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# Turning rebellion into money? Social entrepreneurship as the strategic performance of systems change

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## Abstract

**Research Summary:** Critical scholars recognize a disjuncture between the problems identified by social entrepreneurs and the solutions they propose. Existing theory treats this as a problem to be rectified at the organizational level. In this essay, we widen attention to the macro-oriented systems change strategies of social entrepreneurs. We develop a dynamic typology showing how strategies are reassembled over time to stimulate or deflect desire for systems change. Deriving inspiration from Goffman, we theorize the ways that different types of systems change actor perform systems change via interaction with their environments. Drawing on illustrative cases on the boundaries of social entrepreneurship, we show how the collective action frameworks developed by systems change actors can be adapted and repurposed by their (systems) audiences: effectively turning rebellion into money.

**Managerial Summary:** Social entrepreneurs often call for systems change to tackle wicked problems such as poverty or climate change. However, the strategies they propose for tackling these problems, such as lending money to poor people are considerably less radical. In this essay, we identify three types of systems change actor distinguished by the degree of systems change they call for. We trace their

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ideas over time to illustrate how strategies are mediated, and subsequently repurposed through interaction with the systems they seek to change. In conclusion, we call upon researchers and social entrepreneurs to widen their perspectives to incorporate more radical ideas and potentials for systems change, and for greater attention to be devoted to scrutinizing and protecting the integrity of systems change strategies.

#### KEYWORDS

assemblage, collective action framework, framing, social entrepreneur, systems change

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The new groups are not concerned  
With what there is to be learned.  
They got Burton suits, huh, you think it's funny,  
Turning rebellion into money.<sup>1</sup>

At the turn of the millennium, social entrepreneurship—broadly understood as the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue social change or address social needs (Mair & Martí, 2006)—was seemingly poised to tear down unjust structures and replace them with more equitable systems. Field-building actors such as Ashoka and the Skoll Foundation extolled the virtues of supporting new models that would bring about “systems change.” In 2006, Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their work to “create economic and social development from below.” Early academic work borrowed from Schumpeterian traditions to develop the notion of the charismatic “hero” social entrepreneur as someone who recognizes injustice, disrupts inequitable structures and forges new, more equitable, “equilibria” (Martin & Osberg, 2007). In popular rhetoric, the assumption was that in contrast to institutional entrepreneurs seeking to change the same structures that condition their behavior (Gehman, Sharma, & Beveridge, 2022; Holm, 1995), the *social* entrepreneur was considered to be immune to this paradox since they are positioned as sitting outside the systems they seek to change. Fifteen years later, it is perhaps startling to reflect on the extent to which social entrepreneurship has captured popular and academic attention despite there being little evidence of such structural change occurring (Saebi, Foss, & Linder, 2019). Admittedly, social entrepreneurs have often successfully diagnosed injustices and developed solutions such as social enterprises which can patch over the failures of existing systems (Dacin, Dacin, & Matear, 2010; Stephan, Uhlaner, & Stride, 2015). But it is difficult to find examples of systems that have been completely disrupted by social entrepreneurs. Indeed, there is a recognized disjuncture between what social entrepreneurs *call for* (disruptive systems change) and what they *do* (remedy deficiencies in existing systems) (Chalmers, 2021; Kimmitt & Muñoz, 2018; Tucker, Croom, & Bacq, 2019).

The social entrepreneurship literature has predominately drawn upon the concept of mission drift to explore this incoherence (Grimes, Williams, & Zhao, 2019) and in response, has developed a sophisticated understanding of organizational strategies to balance competing logics (e.g. Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Battilana & Lee, 2014; Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014; Ebrahim, Battilana, & Mair, 2014). A notable focus has been on how organizational identities are modified over time via interaction between different sets of stakeholders (Grimes, 2010). Through collective sensemaking, social entrepreneurs adapt perceptions of problems and their solutions over time (Kimmitt & Muñoz, 2018). This is suggestive of a dynamic process whereby discrepancies between problems and their solutions

are reconciled within the organization. However, given that the gap between rhetoric and action remains at the field (or macro) level we suggest that this hints toward a “dependent variable” problem. Since social entrepreneurship is predominately studied from the perspectives of management and organization theory (Hota, 2021; Rey-Martí, Ribeiro-Soriano, & Palacios-Marqués, 2016) there is a tendency to measure “success” in terms of organizational survival: for example, a social venture is “successful” if it continues to trade. Social (or systems) change tends to be assumed rather than theorized or empirically tested (Saebi et al., 2019; Teasdale, Bellazzecca, De Bruin, & Roy, 2022). In this essay, we propose a dynamic typology showing how discursive systems change strategies can be reassembled over time to stimulate or deflect desire for change. Our approach is inspired by the application of assemblage thinking (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988) to the study of entrepreneurship (Gehman et al., 2022). Assemblages are arrangements of different components: actors, processes, ideas, and objects. Assemblage thinking draws attention to the multiple ways in which these components can be assembled (Nail, 2017), how the assemblage works to affect desire (Savage, 2020), and how assemblages are continually remade as they incorporate new components and rejects the old (Buchanan, 2020). Although relatively underutilized in strategic entrepreneurship research, assemblage thinking has considerable potential since it draws attention to the heterogeneity of actors within the social entrepreneurship space(s), permitting a wide exploration of how these actors work to strategically perform systems change through assembling sets of ideas, and positioning these ideas as congruent with alternative ways of thinking and doing.

Our focus herein is on systems change as involving the alteration of defining routines, resources and authority flows of beliefs of the broader social system (Westley, 2008). Following Foster-Fishman, Nowell, and Yang (2007), we distinguish between “first-order” systems change as incremental improvements within existing modes of practice, and “second-order” systems change, which focuses on strategies to bring about a paradigm shift in terms of the framing of an issue. Discursive institutionalist approaches have shown how entrepreneurs construct and tell stories of “imagined futures” (see Beckert, 2021; Thompson & Byrne, 2022) to counter uncertainty and persuade others to support their cause. Relatedly, where scholars have attempted to theorize the systems change potential of social entrepreneurship there has been a focus on the framing tactics used to attract popular support to build a “movement for change” (Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, & Shulman, 2009). Frames are the socially constructed principles of organization which govern how we perceive and subsequently respond to events (Goffman, 1974). Social entrepreneurs may seek to change frames through building new “collective action frameworks” (Hervieux & Voltan, 2018), which are action-oriented sets of beliefs aimed at mobilizing collective action toward system change (Benford & Snow, 2000). Collective action frameworks consist of a diagnostic frame (specifying the problem), a prognostic frame (specifying what should be done) and a motivational frame (encouraging others to action) (Benford & Snow, 2000; Hervieux & Voltan, 2018). Thus, collective action frameworks serve as systems-change strategies, seeking to both foster new ways of seeing and doing, and motivating supporters to action (Cherrier, Goswami, & Ray, 2018; Hervieux & Voltan, 2018; Teasdale et al., 2021; Wittmayer et al., 2019). We therefore focus attention on the different ways in which component frames can be (re-) assembled to stimulate (or deflect) desire for systems change.

This literature on framing widens attention from the individual social entrepreneur or hybrid organization and toward the systems change strategy. However, existing research on social entrepreneurship and framing tends to be rather static, taking us only so far as the moment where the collective action framework is established. Studies of “future-making” teach us, though, that processes of this nature are dynamic: they are continually reperformed as internal and external audiences respond to the fictional expectations initially presented (Wenzel, Krämer, Koch, & Reckwitz, 2020). An emergent stream of “transitions” research has focused on how transformative change can result from interactions between agents of change, elements of the system (Avelino et al., 2019) and the wider socio-material contexts in which such interactions occur (Pel et al., 2020). However, there has been a curious failure to extend social entrepreneurship theory through reflecting on the considerable body of literature concerning previous attempts at systems change by social movements (see Montgomery, Dacin, & Dacin, 2012; Short, Moss, & Lumpkin, 2009). This literature (e.g., Snow, Vliegenthart, & Ketelaars, 2018) alerts us to the possibility that systems might be considerably more resilient than social entrepreneurs (or indeed social entrepreneurship researchers) expect (Dacin et al., 2010), and directs us toward the dynamic ways in which collective action frameworks created by social

entrepreneurs might subsequently be reassembled during the course of their performance; not only by powerful incumbent systems actors, but also through negotiation with internal audiences.

The purpose of this essay, therefore, is to better explain the gap between diagnosis and prognosis of problems through showing how collective action frameworks are modified during their performance. We do this through the development of a dynamic typology which shows the distinct trajectories taken by collective action frameworks developed by different types of systems change actors. Our typology is developed in three stages, allowing us to gradually widen our focus from the social entrepreneur to the collective action framework and incorporate dynamic change. In the process, we make three novel contributions. In the first part, we synthesize literatures on social entrepreneurship and framing strategies to create a typology containing three types of systems change actor (frame insurgent, frame blender, frame bricoleur). These types are distinguished by the different ways in which their collective action frameworks seek to replace, modify, or adapt to existing systems, respectively. Next, we draw from the social movements literature to incorporate external resistance and internal pressure into previously static theories of social entrepreneurship and framing. Building from Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach, we develop the notion of systems change social entrepreneurship as performance. This enables us to incorporate a dynamic perspective to our typology, showing the ways in which strategies are modified over time through interaction and contestation between systems change actors and their internal and external audiences. Our theorizing is illustrated throughout by three prototypical cases operating at the interface between social movements and social entrepreneurship: Fair Trade, Microfinance, and Extinction Rebellion (XR). Together, the three cases permit a wider perspective on systems change since they capture the two broad approaches identified by Westley (2008), as well as illustrating the potential for social entrepreneurship to contribute to systems stability (or no change). Each example relies on different framing strategies. In each case, diagnoses of problems and prognoses of solutions are (initially) closely linked. We pay particular attention to how collective action frameworks are modified through the dynamic interaction between systems change actors and their audiences. This leads us to our third contribution: since the cases highlight difficulties for actors to maintain control over their strategies, we focus attention on how collective action frameworks developed by one actor can subsequently be reperformed by others to stimulate, or deflect, desire for systems change.

In concluding, we move toward a prescriptive approach setting out how social entrepreneurs, and systems change actors more generally, might better preserve and protect the authenticity of their collective action frameworks. While our paper is aimed primarily at social entrepreneurship scholars, we discuss our wider contribution to three sets of literature: institutional entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship as emancipation, and imagined futures. Finally, we reflect on the limitations of our typological approach and suggest how researchers build on these conceptual foundations to incorporate a wider systems-change perspective.

## 2 | SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SYSTEMS CHANGE

Given the centrality of systems change to the social entrepreneurship literature it is somewhat disconcerting that "systems" are rarely defined. From complexity science, we can surmise that many systems (e.g., banking, global trade) emerge organically over time because of the interaction between the different components. They encompass deep structures as well as interactions and interdependencies across constituent components, and, indeed, with other systems. Somewhat counterintuitively, the whole is often more stable than the individual components (Ladyman, Lambert, & Wiesner, 2013) since, over time, systems are constructed around, and become part of, dominant paradigms of thinking and sensemaking (see, e.g., Nicholls & Teasdale, 2017).

As the social entrepreneurship field has developed, it has begun to incorporate a more sophisticated understanding of systems change, appreciative of the importance of context and the complexity of the change process (see Teasdale et al., 2022). Institutional perspectives have diverted attention from a focus on individual social entrepreneurs and highlighted the importance of collective action (de Bruin, Shaw, & Lewis, 2017; Mitzinneck & Besharov, 2019; Montgomery et al., 2012). Running parallel with theoretical developments in the entrepreneuring as social change literature (see Rindova, Barry, & Ketchen, 2009; Staggs, Wright, & Jarvis, 2022; Steyaert, 2007), social

entrepreneurship scholars began to incorporate notions of resistance to change and breaking free from institutional constraints to understand how social entrepreneurship could overcome the paradox of embedded agency (Holm, 1995). Zahra et al. (2009) note that social entrepreneurs need to attract popular support for their actions and will inevitably face resistance from incumbent actors seeking to undermine their ability to bring about change. This theme was initially taken up by discursive institutionalist approaches to social entrepreneurship, which have focused on how social entrepreneurs seek to change institutions, whether through shifting values, or eroding and replacing institutional arrangements (Alvord, Brown, & Letts, 2004; Calás, Smircich, & Bourne, 2009; Nicholls, 2008). More recently, and following longstanding calls from Dacin et al. (2010) and Montgomery et al. (2012), a developing stream of research has sought to learn from the past in utilizing social movement theories to understand how social entrepreneurs frame issues to mobilize collective action. For example, Hervieux and Voltan (2018) examine how field-building actors such as Ashoka seek to engage in social change through discursively “framing” a “powerful mobilization discourse” (see also Teasdale et al., 2021). Wittmayer et al. (2019) explore how social entrepreneurs' narratives of change foster the construction of collective worldviews. Their analysis suggests that such narrative construction is of central strategic importance in systems change (see also the “Social Grid Model” put forward by Nicholls & Ziegler, 2017).

Foster-Fishman et al. (2007) highlight the analytic importance of being attentive to the *degree* of systems change objective. Here, “first-order” systems change focuses on incremental improvements within existing modes of practice, while “second-order” systems change focuses on strategies to bring about a paradigm shift in terms of the framing of an issue. From this perspective, systems change requires that attention is paid to the underlying social frameworks that determine how we make sense of issues (Newey, 2018; Nicholls & Ziegler, 2017).

## 2.1 | Frames, framing, and collective action frameworks

According to Goffman (1974, p. 10), social frameworks involve a set of rules which may be clearly explicated (such as in his example of a game of Checkers) or are developed more subconsciously and built up over time. Goffman's main interest was in how such frameworks preserve social harmony. However, he also outlined a variety of tactics that deviant actors use to manipulate how people see and understand events. Goffman's work has inspired scholars across several disciplines. Notably, social movement theorists have extended Goffman's work to develop the dynamic concept of framing as: “the generation of interpretive frameworks that not only differ from existing ones but that may also challenge them” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614). As such, social entrepreneurs can be seen as being engaged in the production and maintenance of new systems of meaning. These “collective action frameworks” are action-oriented sets of beliefs aimed at mobilizing collective action.

There are three “core framing tasks” which together constitute the collective action framework: “diagnostic framing” “prognostic framing,” and “motivational framing.” Diagnostic framing involves identifying what the problem is, and what or who is to *blame*. Prognostic framing involves specifying a potential solution according to the ideologies and values of the movement. Motivational framing “provides a ‘call to arms’ for engaging in ameliorative collective action” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 617); for example, warning of the consequences of failing to act. Collective action frameworks thus provide activists, supporters and recruits with compelling narratives for how and why they should become involved in systems change efforts (Polletta & Ho, 2006, p. 190). The assumption behind framing as systems change is that audiences drawn to a collective action framework will adjust their schema of interpretation. Once enough people are persuaded by a collective action framework then how we perceive reality shifts and systems change occurs.

By way of example, Muhammad Yunus is often credited with developing a new system of microfinance (Yunus, 2003). In relation to his collective action framework, the diagnosis of the problem was that poor people could free themselves from poverty but needed access to credit to avoid the usurious “loan shark” rates that kept them poor. His prognosis was that nonprofits such as Grameen Bank, which he formalized in Bangladesh in 1983, could offer lower cost loans on terms acceptable to poor women. His motivational call to arms was that “credit is a

**TABLE 1** Systems change actors, framing strategies, and systems change possibilities: A static perspective

Framing strategy	Appropriate type of systems change			Systems change actor	Prototypical case
	No change	First-order change	Second-order change		
<i>Frame Decoupling:</i> Presenting different elements of existing frameworks to different actors	Yes	No	No	Frame bricoleur	Commercial microfinance
<i>Frame Blending:</i> Combing separate frames into a new collective action framework	No	Yes	No	Frame blender	Fair trade
<i>Frame Shifting:</i> Replacing existing systems of meaning with a new collective action framework	No	No	Yes	Frame insurgent	Extinction rebellion

fundamental human right,”<sup>2</sup> accompanied by the now famous story of how he loaned (and was repaid) small amounts of money to basket weavers in Bangladesh.

Collective action frameworks are designed to motivate people toward systems change. Different types of systems change actor can utilize different framing strategies which correspond to first-order (frame blending) or second-order (frame shifting) systems change. A third framing strategy—frame decoupling—does not seek to change systems but is theoretically important since it is a strategy used by (some) social entrepreneurs to preserve organizational stability (see Table 1).

*Frame shifting* aims to replace one set of meanings with an entirely new set of meanings through the development of “an alternative frame that restructures expectations and experiences and suggests different inferences” (Werner & Cornelissen, 2014, p. 1456). Frame shifting typically involves “disjunctive language” that negates prior knowledge to disrupt presently existing frameworks (or systems), often via direct negations or the use of “contrastive pairs” (Werner & Cornelissen, 2014). Despite the focus on social entrepreneurship as tearing down unjust structures (Martin & Osberg, 2007) frame shifting is not well represented in the social entrepreneurship literature. One of the most prominent systems change organizations currently active (Fotaki & Foroughi, 2022)—XR, is a decentralized movement seeking second-order systems change to address the climate emergency. XR diagnose the climate crisis as an “extinction-level” event with political, economic and moral implications that must be urgently addressed: “We will not be led quietly to annihilation by the elites and politicians, write the group” (Doherty, de Moor, & Hayes, 2018, p. 1). XR have sought to shift thinking away from a focus on long-term reduction of carbon emissions being addressed through technical progress. Rather than seeing capitalist progress as part of the solution, capitalism is a “toxic system” (Extinction Rebellion, 2019). XRs prognostic frame is that climate change is thus a *political* crisis requiring urgent action by government. Frame shifting strategies as practiced by XR are appropriate to second-order systems change. We categorize systems change actors using frame shifting strategies to pursue second-order systems change as *frame insurgents*. This label captures their acts of rebellion against existing systems but perhaps does not do sufficient justice to their careful work in constructing alternative ways of seeing and doing.

*Frame blending* involves either the combination of two separate schema into a new hybrid schema, or the importation of the language from one schema into another. The outcome is a new hybrid frame (Werner & Cornelissen, 2014). For example, the framing strategy of Fair Trade focused on repurposing supply chains to move more of the total value to poor farmers and artisans. Under the banner of “Trade not Aid,” Fair Trade created a new collective action framework which blended the business language of international supply chains (maximize value to the corporation) with development narratives of fairness and empowerment. This frame blending repurposed

business practices (pricing, contracts, labor rights) as development practices (guaranteed minimum price, long-term contracts, no child labor). Since frame blending combines elements of existing systems without aiming to disrupt the underlying system, it is more usually a first-order systems change strategy. Somewhat unimaginatively, we classify systems change actors pursuing first-order systems change through the blending of separate frames as *frame blenders* (see Table 1).

*Frame decoupling* involves the discursive separation of different meaning systems (Modell, 2019). It is not a systems-change strategy since it does not challenge incumbent system frameworks, but rather, involves the more pragmatic separation of competing frames (Janssen, Fayolle, & Wuillaume, 2018). Notably, the concept of decoupling is also used in a slightly different context within the organizational hybridity literature to describe how social enterprises maintain organizational stability in the face of competing frames, usually seen as social mission versus commercial viability (Doherty et al., 2014; Ometto, Gegenhuber, Winter, & Greenwood, 2019; Smith & Besharov, 2019). It was in this vein that Battilana and Dorado (2010) explored how commercial microfinance organizations in Bolivia can prevent the mission drift that would come from the prioritization of “banking logics” over “development logics” through hiring practices geared toward focusing on operational excellence. What is most interesting about commercial microfinance in our context is that it retains Yunus’s diagnostic frame (see above)—people are poor since they do not have access to credit—but departs from a prognostic frame that nonprofits should provide subsidized (i.e., affordable) finance, instead persuading supporters that banks can offer loans at commercially viable rates. We develop the category of *frame bricoleurs* to describe those social entrepreneurs who selectively decouple diagnoses and prognoses from different frameworks and present different elements according to the expectations of the audience. Although not directly concerned with systems change, frame bricoleurs are theoretically interesting, since they can exemplify the authenticity gap between diagnosis and prognosis of problems and solutions. To better understand how such a disjuncture might emerge, cognizance needs to be taken of the “dynamic relationship” between collective action frameworks and their audiences (Benford & Snow, 2000).

## 2.2 | Resistance to systems change

It is important to also incorporate the counterframing strategies used by incumbent systems audiences into theories of change (Pel, 2016). Collective action frameworks are socially constructed through situated social interaction (Snow & Benford, 2005). Audiences sympathetic to systems change objectives may dispute collective action frameworks, particularly where they perceive inconsistencies between problems and their solutions (Grimes et al., 2019). Conversely, external systems audiences resistant to change will typically attempt to challenge and modify new collective action frameworks (Benford & Snow, 2000). Challenges to collective action frameworks can come from external systems audiences (counterframing), or internal, organizational, audiences (frame disputes). In turn, systems change actors may modify their initial collective action frameworks to deflect or limit the effects caused. “Framing contests” (Ryan, 1991) thus constitute a dynamic process involving a series of sequential attempts to frame and reframe (how we understand) reality.

### 2.2.1 | Frame disputes (internal/organizational)

Usually, the system change actor’s internal audience will consist of people sympathetic to systems change objectives. These audiences may include volunteers and staff within a social venture, or other members of an affiliation of networked organizations (as with Fair Trade), supporters, customers, and so on. It is important to note, therefore, that internal audiences extend beyond the organizational setting. It would be unusual that internal audiences will agree precisely on the collective action frameworks (Benford, 1993, p. 691) since each individual has her own personal schema of interpretation. Therefore frame disputes, regularly caused by divided loyalties, definitional



differences, and misinterpretation of frames, are relatively common (Benford, 2013). These frame disputes may involve a battle for “hearts and minds” of the movement between “moderates” who prefer to build bridges with the targets of change, and “radicals” seeking to dethrone the current elites and build a new system (Benford, 2013). Generally, we would expect frame insurgents to side with radicals, and frame blenders to side with moderates.

Frame disputes can be both detrimental to, and facilitative for, mobilizing support for systems change (Benford, 1993). Frame blending strategies aimed at first order change generally appeal to a broader set of audiences and are more likely to attract moderates. However, this will exert pressure on the collective action framework away from more radical change since moderates will seek to engage with systems audiences rather than displace them. Appealing to a broader set of audiences may also make a collective action framework less coherent (or open to multiple interpretations) since it is socially constructed by a heterogeneous set of actors.

By way of illustration, Fair Trade began as an alternative trade movement where the prognosis was “trade not aid.” Despite receiving considerable public attention, commercial impact was initially very limited (Raynolds, Murray, & Wilkinson, 2007). Products such as Fair Trade coffee were restricted to being sold from churches and charity shops. In this context, frame disputes emerged within the movement (Doherty, Davies, & Tranchell, 2013). The development of the Fair Trade Mark, linked to close relationships with supermarkets, caused a split between “radicals” who saw themselves as primarily development activists, and “moderates” who focused on business growth as a development tool. The moderates felt that to achieve greater impact, Fair Trade products needed to access mainstream markets through negotiating directly with supermarkets (i.e., inviting systems actors to become part of the solution). This eventually led to the radicals feeling disenfranchised and creating a new entity: the World Fair Trade Organization.

The counter position is that siding with radicals generally leads to a more coherent collective action framework, since voices may be more homogenous (and united against existing systems—see Benford, 1993). But this can make it more difficult to build a broad-based movement for change. For example, within XR Business was launched in April 2019 to engage actively with the business sector “to think about what XR means to them.”<sup>3</sup> However, a month later, following a series of internal disputes within XR, they “excommunicated” XR Business.<sup>4</sup> In this example, the radicals won the battle for hearts and minds. While appealing to business might well have broadened the movement, it would also have led to incoherence in the collective action framework, which, as we saw earlier, presented capitalism as part of the problem.

## 2.2.2 | Counterframing (external/systems)

Incumbent systems audiences may counter-mobilize to either neutralize or incorporate challengers collective action frameworks (Andrews, 2002; Jasper & Poulsen, 1993). Studies of counterframing analyze the various responses put forward by institutions in response to framing (e.g., Vogel, 2012). Typically, these studies point to a process of collective action framework (re-)negotiation where the systems audience seeks to negate the collective action frameworks put forward by the systems change actor. Generally, the literature points to two main approaches to counterframing: “deframing” and “reframing” (Vyncke & Van Gorp, 2020). These are effectively the direct counter-positions of frame shifting and blending.

Deframing involves a total refusal to accept the collective action framework. Systems audiences may refuse to engage on the system change actor’s terms and simply reiterate their original systems change frames (Vyncke & Van Gorp, 2020). This approach may be more appropriate against frame shifting strategies aimed at second-order systems change. Such deframing strategies can be accompanied by legislative action. For example, in the case of XR, mass arrests have taken place when XR has sought to disrupt transport or block public roads in London. In Bangladesh, Yunus was the focus of significant attention by the Sheikh Hasina government following a proposal to establish a new oppositional political party in 2007. In 2011, he was forced to stand down as head of Grameen Bank by the Supreme Court of Bangladesh due to an apparent violation of retirement laws.



Reframing involves blending elements from the collective action framework into the original systems frame. It usually involves a partial acceptance of each aspect of the counterframe (Chong & Druckman, 2013). However, reframing might also involve accepting one, but not all, of the frames (diagnostic, prognostic, motivational) within the collective action framework. Gallo-Cruz (2012), for example, identifies a form of counterframing which embraces the moral arguments (or diagnoses) implicit in collective action frameworks, but repositions existing systems as being able to address these problems (prognosis). In the microfinance context, we can see how banks eventually extended credit to poor people through their own microfinance programs, and in so doing were able to preserve the banking system and access a (very profitable) new market. They seemingly accepted one part of Yunus's moral argument that poor people should have access to credit, but the solution they proposed (banks lending to poor people to create a profit) is detached from the original prognostic frame (that nonprofits should offer credit at subsidized rates).

In building a more dynamic understanding of systems change, we have so far identified that systems change actors build collective action frameworks through developing core framing tasks (diagnostic, prognostic, motivational framing). Where the systems change actor seeks to improve existing systems, frame blending strategies are appropriate (as first-order systems change). Where they seek to replace existing systems (as second-order systems change) they will use frame shifting strategies. However, framing is a dynamic process subject to continual modification by internal (supporters) and external (systems) audiences. Internal frame disputes can occur over how best to frame issues. Internal frame disputes can solidify strategies aimed at more disruptive change, but where they incorporate the perspectives of moderate and radical audiences, this can often lead to splits in an organization. External systems audiences may seek to neutralize systems change, using different tactics depending on whether the systems change actor has strong or weak views (Chong & Druckman, 2013). Generally, one would expect a reframing tactic to be deployed against frame blending strategies (effectively leading to iterative sets of negotiation), and deframing (or even “defaming”) tactics to be employed against frame shifting strategies. We now turn attention to the different ways in which collective action frameworks might be strategically modified in response to these framing contests.

### 3 | PERFORMING SYSTEMS CHANGE

In the previous section, we illustrated how internal and external audiences exert multiple pressures on collective action frameworks. The social entrepreneurship literature identifies collective sensemaking (see Kimmitt & Muñoz, 2018) or developing new logics (see Battilana & Dorado, 2010) as means to absorbing these multiple pressures. Notably both approaches lead to an organizational equilibrium whereby internal actors are effectively decoupled from external logics, and systems change (i.e., change of mindset) is contained within (or around) the organization.<sup>5</sup>

However, as the cases of Microfinance and Fair Trade illustrate, collective action frameworks are not confined within organizational structures. Hence, in understanding the relationship between social entrepreneurship and systems change, particularly at the macro level, it is important to understand how collective action frameworks are modified over time. Here, we derive inspiration from Goffman's dramaturgical perspective (Goffman, 1959) to develop the notion of a strategic identity performance to theorize the different ways in which systems change actors negotiate different (combinations of) internal and external “audiences.” In essence, the collective action framework they present is analogous to the script of a theatrical production. The audiences can respond to these scripts by either accepting them, offering alternate frames (through counterframing or frame disputes), or, of course, by rejecting them (see also Hall, 1973 [2018]). This script is continually renegotiated (blended and reframed) in response to the reactions of internal and external audiences through subsequent acts of the performance.

The process of negotiation and renegotiation is repeated until the collective action frameworks eventually become more stable. This might be because all audiences have agreed on the new frameworks; because an audience leaves the theater, for example, an internal faction leaves the movement (as we saw in the case of Fair Trade); or when systems actors refuse to engage with collective action frameworks “offered” by the social entrepreneur (as in

the case of XR). Where all audiences agree on a (new) framework, we might consider this as systems change. Second order change occurs where the new framework completely displaces the old one. More usually, we might expect a compromise set of frames to emerge, (almost always) representing first-order systems change, since by default successful negotiation with systems actors that leads to (some degree of) blended change.

In the first part of this essay (see Table 1), we identified three types of systems change actor: Frame Insurgent, Frame Blender, and Frame Bricoleur, and showed how these types might usually be expected to adopt different types of framing strategy corresponding to different orders of systems change. Next, we introduce a dynamic perspective to our typology through combining the literature on counterframing with the notion of strategic identity performance. This helps identify the ways that systems change actors would be expected to modify their collective action frameworks in response to counterframing (see Table 2).

### 3.1 | Frame insurgent

Frame insurgents such as XR develop scripts that negate or replace existing systems. Their “ideological purity” (Ryan, 2013) equates to a refusal to deviate from these frame-shifting strategies, whether by engaging with systems actors or by allowing space for moderates. Frame insurgents will side with radical internal audiences during frame disputes. This will lead to a strengthening of the initial arguments and a more coherent (reinforced) set of frames. However, frame insurgents perform only to internal audiences. Since renegotiation of the script is not usually an option, systems audiences external counterframing strategies may include targeting the social entrepreneurs themselves or using the power of legislation to counter their frameworks. We saw this in the case of XR through mass arrests, but also in media coverage of movement leaders as “too white,” “middle class,” “unwashed,” “communists.”<sup>6</sup> Rather than backing down, frame insurgents will double down in their efforts to frame incumbent systems as unjust and refuse to negotiate. However, such doubling down can exacerbate attempts to build a broad-based movement. It is notable that explicit media support for XR almost completely disappeared over time, even from traditionally liberal outlets such as The Guardian. Frame insurgents rarely, if ever, achieve second-order systems change since it is difficult to build a broad-based movement without accommodating moderate actors (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Moreover, without a broad-based movement, systems-change becomes almost impossible, as Goffman (1974) alluded to when outlining the difficulties of waking people from false consciousness.

### 3.2 | Frame blender

Frame blenders perform to both internal and external audiences. They are open to negotiation and will modify collective action frameworks until a new schema that is acceptable to all audiences emerges (Modell, 2019). Since some elements (diagnosis and prognosis) of the frameworks of external audiences are necessarily incorporated into any new schema, (successful) frame blenders create (at least some degree of) first order change by default. Such change can be more-, or less-, radical depending on the distance between the original systems frameworks and the newly blended framework (Werner & Cornelissen, 2014). Frame blenders almost always negotiate frameworks that are less disruptive than those initially proposed by the systems change actor. This is because combining frames is only an appropriate strategy where moderates win internal frame disputes (if the radicals win there would usually be no negotiation with systems frameworks), and because negotiation with systems audiences subsequently leads to compromise between the social entrepreneur's initial collective action frameworks and the counterframeworks of systems audiences.

The case of Fair Trade is illustrative here. In 2002, the International Fair Trade Certification Mark was launched with the dual aim of increasing the visibility and growth of Fair Trade via listings in major supermarkets. As we saw

**TABLE 2** How systems change actors adapt strategies in response to counterframing: A dynamic perspective

Time period		Frame bricoleur	Frame blender	Frame insurgent
2a	Internal frame disputes	—	Tend to side with moderates. This helps build a broader based movement but can lead to collective action frameworks that are less coherent since they incorporate a wider variety of perspectives.	Tend to side with radicals. This makes it difficult to attract broad-based support but leads to a more coherent collective action framework aligned to the ideological principles of a homogenous group.
2b	External counterframing	—	Open to negotiation and will modify collective action frameworks until a new schema that is acceptable to all audiences emerges.	Double down on system change strategies in response to deframing and refuse to engage with systems audiences.
3	Modification of collective action frameworks	Creatively repurpose problems and solutions from frameworks developed by other actors.  Different elements (or frames) may be presented to different internal and external audiences to conceal any authenticity gap between diagnosis and prognosis.	Incorporate the perspectives of external audiences into any new schema.  Collective action frameworks become less disruptive.  Potential for misalignment between problems and their solutions.	Collective action frameworks are reinforced. Problems and solutions are ideologically congruent.
4	Systems change	Systems stability. Diagnoses are incorporated into prognoses offered by existing systems.	First order. Can also involve the creation of a new system that sits alongside, but does not replace, existing systems.	Second order. However, frame insurgents rarely achieve systems change.

earlier, this resulted in a split in the movement with radicals leaving as they were reluctant to allow systems—in this case, mainstream supermarkets—to influence the collective action frame. The certification mark has been incredibly successful commercially—Global sales were over \$9 billion in 2017<sup>7</sup>—and certainly represented some degree of first-order systems change. However, the extent to which the blended solution (prognosis) is consistent with the original diagnosis that poor farmers and artisans do not receive a fair proportion of the total value of their products (White, Samuel, Peattie, & Doherty, 2022) is questionable.

**3.3 | Frame bricoleurs**

Frame bricoleurs are less concerned with systems change than with preserving organizational stability. In the context of performing systems change, they can draw on discursive materials from various scripts developed by other systems change (and systems) actors. In creatively recombining diagnoses and prognoses, they effectively decouple existing collective action frameworks. Different elements (or frames) may be presented to internal and external

audiences in order to conceal the authenticity gap between diagnosis and prognosis and hence to prevent conflict from emerging (see Goffman, 1959).

We used the example of commercial microfinance as an example of frame bricolage earlier, showing how such social ventures accept the diagnosis of the problem but present existing systems (e.g., commercial banking) as able to address these problems. This appears theoretically identical to systems-based audiences accepting one element of a collective action framework (prognosis) as part of their reframing strategies, and subsequently repositioning (framing) existing systems (commercial banking) as coherent with this problem (Gallo-Cruz, 2012). This would suggest that at the meso-level, (some) frame bricoleurs are able to draw upon diagnostic frames (from an externally generated counterframe) to persuade internal audiences, while following a prognosis that systems change can be achieved through the existing banking system. This is possible since frame bricoleurs build collective action frameworks by combining different elements (diagnosis, prognosis) from different systems/collective action frameworks.

#### 4 | ON AUDIENCES BECOMING ACTORS

Our theorizing (and illustrative cases) highlights the difficulties for systems change actors in maintaining control over their collective action frameworks. During modification of collective action frameworks, we have seen how super-markets and commercial banks have become engaged in the sale of fair trade and microfinance products. This implies that as well as being modified through their performance; the collective action frameworks developed by one actor can subsequently be modified (or reperformed) by others. It is seemingly during this journey that the diagnosis of problems becomes decoupled from prognosis of solutions. Table 3 shows the temporal journey of microfinance as a collective action framework from the 19th to the early 21st century. Here, we discuss such processes in greater depth.

We have suggested that frame insurgents such as XR rarely, if ever, achieve second-order systems change since they are unable to attract a broad-based movement to their collective action frameworks. But frame insurgents can increase institutional complexity (Cherrier et al., 2018) through extending the menu of possibilities from which other actors can select alternative futures (“dream the impossible!” as XR shout). It is notable that we see some elements of XR’s collective action framework in (more) moderate calls for action on climate change; as exemplified, for instance, by the activities within the Green Zone during the COP 26 event in Glasgow in November 2021.<sup>8</sup>

Frame blenders such as Muhammad Yunus thus have a wider range of frames to combine into new collective action frameworks. By way of illustration, Roodman (2011) highlights that the village banks “invented” by Yunus bear remarkable similarities to village banks in Germany almost a century earlier.<sup>9</sup> And these, in turn, drew their inspiration from (the more radical) mutual building societies that emerged in England at the beginning of the industrial revolution. But this hints toward a potential problem: once we recognize that audiences may eventually become actors, and blend the collective action frameworks of others, then it becomes easy to understand how systems change strategies might become (accidentally or deliberately) derailed.

In building a broad-based movement, microfinance has, over time, embraced the prognostic frames of incumbent (banking) systems audiences (i.e., maximizing return on investment) within its collective action framework. This can be seen as echoing the concept of mission drift (see Grimes et al., 2019). The key difference being that our theorizing points toward a mission drift at the macro level (e.g., Microfinance, Fair Trade) that cannot be so easily rectified as at the organizational level. Commercial microfinance providers act as frame bricoleurs, seeking to manipulate audience perceptions by borrowing frames from more radical collective action frameworks to appeal to customers, and from existing systems frames to appeal to shareholders. These bricoleurs are not directly concerned with systems change but instead seek to manipulate the institutional complexity for a wide variety of purposes, which may include the preservation of existing systems (Cherrier et al., 2018).

Of course, not all frame bricoleurs seek to nullify systems change. Theoretically, there are almost infinite combinations of diagnoses and prognoses from different collective action frameworks. Weaving *entre* and *prendre*

**TABLE 3** The temporal journey of microfinance as a collective action framework

Collective action framework			
19th century			Mutual building societies in England <i>Diagnostic Frame:</i> People are poor because labor is exploited by capital <i>Prognostic Frame:</i> Workers band together to pool their assets and build a new financial system outside of/on the margins of the capitalist system
Late 20th century		Grameen Bank <i>Diagnostic Frame:</i> people are poor because they do not have access to credit <i>Prognostic Frame:</i> nonprofits such as Grameen Bank, should offer lower cost loans on terms acceptable to poor women	
Early 21st century	Commercial microfinance <i>Diagnostic Frame:</i> People are poor because they do not have access to credit <i>Prognostic Frame:</i> Banks offer loans to poor people on commercial terms and repackage loans to transfer risk		
Intended outcome	Systems stability	First-order change	Second-order change

(Hjorth, 2005) from different frameworks can, and often does, lead to creative new ways of addressing social problems through innovative combinations of diagnoses and prognoses (Dey & Teasdale, 2016; Kimmitt & Muñoz, 2018). But since frame bricoleurs do not directly target existing systems, their actions are perhaps less subject to the scrutiny afforded to the collective action frameworks from which they draw their discursive materials.

Sometimes bricoleurs will adopt prognoses that are seemingly at odds with their diagnoses of problems. This may happen almost accidentally, particularly where social entrepreneurs define social problems narrowly (Kimmitt & Muñoz, 2018). For example, developing a trading arm can help raise income, but may not be compatible with a diagnosis that frames capitalism as part of the problem (as we saw with XR). On the organizational level, being “mindful” of the emergence of mission drift allows for the eventual realignment of diagnosis and prognosis (Grimes et al., 2019), perhaps through collective sensemaking and sensegiving (Kimmitt & Muñoz, 2018), or in response to external audiences making negative assessments as to the logical consistency of the collective action framework (see Grimes et al., 2019). However, sometimes, as in the case of Fair Trade and commercial microfinance, frame bricolage may involve a more strategic reframing of collective action frameworks by systems audiences to neutralize systems change via its strategic performance. This more deliberate performance of systems change involves accepting diagnoses of problems (climate change, poverty, global trade systems) but repositioning existing systems as able to

address these (through technical progress, lending to poor people, badging products as fairly and ethically sourced). In essence, we would argue, turning rebellion into money.

## 5 | THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The motivation for this essay was primarily the failure of current social entrepreneurship research to satisfactorily explain the gap between the disruptive systems change claims made by (or of) social entrepreneurs, and what they *actually* do (improve existing systems). Working at the interface of social movement and social entrepreneurship theories, and drawing from case examples of microfinance, Fair Trade, and XR, we have advanced social entrepreneurship theory in three ways. First, we have synthesized social movement and social entrepreneurship literatures to identify three categories of systems change actor (see Table 1). Second, we have interrogated the literature on counterframing and presented the notion of systems change social entrepreneurship as strategic performance. This has enabled us to incorporate a dynamic perspective illustrating how different types of systems change actor adapt their collective action frameworks in response to internal and external counterframing (see Table 2). Our third contribution is to highlight that the originators of a solution may lose control of its strategic direction. Elements of strategies developed by systems change actors can subsequently be copied, modified, and creatively repurposed, by other types of systems change actor, or indeed by systems actors. It is during these journeys that the disconnection between problems and their solutions emerges, effectively turning a prognosis of rebellion into one of money (making) (see Table 3).

Such repurposing is perhaps reflective of the changing (post-truth) world we live in. The previous generation of social movement activists arguably treated systems change as the prognosis or solution. However, for the “new groups” of social entrepreneurs, the language of systems change has become a motivational frame, calling actors and audiences to unite behind the affective thrust of disrupting inequitable structures (Dey, Schneider, & Maier, 2016). Their solutions (or prognoses) to the problems facing the world today—somewhat implausibly—include purchasing from supermarkets or generating profits from lending to poor people. In widening our lens from those actors traditionally perceived as social entrepreneurs to incorporate a wider range of systems change actors, and through focusing attention on systems change strategies, we can now point to this gap as arising from the failure, or inability, of systems change actors to maintain the consistency of their collective action frameworks over time.

Our contributions extend beyond social entrepreneurship theory. Here, we offer three provocations to three sets of literature. First, with reference to the paradox presented by institutional entrepreneurship: *how can the institutional entrepreneur change those systems which shape and constrain their own behavior?* To some extent social entrepreneurship, and particularly social movements, offer a way out of this classic trap. Frame insurgents such as XR are arguably less embedded in the systems they seek to change than the institutional entrepreneur. Often, they may refuse to engage with certain systems. Gehman et al. (2022) draw upon assemblage thinking to conceptualize actors (broadly defined to include individuals, organizations, states, networks, and international regimes) as the consequence of cultural “assembling” processes, rather than as a fixed set of pre-givens. From this perspective, actor-hood is dynamic and in flux: so new categories may arise, and others disappear (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011). Social entrepreneurship might usefully be conceptualized as occurring in the intermediate spaces where the social movement assemblage collides with “statist” or “capitalist” (see Nail, 2017) assemblages. In this sense frame blenders such as Yunus or Fair Trade have a foot in either camp and offer mediation between the more radical collective action frameworks proposed by social movements initiated by frame insurgents and existing systems. The role of the social entrepreneur, then, is to culturally reassemble systems and collective action frameworks in ways that are amenable to both parties. Such a perspective links to the work of Staggs et al. (2022). A sympathetic reading of the systems change potential for social entrepreneurship would be that the social entrepreneur operates within a temporary assemblage that facilitates institutional entrepreneuring. Institutions, rather than being static and resistant to change, continually incorporate and adapt new ideas: fair trade, microfinance, and climate activism are thus incorporated via

the mediating actions of social entrepreneurs. Perhaps it is the fate of all sites of rebellion to be folded into the mainstream by “new groups wearing suits.” But, as frame insurgents such as XR highlight, time may be running out for capitalism to find and incorporate ways to abolish poverty, reverse inequality, and ameliorate the climate crisis.

Second, our paper speaks to the literature on entrepreneurship as emancipation. In their groundbreaking article Rindova et al. (2009) reconceive entrepreneurship as freeing oneself from constraints. A subset of this literature overlaps with social entrepreneurship in exploring how market-based approaches to poverty alleviation can lead to social change through freeing others from constraints such as poverty, patriarchy (Haugh & Talwar, 2016), or even ideologies that espouse terrorism (Chandra, 2017). However, this literature also reminds us that in tearing down the old system of constraints, we simultaneously erect new constraints (or systems). Arguably social entrepreneurs (and scholars) fail to reflect upon the new system of constraints their business models imply. In proposing market-based solutions, Fair Trade, Microfinance, and multitudes of social enterprises are effectively aligning with the same capitalist systems which they also diagnose as causing the problems they seek to solve. If poverty—people not having sufficient resources—is a core problem, then is encouraging people into debt, or simply moving a select group of farmers slightly above the subsistence level likely to address the structural causes? Even for XR, the solution—that governments should act—is less clearly specified than the problem. This would suggest that both scholars (including ourselves) and practitioners alike need to carefully understand the constraints imposed both by the systems they seek to change, and implied by the solutions they propose.

Here, we may need to look to the past, as well as the future, for inspiration. The construct of “imagined futures” (Beckert, 2016) represents multiple visions of utopia or dystopia that reflect a nostalgia for a future that never happened. Typically, imagined futures (like collective action frameworks) combine selective discourses of action from the past with aspirant visions of the future. Imagined futures can be applied in both pragmatic (static) and idealist (dynamic) institutional settings, with different framings and dynamics. As Thompson and Byrne (2022) remind us, strategic planning techniques such as financial modeling reflect a pragmatic, quasi-scientific, modeling of the future risk and return parameters for asset classes. Such an approach simplifies complexity and enables decision-making in the present but remains a fiction—since the future can never truly be predicted with accuracy (Beckert, 2016). On the other hand, systems change strategies devise aspirant imagined futures that dynamically correct or adjust inequalities (diagnostic frame) in the present with an alternative future (prognostic frame) (Nicholls & Ziegler, 2017). The utility of these futures is to mobilize and inspire support for change (motivational frame) specifically by processes of imagination that present an “alternative” world. The prototypical cases used here reflect both pragmatic (microfinance as practiced by Grameen) and idealistic (XR) imagined futures, as well as a blend of both (Fair Trade). But here we would close with a warning. Our essay and prototypical cases suggest that our future imaginaries are constructed over time and through dialogue, not only with sympathetic internal audiences, but also with more hostile systems audiences who may seek to negate these calls to action. Hence, it is difficult for any actor or group of actors to maintain control even over their imagined futures. As our brief journey backward in time to the socialist origins of microfinance warns us, even utopian dreams can be stolen and repurposed by audiences seeking to turn rebellion into money.

## 6 | LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

According to Snow and Ketchen (2014), for a typology to have theoretical utility it should be amenable to valid and reliable measurement. An obvious weakness of our typological approach is that the core constructs (types of system change actor, orders of systems change, collective action frameworks) are not easily amenable to quantitative empirical testing. However, as Collier, LaPorte, and Seawright (2012) note, quantitative measures are underpinned by in-depth qualitative conceptual work. We seek to provoke the reader to reconsider these underlying dimensions of



social entrepreneurship research, and how they have been assembled, in preparation for more focused empirical work.

Dynamic typologies assume that individuals or organizations can be placed in one of several states or stages at each different point in time (Prochaska, Velicer, Guadagnoli, Rossi, & DiClemente, 1991). Our focus has been on illustrating how the collective action frameworks developed by systems change actors can change over time. In the first stage of our typology, we conceptually derived three logically consistent relationships between types of framing strategies and orders of system change. We combined these with the social entrepreneurship literature to conceptualize three types of systems change actors. It is important to note that other plausible (albeit less logical) relationships exist. For example, a social entrepreneur pursuing second order change might pursue a framing strategy more logically consistent with first order change. More commonly, as we saw with the cases of microfinance and Fair Trade, we might expect collective action frameworks developed by frame blenders to become misaligned over time as systems change actors seek to accommodate what is possible (pragmatic) with idealized futures. For frame bricoleurs, inconsistencies may be (deliberately) built into their collective action frameworks from the start. Here, goals of organizational survival may be facilitated by presenting what they do as a solution to a problem that their audiences are sympathetic to tackling. Future research might usefully be targeted too toward the empirical effects of disjointed collective action frameworks, as well as the processes of assembling them. For example, what happens when social entrepreneurs targeting second-order systems change adopt framing strategies more applicable to the modification of existing systems (or vice versa)? Addressing such questions can help systems change actors to better achieve their goals. This, however, assumes that the stated goals of these actors reflect their “true” intentions—that is, that any inconsistencies are accidental and can be resolved within the organization. We have suggested that this may not always be the case.

Future research might therefore also interrogate the authenticity of systems change strategies of social entrepreneurs, potentially holding them to account and ensuring the solutions they strive for are compatible with the problems they seek to address. But such an endeavor is methodologically problematic as the ongoing empirical debates over the efficacy of microfinance attest to (Bateman, 2010; Chliova, Brinckmann, & Rosenbusch, 2015; Kimmitt & Muñoz, 2017; Roodman, 2011). And, from a constructivist perspective, it might be argued that almost any problem can be creatively linked to a solution (see, e.g., Kingdon's (1984) work on policy entrepreneurship). One potential way around this is to compare the systems change strategies and practices of social entrepreneurs (or intermediaries) against the ideological and normative standards they themselves profess (Hervieux & Voltan, 2018; Kimmitt & Muñoz, 2018; Teasdale et al., 2021).

The historical journey of microfinance has alerted us to the possibility that the collective action frameworks developed by one actor can regularly be adapted or modified by others. Here, we make a plea to social entrepreneurship researchers to trace the evolution of systems change strategies (or ideas for systems change) over time and context. This involves moving away from Schumpeterian notions of the hero entrepreneur, back toward Tarde's (1899) conceptualization of the entrepreneur as a conduit for ideas. Researchers might fruitfully benefit from the historical methods applied studying the evolution of neoliberalism as a set of ideas (e.g., see Peck, 2012). More creatively, techniques derived from the study of networks (Latour, 1996) might usefully be adapted down to follow ideas in their journey from the macro to the micro and vice versa. The lens of assemblage thinking offers considerable utility here. Rather than treating actors, ideas (systems change strategies), and processes as separate, such thinking allows an apprehension of these as interlinked components of the overall assemblage. If we conceptualize movements for systems change as creative and revolutionary assemblages where formulation of problems and their solutions are assembled over time (see Nail, 2017), our focus might usefully be on what happens when these nomadic assemblages collide with the more formalized statist or capitalist assemblages (Nail, 2017) that they seek to change.

Typological approaches can conceal much of the multidimensionality inherent in “empirical reality.” While we have treated the various internal and external actors as homogenous groups, in the “real-world” systems change actors are likely to perform to multiple different audiences, all with different expectations. We would speculate that this does not dramatically change our theorizing. Systems change actors will either maintain their collective action

frameworks or adapt them to meet the expectations of multiple (not just two) audiences. Nonetheless, the journey toward a more stable collective action framework is much messier than our typology, and strategic identity performance, suggests. Future research might usefully interrogate how systems change actors respond to multiple external audiences. Here, work on organizational impression management (Ginzel, Kramer, & Sutton, 1993) suggests that researchers might probe how power and financial resources impact on the assembling of collective action frameworks.

Finally, this hint toward power imbalances takes us in the direction of a more interventionist critique (see Dey & Steyaert, 2012). Rather than rigidly maintaining a fiction of supposed value neutrality, as academics we might work with (all types of) systems change actors to help them reimagine the contours of a different world and to reconfigure “what is sayable and visible” (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011, p. 112) in the social entrepreneurship space.

## 7 | CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We set out to ascertain how collective action frameworks are modified in response to internal and external counterframing. We have highlighted that more thought needs to be given as to how social entrepreneurs might preserve and maintain the collective action frameworks they have developed over time. Relatedly, we have noted that frame insurgents such as XR are not normally considered in social entrepreneurship research or practice. More normatively, we call for frame insurgents, or at least their ideas, to be included within the accepted social entrepreneurship “space.”

It is important to remember that Nelson Mandela, Emmeline Pankhurst, and Martin Luther King Jr. were all once branded as dangerous radicals (and even labeled as “terrorists” in the case of Mandela and Pankhurst). Perhaps the collective action frameworks created and carefully preserved by frame insurgents can extend the boundaries of what is deemed possible by more conservative frame blenders (and academics), closing off some of the space to incumbent systems audiences and allowing rebels at least a hope of fighting back.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Clash (1978). *(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais*, CBS Records.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jan/05/outlook.development>.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/2019/05/27/xr-business-public-correction/>.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/act-now/resources/communities/mistaken-identity-xr-business-is-no-more/>.

<sup>5</sup> Although see Kimmitt and Muñoz (2018) for an explanation of how “sensegiving” might lead to change beyond the immediate organization.

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/sep/11/extinction-rebellion-how-successful-were-the-latest-protests>; <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/04/extinction-rebellion-race-climate-crisis-inequality>; <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/oct/19/extinction-rebellion-white-faces-diversity>.

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.reutersevents.com/sustainability/FairTrade-shrugs-sainsburys-controversy-7-growth-sales>.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://ukcop26.org/the-conference/green-zone-programme-of-events/green-zone-exhibitors/>.

<sup>9</sup> Relatedly, Calás et al. (2009) note that women's microlending schemes were in existence for centuries before becoming popularized by (male) Nobel Laureate Yunus.

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