

Introducing the special issue **Collective action, social movements, and organization: collected papers from the ISA forum 2021 and beyond**

Guest Editors

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This dossier is the product of a collective action and subjectivity/ies. Predominantly asynchronous, technologically mediated, and involving different scales and regions of the globe, the issue presented here had as its background and starting point a thematic session housed under Research Committee 17: "Organizational Sociology" (RC 17 Organizational Sociology), itself hosted and held in the context of the ISA Forum 2021 event.

The idea of this dossier arose from contact between the guest editors of this issue, in the context of that event, and from the realization of the existing gap in terms of the participation and approximation of Brazilian and world academia regarding the specific theme in question. Particularly, reflection on the extent and role of organizations in sociological theory (Ackroyd, 2000) has been a frequently highlighted problem, although partially and timidly "solved".

This issue seeks to explore the convergence between organizational theories, social movements, and sociologies of collective action – as seminally pointed out by Friedberg (1992) – in order to produce a dialogue and promote progress toward a more general and common theoretical framework. Usually, one can identify clear debates in this regard. On the one hand, researchers investigating how organizations work tend to focus on the study of formal organizations as rather stable collective actors - thus often neglecting organized forms of collective action and social movements that do not come in the form of formalized entities (Ahrne, Brunsson & Seidl 2016). On the other hand, social scientists studying social movements and collective action often place a more fluid and diverse lens on their empirical objects, and often appear quite disassociated from organizational research debates.

However, as pointed out by Erhard Friedberg (1992) and his followers, in what has come to be called "Organized Collective Action" (*Action Collective Organisée*), these theories and empirical objects can be seen as different points on the same *continuum* of collective action, according to their different degrees of organization. Following this logic, Pimentel (2012) has made his own interpretation, realistically and critically, delivering an updated model of Organized Collective Action. Similarly, but grounded in a constructivist approach, Dobusch and Schoeneborn (2015) as well as Grothe-Hammer (2019) have engaged in theorizing different

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degrees of the "organicity" of collectives, recognizing and systematizing that organized collective action does not necessarily imply stable collective actors.

In this context, this *dossier* aimed to gather contributions from those who are working on some kind of fusion, dialogue, or comparative models that deal with social movements and organizational theory as two different sides of the same object: collective action. We hope to foster and produce a debate bringing together these different schools and their specific interests in order to generate a broader picture aimed at building deeper theoretical models and their applications.

Besides this brief introductory note, 8 texts were gathered and selected for this collection, being, in a way, reasonably diversified and thematically, theoretically, methodologically and epistemologically; the set embraces: 3 theoretical essays and 5 texts resulting from empirical research; geographically and institutionally diverse analyses, with the presence of authors from Germany, France, Norway, Spain, Mexico, and Brazil, and within this, from different regions of the country, such as Minas Gerais, Bahia, São Paulo and Pará and with participants from the following institutions: the Trier University, Germany; the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, in Trondheim, Norway; the Ecole Polytechnique and CNRS, France; the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals, Spain; the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany; the Núcleo de Altos Amazônicos da Universidade Federal do Pará, Brazil; from Federal Institute of South (IFSul)/Campus Pelotas/RS and Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil; Universidade Autônoma de Sinaloa, Mexico; Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, Brazil; Technical University of Dortmund, Germany; Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense, Brazil; Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brazil and La Sapienza de Roma, Italy, respectively.

The thematic diversification presents itself under the sign of the different empirical objects and/or theoretical categories selected by the authors for discussion. While some of the theoretical texts prioritize the decision-making process itself as analytical categories, others analyze the systemic theory or even the epistemological dimension, combining theories derived from different research traditions. From an empirical perspective, the diversification of objects seems to be one of the

highlights of the dossier, since the social movement in cinema, the voluntary associations in networks of therapeutic use of cannabis, the international migration of women, and the changes made in the public policies of the state through the labor reform, as well as the relations between leaders of social movements and the government, are analyzed and provide examples of how a broader theory of organized collective action could cover different fields and objects of knowledge.

By way of introduction, let us move on to a brief presentation of each document in the collection. Opening the dossier, we have the original manuscript *Organized collective action and the new collectives: a theoretical-practical heuristic* written by Prof. Robert Jungmann, Ph.D. in Sociology (2018) from the Technical University of Berlin and (junior) professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Trier University (Germany). Professor Jungmann is a prominent young scholar in the field of sociology of organizations, having recently released his book *The Practice of Collective Action* [Jungmann, Robert (2019): *Die Praxis kollektiven Handelns*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.], resulting from his doctoral thesis. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the International Sociological Association as well as of its Research Committee 17 (Sociology of Organizations)³. Besides being a visiting scholar at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver (Canada), he is also co-editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Organizational Sociology*. In his text, Jungmann elaborates, from a revision and reinterpretation of Anthony Giddens' structuration theory, a specific theoretical model for organized collective action, which tries to account for different organizational forms, either in their more "classical" and structured types, as in a company-system, or in their more fluid, relational and unstable forms, as in the "new collectives". His model has been tested also in field approaches, being promising in terms of theoretical renewal and empirical contributions to the analysis of collective action and definitely an example of how theory or theories can also contribute back to theorizing about organizations.

The second text in this issue is also a European contribution, having been written by professors and researchers from France, Germany, and Norway. In the text *Decision Theory in Organizations: towards an integrated Organization Theory*, by Associate Professor

³ <https://www.isa-sociology.org/en/research-networks/research-committees/rc17-sociology-of-organizations>

Michael Grothe-Hammer (Norwegian University of Science and Technology / NTNU), researcher Héloïse Berkowitz (CNRS, LEST, Aix Marseille Université) and Associate Professor Olivier Berthod (ICN Business School & Freie Universität Berlin) we have a re-reading of decision theory from the classics to the present, guided by Niklas Luhmann's neosystemic theory. The authors, when developing the basis for a (new) Decision Theory of Organizations (DTO), focus their analysis on the role of decisions as structuring elements and, in particular, develop and defend the argument that the organization would be both "a system of decisions and a decided social structure", presenting degrees of organizationality, from two intertwined (overlapping) continua: one regarding the degrees of organizationality at the entity level ("entitative organizationality") and the other regarding the combination of organizational elements ("structural organizationality"). Its main contribution, according to the authors themselves, lies in the fact that it helps us to "analyze the complex stratification and intertwining of social orders within, outside, between, and as organization(s)," to which one could add the fact that it puts the decision-making process back at the center of organizations (or organized decision-making orders...).

The third text of the dossier, also of German inspiration and in dialogue with Luhmann's social theory, is written by Prof. Josep Pont Vidal, Ph.D. in Political Sociology at the University of Barcelona (Spain). Vidal is a sociologist by training from the Bielefeld University (Germany), having studied directly with Niklas Luhmann and having been influenced by him. Starting from the premise that action, in its different mobilizations and interpretations (for example, communicative action (Habermas), communicative understanding (Luhmann), and communication beyond language (Deleuze) constitute the basis of social theory, Vidal proposes, in his essay *Coming out of the fog: neosystemic and post-structuralist contributions in organizational theories*, a reinterpretation of neosystemic, post-Humanian, and post-structuralist theories, taking Luhmann's work as a common thread and resignifying and readjusting it in conjunction with other post-structuralist currents, with special attention to constructivism and actor network theory. Perhaps one of the main merits, if not the main one, of the text is that it makes an effort to bring into contact and dialogue theories from different research traditions

and, not only discusses, but proposes a theoretical and methodological alternative of how to combine them in its own analytical model.

Starting the section of articles resulting from empirical research, the fourth text of this dossier comes from Brazil and is signed by Prof. Carla Rech, who has a doctorate in sociology from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul and is currently a professor at the Instituto Federal Sul, in Pelotas. Building on the foundation of her doctoral thesis, her article *Building Bridges Between Social Movements and the State in Brazil: an analysis of trajectories and occupation of positions in the federal government* seeks to analyze how the process of occupation and rotation of positions in the Brazilian federal government occur, with special focus on the participation of people from civil society and social movements. To this end, the author tries to identify in the political-institutional context and in the trajectory of the people researched traits related to the occupation of government positions "by discretionary means". Rech makes use of a robust and well-formatted theoretical framework based on the theory of strategic fields of action, the social network approach, elements of dispositionalist and multideterminist sociology, and the concept of institutional activism. Her results indicate that there is also a "biographical availability", a profile, of the individuals who occupy such positions and that, "by entering this field, individuals start to share the same technical but also militant community." The article, therefore, sheds light on the connections between civil society and state and the transfer of capital between the two.

The fifth article, *The Deconstruction of Social Protection through the flexibility of the labor contract: an analysis of the Mexican labor reform*, is written by Prof. Fernanda Barcellos Mathiasi, Ph.D. in Social Sciences from the Autonomous University of Sinaloa (Mexico) and the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (Brazil), under a double degree (cotutelle), and Prof. Thiago Duarte Pimentel, Ph.D., a post-doctoral fellow in Sociology at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and member of the Board of Directors of the International Sociological Association, in its Research Committee 17 (Sociology of Organizations). Their article analyzes the Mexican labor reform using as a reference the critical realist theoretical model of Social Systems Structuring (Pimentel, 2012), which, in turn, considers ontological aspects of social structure.

Based on critical realist social theory, ontological categories are taken in relation to spatio-temporal structures (natural reality), symbolic (ideal), and relational (social) practices. Institutional changes in the mechanisms of the social structure of labor are based on three ontological categories: space-time, identity, and power. Morphogenesis in space-time structures implies new identity configurations - in individual and collective identity - which, in turn, enable reconfigurations in power structures. In their results, the authors present evidence supporting their conclusion that flexibility in the labor contract has left workers socially unprotected, worsening their working conditions. This is done through: the introduction of a new type of labor contract (causal mechanism), which has structural characteristics of flexible spatio-temporal (intermittency and relocation) and symbolical anomalies (with the loss of collective/group references via fragmentation and individualization of social relations) and socio-political effects (the loss of representativeness, institutional agency capacity and higher order structuring). In summary, the labor reform rearticulates ontological elements, e.g., space-time structure, making labor relations more flexible, transforming the possibility of interaction between individuals and that impacts identity relations, above all, deconstructing it towards the worker, the union and the collective struggle of social movements.

The sixth article is authored by Diana Marcele Kerber, a doctoral student at the Technical University of Dortmund (Germany). In *Experts from NGOs in the process of problematizing (the facts) of Brazilian women's migration: an experience under construction*, the author analyzes the way in which gender and migration issues are treated by expert analysts from non-governmental organizations. For this, the author works with the concept of "problematization" (Pofertl, 2012), whose premises are based on a constructivist perspective in which facts are perceived and formatted according to the observation of the agents directly involved. Starting from the premise that feelings such as empathy and compassion play an important role in problematizing the migration process, the author asks "What awakens the feeling of empathy/compassion in NGO experts during the process of problematizing the migration of Brazilian women?", "What inhibits this type of feeling in these actors?". To do so, she examines knowledge structures, using an individual-

based research perspective as well as Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss 2010 [1967]). According to the author, this method, therefore, promoted theoretical sensitivity as the researcher's ability to consciously deal with her own prior knowledge and thereby track and understand the subtleties in the meaning of the data and separate the relevant from the irrelevant. Thus, by analyzing how such sentiments are shaped by broader cultural contexts of meaning, the article argues that expanding the horizons of relevance can be understood only by identifying these emotional structures and yields insights as to how to move analytically between nation-states and the meta-level and position oneself in a way that identifies the location of the knowledge of these NGO experts.

The theme of collective action is addressed in the seventh article. In *Cannabis networks and medicinal uses of marijuana: associativism as part of the therapeutic process*, Luciana Barbosa, Ph.D. and post-doctoral fellow in Political Sociology, at the State University of Norte Fluminense (UENF) analyzes collective action from a fluid perspective, based on Daniel Cefaï's theory of association in civil organizations in action networks, to analyze how social actors mobilize around access to marijuana for medicinal purposes in Brazil, generating a network of civil association around what has been called "cannabis associativism". The text is based on an "ethnographic research carried out with Brazilian cannabis associations, and by the analysis of documents and public hearings" and it is understood that activism around the theme has resulted in increased access to such treatment, through civil disobedience and the judicialization of health. Since the knowledge needed to perform cannabis treatment has not been produced by medical institutions or research institutes to access it, it is necessary to engage in cannabis collectives or associations. In this sense, engagement promotes greater access to health, as such movements have resulted in possibilities for such treatment. Moreover, the credibility and legitimacy achieved by cannabis associations has the potential to broaden the democratization of the debate on the cannabis issue, as they increase social participation in decision-making processes, and demand democratic means of access.

Finally, to close the dossier, we bring the eighth article entitled *Glauber Rocha and the Cinema Novo movement*, authored by Irma Viana, a post-doctoral

fellow in Social Sciences at UFBA with a doctorate in Culture and Society from the Federal University of Bahia, with a sandwich internship at La Sapienza University in Rome (Italy), and researcher and assistant professor in the Graduate Program in Social Sciences at UFBA. In her work, the author analyzes the Cinema Novo movement, which took place between 1960 and 1970, based on the collective action of its leaders and main exponents - such as: Glauber Rocha, Fernando Solanas, Fernando Birri, Miguel Littín, Julio García Espinosa, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea - whose main goal was to make the Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano, of which the Brazilian Cinema Novo is a part, visible internationally. This social movement, of an artistic-intellectual but also political-cultural nature, went beyond the local, regional and national spheres and gained continental and international reach and visibility. Its goal was not to hide but to bring to light and reflect on "the problems peculiar to Latin America, such as underdevelopment, the abuse of power, the great social inequalities, authoritarianism, oppression, the struggle for democracy [...]" Viana frames it under the prism of social movement theory. And, in interdiscursive opposition to "industrial cinema", the new cinema is studied as a sociocultural movement that placed itself in opposition configured in the cinematographic politics of the big studios. Although it has in the figure of Glauber Rocha its "main leader and theoretician par excellence", the instrumental precariousness of the young filmmakers who formed the movement was an important factor for the aesthetic conception of a new way of making cinema, with a political character, which, together with the independence of production, made possible a critique of Brazilian reality in favor of a new language against the "cultural colonialism" of the big studios' cinema policy.

We hope that this collection can serve as a reference for all those who are concerned with and interested in the ways in which individuals and collectivities relate and articulate themselves, in different contexts and with different purposes, and, instead of indulging in some kind of conflict (Archer, 2000), problematize in detail the mesosociological level, bring up and discuss analytical categories, models and proposals of how to re-signify and analyze collective action, as well as ponder its theoretical unfoldings, and propose practical implications. In summary, we believe that the texts gathered here represent, in good measure, an effort to

show how organized collective action relates to social theory, and vice-versa, what place it occupies, and how it can contribute to its substantiation. We wish everyone who is concerned, interested, and inspired by the reflections that follow a rewarding reading!

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