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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Social Movement Gains and Losses: Dilemmas of Arena Creation

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ABSTRACT: Social movements never entirely win or lose, nor do they suddenly appear or disappear. Just as their component parts recombine and continue in other forms, so movements have dozens of impacts of various kinds. To make sense of this complexity we propose examining the outcomes of political interactions for a variety of players (including individuals) across a range of arenas. Given the acknowledged tradeoffs and dilemmas of collective action, we would expect packages of outcomes to appear together sometimes; for example, gains in street mobilization may lead to losses in the form of a damaged reputation or police repression. The first step to explaining such patterns is to identify and name them. We examine one of these outcome patterns, the arena-ownership package, through the case of Seattle's historic $15 per hour wage law passed in 2014, the first ever in a major U.S. city. The players who crafted the bill included an avowed Socialist, the owner of Seattle's iconic Space Needle tower, many representatives of the city's labor movement, and the newly elected Democratic Mayor Ed Murray. These diverse players moved through a series of complex arenas to arrive at the legislative outcome. In this case, we find players who *create* new

arenas, rather than only using already-existing arenas. This move is associated with a typical package of gains and losses: increased control for the player on the one hand, but corresponding losses and risks—the alienation of excluded players and increased perception of responsibility. The creating player is blamed for the arena's failures as well as credited with its successes.
KEYWORDS: social movement outcomes, players and arenas, success and failure, gains and losses, arena creation
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1. Introduction

Studies of social movement consequences have long sought answers to broad questions, such as: Which strategy leads to success? But recent scholarship suggests that broad predictions about outcomes are limited (Amenta 2006; McCammon 2012). Theory and research have identified more and more outcomes that protest can generate (Bosi et al. 2016). Social movements rarely win or lose, at least not entirely. Movements have dozens of impacts of various kinds. Some of them are gains for players within the movements, advancing their implicit or explicit goals, while others are losses for many of those same players. The same movement actor may experience both gains and losses at the same time or in quick succession—imprisonment followed by celebrity, for example. A social movement organization may lose a policy fight but gain new members.

All social movement actors experience tradeoffs when making decisions about which actions to take. When they grapple with the decision in advance of making it, they experience the tradeoff as a conscious dilemma. Given that social movement actors, as well as those players they target, face recurring dilemmas across time and space (whether or not to use disruptive tactics, for example) we expect certain packages of outcomes—that is, of gains and losses—to appear together regularly (Jasper et al. 2022).

This article highlights one common but understudied move available to some players, and the gains and losses entailed with making it (or choosing not to): players frequently *create new arenas*, rather than simply using those that already exist. This move is associated with a typical package of gains and losses: the capacity to write the rules and define the boundaries of the new arena on the one hand, but corresponding costs and risks on the other—the alienation of excluded players, as well as increased perception of responsibility. 'Owning' an arena means that a player is blamed for its failures as well as credited with its successes—gains and losses accrue accordingly. Although activists sometimes create arenas, it is more often players with greater resources and institutional positions who create them. A players-and-arenas framework allows us to follow calls 'to put social movements in their place' (McAdam and Boudet 2012) by tracing the interactions among players that lead to political outcomes; movements are just one set of players among many others (Amenta 2014).

We analyze the contestation over Seattle's $15 per hour wage law, passed in 2014, the first ever in a major U.S. city, because it illustrates the importance of arena creation and the packages of gains and losses that come with it. A diverse group of players (including, for example, both an avowed socialist and the owner of Seattle's iconic Space Needle tower) moved through a series of complex arenas to arrive at the legislative outcome. We find no fewer than six instances of arena creation and hence argue that this phenomenon is likely more central to the story of social movement "victories" and "defeats" than has previously been recognized.

2. Collective Action as Strategic Interaction and the Importance of Arena Creation

This article relies on a "players and arenas" conceptual framework (Jasper 2006, Jasper and Duyvendak 2015; Jämte and Pitti 2019; Rone 2021) that compels us to remain sensitive to strategic decision-making among

both movement players and their targets (Jasper and King 2020). This theory is compatible with a process-tracing method of research (Beach and Pedersen 2013; Bosi 2016b).

Players are the individuals and organizations engaged in strategic interaction. Simple players are individuals and compound players are two or more individuals who coordinate as a unified player. Compound players range from semi-formal alliances or factions to formal organizations with constitutions, bylaws, and budgets.

Arenas are the concrete places where players interact – whether cooperatively or conflictually – to make decisions and to fight. Like players, arenas range from the informal to the highly formal, and in fact all compound players are *also* arenas, in which individuals and factions jockey for decision-making power even when the outside world sees a unified player. On the informal end of the spectrum, a street corner constitutes an arena if protestors and police engage there. Laws and other rules, in part, define the arena, but players may choose to break those laws. The history of police-protest engagement in that neighborhood, that city, that country, as it lives in the minds of those interacting, also helps to constitute that arena and what is normal to do within it. But again, either side may break the norms. Arenas have rules and norms, but those rules and norms never fully determine the actions of players within them.

At the other end of the spectrum we find formal arenas like courts. There, the consequences for violating laws, norms, and rules are usually more explicit and predictable than on the street corner. Yet even here, a new prosecutor may have no history at all with the judge, on the one hand, or his father may have gone to law school with her, on the other. The rules and norms even of rigid arenas shift in subtle and occasionally drastic ways depending on the players who enter them.

2.1 Packages of Gains and Losses

Two traditions used to dominate the study of movement impacts. One analyzed the strategies that help movements succeed or fail (Gamson 1975; Piven and Cloward 1977), while the other focused on pre-existing conditions that lead to various outcomes, including success (Giugni et al. 1999; Goodwin 2001). Today, scholars are more likely to tie institutional structures, player strategies, and outcomes together (Amenta 2006, Amenta and Short 2020; Andrews 2004), especially by examining the interactions among various players (Andrews and Gaby 2020; Bosi 2016b). This approach often entails looking at subplayers within a movement. We build on this work with a language of players, arenas, and strategic interaction to identify patterns of gains and losses made by the various players engaged in strategic interaction.

The story is necessarily complex, filled with more small gains and losses than large ones. Scholars for example study the effect and enforcement of laws (Jabola-Carolus 2017) and find that the strategic drama continues after legislators make laws. No sooner did Franklin Delano Roosevelt sign the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, than powerful business interests set about to unwind it. Twelve years later they did, passing the Taft-Hartley Act, formally reversing some of the most important gains of the earlier Act. Even what appear to be full legislative successes are contingent upon ongoing strategic interaction for their implementation.

Often gains and losses are inseparable, another way in which a strategic interaction perspective demands a subtler accounting of movement outcomes. We observe recurring packages of gains and losses produced by how players resolve strategic dilemmas that they consciously face, or in how they muddle through the tradeoffs that they are not able to analyze in real time, for whatever reason (Jasper et al. 2022).

In a recent study, for example, we identified a package of gains and losses associated with the institutionalization of activist demands for participatory budgeting in New York City (Jabola-Carolus et al. 2018). In this case movement players faced the powerful allies dilemma, ultimately choosing to make friends with key politicians who helped to advance their agenda. They successfully compelled these allies to adopt the practice and formalize it across an array of city arenas--thus achieving their stated goals. Yet this success and stability was linked with decreased control and capacity for the activists who had sought formal institutionalization; city bureaucrats and elected officials shaped participatory budgeting to meet their own ends, rather than those of movement players. Movement players then faced the 'being there' dilemma (Jasper 2006:115): should they continue to expend organizational resources to participate in the institution they created, or should they call their efforts a success and move on to other arenas, with the erosion of gains that this decision typically entails?

In short, players face conscious dilemmas and unacknowledged tradeoffs. Choosing one horn of a dilemma produces a typical package of gains and losses. Choosing the other horn produces one as well, usually an inverse of the other package. Even where scholars have not identified recurring packages, we should look for bundles of gains and losses that, with more study, we may recognize as common packages. Even where there is no clear pattern, we expect gains and losses to come hand in hand.

Success and failure are never fully distinct. Sometimes the shock of a crushing defeat galvanizes players to convert bystanders into players, and the movement returns stronger than before the defeat. Sometimes a new piece of legislation goes unenforced, and what seems like an unequivocal victory proves to be only a momentary gain.

By examining strategic choices and the packages of gains and losses associated with them, we contribute to a theoretical language that acknowledges both the agency of social actors and the complexity of social movement outcomes. The "arena-ownership" package is an example, which stems from the strategic choice to create new arenas.

2.2 Arena creation in strategic interaction

In the players and arenas approach, the arena contains many elements of what would be called structure in other paradigms. In the strategic interaction perspective, players can often *select* the arenas they enter, and players can operate in multiple arenas simultaneously or sequentially. Arenas demystify social structure and put structuring forces in the most concrete possible terms (Jasper 2021), much in the spirit of actor-network and related theories (Latour 2005).

But even in the players and arenas perspective, arenas are typically a given. Players may reshape them, change their rules, or violate their norms. But the courts are the courts, and the streets are the streets. The core contribution of this paper is to focus on an underappreciated phenomenon: players, movement players and elites alike, often *create* arenas, from scratch. Players have the ability to pivot from one arena to the other, and to reshape the arenas which they enter. But they also have the ability to pause, confer among themselves, and construct new arenas. They may lure targets into the arena, or they may use the arena to recruit to their alliance. There are countless reasons why a player might create an arena.

In the case that follows, we will see that arena creation was both common and consequential in the strategic interactions that produced a historic policy change. We identify *six* instances of arena creation: the Seattle Mayor created a decision-making arena, only to discover that the arena was so unwieldy it threatened collapse; in response he created a smaller, less formal, arena where he could exert his influence more powerfully; a

movement player constructed an arena in which members of the public came to feel decision-making ownership over the $15 an hour movement; business players created an arena in which to determine their collective interests in negotiations with the Mayor and organized labor; organized labor created their own coalition arena in which to determine theirs; finally, business players strongly opposed to the final outcome formed yet another arena within which to decide how best to fight back.

The decision of whether to create an arena or not is a version of the 'engagement dilemma' (Jasper 2006:26). All players face choices about whether to enter arenas to make decisions and fight. Choosing to engage entails risk, but so does avoiding conflict. Players who create arenas similarly face the engagement dilemma, with the added twist that they will bear responsibility not just for their role in the engagement but also for the efficacy and reputation of the arena itself.

Arena creation appears first as a dilemma facing those with the power to do so. If they decide to try, they make a variety of tactical choices. As they continue down that path they experience a package of risks, opportunities, gains, and losses associated with their (symbolic or literal) ownership of that arena.

In 2014, Seattle became the first major U.S. city to pass a $15 minimum wage. Arena creation is fundamental to the story. After a methodological discussion, we present a narrative of the interactions that led to Seattle's historic $15 minimum wage legislation. We pay special attention to the dilemmas associated with arena creation, which we analyze more thoroughly in the subsequent discussion section.

3. Methods

Most social movement players target and interact with political and business elites. When environmental activists shame corporations that pollute or workers ask politicians to regulate the conditions of their employment, the targets respond favorably or unfavorably. These players are engaged in strategic interaction. We would like full information about all the players, but the motives of activists' allies and opponents often remain obscure. Scholars can more easily study activists' decisions, motivations, and dilemmas, not least because activists are usually more accessible to researchers. Sometimes scholars are movement sympathizers or even former members of the groups they study.

But the corporations, politicians, and other players with whom protestors interact often remain a black box; it is hard to observe their strategic decision-making, so it is easy to miss that they too are making strategic decisions in their interactions with movement players. Of course, movement players also make backroom decisions before entering public arenas that scholars can readily observe. But even those backrooms remain more accessible to scholars than corporate boardrooms or the conversations between an elected official and her chief of staff, and by the nature of social movements the backroom and the public are more permeable than the corporate board room and the public engagements of the corporation's communications director.

Interviews are a useful tool for opening the black box, if researchers can access a diverse set of players. Selecting a case in a single city—as opposed to a large nation-state—helps, as even the most powerful players are potentially accessible. In 2016, Luke Elliott-Negri conducted twenty-one interviews with players from the 2014 Seattle minimum-wage drama: four elected politicians (Mayor Murray, Councilmember Sawant, then-Councilmember Licata and now Congressperson Jayapal), two business leaders, one journalist, nine labor leaders, three members of Socialist Alternative (in addition to Sawant), and two leaders in community-based

(though labor-funded) organizations.[1] These interviews were conducted just a few years after the strategic interactions in question, enabling relatively crisp recollections of events and affects. In addition, we used secondary sources to construct the timeline of events that comprised the strategic interactions leading up to the passage of the law.

This breadth of interviews across a range of strategic players enables a more balanced and complex story of strategic interaction. While issues of black-box obscurity remain—in our interview with the Seattle Mayor, he had staff with him and was circumspect—the players and arenas theoretical framework demands a methodological and analytic attention to the strategic interactions that unfolded in Seattle in 2014. We interviewed nearly all the players at the center of the fight, from all the key "sides"—elected officials, labor negotiators, business owners, and Socialist Alternative leaders.

We include the media as players. As one labor leader reported in an interview about the role of the media in the minimum wage fight: "[H]onestly the fact that it was Lynn Thompson of the *Seattle Times* covering it and not one of their more conservative reporters I think made a significant difference." And, after the minimum wage fight subsided, one of the labor-funded community organizations hired a journalist from a local publication that had reported favorably during the most contentious phases of the fight.

Our methodological choices reflect the players-arenas perspective within which we operate. We do not aim to name the general factors that explain a particular outcome, thereby attempting to develop a general understanding of the conditions under which movement players can produce such an outcome. Rather, we use an agency-centric approach, attempting to capture strategic calculations and interactions in order to show how players make decisions in the face of dilemmas and tradeoffs—and that those decisions often, but not always, produce patterned packages of gains and losses.

4. Seattle and the Fight for Fifteen

As Occupy Seattle and encampments around the country faded in early 2012, a small Trotskyist party called Socialist Alternative sought to transform movement energy and attention into power in arenas other than public parks. They called for 200 Occupiers to run for elective office. Few took up the call, but in Seattle, Kshama Sawant ran for state representative, surprising herself and her organization by winning 29 percent of the vote—a notable proportion of the electorate, although not enough to win office under a winner-take-all electoral system. Initially Socialist Alternative had viewed electoral politics primarily as an opportunity to discuss socialism explicitly in the public eye. But the surprising showing gave members of the organization a boost of confidence – some began to think that they should stop running educational campaigns and instead run to win. One Socialist Alternative member, Philip Locker, said, "The pithy answer [to how Socialist Alternative came to run a serious campaign for elective office] is luck. The more politically correct answer, which I do believe, is that our run in 2012 really confirmed we had an analysis." A year later, Sawant ran for city council and won with 51 percent of the vote, this time making a $15 minimum wage central to her campaign.

Meanwhile, in New York City, long-time community organizer Jon Kest pitched the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) on the idea of funding a fast food worker organizing drive. Kest's New York Communities for Change organized around the demand for "$15 and a union." In the U.S. context, with wages stagnant since the 1970s and the federal minimum stuck at $7.25, the demand was audacious. In 2012

[1] Unless otherwise attributed, all quotes in this paper come from these interviews.

and 2013, the group led several brief strikes in New York's fast food industry, and the efforts soon spread throughout SEIU's federated structure, arriving in Seattle in May 2013. Socialist Alternative and SEIU 775, one of Seattle's SEIU locals, were key players in the effort to raise the minimum wage over the course of the year between the summer of 2013 and the summer of 2014.

The campaigns of Kshama Sawant for City Council and Democrat Ed Murray for Mayor were pivotal in elevating the demand for a $15 minimum wage. The Sawant campaign began with three core policy proposals, but as fast food worker organizing took off nationally, they largely dropped the other two, focusing on the minimum wage. While informants disagreed about the role of Socialist Alternative in the final policy outcome, most attributed the city's initial focus on $15/hour to the Sawant campaign. Following Sawant, Ed Murray came out publicly in support of $15, and SEIU 775 endorsed him two days later.

On November 5th, 2013, both Sawant and Murray won their races, creating a sense in the business community that the $15 threat was real. Howard Wright Jr., owner of Seattle's iconic Space Needle, said: "[I]f it's coming here then we need to get out in front of it." His goal was to weaken the legislation as much as possible, rather than preventing it altogether. That a key business-side player had a sense of the legislation's inevitability was in large part a result of Sawant and Murray's victories.

4.1 Arena creation as part of strategic interaction over minimum wage

Soon after taking office in January 2014, Mayor Murray created a new arena as a means to advance his campaign promise—the first of six new arenas created by players in the policy fight (see Table 1, below). In order to raise the minimum wage in Seattle to $15 or any other number, the Mayor would need to work with the city council and pass legislation. But Murray initially avoided this formal arena of the local polity, constructing his own Income Inequality Advisory Committee (IIAC). The group was comprised of approximately two dozen individuals representing various segments of the business community, labor unions, and community organizations, as well as three members of the city council. Murray knew that the city council would ultimately have to pass any bill language that emerged, but he first hoped to build consensus among conflicting constituencies, namely business and labor.

Table 1: Six arenas created in the conflict over minimum wage in Seattle

New arenas	*Player(s) creating the arena*	*Main goal of arena creation*
Income Inequality Advisory Committee (IIAC)	Mayor Murray	Find minimum wage compromise together with business and labor, bypassing the city council
One Seattle	Business players	Develop a common strategy for the IIAC process and align the interests of small and big business
$15 for Seattle	Labor and other sympathetic groups	Develop a common strategy for the IIAC process and involve those players that were left out of the IIAC
15NOW	Socialist Alternative	Mobilize publicly (outside the IAAC procedure) and against a phase-in period
G8	Mayor Murray	Reduce the number of players involved and therefore making the decision-making more effective than in the IIAC
Forward Seattle	Business players (David Minert)	Overturn minimum wage legislation

The IIAC quickly bogged down. Players neutralized one another's proposals through endless conversation, as Murray played a restrained role in meetings. In interviews, players from both camps recounted long and generally fruitless gatherings.

The Mayor's decision to construct this arena launched the arena-ownership package of gains and losses. The IIAC was the Mayor's arena. Although he initially maintained a light touch, he had the authority and resources to shape the rules of the arena, the boundaries of the arena (who was invited in and who was kept out), and the processes by which ultimate decisions would be made. If a player has the ability to create a genuine arena, this authority is very likely a gain. Yet with this gain comes an increased responsibility for the outcomes. In this case, the Mayor wanted to produce a consensus outcome, and the winding, unproductive meetings were a setback.[2]

To maneuver in the Mayor's new arena, labor and other sympathetic groups formed "$15 for Seattle," an ad hoc coalition to develop common strategy for the IIAC process that included many players excluded from the IIAC itself. Meanwhile the business community formed "One Seattle" for similar reasons. At the start at least, the lines of antagonism were clear.

For all the progressive groups except one, $15 for Seattle was not just a player, but also the most important *arena* aside from the IIAC. Decisions made inside the new group were meant to determine bargaining positions in the formal IIAC process, as well as movement strategy and tactics. Socialist Alternative, however, had other ideas. In January 2014, Socialist Alternative announced the formation of yet another new player, 15NOW, which would build mass support for the legislative goal of $15 and agitate to make it as strong as possible. One Socialist Alternative activist said, "For us it was a war, and the question was, how do we build the strongest possible army on our side? So that's what 15NOW was about, was building the strongest possible force on our side, in every way, both from making arguments publicly to people on the street making noise." 15NOW ultimately developed chapters across the city that met weekly and hosted monthly meetings that attracted hundreds.

This gain for Socialist Alternative was simultaneously a loss for the most powerful labor unions in the coalition. SEIU, the Central Labor Council, and others lost some control over the movement when Socialist Alternative created 15NOW. The name itself hit on a major point of contention, both within the labor coalition and between business and labor: if the $15 number seemed inevitable to some, the big question was *when?* From the outset, Socialist Alternative was publicly committed to $15 "now," meaning a $15 minimum wage for all workers in Seattle, the day after the law was passed. Others in the room were willing to agree to a phase-in period, where the wage would climb gradually to $15. Indeed, a number of informants reported that some individuals in the coalition had their own personal agendas, making them less concerned with the details of the legislation, so long as it contained the word "15."

The Socialist Alternative path was particularly disconcerting for one coalition partner, the Main Street Alliance (MSA), composed of politically progressive small business owners inclined to support pro-worker policies such as an increased minimum wage. MSA had been active in constructing and passing the paid sick leave law in Seattle a few years before. "But nevertheless, I think it's fair to say that we [at MSA] were freaked out about the notion of 15 now," reported one organizer. MSA was certainly a labor ally, especially relative to

[2] Some players may create false arenas (Jasper 2006:169), where they purposefully hope to produce no outcome at all. The same package applies, however: the decision to create an arena creates both increased control and increased responsibility for the outcome—or lack of outcome.

some small business owners on the other side of the table who wanted 15 *never*. In any case, the "now" position that Socialist Alternative took, while creating anxiety on the other side of the table, also created plenty on the labor side, highlighting potential disagreements at the $15 for Seattle coalition table.

In February 2014, both business and labor players were active. Fast food workers staged a one-day, city-wide boycott of big burger chains, funded mostly by SEIU. Throughout the day, protestors visited all 25 major chains, receiving extensive media attention. Such actions were part of SEIU's broader national fast food worker organizing, but they also focused the local Seattle public conversation on the minimum wage. The protests did not directly target local business leaders who sat on the other side of the table in the IIAC.

"Big business" was active *within* the One Seattle coalition, hiding their resistance to a higher minimum wage from the public. According to one informant, the business coalition "hired an African-American organizer to go around to all the Black small business owners and tell them it was going to be bad for businesses, and they got… some of the Asian businesses fired up." In February, the Chamber of Commerce conducted a poll of businesses, with many reporting that they would be forced to fire workers if there were extreme shifts in the minimum wage, a classic business tactic to influence residents and workers of the city.

With spring on the way, and after many weeks of slow negotiations at IIAC, Socialist Alternative began to execute a tactic without the agreement of $15 for Seattle. Importantly, the city charter allows ballot amendments and initiatives, unlike in many U.S. cities. The coalition had decided to work the IIAC process without threatening to take the fight to the public. But Socialist Alternative disagreed. They filed a charter amendment initiative and began collecting signatures. Socialist Alternative stated publicly that they wanted the IIAC to work, but that if business-side players would not negotiate with sincerity, they and 15NOW would run a massive ballot box campaign for a $15 minimum wage, to be implemented immediately upon its passage.[3] There was finally an open fissure in $15 for Seattle.

15NOW used their monthly public meetings to create a public process generating the content of the amendment. Like Mayor Murray, Socialist Alternative faced the arena-creation dilemma: they wanted to elicit broad participation, but also to control the outcome. The split was at once a loss and an opening for SEIU and top coalition leaders, generating a radical flank effect. An ally was "out of control," but labor negotiators in the IIAC could now plausibly say to the business interests, in so many words, "You better back down or we don't know if we can control these folks." Labor players even attended the 15NOW meetings, suggesting to business-side players that Socialist Alternative might eventually convince them to support it.

The lines of antagonism in the IIAC were clear. The main issues the players faced were the length of the $15 phase-in period (if any), whether there would be an exemption for tipped workers, and the definition of a small business (which would be given a longer phase-in period). With IIAC negotiations dragging on, and facing the humiliating paralysis or collapse of his first arena, in March Mayor Murray formed a second arena that became known as the G8 – an IIAC subgroup ultimately comprised of three labor leaders and three business leaders (two others dropped out).

Murray again faced the tensions associated with arena creation: he increased his control with the smaller arena, chairing meetings more aggressively (participants report his yelling at them on multiple occasions before storming out of the room), and the group made some progress. As the mayor himself reported, perhaps

[3] We identify the *threat* of a referendum itself as an effective tactic also in other local conflicts over social policy issues (Weisskircher 2019, Jasper et al. 2022), perhaps hinting at the importance of direct democracy for radical players more generally.

reflecting his growing confidence in office, "There seems to be something that people respond to when you're mayor, unlike when you're the chair of the Ways and Means committee." He expected that the tighter group would make it easier for him to wield the charisma of office. But with increased control over a smaller number of players came a corresponding loss: decreased control over the excluded players, both those supportive of the legislation and those opposed.

The unions and business leaders who agreed to sit on the misnamed G8 also experienced various gains and losses. Business delay was no longer viable under Murray's watchful eye, a gain for labor, but Murray also wanted to make business happy. The new arena made these players more powerful than those who were left out, but less powerful relative to Murray. The opportunity to enter a new arena with a sympathetic but powerful "judge" presents a dilemma – the judge may sympathize with you more than with the opposition, but you also cede power to the judge. Any player who enters or creates an arena faces a version of the engagement dilemma.

The G8 worked well for the Mayor where the IIAC had failed. In the smaller room, he was able to use his executive authority and the charisma of his position to force the other players to get to their bottom lines. His pressure and aggression worked. There were, of course, tradeoffs. One interviewee, who had some power in Seattle politics, resented his exclusion from the G8, another example of the arena-ownership package: "I think we were cut out of some of those meetings," this person reported with an edge. The practical and emotional effects of exclusion and inclusion may last years, affecting future rounds of conflict and coalition. Murray created an arena, giving him the authority to construct boundaries. But those boundaries angered those excluded, fueling possible opposition in the future. Yet for the moment, the play appeared to be working, and as April unfolded, they grew close to a deal.

On April 22nd, with the G8 – and hence the IIAC – process on the verge of concluding, the pro-$15 players staged a rally, with hundreds surrounding city hall. Although Socialist Alternative had long parted ways with the labor coalition, all the players participated in this public event. They expected an agreement to come out of the IIAC the next day, and wanted business players to feel some final pressure, to experience viscerally how popular an exemption-free minimum wage bill was in Seattle.

But on April 23rd, hours before the mayor's planned press conference to announce a deal, the inside negotiators hit a serious snag, based on confusion about one of the three core issues separating business and labor. Both sides had agreed to a different wage phase-in for small businesses, but the number of employees separating large and small business was in dispute. According to union leader David Rolf, we "came into the room and said, 'We think we've got a deal, we have an agreement, we're ready to pop the champagne.' We then went through the exercise of reading aloud what we thought the agreement was, and when I got to 500 employees *nationally* they said, 'No, you said *local*.' (quoted in Feit 2014). Under the business-side interpretation, megachains like Walmart that might have fewer than 500 employees *in Seattle*, would be eligible for a longer phase-in to the full $15 minimum wage.

Murray had to face journalists empty-handed. Thompson of the *Seattle Times* said, "[W]e all show up and he's like, 'I don't have an agreement.' And it seemed devastating at the time. It seemed like, this is a huge political disaster. He said, 'I'm staking my mayor-ship on this.' … [T]he thing's falling apart is what it felt like." The increased responsibility associated with arena creation was on full display. If the Mayor had used a typical legislative process—that is, if he had entered an existing arena—such a failure would be shared with legislators. But having constructed an arena, attribution of failure would land squarely on the Mayor. Over the next five days tensions rose in the IIAC, but ultimately the labor-side view prevailed: companies with more

than 500 *national* employees would not be eligible for a longer phase in period. Mayor Murray announced the final plan on May 1st.

This was the end of the IIAC process, the end of this round of strategic engagement. The G8, an arena within an arena, had worked for the Mayor, and so the IIAC ultimately served its function. Labor leaders declared victory.

4.2 Strategic interaction without 'final' outcomes

And yet, there is never a clear line demarcating one round of strategic interaction from the next. Though participants in the IIAC had agreed to abide by the outcome of the process, some business players had other plans. The proposed legislation had to make its way through the city council, and some interviewees reported quiet attempts to amend the legislation in that arena. The council, however, was disciplined, and did not change course as a result of lobbying.

In addition to being frustrated with the outcome, some business players were aghast to learn that the Socialist Alternative threat of a charter amendment had not been real, due to a procedural misunderstanding on the organization's part. In Seattle, ballot initiatives can be filed every year, but charter amendments only every other year, meaning that the business community would have had more than a year to fight the amendment, in the court of public opinion and through various procedural means. Some business players felt they had been duped.[4] A subset of the negotiators broke off to form Forward Seattle. The organization was registered to the address of David Minert, a small business owner who had played a minor part in the IIAC process. Forward Seattle went so far as to file a ballot initiative to overturn the legislation, although it ultimately backed down.

And in yet another example of the endless nature of strategic engagement, some business leaders immediately pivoted to the state legislative arena. The final IIAC package allowed an initial subminimum wage exemption for tipped workers in the initial years of the deal, with an eventual sunset. Such exemptions are common in the United States, but it was the first of its kind in Washington state. So, business leaders immediately attempted to use this provision of city policy to convince state legislators to create a permanent exemption in the state statute. Every victory is partial, and strategic interaction does not end even with the fullest of victories. To date, business players have not prevailed in changing state statute, but they have not entirely given up.

5. Arena Creation and the Resulting Ownership Package

In a way, the IIAC and the G8 represent a familiar form of arena creation. Often movement players make demands on elites, and in response those elites create arenas toward which they channel the movement's energy, as we mentioned earlier with participatory budgeting (Jabola-Carolus et al. 2018). We can see this dynamic in a wide range of historical and geographic contexts. The Tzar's creation of the Duma in response to the first Russian Revolution is perhaps a quintessential example. Yet in the case of the Duma—and we

[4] Contradicting a central premise of orthodox rational choice theory, this example clearly underlines how resourceful players engaged in strategic interaction never have perfect information at their disposal, even in matters of substantial financial importance to them.

suspect this is common—the intention was to create an arena that could make few if any decisions, a false arena (Jasper 2006:169). Movement players enter the arena, but there are no real decisions to be made, no real fights to be had. In such situations, the player who creates the arena attempts to maintain the illusion of decision-making power, while preventing the arena from producing concrete outcomes. Certain forms of movement institutionalization share this dynamic, often labeled as co-optation or incorporation (Bosi 2016a).

The IIAC and the G8 are a twist on this classic story. Socialist Alternative and SEIU 775, along with other movement players, compelled the Mayor to adopt their position on the minimum wage. Yet once the Mayor adopted the position, and ran his campaign on that basis, he actually *wanted* to produce some version of the desired outcome, lest he face re-election a few years down the road having failed to make good on a campaign promise. Thus, he created the IIAC not as a false arena, but as a genuine one, within which he could build consensus among players who sharply disagreed about whether the minimum wage should be increased and by how much.

Meanwhile, both movement and business players also created true arenas in the context of strategic interaction. The broadly "pro-$15" set of organizations created a coalition table at which to decide on a unified public position in their negotiations with businesses and the Mayor. From the outside, this group appeared as a player, but on the inside, it was an arena rife with conflict. Socialist Alternative ultimately left the arena (interviewees hedged on whether this was voluntary or not). They had also created their own arena for movement decision-making, which from the outset competed with the coalition arena for status as the central movement player. In 15NOW, Socialist Alternative sought to create some collective control over the decision-making process about their proposed amendment, and yet they also met in advance of public meetings, making plans to produce certain outcomes. In this sense, 15NOW verged on a false arena, because the player who created it had clear ideas about the decisions it should produce and plans to ensure that it did. Like the Mayor, Socialist Alternative experienced the arena-ownership package: they gained increased control, but if they wielded that control too heavily, they risked alienating players who might come to see the arena as false.

Businesses faced many of the same issues as labor in their attempts to form coalitions. Their principal player-arena, One Seattle, was also rife with internal conflict, primarily along the lines of small versus large businesses. When it struck a deal, some small business players rejected the outcome, and, in violation of the founding agreements of both One Seattle and the IIAC, formed yet another decision-making arena in which to fight back. Given those agreements, the founders attempted, unsuccessfully, to hide their identities and evade responsibility for the arena's outcomes.

Each of these arenas had distinct processes and purposes, and in some cases, diametrically opposed goals. Yet the players who founded each arena all faced at least one similar dynamic, one recognizable bundle of gains and losses that appears to be inherent in the decision to create an arena in the context of sharp strategic interaction: the founders increased their control by constructing the arena, but their level of responsibility for what the arena produced and how the arena was perceived also increased in a way that risked their reputations, their substantive goals in the short-term, and their more long-range goals too. Among the latter was maintaining positions of power—which was the Mayor's concern if he failed to produce what he needed from the IIAC.

In the heat of battle, one tool that players have at their disposal is to create arenas, something that both movements and their targets regularly do. In contemplating such an action, players face a version of the engagement dilemma. Few players, even the most powerful, can control their surroundings completely; strategic interactions always have contingencies. Once players construct the arena and draw other players into it, reversing course is difficult or impossible. Creating the arena gives them increased control over engaging

in an existing arena. But with that control comes increased responsibility and the risks that responsibility entails. Players who construct arenas get to decide who enters or at least the process by which players may enter. Excluded players may be angry and lash out in other arenas.

The reputation of the constructing player is likely to become tied to the arena, both in terms of its substantive output and the procedures it adopts. If the arena is or becomes false, other players may shame or isolate the founding player as disingenuous. If the player is too powerful to be shamed, other players may simply take their marbles and go home, leading to arena collapse. On the other hand, if players construct an arena and create rules that are too loose, they may lose control of the arena—and yet still bear responsibility for its form and content.

Like all strategic decisions, constructing arenas involves risk. Here we identify the arena-ownership package – we might also dub it the control-responsibility package – that appears to be inherent in the decision to build an arena in the context of heated strategic engagement.

6. Conclusion

The strategic interaction perspective begins to help resolve or reframe some antinomies endemic to social movement studies.

Instead of "movements" we discuss players, and thereby avoid typological debates over what a movement is and is not. Whatever else a movement is, it is an aggregation of players, some quite formal and others less so. Talking about the players avoids misrepresenting social movements as homogeneous.

In place of structures, we discuss arenas, the concrete places where structures impinge on action. Again, this language and the precise methodological description it implies avoids many of the confusions analysts face when discussing "structures" as broad social forces that are many steps removed from actual movement players. Arenas force us to specify concretely the constraints that players face in their engagements.

Instead of success and failure, we discuss gains and losses. There is an ontological dimension to this analytical pivot. Success and failure suggest that movements win or lose and then disappear. In fact, the players within movements often carry on for decades, the individuals and the organizations especially, but also the informal groupings and networks. Sometimes they cohere into something that looks like "a movement," turning people who were once public observers into players themselves. But when that amalgamation of players separates, the players go on, engaged in various other forms of strategic interaction.

Even the biggest movement successes are typically temporary—contingent gains, rather than final achievements. Some laws go unenforced, or are overturned a year or a decade later. The opposition never stops opposing, and if players move on to other arenas, their gains erode. The language of gains and losses works well in the strategic interaction perspective, because it implies no final outcomes, just long sequences of various engagements.

In this paper, we build on the strategic interaction perspective, highlighting the understudied phenomenon of arena creation. It begins as a dilemma: whether or not to create an arena; it is then an action or strategy; and finally, it sets in motion a package of gains and losses involved with ownership of that arena.

We suspect that this strategic maneuver, in which a player constructs a new arena from whole cloth, is more common than social movement studies suggests. In the case we have analyzed, there were fully six instances of arena creation—players constructed new arenas within which to make fraught decisions in the context of heated strategic interaction. In fact, we did not set out to look for arena creation, which is to say that we did not select this case to fit the theory. Rather, the theory emerged from the data, and the more we looked, the more instances we found.

We urge future researchers, especially those attuned to the micro- and meso-levels of social movement studies, to comb their cases for arena creation. It is virtually impossible to tell the story of the policy outcome in Seattle, 2014, without this analytic tool. We imagine that it is impossible to understand most other activists' struggles without analyzing a fundamental tool deployed by movement, business, and political players: the creation of new arenas.

This is just one example of the kind of tradeoffs and dilemmas that structure packages of gains and losses (Jasper et al. 2022). Movement players have a variety of impacts on arenas, on themselves, on other players, on laws and regulations, on understandings and feelings. We need to understand the complex patterns of gains and losses that comprise these impacts.

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