Introduction

It was a bright and unseasonably warm winter day. People streamed into Copenhagen by early morning to participate in an event billed as the "Global Day of Climate Action." It was a big success. The crowd snaking through the streets approached 100,000 at its peak. Protesters held signs that read "There is no Planet B" and "Bla Bla Bla ... Act Now!" to reference the urgency of the ongoing climate negotiations. The sun had set by the time the protesters reached the venue of the climate summit. The crowd assembled in the dark, illuminated by the glow of candles as Desmond Tutu led a vigil for climate protection. Speaker after speaker beseeched world leaders to act on the critical challenge of climate change. Individuals in the crowd linked arms and sang songs of solidarity.

A very different scene was unfolding simultaneously across town. While the "family-friendly" march was making its way toward the venue of the conference, approximately 2,000 individuals fell behind. Many of these activists formed their own bloc to march separately from the rest of the protesters. They distinguished themselves by wearing black clothes and bandanas. A few broke off to smash windows and spray-paint buildings as they began to leave the downtown area. The Danish police responded by arresting more than 700 individuals that morning. Many of those arrested were made to sit on the sidewalk for more

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than five hours. Those that were not arrested continued their march, holding banners proclaiming "change the system, not the climate" and "climate justice now!" They linked arms, closed ranks, and maintained their distance from the other marchers assembled in front of the venue, drumming and chanting for climate justice from a site about half a mile away from the other activists.

This event, in Copenhagen in 2009, was the moment at which the world anticipated a successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol. Environmental organizations were expected to be there. Civil society participation at previous conferences had been managed by mild-mannered, scientifically sophisticated nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). But it was already clear by November that Copenhagen was going to be very different. The head of police issued a warning stating that "violent extremists" were likely to target the summit. The panicked Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) issued a set of participation rules – typeset in bold, capital letters, in red ink – that expressly forbid "unapproved protest actions" in the venue. The UN Security Team began to realize that more than 10,000 activists, some of whom had made explicit threats of radical action, would have access to a venue housing world leaders. An atmosphere of tension and nervous anticipation pervaded the first week of the negotiations.

The final week of the conference was a descent into chaos. The negotiations among parties were falling apart over issues of mitigation targets and equity. The mainstream NGOs were working night and day to try to influence states and to apply pressure to ensure the best deal possible. But more radical groups had already threatened to engage in direct action and Seattle-style summit protests to take over the talks in Copenhagen, all the while ramping up activity in the streets. Security forces responded to activists with preemptive arrests, tear gas, and beatings. The panicked Secretariat reacted by banning observers almost completely for the final three days. This resulted in both conventional and contentious organizations being shut out of the conference – an unprecedented move in the history of the UNFCCC.

The negotiations collapsed days later, producing a nonbinding accord that fell dramatically short of expectations.

Copenhagen was a highly consequential conference in the history of climate governance. It was also a conference that was marked by an unprecedented level of contentious activism. How did all this activism come about, and why did it take the forms that it did? This book shows that it emerged from two related, but largely independent, components of a massive transnational civil society network.

On the one hand, transnational NGOs working inside the UN negotiations organized numerous actions and media stunts during Copenhagen to build support for their concrete negotiating positions. They anchored their demands in available climate science, using numbers such as "350" or slogans such as "Keep Global Warming Below 2 Degrees!" They painstakingly built the world's largest transnational advocacy network – composed of 700 NGOs in more than ninety countries – to lobby decision makers for enhanced climate protection.

In parallel to these efforts, another cohort of activists came to Copenhagen to mobilize along entirely different dimensions. These activists were well versed in the politics of the global justice movement and had experience protesting international meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the G8. They built a coalition that bridged the issues of the global justice movement and climate change, using a broader slogan – Climate Justice Now! – to attract a more radical constituency. Critically, they convinced other prominent organizations and individuals to go along with their approach, building support for a justice-based issue framing and introducing a repertoire of radical action into the politics of climate change.

The meeting of these two organizing models meant that civil society organizations within this network faced critical choices: either they could continue to work on an inside track, using primarily conventional tactics and a science-based framing, or they could move to the outside, radicalize their approach, and adopt a justice-based framing.

Groups took opposing – and sometimes unexpected – paths in negotiating these choices. This book explains how they made these decisions. In doing so, I detail how civil society organizations have mobilized historically on climate change, how their strategies have changed over time, and how the interaction between actors in this arena has shaped their decisions. It also tackles difficult questions about the implications of this activism for the politics of global warming and for the future of international climate change governance.

THE PUZZLE

It is not enough to know that there was ample protest in Copenhagen. We want to know *why* protest emerges and *how* it matters. The analysis in this book looks closely at how organizations make tactical choices regarding forms of collective action, to explain why so many of them adopted contention in Copenhagen.

Actors do not go out and simply act collectively. They use a variety of specific action forms – protests, pickets, or petitions, for example – from a broader repertoire of collective action to try to influence their targets (Tilly 1978, 151; Tarrow 2011, 39). These choices are critical to civil society organizations. Groups weigh their tactical options seriously and are acutely aware that they must ultimately face the reputational consequences of their decisions.

Despite the importance of these tactical choices to the actors making them, this is a subject that scholars know surprisingly little about. As Jeff Goodwin and James Jasper (2004, 16) observe, "the actual choice of actions from within the repertoire – not to mention issues of timing and style in their application – has been almost completely ignored." Interest group scholars Frank Baumgartner and Beth Leech (1998, 165) echo this assessment, stating "our review . . . convinces us of two things: groups engage in a wide variety of lobbying tactics, and scholars have yet to explain how they choose among those tactics."

When scholars do tackle this issue, they tend to study either conventional forms of action, such as lobbying, or contentious

forms of action, such as protest. As David Meyer (2004, 137) notes, we know little about the choice between the two, and "the relationships among different types of activism are also begging for more empirical work." Aseem Prakash and Mary Kay Gugerty (2010, 18) lament that the existing NGO literature cannot "explain how and when NGOs decide to use 'insider' versus 'outsider' strategies . . . or the decisions of some NGOs . . . to reorient their strategies."

How do we explain why some actors decide to adopt contentious forms of collective action, while others do not? Scholars have offered two general explanations. First, political process theorists argue that organizational behavior should respond to changes in the external political opportunities available for participation. For example, research in this tradition has argued that actors' behavior should become more contentious when opportunities for participation become more limited (Meyer and Minkoff 2004; McAdam 1999; Tilly 1978; Tarrow 2011).

While political process theory makes an important contribution to this topic, it is limited in its ability to explain the choices of individual actors. It may be perfectly correct that when opportunities are reduced, more actors choose protest. But virtually every movement has variation in the forms of action that are employed at any given time. What about those that do not respond to political opportunities, protesting when opportunities are abundant or continuing to try to lobby when access is scarce? Many actors in my study subvert the general expectations of political opportunity theorists. How can we explain their behavior?

Organizational theorists help with this problem. This work shows how an organization's ideology, structure, and resources can influence its tactical choices (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Piven and Cloward 1977; Dalton 1994). From this vantage point, the behavior of advocacy organizations should respond to both their normative and instrumental concerns (Prakash and Gugerty 2010; Keck and Sikkink 1998). For example, we should expect organizations that are older and have more resources to be less contentious, and those that have more radical ideological orientations to tend toward more contentious forms of action.

Considering organizational factors helps explain why changes in political context do not affect all actors equally. But this approach is more limited in its ability to explain organizational change. Scholars working within this tradition tend to consider change unlikely (Hannan et al. 2006), develop simple stage theories that predict unidirectional change (Michels 1958), or essentialize organizations and their ideology (Dalton 1994, 209). But many actors in my study changed their forms of action during the time period in which I observed them without significantly altering their other attributes. How can we explain these changes? And, more specifically, how can we explain which actors will change, and why?

This book argues that both political process and organizational theories are important in explaining organizational choices, but both overlook the importance of *relationships* in organizational decision making. This book develops a network approach to collective action that helps explain who adopts contentious forms of action, and why they do so.

THE NETWORK APPROACH

My network approach is situated in relational thinking. Relational thinking differs from the traditional approaches to collective action in that it considers organizational decisions to be interdependent. This means that knowing the structure of relationships between organizations can be as important as understanding the properties of organizations themselves or the characteristics of the political system in which they operate (see Mische 2010; Emirbayer 1997).

Relationalists are concerned with what Mark Granovetter (1985, 482) calls the problem of embeddedness: "that the behavior and institutions to be analyzed are so constrained by ongoing social relations that to construe them as independent is a grievous misunderstanding." To say that actors are embedded in relations places the focus on the social ties that allocate resources, information, and meaning differentially across populations of actors. In this view, social structure emerges from stability in patterns of

relations among actors. In turn, the structure of these relations both empowers and constrains the choices of the individual actors.

This perspective reveals the limitations of studying advocacy organizations as analogous to firms (Prakash and Gugerty 2010). While this approach illustrates the importance of organizational structure and incentives, it underplays the importance of relationships between organizations. Advocacy organizations self-represent to members, funders, and the media as independent units with unique brands (Barakso 2010). But in most instances, they must also cooperate and compromise with other groups to advance their causes. Networks "soften the boundaries of organizations" by facilitating the exchange of information, resources, and meaning (Lecy, Mitchell, and Schmitz 2010, 242). There is nothing contradictory in this duality: the network perspective allows us to understand how civil society can be composed of both instrumentally motivated organizations and a network of principled advocates.[1]

The relational approach integrates elements already present in other approaches to social movement studies. For example, the relational approach draws on the original insight from political process theory that political opportunities have to be perceived in order for them to affect choice of tactics (McAdam 1999, x). Similarly, it highlights the resource mobilization insight that it is not individually held but collectively mobilized resources that matter for generating collective action (Edwards and McCarthy 2004, 114). But it goes beyond both of these approaches by highlighting which elements of explanation are properly relational. It also explains apparent empirical contradictions by systematically theorizing how social relations influence important political outcomes.

[1] Organizations are very conscious of this duality. As one interviewee explained to me regarding the strategy of the international climate coalition: "We work together quite a lot. But we know that we all represent different brands, so we have to be careful to give the appearance of not working together all the time" (Interview, WWF European Policy Office 2008).

Relational theorists consider both individual behavior and collective outcomes to be the product of interdependent actions of members of the system (Coleman 1986). Thus, methodologically, relationalists often use different approaches – qualitative and quantitative – to consider the role of interdependence in generating individual choice and social outcomes. Social network analysis is one way to implement a relational approach (see Diani and McAdam 2003), although network analysis and relationalism do not always perfectly overlap (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994).

Drawing on the tradition of social network analysis, this book emphasizes that patterns of interorganizational relations influence organizational strategic decisions. Networks influence an organization's choice of action form because they can encourage tactical harmonization between closely connected groups. In other words, I expect organizations to adopt contentious forms of action when their peers have already done so. I find that this is true in the time period I study, even after controlling for other important factors.

Why would organizations harmonize with their peers? My research emphasizes the importance of three mechanisms. First, networks structure an organization's relationships with other organizations, thereby facilitating *information sharing*. As a result, an organization's position in a network may provide it with information about opportunities or choices that it otherwise might not be aware of (Ansell 2003). Information sharing can spread knowledge about the planned tactics of other organizations, aiding in determining whether a particular collective action proposal will meet the threshold at which it is likely to be successful (Granovetter 1978). Finally, information sharing can also stimulate interorganizational learning about tactics that leads to the adoption of new forms of action. For example, Wang and Soule (2012) find that collaboration is an important channel of interorganizational tactical diffusion among American social movement organizations.

Second, network ties can facilitate *resource pooling*. Resource pooling is important because it can help an organization

overcome its individual resource limitations. Through resource pooling, an organization can draw on not only its own resources but also the resources of others for purposive action (Lin 2001). Organizational coalitions are often created as permanent vehicles for resource pooling between participants (see Bandy and Smith 2005; McCammon and Van Dyke 2010). For example, Diani, Lindsay, and Purdue (2010) find that diverse social movement coalitions in Bristol and Glasgow share both material and symbolic resources, regardless of the type of collective action they organize.

Third, groups may also use *social influence* to persuade one another of the utility or desirability of certain tactics. This influence can function directly, convincing others to change their plans for action as a result of negotiation or discussion, or it can function indirectly, convincing organizations to change their underlying identities and in turn implying different forms of collective action. For example, Taylor and Whittier (1993, 118) use the history of the lesbian feminist movement to suggest that "groups negotiate new ways of thinking and acting" that can change both their identities and forms of action.

Understanding how relational mechanisms operate is important for developing a more complete knowledge about the dynamics of collective action. My documentation of the operation of relational mechanisms in this book helps establish their importance in organizing collective action and, in turn, in influencing the nature of climate politics.

ARGUMENT OF THE BOOK

This book is organized around four key arguments. In combination, they help us understand why Copenhagen was so contentious, why some organizations adopt contention and others do not, and how this matters for climate politics. Figure I.1 summarizes the structure of the argument.

First, the expansion of political opportunities changed the population of the organizations that mobilized on climate change. More organizations began to work on the topic as
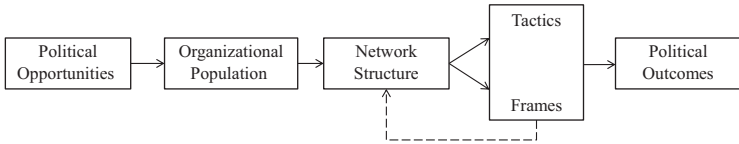
FIGURE I.I. Structure of the Argument

climate change became a more salient issue. As the nature of climate negotiations became more complex, a more diverse group of organizations – representing environmental NGOs, development NGOs, global justice organizations, and radical social movements – all began to participate in climate politics.

Second, changes in the organizational population resulted in the emergence of a divided network. The network became less connected as the population of organizations became larger and more complex. Groups began to form different coalitions to compete with one another. This resulted in a divided network with two main components: groups engaging in conventional climate advocacy and those adopting a contentious climate justice approach. The two sides of this network rarely communicated or coordinated collective action in Copenhagen.

Third, network structure influenced the tactics and framing choices of civil society organizations. Civil society groups are embedded in a network of ties with other groups. These ties influence the decisions that they make because organizations share information, pool resources, and influence one another to adopt similar forms of collective action and collective action frames. Divisions in the network meant that some organizations were exposed to organizations already using contentious tactics while others were not, helping to explain differential adoption of tactics. The choices organizations made in turn also contributed to the restructuring of the network as organizations built new coalitions and alliances in advance of Copenhagen and in the years after.

Finally, the tactics and frames used by civil society groups influenced political outcomes. We would not be interested in civil society activism if we did not think that it was important.