



Expanding boundaries: Nongovernmental organizations as supply chain members

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Abstract

Using a social movement perspective, we propose a framework that includes nonprofit actors as members of supply chains in a context that we call sustainable supply chain facilitation, particularly within multi-stakeholder supply chain sustainability initiatives. In this framework, certain nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) work alongside other supply chain firms, going beyond technical roles to serve as coordinators, conveners, organizers, brokers, and negotiators who facilitate multiparty agreement on sustainability issues within and across supply chains. We describe a set of roles consisting of third-party facilitators (3PF), fourth-party facilitators (4PF), and fifth-party facilitators (5PF) serving in increasingly strategic roles with increasing numbers of actors, and with increasing potential for co-creation of value in global supply chains. Reframing nongovernmental organizations as *members* of supply chains instead of outsiders provides a dramatically different perspective. This explicit acknowledgement of membership can help business and NGO managers to rethink their own roles and motivations and to find collaborative solutions in the steady transition to more sustainable supply chains.

Introduction

Twenty-five years ago, on August 1, 1990, amidst public controversy on its use of polystyrene clamshell packaging, McDonalds announced an alliance with the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), an environmental activist group (Livesey, 1999). It was unusual, if not unheard of at the time, for corporations to collaborate publicly with environmental activists, but this alliance for waste reduction, operations, and brand management was a harbinger for what these actors now take for granted—collaborations involving multiple stakeholders aimed at the production of sustainable outcomes that create mutual value across sectors. Such projects may have limited scope, as in the above example, but increasingly multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) aim to produce industry solutions, including private governance mechanisms like the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), which promulgates auditable standards by which fisheries may be deemed “sustainable” in the sense of both a sustainable supply of goods, and larger ecosystems that are sustained for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations (Gulbrandsen, 2009; Martin, 2014). The MSC made substantive progress and achieved legitimacy among key decision makers at least to some extent because its governance structure involved stakeholders from multiple sectors—scientists, fishing companies, seafood brand companies, retailers, and environmental groups (Martin, 2014).

The MSC case also suggests that significant opportunities for sustainability performance gains often lie outside the boundaries of individual firms, which is to say upstream in their supply chains and downstream in the consumer use and disposal phases. For instance, the environmental group The Union of Concerned Scientists estimated that over 90% of Walmart’s overall environmental impact lay outside the company’s boundaries (Plambeck, 2007). As Walmart and other firms broaden their perspective beyond their own boundaries, increasingly the expertise and participation of multiple stakeholders, including environmental groups, is required to transition supply chain sustainability toward economic, social and environmental ends

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(McLaughlin and McMillon, 2015). A number of MSIs are now involved in the collection, analysis and dissemination of product sustainability data as both consumers and firms demand more information on the environmental and social impacts in production networks (Gualandris et al., 2015; O'Rourke, 2014).

In this paper, we focus on the role of social movement organizations—social and environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—in improving the sustainability of supply chains, a topic increasingly addressed by practitioners and academics alike (see reviews by Gray and Stites, 2013; Wassmer et al., 2014), who have begun to examine relationships between NGOs and multinational corporations that have evolved beyond purely adversarial positions (de Lange et al., 2015). Using the lens of social movement theory, we show why and how NGOs became drivers of supply chain MSIs, indeed how some NGOs have become embedded in the supply chains they sought to change. We focus on NGOs whose missions are relevant to supply chains, including environmental impacts, working conditions, health and safety, humanitarian and relief work, poverty, and other similar issues. Though generally regarded as outsiders by traditional supply chain firms, we develop a framework that introduces certain classes of NGOs into supply chains in a way that reconceptualizes supply chain membership (Gualandris et al., 2015; Pagell and Shevchenko, 2014), which is traditionally limited to firms and logistics service providers.

We take this a step further by describing three roles that enhance our understanding of how NGOs may organize and lead MSIs in supply chains. We then describe structural archetypes associated with each role. This reconceptualization provides a new frame of reference for both corporate and NGO managers to approach their collaborations in ways that will make them more effective in pursuing economic, environmental and social objectives in the transition to sustainability.

A social movement perspective on the emergence of NGOs and MSIs

Theories of collective action and social movements are relevant not only because they offer explanations for the emergence and development of movements and organizations, including groups that pursue environmental and social issues as well as business organizations (Campbell, 2005; Davis et al., 2005; McAdam et al., 1996a), but because they also help us account for mechanisms of institutional (Hargrave and Van de Ven, 2006) and organizational change (Strang and Fung, 2005). They help us understand the forces that have shaped the current sustainability landscape that includes MSIs and to imagine how that landscape will continue to evolve.

Borrowing from Strang and Fung (2005), we define a social movement as a process by which actors organize on the fringes of institutional fields to change the status quo. As such, we propose to supplement social movement theory's traditional emphasis on contentious politics with the collaborative interactions of actors in and across organizations that form an interdependent system in search of change for sustainability—that is, interactions within the sustainability movement (MIT Sloan Management Review and Boston Consulting Group, 2012). We broadly define the sustainability movement as encompassing individuals, groups, and organizations pursuing the sustainability agenda, such as by improving the human condition through sustainable development and stewardship of the earth's life support systems.

Here we broadly conceptualize multi-stakeholder supply chain initiatives as sites of institutional and organizational change, as structural mechanisms by which varied actors from different sectors (business, civil society, and government) set about achieving shared agendas of change that have evolved beyond the traditional boundaries of the sustainability movement. We use three interacting mechanisms from the social movement literature to describe the process of collective action that may give rise to both new NGOs and multistakeholder initiatives in which they are embedded. These include *political opportunities* that enable or constrain actors ability to engage in change processes, *framing processes* that create shared meaning (altering how actors perceive their interests and possibilities for change) and *mobilizing structures* that connect like-minded persons in ways that enable them to cause change (Campbell, 2005).

Political and corporate opportunities

Political opportunities are circumstances in the larger movement environment, such as institutional arrangements or political conditions, that constrain or enable mobilization (McAdam, 1982; Tilly, 1978). Although social movement theorists have traditionally emphasized attempts to influence government policy, the theory also accommodates opportunities that emerge through exogenous shocks (e.g., environmental disaster related to climate change) (Maon et al., 2009) and the evolution in the expectations and demands of a variety of stakeholders such as governments, investors, consumers and corporations through changes in the corporate sector (King, 2008; PwC, 2014; Waddock, 2008). For instance, in the relief sector, the number of natural disasters is increasing; Oxfam estimated in 2007 that over the preceding two decades the number of floods, droughts, and other severe weather events had quadrupled (Oxfam, 2007). A number of factors, including a lack of resources and expertise in relief agencies to deal with climate change effects, opens the door for supply chain MSIs for logistical and operations support (Maon et al., 2009). In terms of the changes in stakeholders'

expectations, we focus on corporate opportunities. We argue that changes in the corporate sector, particularly with regard to environmental management, have created circumstances that have led to the emergence of specialized NGOs, which have then led in the development of new forms of multistakeholder initiatives.

Changes in corporate environmental management have created potent political opportunities in the environmental movement. Before the 1970s, for most firms, issues pertaining to the natural environment operated well outside the firm's strategic core, and were most logically located in the periphery of Thompson's (1967) classic model of organizations, separate from the firm's central strategy. From this perspective, management for the natural environment, to the extent it existed at all, was compliance oriented, aiming only to protect the firm's technological core from external, and strategically distal, shocks. Over time, management theorists, and some managers, began to view environmental management as more central to many firms' operating strategies, and a focus on cleaning up operations before they reached the end-of-the-pipe became more popular (Hart, 1995; Porter and van der Linde, 1995a, 1995b). Furthermore, as the stakeholder management perspective began to be adopted by corporate managers, some firms began to set goals that went beyond regulatory compliance (Freeman, 1984).

Firms seeking to move beyond regulatory compliance to include green operations and supply chain practices often found that required resources were lacking in the firm's strategic core. A search for needed resources, for example through collaboration with nonmarket actors, was needed (Perez-Aleman and Sandilands, 2008; Rondinelli and London, 2003). In the EDF and McDonald's partnership example, EDF had a team of scientists to commit to the project with expertise that McDonald's needed. Firms have increasingly sought NGOs' tangible and intangible resources, including specialized expertise (Arts, 2002; Dahan et al., 2010; Plambeck, 2007), legitimacy (Dacin et al., 2007; Hartman and Stafford, 1997), and access to different networks of strategic stakeholders (Arts, 2002). Legitimacy, for instance, often comes from NGOs' endorsements of firms' environmental claims or firms' licensing of NGO brands as a means of credibly differentiating green products in the marketplace (Hartman and Stafford, 1997).

As firms began to demand the resources of NGOs, NGOs became attentive to these corporate opportunities, developing mobilizing strategies, structures, and capabilities in response (King, 2008; van Huijstee et al., 2011). According to social movement theory, opportunities are changes in the institutional or industry structure (economic, organizational, or cultural) that signal probable achievement of a movement's goals (Schurman, 2004). In our context, these signals include not only the above, but also more broadly, increasing top management interest in supply chain sustainability and collaboration with non-traditional stakeholders to create business and community value (PwC, 2008). Many NGOs have responded to this opportunity by restructuring their organizations, creating corporate partnership divisions and specialties in long supply chains (e.g., Environmental Defense Fund, World Wildlife Fund, World Resource Institute, and Conservation International).

Collective action frames

Framing involves a set of discursive, strategic, and contested processes that actors use to negotiate and construct shared collective action frames—that is, “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization” (Benford and Snow, 2000). Collective action frames include a cognitive and emotional sense of an injustice or need, a sense of identity that social movement theorists have depicted as a separation of “we” from “them,” and a sense that an empowered agent can bring about change through action (Gamson, 1995).

Collective action frames underpinning the environmental movement have evolved with changing political and corporate opportunities, the influence of science, and the agendas of charitable foundations (Brulle and Jenkins, 2005). Conservation and preservation dominated the early frames, influenced by actors such as Henry David Thoreau and John Muir, who founded the Sierra Club and was instrumental in establishing Yosemite National Parks. Later, in the 1960s and 70s, the movement expanded to include a third major frame—reform environmentalism (Brulle, 2010). This frame was influenced by writings such as *Silent Spring* (Carson, 1962) and was concerned with the linkage of human health, ecosystem conditions and sustainable development. In this frame, movement organizations sought mainly to influence governmental policy, particularly around pollution control, with major wins in the establishment of new laws and environmental agencies. Later, other frames in the movement emerged taking into account the possibility that the dominant players on the world stage were multinational corporations (MNCs), and movement participants increasingly targeted these MNCs through litigation and highly visible public campaigns. For instance, in the 1990's Home Depot was targeted by a collective of activist NGOs because of environmental issues in the company's supply chain (Carlton, 2000).

NGO strategies to this point were overwhelmingly confrontational, but during this same time period, even in the Home Depot campaign, some activist groups also began to see opportunities to work *within* the market system to bring about change. These groups' collective action frames left open the possibility for modes of collaboration with corporations, even those with questionable environmental track records (Livesey, 1999). Movement frames are rarely constructed from whole cloth, but instead reflect a bricolage constituting responses of actors to changes in the opportunity structures (Campbell, 2005). Because the

interpretation of frames affects how actors see their interests aligning (or not) and opportunities for change (or not), movements often splinter into conservative and radical positions concerning matters of common interest. In the context of the environmental movement, movement actors might embrace ideological frames that preclude corporations from being part of any environmental solution (radical), or they might embrace ideologies that corporations could help bring about the change sought by the environmental movement (reformative) (den Hond and de Bakker, 2007).

For instance, the activist Paul Watson parted ways with Greenpeace in 1987 to form the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. Referring to his former colleagues as “Avon ladies,” Watson, a self-described eco-terrorist, was prepared to sink vessels whaling illegally anywhere they were found in the world (Connor and Epstein, 2007). At about the same time, Fred Krupp, executive director of the activist group Environment Defense Fund, argued in the *Wall Street Journal* that he was witnessing “the beginning of a new strategy in the movement,” one that rejected its “pre-cast role of opponent to environmental abuses” (Krupp, 1986). Krupp later acted on his beliefs when his group formed the Waste Reduction Task Force with McDonald’s, an effort that led to the company’s abandonment of the polystyrene clamshell and to a long-term collaborative relationship with the company (van Huijstee et al., 2011).

Whereas traditionally confrontational NGOs operate outside of the institutional environment they are contesting, reformative NGOs—those willing to experiment with new modes of engagement and shifting their frames relative to other NGOs, corporations, and other stakeholders in global supply chains (van Huijstee and Glasbergen, 2010; van Huijstee et al., 2011)—may operate within those institutional boundaries. Reformative NGOs have recently emerged as an important force in the environmental movement. Influential reformative NGOs are generally large, highly organized, have paid staff and are headquartered primarily in the Global North, although they may represent interests and issues in the South. Examples in the multi-stakeholder initiative context include the Environmental Defense Fund and the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (van Huijstee et al., 2011), Earthwatch (Seitanidi and Crane, 2008), Conservation International (Argenti, 2004), World Resources Institute (Hemmati et al., 2002), The Nature Conservancy (Pinkse and Kolk, 2012), and even the more activist group Greenpeace (Hartman and Stafford, 2006). Socially focused examples include Oxfam (Pesqueira and Glasbergen, 2013), CARE (Austin, 2000), and even relief agencies like the World Food Programme (Maon et al., 2009). Their dominant frames not only include business as a partner in solving problems, but they also specifically seek to harness resources in the private sector to drive sustainable change. However, connecting into the private sector in a collaborative way requires opportunities—an opening—and a high level of mobilization with different skills. Connecting into the private sector also creates opportunities for NGOs to create and occupy new roles in the institutional environment.

Mobilizing structures

Mobilizing structures are “collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action” (McAdam et al., 1996b) that include formal organizations and interpersonal networks (King, 2008), each of which provides means to nurture collective interests and identity (den Hond and de Bakker, 2007; Rowley and Moldoveanu, 2003). For NGOs, mobilizing structures provide an established resource base supporting organizational members as they carry out their missions (King, 2008). A review of the largest NGOs reveals strategic and organizational adaptations that support the creation and maintenance of mobilizing structures that include members from the for- and non-profit sectors. These include staff (usually with business expertise), forming separate corporate engagement units, developing supply chain expertise, changing internal processes, and developing systems to diffuse best practices (de Lange et al., 2015; Hyatt et al., 2010; van Huijstee et al., 2011). In several cases, this has involved creating divisions within their organizations explicitly devoted to supply chains (e.g. World Resources Institute).

These efforts aim to extend the NGO’s reach and to cultivate formal and informal networks that include multiple stakeholders across sectors, a critical dimension of mobilizing structures for connecting people and organizations (Tilly, 1978). Such networks serve as “conduits through which new models, concepts, and practices diffuse and become part of an organization or movement’s repertoire” (Campbell, 2005). Accordingly, expansion of the network ensures that increasing numbers of people have access to and can translate movement frames into action. Further, movement organizations may specifically expand their network to include actors with valuable resources that could be deployed to achieve movement objectives (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). The Marine Stewardship Council initiative described above is a pertinent example of a formal network, as the Council came together through already established networks between the World Wildlife Fund and Unilever, organizations that had collaborated in earlier supply chain sustainability MSIs. As the network expanded to include scientists, producers, consumers, and others, movement goals for sustainable fisheries transitioned into a market for sustainable fish products.

Taken together, the three mechanisms from Social Movement Theory reviewed above describe how the corporate-NGO landscape has evolved in recent decades. Changes in corporate managers’ attitudes and strategies toward the environment created new opportunities for collaborative engagement with the NGO community, allowing or even inviting NGOs willing to cooperate inside supply chain arenas. The pioneering

NGOs that took advantage of those opportunities began to collaborate in a variety of ways with supply chain members, and in the process began to take on different roles in supply chains. As the number and variety of NGOs and collaborative relationships proliferated, the mobilizing structures undergirding multistakeholder initiatives themselves changed as resources of non-traditional actors in the movement, corporations, brought additional resources and knowledge to bear on movement objectives.

Evolution of supply chains and supply chain management

At the same time that the sustainability movement was evolving into complex network structures, corporate supply chains were themselves undergoing radical structural changes. Conceptualized early on as dyadic relations between buyers and sellers (Harland, 1996), as supply chains evolved into more complexly integrated forms, they began to be conceived as a single entity with activities that could be managed to achieve a set of members' common objectives for the chain (Mentzer et al., 2001). In the most widely agreed upon definition, Mentzer and colleagues (2001) proposed that supply chain structures should include "three or more entities (organizations or individuals) directly involved in the upstream and downstream flows of products, services, finances, and/or information from a source to a customer".

This chain could be imagined with at least three levels of complexity—a direct supply chain, an extended supply chain, and an ultimate supply chain—reflecting an increasing number of actors. Accordingly, an ultimate supply chain would include "all the organizations involved in all the upstream and downstream flows of products, services, finances, and information from the ultimate supplier to the ultimate customer" (2001). In this work they specifically reference third party logistics service providers (3PLs), market research firms and financial service firms as supply chain members, and a recent conceptualization includes consultants as a general class of supply chain actor (Brockhaus et al., 2013). These entities are included by virtue of providing linking or logistics services, assuming risk, or providing essential services such as moving information through the supply chain.

The concept of the ultimate supply chain is consistent with arguments that supply chains are better regarded as complex supply networks (Harland, 1996; Kim et al., 2011), which recognize increasing numbers of participants that vary across product life cycles (Bowersox et al., 2000). Across many industries and markets, supply chains have fragmented and specialized as economic and technological forces have driven efficiencies and redrawn firm boundaries. The resulting supply networks have not been restricted to just for-profit firms. For instance, Starbucks forged a relationship with the Oaxacan State Coffee Producers Network (CEPCO), a large association of small-scale coffee producers in Oaxaca, Mexico that included 16,000 farmers and 44 cooperatives, Oxfam America, and the Ford Foundation. Using the on-ground expertise of Oxfam, an activist group with issue areas of injustice and poverty, Starbucks aimed to develop the supply of high-quality Certified Fair Trade coffee by improving skills of small-scale farmers, providing greater information on prices in coffee markets, and enabling dissemination of key learnings to other coffee cooperatives (Argenti, 2004). In the chocolate industry, Mars, Inc. was engaged in community work in cocoa producing areas to ensure a reliable source of cocoa going into the future (Shapiro and Rosenquist, 2004). In these examples, corporate members of supply chains increasingly take on responsibilities and activities formerly regarded as in the realm of groups in the sustainability movement.

NGOs roles in supply chains

Collective action frames of NGOs and corporations are beginning to overlap with regards to sustainability and the environment. For instance, many NGOs have recruited market-sector representatives to sit on their boards (Hoffman, 2009). Indeed, as Hoffman and Bertels (2010) observed, the environmental movement is sufficiently advanced such that its membership is diffused in a complex network that includes both market and nonmarket organizations. It is not surprising that the structural dimensions of the movement moved beyond its activist roots to include activities in mainstream business organizations, especially as frames emerged that recognized shared value opportunities. Many supply chain projects are capable of simultaneously producing both economic value for the firm and social and environmental value for communities (Porter and Kramer, 2011). This expanded understanding of value creation along with structural changes already underway suggests that we need a reconceptualization of supply chain membership, one that specifically takes into account collaborative NGOs.

The emergence of NGOs willing to collaborate with business constitutes an expansion of the sustainability movement landscape, a networked ecosystem that includes groups that specifically privilege collaboration and market based solutions to environmental and social problems. Groups inhabiting this niche directly engage in nonconfrontational and value co-creating ways with corporate supply chain members in a wide variety of multi-stakeholder supply chain initiatives. At the same time, supply chains have evolved into complex networks of increasingly specialized actors that enable coordination among separate actors in the supply chain. This network of structures has enabled tighter integration in supply chains even as they lengthened and became

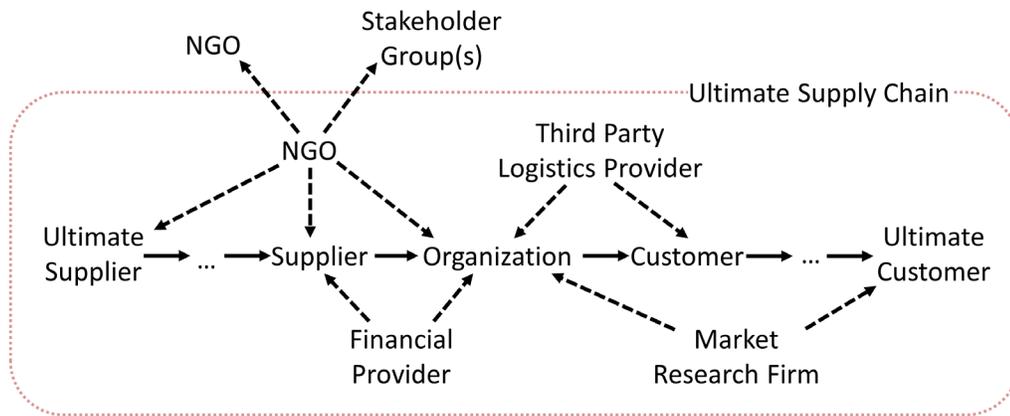


Figure 1
Ultimate supply chain including NGOs.

Source: Adapted from Mentzer et al. (2001). In this figure, we expand the traditional definition of supply chain membership to include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in bridging roles from the supply chain to external stakeholders.

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more complex. NGOs are often among the specialized actors in these networks, often providing technical expertise and tying together otherwise disconnected actors. In other words, many NGOs have *become* members of supply chains. We believe that explicitly regarding them as such will serve as a framing process for both NGO and corporate managers to expand their understanding of the possibilities from collaborative interactions.

In the supply chain literature, Gualandris and colleagues (2015) suggest two roles that NGOs offer firms—technical and relational. Technical roles include activities that aid the firm in executing certain activities and realizing change. For instance, the Environmental Defense Fund, which has expertise in energy efficient transport and fleet management, worked with FedEx on a process for adding hybrid technology to FedEx’s fleet. Relational help includes activities that enable the firm to engage with other stakeholder groups, prioritize issues and goals with them and finally design the change for a sustainability agenda. NGOs in relational roles then may serve as enablers, coordinators, conveners, organizers, brokers, and negotiators who facilitate multiparty agreement on sustainability issues across supply chains. Well-known exemplars include the MSIs for marine and forest sustainability, each working with stakeholders both within and outside of supply chains to establish a kind of supply chain governance (Martin, 2014). The same thing has happened with labor standards in global supply chains (Bartley, 2007). In Figure 1 below we show our reconceptualization of the supply chain, which explicitly includes collaborative NGOs. While acknowledging that these NGOs bring varying levels of technical expertise, our model emphasizes the relational role that engages actors both within and outside of the supply chain—a role we broadly call sustainable supply chain facilitation.

A useful means of showing why many collaborative NGOs should be regarded supply chain members is by analogy to roles used to describe existing service providers in supply chains. A hallmark of contemporary supply chain theory is the increasingly sophisticated management of the business supply chain landscape. Managers have formed ever more complex relationships with an increasingly diverse set of outside firms in pursuit of both local and system-wide optima, as witnessed by the emergence of third-party logistics providers (3PLs), consultants and supply chain specific information technologies, and even a new class of firm, fourth-party logistics providers (4PLs) (Selviaridis and Spring, 2007; Stefansson, 2006). Whereas 3PLs often provide traditional logistics (warehouse, transportation, and other distribution) services or bundles of these services, usually based on ongoing contractual arrangements (Murphy and Poist, 1998), 4PLs play a coordinating role between multiple asset-based 3PLs (van Hoek and Chong, 2001). Such management innovations have been necessary as managers have sought to hone their own firm’s competitive advantages while simultaneously solving supply chain level problems presented by increasingly complex and dynamic supply chain environments, particularly as firms embrace sustainability agendas.

Our reconceptualization of supply chain membership suggests three different roles for NGOs—with analogs to traditional supply chain roles—each of which facilitates the creation of mobilizing structures. In keeping with the supply chain categories, we have labeled the roles third-party facilitators (3PF), fourth-party facilitators (4PF), and fifth-party facilitators (5PF). Similar to existing definitions of logistics service providers (3PL, 4PL), facilitators are parties that help organizations in supply chains to develop and achieve their goals—in this case environmental and social objectives—by such actions as conducting analyses, recommending, implementing and evaluating solutions, providing feedback, connecting supply chain members with common issues, and convening governance frameworks in multi-stakeholder initiatives. Facilitators can thus serve increasingly more strategic roles, involving increasing numbers of actors, and with increasing potential for co-creation of value in global supply chains.

Sustainable supply chain facilitation is then the performance of those functions in a sustainability context, including learning and innovation, life cycle analysis, market analysis, environmental training, product sustainability standards, reverse supply chain, ecosystem management, extraction and manufacturing practices,

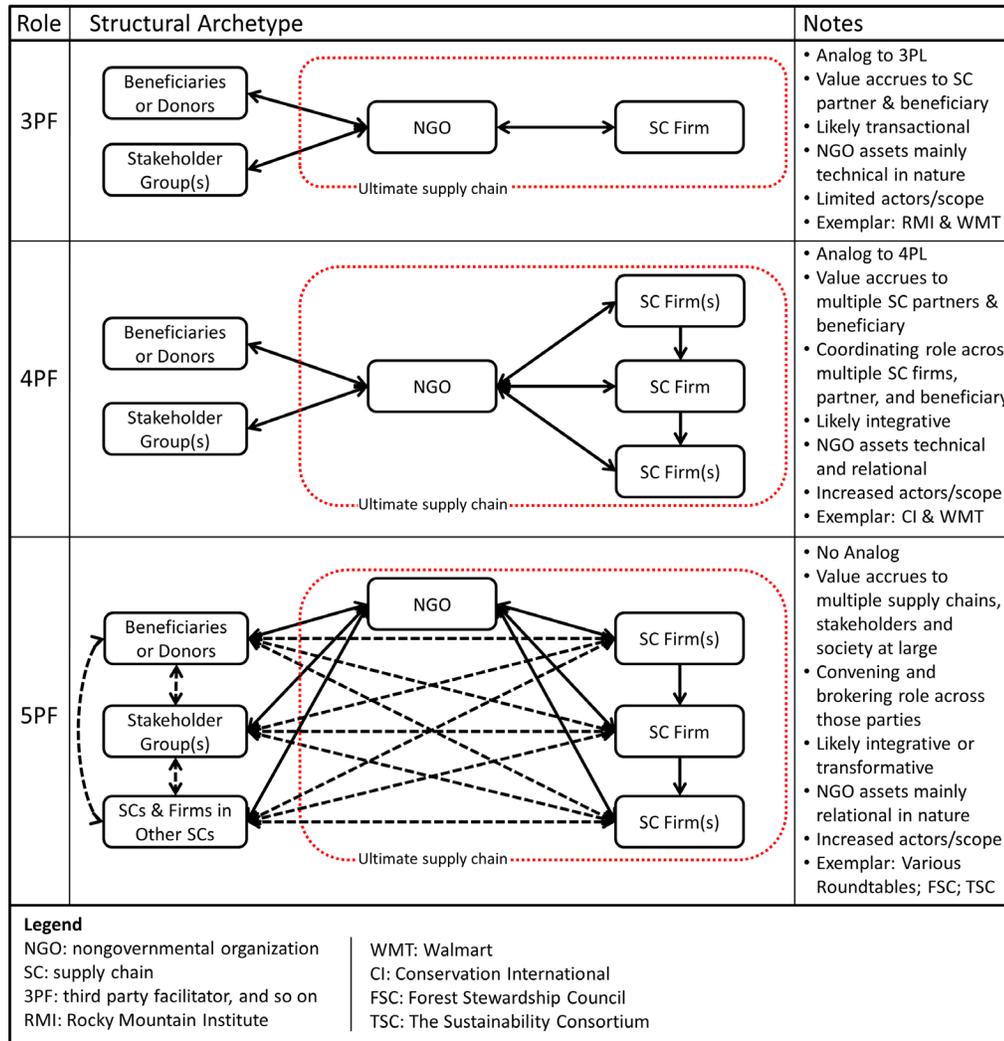


Figure 2
Sustainable supply chain roles and structural archetypes.

In this figure, we propose three archetypes of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) supply chain membership roles: third-party facilitators (3PF), fourth-party facilitators (4PF), and fifth-party facilitators (5PF). Similar to existing definitions of logistics service providers (3PL, 4PL), facilitators are parties that help organizations in supply chains to develop and achieve their goals—in this case environmental and social objectives—by such actions as conducting analyses, recommending, implementing and evaluating solutions, providing feedback, connecting supply chain members with common issues, and convening governance frameworks in multi-stakeholder initiatives. Facilitators can thus serve increasingly more strategic roles, involving increasing numbers of actors, and with increasing potential for co-creation of value in global supply chains.

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risk management, and sustainability reporting and disclosure (Bitzer and Glasbergen, 2015; Gualandris et al., 2015; Hemphill, 2013; Heuer, 2011; McDonald and Young, 2012; Murphy et al., 2012). Figure 2 contains our conceptualization of NGO supply chain roles and their associated mobilizing structures. The figure includes illustrative networks indicating the kinds of multistakeholder structures that would be typical of each of the NGO roles. As with traditional supply chain roles, and in keeping with social network theory (Scott, 2000), the roles are essentially defined in terms of the networks in which they are embedded. Each NGO role is associated with an archetypal structure characterized by the pattern of relationships between the focal NGO and other stakeholders, as well as between the stakeholders themselves.

Third-party facilitators act in primarily dyadic relationships with primary supply chain members (suppliers or customers). In this basic configuration, the NGO engages with the member firm on behalf of one or more of its beneficiaries. The relationship is likely to be transactional in nature, but may evolve into more integrative collaborations as the members of the collaboration build trust, shared understanding and co-create value for the firm and the communities and environments in which they are embedded. However, whereas 3PLs in the literature are conceptualized as a cooperative, 3-way triad, the 3PF is responsible for finding the shared value between the member and the donor or beneficiary.

One example in this structural archetype is the relationship between Walmart and the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), an NGO with deep expertise in energy. Walmart sought RMI's energy expertise on a contract basis covering two areas, truck fuel and facilities energy efficiency. In terms of fuel efficiency, RMI was to help Walmart decide among a number of possible efficiency technologies for Walmart's large trucking fleet (Humes, 2011). These included technologies such as alternative power units to reduce idling time, side fairings to reduce drag, and high-efficiency tires to improve fuel efficiency. For facilities, RMI worked with Walmart to integrate efficient lighting, HVAC, refrigeration systems, daylighting and advanced mechanical systems into new stores and facilities (Burns, 2006). Another example emphasizing social dimensions is the

NGO City Year that orchestrated full-time community service in urban public education, leadership, and civic engagement. City Year worked with the shoe manufacturer Timberland with its strategy of developing a strong service culture, stewardship, and community engagement. In support of City Year's Service Corps program, their respective infrastructures eventually evolved together in such areas as communications, financial, staffing and operations (Austin, 2000). In both of these examples and for the 3PF role in general, we suggest that the technical expertise of the NGO is the most valuable asset in the initiative, as opposed to relational capabilities that the ENGO possesses.

Fourth-party facilitators (4PF) expand on the dyadic 3PF model by including additional supply chain members in the value-creation process. Structures associated with the 4PF role are characterized by relationships between the NGO and two or more supply chain members. Accordingly, the key asset of the NGO will be its relational capabilities. In one configuration, the NGO may interact directly with a supplier and a customer on behalf of the donor or beneficiary. For instance, Conservation International (CI), an NGO with expertise in mining, worked with Walmart to help develop a line of jewelry—Love Earth—whose provenance could be traced back through the supply chain to the originating mine. CI played the lead role in conceptualizing and designing the system and its underlying set of standards, engaging supply chain actors (mining companies, refiners, manufacturers, etc.), and organizing discussions with stakeholders (Smith and Crawford, 2011). At the same time, CI, by its efforts, was buffering criticism levied against Walmart and other retailers in a “Dirty Gold” campaign led by Earthworks, Oxfam, and others. In this scenario, CI was performing certain coordination functions similar to a 4PL handling administrative functions among supply chain actors, but also bridging between the supply chain actors and those outside of the supply chain interested in social and environmental outcomes.

From a social and economic outcomes perspective on 4PFs, the activist group Oxfam GB (UK-based member of international NGO Oxfam) collaborated with Unilever in 2003 to examine Unilever's impact on poverty along its value chain in Indonesia; that is, an examination of the extent to which Unilever's success could play a part in poverty reduction. The relationship evolved to include other projects, including an examination of worker rights in Unilever's supply chain, including freedom of association, living wages, working hours and temporary contract workers in Vietnam, and including the links with Unilever's own policies and practices (Wilshaw et al., 2013). Through these efforts, Unilever and Oxfam both hoped that learnings from the effort could be integrated into new practices more consistent with international norms for worker rights. 4PF structures such as we describe will be characterized by increasing levels of shared value creation supported by relatively high resource complementarity, linked interests and conjoined resource flows (Austin and Seitanidi, 2012b), which is to say the relationship is likely to be integrative rather than transactional.

The proposed 5PF role does not have a direct analog in the supply chain literature. Fifth party facilitators broker direct connections between supply chain members and external constituent groups. Rather than intervening between corporate members and outside groups, 5PLs are coordinators, conveners, organizers, brokers, and negotiators who facilitate multiparty agreement on sustainability issues across supply chains and with stakeholders outside of the supply chain. The distinguishing feature of structures associated with 5PLs is the direct ties between organizations inside and outside of the supply chain. These kinds of multistakeholder initiatives are likely focused on industry transformation across multiple supply chains. For instance, the NGO Future 500 has interest areas in supply chain and materials, energy and climate, people and power, and food and water—similar to other sustainability movement groups. But they have organized specifically to provide a convening or bridging function that unites “the corporate and NGO sector, the political right and left, to break through gridlock, encourage thoughtful dialogue, and achieve broad systemic change” (Future 500, 2015).

They, as well as other groups including World Wildlife Fund and Conservation International, help convene multi-stakeholder supply chain initiatives such as the Roundtable on Responsible Palm Oil, the Roundtable on Sustainable Human and Environmental Systems, and many others. More generally, these kinds of structures include industry or commodity roundtables (palm oil, water, sugar cane, etc.), industry standard-setting collaborations (e.g., Sustainable Apparel Coalition, Marine Stewardship Council, Forest Stewardship Council), and multisector consortia (e.g., The Sustainability Consortium). These MSIs represent efforts to change industry structures such that shared value is created through collaboration in a pre-competitive setting. Often such initiatives aim to change the rules of the game in markets; in that way they are conceived as “transformative” collaborations (Austin and Seitanidi, 2012a, 2012b).

Firms also take leadership for multistakeholder initiative formation in such settings. For instance, in 2009 Walmart announced that it would lead in the formation of The Sustainability Consortium, an MSI that by 2015 included over one hundred members, including global NGOs, government agencies, academics, and corporations representing over \$2 trillion in market capitalization. The Consortium's stated mission was “To drive more sustainable consumer products through the design and implementation of credible, transparent and scalable tools and services that are science-based, stakeholder-informed, focused on impact, and accessible for all producers, retailers, and users of consumer products” (TSC, 2015). To implement its strategy, the Consortium was organized into working groups that included a variety of firms, NGOs and other interest groups across multiple supply chain domains. For instance, sector-specific working groups focused on product categories—such as electronics, cereal, and personal care products—and engaged actors

with interest or expertise in those product categories to determine what should be measured for product sustainability. Outcomes from these discussions resulted in a list of “hotspots” for a category. These hotspots might include environmental dimensions, such as energy-intensive production in computer production, or social issues, such as slavery in orange groves. Overall, the Consortium has acted in its capacity as a 5PF to convene a large and complex network of multisector stakeholders to create a reporting system at the product category level that could be used to collect data from suppliers on their sustainability practices (Dooley et al., 2011; Hyatt and Spicer, 2012).

Discussion

In this paper, we have argued that in recent years both the NGO and supply chain landscapes have evolved, simultaneously fragmenting into ever more specialized niches even as they have expanded to the point where they have begun to overlap. NGOs, many of which have dedicated supply chain practices, have become enmeshed in supply networks, taking on many roles and modes of interaction typically characteristic of supply chain firms.

We have argued that explicitly acknowledging a certain class of NGOs as supply chain members in their own right will advance the interests and missions of supply chain firms and NGOs alike. Doing so will effectively alter the collective action frames of both constituencies, moving them from “we” and “them” identities to a more inclusive and collaborative regard of members who are not in their sector. Such a perspective recognizes inherent differences but takes into account common interests and shared values. It is a framing mechanism that helps create shared meaning across what has historically been a divide. For supply chain companies, it helps managers to think in new ways about the role that NGOs can play in the ecosystem. For NGO managers, it can help bring to the fore the kinds of problems corporate managers must solve.

Porter & Kramer’s (2011) Shared Value framework fits nicely with our perspective. These authors argue that only those environmental and social initiatives that are complements to a firm’s strategy will create value for both the firm and for the communities in which it is embedded, which is necessary to ensure the long term success of both. Corporate supply chain managers who view the NGOs they work with as creators of value—as supply chain partners rather than as outsiders or antagonists—will be more willing to include NGOs in their decision making, providing more opportunities to find integrative solutions at every stage of the process (Hardy et al., 2006), and potentially increasing social value through cross-sector collaboration (Austin, 2010). Likewise, NGO managers who view themselves as fully embedded members of supply chains will be more open to understand and embrace market logics and seek value not only in social or environmental, but economic gains. The roles we propose provide insights into the ways that NGOs can work within different network configurations to create mutual value.

We apply a social movement perspective to supply chain multistakeholder initiatives to show that actors can organize across organizational boundaries to accomplish movement ends. For instance, the Forest Stewardship Council emerged as a structured multi-stakeholder response to shared action frames among the market firms who sought to exploit forest resources and the environmental groups who sought to protect them (Pattberg, 2005). Similarly, the Marine Stewardship Council emerged as a supply chain governance mechanism using market logics (Auld, 2012). Walmart, in response to a void in product sustainability standards, mobilized a large, university-based multistakeholder initiative (The Sustainability Consortium) to help develop those standards from the input of a wide number of stakeholders and sources.

The social movement perspective is useful for several reasons. First, it helps us to understand how mobilization, whether it be a movement group or a complicated supply chain MSI, comes about via shared action frames and opportunities in the institutional environment. It also helps us to understand how a long-running movement, such as the environmental movement, might evolve as it takes in new members, especially for-profit actors. For instance, how does the sustainability movement structurally accommodate these new members? One answer is through cross-sector collaboration to achieve movement ends, a perspective that to some extent retains the original organizational objectives and allegiances of all of the actors but involves compromise and action on shared movement agendas.

In addition to explaining how MSIs as a social movement structure emerge in this way, a social movement perspective also helps us to see the limitations of MSIs to accomplish movement ends. In our structural archetypes, we expect that the focal actors will share alignment on issues important to the sustainability movement, regardless of their motivations, which is to say their action frames will be similar and include the possibility that collaborating towards the MSI objective will be more productive than other alternatives. In the case of 4PF and 5PF roles, these efforts reach across supply chains to affect or include actors that may, or may not, share movement goals. To the extent that they do not share the same goals and issue frames, their willingness to collaborate towards achievement of MSI objectives may depend more on market forces, such as access to customers or market power of other actors in the MSI. Clearly, this is an arena where additional empirical research is needed.

The social movement perspective also informs how different actors in the sustainability movement will react to MSI formation and execution. For instance, some members of the movement discount the Environmental Defense Fund's work with Walmart because it receives substantial funding from the Walton Family Foundation (Mitchell, 2013). On the other hand, if market actors aim to operate in these convening roles, other movement actors might discount those efforts as well, believing they only benefit markets. For instance, two industry associations, the Electronics Industry Citizenship Coalition and the Global E-Sustainability Initiative, convened the Conflict Free Sourcing Initiative (CFSI) aiming to help companies addressing conflict minerals issues in their supply chains, particularly as laws, at least in the U.S., have emerged forcing companies to do so. However, human rights NGOs Global Witness and Amnesty International say the initiative does not go far enough, and that only 21 percent of firms using CFSI's reporting framework are in compliance with U.S. law (Global Witness and Amnesty International, 2015).

Further, some of the large NGOs we have referenced in this article also deploy activism as a back strategy, which may be more-or-less overt depending on the organizing frame. For instance, Greenpeace often uses its powerful advocacy to convene stakeholders on sustainability projects, such as its efforts to drive industry-wide adoption of ozone-sensitive refrigerant technology (Hartman and Stafford, 2006). Oxfam is vocal about the sorts of labor rights improvements are needed in Unilever's supply chain (Wilshaw et al., 2013), even as it is engaged in learning partnerships with Unilever. A central question thus emerges at the intersection of Social Movement Theory and the Supply Chain literature. The latter specifies to some extent who are members of supply chains and what roles they play, while the former allows for a variety of membership and roles. Future avenues for MSI research might provide more empirical exploration into alternative NGOs' roles and MSIs' typologies and provide adequate empirical support for the roles and the model we propose. For instance, for NGOs' ideologies, what are the limits, in terms of supply chain MSIs, for inclusion of NGOs with more radical frames? Implicit in the roles we propose is that most NGOs, such as radical advocacy groups, should not be regarded as supply chain members. Rather, we describe these as other stakeholder groups whose interests are taken into account in the mobilization process.

At the same time, a social movement perspective considers the efficacy of a diversity of mobilizing frames or ideologies in achieving overall movement objectives. For instance, groups with reformative ideologies might become attractive partners for supply chain MSIs because corporate actors might otherwise have to deal with more radical elements in the movement (Lyon, 2010). These reformative partners thus convey a certain kind of legitimacy to company's environmental efforts (Burchell and Cook, 2013; den Hond and de Bakker, 2007) and provide a collaborative space in which companies can address supply chain sustainability. In other words, reformative NGOs may provide legitimacy—or perhaps more cynically, cover—for companies' proactive efforts through MSI collaboration. In this regard, NGOs will have an advantage over consultancies or other for profit supply chain actors who might otherwise provide equivalent technical or organizational expertise. Nevertheless, as with the examples of Greenpeace and Oxfam given above illustrate, a more robust exploration of reformative NGOs with advocacy back strategies in the MSI context is needed.

We also suggest further empirical investigation on the role and extent to which NGOs are able to prioritize changes and sustainability transitions within and across supply chains. How are movement ideologies compromised in this process? Are NGOs just facilitating the execution of a sustainability transition decided and defined ex-ante by focal firms and their key stakeholders? Are NGOs advocacy strategies actually impactful in MSI strategies? To what extent do features of MSI collaborative relationships (financial dependencies, nondisclosure agreements, and personal relationships) constrain NGO's alternatives, a reason that collaboration is often cast as cooptation (Sayer, 2007a, 2007b)? That is, does the resource dependency implicit in MSI relationships foment undue attention on the NGO's ongoing maintenance at the expense of its responsibility to its beneficiaries (Sayer, 2007a)? Under which circumstances will NGOs be in competition with consultancies or 3PL/4PL firms to provide services?

Also, to what extent do other factors, such as network determinants and institutional antecedents influence the emergence of different MSIs and their final impacts on natural and social systems (see Vurro et al., 2009; 2010). How does the level of market competition impact the willingness of actors to collaborate? Because competition limits firm-to-firm collaboration, we observe some MSI initiatives, such as The Sustainability Consortium, evolve in a "pre-competitive" space. In such arrangements, actors set out to collectively determine the rules of the market in which they will eventually compete. In the sustainability context, the market is emergent and the rules unclear or non-existent. While actors may still act to protect their future interests, such efforts offer greater possibility for serving the public good and creating shared value because the participants in the MSI come to agreement on what that good is and how it is to be accomplished in the supply chain context. Lastly, beyond the model that we propose, what are the implications for MSIs when firms forego the messiness of collaborating across sectors to form essentially firm-only MSIs (as in the conflict minerals example given above) (Egels-Zandén and Wahlqvist, 2007)?

There are obviously many open questions regarding NGOs' engagements in supply chains. As NGOs have evolved and migrated into new territory, we need new ways to understand the roles they take on in interacting with organizations across sectors, including in supply chains. The supply chain roles we have proposed provide a foundation on which the questions posed above may be addressed.

Conclusion

Nongovernmental organizations have become part of a complex, networked ecosystem inside and outside of global supply chains within which they continually develop their constituency, seek out partners, and adapt to their environment. Increasingly their frames include collaboration and boundary-spanning between supply chain members. We believe that many NGOs act as supply chain members, going beyond technical roles and serving as coordinators, conveners, organizers, brokers, and negotiators who facilitate multiparty agreement on sustainability issues within and across supply chains. We propose a framework of NGO roles consisting of third-party facilitators (3PF), fourth-party facilitators (4PF), and fifth-party facilitators (5PF) serving in increasingly more strategic roles, involving increasing numbers of actors, and with increasing potential for co-creation of value in global supply chains.

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Contributions

- Both authors contributed equally to the paper.
- Substantial contributions to conception and design DH, JJ
- Acquisition of data (N/A)
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- Drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content DH, JJ
- Final approval of the version to be published DH

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