

# Elite Status and Social Change: Using Field Analysis to Explain Policy Formation and Implementation

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*Integrating an analysis of fields into studies of social change provides a better understanding of the outcomes achieved by challengers. We demonstrate the value of field analysis through a case study of a social change effort regarding urban land use. An organization led by wealthy and well-connected individuals pressed city government and a powerful for-profit developer to incorporate progressive social goals into a new urban development project. We show how the organization was able to achieve success in the policy formation field but faced significantly more obstacles when trying to enter another field (policy implementation), despite its elite status. Thus, using fields to study the case can bolster scholars' understanding of elite power and status, as well as help explain outcomes. The advantages enjoyed by elites can be field specific rather than universal, and so do not translate automatically into successful challenge results. Keywords: field, elite, social movements, urban development, policy formation and implementation.*

Scholars of social movements and other kinds of contentious politics have increasingly focused on the complicated and sometimes neglected issue of the outcomes of social change efforts (Earl 2004; Giugni, McAdam, and Tilly 1999). In this article, we argue that integrating an analysis of fields into studies of social change allows for a fuller understanding of the outcomes achieved by challengers. Fields are local orders, "situations where organized groups of actors gather and frame their actions vis-à-vis one another" (Fligstein 2001:108).<sup>1</sup> Interplay between movement and organization scholars (Davis et al. 2005) has led to an increased interest in these institutional environments of challenger organizations. We carry this work further in presenting a concrete example of how fields matter for outcomes.

To illustrate the impact of fields in social change efforts, we use the case study of a land-use challenge: an organization pressing for the development of a new urbanist community in the space formerly occupied by Denver's Stapleton International Airport. This case is of particular interest because it focuses on the efforts of elite actors rather than a mass social movement. We show that using fields can bolster movement scholars' understanding of elite power and status by illustrating that the advantages enjoyed by elites can be field specific rather than universal, and therefore do not translate automatically into successful challenge results. Thus, our goals in this article are twofold: to demonstrate how an analysis of fields can be useful for

1. The concept of fields has origins in cultural sociology (Bourdieu 1984) as well, but here we relate more to its use in organizational theory.

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scholars of social change interested in examining challenge outcomes generally, and to further scholarly understanding of elite-led change in particular.

We illustrate these points through a case study of a struggle over land use in Denver. Urban sociologists of the past several decades have shown that land-use decisions are often important episodes of social and political contention (Harvey 1985; Logan and Molotch 1987; Molotch 1976). When the city of Denver decided to build a new airport, a group of wealthy and influential citizens challenged the mayor and city council to adopt a socially progressive plan for the old airport site. Instead of the city parceling the land into truck stops and warehouses for quick revenue, these citizens wanted the city to build a new community that would be economically and ethnically diverse, environmentally conscious, and innovative in the areas of workforce development and education. Because the site for this new community was not already occupied, this struggle over land use does not take the familiar shape of an indigenous population conflicting with proponents of gentrification or other forms of new development. Rather, Denver's business and philanthropic elites saw an opportunity and created a new entity, the Stapleton Redevelopment Foundation, to coordinate the effort to shape how Denver would use the Stapleton site.

### Understanding Elite-Led Change Efforts

Few scholars would label this organization and its allies, constituents, and funders a social movement: the Stapleton Redevelopment Foundation did not conduct activity outside institutionalized channels, nor place much emphasis on mass mobilization.<sup>2</sup> Its members' elite status meant that they did not have to depend primarily on the capital of outside sources to buy a voice in the debate. Instead, they were a small group of organized individuals who desired change, and who formed a resource-rich charitable organization to develop their vision. They were some of the city's wealthiest and most powerful elites, possessing significant political, cultural, and economic resources through their own bank accounts and their affiliations. Yet, the group sought social and political change and challenged authority by making claims on city government and a powerful corporation. Members had to organize, mobilize, and struggle to achieve their goals, which included such recognizably progressive objectives as workforce development and diversification, environmental protection and sustainability, affordable housing, and education reform. Thus, our case had movement-like (or at least movement-inspired) goals, and acted like a movement in some ways but like an interest group in others. During the time of contention we study, the organization achieved only mixed outcomes—its elite status, and the positive factors that movement scholars would expect to lead to its success, did not translate into gains across the board. How can we, then, understand this and other change efforts led by elite groups?

Elites have not been absent from the study of social change. In fact, one of the larger debates among social movement scholars has concerned the impact of elite involvement in contention: are elite actors the proactive conscience constituents of resource mobilization theory, or reactive co-opters who use funding as a means to channel protest (Haines 1984; Jenkins and Eckert 1986; McAdam 1982; Piven and Cloward 1977)? Some scholars have sought to complicate the terms of the debate. Tim Bartley (2007) illustrates how channeling occurs through the efforts of elite foundations to build and shape social movement fields. Fabio Rojas (2007) concludes that while foundations can contribute to movement outcomes, co-optation is not the only possible result. Susan A. Ostrander (1995) also challenges the co-optation thesis by showing that the organization of philanthropy matters: funders can be movement insiders and activists (see also Silver 1998).

2. While the organization did hold public forums where staff shared plans and solicited input, our research indicates that the public paid little attention to the project (interview with Tom Gougeon; interview with Kay Miller).

However, our case differs from these in that the elite actors are the central change agents, not simply funders of indigenous grassroots organizations. In our case, elite actors founded an organization that then pressed for voice and political change directly. Is this a case of an organization with a “movement face” but institutionalized repertoire?<sup>3</sup> Would social movement theory expect unqualified success from an organization with substantial financial resources, social status, and political connections? Integrating movement theory with an analysis of fields explains the outcomes achieved by an elite challenging group. Here, the elite group is not a shaper of a field of grantee organizations, but rather one element within several larger fields.

Understanding elite-led efforts is important because, in recent decades, much social and political change has resulted from the efforts of elite actors. Quintessential movements of past decades are now dominated by large, professionalized organizations (such as the National Organization for Women, the NAACP, Human Rights Campaign, Sierra Club), which are supported by wealthy individuals and foundations. These wealthy individuals and foundations, themselves, have come to play more active roles in creating and sustaining social change (consider the Ford Foundation, George Soros’ Open Society Institute, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, or even celebrities like Bono of the rock group U2). Our social movement society is characterized by more frequent protest conducted by diverse constituents for a wide range of claims (Meyer and Tarrow 1998). Thus, there may be “only a fuzzy and permeable boundary between institutionalized and noninstitutionalized politics” in terms of goals, targets, and even actors (Goldstone 2004:336). Edward T. Walker (2007) argues that this is the result of the two-way institutionalization of protest, or what he calls reciprocal diffusion, as a wide range of groups adopt movement-like tactics and movements themselves are institutionalized.<sup>4</sup> The blurred line between movements and the mainstream “makes possible protests orchestrated by well-heeled social actors” (Walker forthcoming:9). Thus, movement-style politics are no longer a last resort for people without power, but are utilized by a variety of groups, including elites. It seems logical to expect, then, that social movement theory should be useful for explaining more institutional action, even that undertaken by elite actors.

Indeed, in the past several years, movement theory has expanded to include phenomena that previous scholars did not consider to be social movements at all. This wide-ranging work on movements in different types of organizations and/or with targets other than the state broadens our sense of where movements happen, whom they involve, and what they look like (Binder 2002; Davis et al. 2005; Raeburn 2004; Scully and Creed 2005; Scully and Segal 2002; Van Dyke, Soule and Taylor 2004; Zald and Berger 1978; Zald, Morrill, and Rao 2005). A growing body of literature (Andrews and Edwards 2004; Bartley 2007; Burstein 1998, 1999; Clemens and Minkoff 2004; Lounsbury, Ventresca, and Hirsch 2003; Oliver and Marwell 1992; Tarrow 1994) pushes us to reconsider what we think we know about the differences between social movements and more institutionalized forms of politics. Finally, scholars relabeled the object of study to stress the “mutually constitutive relationship between institutional and contentious politics” (McAdam 2001:223; see also Aminzade et al 2001; Myers and Cress 2004; Tilly and Tarrow 2007). In total, these different lines of research have advanced the field both by recognizing that efforts at political or social change can take a variety of forms, and by showing connections between politics through noninstitutional and institutional means.

We build on the work of this growing group of scholars by making use of concepts drawn from social movement theory (political opportunities, resource mobilization, and framing) to evaluate a case of elite-led change. However, we also argue that a more thorough understanding of the outcomes of this case requires connecting movement theory with an analysis of fields.

3. Fabio Rojas, personal communication.

4. Scholars differ on the fate of movements undergoing institutionalization: Katzenstein (1998) contends that protest within institutions is evidence of an expansion of activism, while McCarthy and Phail (1998) suggest that the institutionalization of protest diminishes its impact. We do not enter this debate here.

## Why Fields Matter

The increasing dialogue between researchers who study movements and those who study organizations (see especially Davis et al. 2005) has led to a new focus on the importance of external contexts on multiple levels: organizations belong to both a larger institutional environment and to local orders, or fields.<sup>5</sup> Within fields, organizations are governed by formal rules and procedures but also by normative values and cultural scripts (Bartley 2007; DiMaggio and Powell 1991; McAdam and Scott 2005; Scott [1995] 2001).<sup>6</sup> These shared meanings define social relationships and guide interactions by providing legitimacy for decisions, which explains why much organized life is slow to change: routines are taken for granted. Different fields are governed by different logics of action (Friedland and Alford 1991). Fields are structured to favor those institutional actors whose interests and actions in the field are expected and routinized. In turn, these institutional actors seek to play the game according to the rules already set up for the field and to exclude illegitimate actors, whose interests and roles are unrecognized in the field of action. Still, change is possible through the efforts of socially skilled actors (Fligstein 2001), who can gain legitimacy for their change efforts through the use of larger cultural systems, political maneuvers, and/or organizational practices (Binder 2002; Skrentny 2006).

A few scholars have shown that fields impact movements, often by carrying institutional logics. Elizabeth A. Armstrong (2002) shows that the changing structure of a local lesbian and gay movement is explained by the symbolic environment of the organizational field, crystallized around particular institutional logics that shift over time. We agree with Armstrong's (2002) assertion that challenges can be seen as "collective efforts to create new fields or to transform existing fields" (p. 11) and show how Stapleton was trying to transform the field of urban development to allow for the participation of a new kind of actor. However, where Armstrong examines the growth and change of a group of organizations within a field over time, we examine how the logic of fields impacted the level of success our challenger organization was able to achieve. This work builds on that of John Skrentny (2002), who emphasizes the impact of institutional logics of legitimacy on social movement outcomes in 1960s/70s minority rights struggles, and Amy Binder (2002), who demonstrates that institutional logics in both local-level fields and larger contexts matter for challenger outcomes in curriculum debates by creating consensus about how things should be done. In this article, the analysis of fields is brought to the forefront by examining an organization that experienced a shift in fields during its challenge, and the impact that change of fields had on the other factors that affect social change efforts.

Additional researchers have considered the links between fields and elite actors as part of larger research projects. Bartley (2007) and Rojas (2007) note specifically the role of foundations that fund movement organizations as institutional carriers, enforcing the rules, ideologies, and practices of the field. However, we stress that actors within fields also regulate action by excluding illegitimate actors—and elite status is no guarantee of legitimacy. While the organization we study had resources similar to those in Bartley's and Rojas's works, those resources did not guarantee it the position of institutional carrier. In fact, we argue that elite status can be field specific. Therefore, it is possible that some elite actors do not necessarily shape or police the field, as shown in these prior studies, but rather are constrained by its logic of action and/or excluded by other actors within it.

5. Crossley (2003) notes that resource mobilization theorists McCarthy and Zald (1977) anticipated the concept by depicting a relational, institutionalized space of social movement activities: movement organizations navigating movement industries that are in turn embedded in the movement sector.

6. The cultural aspect of fields may make their use with social movement concepts particularly valuable, in that the concept of fields provides one way to link cultural aspects (legitimacy and meanings) to structural factors (such as resources and political opportunities) in exploring change efforts.

Other scholars have suggested modifications to movement theories in order to better take account of field dynamics: Jack Goldstone (2004) suggests replacing the political opportunities concept with “external relational fields” in order to capture a more specific picture of movements’ local contexts. Unlike Goldstone, we do not believe that fields replace other factors identified by theorists as important to explaining movement emergence and activity. Rather, we argue that the positions held by challengers within fields impact factors like political opportunities, resources, and framing. For example, Nick Crossley (2003) theorizes that social movement activists enter multiple fields, and each field has different rules. Financial, social, and cultural resources that give advantages to actors in one field do not automatically transfer into other fields—nor do the changes achieved by those actors. Our case illustrates both of these points clearly. In the analysis below, we highlight how an organization composed of elite actors with significant resources (financial, social, cultural, and political) was able to achieve success in one field but faced significantly more obstacles when trying to enter another. We examine how challenge factors played out in two fields entered by the organization we study, and how the fields impacted those factors.

### **A Shift in Fields: Policy Formation versus Implementation**

We characterize the organization as moving into two different fields during the episode of contention: one during the period of policy formation, and another during policy implementation. Political sociology’s emphasis on the divide between policy formation and policy implementation phases provides scholars more purchase on exploring different phases of challenger activity. While Sarah A. Soule and Brayden G. King (2006; see also King, Cornwall and Dahlin 2005) have shown that even the policy formation process actually consists of different stages that impact movement influence, we focus on the critical split between efforts to make policy and efforts to implement policy once made (again, this is especially important when considering outcomes). As identified by William A. Gamson ([1975]1990) and Michael Lipsky (1968), among others, when states respond to movement demands, they typically do so only cosmetically, with no significant follow-through. For this reason, challengers must ensure that favored policies are actually implemented adequately. Few movement scholars have acknowledged the importance of this step. Kenneth Andrews’s (2001) article is an important exception, though it does not try to explain the distinctiveness of this stage.<sup>7</sup>

Since at least the early 1970s, however, political scientists have identified the implementation stage as a distinct stage from lawmaking, but nevertheless an intensely political one and not merely “administration” (Nakamura and Smallwood 1980). These scholars have identified that implementation has its own dynamics and political logics, where implementing agencies seek consensus and try to follow the law but also try to maintain themselves and grow (Rein and Rabinovitz 1978). This stage typically involves new dynamics between different levels of government (Derthick 1972). Eugene Bardach (1977) argues that it is a whole new game involving different parties and different strategies. We build on this work to argue that the policy implementation phase moves action into a new field.

Thus, combining the ideas of fields and the policy formation/implementation split helps us to explain the outcomes achieved by the organization under study here. Policy formation and implementation stages of the political process involve different fields, and attention to their differences reveals the multiple stages of activity of our organization and the divergent levels of impact the organization was able to have in each field. In this framework, Gamson’s ([1975]1990) two-part definition of social movement success is filtered through the field concept: challenging groups must be accepted by members of the field as valid actors within the

7. Andrews and Edwards (2004) discuss several different phases for movements: agenda setting, access to decision-making arenas, achieving policies, implementation, and shifting long-term priorities/resources.

field, and group gains in one field do not translate automatically to gains in another field. This idea is crucial for understanding social change efforts, especially why elites—so close to the state in many ways—might be forced into movement-like struggles, and why those struggles might not succeed despite their backers' elite status. Examining fields therefore helps explain challenge outcomes for elite-led change efforts.

### Structure of the Analysis

To reflect the differences in fields faced by our elite organization in the policy formation and implementation stages of political change, we divide our analysis into two parts. This is also meant to underscore the importance of studying challenge outcomes in multiple phases of activity, beyond just mobilization or claims making, or even initial success in policy formation. In each part, we begin with a description of the field at that stage in the policy process. We then use the social movement concepts of political opportunities, resources, and framing to analyze the strategies, successes, and failures of the organization we study. Although some scholars have criticized these social movement concepts for unnecessarily separating culture from structure, or for analytical imprecision (Gamson and Meyer 1996; Goodwin and Jasper 2003), we do not engage those debates here. Though imperfect, for our purposes, the concepts of opportunities, resources, and frames do illuminate the case and show how the dynamics of contention change from one field to the next.

### The Case and Data Collection

This is a case study of the Stapleton Redevelopment Foundation, later renamed the Stapleton Foundation, a group that pressed the city and a powerful for-profit developer to incorporate social goals as part of a new urban development project called Stapleton.<sup>8</sup> The Stapleton Foundation (or the Foundation) is a nonprofit organization (recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) public charity) in the city of Denver, founded and financed by a small group of wealthy individuals and established nonprofit organizations with regular links to government. To conduct the case study, we collected original data for a period of one year. We tape-recorded 30 interviews with key actors in the change effort, including the organization's founders and directors, city planners and politicians, representatives for the developer, local contractors, school board members, citizen activists, and affordable housing proponents. One prominent section of our interviews was devoted to questions of goals, including how different stakeholders conceptualized and planned the new community development. Another section of the interview focused on process, particularly how different actors advocated for these goals; while a third set of questions focused on respondents' assessments of the degree to which the outcomes ultimately achieved in the built environment matched the goals set out by the Foundation. Each interview lasted between one and two hours. We also read more than 300 articles in Denver's two daily newspapers, *The Denver Post* and *The Rocky Mountain News*, which we collected using the Lexis-Nexis database. Additionally, we collected data during public meetings held during this one-year period. We coded and sorted all of these data on several questions of interest, including goals setting ("affordable housing," "diversity of the labor force"), processes ("framing," "mobilizing the community"), and discourses of contention ("city's level of commitment"). We also referred to online and archival materials for background information, including the monthly *Stapleton Front Porch* newsletter (now published by the developer) and various reports from the city of Denver.

8. Where used, names of people and organizations are real, not pseudonyms.

## Stage I: Policy Formation, 1989–1995

### *Policy Formation Field and its Actors*

Our story begins in the late 1980s, when the city council and the mayor of Denver, Federico Peña, decided to close down the city's airport and build a new international airfield 25 miles outside the city. The consequences of the decision to replace Stapleton airport with the new Denver International Airport (DIA) were many, but among them was the opening up of a large plot of developable land on the old site. The site was composed of 4,700 acres, or 7.5 square miles, and rested just five miles from downtown Denver. The question quickly became: what should be done with the vacant land? To generate ideas for Stapleton's future, in 1988, the mayor appointed his top aide, Tom Gougeon, to lead a staff effort, and also formed a separate Citizens Advisory Board (CAB). Gougeon, who had helped develop the original DIA plan, had a deep understanding of the intricacies of acquiring, developing, and selling land for the city, and was well regarded as a leader in this new project.

At the same time, an elite group of business and civic leaders formed to generate its own ideas for the land. The group was convened by a local multimillionaire named Sam Gary, the president and founder of Gary-Williams, a large energy corporation in Denver, as well as the chairman of a local progressive private operating foundation funded by his company, known as the Piton Foundation. Gary invited several of the city's influential lawyers, bankers, and other civic leaders to form the board of the new Stapleton Redevelopment Foundation, which would develop a socially conscious plan for the site. To further fund their venture, the new board members convinced local philanthropic organizations to invest in the project.

Although the business and civic leaders on the Foundation board had little experience with redevelopment, and the foundation investors were unaccustomed to backing such an unconventional cause, the assembled group received a charge from Gary. He wanted them to guide the generation of wide-ranging ideas—gratis to the city—about how the Stapleton land could be used to create long-term social and economic value for the city as a whole, and for the concerns of the racially and economically diverse communities immediately surrounding the land in Northeast Denver. While still nascent at this point, the goals of the original leaders concerned creating demographically diverse neighborhoods, preserving open lands, and creating a community more environmentally sustainable than most land development projects. The new organization hoped that the city would welcome its efforts to collaborate on the project, particularly given that city leaders were overwhelmed with work on DIA. After quickly raising \$5 million in private funds, the Foundation paid for consulting in the areas of urban planning, architecture, landscape architecture, design, progressive education, environmental sciences, market and financial analysis, and project management, and applied those ideas to a long-term, overarching plan for developing Stapleton.

Why did this group of civic leaders decide proactively to pursue a role in the city's future land development, a field of activity with which, to that point, the participants had only peripheral experience? The simple answer is that they did not trust city government to create an innovative, socially equitable, and progressive plan for the land. As we learned from interviews with several of these actors, the first fear animating this group was that the city—particularly under any future mayor's administration, once Peña had decided not to run for a third term—might be shortsighted about long-term development and might begin selling off Stapleton land ad hoc, without thinking about long-term potential value to the community. The leaders worried that without a coherent long-term plan in place, city officials—a new mayor, the planning department, and the aviation department—would transfer parcels of land in small-acreage pieces for warehouses and strip businesses, like truck stops and auto auctions.

The second type of mistrust motivating the group was the problem of political interests. The organization's leaders had witnessed how several previous large developments in Denver had become "political footballs" among city managers, politicians, and developers,

who frequently had diverging ideas and interests.<sup>9</sup> Added to this concern about everyday city politics was the group's realization that because of its size, the Stapleton land would likely have to be developed over more than two decades and over the course of at least four mayors' administrations. While the organization's leaders viewed Peña's current administration as progressive and measured in the area of community development, they feared that future city administrations might lack "vision" and that the process would become politicized.<sup>10</sup>

To prevent these potential outcomes, the Foundation took action by entering the field of urban land development—yet in the course of this action, many of the group's fears were realized. The city, and the large developer it hired, *were* resistant, not only to many of the details of the plan that eventually emerged, but, even more so, to the organization's very right to make ongoing claims in the area of urban development. The Foundation found itself attempting to "stay in the game" and assert legitimacy in the field by leveraging political opportunities, mobilizing third-party allies, and strategically framing its goals.

### *Political Opportunities*

To make headway in a change effort, challengers must recognize how to exploit existing political opportunities that arise in the field of contention. While conceptualizations of political opportunities vary greatly, the overall issue at stake is the interaction between challengers and their context (Meyer 2004). Typical of opportunities of this type are elite cleavages and/or allies, diminished repression, wars, and economic shifts (McAdam 1982, 1996; Tarrow 1998). Later theory on political process demonstrates that rather than construing political opportunities as events that may or may not befall challengers fortuitously, we should instead recognize that challengers exercise agency to create political opportunities (Morris 2000) and that broad cultural repertoires provide the context for opportunities (McCammon et al. 2001). We see evidence of the impact of political opportunities on the Stapleton Redevelopment Foundation's activities in the ways they exploited both access to the state and state allies.

*Access to the State.* When they first mobilized to create the Foundation, elite members combined (1) skepticism about future administrations' politically expedient impulses with (2) cautious optimism that if the foundation could get a development plan in place, then such expedience could be contained. As events unfolded, it became clear that Peña's successor Wellington Webb was not especially supportive of the Foundation's development plan. According to several interviewees, as well as reports in *The Denver Post* and *The Rocky Mountain News*, the new mayor was suspicious of business elites in the city of Denver as a whole (most had not supported his candidacy), and he cared little about the Stapleton development (critics claimed he was more concerned about downtown development and had little interest in promoting Peña's legacy). Elected in June 1991, the new mayor did not assign oversight of the Stapleton project to any member of his staff for seven months. Over the next year of work, 1992–1993, the city neither embraced nor rejected a relationship with the elites, even as the Foundation was holding community discussions, sending emissaries to look at socially conscious projects around the country, and researching contemporary ideas about land development. When it did attend to Stapleton, the city did so only in terms of thinking about *interim* use of the land, such as when the mayor agreed with an aide to sell off corner parcels of the land to a large grocery chain for its warehouse facilities.

The ambivalence of Webb and his aides toward the Foundation was well known throughout the city. On the one hand, the mayor and some of his agency directors recognized that having a plan developed for the site at the organization's expense was a beneficial opportunity—particularly when the city's energies were being consumed by other developments,

9. Interview with Tim Howard.

10. Interview with Sam Gary.



including the new airport.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, land development is ordinarily *city* business, and city staff and politicians saw the Foundation's leaders as interlopers on what rightfully was a project that belonged to them. When asked if the city regarded the activities of the organization as friendly or threatening, one interviewee<sup>12</sup> close to the Foundation reported that relations between the Webb administration and the philanthropic group were strained:

There's always going to be a built-in reaction of city government to noncity people. No matter who they are, there's always a little bit of that because there's always *turf* . . . After Webb was elected, the truth is that [city sentiment] evolved even more into, "Who are these guys? They are an elitist group. *We're* the city, *we'll* figure this out. What are they up to?" [It was] not overtly hostile, but a lot of passive-aggressive behaviors.

This interviewee went on to say:

Webb's world is a little bit more of a political world: You punish your enemies; reward your friends . . . These guys [involved with creating a plan for Stapleton] weren't his friends. "They didn't give me money, they didn't vote for me, so why would I deal with them? They're just a bunch of rich white guys who want to do something here."

Perceiving this level of mistrust in the newly elected administration, members of the elite group concluded that to persuade Webb and his aides, they would need to hire a director and staff who not only had expertise in urban planning, but also had ties with Denver city staff. To secure these ties and expertise, the group courted Tom Gougeon, who had worked on the Stapleton project in the previous administration. Gougeon was sympathetic to the emerging vision of the founders and eventually agreed to head the Foundation. According to Gougeon, the elite group hired him for three reasons:

[First,] to understand the property as property, and how it fits in an urban context, and planning, and development. [Second,] they wanted some understanding of the city as an institution, and the politics, and the reality of how you deal with this. And [third,] to some extent, they wanted strategic thinking about "What's the vision? What's the process? How do you get from here, to wherever it is, to find the objective? What is it that we are trying to achieve?" And to come up with some way to rally the business community and the philanthropic community to do it.<sup>13</sup>

Hiring Gougeon to head their well-resourced organization illustrates that the Foundation's leaders were trying to gain access to the state. The board had to overcome Gougeon's trepidation about signing on to lead the new group—it was, after all, uncertain how long the Foundation would exist or what it would be able to accomplish, given the city's apparent lack of interest. But board members understood that they needed a leader who could provide access to the city for their change effort, and they vigorously pursued the former Peña aide. Based on his history of contacts within the city, the Foundation believed that Gougeon knew how to penetrate the routines and logics of city decision-making and authority, and to work, in essence, from the inside.

*Elite Competition and State Allies.* Sidney Tarrow (1998) argues that there are conditions under which some members of the targeted institution (state or other) will choose to align their interests and activities with movement demands: specifically, when they believe that by doing so they will get leverage over their institutional rivals. These are a movement's state allies. Linda Brewster Stearns and Paul Almeida (2004) suggest that state allies are key to understanding policy outcomes. An important, though often implicit, assumption underlying this perspective is that the target state is not a single, cohesive unit, whose incumbents'

11. Interview with Kay Miller.

12. Interview with respondent requesting anonymity.

13. Interview with Tom Gougeon.

interests are unified, harmonious, and always antagonistic to movement goals, but rather that the state is more aptly described as a divided power base, with representatives of different constituent agencies sometimes at odds with each other.

The Foundation's leaders recognized such divisions in Denver, and strategically attempted to develop alliances with what they perceived to be friendly segments of city government. For example, the Foundation aligned early on with one especially outspoken and supportive city council member, Happy Haynes:

Happy was good at being kind of a go-between with, on the one hand, the Mayor and staff, and on the other hand, us [the Foundation] and the community. While the Mayor didn't always follow her advice, she did have more opportunity to tell him what would work, and be well received by the community, and what would not.<sup>14</sup>

Other allies included the city's planning and economic development directors (Webb political appointees who had long-standing relationships with the business community and community groups); as well as Webb's second chief of staff (who had served on the city council and had close contact with several Foundation board members and staff). These three top city employees, along with Haynes, were crucial allies for convincing the rest of the city council and the mayor to support a partnership with the Foundation. Partially pulled by the council member's and the directors' long-term interest in the project, and partially pushed by his own political needs to do *something* about Stapleton, in 1993, Mayor Webb agreed to a limited partnership agreement with the Foundation.

Two years later, in 1995, these allies played a critical role in getting the city to adopt the finished plan. Six years after the organization's leaders first came together to discuss their vision, and three years after they had formally organized the Foundation under Gougeon, the Denver City Council voted to approve the redevelopment plan. Haynes, who was the council representative from the district closest to Stapleton, had by that time been a long-time supporter of the plan and an important interlocutor between the mayor's office and the Foundation. The council voted unanimously for the plan, in part because Haynes was behind it, and also because council members now widely viewed the organization favorably, as an entity that worked on the city's behalf to develop a visionary plan (the council had always been friendlier to the Foundation's leaders than the mayor had been). Once the city council voted in favor of the redevelopment, the mayor began to express more vocal support for the Stapleton project.

The Foundation's access to the state, foremost through Gougeon, and its ability to win state allies were two critical components, among others, of these early successes in the policy formation field. Additional factors related to the group's resources.

### *Resources*

Resource mobilization theory (McCarthy and Zald 1977) recognizes the impact of resources (time, money, facilities, legitimacy), as well as the support of nonstate allies, on any challenge's emergence and success. While the concept of resources has been applied to many different types of movement assets (Edwards and McCarthy 2004), here we concentrate on the Foundation's access to material and organizational resources as well as third-party allies.

*Material and Organizational Resources.* As described above, the Foundation was rich in financial resources. The board was populated by some of the city's most affluent business and civic leaders, who were able to use their contacts and credibility to raise large amounts of money from area foundations and to spend those millions of dollars to purchase expert consultation, to hire staff, and to acquire office space. Among those it hired were Gougeon; successive

14. Written communication with Tom Gougeon, 2005.

directors Kay Miller and Beverly Haddon (respectively, the director of another property re-use project in Denver, and the head of a prominent Denver foundation); and program officers like Brian Weber, formerly a reporter for the *Denver Post*. These were highly connected individuals in the Denver area who drew on vast networks of contacts in the city and who, in their prior positions, had many years of experience leading organizations. Although there was a good deal of uncertainty over whether and how the Foundation would succeed in pressuring the city to listen to it, many resource-rich enterprises were willing to put their faith in the organization's board and staff and to donate. In terms of financial and organizational resources, the Foundation was in a good position to leverage power with the city.

*Third-Party (Nonstate) Allies.* Another resource that movement organizations attempt to marshal is what Tarrow (1998) calls nonstate, third-party allies who offer special expertise and/or pressure the state to act (*state* allies are treated as offering increased political opportunities, above). The Foundation sought to develop relationships with a variety of third-party allies, some proficient in the technical details of progressive community development, and others who provided a type of citizen constituency for its goals.

Among the many allies who provided technical assistance were local affordable housing organizations, urban design planners, and education specialists. As one education policy reformer recalls, the Foundation would host small conferences, call together meetings, or set up lunch dates with him and other educators to discuss new types of progressive school organizations that ought to be built on the site, and strategies for pushing the school district and the mayor to respond to their ideas.<sup>15</sup> Our interviews are filled with similar reports of meetings on housing, parks, workforce diversity, and environmental conservation. Because of their long-standing reputations in the city, organization staff and board members easily mobilized the short- and long-term support from such allies.

The Foundation also sought allies in neighborhood groups, which were seen as giving moral weight to its demands on the city. According to newspaper accounts and the recollections of several of our interviewees, staff and board members had preexisting trusting relationships with these groups built in other community endeavors, and saw that they could draw upon those social ties to put pressure on the city. One of the Foundation's strongest allies ended up being the CAB, which the mayor had established at the time of the city's initial agreement to partner with the Foundation. The advisory board's membership, appointed by the mayor, was composed of professional, political, and area business representatives, as well as neighborhood association members, whose charge was to oversee the Foundation's work to create the Stapleton development plan (Stapleton 2003). As this work proceeded, the advisory board became a progressively closer ally.

Due, in part, to this mix of relationships that the organization had with third-party expert and local community allies, it was difficult for the mayor (and the majority of his staff) to ignore the Foundation's efforts. Over time, according to one of our interviewees, "these relationships made it increasingly necessary for the city to listen to what the Foundation had to say, and think about whether it could be helpful."<sup>16</sup> Both citizens' support of the Foundation's goals and area specialists' efforts to help the group strategize caused the mayor to remain connected to the project, even when his own personal distrust of the organization and his desire to maintain city authority over development threatened to pull him away.

### ***Framing***

In addition to mobilizing resources and exploiting political opportunities, challenge leaders must also outline a course of new action and give potential adherents a reason to support

15. Interview with Van Schoales.

16. Interview with Alan Gottlieb.

the challenge. Theorists have labeled this effort to organize meaning framing, which is now seen as a central dynamic in social movements (Benford and Snow 2000). Social movements frame their goals for multiple constituencies to diagnose a situation as a problem requiring change, to set parameters for solving that problem, and to give constituents a sense of a new identity that might emerge from the action (Snow et al. 1986). Although most theories focus on framing as a technique for mobilizing potential adherents, some recent efforts examine framing directed at state actors (Binder 2002) and toward opponents or the general public (Benford and Snow 2000) as part of an effort to achieve goals. Daniel Cress and David Snow (2000) argue that movements must attend to “diagnostic framing,” which problematizes an issue and assigns blame, and “prognostic framing,” which identifies remedies for the problem. Both types of frames are more effective when they are “articulate” or specific. During the policy formation phase, Foundation staff and board members framed their project for city agencies and the community.

*The Foundation’s Frames.* The Foundation began with a disadvantage from the standpoint of framing theory in that there was no specific, long-standing injustice or problem that its activities were designed to rectify. The organization instead put together a diagnostic frame emphasizing the existence of a chance that should not be wasted, that the city should seize the opportunity “to plan and manage its own future” (Newcomer 1995:A20). Foundation leaders gave greater attention to prognostic framing, beginning with a focus on the public benefits that would follow from the principles of their new urbanist vision and culminating in a slick, professional, published prognostic tour de force.

Foundation elites argued for their plan in an assortment of venues and contexts: in public community forums; in interviews with Denver’s media reporters, who covered the forums and city meetings; with city planners, in an effort to get political support; and in their efforts to raise money from philanthropists to continue funding the plan. They said that the Stapleton development would economically benefit the city by creating new mixed-use areas and by paying off debts for the new airport; create diverse community-focused neighborhoods where people from different income levels would want to live and work; connect the new community with existing low-income neighborhoods through adopting and improving overpopulated and underserved schools, recreation areas, and parks; provide work opportunities for underrepresented workers in the construction phases and in commercial areas, once built; and create an environmentally sustainable development where open lands would be preserved, smaller lawns would need less water, and pedestrian-friendly streets would encourage more walking and less driving.<sup>17</sup>

These framing activities reached their apex in March 1995, when the Foundation presented “The Stapleton Development Plan: Integrating Jobs, Environment, and Community” to the Denver city council. This published report, called the “Green Book” because of both the color of its cover stock and its environmentally friendly content, is a 200-page, sophisticated document, which, from the opening page to the last, advertises its hybrid social consciousness and political/business savvy. The inside title page contains a statement that the book is printed on recycled paper with soy-based inks; the last page acknowledges all those in city government and the private, public, and nonprofit sectors who assisted in the vision, despite the fact that some of the city representatives thanked were only marginally supportive throughout the process. In the body of the document, the Green Book frames the social goals for the development while also nodding deferentially to the development’s many benefactors in the city, including the mayor’s office, various city agencies, funders, and CAB representatives.

Designed mostly for decision makers, as both a direct blueprint for developers and a plan for the city to use in pressing demands with those developers, the Green Book reiterates the logic of new urbanist development for the Stapleton land. Filled with drawings and plans, the

17. Interview with Dick Anderson.

Green Book describes the history of Denver and its airport, documents the citizen input that the Foundation sought over the years of planning, and asks rhetorically what Stapleton's role in the future of the city should be. In the middle of the book are sections on the Foundation's social goals: environmental responsibility, social equity, and economic opportunity. Physical design and implementation sections follow, anchoring the visions to real development processes. In short, the Green Book portrays Denver as a special place, with special people and special neighborhoods, and proposes wise urban planning to protect the city's legacy. It is difficult to imagine a more articulate prognostic frame than the one used by the Foundation.

With the publication of the Green Book, and the plan's adoption by the city council, the first stage of the Stapleton Foundation's efforts came to a close. Having exploited political opportunities, having generated and used its resources well, and having created effective framing techniques, the Foundation ended stage I, its work in the policy development field, with what by almost any measure would be called a success.

## **Stage II: Policy Implementation, 1995 to Present**

While quite successful in the policy formation stage, which involved getting the city to buy into its plans, the Foundation has been less successful in the implementation stage, which involves ensuring that its social principles actually get incorporated into the building of the site. As we show below, increased resistance to many of the Foundation's principles arose once the city began negotiating a purchase agreement with a national developer to build and coordinate development and as that developer grew increasingly powerful on the site. In this section, we document the elite organization's declining influence on the Stapleton development, and analyze how and why the city and the developer have been able to marginalize the Foundation. A newly constituted political field—which featured new players with new interests and a different understanding of legitimate action within the field—affected the political opportunities available to the organization, changed the value of its resources, and altered the degree to which its frames would resonate. When the Foundation entered the field of urban development in the implementation stage it was viewed and treated differently by others in the field, and the effects of its challenge were diluted.

### ***The New Field***

Once the Green Book was adopted as the visionary guide for developing Stapleton land, the next looming matter concerned the *process* for how the development should occur: how should the land be sold, in what size parcels, and under what management schema? To handle these issues, the Foundation encouraged the city to establish a new entity, empowered with the authority to make decisions consistent with the Green Book, but which would not be overly associated with the Foundation's original founders and staff—who had long presented a perceived threat to the mayor and his staff. As Gougeon recalls this strategy, his thinking was that the city could not be trusted to remain true to the plan's vision without some oversight, but that the city would not welcome such oversight directly from the Foundation:

We concluded that a nonprofit development corporation would be the best vehicle to act as the city's alter ego in disposition. The Stapleton Redevelopment Foundation was already a nonprofit, and could have played this role. But we wanted an entity the city would feel ownership in.<sup>18</sup>

Wanting to signal his administration's commitment to "green development," but not simultaneously seem beholden to the Foundation, the mayor agreed and, in 1995, the city created a

18. Interview with Tom Gougeon.

new entity called the Stapleton Development Corporation (SDC): a private, nonprofit, quasi-governmental agency that was structured to be separate from both the Foundation and city government, but which had working ties to both. The Foundation was actively involved in identifying and recruiting the board members who were named to SDC and, once the organization was formed, the Foundation staffed its search for a director. There was good reason to believe that SDC would be able to play a strong role on behalf of the vision.

SDC's most pressing task was to determine the process by which the property would be acquired from the city, and to determine responsibility for cleaning up the site before infrastructure and housing construction could begin. While there had been some talk early on that SDC might appoint itself to be the master developer (thereby maintaining considerable control over the implementation of the project), it soon became clear that the costs of cleaning up an old airport site and building infrastructure ran to the hundreds of millions of dollars. Even the Foundation was forced to conclude that SDC would have to select a very large, very rich master developer to put up the money to manage such development. In late 1998, with the blessing of the city council and the mayor, SDC chose Forest City Enterprises, Inc., a Cleveland-based corporation, to serve as that master developer. Forest City would buy land from the city in five separate parcels over a planned 25 years, take full responsibility for funding clean-up and infrastructure building, and, later, select retail and local home developers and contractors. In exchange for assuming such high financial risk, the master developer would reap full financial rewards if and when the project proved attractive to home and business owners. SDC would establish performance benchmarks, in keeping with the Green Book, as the project progressed.

In the final steps of getting Stapleton off the ground, in 2000, the city of Denver and Forest City signed a purchase agreement detailing the rights and responsibilities of each party. At the table were the mayor's staff, representing the city; representatives of Forest City, the developer; and leaders of SDC, who had the formal authority to ensure that the Green Book plans would be incorporated. Yet, despite this formal authority, according to several of our interviewees, the city intervened very actively in SDC's negotiation with Forest City, undermining much of the SDC negotiator's authority. Before we explain how the city and developer managed to undermine SDC's authority (and many of the Foundation's interests), we provide a quick tour of the details of this purchase agreement and several of the outcomes that are being realized on the site.

### *Assessment of Outcomes*

Compared to its earlier victories in the policy formation field, the Foundation has found less success in the implementation field. The Green Book laid out the Foundation's ideal vision of success, yet the purchase agreement between the city and developer and its subsequent implementation have not included all of the goals in the Green Book. Positively, as the development's advocates point out, the built environment at Stapleton is showing some of the Green Book's vision: rather than sprouting industrial parks and fast food restaurants, the tract showcases homes, schools, and open spaces. As of 2008, some 3,000 housing units had been built, a portion of which are either rental units or subsidized private homes for low-income families and seniors. This combination of home prices and rentals in a new development suggests some commitment toward the mixed-income/affordable housing goal. On the environmental front, the proximity of local area retail and services to neighborhoods encourages walking, and there is a vast expanse of open space that cannot be developed. Builders are also "building green" on the site by minimizing the size of lawns and maximizing public park space. Towards the Foundation's education goals, an innovative combined-use public school and progressive charter elementary school opened its doors in 2003, and a charter high school—requiring 40 percent of its students to meet low-income criteria—opened in 2004. In short, the built environment—featuring possibilities for some economic diversity, educational

opportunities for surrounding poor neighborhoods, and environmental sustainability—shows progress. None of these social benefits would have occurred if the Foundation’s leaders had not participated early and persuasively in the city’s plans for the property.

This is not inconsequential. As the urban sociologist Peter Evans (2002) indicates, coalitions of private and public actors that construct urban markets normally have socially minimalist goals, “the most important being preserving the property rights of the most powerful market” (p. 6). Substituting these “minimalist markets” with ones that have social goals is critical to creating livable communities. Additionally, Denver is not known for urban vision. One respondent stated that “In Denver, very few people actually cared very much” about what would happen at Stapleton.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the Foundation, as an affluent group of funders and staff, agitated enough to make some positive changes at the site. Through their ability to craft and exploit political opportunities, their use of organizational and material resources, and their persuasive framing, the Foundation intervened in the policy development field and ensured that Stapleton is on the road to being neither a hodgepodge of truck stops and fast food restaurants, nor a suburbanized gated community like other new developments.

However, implementation has attracted serious critique, with detractors arguing that many of the Green Book’s most progressive goals have been compromised. A former head of the Stapleton Foundation argues that Forest City circumvented the Foundation’s role by restricting its power to do its job:

What was unfortunate for me, was that I took the job at the Stapleton Foundation believing that its mission was really to be the watchdog for the Green Book. And that is not the way that it played out, and that is why I am not there anymore . . . We fully expected the SDC was going to go out of business, and that the Stapleton Foundation would become the keeper of the Green Book, and that’s what I really thought we were there to do. And that didn’t turn out to be the case. So I feel like there were a lot of compromises made.<sup>20</sup>

One of the groups most disapproving of these sorts of compromises is, not surprisingly, affordable housing advocates, who point to the developer’s resistance to ensuring a significant supply of “truly affordable housing.”<sup>21</sup> But critics also include the Foundation’s original designers, who fault the city for not putting enough sustained pressure on the developer to uphold many of the original goals. The purchase agreement, signed by the two powerful actors—the city and the developer—defines “affordable homeownership” as housing that meets the needs of families earning 80 percent of the area median income. Housing advocates call this standard “laughable” for creating truly mixed income neighborhoods.<sup>22,23</sup> The developer has guaranteed no more than 200 for-sale units (out of an eventual total of 12,000) to be developed by nonprofit agencies serving families making below half of the median income (McGhee 2007).<sup>24,25</sup>

Other critics complain that Forest City has not built economically integrated neighborhoods, instead clustering \$1 million houses in one section of the development and lower-end homes and rental units in another. According to an interviewee who works at the development’s affordable housing builder, Mercy Housing:

19. Interview with Tim Howard.

20. Interview with Kay Miller.

21. Interview with Josh Russell.

22. Median household income in the Metro Denver area was \$60,344 in 2008 (Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce n.d.). Affordable housing advocates urged Stapleton decision makers to include housing for families with incomes lower than 80 percent AMI.

23. Interview with Aaron Miripol.

24. According to *The Denver Post* (McGhee 2007) and Brian Weber, program officer at the Foundation, 158 homes were subsidized for low-income residents, and 186 were rental units for low-income families and seniors. The average selling price for homes is \$380,000, although top prices reach as high as \$1.4 million.

25. Also, personal communication with Brian Weber 2008.

Well, if you look at where *we* are on a map, it is safe to say that our site is isolated. In the overall context of this huge redevelopment area, down on the very corner is our site. Undeniable—it's just on the map.<sup>26</sup>

A more pointed criticism came from a staff person who eventually left Forest City, who had previously held jobs in the public sector, and who increasingly felt concerned about becoming “potted” working for the for-profit developer. This interviewee wished to remain anonymous when he reflected on his own commitments to “social justice” in contrast with his employer's:

Because, again, I am in this big development, I am getting a lot of recognition, I am in a higher-level position than I have ever been before, people treat me differently. I mean, I can see how people get sucked into the culture, and how easy it is to just forget: “We don't need to house those people,” or “It's too difficult.” Even when I think of donating more land [to affordable housing developers], I have to think about which population is going to be acceptable to my employers. If I were to suggest, “Oh, let's bring a homeless shelter in here,” they would freak.<sup>27</sup>

In anticipation of such a response, this employee modulated his recommendations to the developer to build more equitably, contrary to the goals of the Green Book.

Another complaint concerns the development's virtual and real relationships with the preexisting neighboring communities, which are majority African American. A member of the CAB said:

I have had a lot of concerns about two factors: one is that we have been less successful in what we used to always call the “seamless border”; that we have not made the connections physically to East Montclair, to Old Aurora, to Park Hill. Ever since Forest City came on, and this is not a criticism of Forest City . . . But I'm just saying that for the last four years, always at the CAB [we have] complained that all the maps showed just the development property. We wanted and kept insisting and asking that the map show the *surrounding* neighborhood, to physically make people make that connection. They still don't do it. They're still inclined, as a developer, to not . . . there's a phrase in architecture and planning called being “contextual in context with the surrounding.” Their plans don't demonstrate that by the way they present them, in community meetings and work sessions, public or private.<sup>28</sup>

For this interviewee, even the virtual representations of the community now do not match the original vision laid out in the Green Book.

Finally, others argue that the developer has not done enough to encourage its builders to use minority-owned contractors and subcontractors or to create other avenues for minority participation in the workforce at Stapleton. The Foundation has put together task forces and pushed the developer to create more opportunities, but these efforts have not been successful. While the Foundation and some of its city allies have created plans by which African Americans, in particular, could find better opportunities on the site, the developer and its contractors have called those plans unrealistic and have resisted obligations on this front.

Only Stapleton's environmental achievements receive a fairly unanimous ovation, although some critics complain that this is the fulfillment less of a “social equity goal” than it is a savvy exploitation of a “marketing niche.”<sup>29</sup> In other words, critics argue that success on environmental goals occurred because those goals aligned with developer interests in attracting eco-conscious, affluent urban dwellers, not because of successful pressure from the Foundation.

In short, Stapleton has demonstrated greater strides in the direction of social goals than most other local developments, but its development falls far short of the original Green Book

26. Interview with Josh Russell.

27. Anonymous interviewee.

28. Interview with Jim Wagenlander.

29. Interview with Josh Russell.



plan. In fact, some in the community, including a staff member at the developer (who wished to remain anonymous), argue that the social goals have remained largely symbolic because they have not received the full backing of the ultimate economic authority in the field, Forest City, and because the city of Denver has not put pressure on the developer. The possibility remains that the most impressive outcome of building Stapleton will be to have developed a predominantly white, middle class, environmentally friendly community instead of an area of strip malls and warehouses, but that other ideals will go unrealized. Given the elite status of the Foundation's leaders, we might have expected to see a higher level of success in implementation.

### *Explaining the Failure to Achieve More Significant Outcomes*

Our analysis suggests that the Stapleton Foundation failed to achieve more of its goals for a number of reasons. Overall, the policy implementation stage represented a new field of action for the organization; the factors that ensured success in the formation stage were absent in, or impacted by, this new field. The rules of the game shifted, to the Foundation's disadvantage. Its members interacted with new actors, experienced a decline in access to the state, lost third-party allies, and refrained from creating additional frames in this field. The result of this combined set of deficits was that the Foundation and even SDC were sidelined when the city and developer implemented the biggest decisions. Following its greater success in the policy formation field and its ability to form an initial partnership with the city, the Foundation was unable to ensure that its goals were fully incorporated in the actual development of the land.

*The New Field's Actors and Interests.* Implementation in this case meant actual land development, not city planning, which represented a very different field with new actors, including one extremely powerful actor—the developer. John Logan and Harvey Molotch (1987) have written that three actors typically are involved in land development projects: private developers, who have financial incentives to direct the fate of projects according to their interests; local government agencies, whose involvement in directing “outcomes of growth distribution” is a key component of their political force (Molotch 1976); and, with some frequency, but with considerably less power, resident groups, who may seek to pressure the city and developers to build in their interests. This means that the field historically has been structured to favor only these three institutional actors—with the city and the developer dominant—because their interests and actions are expected and routinized. These actors then seek to exclude others, who are seen as illegitimate interlopers.

At the implementation stage of the Stapleton development, the field changed dramatically, as the balance of power shifted from being predominantly about *political* power (Who would prevail in vision: the Foundation or the city?) to being predominantly about *economic* power and interests of the two major actors (How would the developer profit, and how would the development generate tax proceeds for the city?). The interest of Forest City in these proceedings is clear—in a market economy, the logic of making profits displaces most other motivations. When confronted with demands for heterogeneous housing, minority representation in the work force, or improvement of neighborhood schools, Forest City sought to minimize these demands by negotiating them away. It succeeded in doing this by getting the city to supersede SDC in decision-making power.

Forest City viewed the Foundation's goals as simultaneously promising and problematic.<sup>30</sup> On the one hand, Forest City embraced front porches, smaller housing lots, and open park land on the site—design elements promoted by the Foundation and its allies that fit nicely with the developer's own economic interests. On the other hand, the developer strongly resisted the Foundation's social goals (such as mixed-income housing and affirmative action programs

30. Interview with Jacky Morales.

for workers) because they were costly. Land developers develop land to make profit, and their historical mantra is “value-free” growth, meaning that building is expected to proceed according to a model of “what the market will bear” (Logan and Molotch 1987), not what some part of the community says it needs (although corporate social responsibility concerns may now mean that social values enter market calculations more often).

For its part, the mayor’s office, with a few exceptions, had always disliked being pushed into action by the Foundation, even while it acknowledged that the Foundation’s ideas could be used to the city’s benefit. While it generally had a better relationship with SDC than with the Foundation, the city was still reluctant to turn over its power to SDC when negotiating with Forest City. Thus, the city joined the developer in rejecting the Foundation’s claims to legitimate standing in the implementation field. Next, we examine in greater detail the field shift’s impact on the social movement factors at play in our case.

*Political Opportunities: Access to the State and State Allies.* The start of the implementation phase marked a significant decline in the Foundation’s access to the state and to the ongoing development project, despite the Foundation’s effort to maintain its voice in the proceedings via SDC. With SDC at the negotiations table, going head-to-head with a city that wanted to maintain its position as the chief negotiator with a billion-dollar developer, and the billion-dollar company itself seeking to protect its interests, it is little wonder that the Foundation’s political opportunities would be diminished. While there is some evidence that the master developer has come to trust and respect the Foundation’s work more as the years have passed—if not least because it has created added property value through high-quality schools and open spaces—Forest City recognized early in its negotiations that it was more important to meet the city’s demands than those of SDC, and that it and the city, together, could make end runs around SDC and the Foundation.

Cities *may* wield power, vis-à-vis developers, to constrain purely profit-motivated development, but they must choose to exercise this power. The Denver city administration, in principle, could have granted more decision-making input to the Foundation and its ally, SDC, and could have written a purchase agreement that hewed more closely to the principles set out in the Green Book. But Forest City, which was paying the city of Denver for the right to take down the land, and was creating future value for the city in the form of property taxes, was by far the more important force in the city’s estimation. City government officials, according to several of our interviewees, privileged the developer’s interests over the Foundation’s and generally did not seek to champion the organization’s vision or operate as its ally. Certain segments of city operations were supportive of the Foundation’s greater input in negotiating the development. But the mayor—the central power broker—was not willing to align more closely with the group. Without a central ally in the mayor’s office, there existed no significant and sustained pressure on the master developer to meet all of the planned goals.

According to our interviewees, state allies failed to play a significant role during implementation for two reasons. First, incentives in the implementation field are different. Developers are there to make money, and state officials can already claim credit for having had the vision to adopt the policy, and then move on to new issues. Incentives were not strong enough for the state at this stage to ally resolutely with the Foundation. The other reason is related, but more generally points to the exacerbated field problems of the Foundation in this project. One of our interviewees argued that the mayor cut Foundation and SDC leaders out of the deal because the developer insisted that the city do so. According to this interviewee, Forest City had declared that it wished to “deal directly with the city” in contract negotiations, and therefore, “[the Foundation’s allies on SDC] had no ability to interact with the developer.”<sup>31</sup> Although Forest City and the city of Denver publicly trumpeted the Foundation’s work, this

31. Interview with a Foundation board member requesting anonymity.

informant said, the developer “didn’t want us to be part of the conversation about housing” or other “hard issues.” The developer perceived the Foundation as acting out of field.

*Resources: Lack of Third-Party Allies at Implementation.* In terms of resource mobilization, the Foundation retained significant material resources but was largely bereft of consequential third party allies in the new field. Once the project entered implementation and the purview of city government and the for-profit developer, the Foundation’s community allies could no longer offer the kind of expertise and support the organization needed to “stay in the game.” As we discussed earlier, the Foundation clearly understood the value of having community allies who would support its plan and sought community participation during the planning process. Yet, during the long process of creating and implementing the Stapleton plan, community members became progressively disempowered to contribute meaningfully to Stapleton’s development. Once they were appointed to official boards associated with the project, the contributions of these nonexpert, volunteer citizens became more symbolic than substantive. Although they were named official advisors to SDC and Forest City, citizen participants seemed to become less eager and willing to exert strong pressure on the city and Forest City to abide by all the goals set out in the Green Book, according to our field notes and conversations with our respondents.

According to several interviewees, the advisory group maintained its calls for affordability and diversity throughout the earlier process of creating the Green Book, but its members’ voices became much more muted, or tempered (Myerson 2001), and their concerns began to sound more like requests than demands once Forest City entered the game. In fact, in our interviews, several citizens board members professed sympathy for the extent to which a for-profit company could be expected to act in an unprofitable manner, such as contracting with African American-owned companies, or integrating affordable housing throughout the development rather than clustering it on the edges. When asked if Forest City was doing enough to ensure workplace diversity and residential integration, several citizen representatives expressed their sympathy for the company’s need to face economic reality. In effect, they seemed to concede that Forest City was acting on interests recognizable to the field, while they themselves (and the Foundation’s social goals) were out of place.

It may be unreasonable to expect average citizens who are given oversight responsibility on a project like this to confront the master developer and the city, and push each to conform to lofty ideals. Admittedly, the composition of these boards cannot be considered radical—members of the CAB and SDC board include city council members, local business people, and many middle class neighborhood residents—but few from the surrounding neighborhoods directly affected by the development. This fact points to a special circumstance of the Foundation’s project: that it was essentially creating a neighborhood where nothing existed. This had some advantages for the organization, but also disadvantages relative to other kinds of movement organizations. Since no one then lived at Stapleton, there was consequently no “not in my backyard” resistance—but neither were there any vested interests of Stapleton residents to form easily mobilized allies to support the Foundation. Additionally, these boards have vastly limited capacity to require adherence to the goals of the Green Book. The CAB is, eponymously, *advisory* and, as a consequence, it is highly symbolic in nature, not substantive in enforcement.

*Framing.* In the implementation field, we see a marked decline in the Foundation’s public framing activities, accompanied by a decline in the Foundation’s ability to have significant input in the project. As the Foundation’s interests were funneled into the hands of SDC, and SDC, itself, had mounting difficulty maintaining leverage over the city and the master developer, the Foundation refrained from creating new frames. This is not the only result that might have occurred: a simple diagnostic frame that highlighted betrayal or lip-service on the part of the mayor or developer may have put pressure on either of the parties to live up to the

original promise of the Green Book, or to encourage citizens to pressure the two power holders. So why didn't the Foundation create this type of frame in the implementation field?

We identify two factors contributing to the decrease in framing activities: the loss of some of the Foundation's most persuasive "framers," and the likely disinclination of the elite members to create protest-oriented frames. Conceivably responding to being pushed out of the field, the organization's founder, Sam Gary, and original director, Tom Gougeon, both distanced themselves from the development after the purchase agreement negotiations took place. Gougeon left his central role in the Foundation once he saw that his project's goals were sure to be diluted in implementation. While he remains on the board, Gougeon has pursued other employment interests, including joining a local real estate development company that funds progressive community development. Gary, too, continues to serve on the Foundation board, but has made virtually no public comment about Stapleton in several years. After the land's purchase agreement went through and Forest City began its work, Gary turned his progressive development sights on a large parcel of land that he owned privately, where he and a group of "wild-eyed . . . innovators" have more autonomy and discretion to develop according to their social values.<sup>32</sup> The loss of these charismatic leaders left a vacuum for their successors, who were not as socially skilled (Fligstein 2001) in creating new frames during the implementation phase.

Perhaps the main reason new frames did not emerge in the implementation phase, however, has to do with the social and economic position of the organization's staff and funders. Elite status here may have been more harmful than helpful. Despite being disregarded by the city and developer in this field of action, the Foundation did not respond with protest-oriented frames. Unused to having to resort to such measures, they may not have recognized such framing as an appropriate response to being sidelined in the debate. Instead, some of the framers moved on to other issues, while the ones who remained failed to use frames as a means to diagnose or propose solutions to the problem the Foundation faced: being seen as an illegitimate actor in the field.

## Conclusion

In short, Forest City and the city of Denver perceived the Stapleton Foundation to be out of field in development implementation. This meant that organizational leaders were defined as outsiders, at least in this particular arena. As another of our interviewees put it, city agents and the developer worked together—as they usually do on development—and there was "no format" for the organization's leaders to continue their participation—no openings, no blueprint, no opportunities for their sustained intervention.<sup>33</sup> While SDC was formally authorized to represent the Foundation's interests in negotiations, it too was sidestepped by the two major actors in the deal. Simply put, the elite status enjoyed by the individual founders and early members of the organization was not transportable to the urban development field. The organization's interests were not part of a culturally "given" landscape: they did not represent government interests (maximizing the tax base), nor did they represent standard business interests (laissez-faire, for-profit development, or urban growth). Foundation leaders, pressing for innovation from an unfamiliar location, for an innovative outcome, were not clearly definable. The city had long-standing systems for conducting development projects, and these routines (or institutionalized practices) did not easily accommodate the role of an outside challenger. Being ruled "out of field" meant that the Foundation was not able to achieve the level of success its leaders had desired.

32. Interview with Sam Gary.

33. Interview with Tim Howard.

Many movement scholars have detailed how difficult it is for “outsiders” to be recognized as legitimate players in institutional politics. What is particularly striking about this case, however, and shows the importance of considering fields, is that Foundation leaders were not at all paradigmatic outsiders, as defined by movement research. It was only their role *in this particular field* that gave them their outsider status. Fields, therefore, may define insider/outsider status more usefully than other factors (such as access to the state or resource levels) used in political sociology and social movement study. Resource mobilization and political process theorists would certainly consider the organization we study to have insider status—but the difficulties it faced in policy implementation illustrate the complexity of insider/outsider divides. This picks up on the work of other scholars who have noted the insufficiency of such a dichotomy for describing change efforts (Banaszak 2005; Binder 2000, 2002; Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Jasper 1997). While other scholars have questioned the insider/outsider divide by showing that much contemporary protest occurs within institutions (Burstein, Einwohner, and Hollander 1995; Katzenstein 1998), this case shows that the insider/outsider divide is more usefully seen as being field specific and thus apt to change during different phases of challenge activity. Despite their significant resources and connections to the state, Foundation leaders were unable to achieve success in the policy implementation field because they were defined as illegitimate actors there. Thus, a field framework also allows us to think more complexly about elite status, rather than treating all elites as homogeneous or universal. Depending on the logic of the field, elites may be less well-positioned than more traditional, resource-poor movement actors. Rather than being absolute, power depends on legitimacy in the field.

This case also reveals possible elite responses to being ruled out of field. Facing burnout and disappointment with their failure to affect action in the field, some of the Foundation’s leaders (such as Gougeon and Gary) opted not to stay and engage in further protest. Instead, they shifted their change-oriented attention elsewhere to find new, more rewarding terrain. While all change actors have the option of dropping out of activism, for less-privileged actors this may mean merely accepting their failures and living with the consequences. Elites have an additional luxury: they can take their intellectual, organizational, and economic resources elsewhere and improve their own practice the next time they choose to generate change. Actors like Gougeon and Gary in our case were able to stay committed to the broad ideals of their vision (socially conscious development) without being tied to a particular episode of contention. Contrast this, for example, to the case of activists protesting a new highway that would destroy their neighborhood: they cannot be committed to neighborhood activism *generally* but rather must stay focused on their specific challenge to achieve the desired goals. This finding may apply to other elites active in our social movement society: when faced with obstacles, such as attempting to enter a new field unsuccessfully, elite actors may simply move on to new territory.

Elite challenges like this have become increasingly apparent in the social landscape. While a single case study may not be generalizable to other instances of contention, our case of a land-use conflict shows that analyzing fields provides a fuller understanding of elite power and of the outcomes of change efforts. We show that the concept of fields illuminates the varying political fortunes of even elite challengers during different phases of the policy process. This particular case highlights the ways in which scholars of elites can understand elite status as domain specific, not absolute. While other scholars have examined the role of elite actors within certain movement fields (Bartley 2007; Rojas 2007), they studied elites who held power within these fields. We argue that this is not a matter of course: elite actors are only powerful within fields to the extent that they are seen as having identifiable, legitimate, and expected interests there. The elites in this case had to undertake a challenge to achieve recognition in the policy formation field, and were largely unable to transfer this hard-won recognition to the policy implementation field. Thus, elite actors are not always field shapers, but rather can be constrained by field logics of action.

At the same time, fields provide scholars of contentious politics, social movements, and other forms of social change more generally another tool to explore challenge outcomes—a still-neglected area of study. Challengers must gain legitimacy in the field(s) they enter, and may face resistance from more institutionalized actors (and/or actors whose interests are more routinized). The field concept therefore does not replace other movement concepts, but rather impacts them, as challenge activities all take place in the context of specific fields. Change seekers may need to mobilize resources, take advantage of political opportunities, and frame their positions merely to gain a foothold in the field they wish to transform—or to create a new field. The rules of the game and cultural expectations held by other actors within the field will then impact the level of success achievable by activists.

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