapes the ways that individual in organizations are able to articulate a broad social movement to a localized setting and to what ends. This feedback led me to expand my focus from just the food buyers to the interactions between the food buyers and the Procurement Lab as a whole as well as to note what was occurring in the larger community relative to the Procurement Lab.

**Data Sources**

Like ethnographic studies at the organizational level, field ethnographies combine multiple data sources to richly capture and triangulate dynamics (Stake, 1995; Zilber, 2015). The data for this study indeed draws upon multiple types of data sources, over a period of four and a half years from the time the Procurement Lab was formed (February 2014). The breadth and types of data were important for providing a convincing and accurate study that best enabled me to capture the potential influence of social partnerships on organizational insiders (Stake, 1995). While the study was primarily based on participant observation, the inclusion of 31 interviews and extensive documentation and archival data provided important triangulation and, in some cases, important comparisons (Table 3.1). For example, the use of multiple data sources was especially critical for assessing whether the reality of what the food buyers did was different from what they said, or even believed, that they did.

**Table 3.1: Data Sources**

| | Data Sources | Quantity |
|---|---|---|
| ***Participant Observation (Hours)*** | August 2016 - June 2019 | 406 |
| | Sustainable Foods Procurement Lab Meetings | 46 |
| | Sustainable Foods Procurement Lab Coordination/Communication | 180 |
| | Local Food Tours (5) | 25 |
| | **TOTAL** | **631 Hours** |
| ***Interviews (Number)*** | Food Buyers from Eight Institutions:<br>Large Public Healthcare System<br>Private Hospital System<br>(3) Large Universities<br>Rural University<br>(2) Conference Centers<br>*(Four buyers were interviewed twice, totaling 12 interviews)* | 12 |
| | Government (Municipal and regional) | 7 |
| | Farmers/Producers | 10 |
| | Sustainable Foods Advocates | 2 |
| | **TOTAL** | **31 Interviews** |
| ***Conferences (Number, Days)*** | National (1) | 4 |
| | Regional (3) | 6 |
| | **TOTAL** | **10 Days** |
| ***Archival Data (Pages)*** | Websites | 113 |
| | Government Reports | 326 |
| | Meeting Minutes (4 years) | 137 |
| | Sustainable Foods Procurement Lab Documents | 78 |
| | Sustainable Foods Movement Documents | 1,361 |
| | **TOTAL** | **2, 015 Pages** |
| ***Prior Field Experience (Years)*** | **TOTAL** | **4 Years** |

*Participant Observation*

I spent 34 months in the field, from August 2016 to June 2019, observing the activities and interactions of the Procurement Lab. In addition to being on-site at the Procurement Lab's host organization two days per week for one year and attending all Procurement Lab meetings, observation also included near daily interactions with Procurement Lab members through emails, phone calls and document review and editing as part of a research internship role to facilitate Procurement Lab meetings. Because the Procurement Lab was based on a shared-leadership model, the facilitator role was administrative (coordinating meetings, sending agendas, time and note keeping during meetings, and sending meeting notes). In addition to Procurement Lab observations, I attended four conferences on sustainable food systems and participated in several local food tours.

Extensive field notes and photos were taken while at the host organization, while visiting member organizations to conduct interviews, and also during Procurement Lab meetings and local food tours. Abbreviated notes, taken during meetings and tours and fleshed out shortly afterwards, were memos of what happened, what people said, details of the environment and thoughts, observations or questions (Myers, 2013). For instance, field notes commented on how the host organization, in stark contrast to the stated goal of working towards sustainable food systems, was strikingly corporate: "employees work in cubicles, rarely talk with one another, elevator music in the background, florescent lights, cow statues everywhere (awards for the best cattle), pictographs of year-over-year increases in exports convey a goal of mass production and export of animal protein and commodity agriculture".

Prior to this study, I had spent four years volunteering extensively (approximately 20

hours per week) in the sustainable foods movement during its initial development. These four years allowed for an in-depth familiarity with the movement. This time was instrumental to the study, for example, in enabling the identification of intriguing differences between the larger sustainable foods movement and the actions and rhetoric of the members of the Procurement Lab. Without this prior experience, such differences may have gone unnoticed.

*Interviews*

In addition to participant observation, 31 semi-structured interviews were conducted. Interviews lasted 45-90 minutes and began with the broad question of "How did you become involved in the Procurement Lab?" (Myers, 2013). Interviews focused on the institutional food buyers but also included others who offered important perspectives for the study. Interviewing local food suppliers (e.g. farmers and producers), for example, helped triangulate and provide context for the interview data from buyers. For example, one of the interviewees was a farmer who used to sell produce to the food service sector but had transitioned to selling only directly to consumers through farmers markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA). This farmer's unique background provided important insights into the dynamics of selling to institutions compared with selling directly to consumers.

*Archival Data*

Archival data was important to the study, not only in providing triangulation for the participant observation and interviews, but also in providing contextual and historical information related to the Procurement Lab and to the larger sustainable foods movement. Archival data for the Procurement Lab included all meeting minutes covering the four years between the group's inception and the end of the study period, along with grant applications

and reports. The Procurement Lab commissioned two reports – a report on the economic impact of increased local foods purchasing and a baseline report of local food availability and purchases. Non-profit and government reports were also part of the archival data for this study, as well as information and reports from a large number of sustainable foods movement organizations.

**Data Analysis**

The initial phase of data gathering included theoretical sampling in which emergent theory was developed alongside data collection and analysis, allowing me to cycle back and forth between thinking about existing data and generating strategies for collecting new, often better, data (Myers, 2013). Theoretical sampling, or early analysis, often suggests the need for a more focused period of data collection, which was the case for this study (Dey, 2004). For the initial eight interviews, for example, a broad net was cast with the question "How did you come to be involved in the Procurement Lab?" and "Tell me about your experience with trying to increase procurement of local foods?" After analyzing these interviews, I refined the interview questions to evoke richer descriptions related to the buyers' personal and professional perceptions of the sustainable foods movement, along with their specific efforts to integrate its practices. In analyzing the data from interviews, participant observation (field notes) and archival data (e.g. meeting notes, reports), I followed the standard methods for inductive analysis set forth by Gioia that involved three distinct phases of analysis (Gioia et al, 2013)

*First Order Analysis: Concepts*

The first phase of analysis involved the open coding of raw data (Myers, 2013) in which phrases or sentences were summarized with a succinct code. According to Gioia and colleagues,

it is important to adhere faithfully to informant terms when initially coding the myriad of informant terms, codes, and categories that emerge early in this analysis phase (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013). Following this analytical approach, the codes from this initial round of analysis were intimately linked, often verbatim, with field notes, interviewees' words, or text from archival data (Van Maanen, 1979). For example, the field note, "Meeting structures have been changed to allow structured time for group members to share new practices or to present challenges and ask for ideas from others" was coded as "Learn from others".

As the process of open coding, or first-order analysis, continued, my analytical attention was focused upon identifying similarities and differences among first order codes. The goal of this stage of analysis was to group first order codes into naturally occurring concepts. As an example of this step, the following two excerpts (bolded in Table 3.2) were analyzed from the perspective of what they might have in common or where they might diverge. One excerpt was the interview quote, "It's the broadest definition [of local foods] that I've ever used but it meets economic development, economic diversity and the agricultural goals of the group". The other excerpt was the field note "Mention of social and environmental aspects are absent from meetings and documents". What was clear, upon comparing and contrasting these data excerpts, is that both illustrate a sole focus on the economic benefits of local foods, rather than a broad focus on all aspects of local foods which would have included social and environmental aspects. These two excerpts were thus naturally grouped within the concept "focus on economic benefit".

**Table 3.2: From Raw Data to Concepts**

| Selected Field Notes and Interview Quotes | *Concept* |
|---|---|
| Identified need for communications plan and research that will help us quantify our economic impact (Meeting Minutes, Feb. 19, 2015) | ***Focus on economic benefit*** |
| **Mention of social and environmental aspects are absent from meetings and documents.** (Field Notes) | |
| A person from the sustainability committee at the university commented that the Procurement Lab does not consider any aspects of local foods except the economic aspects. I asked her if she had ever brought this up at the meetings and she said that she did early on but didn't want to seem oppositional. (Field Notes) | |
| It was the typical response. It's local, it's too hard to buy. It's local. Nobody wants to pay the price." (Distributor 1) | |
| Fluctuation in pricing (of local foods) is another issue. Big industry suppliers can weather the storm in some cases. There is that element of contracted pricing or contracted availability. We don't have that with smaller producers. They can't say, we know we promised you this price but we can't operate at a loss. (University Food Service Director) | |
| **It's the broadest definition that I've ever used but it meets economic development, economic diversity and the agricultural goals of the group.** Needed definition to allow for a local coffee roaster and still encompass a potato grower and value add producer. It's criteria versus definition. (Procurement Lab Coordinator) | |
| Because of the market being driven by agriculture and because of the scale of the partners, we could not have a 100-mile definition. (Food Buyer 3) | *Revise definition* |
| Notably, the emphasis of many of [the institutional procurement of local food] has been on criteria regarding the distance food has traveled, and has not taken into account aspects of production such as the structure and size, treatment of workers, health and environmental. (Johns | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Hopkins Center for a Liveable Future, (2016). Instituting Change: An overview of institutional food procurement and recommendations for improvement.) | |
| The sustainability is not part of the primary focus of the university. Their focus is on making sure people are fed without seeing costs go through the roof. (Food Buyer 2) | |
| During the meeting, one of the large distributors explained how they revised their product tracking system to add new codes for items that were local. This made their "local purchases" go up quickly. They did not actually buy more local, they just changed their product codes to now track what they were purchasing all along. (Field Notes) | *Relabeling* |
| We added a new code to all of the products that we were buying that met the definition of local that the group agreed upon. (Food Buyer 6) | |
| Yeah, we buy our buffet items from a nearby farm. When we have a buffet coming up, we call them and ask what they have available and then we plan the buffet around what they have. (Food Buyer 8) | *Make small changes* |
| A small local baker made really good banana bread and we worked with them to figure out how they could make more. They realized that they could buy longer pans. (Food Buyer 3) | |
| Ingrid suggested that our hospitals could be a good CSA drop off. So we advertised for the local farmer and now they sell 50 CSA boxes here per week. (Food Buyer 3) | |
| During the tour of the college, the food buyer explained that they found a local supplier for teas and that they are selling very well. She would like to find more suppliers like this. (Field Notes) | |
| But you work with a company like [large animal farm] who cares about how animals are transported. We get lower prices because of our volume and because it's bragging rights for [the farm]. One of the things I am most excited about is using group buying power. (Food Buyer 5) | *Collaborate with stakeholders* |

| | |
|---|---|
| We have no plans to abandon the small food aggregator. If anything we are looking at new ideas to build them out. We look at what the working group is doing as fertile grounds. (Food Buyer 8) | |
| We are at three universities so we can make a program like (aggregated buying) work because we would give them an instant market base. Instead of saying we'll buy 2 boxes of apples each week, we can give them a jump start (Food Buyer 4) | |
| Higher education food service buyer said she is very interested, that collective buying has been her "hidden agenda" for many years and the reason for joining the working group in the first place. (Field Notes) | |
| The food hub was a suggestion that we floated by [city council member], it would be an ideal location. They have space, people, etc. (Farmer 3) | |
| Last summer, there was a group from [a food distributor]. They have a system that they are trying to recreate here trying to create relationships with local farmers. (Food Buyer 7) | *Learn from others* |
| The procurement group is set up as a "community of practice" meaning that their purpose for meeting is to share ideas for buying more local food. (Field Notes) | |
| Meeting structures have been changed to allow structured time for group members to share new practices or to present challenges and ask for ideas from others. (Field Notes) | |
| At today's meeting, one of the food buyers asked another where they were buying their locally produced yogurt from and said they would contact the same supplier. (Field Notes) | |
| Now what's different is that there is more structure, more awareness, more demand that has, for instance, created interest in local foods even by [large food distributor]. Like the food hub idea is really different. (Food Buyer 4) | *Advocate for infrastructure* |
| The strategic plan for 2017 lists, as one of the priorities, to facilitate policy development and grand funding for small to medium farmers so that they can sell to institutions. (Field Notes) | |

| | |
|---|---|
| One of the distributors said that the main problem with signing on new farmers and producers is that obtaining food safety certification is so costly. She directed her comments to the government representatives in the meeting. (Field Notes) | |
| The strategic plan for 2017 lists, as one of the priorities, to facilitate policy development and grant funding for small to medium farmers so that they can sell to institutions. (Field Notes) | *Facilitate policy development* |
| "Host dinner with government representatives for the purpose of telling them that the main barriers to us being able to purchase more local food is the lack of infrastructure and the challenges involved in GAP certification" (2017 Strategic Action Map) | |
| At the end of the day, they may just want to go the food service route and not stand at farmers market all day. Prices are lower but farmers can move more volume. (Food Buyer 1) | *Identify and overcome supplier barriers* |
| This guy showed up in a small truck and asked me try his breaded chicken tender. It was seriously in a plastic baggie that was in a small cooler. Call me crazy, but I cooked it up an tried it. I wanted to give him a chance. Anyways it was really good so I asked him to get me some more to sample. You won't believe this but the next week, I got a package in the mail and it had dry ice and another bag of chicken tenders. I told the guy that he can't do business like this and I connected him to government resources. Now he is one of the biggest breaded chicken tender suppliers in the country. (Food Buyer 6) | |
| The lab came out of one meeting where I brought together group of stakeholders, institutional food service folks who were struggling to get more local food into their operation. (Initial Procurement Lab Coordinator) | |
| The economic impact report that the Procurement Lab commissioned showed how much food is being purchased from outside the region that is actually available here at a lower price. They discussed that group purchasing might be a way to go. (Field Notes) | *Buying more of what is available* |
| The Procurement Lab brings local vendors to their meetings to showcase their products and answer questions. This is a way for buyers to learn more about what's available locally that they didn't know about. (Field Notes) | |

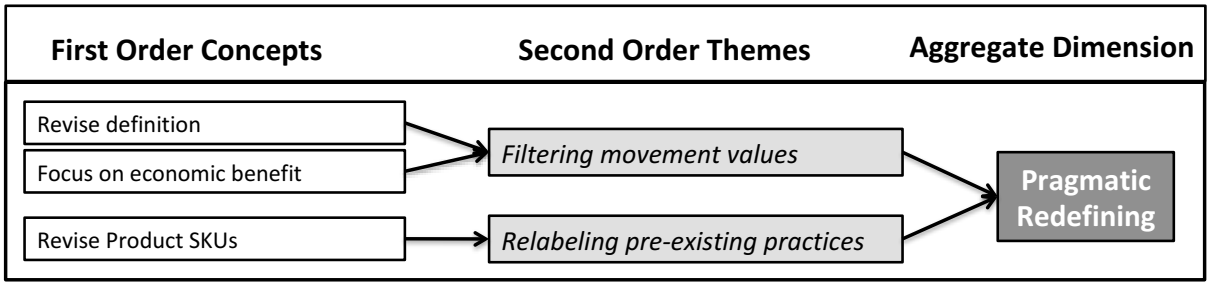
| | |
|---|---|
| The Procurement Lab members organize several local tours throughout the year. One of the buyers said that when they visited a local sauce producer, he found out the producer can make and bottle a signature salad dressing for their conference center. (Field Notes) | *Tour local food producers* |
| The Procurement Lab toured five local producers during 2016. (Grant Report) | |
| It's easy to have more pork available to purchase in our region. Pork can be scaled up quickly. Sows can have lots of babies fast and that be quickly grown and fattened. (Food Buyer 2) | *Big is better thinking* |
| Our job is to help small farmers and producers expand their operations so that they can eventually export. (Government Representative from the Local Foods Division) | |
| You have like the procurement officer not wiling to take the time to contact local growers, rather just go with [the distributor's] list. (Farmer 1) | *Taking the well-worn path* |
| All the literature was about the local chef that picks up farmers market on sat and makes meals. We make 1000s meals a day and can't do that. (Food Buyer 7) | |
| *At the meeting today, the buyers were shown a draft of the economic impact report of buying local food. It showed how much food was purchased outside the region but that was available within the region. One of the buyers asked "Why do we buy outside the region then? It doesn't make sense!" Another buyer said, "Because it's a habit." (Field Notes)* | |
| When I asked how much of the organic food was being purchased, given that it is generally more expensive than local, he said not much because of the price. Then he wiped his hands together and said "We've done our part. We made it available. People want local, well this is even better. It's organic." (Field Notes) | *White-washed solutions* |
| Today, we toured a "local" producer that processed canola oil. The processor is a massive international producer. I took photos of how much product in the warehouse had box labels in Chinese because it was being shipped there. I also took photos of the food labels for items like margarine and non-dairy whipped cream. (Field Notes) | |

*Second Order Data Analysis: Themes*

The second phase of analyzing my data is referred to as axial coding (Gioia et al., 2013). The goal of axial coding is to interpret the concepts that emerged from open coding with the purpose of moving from informant-centric concepts to researcher-centric concepts or descriptive categories (Gioia et al., 2013). This phase of my analysis thus placed me firmly within the theoretical realm. Accordingly, my inquiry during this step was whether the emerging themes of the first order analysis were suggestive of broader concepts that could help to describe and explain the phenomena that I had observed (Gioia, et al., 2013).

During this step, for instance, and using the same example as above, the first order code, “revise definition” was naturally grouped with the first order code “focus on economic benefit” into the second order code “filtering movement values” because both first order codes represented ways that the broader values of the sustainable foods movement had been filtered out (Figure 3.1). I continued with this process of distilling first order codes into concepts and themes until I reached what Glaser and Strauss (1967) refer to as ‘‘theoretical saturation’’, which is the point at which new concepts or themes ceased to arise.

**Figure 3.1: An Example of Moving from First Order Concepts to Aggregate Dimensions**



*Third Order Data Analysis: Aggregate Dimensions and Data Structure*

Once the first order concepts had emerged, followed by the second order themes, which were distilled to the point of theoretical saturation, I began a third phase of data analysis – theoretical coding. In this phase, I looked for even broader themes, or aggregate dimensions, with which to describe the phenomenon that was emerging from both the raw data and the second order concepts (Gioia et al., 2012). My goal for this third phase of analysis was to build a data structure (Figure 3.1), which is important for two reasons (Pratt, 2008; Tracy, 2010). First, the process of developing a data structure enabled me to configure my data into a sensible visual aid with which to confirm my analysis. Secondly, a data structure is important because it provides a graphic representation that demonstrates analytical rigor by making visible and transparent the progression of moving from raw data to aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2013). The data structure is perhaps the most pivotal step in taking an inductive research approach in line with the Gioia method (Gioia et al., 2013).

Specifically for my data, this third phase of analysis involved looking at the second order themes or descriptive categories, while considering the raw data, and asking, "What is the Procurement Lab providing in more thematic terms?" and “In response, what are the food buyers doing in more thematic terms?” The third stage of coding thus captured the broad roles of the Procurement Lab as well as the broad ways that the food buyers enacted the sustainable foods movement. These broad themes emerged, and were validated, from the process of considering this question during multiple reviews of the second order codes while asking "Did I miss anything?" and "Is there another way to see this data?". The result was the development of the theoretical framework from which began developing a model (Pratt, 2009). For

additional confirmation of accuracy in the data analysis process, the results of the coding phases were presented to, and confirmed by, two core members of the Procurement Lab who were both academic researchers.

*Trustworthiness*

Trustworthiness throughout the data analysis process was supported by taking an insider-outsider approach in which I was in the field and I continually connected with individuals (e.g. my supervisor and other faculty) who remained outside (e.g. Bartunek, 2008; Gioia et al. 2013, Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991). An insider-outsider approach to ethnographic research facilitates ongoing reflexivity and builds real time engagement and learning (Bansal, 2003). Peer debriefing (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), or exposing oneself to a disinterested professional peer to "keep the inquirer honest" was crucial to the trustworthiness of my dissertation. For instance, through exposing my empirical data and theory development processes to faculty members and peers, as well as at conferences, I was told on two occasions that I was 'gong native' and not being critical enough. Early on, this comment was particularly related to my ideas of how sustainable or local foods are a promising way to address a number of complex social issues. It was pointed out to me that this thinking presented a bias with which I was analyzing the data and developing theory. I was provided with more critical viewpoints, which opened my eyes to biases that had previously been taken for granted. For additional confirmation of accuracy in the data analysis process, the results of the coding phases were presented to, and confirmed by, two scholars who were part of the Lab.

I supported the trustworthiness of my dissertation in additional ways. Credibility was supported through prolonged and persistent engagement (three years) in the field with lengthy

and intensive contact with the phenomena and respondents to assess possible sources of distortion and to identify saliencies in the situation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Credibility was also supported through the triangulation, or cross-checking, of data sources. In my case three different types of data were collected and cross-checked: participant observation, interviews and archival data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). For transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), I also provided 'thick descriptions' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of the dissertation setting. Thick descriptions provide detailed narratives about the context which enables readers in judging the degree of fit, similarity, or applicability to other settings. For instance, although my specific setting is on institutional food buyers trying to buy more local, the thick descriptions that I have provided (e.g. the genuine enthusiasm of the buyers to buy more local foods and the practical difficulties that they faced when trying to do this, along with the processes and decisions through which they made buying local more pragmatic), enable readers to determine if the findings and theoretical contribution apply to other settings (e.g. the integration of other sustainability-related ideals and practices into mainstream or 'market' settings).

# CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

My dissertation findings are structured in three parts. First the study setting is detailed, beginning with the broad field setting of the sustainable foods movement, particularly as it relates to the institutional procurement of foods. The Procurement Lab - a localized instantiation of this broader setting - is also detailed. In particular, I present the specific ways in which the Procurement Lab was theorized as a relational space. In the second part, the findings show how, as a relational space, the Procurement Lab enabled relational mobilization through relational efficacy, relational identity and relational framing. Where the second part of my findings show *how* the Procurement Lab enabled this. The third part of my findings focuses on the *outcomes*, or the ways in which the food buyers, through their participation in the Procurement Lab, collectively tailored the sustainable foods social movement into their respective organizations in both symbolic and substantive ways.

## Part 1: The Sustainable Foods Movement and the Localized Instantiation by the Procurement Lab

The first part of the findings describes the broader context for the Procurement Lab by providing an historical account of the emergence of the sustainable foods movement. Next, the formation, aims, participants and structures of the Procurement Lab are detailed. Special attention is given to the specific ideals and strategies, which the Procurement Lab was initiated and formulated.

### *Broad Context: The Sustainable Foods Movement and Institutional Procurement*

Before providing details of the specific setting for this research, it is important to first provide the broader context of the North American sustainable foods movement in which this study is

situated. Because the North American sustainable foods had emerged in response to the industrialization of the food system, a brief history of the emergence of the industrialized food system is provided, including the negative outcomes that have increasingly been attributed to the industrialized food system. Following this historical and social context, the emergence and rise of the sustainable foods movement, as well as what it is, are explained.

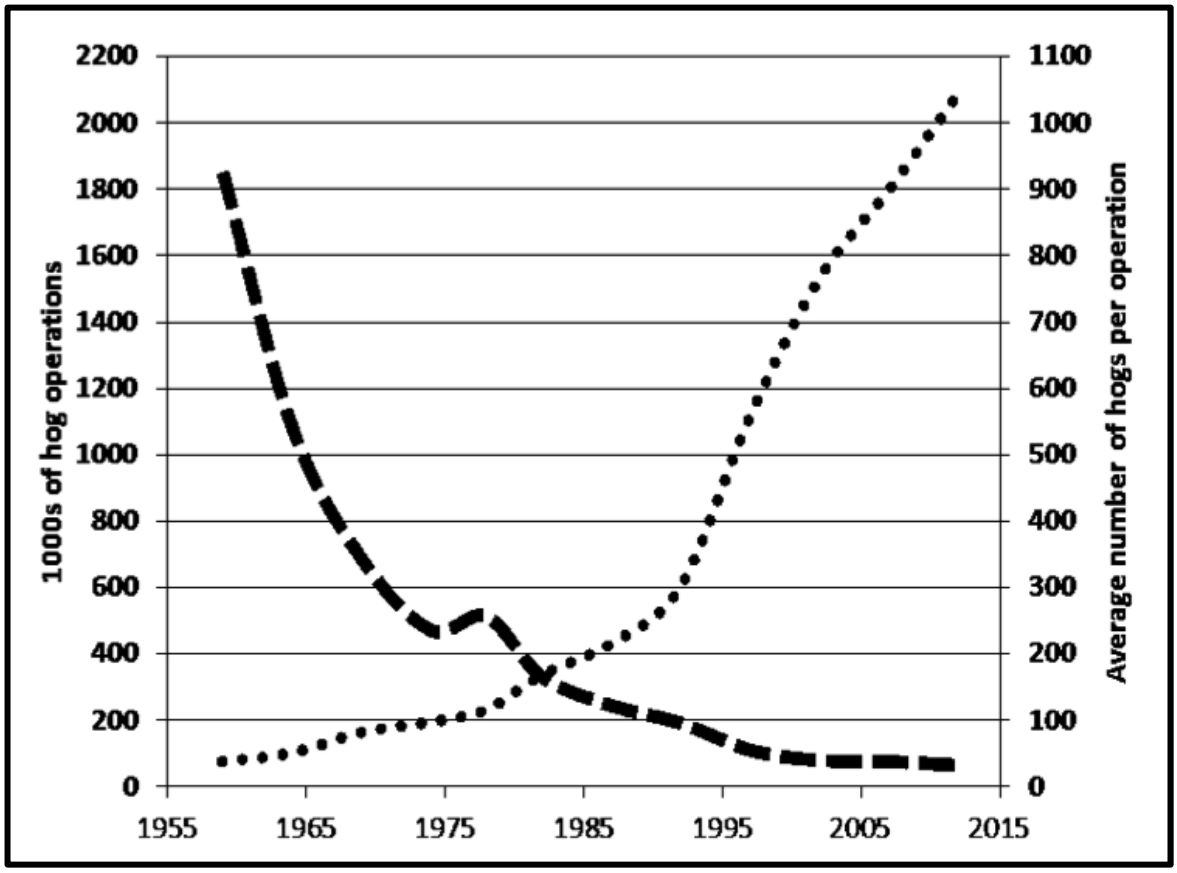
The North American sustainable foods social movement is generally agreed upon as having originated in the United States as a response to the industrial revolution. The industrial revolution likely emanated from changes in the larger socio-political context including deregulation, the liberalization of trade, the supply chain revolution, and a shift in shareholder value movement that began emphasizing outsourcing (Davis & McAdam, 2000; Gereffi, Humphrey, & Sturgeon, 2005). By some accounts, the hollowing of nation-states contributed by increasing the relative attraction of global markets and transnational corporations (Bandy & Smith, 2005; Schurman, 2004).

In 1933, amidst the industrial revolution and following the Great Depression and severe drought, the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) was created (Kolar, 2011). Initially positioned as a way to protect family farms from economic failure, the AAA ensured that farmers would receive a minimum price for their farming outputs, protecting them from the risk and instability of unforeseen economic or weather fluctuations. However, the AAA took on another significant role over time and agricultural subsidies were provided not only for family farms as an important safety net, but also for commodity farmers as well (Rausser, 1992). In particular, support from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the AAA enabled vertically integrated food-manufacturers – those with a span of direct control that includes

seed and fertilizer production and distribution as well as the growing, harvesting, processing and distribution of food goods - to purchase commodities (rice, corn, wheat, soybeans and sugar) at low prices to be used as ingredients for value-added (processed) food products.

As a result, commodity-based processed food items quickly consumed the majority of grocery store shelf space (Stevenson & Pirog, 2008). Even most of the meat and dairy found at grocery stores were based on commodity-based food products, which became the primary feed for food-producing livestock. The rise of commodity food products enabled three primary features of the current food system. First was the dramatic scaling up of livestock operations into concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), also called factory farms, to supply a growing market demand for meat and dairy. The dramatic rise of CAFOs have resulted in much different, and highly criticized, animal treatment practices and food-borne illnesses. Figure 4.1 depicts the decline in the number of hog farms from 1.85 million in 1959 to 63,000 by 2012. Over the same period, the average number of hogs per farm increased from 37 to 1,044 (USDA, 2017).

**Figure 4.1: Number of Hog Operations, Number of Hogs Per Farm (1955-2015)**




*Source: USDA 2012 U.S. Census of Agriculture (Image credit: Brent Kim, Johns Hopkins Center for a Liveable Future)*

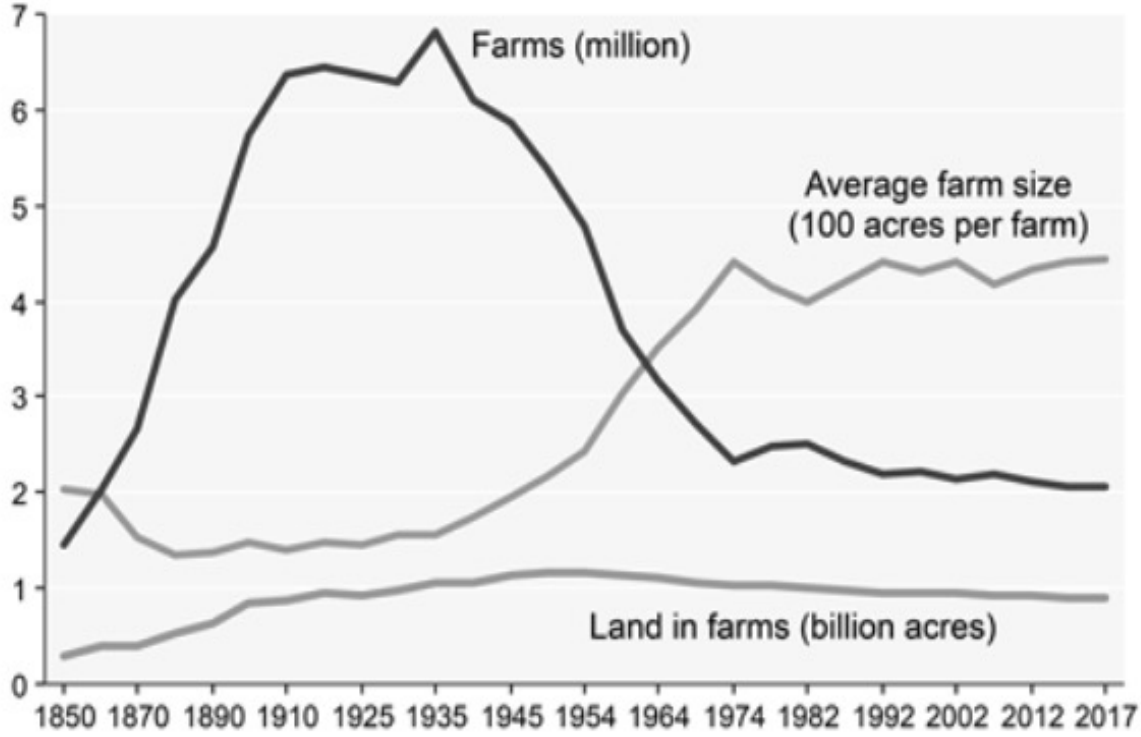
The scaling up of livestock operations also increased the popularity of eating away from home, which led to the second and third features of the current food system: the proliferation of franchised food restaurants in the 1980s (Schlosser, 2012) and the consolidation of farms (Stevenson & Pirog, 2008), both of which have significantly changed the landscape of food but with differing negative impacts. The proliferation of franchised food restaurants is implicated in several significant and negative economic, health and social changes. As most prominently illuminated by the popular book and documentary, Fast Food Nation (Schlosser, 2012), the rise of franchise restaurants is associated with a rise in jobs that offer sub-standard living wages. Fast food restaurants are also implicated in mounting healthcare issues. A popular documentary, Super Size Me (Spurlock, 2004) followed an American male who ate only at McDonald's for 30-days, incurring striking health and psychological repercussions.

Coinciding with the rise of CAFO's was the spread of the industrial model of food production that prized consolidation (Holt-Giménez & Peabody, 2008). Beginning in the 1960's, the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations funded the development and marketing of packages of hybrid seeds fertilizers and pesticides to developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This ironically coined "Green Revolution" significantly raised yields through the development of hybrid plants that responded well to dense planting, as well as to strong fertilizer and pesticide applications. The widespread adoption of these seed packages, however, along with the other main features of an efficiency- and cost-based agricultural system, was not without cost. One grave cost was a reduction in biodiversity by as much as 90 percent (Tscharntke, Klein, Kruess, Steffan-Dewenter, & Thies, 2005).

Another cost incurred by consolidation is evidenced by the rapid disappearance of small

and medium sized farms while the top 100 food and beverage firms grew to account for 77% of all packaged foods sold globally (Clapp & Scrinis, 2017). Figure 4.2 depicts how the AAA, which spurred the introduction and proliferation of CAFO's, affected the farming landscape of the U.S. by decreasing in the number of farms while increasing the size of farms.

**Figure 4.2: Farms, Land in Farms, Average Farm Size (1850-2017)**




*Source: USDA 2012 U.S. Census of Agriculture (Image credit: Brent Kim, Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future)*

Food system consolidation and commodification is pointed to as contributing to many of the world's growing environmental, health and social issues. The leading sources of water quality impacts on rivers, lakes and wetlands in the U.S. are agricultural related (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2013). The current dominant food system accounts for 19-29% of global greenhouse gas emissions (Vermeulen, Campbell, & Ingram, 2012). Fossil fuel dependence and depletion are attributed in large part to mass agriculture (Johnson, Franzluebbers, Weyers, & Reicosky, 2007).

Food security is a primary global issue (Godfray et al., 2010) evidenced by the United Nations number two sustainable development goal being to "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture" (UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2017). Foodborne illnesses are pandemic (Rocourt, Moy, Vierk, & Schlundt, 2003). The vast majority of health issues are food-related (World Health Organization, 2003), a striking predominance of which correlate with lower income levels alighting the food system with questions of social justice (Olson, 1999; Silverman et al., 2015). In summary, the world's food system is directly connected with a number of grand challenges and both directly and indirectly to nearly all of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

In response to the negative outcomes of an industrialized food system, sustainable food systems have rapidly arisen in recent years (Hendrickson & Heffernan, 2002). The term "sustainable food systems" is used interchangeably with "local food systems", "community food systems", and "regional food systems" and the consumable outputs of a local food system are most commonly referred to as "local foods". Gail Feenstra's 1997 definition of local food systems has endured as the mainstream and most often quoted definition. By her definition,

local food systems are “rooted in particular places, aim to be economically viable for farmers and consumers, use ecologically sound production and distribution practices and enhance social equity and democracy for all members of the community” (p. 28). The definition of local food systems is perhaps further understood by comparing the attributes that commonly distinguish a global food system from a local one (Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1: Attributional Differences Between "Global" and "Local"**

| GLOBAL | LOCAL |
|---|---|
| Market economy | Moral economy |
| Economics of price | Economic sociology of quality |
| Trans-national companies dominating | Independent artisan producers prevailing |
| Corporate profits | Community wellbeing |
| Large-scale production | Small-scale production |
| Industrial models | "Natural" models |
| Monoculture | Bio-diversity |
| Resource consumption and degradation | Resource protection and regeneration |
| Relations across distance | Relations of proximity |
| Big structures | Voluntary actors |
| Technocratic rules | Democratic participation |
| Homogenization of foods | Regional and cultural palates |

*Adapted from Hinrichs, 1996; Hinrichs, 2000; Lang, 1999*

From a practical perspective, local food systems aim to reduce the distance between the geographic location where food is grown and processed and the place where it is consumed thereby more directly connecting consumers with food producers. This means that, ideally, consumers know the farmers who grew their food as expressed in the “Know your farmer, know your food” marketing campaign for local foods (USDA, 2017). Organizational forms and programs that have proliferated to facilitate this connection include farmers markets, roadside stands, community gardens, urban agriculture, farm-to-school programs, processing cooperatives (food hubs) and community supported agriculture farms (CSAs).

Farmers markets, roadside stands and community gardens are likely to be widely understood, while the other aspects of sustainable food systems – urban agriculture, CSA's, farm-to-school may warrant explanation. Related to urban agriculture, the year 2007 marked a critical event in the world history because, for the first time, more than half of the world population lived in cities (Orsini, Kahane, Nono-Womdin & Gianquinto, 2013). In many developing countries, the urbanization process is concomitant with increasing urban poverty, pollution, food insecurity, unemployment, and malnutrition, particularly for children and pregnant or lactating women. Urban agriculture, which is simply the growing of food within or near cities, provides opportunities for improving food supplies, local economies, and environmental sustainability (Mougeot, 2000).

CSA farms are those in which "members" agree to pay an annual membership fee to the farm. The fee is generally paid in full during the off-season (e.g. winter) when farms most need financial capital to buy or repair equipment and to purchase seeds. In exchange for the membership fee, members receive a weekly box of vegetables based on availability throughout

the growing season. The boxes may be abundant or lean, depending on conditions, like the weather, that affect growing. In this way, members share in the risk of farming.

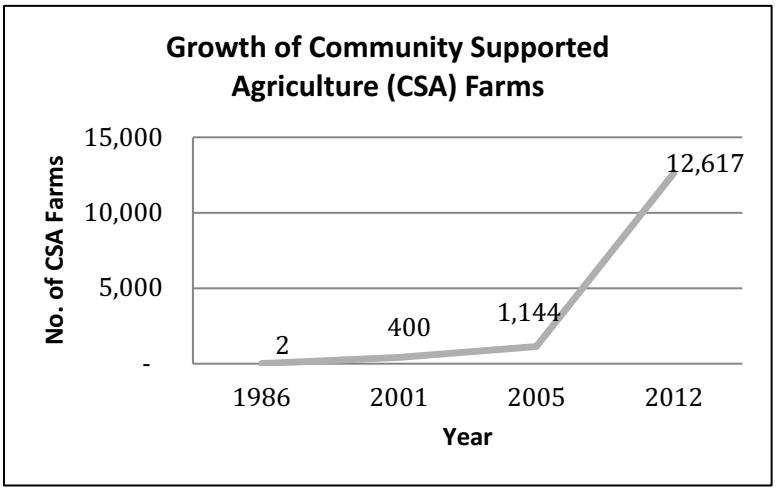
Farm-to-school programs emerged in the United States in the 1990s but grew substantially with government funding that began in 2002 (Vallianatos, Gottlieb & Haase, 2004). Farm-to-school programs connect primary students with nearby farmers. Students benefit from farm-to-school programs by gaining understanding of where food comes from, how it is grown, and making healthier food choices. Farmers benefit from farm-to-school programs by gaining access to a large market channel.

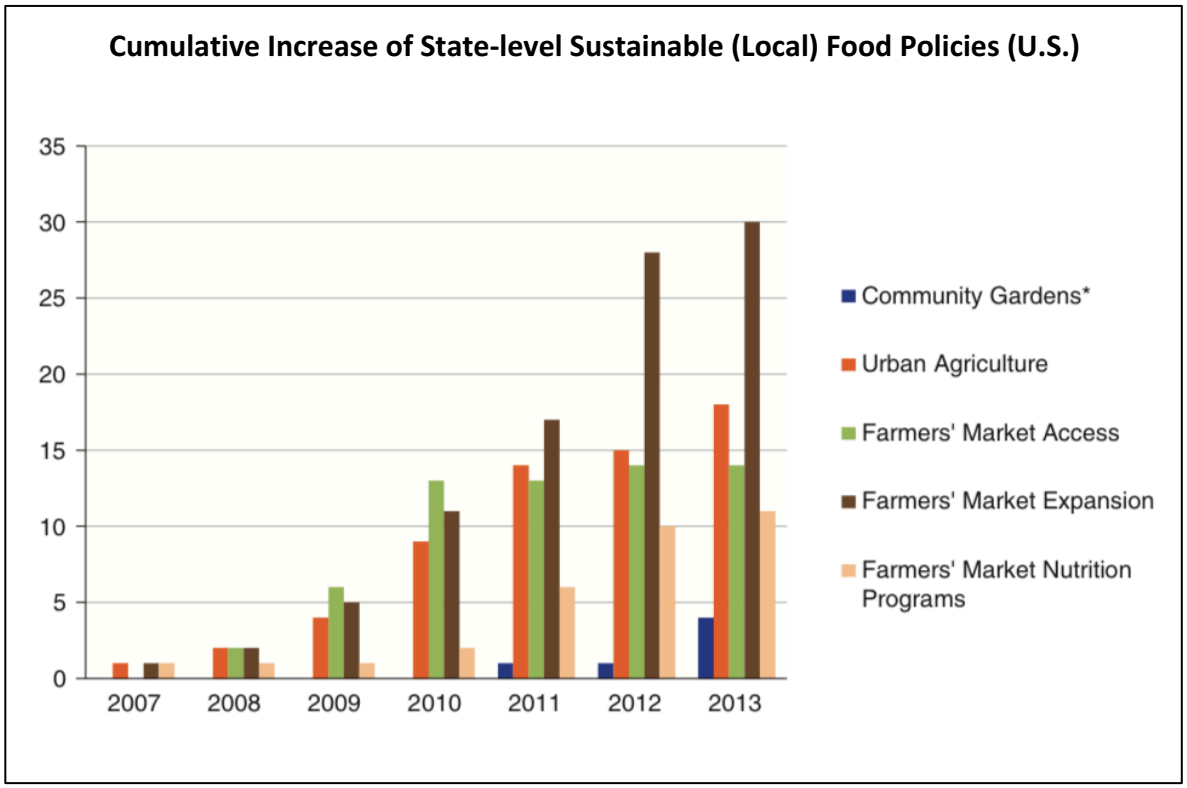
Sustainable food system prominence was signaled clearly within the United States in 2014 when the U.S. Congress mandated a report from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to document the recent and rapid growth of consumer, producer, and policymaker interest in sustainable or local foods (Low et al., 2015). A number of indicators were used to assess the growth of local food including farm operations with direct-to-consumer (DTC) sales, local food sales, farmers markets, farm-to-school programs and CSAs (Low et al., 2015; Martinez et al., 2010).

To provide examples of indicators of the emergence and growth of the sustainable food movement, the number of farms with DTC sales (e.g. farmers markets, farm or road-side stands, u-pick) increased over 22% from 2002 to 2012, comprising 7.8% of all farms in 2012 (Low et al., 2015). The number of farmers markets grew by 180 percent from 2006 to 2014. In 2012, annual local foods sales in the United States were estimated to be $6.1 billion. Farm to school programs increased from 2 in 1996 to 2,095 in 2009. Figure 5 shows that the number of CSA farms operated in the United States increased from 2 in 1986 to 12,617 in 2012. Figure 4.3

also shows another indicator of the emergence and growth of the sustainable foods movement, which is the increase of state-level laws related to local foods. In 2007, for example, only one state-level policy on farmers' market expansion had been enacted, but by 2013, the number had risen to 30 (Low et al., 2015).

**Figure 4.3: Indicators of the Emergence and Growth of the Sustainable Foods Social Movement**




Low SA, Adalja A, Beaulieu E, Key N, Martinez S, Melton A, . . . Jablonski B (2015) Trends in U.S. local and regional food systems. (No. AP-068). Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

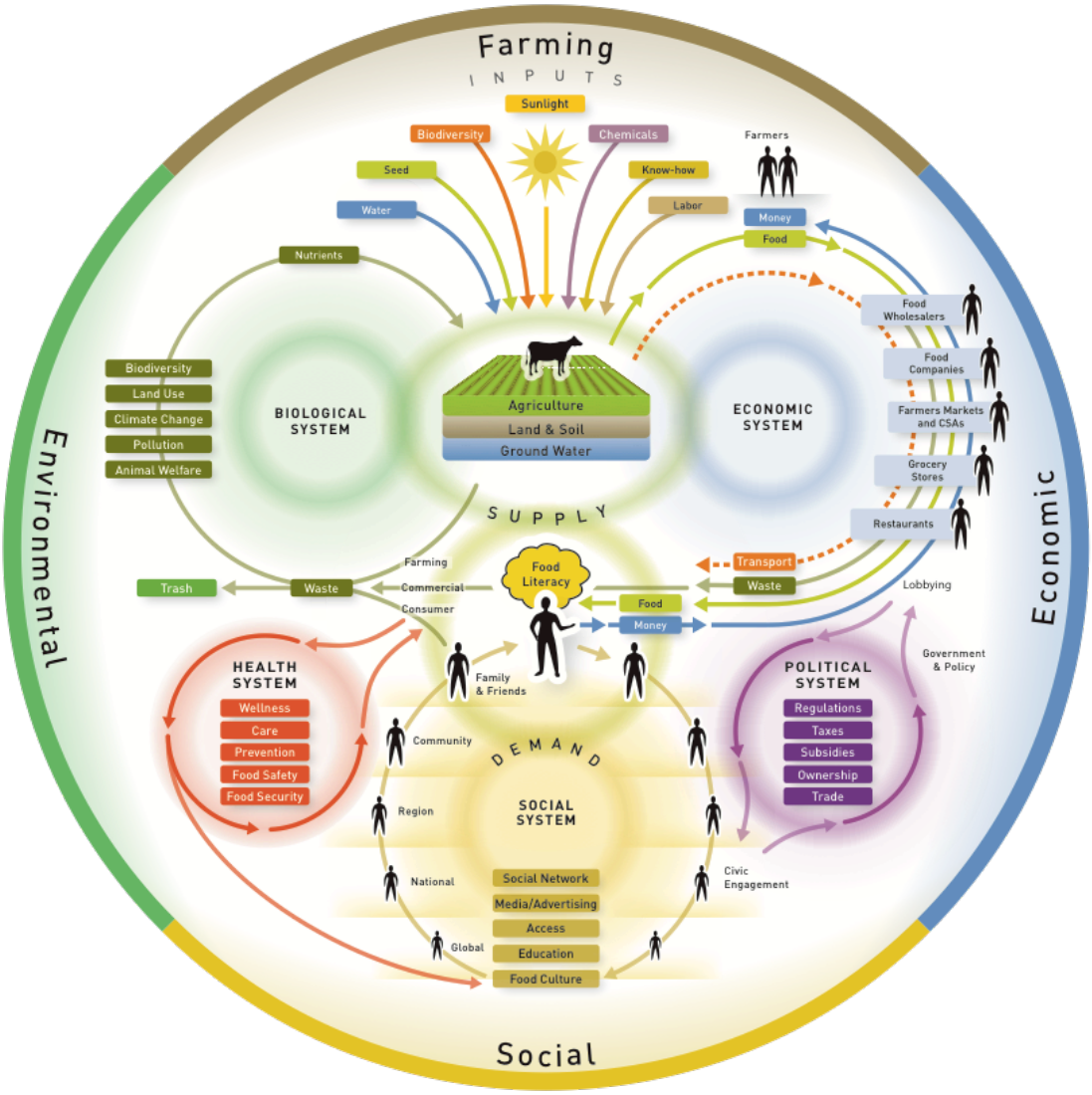
The mobilization around and spread of sustainable food ideals and practices can be understood as a social movement that purposively aims to change societal institutions and structures related to the food systems. The sustainable foods movement aims to shift ideals and practices from the current dominant industrialized and globalized foods system, which emphasizes economies of scale and which unproportionately benefits a small number of large corporations and has led to significant negative outcomes. In contrast to the ideals and practices of the industrialized food system, the sustainable foods movement aims to develop food systems that are more socially just and environmentally sustainable.

Hundreds of sustainable foods social movement organizations (SMOs) have arisen in North America the past decade (https://civileats.com/resources/ provides an example list). Some of the most prominent include the McConnell Foundation's Sustainable Food Systems, the North American Food System Network, and the Local Sustainable Food System Network. In addition to SMOs, a large number of university degree-programs have arisen related to sustainable food systems.

Despite the promise of the sustainable foods movement, along with the indicators of growth, recent research argues that the environmental, social and economic benefits of local food systems are only able to manifest as the sustainable foods movement attains an even greater level of scale (Conner, Campbell-Arvai, & Hamm, 2008; Izumi, Wright, &Hamm, 2010; Mount, 2010). Such level of scale is possible through the increased procurement of local foods by large organizations such as hospitals, universities, and conference centers, a market segment that represents over $72 billion of food purchasing power in the United States alone (Fitch & Santo, 2016).

Although organizations are motivated to support the sustainable foods movement by participating in the local foods market, organizations are finding that it is not easy to purchase more local foods. The complexity of the food system (Figure 4.4), which involves a large number of diverse but interrelated actors, makes it difficult to alter food procurement practices (Tansey & Worsley, 1995). Altering food procurement practices is also made very difficult because of the very high degree to which the field of industrialized foods is elaborated and coherent, as I elaborate upon next.

**Figure 4.4: The Multiple, Diverse Actors within the Complex Food System**




*Copied with permission from https://www.nourishlife.org/teach/food-system-tools/*

The high elaboration of the field is evidenced by the very small, but deeply established set of powerful collective actors (e.g. multi-national agricultural conglomerates, distributors and food service management companies that dominate the entire supply chain. Four giant transnational corporations dominate the raw materials of the global food system. These four corporations account for between 75% and 90% of the global grain trade. Furthermore, these four companies have strategic alliances and joint ventures with the seed and agrochemical companies that similarly dominate the agricultural inputs part of the global food system (Lawrence, 2011).

Large mainstream organizations, like the ones in my study, are typically locked into multi-year contracts with distributors and food service managers in which they are prohibited from purchasing foods outside of these contracts (i.e. purchasing direct from local providers). The field of industrialized foods is also highly elaborated through the establishment and maintenance of strong food safety regulations and multiple governance systems that enforce the food safety regulations. The high coherence of the field of industrialized foods is evidenced through the unitary logic of efficiency and profit that dominates the field.

Given the high levels of elaboration and coherence, any change to the field of industrialized foods, or to organizations embedded in the field, like changes in procurement ideals and practices, would not be predicted. Because of the complexity of the food system, along with the high level of elaboration and coherence associated with industrialized foods, change to the food system to become more sustainable is largely agreed to only possible through cross-sector collaborations (Conner et al., 2008; Goodman, DuPuis & Goodman, 2012; Levkoe, 2014; Levkeo & Wakefield, 2014).

*A Localized Instantiation of the Sustainable Foods Movement*

Amidst the larger setting of the sustainable foods movement, this study zooms in on a localized instantiation of the movement via one community's participation in the local foods moral market. In particular, the study takes place in North America at a time when the sustainable foods movement had grown large enough to spur a local foods moral market in which large mainstream organizations (including universities, hospitals and conference centers) were motivated to participate. However, reformers inside these organizations struggled on their own and with little to no success, to integrate movement practices because of the degree to which the movement-related practices conflicted with the complex and well-entrenched structures and practices.

At a time when large North American organizations had yet to figure out how to incorporate sustainable foods ideals and practices but were increasingly motivated to do so, I was provided timely access to an innovative cross-sector collaboration in which food procurement officers (food buyers) from eight large organizations began collaborating with other food system stakeholders (distributors, farmers, policy makers, researchers, and non-profits) to brainstorm how to integrate sustainable foods procurement practices into their respective organizations. Together, the food buyers represented a large public healthcare system, a private hospital system, four universities, and two conference centers. Table 4.2 provides information on the eight organizations represented by the food buyers and Table 4.3 shows a timeline for the Procurement Lab.

**Table 4.2: The Eight Food Buying Organizations in the Procurement Lab**

| Type of Organization | Date Founded | Number of Employees | Annual Budget |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hospital System 1 | 2009 | 109,000 | $21.4 Billion |
| Hospital System 2 | 2008 | 11,000 | $850 Million |
| University 1 | 1908 | 5,200<br>(37,800 students) | $1.9 Billion |
| University 2 | 1962 | 2,900<br>(86,000 students) | $380 Million |
| University 3 | 1971 | 972<br>(19,000 students) | $250 Million |
| University 4 | 1920 | 90<br>(1,000 students) | N/A |
| Conference Center 1 | 1983 | 105<br>(500,000 guests) | $44 Million |
| Conference Center 2 | 1984 | 676<br>(4,000 volunteers;<br>1.5 million guests) | $34 Million |

**Table 4.3: Sustainable Foods Procurement Lab Timeline of Key Events**

| | |
|---|---|
| *February 2014* | • First meeting; participants unanimously agree to continue to meet as a group |
| *Summer 2014* | • Awarded two-year grant from to support development of food systems innovation |
| *Fall/Winter 2014* | • Members agree to overarching goal of "creating positive community impact by getting more local foods on more local plates"<br>• Defined "local food" within the regional context<br>• Began inventorying local food products currently available through distributors or being sourced directly from producers or processors<br>• Learning resources made available: guest speakers, reports and online sources |
| *Fall 2015* | • Awarded additional 2 years of grant funding<br>• Partnered with a university on a 5-year measurement and evaluation study<br>• Began local food tours<br>• Identify priorities for next 3 years:<br>o Annual measurement and evaluation of local food procurement<br>o Recognition & celebration of accomplishments<br>o Local food products familiarization<br>o Marketing<br>o Group expansion |
| *Summer 2016* | • Created one video on the Procurement Lab and two videos on local food producers<br>• Secured matching funding to hire two research interns |
| *Fall 2016* | • Marketing toolkit created and made available<br>• First PhD intern begins facilitating the Procurement Lab (participant observation begins) |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • Twitter account and website launched<br>• Measurement and evaluation baseline research (2015) begins<br>• Economic impact assessment study contracted to a consultant<br>• "Meet the Maker" added to meetings (local vendors highlighted at each meeting) |
| *Winter 2016/2017* | • Second PhD intern begins assisting with communications and online resources<br>• Strategic planning and "strategic action map" created for 2017 and beyond with the priorities of:<br>  ○ Storytelling<br>  ○ Measurement and Evaluation<br>  ○ Coordinating Demand<br>• Measurement and evaluation 2015 baseline study completed.<br>• Members sign off on terms of reference and pledge of commitment and confidentiality |
| *Fall 2017* | • Coordinated procurement discussions begin (buying outside of distributors, connecting directly with local farmers)<br>• Procurement Lab presented at international food systems conference<br>• Recognition grows; becomes a key stakeholder for local and regional policy discussions (e.g. food hub development) |
| *2018-2019* | • Contacted by a regional government to use as role model for increasing institutional procurement of sustainable foods<br>• Procurement Lab presented at two North American food systems conferences<br>• Discussions begin for funding a value chain coordinator to build relationships across the supply chain (e.g. between institutions and farmers) |

The first Procurement Lab meeting was in February of 2014. The meeting was initiated by a former restaurateur and sustainable foods advocate, whom I refer to as 'Jackie' for anonymity. Several months prior to the Procurement Lab's first meeting, Jackie had been hired by a regional agricultural association to help develop the region's food system as a way to diversify the economy. The purpose of the initial meeting was to gauge the level of interest that existed, among the food buyers, in working together to increase the amount of sustainable foods being purchased. The first meeting ended with unanimous agreement to continue meeting and ongoing meetings were supported by a two-year food systems innovation grant. An additional two-year grant was later awarded to the Procurement Lab.

The Procurement Lab meetings took place every six weeks and lasted three hours each. Participants expressed engagement in the meetings by attending regularly. If any participants were not able to make it to a particular meeting, for instance, Procurement Lab organizers would receive an email with an apology and reason for not attending the upcoming meeting. Participants were actively engaged in the meetings to the degree that, as the facilitator, I often had to interrupt discussions in order to keep to the agenda.

The Procurement Lab's stated goal was to make a "positive community impact" by increasing the amount of locally produced foods that were purchased by each institution. All of the food buyers had at least a bachelor's degree and many had a master's degree in business (i.e. MBA). In addition, most of the buyers had earned professional credentialing related to procurement or supply chain management. Although food buyers were the focus of the collaboration, the importance of including other food system stakeholders (e.g. farmers, distributors, government representatives, non-profits and academics) was recognized due to

the complexity of the food system as well as the embeddedness in the dominant industrialized food model.

**Part 2: The Procurement Lab as an Interorganizational Relational Space**

While the first part of my dissertation findings detailed the study setting, this second part shows how the Procurement Lab served as a relational space. In this part, I first show that the food buyers were personally and professionally engaged in the broader values of the sustainable foods movement, which they interpreted as "local foods", the term that is largely used throughout the findings section. Despite personal engagement and professional intentions, however, the buyers faced significant tensions and challenges in trying to purchase more local foods on their own. Participation in the Procurement Lab, however, provided an *interorganizational relational space* that enabled the buyers to overcome these tensions through relational mobilization, which was enabled by relational efficacy, relational identity and relational framing.

*Good Intentions, Big Tensions*

When asked, during interviews, what local foods meant to each of them on a personal level, the food buyers generally responded with enthusiasm. Their faces became expressive and their body language became livelier (Field Notes).

> *Local foods is about the impact you can have in the community. What matters is animal husbandry, food safety. Social justice is important as well. Fair Trade coffee, equitably traded, ethically sourced. (Interview, Food Buyer 3)*
>
> *Local means knowing who was producing, growing, knowing who it is. I know the owner here (at the café where the interview was conducted) who is opening a roaster down the*

*street. I like knowing that. Maybe it is about the relationship. I feel like I am supporting local. In my own mind there is more of the relationship. Local evokes fresh, healthier, may be more sustainably produced. I will assume better practices, not so industrial. (Interview, Food Buyer 6)*

All but one of the food buyers expressed that they personally valued local foods for their environmental, social and economic benefits. In general, their lives were also reflective of this sense of value in local foods. Some of the buyers kept bees in their backyards for producing honey. Most of them had gardens, visited farmers markets, and were familiar with and frequented local foods restaurants.

However passionate that food buyers were about local foods in their personal lives, features of the dominant industrialized agricultural model presented significant tensions and challenges when they tried to buy local foods as part of their professional roles (see Table 4.4). Price, availability, food safety and delivery/distribution were some of the primary challenges. Illustrating these challenges, a food buyer for a hospital system told the story of purchasing meat from a local farm for a banquet and being shocked when a truck pulled up to the administrative building with the carcass of a recently butchered elk that had been divided between several large coolers. During this point of the story, the buyer lowered his head and, shaking it slowly, said that was the moment that he realized the challenges of buying local foods (Field Notes).

*We are a hospital. We have high food safety standards to comply with. We can't have a carcass show up in coolers, delivered in the back of a regular truck…Twelve years ago was an attempt to buy local but from the farmers market. The gap was too large. The*

*carcass was the exclamation point on the thought that this just isn't going to work despite good intentions. (Interview, Food Buyer)*

*Twelve years ago was an attempt to buy local but from the farmers market. The gap was too large. The carcass was the exclamation point on the thought that this just isn't going to work despite good intentions. (Interview, Food Buyer)*

**Table 4.4: Tensions Related to the Institutional Procurement of Local Foods**

| LOCAL GROWERS/PRODUCERS | BUYERS |
|---|---|
| Need price point to survive | Need price point to compete |
| Lack of processing, ordering and distribution | Require efficient ordering & distribution |
| Limited growing season | Year round need |
| Food safety certification too expensive | Food safety certification required |
| Experiences power imbalance | Does not see power imbalance |
| Size sensitive (lacks volume) | Pushes growth (requires volume) |
| Emphasis on environment, social values | Emphasis on economic values |

While local growers and producers need to set prices at levels that allow for business survival, they are competing with the economies of scale that corporate farms are able to achieve through vertical integration and inexpensive labor.

> *We sold to grocery stores and it was so rough. Wouldn't get paid for six weeks and wouldn't know the price we'd get until we got paid. They found one worm in a truckload of cabbage and they dumped (the whole truckload) in our lawn. It's painful. You are competing with Mexico. (Interview, Farmer)*

Processing, delivery and distribution presented another set of tensions. Small and medium sized farms often focus on growing and often cannot afford processing and delivery, while working through a distributor means a loss of already thin margins. Institutions, on the other hand, are accustomed to purchasing processed (e.g. chopped onions) or value-added (e.g. pasta sauce) food items. Institutions, on the other hand, are not able to handle a large number of incoming small deliveries each day.

Along these lines, the process of order placement for local foods presented another challenge. Institutions are typically bound to multi-year contracts with large, multi-national food distributors, which provides the convenience of placing a single order for food requirements and having the order show up in a single delivery. Food distributors also provide important food safety reassurance for the food buyers that all of the food they delivered met food safety standards. When buying local foods, on the other hand, institutions have to find each individual supplier, ensure they meet food safety standards, set them up in the institution's vendor system and arrange for delivery. Buying local foods also means placing a large number of small orders.

*All the (local foods) literature was about the local chef that picks up ingredients at the farmers market on Saturday and makes meals with it all week. We make thousands of meals a day and can't do that. So there was a real disconnect at the beginning, even in the first meetings that we had. People coming to the meetings were farmers and [institutional food buyers] and there was a big gap in the middle, which is the systems and processes that would allow us to even consider using the products from safety and delivery standpoints. So there were barriers. Back then I felt guilty like we were doing the wrong thing because even if we tried, we could not get (local growers) in the door. (Interview, Food Buyer)*

*There are certain barriers. They are so used to ordering from [a large distributor] and there are things that I can't do that [the distributor] does, like have broccoli available every week of the year. People understand but they don't know how to make it work and it takes extra effort. (Interview, Farmer)*

Additional tensions added to the challenging relationships between institutions and local producers. Producers generally valued the environmental, social and economic aspects of being small to medium enterprises while institutions were generally constrained by a focus on the economic aspects of food purchasing. The misalignment in values and practices, along with availability of imported food, presented a power imbalance between institutions and local food producers.

*Growers were really getting squeezed pricewise. Wholesalers called the shots. You had to deliver what they wanted, when they wanted and at the price they wanted and they could refuse it when you got there. Cabbage price was something one week and the next*

*week something different. (Older) growers told the young guys that this is not the way to go. (Interview, Farmer)*

In summary, the institutional food buyers were personally passionate about local foods and, from a personal perspective, were generally aware of the social, environmental and economic reasons for purchasing local foods. However, they also grappled with the significant tensions and challenges involved in adopting local foods purchasing practices, despite their good intentions.

*Dealing With Tensions and Challenges: The Role of the Procurement Lab*

Working alone, individual food buyers were frustrated by the gaps they encountered between what they desired (to integrate the sustainable foods movement) and what was pragmatic. The Procurement Lab was instrumental in overcoming the food buyer's lack of efficacy by providing an interorganizational relational space that convened different positions related to the food system. The relational space was enabled through the intentional and specific ways that Jackie, the founder of the Procurement Lab formulated or designed the Lab. The relational space of the Procurement Lab enabled *relational efficacy, relational identity* and *relational framing,* which in turn enabled *relational mobilizing (Kellogg, 2009).* Next, I detail the ways that the Procurement Lab served as an interorganizational space.

*Setting the Stage for an Interorganizational Relational Space*

The Procurement Lab's founder, Jackie, was well aware of the challenges of buying local foods through her previous experience as a restaurant owner. Jackie also envisioned the positive economic, environmental and social impacts that moving through these challenges and scaling up the local foods system would have on the community. In her words,

*My vision was about a resilient community with a well-developed food system. The (food buyers) provided the purchasing volume and predictability to help grow that. (Interview, Procurement Lab Coordinator)*

Jackie had intentionally designed the Procurement Lab by combining several approaches to community development and leadership that she had accumulated:

*The formation of the Procurement Lab was influenced by a few things: my experience with the BALLE leadership, my knowledge and understanding of community organizing principles that are promoted by the Industrial Areas Foundation, [the Procurement Lab's co-facilitator's] experience with Art of Hosting, the work of Meg Wheatley on emergence was also a key focus, and Deborah Frieze was a core part of shaping the BALLE experience. …We also had the opportunity to work with several experts in the non-profit sector, including Heather Macleod Grant. …My work was also influenced by David Korten and his work on A New Economy. Authors that have substantially shaped my thinking are Michael Shuman and Stacy Mitchell.*

The commonality between the groups and individuals that provided theorization for how Jackie constructed the Procurement Lab is a strong value against capitalism and towards the development of a new economic form to prioritize social and environmental values. For example, BALLE (The Business Alliance for Local Living Economies, 2019):

*represents thousands of communities and conveners, entrepreneurs, investors and funders who are defying business as usual* with the mission *to create local economies that…create healthy, equitable communities.*

The Industrial Areas Foundation's measure of success was the extent to which:

*organizations contribute to human flourishing in communities where human development is often devalued and human dignity trampled. These successes, when they occur, take the form of imaginative responses to seemingly intractable problems, new relationships overcoming racial, religious and socio-economic divisions and immediate, concrete victories that change communities for the better and inspire hope in the future* (Industrial Areas Foundation, 2019).

The Art of Hosting is "an approach to leadership that scales up from the personal to the systemic using personal practice, dialogue, facilitation and the co-creation of innovation to address complex challenges" (Art of Hosting, 2019). The Art of Hosting focuses on making personal (versus professional) connections among participants. Foundational elements of this facilitation style include the physical arrangement of meetings and the way they start and end. Participants sit in a close circle, sometimes on the floor and not wearing shoes. Pieces of paper and colored markers and crayons are in the middle of the circle encouraging creativity and spontaneity (Figure 4.5). Meetings began by "opening the circle" in which the facilitator asks a personal question that each participant answers out loud. Meetings end similarly by "closing the circle".

**Figure 4.5: Art of Hosting Meeting Arrangement**

*Photo Source: https://www.artofhosting.org/. Copyright reprint permission granted through https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/legalcode*

The Art of Hosting facilitation was not chosen because it was natural for participants. Conversely, a grant report on the Procurement Lab's milestones shows how unnatural this facilitation style was for Procurement Lab participants:

> *Facilitation that supports group development has been essential to the group progress. [Art of Hosting] facilitation process has been utilized and despite resistance, or clear discomfort, has been effective in moving the core of the participants to think like a "group" rather than a collection of individuals. We are still working on developing trust and going a bit deeper, but that will come with time. In general, the "business" people in the room are a little uncomfortable with the facilitation style, but it has been an effective tool.*

Another way that Jackie facilitated the Procurement Lab in serving as a relational space was by fostering personal connections not just between Procurement Lab members but also between Procurement Lab members and local food vendors who were not members of the Procurement Lab. Jackie fostered these personal connections by inviting vendors to Procurement Lab meetings to introduce their foods in what were called 'Meet the Maker' sessions. Jackie also brought Procurement Lab members to vendor locations in what she called 'local foods tours'. In arranging these face-to-face interactions between vendors and Procurement Lab members, Jackie encouraged the vendors to tell their personal stories behind their food businesses.

On one of the local foods tours, for example, the tour bus carrying members of the Procurement Lab stopped at a sausage producer. The bus had driven over an hour, transporting Procurement Lab members from their corporate spaces within an urban

setting to the outskirts of the city limits, passing miles of open fields and wooded areas, finally making its way down a dirt road to the vendor's location. It was a rainy day, and many of the Procurement Lab members, not used to being outside in the course of their workdays, much less on a farm, had failed to bring appropriate clothing and umbrellas. Sloshing through muddy areas, accompanied by the mooing of cows that were visible from the bus, Procurement Lab members made their way inside a small building attached to the vendor's home.

Inside, the vendors, a husband and wife team, relayed how they had left Germany to start a new life in the "land of opportunity", but had experienced disappointment, in their new country, of not being able to find authentic German sausages. They explained how they turned their disappointment into a business opportunity, despite not having had any experience in farming or making sausages, much less any experience in the food industry. The vendors explained to the Procurement Lab members how every aspect of their sausage business was grounded in their German values. They used only high quality ingredients. They developed strong relationships with area farmers, eventually sourcing the majority of their sausage ingredients from nearby farms, where they could be assured of good animal husbandry practices.

The Procurement Lab members were walked through the vendor's food safety processes and could see the gleaming stainless steel surfaces and well-organized spaces. Procurement Lab members met two women employees who had worked to make and package sausages for over ten years. The women had been stay-home mothers until their children had grown, at which point they came to work for the sausage vendors.

Another example of the personal interactions and relations enabled by the Procurement Lab is of a samosa vendor who introduced her samosas to Procurement Lab members during one of the Meet the Maker parts of a Procurement Lab meeting. The owner and her daughter who accompanied her wore traditional African clothing and their packaging reflected African colors and symbols. The vendor told Procurement Lab members how poor they were when they came to this country and how the only way she could make enough money to feed her family was to use a traditional recipe to make samosas that she sold to neighbors. Eventually, she began selling her samosa at a farmers market. Thanks to a government program to support small food enterprises, she explained, she was able to grow her business by purchasing industrial equipment and a renting a small manufacturing space. As Procurement Lab members listened to the vendor's story and details of the food safety licenses that she had obtained, they sampled samosas spiced with curry, cayenne and turmeric.

Similar to Kellogg's relational spaces, in which personal connections were a significant component, the Procurement Lab's founder, Jackie, intentionally created the Procurement Lab to foster such personal connections. Jackie fostered personal connections through the facilitation framework that she selected for the lab. She also by fostering personal connections between Procurement Lab members and local vendors by incorporating Meet the Maker sessions into Procurement Lab Meetings and by organizing local foods tours to bring Lab members to vendors.

*Interorganizational Relational Efficacy.* Through the provision, by the Procurement Lab, of an interorganizational relational space, interorganizational relational efficacy was enabled.

Interorganizational relational efficacy is the collective identification, among organizations in my case, of practice-related problems and jointly negotiating solutions. Relational efficacy was provided by the Procurement Lab by giving participants the sense that, what each of them were unable to do individually because of the complexity of the food system and the different inter-related actors involved, might be possible in collaboration with other food buyers and related stakeholders.

For example, the food buyers had a difficult time connecting with local food vendors, and when they did, they were often unable to purchase from the local vendors because of issues related to food safety assurances or delivery. The buyers were not able to overcome these issues on their own. However, by presenting their problems at Procurement Lab meetings, the buyers were supported in buying more local foods by distributors who, because of the Lab, made greater efforts to diversify what they made available to buyers by signing contracts with more local food vendors. Furthermore, upon hearing problems with food safety, the government agents who were members of the Procurement Lab developed a series of food safety workshops for vendors and begin working on policy changes to make food safety regulations more 'scale-specific', meaning that small vendors would not have to comply with all of the food safety regulations that a large international food company had to comply with.

The effect of relational efficacy was evidenced by the extent of voluntarily participation in the Procurement Lab. When asked why the food buyers would volunteer time out of their busy schedules to participate in meetings for the past four years, Marshall, the initial coordinator of the Procurement Lab, stated:

*It's because the buyers know that they cannot do this alone. It's bigger than what the*

*buyers can do on their own. They know that the only way to do this is to work together with others (Field Notes).*

*Inter-organizational Relational Identity.* Through the relational space created by the Procurement Lab, relational identity was also enabled, which is the development of a new sense of self that is based on a collective identity in which reformers see themselves in relation to other reformers and in relation to a greater, collective purpose. The Procurement Lab enabled the food buyers' identity to become embedded into the larger system of meaning, at the community-level. Although the food buyers were personally enthusiastic about local foods prior to joining the Procurement Lab, the Lab enabled the food buyers to see themselves as part of the larger community in which their roles connected to issues like food insecurity, food waste and even homelessness.

A collective, relational identity was not initially present among Procurement Lab members. Several interviewees repeated the same story, which came to be known as the "carrot story". The story goes back to the first Procurement Lab meeting, when attendees were asked whether or not they perceived value in continuing to meet. In response, one food buyer said, *"I'll come to meetings but I absolutely will not tell anyone what I pay for carrots."* This statement refers to the high level of guardedness and competitiveness that was typical among food buyers. A competitive advantage for the buyers had been to closely hold information related to vendors, including amounts purchased and pricing. Interestingly, this story was told over and over, by many different Procurement Lab members, and always with laughter. The telling and re-telling of the "carrot story" seemed to exemplify, to the Procurement Lab members, how very far they had progressed in fostering collaboration in place of competition.

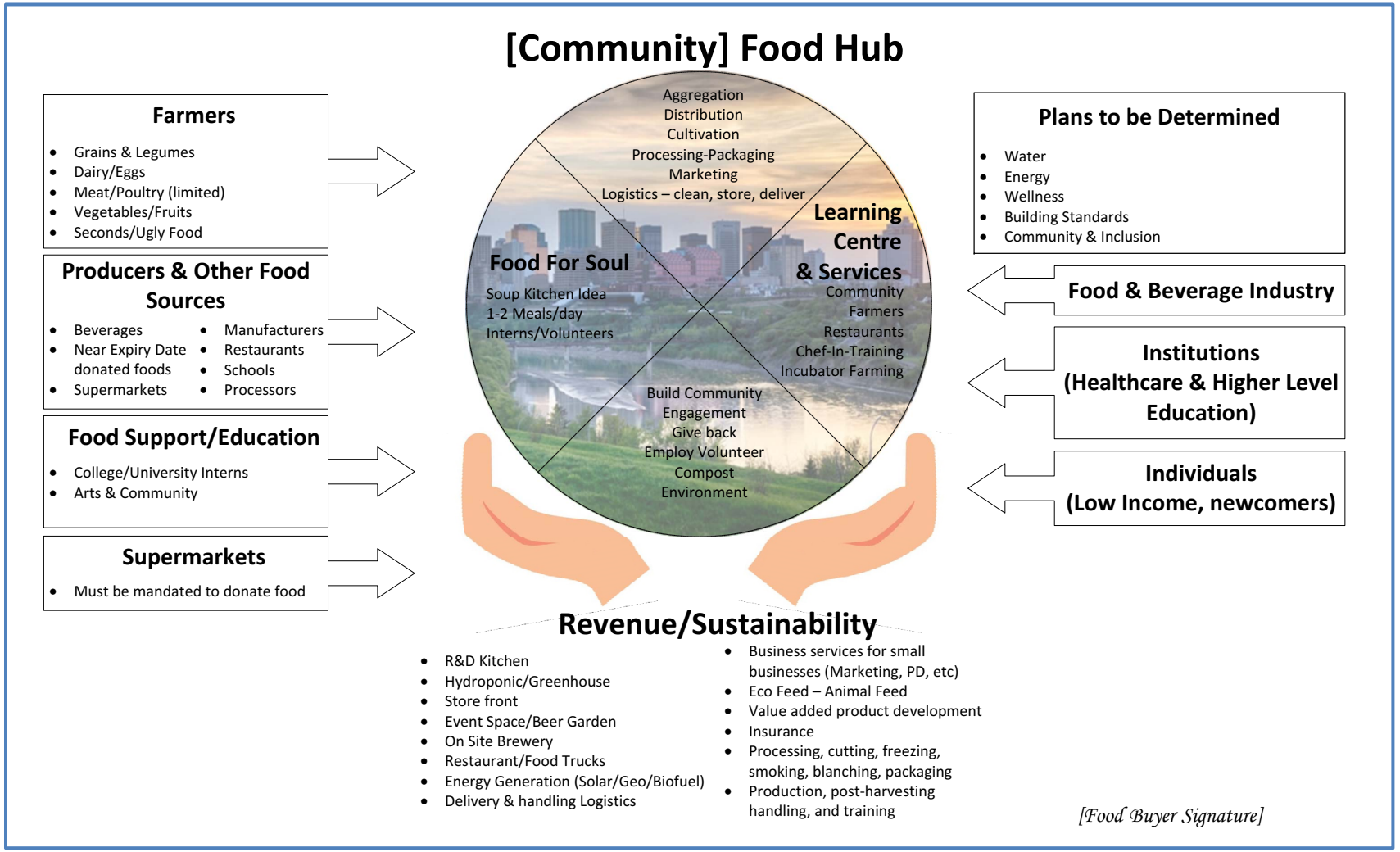
The buyers, along with the other Procurement Lab members, came to see themselves as a unit, as having a collective identity in working together to develop a more sustainable food system.

While the above example illustrates the relational identity that was fostered among Procurement Lab members, relational identity was also fostered among Lab members and the larger community. In other words, Procurement Lab members came to view their identities as not just a part of the Lab but, in turn, as part of the larger community. An example of this is when one of the Procurement Lab members, food buyer of a large health system met with a city counsellor to advocate for the creation of a food hub. A food hub would make more local food available for purchase by institutions by aggregating supply from small farms and providing processing, liability insurance, distribution and food safety certifications. However, forward movement on a food hub had been mired in municipal politics. This particular city councillor's initiative related to developing a robust local foods economy. He had heard of the Procurement Lab and knew that evidence of significant demand, by large community institutions, would bolster his efforts.

At the meeting, the food buyer unexpectedly produced a complex diagram of the community's food system (Figure 4.6). The diagram placed the institutional procurement of food within a larger community system making the non-intuitive connection between institutional procurement and social welfare within the community. The buyer proposed that the food hub could also serve as an upscale 'soup kitchen' to provide the community's homeless population with food, as well as with a sense of dignity and connectedness. The buyer's vision for a food hub also included workplace training to help homeless individuals transition to employment.

Immediately after the meeting, the buyer animatedly explained to me how if it weren't for fragile conditions outside of his control (e.g. getting laid off, becoming mentally ill, incurring a trauma that could induce substance addiction, depression, etc.) he could just as easily be homeless. "*Except for the grace of God*," he said, "*there go I*," referring to a Bible verse. Because of this view, he explained that he was drawn to do what he could, particularly within his professional role, to support others who had not been as fortunate, to no fault of their own, and ended up homeless. He explained that the inclusion of non-profit organizations in the Procurement Lab made him begin to think about possibilities for how his role in institutional food procurement could serve the greater community, particularly related to food insecurity and homelessness (Field Notes).

**Figure 4.6: Vision of a Community Food Hub by Buyer**



Relational identity was further developed as the Procurement Lab garnered increased attention. The Procurement Lab was considered novel and even exciting, given the growing awareness of the importance of institutions in developing sustainable food systems and the challenges that institutions faced is purchasing more local foods. For instance, after being presented at conferences, the Procurement Lab was a focal point of much interest and praise. The Lab was also the subject of a special issue of a national food systems journal on institutional procurement. Additionally, local and regional government members of the Lab touted the Procurement Lab within their organizations and to peer organizations. As a result, the Lab became a key stakeholder for input related to policy and urban development related to sustainable food systems. Furthermore, a government body from a different region asked for more details about the Procurement Lab because they had been trying, unsuccessfully, to develop a similar initiative. The acclaim of the Lab, combined with individual's identification within a larger system of meaning, created a sense of relational identity.

*Inter-organizational Relational Framing.* Of particular interest within the findings is how the interorganizational relational space provided by Procurement Lab enabled individuals to frame and tailor the broader social movement into their organizations in ways that they were seemingly unable to individually. The attention and accolades received by the Procurement Lab seemed to have created something of a "shield of legitimacy" by which all of the Lab's activities were perceived in positive light, by themselves as well as by others, regardless of whether or not the Procurement Lab influenced substantial practice changes or the degree to which the Lab filtered the broad movement values of environmental, social and economic benefit down to just economic benefit.

One of the first aspects of the Procurement Lab that caught my attention, for example, was not so much what was said, but what was missing when Lab members discussed local foods. I was struck by omissions of concern for issues of environmental sustainability, animal welfare, social justice or food security that were associated with the larger movement. This omission was most evident in the definition of local foods that the Procurement Lab created, which reframed the social movement definition by filtering out all but economic values. Figure 4.5 depicts how the broad social movement related to sustainable foods involves attention to all three dimensions of sustainability – economic, environmental, and social. As the figure also depicts, the Lab's definition of sustainable foods places attention only on the economic dimension.

| Source | Definitions of Local and Sustainable Foods | Definition Values | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *ENV* | *SOC* | *ECON* |
| *National Good Food Network* | Together we will build on years of grassroots efforts and move closer to a new food system that rewards **sustainable production**, **treats growers and workers fairly**, and **improves the health** of families and the **wealth** of communities with healthy, green, fair, **affordable** food. | | | |
| *McConnell Foundation* | Food systems that create vibrant local **economies**, ensure **environmental sustainability** and contribute to **health and wellbeing** for all people. | | | |
| *FLEdGE* | **Socially just**, support local **economies**, **ecologically regenerative,** foster **citizen engagement.** | | | |
| *Growing Food Connections* | Food production, processing, distribution, consumption and post-consumer waste disposal are all integrated to enhance the **environmental, economic, social and nutritional health** of a particular place and its inhabitants. | | | |
| *Michigan State University, Center for Regional Food Systems* | Our vision is a thriving **economy, equity and sustainability** for Michigan, the country and the planet through food systems rooted in local regions and centered on food that is healthy, green, fair and affordable. | | | |
| *Metro Vancouver Regional Food System* | A **sustainable, resilient** and **healthy** food system that will contribute to the well-being of all residents and the **economic prosperity** of the region while conserving our **ecologica**l legacy. | | | |
| *Local Food Procurement Group* | Two of the following must be based in the region:<br><br>- Ingredients<br>- Processing<br>- Business ownership | | | |

**Table 4.5: Definitional Values of Local Foods**

The Procurement Lab's definition of local foods required that two of the following three criteria be met: regionally owned, regionally grown, and regionally processed. The definition thus allowed for a highly processed, unhealthy food item made with imported ingredients to count as a local food as long as it is processed in a regionally located facility with at least 50% regional ownership. Below is an example, from my field notes, of the types of "local" foods the Lab's definition allowed for.

> *Today, the Procurement Lab toured a "local" producer that processed canola oil. The processor is a massive international producer. I took photos showing that the majority of product in the warehouse was labelled in Chinese for export there. I also took photos of the food labels for items like margarine and non-dairy whipped cream, which contained a long list of chemicals. (Field Notes)*

I found it particularly interesting that early Procurement Lab documents included the full breadth of the values associated with sustainable foods. Meeting minutes from initial Lab meetings recorded member statements about what they wanted to accomplish through the Lab:

- *Healthy competition between institutions can accelerate progress on sustainability initiatives*
- *Value of local is not just bottom line*
- *Local has many definitions*

Early meeting minutes also included the following marketing content for the Procurement Lab:

*Going local has never been easier. Getting involved with the Sustainable Foods Procurement Lab shows a commitment to strengthening your community, while also offering consumers the choices they are looking for.*

*Specifically We Are Committed To:*

- *Diversity – increasing the variety of (regional) products on menus*
- *Impact – creating economic opportunity within (regional) rural and urban communities*
- *Communication – sharing the story of (regional) food producers and processors*
- *Measurement – developing ways to measure and track local food purchasing*
- *Transparency and Traceability - making sure you know where your foods come from*
- *Food Safety – ensuring our food is grown, prepared and served with appropriate food safety standards*
- *Collaboration – working with partners to increase our collective impact*
- *Sustainability – ensuring our food system is economically viable, environmentally sustainable and socially just*

From these initial meeting minutes and marketing content, it is apparent that there was, early on and at some level, awareness among members of the Procurement Lab that local foods entailed broader values and benefits than just economic one. Yet, the definition of local foods that was finally agreed upon by the Procurement Lab focused only on the economic values and benefits.

In addition to being struck by the definition of local foods that the Procurement Lab agreed upon, I was also struck, during data gathering and analysis, of the lack of contestation

regarding the Procurement Lab's definition, or framing, of local foods. When specifically asked about the difference between how the buyers personally defined local foods, which aligned with the broader movement, and how the Procurement Lab defined local foods, the buyers responded that they had to come up with a definition that made it practical to purchase local foods. It seems that the relational space created by the Procurement Lab enabled a relational framing of the local foods movement, in which agreement and harmony within the group were given priority over a framing of local foods that would have kept all of the locavore movement values intact.

For example, when pressed to explain the process of how the Procurement Lab's definition was agreed upon, Jackie and several lab members said that it happened very easily; once the definition was proposed, everyone readily agreed. Two of the food buyers stated that, although the definition wasn't what they would have preferred, they did not feel comfortable expressing disagreement.

> *A Procurement Lab member from the sustainable food working group at the university's sustainability office commented that the Lab does not consider any aspects of local foods except the economic aspects. I asked her if she had ever brought this up at the meetings and she said that she did a little early on but didn't want to seem oppositional. (Field Notes)*

Relational framing also seemed to have been enabled not just through relational agreements among members, but also as relational agreements between the Procurement Lab as a whole and the larger community. For example, it is unlikely that any one of the food buyers, on his or her own, would have been able to craft this same definition of local foods

without having garnered criticism from stakeholders (i.e. non-profits, customers, students), particularly because this definition served as a basis for tailoring practices as I subsequently detail. However, it seems that it is because of the Procurement Lab's innovative nature, the attention and accolades it received that the Lab's definition of local foods, and perhaps the strength of the group, the Procurement Lab's filtered definition of local foods was not at all openly questioned by members of the Lab or by others, both inside and outside the community. I refer to this as a 'shield of legitimacy' that was enabled by the Lab. The Procurement Lab's definition of local foods, as well as what was considered 'local' under this definition, did not once come under scrutiny. Rather, the Lab was only showered with praise for its uniqueness and innovativeness.

In summary, the relational space created by Jackie, the Procurement Lab's founder, was instrumental in creating a motivational sense of relational efficacy as well as a sense of relational identity in which Lab members experienced a sense of belonging and of being part of something greater than their individual organizational roles. At face value, these mechanisms are positive. However, as my findings show, these mechanisms also lent to relational framing, whereby the Procurement Lab members collectively defined local foods in a way that decoupled their actions from the full values of the sustainable, or locavore, social movement. The Procurement Lab's filtered definition of local foods, while clearly representative of decoupling, was also beneficial for the Lab in that it enabled the Lab to have an agreed upon definition with which to create and implement local food procurement initiatives. As members had indicated, the lack of an agreed upon definition was a prominent early challenge or barrier for the Procurement Lab.

*Interorganizational Relational Mobilization.* Together, the relational efficacy, relational identity and relational framing that were enabled by the interorganizational relational space of the Procurement Lab, in turn enabled *relational mobilization* or cross-organizational, collective resource building. The Procurement Lab's collective nature resulted in a large number of resources for developing the local foods market in and around the Lab's community. In addition to coordinating the Meet the Maker sessions and the local foods tours that connected Procurement Lab members with local vendors, familiarizing them with farms and processing facilities, the Lab also developed and made available a large list of local food vendors. Additionally, time was allocated during each Procurement Lab meeting for food buyers to share practice changes that had helped them purchase more local foods.

The innovative nature of the lab, and the fact that it represented a large amount of annual food buying power also enabled the buyers, along with the other stakeholders in the Procurement Lab, in having a collective voice with which to lobby for physical infrastructure to allow for the increased procurement of local foods including a food hub, food safety certification support for vendors, and motivation for distributors to carry more local food items. For example, the food buyers from the Procurement Lab were asked, by city counsellors, to help advocate for the development of a food hub that would enable small farmers to sell to large institutions like hospitals, universities and conference centers.

As news of the Procurement Lab spread throughout the community, the Lab bolstered the large number of local food initiatives that had been either floundering or lacking in effectiveness. For example, the municipal food policy council had been formed eight years prior to the Procurement Lab and had struggled to achieve any real traction in developing the

community's local food system. The council received little funding and connection to government decision-makers and were in the position of passively waiting for the city to ask for their input. The Procurement Lab, however, gave the food policy council leverage with which to take a more active stance in forwarding the city's food strategy. Because of the large amount of spending dollars represented by the Procurement Lab and the Lab's desire, yet difficulty, in purchasing more local foods, the council was provided with legitimacy for its initiatives. Consequently, the food policy council gained greater visibility within the administration of the municipality. High-level city representatives began to participate in every food policy council meeting, bringing in guest speakers from the city's administration and connecting the food policy council to the city's larger sustainability and economic growth plans.

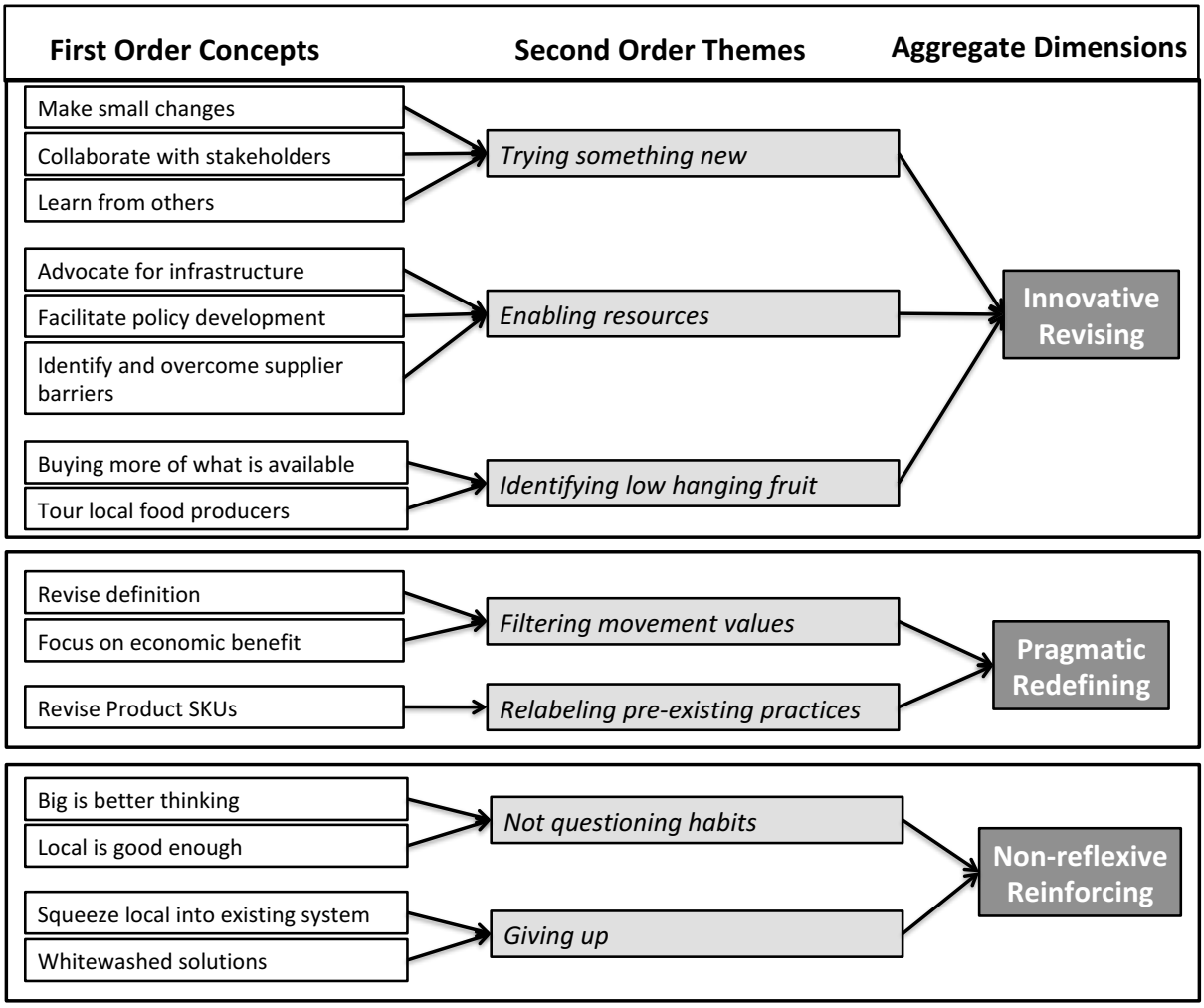
To summarize part two of my findings, the Procurement Lab served as a relational space that enabled relational efficacy, relational identification and relational framing. Together, these enabled the relational mobilization of resources. Next, in part three of my findings, I document the *outcomes* of the Procurement Lab in serving as a relational space that was situated between the sustainable foods social movement and the organizations trying to construct a localized settlement of the local foods market that resulted from the movement.

**Part 3: Shaping the Ways Food Buyers Tailored Sustainable Foods Into Their Organizations**

The focus of the findings, thus far, have been on *how* the Procurement Lab moderated between the sustainable foods movement and organizational insiders by serving as an interorganizational relational space. I suggested that this occurred through relational efficacy, relational identity and relational framing, which enabled relational mobilization. I now turn my focus *to what effects* the Procurement Lab, as an interorganizational relation space had. In

other words, what outcomes did the Procurement Lab, as a relational space, enable? My findings show that, through the Procurement Lab, the food buyers were able to construct a localized settlement of the sustainable foods social movement. The buyers created this localized settlement in three primary ways, through *innovative revising, pragmatic redefining, and non-reflexive reinforcing* (Figure 4.7). Next, I detail each of these three ways.

**Figure 4.7: Innovative Revising, Pragmatic Redefining, Non-reflexive Reinforcing**



*Innovative Revising*

One of the thematic ways that the food buyers integrated the sustainable foods movement – *innovative revising* – represented meaningful practice change. Innovative revising occurred in three ways: *trying something new, enabling resources* and *identifying low hanging fruit*. *Trying something new* involved making small changes. Enabling resources involved advocating for local foods infrastructure and support. Lastly, identifying low hanging fruit refers to the ways in which the food buyers focused on easy wins in buying more local foods.

In trying something new, the buyers made small changes. One of these small changes was to dedicate a small amount of total food purchases towards local foods. For one of the food buyers, this meant that the ingredients for their weekly buffets could be locally sourced. Because the items in the buffets did not need to be consistent from week to week, the food buyer had the leniency of being able to purchase the produce that available from a nearby farmer.

> *People understand but they don't know how to make it work and it takes extra effort. So I built a relationship with (the food buyer) where he bought ten shares of our CSA and I just text him on Tuesday and tell him what I have and he picks three or four items and we bring him a larger amount. The volume and price work. And they have a large budget so he's just shifted a small percentage of his budget towards us. I think he spent $8,000 over the season and it's easy and convenient. He used our veggies in his buffet. (Interview, Farmer)*
>
> *We buy the produce for our buffets from the Green Basket Farm CSA program. It has*

*worked really well for the past two years. (Interview, Food Buyer 6)*

Another example of trying something new is how a university food buyer made a small change by purchasing locally sourced tea for the on-campus convenience store. Another university buyer replaced a national brand of ice cream with a local gelato, resulting in a large sales increase.

Food buyers also began to work together with local greenhouse growers to purchase "ugly vegetables". The industry term for ugly vegetables is "seconds": imperfect vegetables that are typically thrown into compost heaps. Finding specific uses for these less-than-perfect vegetables (i.e. as soup ingredients or salad bar items), members of the procurement lab began collectively purchasing ugly vegetables at a far lower price. In addition to benefiting the food buyers, this arrangement essentially provided farmers with revenue from what had previously been waste.

An additional example of trying something new occurred between a hospital system food buyer and a small local baker. The food buyer thought that the baker's banana bread would sell well at several hospital retail food service locations (e.g. coffee kiosks). However, the banana bread only came in household-sized loaves, which presented a barrier for the food buyer because retail food service workers would have to slice the bread and put it on a plate. The buyer and the baker collaborated to design bread pans that were four times as long as traditional bread pans but that would still fit in the baker's ovens. This allowed the baker to produce more banana bread for the hospital system. Furthermore, the baker agreed to invest in packaging equipment in exchange for a volume commitment from the food buyer. The packaging equipment allowed for the baker to provide pre-packaged single-serving slices, which

the baker was able to sell to other institutions.

The Procurement Lab also facilitated the buyers in *enabling resources*. Members of the Procurement Lab included three government representatives. The innovativeness and longevity of the Procurement Lab, along with efforts to aggregate demand for local foods, signalled to these government representatives that community institutions were willing to step outside of their conventional food purchasing practices in a way that supported the region's agricultural and food economy. In response, the government, also motivated by the growth of the sustainable foods movement and the potential to diversify the region's economy, showed a willingness to develop policies and infrastructure to support the procurement of sustainable foods by institutions. Two interrelated supports included local food purchasing policies (i.e. mandates that government-run and supported institutions purchase a minimal percentage of local food) and the development of food hubs, where produce could be aggregated from several small farms, and then processed and distributed to meets the needs of institutions. These needs are interrelated because local food purchasing policies would increase demand and support production, the joining of which required infrastructure.

> *Make government aware of the purchasing power (e.g. economic impact report) and that the largest barrier to increased institutional procurement of local food is the supply. (2017 Strategic Action Map)*
>
> *Awareness among decision makers of economic potential and barriers of (the region's) local food economy to facilitate needed policy change so that appropriate resources are committed to the local food economy. (2017 Strategic Goals, Meeting Minutes, December 2017)*

*Host dinner with government representatives for the purpose of telling them that the main barriers to us being able to purchase more local food is the lack of infrastructure and the challenges involved in GAP (Good Agricultural Practices; food safety) certification. (2017 Strategic Action Map)*

Another example of enabling resources was provided during an interview with a university food buyer:

*This guy showed up in a small truck and asked me to try his breaded chicken tenders. It was seriously in a plastic baggie that was in a small cooler. Call me crazy, but I cooked it up and tried it. I wanted to give him a chance. Anyways it was really good so I asked him to get me some more to sample. You won't believe this but the next week, I got a package in the mail and it had dry ice and another bag of chicken tenders. I told the guy that he can't do business like this and I connected him to government resources. Now he is one of the biggest breaded chicken tender suppliers in the country. (Interview, Food Buyer 6)*

A final way that institutional buyers revised practices was by *identifying low hanging fruit,* which meant procuring local foods that were within reach. As an example, the Procurement Lab agreed to commission an economic impact study. The study's primary aim was to convey to key stakeholders (e.g. government, other institutions, producers) the economic impact of increased local food purchasing. The study also included a list of the top food items that local institutions were purchasing, showing which of these items *were* being purchased locally compared to which items *could* be purchased locally. With this information, food buyers were able redirect some of their food purchases to local producers merely by

asking their distributor to switch suppliers.

*Pragmatic Redefining*

While the Procurement Lab influenced the buyers in substantively tailoring practices from the sustainable foods movement through innovative revising, the Procurement Lab also facilitated the symbolic tailoring of practices through the next two mechanisms – pragmatic redefining and non-reflexive reinforcing. A striking example of *pragmatic redefining* is how the Lab created a filtered definition of sustainable foods, which, as already touched upon, filtered out all but the economic values related to the larger movement.

Early meeting minutes, which were triangulated by interviews, showed the importance of the Procurement Lab in agreeing on their own definition of local foods. At the first Lab meeting, participants were asked what barriers existed in collaborating to be able to purchase more local foods. Several of the answers pointed to the need for a common definition of local (examples from meeting minutes: *"Need definition of local foods" "There are many definitions of local" "Local? Grown and raised?"*). In several of the interviews, comments were made of how, early on, the lack of an agreed upon definition of local foods impeded communications and progress. A grant report listed an early milestone of the Procurement Lab as "Agreement on the definition of 'Local' created parameters for identifying potential vendors or products as well as creating an opportunity for collective measurement. This shared definition was a result of a desire to positively impact agriculture, support provincial job creation and build community wealth creation through the food system."

As already explained, the Procurement Lab's definition of local foods differed significantly from common local foods definitions by filtering out all values but economic ones.

When asked about the difference between how the buyers *personally* defined local foods, which aligned with the broader movement, and how the Procurement Lab defined local foods, the buyers responded that they had to come up with a definition that made it more pragmatic to purchase local foods.

> *"Because of the market being driven by agriculture and because of the scale of the partners, we could not have a 100-mile definition." (Interview, Food Buyer 3)*
>
> *"The sustainability is not part of primary focus of the university. Their focus is on making sure people are fed without seeing costs go through the roof." (Interview, Food Buyer* 2)
>
> *It's the broadest definition that I've ever used but it meets the economic development, economic diversity and the agricultural goals of the group. We needed a definition to allow for a local coffee roaster and still encompass a potato grower and value add producer. It's criteria versus definition. (Interview, Procurement Lab Coordinator)*

The Procurement Lab was not unique, among institutions, in filtering the movement values of local foods:

> *"Notably, the emphasis of (institutions on the procurement of local food) has been on criteria regarding the distance food has traveled, and has not taken into account aspects of production such as the structure and size, treatment of workers, health and environmental." Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, Report on Institutional Food Procurement, 2016.*

Another way that food buyers engaged in pragmatic redefining was by *relabeling pre-existing practices.* The primary way that they did this was by going through their product codes and adding an identifier to each item that met the definition for local foods that the

Procurement Lab had agreed upon.

> *We added a new code to all of the products that we were buying that met the definition of local that the group agreed upon. (Interview, Food Buyer 6)*
>
> *During the meeting, one of the large distributors explained how they revised their product tracking system to add new codes for items that were local. This made the amount of their "local purchases" increase quickly. They did not actually buy more local, they just changed their product codes to now track what they had already been purchasing. (Field Notes)*

By relabeling previously purchased foods, it appeared that buyers had increased the amount of local foods purchased, when in reality, no actual improvements to the food system had occurred.

*Non-reflexive Reinforcing*

Along with pragmatic redefining, another thematic way that food buyers attempted to institutionalize the local foods movement was by, unwittingly perhaps, perpetuating pre-existing institutional arrangements through *non-reflexive reinforcing* which was engaged in through *not questioning habits* and *giving up*. As previously discussed, the current industrialized food system is rooted in values of efficiency and economies of scale. Data from observations, interviews and archival data indicated how these institutionalized values made it difficult, or even impossible, for food buyers to envision alternative approaches.

> *It's easy to have more pork available to purchase in our region. Pork can be scaled up quickly. Sows can have lots of babies fast and that be quickly grown and fattened. (Field Notes from Procurement Lab Meeting)*

This comment came from a government employee from the local foods center of the agricultural division. It was made shortly after members of the Procurement Lab reviewed a draft of the economic impact report showing how so little of the pork that they purchased was produced within the region. The comment refers to, and may be perceived as advocating for (as a solution to purchasing more local foods), the dominant, large-scale animal production method of confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs).

In CAFOs, sows are induced into producing litters of piglets as quickly as possible by hormonal injections and by confinement in gestational crates that do not allow for movement. From birth, the piglets are given hormones and particular feed for the sole purpose of growing and fattening them as quickly as possible. The public, scientists, and regulatory agencies have long raised significant concerns about CAFOs related to water and air quality issues, occupational and community health consequences, animal treatment, as well as social and economic concerns of individuals and communities near CAFOs.

The following field note also illustrates similar habitual thinking:

*At the meeting today, the buyers were shown a draft of the economic impact report of buying local food. It showed how much food was purchased outside the region but that was available within the region, in many cases at lower cost. One of the buyers asked, "Why do we buy outside the region then? It doesn't make sense!" Another buyer exclaimed, "Because it's a habit!" (Field Notes)*

Because of the tensions and challenges involved in adopting local foods purchasing practices, some buyers responded by *giving up*.

*You have like the procurement officer not wiling to take the time to contact local growers, rather just go with [the distributor's] list. (Interview, Farmer 1)*

As this quote illustrates, some food buyers give up on attempts to institutionalize the local foods movement by continuing with conventional practices of buying from distributors.

*Spill-over Effects of the Procurement Lab*

The influence of the Procurement Lab went beyond shaping how the food buyers integrated practices from the sustainable foods movement into their respective organizations. By convening a number of institutional food buyers, along with other food system stakeholders within the community, the Procurement Lab began to influence how a broader array of organizations integrated the sustainable foods movement. For example, Procurement Lab members met with municipal level policy makers to advocate for the development of a food hub to provide critically missing infrastructure that prevented them from buying more foods locally. Additionally, the Procurement Lab became a key stakeholder group for input on municipal, regional and federal planning and regulation related to food systems. Furthermore, as news of the Procurement Lab spread through conference presentations made by academic members, the Procurement Lab began to be held up as a model for replication. For example, representatives from a different regional government had recently started an initiative to increase the institutional procurement of local foods and had contacted the Lab to learn which "best practices" they should adopt, including which definition of local foods had been most effective for the Procurement Lab.

# CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Social movements induce change by imbuing society, including market actors and markets, with social and environmental values and practices (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016; Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2017). For market actors, in particular, like the food buyers of my study, integrating social and environmental values (i.e. a community logic) in the midst of a highly incompatible and fiercely dominant market logic is often rife with tensions and challenges (e.g. Batillana & Dorado, 2010; Greenwood et al., 2011; Thornton et al., 2012). However challenging it is to integrate a community logic within a setting dominated by a market logic, scientists increasingly warn that unless the status quo undergoes significant change in the next twelve years, the earth will arrive at an irreversible and catastrophic state impacting both human and natural systems (IPCC, 2014).

Understanding the dynamics of social movement induced change is thus highly relevant and very much paramount if organizations are to be a part of shifting our current trajectory and addressing grand challenges of our times including food insecurity, poverty and environmental degradation (Berrone, Gelabert, Massa-Saluzzo & Rousseau, 2016; Ferraro, Etzion, & Gehman, 2015; George, Howard-Grenville, Joshi, & Tihanyi, 2016). Understanding the microprocesses by which insiders tailor social movement ideals and practices has, however, remained woefully thin (e.g. Aguinas & Glavas, 2012; Gond et al., 2012). My dissertation research dives into the messy reality of organizations grappling to tailor social movement (i.e. social and environmental) values into mainstream organizations dominated by market values.

The overarching aim of my research was to begin to shed light on the fine-grained processes and dynamics of sustainability efforts within organizations. In particular, my research

aimed to better understand the role of social partnerships related to these sustainability efforts. As such my research was driven by the question: *What is the role of social partnerships in connecting broad social movements to actors inside organizations to affect organizational change?*

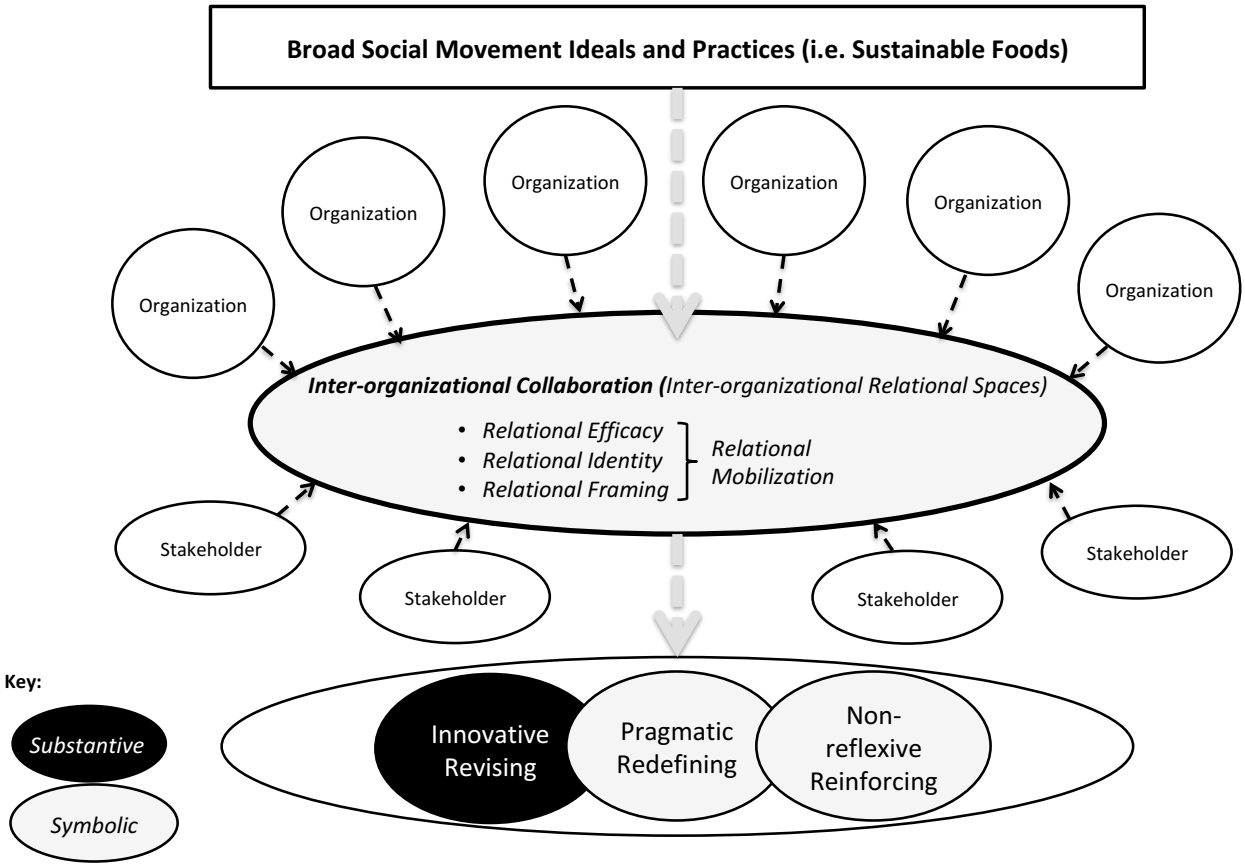
Understanding the role of social partnerships is of particular importance given the anticipated promise of such organizational forms to address complex social issues that no single organization or stakeholder can address alone (Gray & Purdy, 2018). Research on social partnerships, which represent a field-level form of organizing, is also relevant for beginning to gain an important, yet lacking, understanding of the processes of participating in a field and what such participation means for the inner workings of organizations (Hoffman, 2001; Wooten & Hoffman, 2017). Such understanding necessitates an analytical approach uniquely enabled by a field ethnography (Lounsbury & Kaghan, 2001; Zilber, 2015).

Through a research internship, I was granted access to an ideal setting in which to conduct a four-year field ethnography. The Sustainable Foods Procurement Lab (the Procurement Lab) is a cross-sector collaboration that convened food buyers from large, mainstream organizations, together with diverse stakeholders within the food system (distributors, farmers, government agents, non-profits). The aim of the Procurement Lab was to support the food buyers in doing together what they were not able to do along: integrate sustainable foods values and practices into their respective organizations.

My dissertation findings contribute to the literature at the intersection of social movements and organizations and also to the literature on social partnerships in several ways, which I've depicted in a model (Figure 5.1). My research findings expand on Kellogg's (2009)

concept of relational spaces, applying it to the context of a cross-sector collaboration. My model depicts how the Procurement Lab, by serving as an *interorganizational relational space,* moderated between the sustainable foods social movement and organizational change by enabling relational efficacy, relational identity and relational framing, which together enabled relational mobilization. While my study importantly reveals the mechanisms by which social partnerships can connect broad social movements to organizational insiders, my study and resulting model also shows that the outcomes of these effects can be mixed. Although substantive change did occur in my study, through what I refer to as *innovative revising*, symbolic change in the forms of *pragmatic redefining* and *non-reflexive reinforcing* also occurred.

**Figure 5.1: Social Partnerships as a Moderator of Social Movements and Organizational Change**



My dissertation research makes three primary contributions. First, for the social movement literature, this study significantly expands upon previous outsider/insider notions of how social movements influence organizations by bringing attention to the moderating role of community-level social partnerships (e.g. cross-sector collaborations, multi-stakeholder partnerships). Second, this study contributes to the institutional change literature by highlighting the overlooked, yet important, aspect of relational dynamics. Third, my research contributes to the social partnerships literature by bringing it firmly into the social movements and institutional theory literatures to mutually beneficial ends. Within this third contribution, I suggest that the collaborative processes of social partnerships can be a double-edged sword, fostering decoupling, as well as substantive responses, related to social issues. I next elaborate on each of these contributions.

**Expanding Previous Formulations of Insider/Outsider Activism**

For my first contribution, my dissertation research provides a more in-depth understanding of the complex dynamics involved in social movement induced change. Specifically, my research importantly expands upon extant, dichotomous outsider/insider formulations for how social movements foster organizational change. I expand prior formulations by showing how interactions and relations with other field participants instrumentally enable and shape how individuals tailor broad social movements into their organizations.

On the one hand, the social movements literature has substantially documented the outsider, contentious efforts by which social movements influence organizational change (e.g. McAdam, 1982; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Tilly, 1978; Snow & Benford, 1992). On the other hand,

but to a lesser degree, the social movements literature has documented the more conventional insider approaches for inducing social movement related change (e.g. Meyerson, 2001; Meyerson & Scully, 1995; Scully & Creed, 1998). While providing rich insights, this body of research has largely been at the level of organizational populations, leaving a blind spot related to the important micro-level processes and dynamics through which broad outside social movements interconnect with sympathetic insiders. Addressing this blind spot is increasingly important as scholars call for more attention to micro-to-macro field interactions and relations (e.g. Hallett, 2010; Hallett & Fine, 2017; van Wijk, Zietsma, Dorado, de Bakker, & Martí, 2019).

My research addresses this blind spot by expanding the concept of relational spaces (Kellogg, 2009) and applying it to the interorganizational level. My research findings document the instrumental, intermediary role of community level social partnerships in connecting outsider and insider movement efforts. The concept of social partners as inter-organizational relational spaces thus importantly provides explanatory power for *how* (i.e. the mechanisms by which) social partnerships connect broad social movements to individuals inside organizations who are sympathetic to the movement. In my case, the Procurement Lab, as a cross-sector collaboration, served as an inter-organizational relational space (Kellogg, 2009) that enabled organizational insiders to tailor the sustainable foods social movement into their respective organizations.

Kellogg's (2009) concept of a relational space located such a space *inside* an organization where it was critical to enacting a change effort. The relational space in Kellogg's study enabled reformers from multiple positions that were related to the same change effort, to convene and to collectively brainstorm ways to enact their desired change. Relational spaces allowed not

only *isolation* from defenders of the status quo and *interaction* among reformers, as with free spaces (e.g. Polletta, 1999). Relational spaces also importantly allowed for the *inclusion* of individuals from differing work positions (e.g. surgeons, residents, interns, administrators) related to the same change effort (Kellogg, 2009). Kellogg showed that it was inclusion that enabled one hospital, within her comparative case study, to enact a change. The change effort did not materialize and become institutionalized in the other hospital that provided a free space for isolation and interaction but did not provide for the inclusion that is distinctly afforded by a relational space.

While Kellogg's conceptualization of relational spaces referred to the inclusion of differing work positions related to a desired change *within* an organization, I expand upon her concept by applying it to the inter-organizational level. I demonstrate how the Procurement Lab, as a cross-sector collaboration, served as a relational space *among organizations and in a field-level space,* convening diverse actors who were each connected, in some way, to the issue field of the sustainable foods social movement. In my study, food buyers from large organizations were enthusiastic about movement ideals. Government agents were focused on economic development. Distributors were trying to gain or hold onto market-share. Non-profits were focused on addressing food security and farmers were looking for economic viability related to their values of food production. The Procurement Lab, therefore, convened a set of broad field actors with connected but also divergent interests as well as resources.

In Kellogg's (2009) study, reformers of a single position were not able to enact the desired change on their own because of the complexity of the change, which required coordination among positions. Similarly, the food buyers of my study were not able to enact, on

their own, the changes involved in incorporating values and practices from the sustainable foods movement. The buyers were unable to do this because of the strength of the highly institutionalized industrialized food system and, therefore, the coordination that such changes would require along the complex food supply chain.

Rather, I document how changes by the food buyers and within their respective organizations were only enabled through the relational space that was provided by the Procurement Lab. By serving as a relational space, the Lab enabled multiple actors to convene and collectively brainstorm how to locally articulate the ideals and practices of the sustainable foods movement. As with Kellogg's relational spaces, relational mobilization was enabled through relational efficacy, relational identity and relational framing. In my study, however, these mechanisms were observed at the interorganizational level rather than inside an organization, where the mechanisms differed in key ways.

In what follows, I discuss the implications of relational efficacy and relational identity at the inter-organizational level for enabling organizational change. These first two mechanisms are most relevant to my contribution to the literature that intersects social movements and organizations. The third mechanism, relational framing, is discussed further in light of my third contribution. This first contribution illustrates the micro-level processes and dynamics through which broad outside social movements interconnect with sympathetic organizational insiders.

*Relational efficacy* is the assurance that what each reformer position is not able to do alone, due to the complexity of a given change effort, might be accomplished by working together through what Kellogg referred to as 'cross-position collective action' (2009). Haug refers to this sense of relational efficacy as “collective bubbling enthusiasm” (2013, p. 722).

Relational efficacy motivates and energizes the collective identification of problems or barriers related to enacting change and the joint negotiation of solutions. In Kellogg's study, the cross-position collective included administrators, surgeons, chiefs, seniors, residents and interns. These employees collaborated across positions to identify problems related to reducing the number of hours that interns works and to jointly negotiate solutions.

At the inter-organizational level of the Procurement Lab, relational efficacy was provided as a matter of the Lab having convened multiple diverse stakeholders within the community's food system. Each stakeholder had specific, but incomplete, insights into the challenges of changing ideals and practices to better align the food system with the sustainable foods movement. For example, food buyers were familiar with the challenges of buying more local foods in terms of locating vendors, assuring food safety, ordering and delivery. Food buyers were also aware of how much food was wasted. Government agents had insights into the challenges that small farmers faced in obtaining food safety licenses. Non-profits were aware of problems associated with addressing food insecurity and food waste. Distributors were aware of the quantities that they required from farmers in order to be able to list and distribute their produce.

By collectively identifying the problems or barriers of moving towards more sustainable food system ideals and practices, the Procurement Lab was able to jointly negotiate solutions, or at least to move in the direction of jointly negotiated solutions. For example, the Procurement Lab provided impetus for the government agents to move forward on establishing a food hub that would enabled small farmers to aggregate their produce and would provide them with food safety licences and delivery solutions. The Procurement Lab also provided the

impetus for government agents to design and offer food safety workshops for farmers, as well as to re-evaluate food safety standards and consider scale-specific regulations.

My findings on inter-organizational relational efficacy thus illuminate a mechanism by which inter-organizational relational spaces can be a critical enabling component for brainstorming change at the field level, which can in turn enable change at the organizational level. My findings on inter-organizational relational efficacy align with the assertion by Wikj et al. (2019) that the will for social innovators, like Procurement Lab members, to engage in agency is fuelled by interactions with others. My findings on inter-organizational relational efficacy also align with research by Fan & Zietsma (2017) showing that when people interact together, particularly on moral causes that they are committed to, they often develop positive social emotions that help disembed people from their “home” logics, the industrialized food system in my case, and embed them in shared projects, participating in and scaling the sustainable foods movement. Similarly, Ometto, Gegenhuber, Winter, and Greenwood (2019) identified, in their research on social enterprises, the importance of 'herding spaces' within which interactions played a central role in generating emotional encouragement and motivation to disembed from a mainstream logic and collaborate on a moral purpose. The idea of disembedding is an important one, which I will discuss further within my second contribution.

The second mechanism of how the Procurement Lab served as an interorganizational relational space to connect the sustainable foods movement with organizational insiders is *relational identity.* Relational identity is the development of a new sense of self, through the formation of a collective identity in which reformers perceive their identity in relation to

reformers in different work positions related to a change effort (Kellogg, 2009). Relational identity is enabled through personal interactions and the development of friendship bonds. I expand on Kellogg's concept by showing that relational identity is multi-faceted at the inter-organizational level.

In the Procurement Lab, relational identity had three facets: (1) among Lab members, (2) between Lab members and local vendors, and (3) more broadly between Lab members and the larger geographic community. The first facet of relational identity, which was the relational identity among Lab members, was intentionally developed by the Lab's founder, Jackie, through her selection of the Art of Hosting as the Lab's facilitation framework. Jackie chose the Art of Hosting specifically for its ability to fostering personal, rather than, professional connections and relationships among Lab members. She persisted with this facilitation framework despite evidence that Lab members found this facilitation to be uncomfortable in the being because of how it differed from professional networking and relating. The rituals of 'opening the circle' and 'closing the circle' of each meeting, for example, represented "emotional entrainment rituals" (Collins, 2004) that have been shown to instigate feelings of normative commitment and to generate a sense of group solidarity (Claus, 2017).

The second facet of relational identity was among Procurement Lab members and local vendors. Jackie fostered this layer of relational identity by conceiving of and coordinating the Meet the Maker sessions and the local foods tours. Jackie further fostered relational identity during these interactions by explicitly encouraged vendors to tell their personal stories of how they came to establish their food business. As a result, Procurement Lab members related to the vendors as real people, versus food product providers, whom they could perceive their

identity in relation to.

Jackie also fostered a third facet of Procurement Lab members' relational identity as part of the larger community. She did this by including non-profit organizations into the Procurement Lab. The presence of non-profits exposed Procurement Lab members to a spectrum of food-related community issues including food insecurity, food waste, land use and homelessness. The exposure to community social issues enabled members to connect the dots on how their roles, however limited within their organizations (e.g. as food buyers) could make a difference in the community.

My findings on relational identity bring forth an important point related to relational spaces and change. Where Kellogg's (2009) intraorganizational relational spaces briefly mention the importance of personal interactions and relations in fostering change inside organizations, my study findings suggest that such personal connections and relations were relatively central to the ability of Procurement Lab members to collectively shape the localized field of the food system in a more sustainable direction. An example of this is how a food buyer, through the Procurement Lab, came to envision how his professional role could have a community-wide impact in helping to address food hunger and homelessness. My findings are also important in that they document the multi-faceted nature of inter-organizational relational identity. From a practical perspective, this multi-faceted nature can be leveraged to intentionally facilitate the development and strength of interorganizational relational identity to more effective sustainability-related outcomes.

In summary, my dissertation contributes to the literature on social movements and organizations by expanding former dichotomous conceptualizations of social movement

outcomes as resulting from either outside or inside processes. My research suggests that the interweaving of outsider and insider processes can occur through the inter-organizational relational spaces that are afforded by social partnerships. My dissertation shows how relational efficacy and relational identity, at the inter-organization level, are two primary mechanisms through which the Procurement Lab enabled organizational insiders to articular a broad social movement into their respective organizations. As Phillips et al. (2015) contend, social innovations do not simply emerge from heroic, enlightened social entrepreneurs. Rather social innovations emerge from a "collective and dynamic interplay" of a collectivity of actors (Phillips et al., 2015, p. 442). This leads to the second contribution of my dissertation research.

**A Relational Approach to Institutional Change**

Calls continue for research that bridges the old and new institutionalisms by navigating between over- and undersocialized accounts of action. My research answers this call by opening up our understanding of how field membership and interactions aid intra-organizational processes (Wooten & Hoffman, 2018). My findings illustrate how individuals inside organizations were only able to tailor and incorporate values and practices from the sustainable foods movement in the context of participation of the Sustainable Foods Procurement Lab, a field-level cross-sector collaboration that served as an inter-organizational relational space.

For the literature on institutional change, I advocate that the third emerging wave of how change is conceptualized would benefit by taking a decidedly *relational approach*. Such an approach rightfully emphasizes the importance of interactions and relations (Hallett, 2010; Fine & Hallett, 2014) among organizations and the fields in which they are members (Wooten &

Hoffman, 2017). I argue this by discussing how the relational space facilitated change by enabling *field bridging* and *disembedding* through the mechanisms of relational efficacy, relational framing and relational identity. The changes made through the Procurement Lab were tailored to meet local needs and contexts, supporting work on 'frame amplification' (Purdy, Ansari & Gray, 2017).

Organizations are resistant to change despite noble social movement efforts. Institutional theorists attribute such resistance to the embeddedness of organizations in the institutional environment or within institutional fields (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Scott, 2008; Seo & Creed, 2002). Because of embeddedness, alternative arrangements to the institutionalized order are rendered unthinkable or even inappropriate (Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2017). This is especially true for large, bureaucratic organizations (Barnett & Carroll, 2001) like the organizations in my study, and for organizations situated in fields with strong institutional infrastructure resulting from high degrees of coherence and elaboration, as with the field of industrialized foods (Hinings, Logue, & Zietsma, 2017; Zietsma, Groenewegen, Logue & Hinings, 2017).

Explanations for how resistance to change is overcome initially accentuated exogenous shocks (Fligstein, 2001; Haveman, Russo & Meyer, 2001; Hoffman, 1999; Meyer, 1982). In my study, pressures emanating from the sustainable foods social movement represented an exogenous shock, interjecting the conflicting community logic and challenging the field's prevailing institution of industrialized foods (Greenwood et al., 2011; Hargrave & van de Ven, 2006; Rao et al., 2000; Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2008). However, such pressures, which in my case emanated from the sustainable foods movement, were not sufficient for the food buyers

to enact sustainable change.

More recently, change has been explained by institutional entrepreneurship. This type of change includes efforts that are initiated by organizational insiders who sympathize with social movement ideals and practices (e.g. Maguire, Hardy & Lawrence, 2004). In my study, however, the food buyers' enthusiasm to incorporate changes that aligned with the sustainable foods movement was also insufficient for change, given the institutional strength of the industrialized foods system.

The two primary accounts of change, exogenous shocks and institutional entrepreneurship, have been criticized as presenting either over- or undersocialized accounts of change (DiMaggio & Powell, 1988, 1991; Hirsch & Lounsbury, 1997; Micelotta et al., 2017; Seo & Creed, 2002). Furthermore, neither account explains the changes that the food buyers in my study were able to accomplish. However small the changes may have been, change nonetheless occurred where it would not have been predicted.

Recent accounts of change have begun to navigate between either over- or undersocialized accounts by focusing on meaning making and micro-practices (e.g. Purdy, Ansari, & Gray, 2017; Smets et al., 2012). While this recent stream represents progress, there has nonetheless remained an atomistic conceptualization of agency and interests in which an organization's self-interests are developed internally and cause the organization to undertake some action (Oliver, 1991; Wooten & Hoffman, 2017). This atomistic perspective contradicts Scott's (1991) insistence that the ends and means by which interests are determined and pursued are defined and shaped by institutions (Wooten & Hoffman, 2017). Siding with Scott, Wooten and Hoffman (2017) declare that the formation, much less the pursuit, of interests

must be viewed as resulting from field-level engagement. Pushing past atomistic accounts requires that attention be rightfully directed to the ways in which fields provide the context through which organizations enact agency (Wooten & Hoffman, 2017).

Such rightful attention necessitates a focus on macro-to-micro (field-to-organization) interactions, or on a "supra-individual level of analysis" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991, p. 8). It necessitates a focus on interactions or relationships (Hallett, 2010) and a concern for what "people do together" (Becker, 1986). Fields must be seen, according to Wooten and Hoffman, as "*relational spaces"* that enable organizations to interact with one another (2017, p.63). Indeed, Thornton and colleagues assert that actors engage "not as solitary individuals, but as social actors interacting with other social actors" (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 93).

As a field ethnography, my dissertation research privileged an in-depth investigation of fields as relational spaces that enable organizations to enact with one another. In my study, the Procurement Lab, as a cross-sector collaboration, was a field-level organization in a geographically-bound field of the foods system. My study suggests that, by serving as an interorganizational relational space, the Procurement Lab enabled organizations to actively participate in shaping a field, and thereby, their respective organizations. The primary mechanisms for enabling change were relational efficacy, relational identity, and relational framing, which the Procurement Lab enabled by serving as a relational space.

I argue that relational efficacy, together with the different facets of relational identity, enabled members to bridge fields and to 'disembed' from the dominant institution of industrialized foods. Through the field bridging and disembedding enabled by the Procurement Lab, members were able to begin collectively imagining alternatives to the dominant institution

of industrialized foods. In my setting, the alternatives were represented by the values and practices of the sustainable foods movement.

Studies have shown that actors who occupy positions that bridge multiple fields are more likely to disembed themselves from existing institutions (e.g., Boxenbaum & Battilana, 2005; Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006). These studies argue that by occupying structural positions between fields, actors become exposed to the differing institutions of fields. When actors interact with others embedded in differing institutions, they are exposed to novel ways of thinking and acting (Smets et al., 2012). Exposure to differing institutions and fields makes actors less 'locked-in' to a particular field or institution and thereby able to transpose, translate, and recombine values and practices across fields (e.g. Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008). The Procurement Lab provided structural bridging simply by convening stakeholders from differing fields and institutions. This alone exposed Procurement Lab members to differing fields and institutions.

However, not only was structural bridging at play in the Procurement Lab. Rather, interactional and relational bridging occurred as well. While studies of field bridging have focused on structural positions, my research more closely aligns with recent scholarship focusing on the *interactional* or *relational* aspects of field bridging and disembedding. It is important to consider the interactional and relational aspects of field bridging because it is through situated interactions that institutions acquire their “local force and significance” and shape meanings into 'on the ground' practices (Hallett & Ventresca, 2006; McPherson & Sauder, 2013; Reay, Golden-Biddle, & Germann, 2006).

Furnari (2014), for example, theorizes how interstitial spaces (i.e. informal gathering spaces) enable the creation of new ideas and activities when marked by the presence of

situated social interactions that generated high levels of mutual attention and emotional energy. Along this interactional line, Chreim et al., (2019) show how disembedding from dominant institutions is made possible through the construction of 'counter-institutional identities' that are enabled not only by defining 'who we are not' (oppositional identity; e.g. Snow & McAdam, 2000) but also the defining of 'who we are' (relational identity). Similarly, and as mentioned in my first contribution, Fan & Zietsma (2017) show that when people interact together, particularly on moral causes that they are committed to, they often develop positive social emotions that help disembed people from their "home" logics and embed them in shared projects.

My findings related to disembedding from a home logic (i.e. industrialized foods) connect with the recently emergent work on emotions within institutional theory. Toubiana & Ziestma (2016), for example, have empirically demonstrated the capacity of logics to have 'emotional registers' that prescribe norms for the use and expression of emotions. Similarly, Friedland (forthcoming) suggests that embeddedness in an institutional logic makes it emotionally difficult to act in ways contrary to either the emotional register or the values associated with an institutional logic. Creed, Dejordy & Lok (2010) document how shame can result from countering a 'home' institutional logic, while Kraatz (2015) argues that identification with an institutional value *is* an emotional identification.

In addition to providing field bridging and disembedding for Procurement Lab members, my findings also suggest that the Lab, as an interorganizational relational space, can enable institutional change through framing processes. Purdy, Ansari and Gray (2017) argue that, in addition to frames being shaped by institutional logics (e.g. Thornton et al., 2012), the reverse

can occur. Logics can also be shaped by frames. The authors propose a process model by which framing can occur from the bottom-up, becoming 'laminated' through acceptance or agreement. Through lamination, frames can shape logics. My dissertation findings provide support for, and expand upon, their model. In my study, the Procurement Lab members agreed upon (i.e. laminated) a frame for local foods. This frame, although vastly different from the social movement framing of local foods, was not only accepted at the localized field level but was used a role model for other communities, thereby shaping the sustainable foods logic.

My findings build upon this bottom-up framing model by showing how inter-organizational collaborations can provide a mechanism by which framing and lamination occur. By showing how the Procurement Lab's definition of local foods began to be used as a model by other communities, my findings also resonate with contributions by Vurro and Dacin (2014) who explain two mechanisms by which collaboratively defined frames spill over into a wider-level institutional change. First, collaborative frames provide innovative solutions to local problems (i.e. integrating the sustainable foods movement ideals and values). Second, as collaborators subsume the collaboratively developed solutions (e.g. buying 'ugly vegetables') into their regular activities subsuming collaboratively developed solutions under their routinized relational processes, the local effects diffuse beyond original boundaries. It's important to note that, as with the Procurement Lab's definition of local foods that began to spread beyond the Lab' boundaries, collaborative interactions to develop or translate frames do not come without consequences. Such framing can result in diluting the radicalness of social innovations (van Wijk et al., 2013).

In summary, my dissertation research contributes to the literature on institutional

change by suggesting a *relational approach*. As my findings demonstrate, the relational space provided by the Procurement Lab enabled field bridging, related to the local fields issue field, and disembedding, related to the dominant institution of industrialized foods. Field bridging and institutional disembedding were enabled by relational efficacy, relational identity and relational framing. With this contribution, my dissertation research provides important understanding of change that occurs as a result of organizational interactions and participation in fields.

Perhaps most importantly, my research offers an explanation of diffusion that counters narratives in which institutional rules (ideals and practices) are adopted wholesale, spreading throughout fields like wildfires (Wooten & Hoffman, 2018). My research illustrates how Procurement Lab members adjusted and manipulated the ideals and practices from the sustainable foods movement to meet their local needs and contexts. In this regard, my research also adds to the translation literature (e.g. Sahlin & Wedlin, 2017) by illustrates the importance of relational processes (i.e. efficacy, identity and framing) for the 'lamination' of local tailored ideals and practices (Ansari, Gray & Purdy, 2017).

**Social Partnerships as a Bridge Between Social Movements and Organizations**

The third contribution of my dissertation research is targeted at the social partnerships literature. For this contribution, I first discuss the three primary ways in which the food buyers, through their participation the Procurement Lab, tailored the sustainable foods movement into their respective organizations. Second, I caution how collaborative processes can be a double-edged sword by enabling decoupling. I conclude this contribution by discussing the importance

of the social partnership literatures for the literatures on social movements and institutional theory.

The findings of my dissertation research show that interorganizational collaborations, or social partnerships, can serve as an important intermediary between broad social movements and organizations by providing *interorganizational relational spaces* that connect individual efforts with one another and also within a larger community. In my case, the food buyers were struggling, on their own, to integrate the sustainable foods movement. By connecting the buyers with one another and with other stakeholders (e.g. government, non-profits, farmers), the Procurement Lab enabled *relational efficacy, relational identity* and *relational framing* that, together, allowed for the relational mobilization of resources.

My dissertation findings show three thematic ways – innovative revising, pragmatic redefining and non-reflexive reinforcing - that organizational insiders, through their participation in a social partnership, tailored the ideals and values of the broad social movement into their respective organization. Next, I discuss each of the three mechanisms.

The first mechanism – *innovative revising* – represents the substantive integration of practices that align with social movement ideals. In my case, food buyers engaged in innovative revising by working with local food vendors to co-develop new processes to enable food products to be purchased by institutions. My finding of innovative revising, on the part of the food buyers in the context of the Procurement Lab, aligns with previous scholarship showing that the involvement of a multiplicity of actors and interests improves the chances of embedding new ideals and practices build their acceptance (Lawrence et al., 2014; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010).

While the first mechanisms represents the substantive integration of social movement values and practices, the second two mechanisms - pragmatic redefining and non-reflexive reinforcing – represent the *symbolic* tailoring of broader social movement ideals and practices. Symbolic tailoring, by social partnerships, is quite interesting given that research to-date related to measuring the success of cross-sector partnerships (e.g. Gray & Purdy, 2014, 2018; Hibbert, Huxam & Ring, 2008) has not yet focalized on degree of decoupling. With *pragmatic redefining*, broader social movement ideals were redefined or filtered the in ways that decreased the distance between the conflicting sets (mainstream and social movement) ideals and practices. Pragmatic redefining is not surprising for organizations to craft locally resonant interpretations of social movement ideals that allow them to resolve, bridge, and/or conceal existing inconsistencies between conflicting institutional spheres (e.g., Greenwood et al., 2011; Thornton et al., 2012).

With *non-reflexive reinforcing*, organizational insiders continue habituated mainstream practices, seemingly without reflection (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). Certainly, the very nature of a set of practices having become institutionalized, in my case industrialized food procurement practices, presents a situation in which alternatives are unimaginable. "Compliance occurs in many circumstances because other types of behavior are inconceivable, routines are followed because they are taken for granted as 'the way we do these things'" (Scott 2013, p. 68). With this mechanism, organizational insiders cannot even conceive of some practice changes associated with social movements and continue mainstream practices in a seemingly less-than-conscious manner (Gondo & Amis, 2013).

The symbolic tailoring of values and practices is not surprising. The diffusion of social

movement practices can pressure organizations to adapt to "societal rationalized myths" about the ways that organizations should look and what they should do (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The sustainability movement, for example, has created pressure for organizations to adopt CSR practices. The pressure to adopt rationalized myths can impose two problems (Boxembaum & Jonsson, 2017). First, the new practices may not present an efficient solution for organizations, which is particularly poignant where efficiency is a dominantly accepted rationalized myth. Second, organizations can be faced with several incompatible or even conflicting rationalized myths.

These two problems were indeed present in my case: the food buyers experienced a large gap between the efficiency of the practices related to the rationalized myth of the dominant industrialized food system and the inefficiencies of practices related to the conflicting rationalized myth presented by sustainable foods movement. To solve these two problems of efficiency and conflict, organizations engage in decoupling, submitting only superficially to pressures by adopting new structures or rhetoric without any real change in practices (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

My findings related to the substantive and symbolic ways that the food buyers integrated the ideals and practices from the sustainable foods movement are interesting in two regards. First, my findings contribute to recent research aimed at building the missing link between institutional logics and their instantiation in human action (Greenwood et al., 2011; Thornton et al., 2012). In particular, this study supports recent theorization by Pache and Santos (2013). Where previous studies showed compartmentalization and defiance as the primary ways that individuals coped with conflicting logics, Pache and Santos suggested that

actors could also try to blend some of the values, norms, and practices prescribed by each the competing logics. They suggest that actors accomplish this blending by selectively coupling certain elements of each conflicting logic. My findings support this recent theorization by demonstrating the simultaneous nature with which the food buyers both symbolically and substantively integrated social movement ideals and practices.

The second interesting aspect of my findings, related to the ways that the food buyers both substantively and symbolically integrated the ideals and practices from the sustainable foods movement, has do with the nature in which they did so. Specifically, the food buyers seemed entirely unaware of the reality of their symbolic framing and tailoring. In their minds, by all observable accounts, all of the 'changes' that they made were substantive.

Thus, while relational framing at the *intra*-organizational level supported substantive practice change (Kellogg 2009), an important observation of relational framing at the *interorganizational* level is that it also has the potential to provide a "shield of legitimacy" for decoupling. In my study, for example, the food buyers, on an individual basis, would likely not have been able to garner acceptance among certain stakeholders (e.g. non-profits, outside activists, students, consumers) for the filtered definition of local foods that was collectively agreed up within the context of the Procurement Lab. In practice, this filtered definition allowed for the procurement of certain foods to be labeled as "sustainable" that would not have qualified as such according to the broader social movement. This finding aligns with observations by van Wijk and colleagues (2019) that when multiple actors involved in a social innovation (i.e. cross-sector collaboration) engage in relational brokerage between a movement

and a field, they begin to shape themselves to the meaning system that they co-create, resulting in mutual cooptation.

This 'shield of legitimacy' seems not only to have made the Procurement Lab's actions appear substantial to outsiders, but Lab members themselves were, by all accounts, not conscious of the reality of their actions. This aligns with theorizing by Gondo and Amis (2013) that counters traditional accounts of decoupling as being conscious. Gondo and Amis cite early institutional insights to propose that little conscious reflection occurs related to the appropriateness of behaviors, even when interests change (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Zucker, 1977). In additional to seemingly occurring in a less-than-conscious nature, my research findings also question the traditional accounts of decoupling, dating back to Meyer and Rowan (1977), which assert that all decoupling is out of self-interest. In my case, to the contrary, the food buyers were very well meaning in their desire to integrate the values and practices of the sustainable foods movement. Rather, the type of decoupling that I observed in my research setting seems more in line with the concept of *pragmatic compromises* from the moral markets literature (e.g. McInerney, 2014; Schiller-Merkens & Balsiger, 2019).

In moral markets, like the local foods market that emerged from the sustainable foods movement, actors are confronted with the institutional complexity of trying to reconcile multiple incompatible logics (Greenwood et al. 2011). The food buyers, for example, were faced with trying to reconcile a community logic that values the well-being of society and the environment and a market logic that values efficiency and profit. A common way of coping with moral ambivalence is through *pragmatic compromises* to blend market practices and social values (McInerney, 2014). Rojas (2007), for example, shows how academic discipline of African

American studies resulted from a series of pragmatic compromises between university administrators and civil rights protesters from the Black Power movement.

Similarly, McInerney (2014) showed how NPower, a grassroots organization focused on providing technology to support non-profits' social justice causes, made pragmatic compromises to secure much needed funding from corporate funders like Microsoft by incorporating more market ideals and practices like professionalism, professionalism, efficiency, pay-for-service, economic criteria and corporate styles of reporting. In the process, NPower shifted the technology moral market away from serving only social justice causes to serving any nonprofit, regardless of cause (e.g. the National Rifle Association or Le Leche League). Pragmatic compromising is distinct from decoupling in the assumption of authentic intentions related to social or environmental values. As the name implies, compromises are made for pragmatic reasons, rather than out of self-interest.

To summarize the third contribution of my dissertation research, social partnerships warrant a more central place within the social movements and institutional theory literature. As field level organizations, my dissertation shows that social partnerships can importantly mediate between social movements and organizational change. Social partnerships have the potential to contribute richly to institutional theory provide an ideal setting in which to bridge the old and new institutionalisms by opening up understanding of how field membership and interactions aid intraorganizational processes (Wooten & Hoffman, 2018).

This is particularly important because, although collaborations have the potential to transform fields in positive ways by enabling innovation (Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2000), collaborations can also reproduce existing (i.e. market) conditions in an institutional field (e.g.,

Warren, Rose & Bergunder, 1974). When it comes to the role of social partnerships in addressing grand challenges, this dual role of collaborations is one to be cautious about.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This PhD dissertation research aimed to answer the question: *What is the role of social partnerships in connecting broad social movements to actors inside organizations to affect organizational change?* To try and answer this question, I conducted a four–year longitudinal field ethnography. The setting for my research was the Sustainable Foods Procurement Lab (the Procurement Lab), a cross-sector collaboration with the purpose of creating a localized settlement of the sustainable foods movement. Towards this purpose, the Procurement Lab convened a group of food procurement officers (food buyers) that were employed by large, mainstream organizations.

The buyers had been trying on their own, but with little success, to integrate the ideals and practices of the sustainable foods movement into their respective organizations. They were faced with seemingly insurmountable challenges due to the complexity and dominance of the industrialized foods system. Aware of these challenges, the Procurement Lab was founded by Jackie, a former restaurateur and regionally known sustainable foods activist.

The Procurement Lab convened not only the food buyers, but also several diverse stakeholders who were in some way connected to the community's food system. My study followed the Procurement Lab for over nearly five years (nearly three as a participant observer) where I was able to gain multiple sources of rich data related to the role of the Procurement Lab, as a social partnership, in facilitating the food buyers in integrating the ideals and practices of the sustainable foods movement.

My dissertation has practical, as well as theoretical, relevance. The substantive integration of social movement ideals and practices into organizations, like those of the

sustainable foods social movement, is critical if organizations are to help address societies grand challenges, which are "formulations of global problems that can be plausibly addressed through coordinated and collaborative effort" (George et al., 2016, p. 1880). Increasingly, such coordination and collaboration efforts are served by interorganizational social partnerships (i.e. multi-stakeholder partnerships and cross-sector partnerships; Gray & Purdy, 2018).

My dissertation research suggests that social partnerships can indeed have consequential effects on the relationship between social movements and organizations. In particular, social partnerships can serve as relational spaces at the interorganizational level through which they can enable the substantive tailoring of social movement ideals into organizations. However, my research also shows that social partnerships can unwittingly facilitate the symbolic integration of social movement ideals and practices.

More research is required to understand how social partnerships at the interface of social movements and organizations emerge, develop, and affect social movement outcomes. My research provides only a provisional first step in this direction. Next, I discuss the research limitations of my study, including boundary conditions. I follow with a discussion of future research. Finally, I close my dissertation with a discussion of the practical implications of my research for collaborative efforts.

**Research Limitations**

A common limitation of single-case, qualitative studies relates to generalizability - to what extent might my findings apply to other organizations? To answer this, I draw on Tsoukas' (2009) explanation that qualitative studies make a distinctive theoretical contribution by enabling researchers with a refined understanding of general phenomena. In this way,

qualitative research uniquely allows researchers to see things they could not see before, a process that Tsoukas (2009) refers to as “heuristic generalization. Through heuristic generalization, qualitative studies contribute an enhanced understanding of prototypical organizational life. By remaining open to “non-prototypical” cases, as, and if, they are encountered, further refinement is generated (Gehman, Trevino, Garud, 2013). The limitation of generalizability leads to an explanation of an important boundary condition that applies to my dissertation research.

A boundary condition of my study is that the type of collaboration exemplified by the Procurement Lab would be more likely to surface when a social movement is pressing for reforms farther up the value chain. In other words, this case is not about changing behavior of end-consumers through 'ethical consumerism' (e.g. Balsiger, 2014). Rather, it is a case about changing structures and processes along the supply chain, which end-consumers have little power over.

Where prior work suggests that social movements can be effective at mobilizing individual consumers and shaping consumer preferences (e.g. Lounsbury, 2001; Balsiger, 2016; Weber et al., 2008), it is much more difficult to mobilize change among the diverse organizations along the supply chain in order to supply moral market goods to end-consumers. This is because the organizations along the supply chain are more likely to have sticky routines and practices in place, as well as institutional complexity to deal with as a result of contending with competing market and community logics. Having articulated this boundary condition of my study, I believe that the setting nonetheless represents many current important social

movements today that are aiming to reform the supply chain (e.g. labor rights, greenhouse gas emissions, livable wages, waste, etc.)

**Future Research**

Future research might explore how moral markets, like the local foods market in my study, are shaped by the participation of mainstream organizations. For example, my study supports McInerney's (2014) suggestion that the entry and participation of mainstream organizations, or incumbents, in a moral market leads to the decoupling of a moral market from the movement values from which it emerged. My study suggests that this happens in a less-than-conscious manner, thereby supporting theorization by Gondo & Amis (2013) that rattles prior assumptions of decoupling as rational, instrumental and conscious. However, this is not the focus of my dissertation research and I believe that deeper inquiry into decoupling processes, in a focused manner, is warranted.

Related to a focus on decoupling, my dissertation focused on the *thematic* ways that the food buyers constructed a localized settlement of the sustainable foods movement, through participation in the Procurement Lab, which resulted in both symbolic (decoupling) and substantive outcomes. It would be interesting, however, to investigate possible temporal characteristics to decoupling. In my case, for instance, the values of the sustainable foods social movement seemed to be tightly coupled in the very beginning of the Procurement Lab.

It is possible that this tight coupling at the beginning enabled a certain level of cohesiveness around a cause and that the cohesiveness enabled the decoupling, perhaps in the form of group think, at a later point in time. There is some evidence that Jackie's intentional fostering of personal interactions and relations that seem to have resulted in decoupling at one

point in time, later resurfaced, enabling Procurement Lab members to recouple. My findings suggest that recoupling occurred through the personal connections and interactions between Procurement Lab members and vendors, reuniting Lab members with the social and environmental values of the sustainable foods movement that were set aside for a time. Investigating the possibility of recoupling requires a focus and analysis that differs from my dissertation research but that nonetheless would be highly intriguing and important, given long-held assumptions of decoupling.

With this research, I do not suggest that any cross-sector collaboration is a relational space. While this may be true, and warrants further inquiry, my study suggests that it was the specific way in which the Procurement Lab was formulated or theorized, that enabled it to serve as a relational space. In particular, the Procurement Lab's founder, Jackie, was very intentional about theorizing the Lab in such a way as to facilitate personal, rather than professional, interactions. For example, she selected the Art of Hosting as the facilitation framework for meeting, in which meetings were opened and closed by making explicit personal connections. Future research might compare multiple social partnerships on the dimension of personal interactions and relations.

A final suggestion for future research is inspired by Emirbayer and Johnson (2008). In their essay on Bourdieu and organizational analysis, the authors point to the importance of studying interorganizational relations to more precisely understand how organizations structure, and are structured by, the larger social configurations in which they are embedded. The authors encourage an examination of the semiotically distinct positions or stances that organizations assume in their efforts at conservation or subversion related to

interorganizational processes and relationships. The authors also suggest examining the conditions under which organizations collaborate to undertake bold initiatives; how the organizational processes and dynamics unfold relative to each organization's relatively autonomous logic; and to understand the "sometimes intricate ways in which such processes and dynamics are influenced by developments in external fields" (p. 36).

Following Emirbayer and Johnson's (2008) suggestions, it would be interesting to conduct a content analysis of the textual presentations (e.g. websites, annual reports, news media) of each organization within an interorganizational collaboration or social partnership. The analysis from individual organizations could be compared with a similar content analysis conducted of the collaboration, along several points of time from its formation until it has become settled. The content analysis of the collaboration would also be of its textual presentation (e.g. website, grant applications and reports, meeting minutes, marketing collateral). The next step of analysis would involve measuring the distance of each organization's textual presence to the textual presence of the collaborations to explore how the collaboration unfolded relative to each organizational member. Such an analysis seems promising for revealing relational and power dynamics among the collaborating organizations and within their respective and joint fields.

*Practical Implications*

My dissertation research was undertaken with a strong desire to make practical, as well as theoretical, contributions. I began my PhD journey intent on using my PhD to make a "real" impact in the world. For a while, during my studies, I grappled with deep concerns that I was begin trained to "only" make theoretical contributions, well remaining ever-thankful that I was

being trained by some of the best scholars in the world. As my PhD nears commencement, however, I realize, alas, that theory is indeed practical, but at a more abstracted level. I find this to be especially true of my dissertation research.

The world faces, indeed *we face*, grand challenges so complex that no organization or stakeholder group can address them alone (Gray & Purdy, 2017). If recent scientific reports (e.g. IPCC, 2014) are to be taken seriously, unprecedented worldwide catastrophe is not in our distant future but within a frightening short reach of time. The threat is no longer about how to avert environmental damage for future generations (e.g. Bruntland, 1987) but how to avert catastrophic and irreversible damage less than twelve years from now. To shift the current trajectory towards a more hopeful future will require massive changes to the status quo of organizations (IPCC, 2014). Researchers and practitioners alike are increasingly looking to social partnerships as a way to address complex grand challenges and steer the great ship of the earth and its inhabitants towards a more sustainable future (e.g. Seitanidi & Crane, 2013; United Nations, 2018).

Although social partnerships are looked upon as a promising way to address grand challenges, we actually know little about how social partnerships enable organizations to contribute towards a more sustainable future. In particular, we know little about how social partnerships enable organizations to push beyond the status quo by substantively integrating the ideals and practices of social movements, like the environmental or sustainability movements, that are aimed at addressing grand challenges. My dissertation research aims squarely at beginning to shed light on this particular, potentially pivotal role of social partnerships.

Indeed, my research shows that social partnerships play a critical role in enabling individuals inside organizations to overcome dominant market values that prioritize profit and efficiency, and to begin to shift towards more sustainable practices. My research indicates the social partnerships can serve as inter-organizational relational spaces that enable stakeholders to identify with the perspectives of other stakeholders. By serving as relational spaces, in which personal connections are fostered, social partnerships facilitate collaboration, among diverse stakeholders, towards the development of innovative solutions for shifting supply chains, long entrenched in market values, to also take social and environmental values into consideration.

Although my research points to the positive role of social partnerships, my research also cautions that the effects may not all be positive. The very collaborative processes that enable diverse perspectives and resources to be convened towards innovative solutions can also inadvertently support decoupling, whereby actions are merely symbolic and not representative of substantial and needed change. Most interestingly, perhaps, my research findings indicate that the decoupling that occurs in the context of social collaborations may not be intentional, much less conscious. This is actually positive news because it highlights the good intentions of organizational insiders, at least the ones in my setting, good intentions that might be leveraged to minimize or altogether avoid decoupling.

By all accounts, the members of the Procurement Lab perceived that all of the changes that they formulated together and integrated within their respective organizations were positive or substantive. Lacking from the Procurement Lab, however, was a mechanism for providing members with realistic feedback on the degree to which their actions were heading in

a more or less substantive direction. Also missing from the Procurement Lab was a set of evaluation criteria that would have provided such realistic feedback.

Jackie, the Procurement Lab's founder, shaped the Lab to build personal connections among members and between members and the larger community. Relational efficacy and relational identity clearly resulted from the way Jackie shaped the Lab, evidenced by the fact that the Lab is still going strong, with nearly all of the founding members still attending meetings and actively participating. Furthermore, as of writing this conclusion, the Procurement Lab continues to attract an ever-increasing amount of national and international attention and recognition.

I believe there is much to learn from the intentional, specific manner in which Jackie formed the Procurement Lab. The Lab's 'filtered' definition of local foods clearly represented decoupling and was significant in that it resulted in some changes being symbolic rather than substantive. However, it may be that the 'institutional legacy' (Greve, 2012) of strong, personal connectedness that was created by Jackie's intentional and specific formation of the Procurement Lab will eventually enable changes to become more towards substantial. Time and future research will hopefully shed light on this possibility.

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