SOCIAL MEDIA AND THEIR IMPACT ON ORGANISATIONS:

BUILDING FIRM CELEBRITY AND ORGANISATIONAL LEGITIMACY THROUGH

SOCIAL MEDIA

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the impact of social media on organisations, and in particular focuses on the way firms are using social media to construct "online celebrity" and the way social movement organisations acquire legitimacy through a blending of offline and online illegitimate actions. This thesis embraces a perspective at the intersection between institutional theory, communications theory and strategy to deeply understand the impact of social media that enables and constrains organisational actions. The study finds that social media are affecting the information-intensive environment where organisations operate. Current shifts in communication technology, such as new patterns and modes of communication, provide a useful natural experiment to analyse how different types of organisations, including firms and social movement organisations, are strategically adopting social media to help maintain or acquire social approval assets.

This research into social media strategy in one large technology firm and in one social movement organisation shows how social media may enable firms to achieve valuable strategic positions in ways that are underexplored by current organisation literature, ultimately leading to celebrity and legitimacy acquisition. This thesis makes several contributions to organisational strategy and institutional theory. First, it introduces and develops the concept of *online celebrity,* which is a firm's ability to attract public attention and affective investment from networked publics through social media. Second, it expands our understanding of legitimacy acquisition by including a blending of illegitimate offline and online actions by social movement organisations that challenge taken for granted cultural norms, dominant frames and powerful actors. Third, it outlines key social media tactics which focus on shaping the external organisational environment and the cognition and perception of key audiences.

This thesis also presents future paths of research that organisation and management scholars should consider in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how shifts in communication strategies facilitate larger shifts in social institutions and in the way organisations construct their interaction with stakeholder audiences.

Key words: social media, reputation, legitimacy, online celebrity, illegitimate actions, technology firms, social movement organisations, social media tactics, symbolic value, network society, online identity, switching power, external cultural resources

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Overall Theoretical Framework and Structure of the Thesis

The popularity and economic relevance of social media has increased over recent years, enabling millions of users in sharing data, information and products, and affecting the way organisations are building their businesses around connected people. Communications scholars have argued that institutions are highly influenced by different communication structures and processes (Innis 1951; McLuhan 1962). Different authors have analysed the increasing mediatisation of organisations and the influence that news media and other information intermediaries have on organisations and on their relationship with external stakeholders (Carroll 2010; Fombrun 1996; Rindova and Fombrun 1999; Deephouse 2000; Rindova et al. 2007). However, despite the awareness of the central role of media in contemporary society, which affects the information-intensive environment where organisations operate, there is a lack of understanding of how institutional processes unfold in a mediatised society. In addition, there are few empirical studies that effectively demonstrate how shifts in communication patterns and strategies facilitate larger shifts in social institutions and in how organisations construct their interaction with stakeholder audiences.

When I started this research it immediately became evident that in order to make sense of the broader impact of social media on organisations it was critical to investigate the phenomenon as a socially constructed process that contributes to shaping the institutional contexts, linking organisations, stakeholders and institutions (Deephouse et al. 2008). Organisations are in fact embedded in increasingly information intensive environments that enable and constrain organisational actions. Neo-institutional theory provided important insights on the influence of the environment on the organisation of a society. The institutional approach seemed to be the most relevant to research the impact of social media on organisations, and particularly insightful to explain key drivers underpinning these transformations in different types of organisations. However, somewhat surprisingly, organisational institutionalism has failed to adequately integrate communication theory, and social media in particular, which have thus far been overlooked by organisational research. Social media offer especially fertile grounds to explore questions related to the relation between modes of communication and institutional processes, potentially contributing to further expanding our knowledge of the role of communication technologies in structuring institutions. This thesis adopts a perspective at the intersection of

strategy research and institutional theory, and integrates it with communication theory to analyse the influence that social media have on diverse types of organisations. The insights provided in this thesis contribute to the understanding of social media as a phenomenon, but most importantly to the investigation of how organisations are adopting social media with the aim of increasing the positive relationship with their audiences, thus acquiring "social approval assets" such as *celebrity* and *legitimacy*.

This research is motivated by the recent significant developments of social media and their widespread adoption by different types of organisations (ranging from large technology firms, creative intermediaries, to social movement organisations). I was interested in the way social media are affecting organisational strategies and generating new organisational tactics. Social media have been investigated from a variety of perspectives, producing a considerable body of knowledge. Still relatively unexplored through is the impact that social media have on organisations. Furthermore, little effort has been made to integrate the outcome of research in different disciplines and develop a future research agenda for management and organisation studies.

In order to address this gap and generate a theoretical account of the impact of social media on organisational celebrity and legitimacy, this work follows an inductive approach (Denzin and Lincoln 2000) and employs grounded theory techniques for collecting, coding and analysing data (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The aim is to uncover unexplored social dynamics, context-specific processes, and social media tactics at the intersection between strategy, institutional theory and communication theory, contributing to these streams of research and not to generate a stand-alone theory detached from previous literature (Suddaby 2006). For researching such an under-explored issue, I chose an inductive theory building method, which means I had to immerse myself into the field to deeply explore the richly diverse sets of data so that I could be exposed to the development of this fast evolving field, acquire new ideas and look for different sources that could inform the development of my research.

The thesis is organised in three distinct but interconnected papers and it is structured as follows:

PAPER 1 - SOCIAL MEDIA AND THEIR IMPACT ON ORGANISATIONS:

A REVIEW AND INTEGRATED DISCUSSION FOR FUTURE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

In the first paper, I compare and contrast extant literature on social media in four different fields – new media and Internet studies, computer science and information system, marketing research and consumer culture theory, and innovation management – highlighting the fundamental tenets and research findings of each stream of inquiry. Building on this review, the paper proposes an integrative discussion of the phenomenon under investigation, emphasising links between different viewpoints and potential benefits to be gained by a more intense cross-fertilisation among perspectives. I argue how organisational scholars may be in a particularly favourable position to facilitate the integration among different perspectives and upgrade our understanding of social media and its impact for organisations.

This research complements existing studies on the role of media on organisations by revealing what social media and their affordances do, in opposition to non-social media scenarios. The results of previous research need to be extended to take into account the unique new properties of social media such as the dialogic nature of communication, the new quality of "networked publics" as opposed to "audiences" or "consumers", social media scalability and the viral effect based on bidirectional communication, and the volatility of online identities. The originality of this research is its focus on social media and their impact on organisations and institutional processes to explore how a strategic adoption of social media can influence organisational strategies of action.

The first paper presents the theoretical framework for the overall research area and it identifies areas of research to potentially expand existing literature, with a focus on future management and organisation research agenda. It concludes with the identification of key research topics that represent some kind of impact or aspect of organisations and how they use social media and how they are affected by it.

PAPER 2 - THE CONSTRUCTION OF ONLINE CELEBRITY:

EXPLORING FIRM CELEBRITY BUILDING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

The second paper investigates the way a large technology company (Intel) partner with an unconventional creative agency (VICE) to strengthen the relationship with key intermediaries, focusing on constructing cultural value and building online celebrity. This paper builds on research on organisational reputation and celebrity as intangible social approval assets, with a strategic value for the organisation (Fombrun and van Riel 2003; Rindova et al. 2006), and whose value is derived from stakeholder perceptions (Rao 1994). I articulate the similarities and differences between reputation and celebrity. Firm celebrity in particular derives from nonconforming and deviant behaviour that generates attention and reactions from audiences. It has also been argued that the media are key players in the process through providing key resources and mass coverage (Deephouse 2000). In particular, through the diffusion of dramatised narratives, the media construct celebrity firms that are eventually able "to attract a high level of public attention and generate positive emotional responses from stakeholder audiences" (Rindova et al. 2006: 51).

This study of celebrity construction through social media adoption in a large technology firm suggests that strategy research should consider, along with other forms of capital, the development and deployment of cultural resources (Dalpiaz et al. 2010) which are pivotal in managing external perceptions and eventually leading to the attainment of celebrity. I extend the celebrity theory by suggesting the concept of *online celebrity* that incorporates key insights from communication theory and social media strategy. The emerging findings highlight that social media are key in shaping and influencing the construction of online celebrity through three main phases within a firm's strategic process; here named *integration of external cultural resources, the co-construction of web-mediated cultural value,* resulting in the *attainment of organisational online celebrity.* The findings demonstrate how work at the intersection of different streams of literature can provide insights about the role of social media in generating organisational cultural capital and its decisive relation to online celebrity in the process of strategy formation. The grounded model that emerges from the observations thus advances the research concerning the use of social media in strategy, reputation and celebrity management.

PAPER 3 - RETHINKING LEGITIMACY THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA:

HOW SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANISATIONS ACQUIRE LEGITIMACY BY DELEGITIMISING OTHER ORGANISATIONS

In my third paper I turned to neo-institutional theory to understand the way social media are challenging organisational legitimacy. Since there seems to be no rich field-based account of how social media tactics are used by organisations, I investigate new tactics that blend offline and online actions not explored by previous studies and which ultimately lead to organisational legitimacy acquisition. A rich and comprehensive understanding of how social media influence the process of acquisition of organisational legitimacy seems to be still lacking in the literature. I extend theory in this area by tracing social movement organisations' illegitimate actions offline and online, and the provoked changes in the institutional environment. In particular, by drawing on an in-depth case study on a social movement organisation, the third paper contributes to research on challenger movements and legitimacy acquisition through social media.

This research analyses this process in three distinct campaigns carried out by Greenpeace UK in the last two years. The choice to focus on these particular campaigns and on the integration of social media in the campaigns' broader strategy derives from the importance that key stakeholders and audiences attribute to the emerging social media environment to mobilise collective action and direct it to the support of an organisation's causes and values that may contradict and challenge taken for granted norms and institutions. In order to acquire legitimacy, social movement organisations employ several illegitimate tactics offline and online to change the perception of key constituents and aggregate the sentiment of networked publics, gaining mass scale endorsement. This study reveals new directions for research into the relationships between social movements, social media and institutional dynamics based on the described tactics. The research points to the importance of considering the political and collective dimensions of the relationships between social actors, organisations, and social media.

The grounded model developed suggests that social movements that challenge existing frameworks are able to strategically use a set of *social media tactics* (namely *tapping the crowd* and *delegitimising corporate online identity*) to acquire collective support by a variety of key constituents. In this way they are able to exercise their role as *power switchers* in the *networked space*, able to connect and disconnect stakeholder networks and mobilise resources according to different contexts, interests, and tactics applied around specific issues, ultimately leading to organisational legitimacy acquisition.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS IMPACT ON ORGANISATIONS:

A REVIEW AND INTEGRATED DISCUSSION FOR FUTURE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

ABSTRACT

The popularity and economic relevance of social media has increased over recent years, enabling millions of users to share instantaneous data, information and media products. User-generated content and the participatory web are currently the lifeblood of the Internet. Social Media is starting to affect all organisations across different dimensions: organisations' internal communication, the working relationships, the relationship with their stakeholder audiences, conversations with consumers, business model innovation, and organisational reputation and legitimacy. Multiple disciplines have analysed this phenomenon from different perspectives, producing a considerable amount of knowledge. However, the impact of social media on organisations and the type of changes provoked by their adoption remain relatively unexplored. Furthermore, little effort has been made to integrate the outcome of research in different disciplines and develop an integrated theoretical framework at an organisational level that could inform future research agenda. In this paper I compare extant literature on social media in four different fields – new media and Internet studies, computer science and information system, marketing research and consumer culture theory, and innovation management – highlighting the fundamental tenets and research findings of each stream of inquiry. Building on this review, I propose an integrative discussion of the phenomenon under investigation, emphasising links between different viewpoints and potential benefits to be gained by a more intense cross-fertilisation among perspectives. I also argue how organisational scholars may be in a particularly favourable position to facilitate the integration among different perspectives and upgrade our understanding of social media and its impact on organisations.

INTRODUCTION

The popularity and economic relevance of social media has increased over recent years, enabling millions of users to share instantaneous data, information and media products. User-generated content and the participatory web are currently the lifeblood of the Internet. Thousands of social networks focusing on building social relations among people emerged in the last decade to provide people new communication and coordination tools based on social characteristics of the use of technology. Users are creating new communication practices and contributing content to new-media aggregators such as Facebook, Amazon, Google, eBay, and Flickr. Facebook (1.11 billion active users as of March 2013), Twitter (200 million active users as of February 2013), and LinkedIn (225 million active users as of May 2013) as online social communities are unprecedented. Social media sites such as Facebook or Twitter provide a technology platform to establish and multiply relationships between users and organisations, enabling users to become visible to a wide public and to expose their social networks.

Social media offers huge potential for what has been defined "*mass-self communication"* (Castells 2009), indicating the production of knowledge that utilizes the capabilities of large numbers of users for the solution and prediction of challenges or problems. Social networks are monitored to discover trends, get competitive information, listen, and engage in conversations with users and stakeholders. Thus, the ability of firms to engage and shape the relationships and conversations with consumers and customers is a key factor for the successful management of value within digital semantic communication networks.

Social media networks are enabling businesses to become more socially engaged, exploiting new business model innovation based on firms' ability to monetise and extract value from crowd-generated data and content. Social media has enabled organisations to establish a stronger relationship with the community of reference, in order to exploit the network effect and harness collective intelligence. The examples often presented are companies such as eBay or Amazon that managed to build a marketplace nourished by voluntary contributions (user-driven auction system or user-generated reviews) which allows the users to actively participate in the 'communication flow' around their products (Kleiner and Wyrick 2007). Spontaneous activities of users and consumers outside the boundaries of the firms constitute a rare and valuable resource that sparks innovation and which companies are trying to capture and manage. Thus, organisations are focusing on social media and trying to leverage opportunities.

As soon as social media emerged as a technical and socio-cultural phenomenon, it has been studied from different perspectives. In order to properly frame and understand the social media phenomenon, it is important for organization scholars to draw on existing perspectives and learn from results and insights coming from other disciplines. Yet organization researchers have until recently dedicated little attention to how social media influences and are influenced by social processes in and around organizations, and institutional dynamics such as reputation building, legitimacy acquisition and strategy formation. This review aims at presenting the different and usually unsynchronised efforts to study and understand social media from different perspectives and disciplines. The insights provided in this review paper can contribute to the understanding of social media as a phenomenon, but most importantly to investigate how organisations are using social media to engage users and consumers, with the aim of managing community generated content and projects, building reputation, and initiating collective actions. Although different disciplines ranging from social sciences and computer sciences, together with marketing research, have addressed this phenomenon from different perspectives, thus producing a considerable amount of knowledge, it seems that little effort has been made to develop a unitary framework that takes into account the challenges organisations are facing when confronted with the new media-intensive environment.

In this paper, I compare extant literature on social media in four different fields – new media and Internet studies, computer science and information system, marketing research and consumer culture theory, and innovation management – highlighting their fundamental assumptions. Building on this review, I propose an integrative discussion and framework of the phenomenon under investigation, emphasising links between different viewpoints, and potential benefits to be gained by a more intense cross-fertilisation among perspectives that identify key areas for future management and organisation research. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of this study and outline several opportunities to extend this research.

Social Media Definition

Social media has been analysed and investigated from a variety of disciplines and perspectives, thus generating different definitions of social media. Table 1 provides a list of the most important ones according to different disciplines.

Table 1 about here

The emergence of new and social media is quite a recent phenomenon and became popularised only when the Internet became ubiquitous and accessible to consumers worldwide, giving rise to the so called Network Society (Castells 2003). This shift implies a move from traditional communication and media theory (McLuhan 1962, 1964; McQuail 1983, 1997; Lazarsfeld and Katz 1955), even if new media didn't replace older media but converged with other media sources (Lievrouw and Livingstone 2002). Today, in fact, as argued by Bolter and Grusin (1999), media are undergoing a process of "remediation" in which older media are continuously appropriated, reconstructed or absorbed by the new media, therefore simultaneously shaping future media and older ones (Bolter and Grusin 1999). The Social Web is able to combine in novel ways, remediate and expand communication and information possibilities that were already present in the past. Through social communication tools users are contributing content to new-media aggregators and big digital platforms such as Facebook, Amazon, Google, and eBay. Blogs, or other platforms specifically designed for user-generated content, represent a social infrastructure that can harness people's social cooperation.

People's relationships and digital identities become publicly displayed, forming a social graph that exposes each user's connections and lists of friends and contacts. In this research, social media is defined as "*mass-self communication"* (Castells 2010), i.e. the mass, meaning the "massive" amount of knowledge produced and in its production by the non-expert "masses"; and the production of knowledge that utilises the capabilities of large numbers of users for the solution and prediction of challenges or problems. And "self" because the communication happens *intersubjectively* among users themselves who can broadcast news or an update to their friends and to a potential mass audience. The Internet is considered as an enabling infrastructure for novel ways to organize collective action via communication technologies (Rheingold 2002).

Mass-self communication runs on horizontal networks of interactive communication, engaging users that “live with the Internet”, turning the Internet in the communication fabric of people's daily lives, for work, for personal connection, for social networking, for information, for entertainment, for politics and so on. According to Castells (2009), mass self-communication represents the contemporary evolution of the Web due to fast and mobile broadband diffusion, open-source software development and applications, advanced users' interfaces and experiences.
Social media is defined in the literature as the term for the ways people connect to people through computation (Lenhart et al. 2010). Users can generate their personal profile, which includes personal information such as location, gender, age, activities and interests, beliefs, affiliations, and other multimedia content about users' personal and professional lives.

On the academic side, a considerable body of knowledge has addressed the definition, formation and evolution of social media, often using slightly different terminology to capture the nuances within a diverse digital media ecosystem. The use of the term “social media” emphasizes the ability of users to participate and contribute to content creation, Social media have enabled the emergence of a new participatory digital sphere based on a many-to-many communication where users can dialogically interact and collaborate to the creation of content shaping the flow of communication (Jenkins, 2006). The use of the term "Social networking sites" emphasizes the relational and sharing aspect of the medium and can be defined as "a network of social interactions and personal relationships". Social media can therefore become simultaneously as “social networking sites” as: (1) A tool to support people’s real social networks (organization and extension), and (2) A tool to analyse social identity of the others (description and definition) (Riva 2010). In particular, “social network sites” refer to “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd and Ellison 2007, p. 1). The term Social Networking Site (SNS) indicates a platform (including Facebook and YouTube, thematic social networks, blogs, wikis, online forums, virtual communities, online games and virtual worlds) that provides a range of social media services such as user-generated content sharing, social networking, knowledge co-creation and collaborative activities (Hitwise and Experian 2010).

Social networks social media social, such as Facebook and Twitter are thus specifically designed for sharing emotions, feelings and opinions among the users, giving rise to “online

communities". In a popular report published by Hitwise and Experian (2010), social media are defined as embodying the notion of "online communities of people who share interests and activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others" (2010, p. 1). Social networks allows people to share contents on a scale that has not been seen in the past (Colleoni et al., 2011), resulting in the creation of new relationships or communities organized around network of peers. Communication is referred as "viral" because ideas and opinions spread like epidemic diseases though the network *via* word-of-mouth creating trust among users based on group similarities (Colleoni et al., 2011).

Generally social media aren't a very new phenomenon since they are part of the natural evolution of the digital Web towards a mass interactive communication infrastructure. Kirkpatrick draws on the history of social media, starting from long before the invention of the World Wide Web, with the Usenet in 1979, which enabled users to form groups based on specific topics (2010, p. 66) and virtual communities, described by Rheingold (2002), that represent the beginning of computer-mediated communication networks of people.

The development of social media: an historical trajectory

The first proper service for online communities emerged around the mid 90s with *Sixdegrees.com* that "attempted to identify and map a set of real relationships between real people using their real names" (Kirkpatrick 2010, p. 68), thus creating users' personal profiles based on real interests and identity information. Only in early 2000 were social networking sites, as we know them today, started in Silicon Valley. *Friendster* represented a real breakthrough as the first social network for consumers, since it created the industry standards of what later became social networks, offering new tools for people to upload pictures next to their profile and to connect with other friends registered on the platform. After Friendster, MySpace, Facebook, and Orkut started to compete to dominate the newly shaped social network landscape, trying to capture the largest amount of users (see Kirkpatrick 2010). Social networking continued to spread across the world, attracting millions of users and changing the way companies do business and interact with consumers. A growing number of web-based applications involve *crowdsourcing* marketplaces (e.g. Amazon Mechanical Turk), collaborative content generation and knowledge co-production platforms by dispersed users (e.g. Wikis, Wikipedia, Twitter, Facebook), social tagging (e.g. delicious, Digg, StumbleUpon), professional career sites (LinkedIn, Xing, Visible path), media sharing sites (Flickr, MySpace, Lat.FM, YouTube), where

the collective intelligence of the crowd is leveraged to produce knowledge, data and content.

Around 2003 social media started attracting the attention of mainstream organisations and mass audiences, until reaching the point that media theorists refer to as the phenomenon YASNS ("Yes Another Social Networking Service") (Shirky 2003). MySpace was the first SNS to attract mainstream media attention when News Corporation acquired it for $580 million (BBC 2005). This huge success was followed after a few years by the rise of YouTube and Facebook, which indicated a "shift in the organisation of online communities" and introduced a new organisational framework for virtual communities organised around personal networks (Boyd and Ellison 2007, p. 8). Facebook became an increasingly important platform for business to consumer communications. People started using Facebook in 2004, and quickly it gained lots of users from its competitors; the social network pioneer Friendster, and MySpace that was mainly focused on music. According to Facebook's rapidly growing statistics, the site has today (March 2013) over 1 billion active users logging on every day, 60-million status updates every day and 3 billion photos posted every month. The average user has 130 friends and spends an hour a day on the site. Facebook has created a personalised profile page for each user, the *News Feed* that displays real-time social data of the users' activities (e.g. create, connect, like, tag, etc) and their friends, clustering them into social graphs showing all the connections linking users to people, preferences, activities, and shared interest groups. All this information is ordered through Facebook *Edge Rank* algorithm and is filtered in order to show in the users and their friends' *News Feed activity stream* only the top-ranked stories. Another relevant feature in social media is the user *status update* feature implemented by Facebook and Twitter that asks users to record what they are doing or thinking, and which resemble the older Bulletin Board Systems and Instant Messaging Systems (Gerlitz and Helmond 2013). These updates are displayed on people's Facebook home pages, and their highly personalised News Feeds.

Previous research investigated social media, pointing to the importance of social networking sites (SNS) as personal networks with individuals' identity formation and signalling, focusing on impression management, users' profile authenticity, and the negotiation of users' social relationships (Donath and Boyd 2004;; Boyd 2008; Hargittai 2007; Boyd and Heer, 2006), or to the way social media networks help build and maintain social capital (e.g., Ellison et al. 2007). Organisations are starting to exploit social media to manage more effectively consumers' interactions with the organisation through their engagement on Facebook and other platforms, thus building *social currency*. Another stream of literature is focused on social network analysis,

mapping large-scale user data patterns, social graphs and using data visualisation techniques to map large scale behavioural data and to analyse the network structure of social media platforms and users' motivation to join those networks (see Boyd and Ellison 2007; Hempel and Lehman 2005; Stafford 2006). Research at the intersection of different disciplines have analysed social media and the behaviour of organisations in their interaction with these new communication networks. A growing number of popular press have also reported privacy threats and a lack of users' trust over data protection policy on social media that can damage individual users and organisations if not strategically managed.

A REVIEW OF SOCIAL MEDIA

In the following sections, I will review the four most prominent streams of research that have approached the topic of social media - namely media and communication, computer science, consumer and marketing research, and innovation management – and I will highlight their fundamental assumptions about social media and their distinctive contribution to our understanding of the phenomenon.

1. New Media and Internet Studies Perspective

The interactive model of the Web that enables mass participation to happen has been named by Tim O'Reilly "Web 2.0", describing the way in which organisations use the World Wide Web as a platform to connect people and "harness collective intelligence" (2005). Atkinson and Dougherty (2006) initially conceived the expression Web 2.0, and was made popular by Tim O'Reilly and spread through O'Reilly Media and Media Live International. It offers a framework and a common set of principles and practices to define the evolution of the Web and the business models enabled by the "participatory Web" composed of blogs, wikis, social networking platforms, etc. O'Reilly popularised the main characteristics and "core competencies" of the new organisations formed around Web 2.0, such as "control over unique, hard-to-recreate data sources that get richer as more people use them"; to cooperate more than to control in order to build and increase users' trust and harness the collective intelligence they attract (O'Reilly 2005). The Web 2.0 represents an evolution of the "Web of documents" towards the "Web of data", where open mass contributions from users in the form of data, information and content is hosted in proprietary infrastructures and data centres (cloud computing). These resources are provided as services through successful platforms that can aggregate these data and make it

available though open APIs (Application Programming Interfaces) for other companies that can build innovative data-driven services and applications.

In the words of the inventor of the Web, Tim Berners-Lee, who set up the World Wide Web Consortium to set royalty free open standard for the Web, innovation in social media didn't come from technology breakthroughs. The technology was already there, before social media diffusion and the hype surrounding the adoption of social technologies emerged. The Web of the origins was about connecting information. The Web was a web of documents, consisting of internet websites and Web pages connected through hyperlinks, simple online discussion forums, emails, and chats, without enabling content creation or engagement on a wide scale. O'Reilly (2005) defines Web 2.0 as an environment where websites and social applications are developed, putting the control of content- often user-generated- in the hands of consumers. A very good example of this mechanism is shown by the transition from traditional publishing to online publishing. Editorial mechanisms of selection and editing of content by expert personnel and journalists have been replaced with open publishing mechanisms of Web 2.0., where users openly publish media content, and this content is then filtered through mathematical algorithms, resulting in some form of *social rating system*.

As a result, the communities of users enacted outside the boundaries of the firms constitute a rare and valuable resource that companies are trying to capture and manage, since they bring value to the company but act outside their direct control. The Web 2.0 concept originated from the work of Chris Anderson, known as "*the long tail*" − the collective power of niches that create the largest share of the Web's content, transforming companies' revenue models (Anderson 2004). Tapscott and Williams outline the main principles behind what they term an "economy of mass collaboration", describing how "peer production" and the participation of users in the innovation process is becoming the key force driving competitiveness in the digital environment (Tapscott and Williams 2006). Social media allows a wider and more direct participation of user communities in the creation and sharing of content and in solving problems through large scale collaboration in ways unimaginable before the latest evolution of the Web.

Social media was pivotal for the development of new companies and business models, and for the adoption of mechanisms for sharing and mass collaboration, while at the same time companies that controlled centralised platforms or even entire digital ecosystems, as in the case of Apple and Google, were able to recentralise these processes. Socially produced and shared

media *creative commons* (Lessig 2008) are thus exploited by innovative firms that shape their organisations in order to be able to harness the production of content from the multitude of *prosumers* of the Web. However, there is a fierce debate amongst the proponents of Web 2.0 and those who think Web 2.0 ultimately could lead to the end of the "generative web", since it represents an abuse of openness going in the direction of corporate consolidation and lock down (Zittrain 2008; Lessig 2008). *Generativity* means that "the Internet and the computers were designed unfinished, relying on their users to figure out what to do with them and to deal with problems as they arose" (Zittrain 2008, p. ix). The thesis brought forward by Zittrain (2008) is that the new platforms can allow developers to build additional services as they could with the computer industry, but in a highly controlled and contingent way. This constitutes a major shift from the old Internet environment, transforming the future Internet towards a more controlled, concentrated and corporate space.

Still within the broad new media field, but from a legal and economic standpoint, Benkler (2006) analyses the shift from the "industrial information economy", characterised by the industrial information enterprises- such as the broadcast network, the creative industry, and the recording industry- towards the "networked information economy", characterised by the Internet. The argument is that the mass media, as the most prominent institution generating public opinion, used to centrally control the production and distribution of culture and information. The Internet disrupted this form of centralised and concentrated communication and the cultural industries that were born around these hierarchical distribution models (e.g. music, films, publishing and the media themselves). Information "flowed from capital-intensive commercial and professional producers to passive, undifferentiated consumers" (Benkler 2006, p. 30). Thus, as stressed by Benkler, the Internet radically transformed the ownership structure and the distribution mechanisms of modern media, by radically decentralising and democratising the infrastructure of production and distribution of intangibles. These specific technological conditions thus created spaces for new social practices to emerge (Benkler 2006, p. 31).

Moreover, according to Benkler, two main changes destabilised the industrial information economy: the collective meaning making capacity, and the capacity to share and globally spread meanings though horizontal communication networks and personal computers. In particular, Benkler emphasises the role of meaning and communication as main outputs in information economies, and "the basic physical capital necessary to express and communicate human meaning is the connected personal computer" (2006, p. 32). The examples outlined by Benkler

are the open-source software and knowledge co-creation platforms such as Wikipedia. Benkler stresses the difference between the online social network environment, what he calls **"**commons-based peer production" based on collective and collaborative action, and organisational forms such as hierarchies and efficient markets that require a managerial structure for coordination.

Manuel Castells names the new communication phenomena "mass-self communication" revolution because it can potentially reach a global audience, and simultaneously it is self-communication because messages are generated by users themselves, focusing on people's self-expression (Castells 2009, p. 55). Mass communication consists of communication convergence defined by the emergence of new media through the interaction of technological change and communication and, more specifically, the convergence between telecommunication companies, computer companies, Internet companies, and media companies (Castells 2009; Jenkins 2006; Manovich 2001). According to Castell's analysis, the key factor underpinning change is culture, more so than technological or economic factors. Social "protocols of communication" are based on the culture of sharing within the digital network environment that was spread by hackers and scientists at the very beginning of the digital revolution. These actors generated a common culture consisting of multidirectional feeds and interactive peer-to-peer communication, which is "the culture of co-production of the content that is consumed" (Castells 2009, p. 126).

Castells then focuses his analysis on the transformation of the role of "the audience" from mass communication to "mass-self communication", where the role of the audience has shifted from being passive targets of advertising, television, and radio messages to being active interpreters and producers of communication, and reconfiguring as "networked publics". To explain the renewed role of the audience, Castells draws on Eco's (1975) theory of semiotics that emphasises the ability of audiences to interpret the signifiers of the message from a sender, by adding their own codes and *subcodes* in the reception process of the signified message. Following Eco, Castells (2009) argues that there is always a need for interpretation and for *text-reader interaction,* so that the reader (or the audience) has freedom to impose any interpretive associations upon a text. The construction of meanings and identities associated with the role of audiences within social media is a complex process that involves different levels of interpretation and requires a new ability to frame and understand the role of social media within organisations.

At the intersection of new media and sociology, Rheingold (1993; 2002) has been pioneering the study of "virtual communities", online communities, and cultures. Virtual communities are viewed as "social aggregations that emerge from the net when enough people carry on public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feelings, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace" (Rheingold 1993, p. 3). Rheingold argues that social media represent a huge shift in the way people behave, meet, work and do business, transforming social practices and even corporate management styles. He conducted several empirical studies, interviewing youth groups in Tokyo. He investigated how they were changing their social behaviours and mobility patterns through mobile phones. The author described the rise of "smart mobs", new social formations generated by the blending of mobile connectivity, social communication and the rise of mobile communication, thus resulting in profound behavioural changes. Social network formations mean that every individual in a smart mob is a "node with social links, channel of communication and social bonds to other individuals" (Rheingold 2002, p. 68). Naturally, relationships that are created online are often extended offline and integrated into people's daily activities. In fact, the most disruptive changes didn't come only from new technological processes, but from social ties and from new opportunities that emerged. Following Rheingold's perspective, the real impact of innovation will not come from the technology itself but from "frameworks for structuring encounters in social space based on reputation and trust" (Rheingold 2002, p. 68).

This networked communication is also transforming social identities. Individuals are using social media as tools for presentation and promotion of their identities, thus redefining social relations, self-presentation, and learning. Meanings and social relations are critical in understanding users' and consumers' motivations, behaviours, and dynamics of identity construction in social media networks. The Social Web presents a discontinuity from older models for the "presentation of the self in everyday life" (Goffman 1959), since private and public spheres are intertwined. Goffman showed how people engage in public performances to communicate to different audiences and their peer groups as a way of constructing their identity. The author claimed that everyday interactions involve complex symbolic exchanges in which people negotiate their identity, information about themselves, behaviours, and social status in public spaces. Goffman's analysis on the strong connection between people's construction of identities and public performance is significant to better understand how people engage in conversations in (virtual) public spaces with other people in distant locations. When people communicate through social media they are simultaneously in the space they physically occupy and in the virtual space of the

conversation (Palen et al. 2001). For instance, 65% of online teenagers have a profile online (Lenhart 2009), and they use social media to signal their *status* and membership affiliations, like music or clothing.

As emphasised by Turkle, with the rise of social media "technology proposes itself as the architect of our intimacy" (Turkle 2011). The type of information people signal about themselves (their interests, what they like, who they meet, how they dress) enables social interactions to happen. According to organisational sociologists that focus on communication processes, there are two dimensions that characterise our social experience: social identity and the social network (Lave and Wenger 1998). The social network is the network of people that are connected through a variety of relations. The social identity is the *positioning* within the different social groups that constitute a person's social relationships. Riva (2012) explains how social networking is born as a tool to enhance and support people's social network (organisation and extension of social networks), and as a tool for expression of social identity (description and definition), as well as a tool to analyse the social identity of other members of the network (exploration and comparison). Social psychologists have recently studied social networks, showing their role in facilitating "optimal flow experiences" that can fully reward people based on intrinsic satisfaction ranging from self-expression, communication, sharing, and establishing new relationships (Riva et al. 2011). This work led to a stream of research investigating the effects of online social networks on communication processes, relationship building and social identity formation. Social media are thus complex identity systems that attempt to define and control social identity, since they are used to satisfy different types of needs, such as security, association, self-esteem, and self-realisation (Riva et al. 2011).

Another important quality of online social networks is that they connect virtual communities and real life relationships. This is happening also through some technological features such as collaborative and social tagging systems and "*folksonomy*" (Marlow et al. 2006) a system of information classification that allows users to create and manage tags collaboratively to classify contents in the semantic web. Shirky more recently focuses on the meaning of *social*, arguing that humans are social creatures, and communication tools such as social media and social computing have become sufficiently flexible to "match our social capabilities", resulting in "the rise of new ways of coordinating action that take advantage of that change" (Shirky 2008, p. 20). A critical element of folksonomy is that they facilitate crowd-led valorisation systems without being underpinned by a centralised definition of value. Shirky's central concept is that these new

communication tools have a direct impact on the transformation of social institutions, since "we are living in the middle of a remarkable increase in our ability to share, to cooperate with one another, and to take collective action, all outside the framework of traditional institutions and organisations" (Shirky 2008, pp. 20-21).

Other authors that are very authoritative in the new media research community present a less enthusiastic approach on the above-mentioned transformations, since they critically evaluate the impact of social media on society. For instance Lanier (2010, 2013) and Carr (2010) expose a very original view on the recent development of the Web. Lanier (2010) concentrates his critique on three main issues. Firstly, the risks of technological manipulation of the mind, through the imposition of dominant technologies that favour user lock-in. Second, the risks associated with the assumptions derived from artificial intelligence on the nature of the electronic Web as a big interconnected brain, a kind of universal "mechanistic consciousness". Third, the replacement of creative practices with user-generated content and computer-mediated filtering promoted by the Internet industry has damaged cultural production and impoverished the creators who became exploited *prosumers*.

From a different perspective, Carr (2010) starts from a novel interpretation of the work of McLuhan, who is still considered a pioneer of New Media theory, by transforming the ethical sense of his prophecy of the new electronic interdependent "global village" (McLuhan 1962). Drawing from neurological research and medical research on human memory, Carr documents the deep effects that ubiquitous digital technologies are having on the human brain, changing the way people think, and weakening their capacity to concentrate. Carr concludes that the risk is increasingly transferring our memory to the machines, which also means transferring part of our mind and identity. Carr's main example is focused on the critique of the way Google, for instance, is centralising digital human knowledge in their quest for the perfect search algorithm, while at the same time disembodying peoples' judgments, emotions and intentions (Carr 2010).

To summarise, the new media and communication perspectives seem to suggest that social media, defined as "mass-self communication" in the networked information society, is deeply embedded in societal routines, structurally transforming the mode of communication of individuals and organisations. Scholars emphasise that the difference between old mass media and "Web 2.0" that it is dialogic, interactive and ubiquitous. However, social media is co-existing with old media without replacing them, as has already happened with broadcasting

media and the printing press. Networked communication is also transforming social identities (the way people signal status, membership, affiliations) and the very meaning of the word "social", thus affecting social interactions. As a result, social media is transforming the role of audiences from passive consumers of standardised messages to new social formations such as "smart mobs" and active "networked publics" that shape communication and initiate collective actions.

2. Computer Science and Information Systems Literature

Online collaboration has long been of interest for the Information Systems discipline, investigating forms of collaborative systems, group decision-making, or virtual communities (Wagner et al. 2006; Ciborra 2002; Avgerou 2000; Orlikowski and Iacono 2001). Social media are powerful tools that enable better collaboration in organisations. Social media platforms facilitate collaborative dynamics such as knowledge and content sharing, social networking, location-based services, or cloud-based storage services. In particular, the topic has recently received renewed attention due to the emergence of *folksonomies* and *ontologies* (Gruber 2007; Mathes 2004; Shirky 2005) which are a user-generated classifications through shared metadata, emerging through bottom-up consensus instead of closed classification schemes. *Collaborative tagging systems* are systems where users annotate objects with "tags" to label and organise large collectives of data. They have been well studied in the computer science literature, undertaking empirical research (e.g. Heymann et al. 2008; Halpin et al. 2007; Golder and Huberman 2006). Other research investigated new types of machine learning algorithms to improve the usability and the quality of these systems to build new services using big data (Marlow et al. 2005). Through collective classification systems, users can negotiate novel methods to map meaning and relationships (Lebkowsky and Ratcliffe 2005). Social media tools are thus transforming the processes of knowledge production within organisations, going beyond the way domain experts traditionally index and edit information in a structured and hierarchical way.

Computer science researchers have been looking at social networking as a computational engineering phenomenon within the World Wide Web that is strongly increasing human social interaction. When Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web at the beginning of the nineties, he generated the HTML language, the http protocol and the URL, the system of reference for an Internet resource. The combination of these open protocols and open standards allowed the identification of any resource across the Internet and the ability to read data from any computer regardless of the type of hardware and software, resulting in an open, generative,

and decentralised platform (Formenti 2011; Zittrain 2008). Web 2.0 transforms the way content, applications and services are created and shared on the Web, by letting the crowd participate in a collaborative manner. The users become in this way both creators and consumers. In the old Web, pages and links could be added without being centrally authorised, but it wasn't so easy for end users to create new content and to directly contribute to the creation of new pages. Users are empowered to "write and read" the Web, creating and publishing multimedia content using blogs and wikis through the user's web browser, without the need of acquiring particular ICT skills. Social media tools thus increase usability, accessibility, and reach for collaborative work as well as increasing the impact of social computing on collaborative processes, software development, new product development, and ultimately increasing innovation.

The Semantic Web (also known as *Linked Data*) is a project launched by Berners-Lee et al. (2001) and deployed by many public bodies, including the UK government (e.g. in the recent initiative to release government data). Its goal is to build large-scale structured knowledge representation systems using the Web. Computer scientists have described it as an attempt to restart the project of classical artificial intelligence (Fensel 2005; Davies et al. 2003). Web 2.0 is sometimes seen as complementary or as conflicting with the Semantic Web vision pushed forward by Tim Berners-Lee (Berners-Lee et al. 2001). While Web 2.0 is focused on usability, sharing and on capturing users' activities, the Semantic Web is based on the infrastructure that facilitate *data mashup* and information sharing (Ankolekar et al. 2007). From a computer science perspective, the focus is on Web engineering and on new Web technologies centred on the user and allowing for distributed collaboration. These technologies can be distinguished from the classical Web since they revolve around (i) *community* and usability allowing contributors to collaborate and share information easily; (ii) data *mashups* aggregating data from different sites in order to provide new value with different data combinations that create the most innovative applications and services; (iii) new programming languages, which enables the creation of responsive *user interfaces* that can reach a wider audience (Ankolekar et al. 2007). Understanding how networks work, how they scale, from our friends and through friends of friends, became a requirement in the social Web (Adams 2011).

Another stream of research in computer science focuses on machine learning, indexing and search evaluation and ranking, including Semantic Web approaches in searches (Shadbolt et al. 2006; Hitzler et al. 2011). Some researchers are analysing social networking in terms of users' behaviour, social interaction, and adoption in social media. Indeed, the effectiveness of a search

algorithm is based on the amount of information it gathers about the interest, viewing habits and navigation patterns of users. Predictive algorithms generate statistics driven by users' actions and their searches that helps identifying pattern matching with a direct impact on firms' productivity and sales. Information system scholars have also been investigating *online reputation systems* and that enables organisations to signal the behaviour of other organisations or individuals in a network, following the principles of distributions of popularity and the long tail of niche content (Easley and Kleinberg 2010). Social media provide a live testing platform for investigating new research methods for tackling complex organisational problems though big data analysis. An emergent stream of research has started to apply social network analysis to the study of online communities (Garton et al. 2006; Brown et al. 2007). Following this perspective, computer networks are seen as inherently social networks, and these approaches are used to structurally investigate the interaction between technology, computer-mediated communication, and social formations (Wellman 2001).

To better understand the relation between social action and social technology, researchers in the emerging field of Internet Science (Salamatian et al. 2011) and Web Science (Berners-Lee et al. 2006; Berners-Lee et al. 2008) are developing a comprehensive computational, philosophical and sociological theoretical framework for *collective intelligence*, with the aim of advancing our understanding of technology-mediated social change and explaining under which conditions individual citizens can mobilise their cognitive capabilities to act collaboratively in collective ways, producing results far beyond their individual capabilities (Halpin et al. 2010). Assemblages of multiple actors - usually disconnected spatially but communicating over the Internet - are exhibiting *collective intelligence*, properties that go beyond the level of individual identity (Halpin et al. 2010). These new theoretical models on computer-mediated "collective intelligence" employ innovative computational methods informed by empirical data analysis from the sociological investigation based on big data collection from real-world use cases. These scholars are investigating a new phase in the evolution of the World Wide Web that was originally conceived as a collection of static hyperlinked web pages to a more interactive and collaborative social medium. This research reveals a transition from a Web that connects documents together to a Web that connects people together, transforming social relations and institutions (Adams 2012). Increasingly the collaborative Web is intertwined into the social fabric of more and more people, giving rise to a new type of complex collective intelligence system (Malone and Crowston 1994; Levy 2012).

As a whole, computer science research findings seem to suggest that online social networks, social media and the growth of big data has changed the Web and the way researchers are able to solve complex problems, computational challenges, and detect patterns in large scale human behaviours through machine learning techniques. Social networking is investigated as a computational engineering phenomenon, exhibiting computer-mediated *collective intelligence* properties that go beyond the level of individual identities to put forward interpretive frameworks of the co-evolution of Web and society. This in turn leads to tackling complex organisational problems and tasks though big data analysis, increasing collaboration capabilities and firms' performance.

3. Perspectives in Market Research and Consumer Culture Theory

Market research is an established body of work that includes quantitative and qualitative "market orientation" approaches such as focus groups and ethnographic studies (Slater and Narver 1998, 1999). These methods gather user requirements, emerging demands, expressed or unmet needs to improve old products, or to develop new products that can address unmet needs. Consumers' habits and activities are electronically traced and aggregated into digital data, to create large databases of consumer behavioural profiles. Slater and Narver (1998) distinguished between conceptualisation of customer-led and market-oriented, advocating for the need to move beyond expressed needs and to get closer to the consumers and capture early requirements from lead users. Extant research argues that the use of online and more recently Social Customer Relationship Management systems provide deeper insights into costumers' latent and unexpressed needs, using social technologies and communities for market research (Vorhoef 2003; Kozinets 2002; Baird et al. 2011). With the rise of social media forming an integral part of companies' daily conversations, Social Customer Relationship Management (SCRM), became an effective company's feedback integrating social tools into the customer management process (Greenberg 2010).

Putting the consumer at the centre of the marketing process means pointing to the interaction between consumption and production and the notion of the emergence of a "*prosumer*", where the consumer of these experiences is also, in part, a producer of the same experiences (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010; Toffler, 1981). In particular different studies are looking at the way *prosumer* is experienced by consumers over time in social media environments, and in firms' marketing processes that rely on branding (Arvidsson 2006) and on a wider use of social media technology (Arvidsson 2004; Zwick et al. 2008). Since virtual communities share information on their

lifestyles choices and activities (Armstrong and Hagel 2000), by socialising their inclinations, preferences, and relationships, they increase the value of products and services. These processes are therefore beyond producers' direct control, and companies have to follow certain strategies to capture this brand value generated by consumers in the market (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). Firms are increasingly interested in using social network to expand consumer advocacy (Almquist and Roberts 2000) and to make sense of and shape the conversation prompted by their brands and products. Due to the characteristics of social media, they are effective platforms to engage users in marketing processes (Cova and Dalli 2009). The concept of the "working consumer" expands and challenges the literature on value co-creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004) and the service-dominant (S-D) logic (Vargo and Lush 2008) where firms and consumers co-create value, establishing a harmonic relationship.

In light of the new social media context, marketing research has also been innovating methodologies by integrating the online environment. For instance, Kozinets (2002; 2006) created the research method of *netnography*, a branch of ethnography that analyses consumers' behaviour on the Internet, employing social media analysis tools to provide meaningful market research outcomes. Cova framed this transformation as a shift from marketing to *societing*, since consumers value the social aspects of life and the *linking value* of goods that facilitate social interaction and increase community relationships (Cova 1999). This perspective emphasizes the continuous identity quest and identity production of consumers through the market. Social media reinforces this trend, since consumers can construct their identity through social relationships, establish direct communication with brands, and a strong identification. According to these authors, emerging is a "tribal brand culture, where the brands are selected by consumers based on attitude and in-depth knowledge about the authenticity of a product, and where these brands become the ultimate expression of self" (Cova and Dalli 2009, p. 317). Through social media these factors are amplified, since millions of consumers can upload their content and digital productions online and millions of other consumers can watch and download this content, engaging in direct conversations with their peers.

The emergence of social media, along with the computational tools that can process massive amounts of data, also changes Cultural Theory Studies (CTS) methods. Researchers can use social data to tap into the imaginations of millions of people by aggregating the photos and videos they upload and comment on, the conversations they are engaged in, the opinions, ideas, and emotions they share. Researchers have access to a variety of software tools to detect and

analyse cultural texts and conversations. Many companies use *sentiment analysis* to study the feelings that people show about their products in blog posts. Many companies employ teams of data scientists to conduct data-driven behavioural analysis. Data science consists of a combination of machine learning techniques, recommendation systems, and algorithmic optimisation. For instance, recent publications in computer science applying big data analysis investigated how information or sentiments spreads on Twitter, which photos are the most shared on Instagram, and which geo-tagged information tells us about people's attention and mobility patterns (Manovich 2011). Other similar studies analyse with whom people spend time with offline by analysing the tags on their Facebook photos, finding that the average person was tagged with six or seven other people that they see in real life (Facebook 2012).

Social Media and networked communication also impacts the Word-of-Mouth (WOM) marketing literature (Kozinet et al. 2010; Mangold and Faulds 2009; Brown et al. 2007; Qualman 2012) and the way in which firms understand how virtual communities talk about brands and products to influence consumer-to-consumer communications and their purchasing habits (De Valk et al.2009). To analyse this new trend, companies use *networked narratives* (Kozinets et al. 2010) to manipulate marketing accounts and meanings. In this way, social media such as Twitter, are described "as a form of electronic word-of-mouth for sharing consumer opinions concerning brands" (Jansen et al. 2009, p.2169), thus becoming a central part of firms' marketing strategies. Facebook uses graphs of personal connections to recommend products, and so produce predictive behaviour of individuals and groups, since the idea is that social network structure change how people are influenced (Adams 2012). Traditional marketing in the last ten years has been focused on finding society's influential people that supposedly are recognised as influencers by the majority of the population. However, social media showed that the real world dynamics moved away from the popular idea of "the Law of the Few", popularised in Gladwell's The Tipping Point (Gladwell 2006).

In reality, the *influencers* consist only of 15% of the population that generate 30% of the conversations about brands; the remaining 70% of conversions are generated by people that talk to each other through word-of-mouth, which are mainly social networks of connected independent groups of friends (Adams 2012; Bakshy et al. 2012). People's most trusted sources are "strong ties". People are mostly influenced by other people they are emotionally connected to, who are also the people they trust, socialize with, and communicate with the most.

Thus marketing has been transformed by some of the dynamics generated by social media such as the autonomous forms of cultural production, including youth subcultures and street cultures, and other strategies of self branding that regulate the emerging identity market (Barile 2009). Evidence from consumer theory research suggests that value creation is increasingly determined by the extent to which products can be used to communicate meanings regarding individual and social identities (Arnould and Thompson 2005). Research in consumer behaviour (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982) shows that the symbolic attributes of products are increasingly driving consumption choices in industries ranging from clothing, furniture, and cars (Bourdieu 1984; McCracken 1988), to technology industries such as devices, personal computers, mobile phones (Du Gay, 1997; Palen et al. 2001) and more recently social media (Rheingold 2002). These perspectives suggest that the meanings of products in an increasing number of sectors depend on their cultural significance, on their relation with the socio-cultural context and with the agents enacting these contexts.

Another stream of marketing literature is investigating consumer movements through social media as a particular kind of social movement (Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Den Hond and De Bakker 2007; Handelman and Kozinets 2012). In this work consumer movements are defined as social movements that "tend to manifest locally and resist what is seen as a global infiltration of marketplace ideologies that deteriorate local cultures and community relations" (Kozinets and Handelman 2012:1). These movements are activists' collective efforts to transform the social order (Buechler 2000), often with respect to consumption and marketing in terms of anti-brands (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan 2006) and other forms of anti-consumption activities (Penaloza and Price 1993). Such movements resist various business and marketing practices (Melucci 1996). While traditional activism entailed activists meeting face-to-face and engaging in protests, the Internet has given rise to Web-based activism that fostered advocacy, mobilization, and a combination of online and offline actions.

Overall, Marketing and Consumer Culture perspectives have been focusing on the way social media affect consumers' behaviours, cognitive and affective responses. Organisations are now working on integrating these new *prosumers* interactions driven by social data into their organisational processes and strategies using social CRM. In particular, organisations are starting to adopt social media strategically, and to use new social media tactics and analytics that provide insights about consumers' preferences, behaviours, and buying patterns, and are looking to restructure business around complex value co-creation networks.

4. Innovation Management Perspective

In a recent survey conducted by Foster Research, 73.5% of CEOs in companies considered focusing on social media strategies and social media execution a priority, with a larger share of the budget being increasingly allocated to digital media management. "Mass self-communication" is experiencing rapid growth and has attained mainstream popularity within organisations and firms. As already mentioned, social media are rapidly transforming how companies build relationships and work collaboratively, within the firms' boundaries and with their customers. New ad hoc roles have been created that didn't exist before, such as social media managers or social media directors. The social Web is reorganising organisations around people and around the relationships between consumers and businesses, towards social business. Users are constantly producing and sharing valuable social data and contributing to social indexing without even engaging directly with Facebook or Google, and increasingly companies want to be where their consumers and customers are. In 2009 social networking options surpassed emails and in 2010 corporate uses of social media started to take over. However, few managers know how to harness these technologies to create strategic advantage for organisations. There is a growing literature providing practical and business recommendations for implementing social media. Recommendations are the outcome of case studies of companies such as Intel, Nokia, and Microsoft, outlining the strategies used to attract consumers and build reputations with consumers and stakeholders; boost innovation and knowledge creation; and engage customers and employees early in the innovation process.

Many organisations are integrating new "social media teams" in their organisational structure, or hiring social media experts to interact with bloggers and manage online communities. Shirky defines this external value production as "cognitive surplus" (Shirky 2010), referring to a hundred billion hours of human thought and free time of users, which were before mainly fuelling media fruition and are now channelled into interactive social media participation. This "cognitive surplus", when well directed and organised around productive projects, can generate wealth and audiences for organisations. In this direction, social media offer new network-based organisational models that are most capable of engaging users and harnessing the power of the crowd in solving problems. Shirky (2010) uses the picture user-generated site Flickr as an example, showing that all content published on the platform has a real value for their users. However, organisations cannot directly capture that value since the cost-benefit would be detrimental for the firm. It is only through the exploitation of large-scale coordination, classification, social tagging and social data systems that companies are able to enter into a

productive relationship with user communities and tap into the value collectively produced (Formenti 2011). Tapscott and Williams (2006) names this mass collaboration "wikinomics", describing how thousands of people collaborate in online projects such as Wikipedia and co-create products and services, actively contributing to the creation of social media content. Tapscott and Williams (2006) analyse the way innovative firms succeed in appropriating value and rent from the social cooperation and *crowdsourced* creativity enabled by Web 2.0 tools. This phenomenon is described in the literature as a very significant cultural change that goes beyond user-generated content and forces companies to challenge their business models and to innovate the way they produce and distribute content and how they collaborate with external stakeholders.

The body of work at the intersection between open innovation and innovation management research consider social media platforms as new innovation intermediaries that "act as an agent or broker in any aspect of the innovation process between two or more parties" (Howells 2006, p. 720). In particular, online open innovation intermediaries received growing attention since they mediate and facilitate the processes of problem solving, selection, and engagement of potentially successful innovators using a variety of approaches, ranging from managing communities to *crowdsourcing* (Chesbrough 2006; Lichtenthaler and Ernst 2009; Lakhani et al. 2007; Bakici et al. 2010). These authors investigated how big corporations such as IBM, Sun, Intel and Google managed to exploit open-source projects, thus supporting and subsidising open-source communities and using collaborative crowdsourcing as effective models to profit from open innovation. The literature on open innovation intermediaries consists mainly of case studies on private companies as intermediaries through open innovation platforms, such as InnoCentive, NineSigma, and Ideo, analysing the managerial implications (Huston and Sakkab 2006; Lakhani et al. 2007) and impact on performance (Lichtenthaler and Ernst 2008; Howells 2006).

There is also a relevant economic and innovation research stream on multi-sided platforms (Gawer and Cusumano 2002; Gawer 2011; Gawer and Cusumano 2012) that is very relevant in the case of social media platforms, since social media providers such as Facebook are platform owners that value user mobilisation as a priority to maximise their profits based on the exploitation of the network effect created by the huge user base (the "social graph") and user personal information. Thus, Facebook encourages a critical mass of adoption, while monetising the installed base through advertising (Boudreau and Hagiu 2009). Then the strategy for profitability and growth is to activate the social graph, by keeping linkages among members active and facilitating engagement and interaction on the platform. In addition, Facebook has

designed a marketplace for ecosystem innovation based on applications built by a community of over 600.000 external developers. Many applications and widgets built on the Facebook platform are inherently social in nature, because they lead to building, activating and refreshing the social graph by enhancing network effects and attracting new members to the platform (Boudreau and Hagiu 2009). A growing stream of research in the innovation management field focused on *lead users* as sources of innovation in new product development (von Hippel 1986, 2005), or on the role of user communities as co-producers, including open-source development and online communities that constitute the foundation of social media platforms (Franke and Shah 2003; Jeppesen and Frederiksen 2006; Thomke and von Hippel 2002; Ulwick 2002).

The knowledge-based view of the firm draws on the community of practice perspective (Wenger 1998; Lave and Wenger 1991) to explain mechanisms of knowledge creation, management and diffusion (Kogut and Zander 1996; Brown and Duguid 2002; Davenport and Pruzak 2000; Cook and Brown 1999; Cohen and Prusak 1996; Gherardi and Nicolini 2000). Following this stream of literature, many scholars have recently applied the community of practice framework and concepts- such as situated learning, identity construction and enactment, mutual engagement, knowledge sharing, shared repertoire, joint enterprise and legitimate peripheral participation- to explain the rise of virtual geographically distributed communities or Internet-based communities of practice and their novel characteristics (Hildreth and Kimble 2002; Kimble et al. 2012). Amongst many examples of empirical research on virtual communities, Ardichvili et al. (2003) looked at employee engagement through online knowledge sharing communities at Caterpillar, a Fortune 100 company, highlighting the need to develop community-based trust to facilitate knowledge sharing and active contribution among employees. Bryant et al. (2005) have been applying Lave and Wenger's (1991) framework to the study of Wikipedia and its community of engaged users shaping a collective online identity, while Fang and Neufeld (2009) studied an open-source software development online community, emphasising knowledge sharing, enactment and competence building. Murillo (2008) looked at a Usenet-based communities of practice, investigating their posts, collective behaviours and repertoire of action. Hara and Hew (2007) studied an online community of nurses using content analysis of their online forum messages to describe the way they formed a professional online community, and employing a similar method Zhang and Watts (2008) focused on a Chinese online virtual community of practice, analysing the content of their bulletin board.

Finally, the work on virtual communities has extended to investigate multi-player online games, virtual worlds and social networking platforms that host games (Corneliussen and Rettberg 2008), applying game theory and *gamification* (Zimmerman 2004; Castronova 2005; Bartle 2004; Pearce 2009). Today *gamification* is perceived as an important strategy for organisations that want to build online user communities, and increase the involvement of users and customers focusing on incentives and motivation structures.

Overall, innovation management research considers social media platforms as new open innovation intermediaries that enable firms to integrate external resources and ideas early in the innovation process and capture value produced outside the boundaries of the firm. Innovation scholars have also adopted the knowledge-based view of the firm, drawing on the community of practice perspective to explain the rise of virtual communities or Internet-based communities of practice that organisations need to manage in today's complex environment.

Critical Theory on Social Media: Surveillance Studies and Data Protection

Social media are presenting novel opportunities together with big challenges especially to privacy, identity management, and data protection. A stream of literature to mention as a critical reflection at the end of this literature review emphasises the risk that Web 2.0 is posing to privacy and fundamental freedoms. Privacy research for instance define social media as the next *privacy bubble* (Scott 2008), and advocate the need for new privacy enhancing technologies that give users control over their personal information (Langheinrich 2001; Stalder 2002; Cavoukian 2009; Hildebrandt and de Vries 2013; Solove 2006; Wright and de Hert 2012). The open-source software community has been very critical of some of the latest development of the Web 2.0. In particular, Tim Berners-Lee (2010, 2012) has recently published a series of articles alerting to the danger of the Web "walled gardens", by referring to centralised platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, that don't allow open standards and data portability. Creating "walled gardens" out of personal data means that when users try to leave the platform or to move their data to another service, they lose everything, including the social relations, profile data, and the possibility of communicating with their friends. First Monday, a popular open-access online journal, published a special issue on Web 2.0., giving space to research taking a critical approach to the phenomenon (Zimmer 2008). According to the editors, too little space has been given to the critical exploration of the impact of Web 2.0 on society, ethics, and the economy. A particular emphasis is on the threats that social media poses to the concept of privacy and individual

identity, and how sensitive personal data flow across networks are being extracted for commercial gains (Burdon 2010; Dwyer et al. 2007).

Another stream of research that is currently looking at the implication of social media and digital technology on personal freedom and identity is surveillance studies (Lyon 2002, 2007; Rodotà 2004; 2012). These authors argue that surveillance technologies are everywhere today. Every day we encounter CCTV cameras in the street, we use RFID-enabled credit cards, navigation systems, machine readable passports, we constantly use mobile devises and surf the Internet for an increasing number of activities, we have a health card number, loyalty cards and so on. Personal information is gathered by many means (e.g. digital, biometric, genomic), and are constantly recorded, stored, retrieved, compared, mined, traded and processed. Today most of the applications built in the social Web are created by aggregating personal and social data. Personal data, provided by the users themselves when they navigate the Internet and when they interact within the social networks and express their opinions, is captured, analysed, interpreted and aggregated to be traded in the online advertising market. An increasing number of employers use social media in addition to the traditional résumé. Some employers are even asking applicants if they can have their access to their Facebook passwords. In this way social media companies are trying to create categories, and personal profiles, so they can build a composite picture of their users, asking them to contribute directly to those categorisation, aggregating their preferences, musical tastes, food preferences, political affiliation, religious commitment and so on. Surely those categorisations don't necessary fit the way people want to present themselves and the technology behind it may be somewhat misleading. Through these categories risks and opportunities are assessed, and people's life-chances and choices are influenced and managed in a process that has been named "social sorting" (Lyon 2002).

This process of data aggregation and the data marketplace that exchange users' personal information often happens without explicit users' consent, thus posing a serious threat to privacy and data protection online (Bauman and Lyon 2012; Ball et al. 2012). Various solutions have been advocated by academics and advocacy groups, such as the need to follow a different technological approach based on open standards, including data portability, privacy, and user control of personal data. Zimmer argues that building personal profiles of large numbers of people to predict their behaviours and deliver targeted advertising is creating an unfair bargain, resulting in an infrastructure of control more than an infrastructure of empowerment (Zimmer 2008). The collection of personal data happens easily with the explosion of mobile connectivity,

since companies are able to aggregate data about browsing behaviour through the use of *cookie*s, or using the *Facebook Like button* and create individual and collective profiles that cluster all these activities (Roosendaal 2011). Furthermore, many new applications base their business model on being able to aggregate personal data and localise the physical position of users collecting real-time GPS location and DNS lookups. Many Internet users are unaware that data are being collected, analysed, mined and sold to advertisers (McDonald and Cranor 2010).

For instance, Facebook tracks and traces users and processes their data, since over 20 percent of all online advertising not on search engines, video, or e-mail, run on Facebook. But at the same time, data-mining companies are aggregating personal data that are publicly accessible to sell them to third parties, such as data aggregators and credit agencies. Moreover, *Facebook Connect* is able to keep tracking users across the Web, bringing rich data on consumers' behaviours back to the Facebook platform where they can be controlled and monetised in the emerging personal data marketplace. Behavioural advertising "entails the tracking of online behaviour of Internet users in order to build a profile of these users to target them with customised advertising" (Van der Sloot and Borgesius 2012, p. 2). Google competes with Facebook, making its revenue mostly from advertising, and after acquiring Double Click in 2007, has been focusing on behavioural advertising through its "Interest Based Advertising" program. Google thus tracks the behaviours of its users through *cookies* across its advertising network. Google can enrich users' behavioural profiles with additional data gathered from other Google services and with information that users upload to other social networks.

The amounts of raw social data gathered through sophisticated consumer tracking algorithms allow for detailed analysis of users' behavioural patterns. For instance, according to Ibrahim (2008), Facebook acted as social norm setter, by transforming the very meaning of privacy through enabling new users' behaviours around "frictionless sharing" on its platform, without their explicit consent. The very concept of privacy is transformed, because the more people share data about their personal life, the more they are rewarded with peer attention, which is a strong social motivation to continue to share information and aggregate trust and reputation. This is coupled with platform architectures designed to lower privacy levels and influence users' perception of risk (Ibrahim 2008). However, these kind of positions that victimise the users and condemn the company have been criticised. For instance, it has been argued that Facebook seduces people with social motives into using its services, and people feel rewarded for using its services in exchange of data about themselves (Oosthuyzen 2012). Certainly the new norms and

behaviours of social media providers are challenging existing legislations, especially in Europe. In the European Union there are several legislations that protect privacy regarding the processing of personal data. These legislations are being currently rewritten to answer the new challenges posed by digital communication and social media (Van der Sloot and Borgesius 2012; Wong 2013).

Other critiques stem from a more philosophical perspective, outlining the limitations and rigidity of the Facebook approach in defining identity and social relationships. Researchers looking at social and psychological effects of social media are analysing the way social media mediate social relationships and identity, talking about a possible collective "disindividuation effect" (Stiegler 2010). The individual in fact cannot be conceived outside the holistic relation between the individual, the collective, and the technological systems that constitute the environment (Virno 2008). Thus, if identity formation within social networks remains solely based on engineering processes, it can create personality mismatch and artificial social interactions (Halpin and Hui 2012).

Other dysfunctional effects created by social media are investigated within the emergent discipline of cyber psychology (Riva and Galimberti 2001; Riva 2005). This new discipline analyses processes of change activated by social media that are centred on social interaction. This approach shows that social media present at the same time new opportunities and new problems, creating new types of empowerment and collective activation, as well as new dysfunctional behaviours. For instance, psychologists are analysing the identity crisis due to multiple identities that young people construct when they are using the Web, and that can interfere in an integrated development of youth social identity (Riva 2010). Moreover, excessive use of social media can create "Internet addiction disorder" and "emotional illiteracy" (La Barbera et al. 2009; Kuss and Griffiths 2011) which created a new wave of psychology to study these kinds of pathological behaviours named "New Media Related Psychopathology" (Morahan-Martin 2000; Cantelmi 1999). In particular, these authors argue that online friendship addiction is related to the dependence on social networks, since people's self-esteem depends on social relationships that are increasingly digitally mediated. Furthermore, the huge amount of information presented in social networks can result in an "information overload" (Hemp 2009) that is disproportionate compared to the user capacity to digest and analyse the data. The information overload and the related behaviours have their cost but also inspire important solutions, thus advancing digital learning (Blair 2010).

Towards an Integrative Discussion and Future Research Agenda of Social Media and Organisations

The outcome of this literature review is to present a theoretical discussion resulting from the integration of the different streams of research previously reviewed, and a schematic overview of the tentative framework, which identifies future research avenues for exploring the impact of social media on organisations. Collectively, these streams of research seem to suggest that in order to fully understand the social media phenomenon and to fully investigate the implications for organisations, it is necessary to uncover it from different perspectives. More specifically, the following integrative discussion synthesises central themes, concepts, and approaches in the literature on social media and already tested or only hypothesised relationships between them. As a consequence, this framework clearly reveals the complexity of the topic and the many concepts, definitions, implications, and relationships at stake. Furthermore, it also stresses the importance of adopting a conceptualisation of social media acknowledging the different aspects of this phenomenon as well as the relationships among them. Although complex, this review has the benefit of highlighting those concepts and those relationships deserving further investigation, suggesting a future research agenda.

Based on the model and analysis of the existing literature introduced here, I identify four promising directions for future research on social media and organisations. I then include at the end of each discussion, relevant research questions for future studies. Two of the identified themes will constitute the basis of my exploration in the following papers of my thesis.

1. Social Media and New business Models: The Use of 'Big Data' in Organisations

The uses of social media define and transform the nature of social interactions, business and organisations that operate within an information-intensive environment with ubiquitous connectivity. Organisations are learning how to take decisions based on a more accurate knowledge of these vast amounts of data generated, through social data analytics that can help organisations to understand complex phenomena and socio-economic and environmental trends. The biggest Web players such as Google and Facebook, and online retailers such as eBay and Amazon, are largely contributing to the creation of the emergent big data industry (Schonberger and Cukier 2013). This latest information development can be traced back to an historical transformation in research and science that integrated the new computational and informational paradigm, namely the “computational turn” (Burkholder 1992), affecting many disciplines and the way scientists conduct and test experiments.

Vast and growing amounts of data sets can be aggregated, stored, searched and correlated, containing organisational processes, personal information and personal location data (together with their metadata about the underlying information produced). This led to the development of supercomputers and sophisticated algorithms able to process this information and to discover new relationships among large data sets (Manovich 2011). Social media and new communication channels have increased the rate of information flow, its ubiquity and the frequency of data generation. Big data analytics is perceived to become the next competitive advantage for innovative digital companies, becoming a key component in companies' strategy. Just to give an idea of the volume of data generated, 2.5 billion gigabytes of data are created every day (with Twitter alone generating *Terabytes* of data daily), and the data generated globally is expected to grow to reach 35 *Zettabytes* in 2020 (Gants and Reinsel 2012). Organisations have to react quickly to develop capabilities that allow them to derive meaningful insights from this information, automating decisions for real-time processing, identifying current and new business opportunities, identifying and predicting change, and quantifying current and potential risks (IDC 2012).

Access to vast data from heterogeneous sources, together with the computing power to process big data and the algorithms, is having a clear impact on important fields of research and application, including medical science, logistics, healthcare, economic forecasting, retail, manufacturing, public sector and so on. It is clear that organisations are increasingly becoming more dependent on big data development for critical decisions and applications (Kuner et al. 2012). Knowledge of machine learning can today be applied in commercial environments by making sense of large pools of data, such as employing pattern recognition technologies that look for hidden patterns or anomalies in large datasets, detecting data clusters and discovering new correlations, predictive patterns, and real-time statistical modelling. Examples might include designing predictive systems based on mass user behavioural analysis and using *social sorting* techniques that assign users to a particular category. This can enable the system to make predictions about future user behaviours based on the past user experiences, and therefore adjusting their future experiences accordingly with the aim of maximising sales and profits.

Furthermore, the use of big data to collect and analyse information and the ability to release information to the public through open data formats can help both government and organisations make more strategic, evidence-based decisions. The value of big data comes from the relationships, connections, and patterns that emerge from new data correlations about individual

organisations, products and things or information itself. In particular, research is showing that organisations can take better decisions by analysing a large volume or structured and unstructured data from heterogeneous sources that were not previously considered by conventional business intelligence solutions (McKinsey 2013). This access to information is contributing to the spread of "data-driven decision making" management practices that are spreading across organisations. What O'Reilly names "algorithmic regulation" (O'Reilly 2013). Recent research looking at 179 large corporations in the US found that there is a direct correlation between data-driven decision-making and firm performance, which increases of 5 to 6 percent (Brynjolfsson et al. 2011).

In areas such as data mining, and data science in general, social media is becoming a trendy topic (Russel 2011; Barbier and Liu 2011; Asur and Huberman 2010; Pang and Lee 2008). A lively area of research is social data mining that emphasises the importance of social media analysis for mining structural data and studying the interaction amongst users. 'Social media analytics' can present significant insights to the study of practices in social network sites. With the increasing digitalisation of everyday life, much information on people's everyday activities can be found through analysing the use of social media interactions. Social data (i.e. data produced and shared by users) represent an important part of "big data" analysis and it is used to improve and optimise organisational processes in relation to external stakeholders and consumers. A promising stream of research is occurring in the emergent field of *sentiment analysis*, which semantically analyses opinions, and affective expressions in texts. There are a variety of tools available, such as *listening crowdsourcing tools*, which analyse online conversations on social media websites. Sentiment analysis can be used to assess positive or negative sentiment trends for selected topics overtime and across organisations and topics. More in-depth sentiment analysis can highlight specific keywords used during conversations and also shed light on user sentiments, filtered by type of activity, transactions, opinions, and other selected dimensions.

The potential scope of social media analytics can be broader and cover emerging and perceived issues; top influencers in terms of authors, blogs, forums; key themes driving user sentiment over time; affinity analytics; trendy topic; word distribution; names of products or services driving positive and negative sentiment for a specific topic; and key themes that are opportunities to enhance user perception. This analysis in turn can be used to define specific action items to tap into social media opportunities and mitigate potential risks, define priorities, and improve organisational social media strategy. Although social media analytics tools can analyse huge

numbers of people and organisations, taking into account diversity of countries and languages while guaranteeing statistical validity, these techniques are still immature, and in rapid progress. Such tools could potentially complement or replace traditional user surveys and allow for more frequent monitoring at lower cost. Due to the fast development of this technique for analysing significant patterns in human communication and behaviours across domains, new questions have started to emerge from the debate among scholars about the use of methodological frameworks, the theoretical assumptions, regulation and biases that big data implementations can reveal (Boyd and Crawford 2012). Relevant research questions that could be explored to address the gaps in this literature and set a future research agenda are summarised in Table 2.

2. Social Media Strategy and Corporate Communication: The Impact on Organisational Reputation and Celebrity

Social media provide organisations with an audience that they trust, an audience who cares about their activities and products, also providing incentives for users to update their status profiles and to upload new content. For instance, Facebook profiles offer a 'template for identity' that every user can fill in directly with personal information about who they know, where they work, where they studied, what their interests and activities are, what their favourite products are etc. What this means for businesses is a powerful new relational database that constitutes an important organisational asset to establish new productive connections with consumers and audiences. User-led approaches are relevant in the case of social media, since users engage in bi-directional conversations with firms, generating new trends and symbolic value (Rindova and Ravasi 2007). Previous work in the field of strategy and management focused on the renewed active role of consumers in media-intensive and symbol-intensive environments as interpreters of symbols and signs. Audiences and consumers are actively engaging in the process of meaning construction, framing new contexts and practices (Lawrence and Phillips 2002). The ability of firms to engage and shape the relationships and the conversations with their customers is a key factor for the successful management of this process of symbolic value production, leading to the creation of intangible assets for the firm (Ravasi and Rindova 2004; 2007).

Researchers investigated the role of organisational reputation and celebrity as intangible social approval assets that have a strategic value for the organization (Fombrun 1996; Fombrun and Van Riel 2004; Rindova 2006), and whose value is derived from stakeholder perceptions (Rao

1994). This work highlights that strategy research should consider, alongside other forms of capital, the development and deployment of cultural and symbolic resources (for instance by incorporating external cultural resources such as artists, symbol experts and lead users) to manage external stakeholder perceptions (Rindova et al. 2011). Firm celebrity in particular derives from non-conforming and deviant behaviour that generates stakeholder attention and affects. It has been also argued that the media is a key player in this process, by providing key resources and mass coverage (Deephouse 2000). In particular, through the diffusion of dramatised narratives, the media construct celebrity firms are eventually able to "attract a high level of public attention, and generate positive emotional responses from stakeholder audiences" (Rindova et al. 2006, p. 4).

Social media is speeding up this process, representing a hybrid element because they enable companies to engage in a direct conversation with their customers and external stakeholders, while they also monitor conversations that customers have with each other. However, the renewed characteristics of social media and their role in building organisational reputation and celebrity remain unexplored. Intangible and immaterial resources are captured and appropriated by firms through their ability to interact with users, stakeholders, and consumers through social media. Social media-based conversations occurring between consumers are thus outside firms' direct control (Mangold and Faulds 2009). Social media are also changing the way stakeholders view a company's impact on the environment in the framework of corporate social responsibility, since their perception is critical to firm performance and should then be managed by organisations (Chatterji et al. 2007). Within this context, it is increasingly important to investigate how companies are using social media to interact with external stakeholders, with the aim of managing communities and influence stakeholder perceptions. The main challenge, and at the same time the main opportunity, that social media offers for organisations consists of transforming traditional organisational models based on centralisation, hierarchy and vertical communication, that are unable to harness and capture value created outside the boundaries of the firm. Work at the intersection of different streams of literature can provide insights about the role of social media in generating organisational symbolic capital and its relation to online reputation and celebrity in the process of strategy formation. Thus further empirical studies are needed to advance the research concerning the use of social media in strategy, reputation and celebrity management. Relevant research questions that could be explored to address the gaps in this literature and set a future research agenda are summarised in Table 2.

3. Social Media and Institutions: Institutional Change and Challenges to Organisational Legitimacy Posed by Social Media

Communication technologies are clearly a strong force behind institutional change. In organisation and institutional literature there is an established body of work that focuses on the importance of language, discourses and rhetorical strategies as a mechanism of change, legitimacy acquisition and identification in institutional settings (Fairclough 2003; Phillips et al. 2004; Rao et al. 2003; Suddaby and Greenwood 2005; Green et al. 2009; Vaara and Tieinari 2008, 2011; Cornellisen and Clarke 2010). Recently, scholars are starting to further investigate the role of communication in changing social structures and institutions and applying these insights to a renewed context driven by new and social media. McLuhan (1994) suggested that communication spark institutional change by attracting different types of rationality, or as later defined by institutional scholars, *institutional logics* (Friedland and Alford 1991). However, organisational institutionalism (Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powell 1983), with the exception of the work on the role of genres of communication in structuring organisations (Yates and Orlikowski 1992; Orlikowski and Yates 1994), has failed to fully address the role of communication technologies in institutional and organisational dynamics.

Furthermore, previous research focused on traditional forms of communication, such as conventional print or news media and verbal accounts and texts, to analyse how discourse facilitates organisational strategies and actions, and its relationship with institutions (Phillips et al. 2004). The emergence of social media provides a useful opportunity to investigate their impact on organisations and thus can provide unique insights into the processes, tactics and strategies that organisations adopt. Social media can thus provide a useful field for experimentation to analyse how changes in patterns and forms of communication help to maintain or alter institutions. The shift to new technologies of communication also creates new opportunities for key actors within institutions, such as social entrepreneurs, social movements, and professions, to engage in forms of institutional work, or new practices designed to create, maintain or change institutions (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006).

Most neo-institutional researchers have studied the role of mainstream media in shaping and conferring crucial resources for organisations such as legitimacy (Baum and Powell 1995; Dowling and Pfeffer 1975; Deephouse 1996; Pollock and Rindova 2003), emphasising the use of impression management techniques by organisational spokespersons to acquire legitimacy

(Elsbach and Sutton 1992). However, these studies were conducted a long time ago, focusing mainly on prestige press and news media and taking into account a very different media environment. In those days it was very hard for organisations to access the mass media and directly influence stakeholder audiences, while powerful actors and intermediaries were considered the sole gatekeepers of communication channels that influenced and shaped the public opinion, affirming taken for granted norms, institutions and legitimate organisations. Social media radically changes the context in which organisations operate and the types of actors that engage in these processes and the interactive dynamics of their responses. New empirical research is needed on the impact of social media by organisations and the way they affect and threaten legitimacy acquisition processes across different types of organisations and contexts. Relevant research questions that could be explored to address the gaps in this literature and set a future research agenda are summarised in Table 2.

4. Social Media Enabling Social Movement Organisations to Mobilise Collective Actions

In recent years there has been an increasingly prominent academic and public debate on the impact of social movements on institutional change (DiMaggio 1988; Rao et al. 2000; Rao 2009; McAdam and Scott 2005). Rao, for instance, insists on the role of social movements in shaping radical innovations in markets, describing how radical social movements that are born in the "streets" and in civic activism get into "suits" to influence the decision-making of top firms' senior managers (Rao 2009, p. 141). Rao provides empirical case evidences that social movements shouldn't be seen as shocks to a market, but rather outcomes of collective actions. Further research also showed how collective actions can undermine conventions and create new styles and new categories and, for instance, in cultural industries, arise from oppositional identities fuelled by collective actions, and when the boundaries dissolve new hybrid identities are created (Rao et al. 2003; Carrol and Swaminathan 2000).

This perspective in understanding the role of collective actions and its impact on organisations is certainly amplified by the existence of social media and the impact of social activism on the Internet (Buechler 2000; Kozinets 2004; Kozinets et al. 2010; Hollenbeck and Zinkhan 2006). According to Castells, in recent years we have observed the rise of diverse "connected social movements", enabled by digital communication networks (Castells, 2009). In the context of protest movements, online social networks represent key communication tools that enable people

that are loosely connected to organise at an unprecedented scale. These movements come together with shared causes, intentions and political objectives, and usually entail profound institutional change. Social movements mobilise around "collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities" (Tarrow 1994, p. 9). Mass self-communication provides an "extraordinary medium for social movements to build their autonomy and confront the institutions of society in their own terms and around their own projects" (Castells 2007, p. 249). The new connected social movements are adopting a mass use of social media for mobilisation, while at the same time they seek contact and intervention in the conventional media to influence public opinion at societal level. In this way social movements are having a big impact on the possible evolution of social media platforms, evolving towards the new organisational model built around networked communication and networks of meanings or semantic networks (Castells 2009).

Social media is changing the way people initiate collective actions, as shown from the relevant amount of groups and campaigns started directly through social media that reached its climax during the Arab Spring where the role of Facebook and Twitter in helping mass mobilisations has been widely debated. Beyond the academic literature, social media have been identified as key to events as diverse as the rise of youth movements in Europe at the end of 2010 and the outbreak of revolution in the Arab world. For instance, corporate-owned social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Skype have been used during the recent Arab uprising, especially in Tunisia, Egypt, and later in Syria (Ghannam 2011; Rane et al. 2012). The Arab countries have also experienced the rise of a vibrant social media and citizen access to the Internet is expected to reach over 100 million users by 2015. Social media have been used by youth and citizen movements to prompt social change in Europe, in the US, and more recently in Brazil, with examples such as the Occupy Wall Street, the Spanish *Indignados*, and the Brazilian protests again public transport increases (Castells 2012). Della Porta and Diani (2006) have been researching connected social movements and global online mobilisations, pointing out the differences in the way they communicate, grow and mobilise huge numbers of people compared with previous social movement protests.

Activists are able to organise "political flash mobs", challenging repressive regimes and building new digital tools that bypass authoritarian control. Schmidt and Cohen (2010) argue that this is the effect of the "interconnected estate" that will have a huge impact on Governments, companies, and non-profit sectors. Governments and big organisations will have to react in a

new way when “large numbers of their citizens, armed with virtually nothing but cell phones, take part in mini-rebellions that challenge their authority” (Schmidt and Cohen 2010:1). According to these authors, there is only one way to go about this new “age of shared power”, which is to ask Governments to recognise that their citizens' use of technology is promoting change and they should work together to understand and shape this transformation. Following this rationale, debates about the role of the Internet and social media in political mobilisation became increasingly important during Barak Obama’s presidential election campaign in 2008 and the so called “Twitter revolution” in Iran during the 2009 elections (Solow-Niederman 2010). Many civil society organisations are using social media for their awareness campaigns, especially in the case of environmental organisations, human rights and political activists that are using social media to create Internet-scale participation and trust to foster an increasing bottom-up social change. The Project for Excellence in Journalism (2009) reports “Twitter became a symbol of a new kind of activism that can occur online” (2009, p. 9). Activists thus use the Internet for a variety of activities to mobilise and coordinate collective action, creative awareness around causes, foster democratic debate, decision-making, and lobbying.

Social media is playing a key role in facilitating the growth of new ‘hybrid’ forms of organisations that involve civil society actors and blend traditional protest tactics with new social media enabled mobilisation tactics. It is clear that new research should look into the role of social movement organisations and their relations with social media and the way they are strategically adopting social media to help acquire social approval assets, while at the same time challenging taken for granted norms and institutions. Relevant research questions that could be explored to address the gaps in this literature and set a future research agenda are summarised in Table 2.

CONCLUSION

This paper contains the early endeavours towards the classification of empirical and theoretical work on the topic of social media, focusing on the different fields of inquiry wherein social media is becoming an important subject of investigation, thus contributing to emergent theoretical frameworks in the field of organisation theory. Social media are increasingly relevant for organisations. Today through the use of social media platforms, consumers are actively engaging in creating online communities based on affiliations and common interests and producing and disseminating virtual products. Social media help to strengthen relationships among individuals, shape opinions, facilitate collective social and political actions. However, currently there is no comprehensive management and organisation theory on the impact of social media on organisations.

As noted, different disciplines have focused their attention on specific aspects of social media, developing autonomous definitions and research perspectives. Social scientists and Media theorists have pinpointed the role of social media in the social, political and cultural context, framing social media as "mass self-communication" (Castells 2009) and investigating the ability of social media to mobilise collective actions, to build virtual communities and "commons-based peer production" (Benkler 2006). Computer science scholars have emphasised the underlying technologies and standards-making aspects of the social Web and the so called Semantic Web, emphasising its links with open innovation and industry dynamics; market researchers have privileged the study of the influence of social media on consumer behaviour and their role in enhancing firms' performance; and finally innovation management scholars have started investigating the overall industry and ecosystem dynamics of innovation intermediaries as multi-sided platforms to capture value created outside the boundaries of the firm and to improve firms' performance.

Collectively, the analysis of these streams of research seem to suggest that in order to fully understand the phenomenon and its impact on organisations, it is necessary to uncover it from different perspectives. Drawing on this review, I tried to develop a consolidated discussion of the phenomenon of social media, integrating the main contributions of the different research fields and different disciplines in order to outline future research areas for organisation and management scholars. As a consequence, this review clearly shows the complexity of the topic and the many concepts, definitions, considerations and linkages at stake. Furthermore, it also stresses the importance of adopting a conceptualisation of social media acknowledging the

different aspects of this phenomenon as well as the relationships among them. Such integrated analysis could serve as a starting point in evaluating the impact that social media have on Organisation Theory and Management Studies, and investigating how the knowledge of this phenomenon will affect future research from a theoretical and empirical perspective. It is only through an integrative framework that the opportunities and challenges that social media bring to organisations can be analysed and captured. To clearly outline the ways in which an integrated approach would yield better understanding of social media for organisations, I identified at the end of each future research themes researcher questions that could be better answered thanks to the integrated framework. Two of those questions will be answered though my case studies in the following papers. By linking the cultural, sociological, information, and marketing perspectives, organisations can leverage social media and tap into the collective intelligence of users and external networked audiences. In this way, organisations can increase their ability to manage the relationship with a complex network of stakeholders, affecting organisational strategies and actions.

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Table 1. Comparing Social Media Perspectives Within Different Streams of Research

Research Stream	Definition of Social Media	Focus of Investigation	What do we Know?	What are the gaps?
New Media and Communication	"Mass-self communication" (Castells 2009); "virtual communities" (Rheingold 1993); "Smart Mobs" (Rheingold 2002); "Social Networking Sites" (Boyd et al.); "common-based peer production" (Benkler2006) "The long tale" (Anderson 2004);	How do people organise collective actions and mobilise resources? Meanings networks, social identity formation, new connected social movements Audience shift to "networked publics"	Social media allow the rise o new ways of coordinating actions that foster social change, challenging communication power	Integration of social media theory with organisation theory, institutions, and power. We know little about long-term negative implications of social media on social interactions, privacy, and identity formation
Computer Science and Information Systems Literature	"Web 2.0" "Collective Intelligence platforms" "Semantic Web" and "Linked Data"	Folksonomy, categorisations, ontologies, formats and protocols, collaborative systems, group decision-making. New research methods for tackling complex organisational problems though big data analysis	Computer-mediated "collective intelligence" is more effective in mobilising cognitive capabilities, producing results far beyond individual capabilities	How Big Data techniques and algorithms affect organisational decision-making and business model innovation How online reputation systems increase firms capabilities and performance

Marketing Research and Consumer Culture Theory	"Word of mouth marketing" "Viral marketing" " Social Customers Relationship Management -SCRM"	Consumers' responses and behaviours; "virtual consumers communities"; symbolic value; SCRM	The consumers are at the centre of the valorisation process. Value co-creation and WOM Marketing increase firms' profitability	New forms of exploitation of *prosumers* . Lack of privacy can lead to decreasing consumers trust online and less information sharing How organisations use social media in strategy formation A comprehensive account on the way social media enable new forms of digital marketing research
Innovation Management Studies	"virtual communities of practice" "open innovation intermediaries" "multi-sided platforms"	Mobilising collective resource, manage external communities, capturing value, firm's strategic adoption of new technologies	Social media as open innovation intermediaries to capture value externally produced	Business model innovation enabled by social media (e.g. new innovation intermediaries, Big Data businesses, new businesses that turn non commercial intangible resources into commercial assets) The relation between Social Media Strategy and Corporate Communication (e.g. acquisition of social approval assets) Relationship between Social Media and Institutions: Institutional Change and Challenges to Organisational Legitimacy

Fig1: Towards an Integrative Future Research Agenda

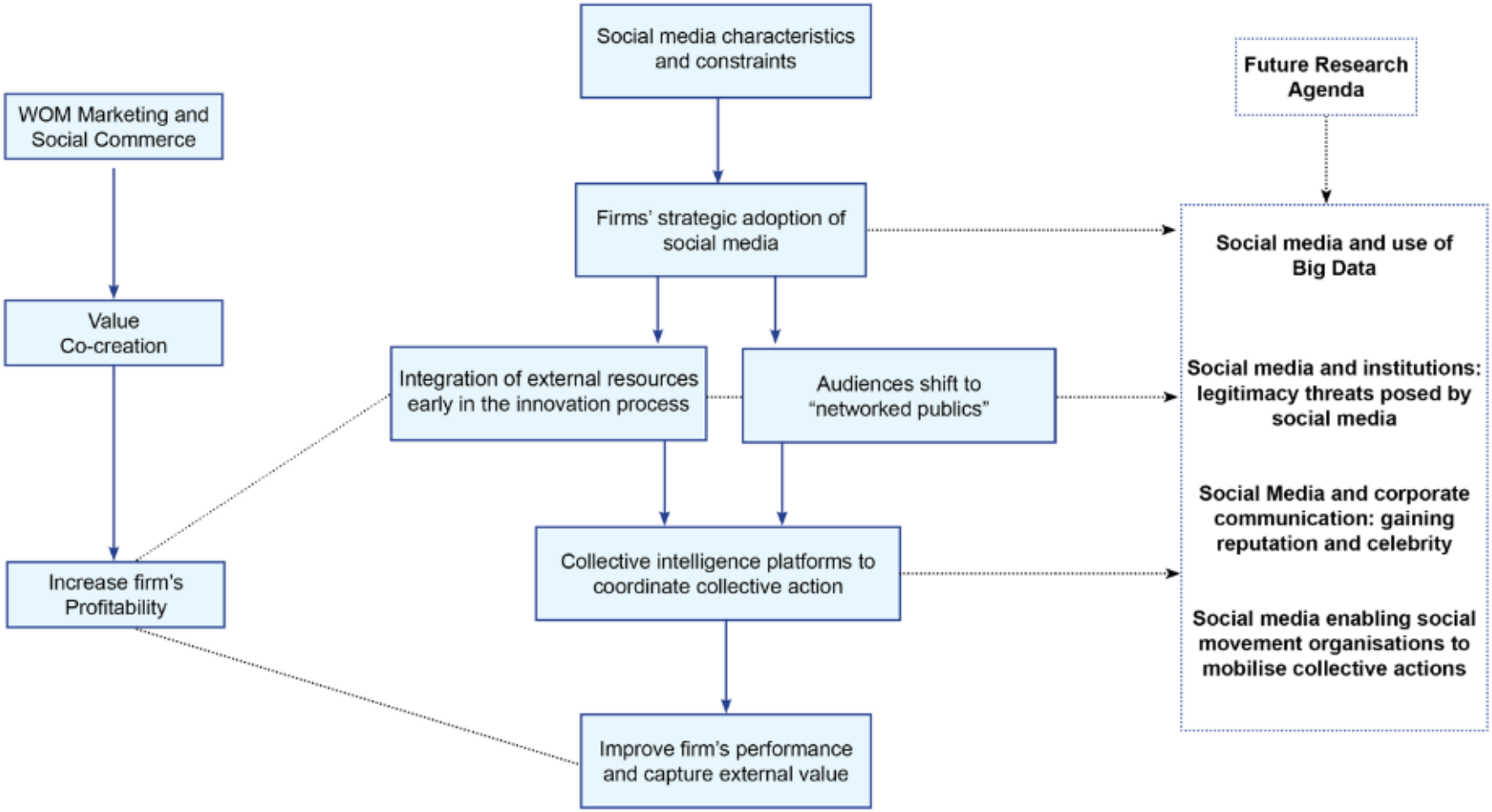

Table 2: Issues for future research on social media and organisations

Area of Research	**Research topic**	**Core research questions**
Social Media and New Business Models	*The use of Big Data in organisations to collect and analyse information*	*How will organisations manage Big data? What is the impact on Society? How do people cope with information overload and attention scarcity? How do data-intensive environments affect the ways organisations deal with information flows and focus their operations and strategies?*
	The impact on both government and organisations on strategic, real-time evidence-based decisions.	*What would a policy Framework on Big Data entail? What are the Big Data benefits for Enterprises and Consumers? How will Big Data affect decision-making and service delivery? How is Big Data transforming business model innovation?*
	Machine learning techniques applied in commercial environments to design predictive systems	*How to preserve privacy values in a Big Data environment? How to ensure fairness and avoid discrimination? How do service personalisation and predictive modelling affect product and service innovation?*
	Methodological frameworks, theoretical assumptions, regulation and biases that big data implementations can reveal	*What kind of statements and attributes about organisations are possible to discover and measure using a Big Data approach that combines machine-learning analysis with social network analysis? What are the norms and behaviours that should be considered for behaving ethically in a data-driven society?*
Social Media Strategy and Corporate Communication	*The role of organisational reputation and celebrity as intangible social approval assets that have a strategic value for the organization*	*What is the role of social media in generating organisational symbolic capital? What is the relation to online reputation and celebrity in the process of strategy formation? How do firms manage the interactions between these different forms of capital in strategy development? How is social media changing the notion of value in the information economy? What are the new metrics? How does online sentiment affects financial evaluation of firms?*
	The relationship between online reputation and online celebrity and social media.	*What is the use of social media in strategy, reputation and celebrity management? What are the processes and tactics through which firms strategically adopt social media to attain online reputation and online celebrity?*
	How companies are using social media to interact with external stakeholders, with the aim of managing communities and influence stakeholder perceptions.	*How companies develop and deploy cultural and symbolic resources, by integrating external communities?*

Social Media and Institutions	*Social Media enabling Organisational Change* *Challenges to Organisational Legitimacy Posed by Social Media* *The way Social Media affects legitimacy acquisition processes across different types of organisations and contexts.*	How different environmental contexts affect the way organisations adopt and manage social media to gain organisational change? *How Organisations challenges the legitimacy of other organizations though social media?* *What are social media management challenges? What are the new tactics needed to strategically manage social media internally and in relation to external audiences?* *How organisations are adopting social media to acquire social approval assets (e.g. legitimacy), while challenging taken for granted norms and institutions? What conditions influence novel tactics and organisations' repertoires across different organisational settings and times*?
Social Media and Social Movements	*The rise of "connected social movements" enabled by digital communication networks* *The role of social media in mobilising collective actions*	*What are the new mobilisation tactics and strategies enabled by social media? How social movements adopt social media to challenge the legitimacy of other organisations? How social media enables collective actions and transform the relation between organisations and their stakeholders?*

THE CONSTRUCTION OF ONLINE CELEBRITY:

EXPLORING FIRM CELEBRITY BUILDING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

ABSTRACT

So far research on organisational celebrity has mostly focused on three main areas of inquiry: (1) individual celebrities within organisations (e.g. celebrity CEOs); (2) celebrity as an intangible asset at firm level, distinguished from other intangibles such as status, reputation and legitimacy; and (3) the role of mass media as *reputation broker*, and their importance in influencing firm-stakeholder relationships and perceptions, thus affecting celebrity building. Although all streams of research present some insights into how the media act as key agents in the process of celebrity building, there seems to be a lack of investigation into the process of celebrity building in media-intensive environments in the face of the social media revolution. This paper, by building on an in-depth case study of a technology firm and its partnership with a "rebel" media agency, finds that firms adopt social media to build celebrity in a complex process of dialogic networked communication between the firms and stakeholder groups - including *networked publics,* lead cultures, online influencers, and other institutional intermediaries. Firms can generate cultural capital through three main phases within a firm's strategic process, here named *integrative use of external digital cultures,* and *co-construction of web-mediated cultural value,* ultimately resulting in the *attainment* of *online celebrity*. I extend celebrity theory by suggesting the concept of online celebrity that incorporates key insights from celebrity theory, cultural innovation and social media strategy. This process points to the need for firms to adopt a cultural perspective on strategy, emphasising the importance of social media to shape and influence the construction of intangible assets that represent a competitive advantage for firms. The findings also demonstrate how the adoption of social media can lead to the acquisition of organisational cultural capital in the process of strategy formation.

INTRODUCTION

Management and organisation scholars have investigated theoretically and empirically the way firms capture intangible assets, namely status, reputation, legitimacy, and celebrity, since they underlie economic performance differences among organisations and influence stakeholders' willingness to exchange resources and make investment decisions (Dowling 1986; 2001 Hall 1993; Rao 1994; Fombrun and Shanley 1990; Suchman 1995; Rindova and Fombrun 1999; Lounsbury and Glynn 2001). Researchers have been focusing on a subclass of intangibles that have been defined as "*social approval assets*" because they derive their value from favourable collective perceptions by creating stakeholder attention and excitement (Pfarrer et al. 2010; Rindova et al. 2006). Extant research on firm celebrity has focused on differentiating celebrity from other constructs, namely reputation, status, and legitimacy (Rindova et al. 2006), and thus only partially investigating how firms' celebrity building depends upon the inter-relation between these different assets (Bitektine 2011). In this paper I will focus on celebrity, underlining the importance of understanding celebrity as an independent construct at organisational level.

Firm celebrity has critical implications for management since celebrity is an intangible asset, enabling firms to gain a "high level of public attention and positive emotional responses attained by a firm" (Rindova et al. 2006, p. 51), thus conferring a firm's competitive advantage. So far research on celebrity has evolved at two different levels of analysis: the individual and the firm. At the individual level, the literature has been focusing on CEOs as a kind of celebrity capital in the quest for shareholder value (Hayward and Rindova 2004; Hayward et al. 2004; Wade at al. 2006; Littler 2007; Benezra and Gilbert 2002). Nevertheless, having a celebrity CEO is not a sufficient condition to generate celebrity at the firm level (Rindova et al. 2006). As described by Rindova et al. (2006) firms are instrumental in the process of celebrity construction by "taking nonconforming actions and proactively seeking to manage impressions about themselves" (2006, p. 50). In particular, scholars have investigated the role of the media and information exchange in contributing to the shaping process of social construction of celebrity, by emphasising the norm-breaking nature of celebrity firms (Rindova 1997; Deephouse 2000; Pollock and Rindova 2003; Rindova et al. 2006; Rindova et al. 2007; Kjaergaard et al. 2011; Pfarrer et al. 2010).

For instance, the media has a key role in the fabrication of narratives that ground organisational successes on the ability of celebrity CEOs (Hayward et al. 2004). Rindova et al. (2006) moved from individual celebrity CEOs to look at the way celebrity is constructed at the organisational level, where the media has a central role in shaping stakeholders' perceptions of firms by

constructing *celebrity firms* that outperform the others. These models are grounded in sociological theories of communications that investigated the role of mass media in society (McQuail 1985, 2005; Peterson 1976, 1979) and the way they shape public perception by actively constructing narratives on firms. However, the analysis of mass media and their impact in influencing stakeholders' perceptions of firms should be refined and updated in light of the rise of social media.

The implications of social media on organisations and the active role of stakeholder groups, such as "networked publics" and "lead cultures", in catalysing novel practices remains relatively unexamined and under-theorised in the management and organisation literature. The results of previous research on organisational celebrity need to be extended to take into account the unique new properties of social media, such as the new quality of the emerging networked publics as opposed to audiences, social media scalability and the viral effect based on bi-directional and dialogic communication, and the volatility of online identities. Rather than following the unidirectional transmission of meaning from a central source to each member of an audience, as exemplified by the traditional mass media model (McQuail 2005), social media enable members to know and share what other audience members know, like, and recommend. As was stated by Tarde some time ago, in an increasingly mediatised economy, the value of goods are underpinned by relations of inter-subjective understanding among members of the public since they are defined by public perceptions of "their truth, beauty and utility" (Tarde 1901). Through engaging with stakeholders and consumers in social media networks, firms are able to attract and aggregate inter-subjective judgments of their value or utility in terms of *web-mediated forms of reputation and celebrity* (Arvidsson 2013).

Novel organisational practices centred on trust and cooperation are being mediated by social media platforms. The collective sentiments and opinions of social media users supply *the measure of trust* that allows user-generated communication and social interaction to happen in social media space (Rheingold 2003). The ability of firms to attract affective investments and consumers' engagement has a big impact in the process of value appropriation. Consequently, there is a strong tendency toward a growing corporate use of these systems as ways to manage firms' relationships with external key actors (Rindova et al. 2006).

In this paper I investigate *the processes and tactics through which firms strategically adopt social media to attain online celebrity.* In order to do so, I merge the in-depth case study method

(Pettigrew 1990; Yin 1994) and grounded theory research (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1998) to analyse the way Intel adopted social media to build online celebrity, and the related impact on the organisations' strategy in relation to external stakeholders. Building on research in the sociology of culture and consumer behaviour (Douglas and Isherwood 1978; Bourdieu 1984; McCracken 1986), social media theory (Castells 2009; Arvidsson and Peitersen 2013), and on management research (Ravasi and Rindova 2004, 2007), this paper finds that firms, symbol experts, and networked publics jointly construct cultural value through a complex and dynamic computer-mediated process of social interaction, with the aim of increasing the positive relationship with networked publics.

My two year investigation of this in-depth case study generated a grounded model in which the process of building online celebrity for firms results from three interconnected phases: (1) identifying external "cool" cultures and developing the capabilities to manage the relationship with a set of cultures to earn credibility; (2) co-constructing symbolic and cultural value through a strategic use of social media, including the capacity to keep an ongoing relationship with networked publics; and (3) by constructing cultural value through social media, firms build computer-mediated relevance, social ratings and forms of social judgments that in turn enables the development of online celebrity, harnessing the "general sentiment" (Arvidsson 2011) of publics. The theoretical model I propose extends extant theorising about organisational celebrity by highlighting how social media adoption affects the process by which firms identify and engage external communities and networked publics and shape the cultural context in which they are embedded, resulting in positive building of online celebrity.

The Creators Project elicited significantly high level of attention and emotional engagement, both during offline events and online interactions. In this process, intangible resources are captured and appropriated by Intel and Vice through their ability to interact with users, stakeholders, and consumers through the Creators project social media platform. According to Rindova et al. (2006), celebrity acquisition can transform the perception of a firm by its stakeholders by focusing on "how and why some firms attract greater levels of public attention…and recognise the emotional dimension of stakeholder responses to firms" (2006, p. 55). Both outcomes are clearly present in the Creators Project, although the way celebrity is attained greatly differs from previous models with the advent of social media. In particular, positive emotional responses are amplified and harnessed through social media, since online sentiment analysis detects public moods and emotions from social media. As a consequence, the

ability of both firms to attract affective investments, such as goodwill, community motivation, and consumers' engagement, will have an impact in redefining the process of online organisational celebrity (Arvidsson 2011).

These findings contribute to work at the intersection of different streams of literature to provide a deeper understanding of the strategic role of social media in processes of celebrity building at organisational level. By developing a theoretical model that links the construction of cultural value with the process of celebrity building, I identify social media as key drivers of these web-mediated processes. I extend different lines of inquiry, including celebrity building in organisations and the role of the media in the process (Peterson 1976; McQuail 1997; Deephouse 2000; Rindova et al. 2007; Castells 2009), and strategy research on the cultural and symbolic side of value creation (Ravasi and Rindova 2004, 2007; Crane and Bovone 2006; Thornton 1996; McCracken 2011; Rindova and Fombrun 1999; Lawrence and Phillips 2002).

This paper is organised as follows: Firstly, I discuss how firms identify and integrate external cultural resources, such as online communities of influencers and artists in the strategy process by capturing the value of those communities. This process enables firms to gain credibility though an ongoing engagement with networked publics and to exploit this relationship, becoming part of the cultural fabric of these communities and attaining cultural value. Secondly, I analyse how in social media networks the cultural value of firms is determined by their ability to shape a cultural system of signification that impacts public perception by negotiating meanings with institutional intermediaries. In the last section, I analyse the outcome of this process emerging from the empirical findings. I therefore seek to develop a theoretical model of online celebrity building and discuss the implications for organisations.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Celebrity Theory

Scholars have advanced different concepts to describe distinct types of favourable stakeholder perceptions (Pfarrer et al. 2010). For example, reputation refers to stakeholder perceptions about a firm's ability to deliver value along a series of strategic dimensions (e.g. product quality, management effectiveness, financial profitability (Fombrun and Shanley 1990); legitimacy reflects perceptions of desirability and appropriateness of firms' actions and structures relative to industry and societal norms (Suchman 1995); status is based on perceptions of a firm focused on quality and capability in a given industry, market or network (Podolny 1994); and finally, celebrity is based on gaining large-scale public attention and positive emotional responses by stakeholders' audiences (Rindova et al. 2006).

Different studies explored the socially constructed processes that influence collective judgment formation. Researchers investigated the role of "certification contests" (Rao 1994), activist groups and social movements (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2008), and the media (Deephouse 2000), in altering collective perceptions, evaluations, judgements and ranking of firms. Authors have pointed out that good reputation may help firms in building a unique social identity, creating trust among companies and their stakeholders, and ultimately improving a firm's performance. Investors and managers base their financial decisions, career choices, and product development strategies on the reputation of firms (Dowling 1986). Social and psychological aspects are key to determine individual investment behaviour (Shefrin 2001; Goldberg and Von Nitzsch 2001), showing the importance of affective cues in determining investors' behaviours (Damasio 1994; MacGregor et al. 2000).

Extant research on firm celebrity has focused on differentiating celebrity from these other constructs (Rindova et al. 2006), only partially investigating how firms' celebrity building depends upon the inter-relation between legitimacy, reputation, and status (Bitektine 2011). Research has focused on analysing strategies adopted by firms to achieve and maintain celebrity, which has been conceived as a different construct from other intangible assets in its theoretical underpinnings, socio-cognitive foundations, and processes of emergence (Rindova et al. 2006, p. 54). As stated by these authors, celebrity differs from other intangible assets "in (1) its underlying theoretical foundations, (2) the social basis of the asset, and (3) the mechanisms by which it is built" (Rindova et al. 2006, p. 54). Celebrity, as well as reputation, is socially

constructed and it is the outcome of a process of legitimation by social actors based on certification contests and institutional certifications (Rao 1994). However, celebrity, as opposed to legitimacy, is attained through a process of nonconformity to the *status quo*, stressing the role of the media in achieving celebrity-related success. The firm seeking celebrity is thus portrayed in the role of nonconforming, projecting to audiences an image that is disruptive, cool, and innovative in relation to other actors' behaviours in the same field or industry.

As explained by Rindova et al., if a firm wants to maintain its reputation, over time it needs to then shift from being a nonconformer that contests the field to becoming a conformer, and then move on to become an over-conformer (2006, pp. 63-65). Rindova et al. (2006) define firm celebrity as a relational construct, as a "property of an actor's relationship with an audience, rather than a characteristic of an actor himself" (2006, p. 51). According to Rindova et al. (2006), celebrity is conferred when a social actor attracts large-scale public attention and positive emotional responses from the public, "meeting an audience's needs for gossip, fantasy, identification, status, affiliation and attachment" (2006, p. 51). Large-scale public attention and a positive emotional response are both critical elements in influencing stakeholder choices, since it "provides celebrity firms with *access to critical resources* and strategic opportunities, therefore increasing firms' competitive advantage" (Rindova et al. 2006, p. 55). Rindova et al. (2006) explain the need for both elements to achieve a significant impact, since "without the attention of an audience of significant size, a firm's ability to generate positive emotional responses is likely to have limited economic consequences, and without positive emotional responses the level of attention a firm commands may be insufficient to influence stakeholder choices" (Rindova 2006, p. 51).

Research so far has shown in the ways in which firms gain celebrity, highlighting the role of the media or information exchange (Pollock and Rindova 2003; Rindova et al. 2006; Pfarrer et al. 2010), the role of CEOs that become a kind of celebrity capital in the quest for shareholder value (Hayward and Rindova 2004; Wade at al. 2006; Littler 2007), and the role of celebrity endorsement and stock market remuneration of reputation risk (Atkin and Block 1983; Agrawal and Kamakura 1995; Erdogan 1999; Knittel and Stango 2010). Previous research looking at reputation as socially constructed multidimensional construct (Rindova et al. 2005; Deephouse 2000; Pollock and Rindova 2003; McCombs and Shaw 1972; Greenwood et al. 2005) emphasises the importance of the institutional context in which firms are embedded and the role played by firms, constituents, and the media in constructing reputational context. It is clear that

management researchers have paid more attention to investigating other types of intangible assets, namely reputation, status and legitimacy; thus celebrity remains under-researched. How and why firms draw great public attention, attracting positive emotional responses from the public, could then explain how firms gain favourable perceptions and higher evaluations despite the lack of real evidence of a firm's superior quality or performance. The construct of celebrity at organisational level highlights the importance of emotional responses from constituencies that directly influence the perception of an organisation, going beyond more established and linear metrics based on a firm's performance history, and preparing the ground for a firm's positive evaluation.

The Role of the Media in Building Celebrity

According to Rindova et al. (2006), the growth of ICT is facilitating the spread of celebrity and its application to industry (2006, p. 56). The role of the media in spreading dramatic narratives about celebrity-seeking firms is emphasised since the media supply a platform for debate, to assess firms' evaluations and thus affecting company reputations (Deephouse 2000, p. 1097). Researchers have emphasised the importance of the institutional contexts in which organisations are embedded and the need to take into account the multiplicity of actors that interact in the construction of organisational reputation. Several researchers argue that the media appear as important players by making their opinion public and consequently attracting attention and interpretation, activating stakeholders' sensemaking processes and thus affecting a firm's reputation with its audiences (Fombrun 1996; Rindova and Fombrun 1999; Rindova et al. 2006). In particular, the media is a key institutional intermediary, since it has exclusive access to mass communication channels and a crucial capacity to spread information about organisations, acting as a catalyst of public attention. In this way the media have a relevant power in 'setting the agenda' and shaping the public debate around issues, imposing a specific hierarchy (Katz 1987; Ettema and Whitney 1994). This is a crucial process of allocation of collective attention that results in a process of audience-making that affects the formation of opinions and collective judgements (Katz 1987).

As a consequence, by diverting mass attention towards certain firms and on specific issues, the media shape publics' perceptions and the process of organisational celebrity building. Specifically, the mass media is depicted as a vehicle for organisations to shape their institutional environment, becoming a *reputation broker* by framing positive or negative interpretations and

statements about a firm. Deephouse showed that media reputation, defined as "the overall evaluation of a firm presented in the media" (Deephouse 2000, p. 1108) is a strategic asset leading to firms' competitive advantage. Media have an active role as agents, shaping information and influencing public knowledge, opinions, and audience's assessments of firms' activities. Silverstone (2005) employs the term *mediation* to describe a dialectical process in which the media, readers, viewers and audiences participate, expressing the way media and social life are mutually shaped by creating a symbolic space in which meanings are communicated and negotiated. Thus, the symbolic function of media is related to the ability of people "to generate meanings related to social identity and status", which is what Baudrillard (1988) calls "identity value", in which patterns of consumptions and use are 'texts' or 'codes' with which individuals create their social identity.

Some of the most relevant mass communication theories, such as *agenda setting*, *framing,* and *priming,* emphasise that media coverage of specific issues or personas prompt their relevance in the public agenda, thus resulting in high media influence on the social perception of reality (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). Goffman defines frames as "schemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label everyday life experiences" (1974, p. 21). Agenda theory and framing thus see the role of media as key in shifting people's perceptions and attitudes. This implies that mass media coverage of certain issues, people or organisations is strongly correlated with the relevance and attention given by publics (McCombs and Shaw 1992; Deephouse 2000; McCombs 2004; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). As previously stated by McQuail (1985), publics are more likely to perceive as relevant the issues that receive the greatest media attention.

The media thus construct dramatic narratives and portrait the firm as leading players fostering change, thus attracting stakeholder interest and constructing their celebrity (Rindova et al. 2006). This statement clearly provides connection to celebrity because media coverage shape and influence public opinion and judgements. Impression management perspective showed that media are indicators of social evaluation since the media "is a counteracting institution that reduces stakeholders' uncertainty about a firm's characteristics, filling reputation's signalling role" (Deephouse 2000, p. 1098). This perspective emphasises that building celebrity is a complex social process that develops over time, shows a key role of mass media, and involves the firm and its stakeholders (Fombrun and Shanley 1990; Deephouse 2000). Gamson wrote about the celebrity industry which is "made up of highly developed and institutionally linked

professions and sub-industries" (1994, p. 64). As stated by Rindova et al. (2006), the media have a crucial role in controlling the technology and disseminating information to a mass audience, thus strongly influencing the process of celebrity creation and making it important for researchers to analyse the way this process works (Deephouse 2000; Pollock and Rindova 2003).

The rise of mass communication technologies is a key factor in explaining the diffusion of celebrity (Rindova et al. 2006). However, research on how media construct firms' celebrity has been describing media as a monolithic entity, and has been mainly focused on traditional broadcast media (one too many) and on the role of journalists as authoritative sources that provide accounts of change processes. Within the context of traditional broadcast media, journalists are actors (sometimes even celebrities in their own right) with the power of manipulating information in a "dramatised reality" in order to create "personas" with their narratives that spark positive emotional responses in stakeholder audiences, thereby creating celebrity firms (Rindova et al. 2006; Pollock and Rindova 2003). The current rise of social media dramatically alters this process, since it has a crucial role in engaging mass audiences, and in the process of disseminating contents and shaping the public's impressions of firms. While traditional media used to have a unilateral control on the technology and the contents of communication and the way information was delivered to large audiences, today social media make this process bidirectional and interactive.

Phenomena such as user-generated contents, blogs, and social networks add a high degree of complexity to the process of construction of reputation and celebrity. The specific means through which the media broadcast information thereby influencing stakeholders' impressions of firms and the way that stakeholders diffuse information in the form of opinions, updates, likes, and recommendations, has dramatically changed with the advent of social media. Social media offers huge potential for what has been defined "*mass self-communication*" (Castells 2009), i.e. the mass - including the "massive" amount of knowledge produced and the content production by the non-expert "masses" - production of knowledge that utilises the capabilities of large numbers of user collectives for the solution and prediction of challenges or problems. Global and ad hoc collaborations by "the crowd" on commercial, scientific, or social challenges provide better solutions than individual researchers or firms would otherwise provide. Further, today the "blogosphere" of over one hundred million blogs created by users, micro-blogging that focuses on real-time information updates, and other social web apps and sites, has become a crucial source of public opinion, generating big data sets. While traditional broadcast media control both

the mass communication channels and infrastructures and the production and distribution of the contents, with the rise of social media the contents of the conversation are increasingly user-generated and their meaning negotiated amongst a network of external stakeholders. In order to understand how social media construct firms' online celebrity, this research provides a novel grounded framework that clarifies how social media enable audiences in the form of *networked publics* to collectively generate information and contents and how this information virally spreads, and is manipulated, shaped, and aggregated by organisations to gather mass scale public attention and generate positive emotional responses to firms from stakeholder audiences (Rindova et al. 2006).

The concept of networked publics (Ito et al. (Eds) 2008; Varnelis 2012; Boyd 2008), is able to capture the new social media context, assuming that using the term audience to refer to Internet and social media users is very limiting, since the mass scale diffusion of digital devices and connectivity, together with the users' ability to publish media, is blurring the line between traditional mass media and social media. This is why Ito et al. (Eds) (2008) propose a new conceptualisation of audiences that moves beyond passive consumption to indicate "the active participation of a distributed social network in producing and circulating culture and knowledge in the foreground" (Ito et al. (Eds) 2008, p. 10). This perspective is useful to understand how consumers are becoming increasingly involved in the production and advertisement of products, whether it is about personalising their clothes or creating and sharing contents on social media. Platforms like Facebook and Google derive substantial revenues from the networking, socialising and information browsing that actor perform in the public domain of the Internet. Rather than following the unidirectional transmission of meaning from a central source to each member of an audience, as exemplified by the traditional mass media model, social media enable members to know and share what other audience members know, like, and recommend. Comments, opinions and conversations are a form of social currency. However, while traditional media used to have a unilateral control on the technology and the contents of communication and the way information was delivered to large audiences (Rindova et al. 2006), today social media make this process more pervasive, bidirectional, and interactive.

RESEARCH GAP IN THE LITERATURE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The specific means through which media broadcast information influencing the public's impressions has dramatically changed with the advent of "mass self-communication" (Castells 2009). Phenomena such as user-generated contents, blogs, and social media add a high degree of complexity to the process by which organisations establish relationships with their stakeholders. Firms' social media adoption and new communication modes result in the creation of firms' reputation and celebrity in a way previously unexplored in the literature. As a result, further research is needed to investigate the role of social media in shaping public perception of firms, leading to the construction of firms' celebrity. In the above literature review I have identified the main theoretical gap that needs further investigation.

According to Rindova et al. (2006), the growth of ICT is facilitating the diffusion of celebrity to a variety of industries (2006, p. 56). With the advent of social media, the web has been rebuilt around people, and firms started to leave behind the idea of reaching a minority of "influential" people in society in order to capture the attention of the masses. Instead, firms are focusing their social media activity on lead cultures, market niches, and small connected groups of friends. People are increasingly producing and retrieving information directly from each other, rather than from businesses. Furthermore, people are highly connected in networks, and they tend to publish online a large amount of information on almost every aspect of their lives. This information and mass scale interaction can be mapped and measured and in turn influence people's behaviours (Adams 2012). Through social media it is easier for firms to diversify the sources of value creation by focusing on external cultural resource integration and cultural innovation (Ravasi et al. 2012) that make technological claims more sticky and persuasive. Because technology firms are historically so focused on developing new efficient technologies, they risk paying less attention to the cultural value that the overall firms' identity can convey.

Social media radically transforms the way companies attract affective investments and "general sentiment" (Arvidsson 2013) from consumers and stakeholders, thereby influencing the mechanisms by which public judgments are formed and affecting a firm's reputation with its audiences and the way celebrity is produced. While reputation mechanisms in online networks have been widely investigated at the level of the individual (Resnick et al. 2000; Dellarocas 2003; Dellarocas 2006), the role of social media in the construction of celebrity at the firm level, and the way firms are managing these new interactions with networked publics, remains under-

theorised. Organisational and strategy scholars should expand on the ways in which social media affects organisations and the perception of its stakeholders.

The ability of firms to gain celebrity is based on their ability to engage with consumers and key institutional intermediaries, thus exploiting the social reputation economy boosted with novel social media tools and tactics. Firm's celebrity gained through social media engagement tactics is then turned into firms' evaluation through the adoption of new social media metrics and increasingly authoritative value conventions. I will combine traditional media and management theories that show the importance of media as producers and sellers of cultural contents and symbolic products (Peterson 1979; Hirsch 1972; McQuail 2005; Lawrence and Phillips, 2002), with new media analysis shifting from source-dominated (the authority of journalists for instance) to active-audience perspective.

A neglect of social media and the active role of publics in the process of organisational celebrity building have tended to obscure the dynamics of how social media impact organisations. This research will therefore contribute to the investigation into the way in which firms gain intangible assets, namely firms' celebrity through social media thus extending the extent literature. To address the above mentioned gap in the literature, this research seeks to answer the following research question, which I will explore further in the course of my field-study:

What are the processes and tactics through which firms strategically adopt social media to attain online celebrity?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Empirical Settings

I investigated the collaboration between the global computer microchip manufacturer firm *Intel* and the new media and creative agency *VICE*, resulting in The Creators Project, an ongoing multi-billion dollar project entirely funded by Intel. The partnership started in May 2010 after informal discussions with VICE Media in 2009, a social media platform to celebrate creativity, culture and technology across countries, focused on promoting the relationship between technology and the arts. The project was launched in May 2010 and has travelled to many countries, showcasing more than 150 international artists and gathering millions of people. The project built a large online community of users, driven by emerging talents and artists and managed by a professional staff co-curating contents with users, commissioning digital innovative projects, and daily features from the cutting edge digital arts scene. A global platform of artists around the world collaborates to produce their work and showcase it during an interactive exhibition set up in the largest global cities: New York, London, São Paolo, Seoul and Beijing. The interactive social media-enabled portal constitutes the core of the project, because it allows participation from the artists, hackers, and users themselves who are updating the website on a continuous basis. In 2012 the project added *The Studio*, a new program to foster creative production and commission work. Half a million people attended the Creators Project events, such as the event in Beijing at the end of 2010. Since 2010, the project has achieved more than 240 million video views and it was able to draw over 40 million unique visitors globally *(creatorsproject.com)*. The Creators Project has a global scope, with the main aim of consolidating VICE and Intel presence in the Asian technology market, and in particular South Korea because it is very advanced in technology diffusion, and China and Brazil because they are emerging countries that are investing resources in mobile connectivity and digital adoption, and there is an explosion of a digital culture amongst youth groups. Intel's partnership with VICE can be defined as Intel's first global effort to connect with a young and hip audience, showcasing art and creativity made possible by technology.

To investigate the dynamics of online reputation building through this project, I researched the background of the project; where the idea came from and how the project has been conceived, according to the diverse narratives of the project's participants. Intel, the world leading

semiconductor manufacturer, with revenues of around $53 billion and more than 90 thousand employees worldwide (Intel 2012), decided to partner with the media agency VICE to develop a platform to foster work at the intersection of arts and digital technology, and to explore the impact of creativity on technological innovation. This is an *extreme case* related to my research question because Intel is perceived as an engineering-driven technology company based on their core business which is the production of increasingly faster microprocessors and mainly focused on B2B relationships and with no particular engagement in the symbolic and artistic creation of value.

It is therefore counter-intuitive that a company like Intel decide to invest financial, human, and organisational resources on the strengthening of the cultural and artistic value of the technology they enable with their core technological products. However, the Creators Project shows that in their quest to build reputation in the online world, companies engage in specific cultural strategies investing in arts and creativity enabled by digital technology as a way to integrate external cultural resources, such as users and creators within the strategy of the company. By inspiring more creativity through the use of digital technologies, firms are able to create a positive association with the younger generation of creators and consumers. This in turn helps build online celebrity for companies engaging in the digital world.

Intel was founded by Gordon Moore, Robert Noyce and Andrew Grove in 1968, becoming a global leader in the semiconductor industry. The company carries out research and development for the technologies that are inside almost every computing device in the world. Intel's microprocessors were a key factor in the evolution of the personal computer, from a basic management device to a complex technological ecosystem that has transformed business and society. When many technology companies didn't manage to survive in the market, Intel was able to keep their competitive advantage by investing financial resources into new production and organisational processes, and into future generations of manufacturing technology, managing to expand their core business. They invested beyond the personal computer, launching components for diverse technological devices ranging from mobile phones to smart TVs, generating an innovation ecosystem, and building a platform and a market for developers and designers (Chesbrough 2006).

This adaptation strategy led Intel to transform its business and organisational structure, operating a shift "from a supply chain logic to a platform logic", and becoming one of the key platform

leaders in the new computing industry (Gawer and Phillips 2013, p.7). Intel is an outward looking company, trying to facilitate research sharing and the blending of internal and external resources through engaging in many partnerships and collaborations. The brand itself has been building a growing reputation amongst various demographics, simplifying things to help consumers understand and interact with technology in a different way. As one of the most relevant brands in computing, Intel is now looking for new strategies to engage youth and audiences in the fast changing digital communication environment. This is certainly an important underlying reason for Intel to decide to partner with the media agency VICE to develop the Creators Project, with the objective of mapping and supporting the future digital creators.

Research Design

Since the processes by which social media impact organisations and their interaction with consumers and stakeholders is a relatively unexplored phenomenon, I chose to rely on a qualitative, interpretative approach. When phenomena are poorly understood (Eisenhardt 1989) and represent an emergent area of study, inductive research is an appropriate method for identifying processes (Yin 1994). In order to get an understanding of how social media affect the process by which firms construct celebrity, case studies are good methods for examining "a contemporary phenomena in its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin 1981, p. 59). Furthermore, the selected case study offers the best opportunity to extend theory, because the phenomenon is investigated in its natural setting, through the direct observation of actual practices, and through the point of view of the selected informants (Meredith 1998; Voss et al. 2002).

The chosen case study involves a partnership between two private companies in the fields of product technology, and media (Intel and VICE) to investigate celebrity building through social media. This case study can be considered an 'extreme' case, where the phenomenon of interest is particularly intense and transparent, thus facilitating investigation**.** In choosing the case study, I carried out prior research to understand the social, strategic, institutional, and technological context that is crucial to study organisational dynamics (Pettigrew et al. 2001). As suggested by previous research in the field, I then created a longitudinal narrative analysis to expose the chronological sequences of the observed Intel social media-based project (Greenwood and Suddaby 2006; Ansari and Phillips 2010). I focused on methodologies, processes, tools, and tactics employed by firms to engage lead users and consumers through social media, and on the outcomes of this engagement in relation to gaining firms' celebrity.

This research project followed a grounded theory approach, which is a good method for focusing on contexts and processes as well as the action of key stakeholders (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Corbin and Strauss 1990; Strauss and Corbin 1998). This is methodological approach that is well established in organisational and institutional research (e.g. Gioia et al. 2000; Ravasi and Shultz 2006; Nag et al. 2007). Building on the existing body of work on firms' reputation and celebrity building, this research expands it by clarifying the way in which the rise of social media transformed this process, leading to the integration of social media tactics in existing firms' strategies. In particular, the in-depth case study highlights relationships and explanations that lead to theory generation. Therefore, following a grounded theory approach helped me to discover under-theorised dynamics, building on specific streams of research, more than to generate a theory, which is disconnected from previous literature (Suddaby 2006).

Data Collection

I gathered the data from three main sources: (1) archival material (industry documents, online materials, social media accounts, specialised industry journals); (2) interviews with organisation members, project participants, and networked audiences, and interviews and accounts of the most relevant social media conferences; (3) Participant observations and field notes. The observations and informal conversations (especially with social media leaders during conferences, Internet users and artists) sparked insights that I investigated more extensively in formal interviews. Subsequent observations and talks during meetings were very useful to substantiate the evidence collected and resulted in additional insights following an iterative process. The research method comprises mainly qualitative research elements tailored to investigate a process that involves the construction of celebrity through social media that aims to capture cultural and context-specific social dynamics. Data from multiple sources were gathered in order to allow for triangulation and to guarantee construct validity of the case study (Yin 1994). I triangulated the emergent evidences with different data sources including archival data, extant academic literature, social media conversations, industry documents, in-depth interviews with organisation members, artists, and audiences, field notes, and key field-related conferences.

1. *Archival sources.* I considered a wide variety of information sources and materials available and suggested by Intel's members on Intel campaigns and strategies adopting social media, including data accessed on the Internet, such as social media sites and specialist websites dedicated to technology companies. I conducted searches through the Internet and social media engines using specific keywords. These resources are particularly important in understanding

how firms' strategies changed longitudinally and to map the perception of key institutional intermediaries to these changes. I consulted and analysed several media sources such as social media content through Facebook timeline, and other social media accounts:

Project website (http://www.thecreatorsproject.com);
The project blog (http://www.thecreatorsproject.com/blog);
Social network sites, such as:
Twitter (http://twitter.com/creatorsproject) 5,331 followers
Facebook *(http://www.facebook.com/thecreatorsproject)* 21,976 friends;
Tumblr (http://thecreatorsproject.tumblr.com)
Instagram (http://statigr.am/creators_project)
Pinterest (http://www.pinterest.com/creatorsproject)

Here I have been monitoring users' interaction and participation and the conversations generated by the Creators Project. I then monitored the partnerships That Intel and VICE formed with other social media sites such as Vimeo: http://vimeo.com/user3552240. I also analysed project publications for the events (http://media.thecreatorsproject.com) and the contents of other media articles about the project.

2.a Industry interviews. In order to enhance the reliability of my research, and to further validate the categories and the relationships amongst the gathered data, I conducted 25 exploratory, semi-structured interviews with digital technology firms, social media firms, intermediaries, and audiences involved in the field of social media. Snowballing techniques were used to identify a multi-level sample of key stakeholders involved in the social media field and to capture divergent viewpoints, until the point of redundancy was reached. In the initial exploratory phase of the research (June - December 2010), a purposeful sample of key informants was interviewed, based on convenience and on their role in the organisations' adoption of social media as criterion for selection. The aim was to investigate social media and their impact on organisational practices, with consequent changes in organisational culture and processes. The interviews took place between 2010 and 2012 and they enabled me to compare initial responses when social media was becoming more popular within big firms after Facebook IPO, and better integrated in the firm's strategy.

First Round (June - December 2010). The first set of interviews on the chosen in-depth case study were conducted from June through till December 2010 in London with representatives of Intel and VICE. Interviews were conducted with informants that took an active part in the project and were used to gather data regarding the origin of the project, the motivation behind the project, the nature of the partnership, and the overall organisational strategy. 10 semi-structured

and unstructured interviews were carried out with members of VICE and Intel, including the Head of Marketing of Intel and the co-founder of VICE. Interviews lasted between one and two hours. Videotaped archival interviews of the Creators Project published on the project website were analysed. As summarised in Table 1, I conducted 48 semi-structured interviews in two rounds: 10 were interviews with senior project managers from VICE and Intel, 24 were debriefing interviews with artists and spectators during the unfolding of the projects, and 5 were retrospective interviews about some past projects. The remaining interviews were with users on social media, and with other Media and PR agencies.

Almost all the interviews were recorded and then transcribed. When not allowed to use the recorder, I took some notes of the conversations. Preliminary interviews focused on Intel's and VICE's history, culture, and evolution of the social media strategy in both companies, focusing on their partnership. Debriefing interviews aimed at investigating insights and clarifying doubts emerged during the observations. Finally, interviews related to past projects were focused on understanding the main activities previously performed by both companies, the most recurrent challenges they had to face, and the conditions that changed those processes with the rise of social media.

*Second Round (*June 2011- July 2012). A second, more explanatory phase followed during 2011 and 2012 in order to collect additional information, and at the same time monitor the evolution of the Creators Project and the fast growing social media field. The second data collection phase was useful for expanding the analysis, from both an empirical and a theoretical standpoint. The interviews were either predominantly unstructured or semi-structured, as a topic guide was used to touch on previously identified and potentially relevant issues, in case they did not emerge spontaneously during the conversation. The interviews were conducted in English and lasted around 60 minutes or less. They were recorded and transcribed, and confidentiality was ensured. I also sent preliminary research outcomes to key informants to validate key categories and findings.

2.b Interviews with audiences, social media users, and artists. These interviews were conducted to further investigate the way organisations were interacting with audiences, social media users, and artists (lead users). These interviews were important in testing the users' experience of the project and to find out what kind of value they were bringing to the process of organisational online celebrity building. For this reason, I interviewed the artists, *geeks*, and *hackers* involved

in the Creators Project, together with the audiences/spectators who experienced the events live. Using a semi-structured interview guide, I tried to record the events while they were unfolding and to integrate more informal conversations and comments from audiences. The people interviewed comprised 10 artists and *geeks* that were selected to participate in the Creators Project, 14 people that came at to the project's live events in London, Beijing, and Paris, and over 20 social media users in chats and forums during the two years of investigation of the project. When selecting the respondents, I included users from a diverse demographic and provenance, and I considered gender balance. I also recorded notes during the project events and informal conversations with the artists. These accounts gave me contextual details about how artists and audiences were interacting with the project activities on a day-to-day basis. Table 1 shows the informants I interviewed and their role within the organisation.

Table 1 about here

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3. Conferences. In the first exploratory phase, I participated in key social media conferences in Europe, in order to explore in-depth the social media field and its strategic use within organisations. These conferences were "field reconfiguring events" (Lampel et al. 2005) where I could access the opinion of key stakeholders in the social media field. I conducted open interviews with thought leaders and CEOs of leading social media start-ups, thus gaining new perspectives that helped me understand the fast evolving social media space. In particular, I conducted open interviews with over 25 social media companies and digital agencies, ranging from big companies such as YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, to small social media agencies/startups, such as iStrategyLabs, Airbnb, Foursquare, TugAgency, and Meetup. Many interviews were conducted in London at the Google Campus Tech Hub and during two editions of "Social Media Week", which is the biggest European and global social media event. I also conducted interviews at "the Next Web" event in Amsterdam, at TED conferences, and at two editions of PICNIC Festival, and the Financial Times social media conference. The rest were ad hoc interviews requested via email or Skype.

4. Participant observation and field notes. Along with the social media presence, VICE and Intel organised big live events, workshops and seminars of the Creators Project in some of the major global capitals: New York, London, São Paulo, Seoul and Beijing. The events consisted of

conferences and panels, art and fashion shows, music concerts, multimedia installations, and digital performances including *hackathons*. The launch event was held in June 2010 in New York. I attended the London launch of the project; three days of observation at Victoria House in Bloomsbury Square and the closing event of the year, taking place on September 17th in Beijing (one week observation and interview with artists, Intel organisers, VICE members and audiences). I took detailed field notes during the participant observations and I captured information related to the broader context of the project, especially related to the way the project interacted with the local creative industry context in the UK, and in China. I observed project meetings held during the events, press conferences, and PR briefings. In addition, I attended as an observer the *brainstorming day* that took place at the beginning of the Creators Project event in Beijing, together with the setting up of the project. Finally, I had many informal conversations with managers, artists, organisers, technicians, PR, and support staff, ranging from very brief exchanges to longer talks before and after meetings, during work breaks, and during lunches and dinners. Data sources and the use of these data to analyse the processes of investigation are outlined in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2 and Table 3 about here

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis includes three phases, analysing the raw data, organising the data into categories, moving up the level of conceptual abstraction to outline theoretical categories and then discovering the relationship among categories and reassembling the data in a new way. I moved between the empirical data and the emerging theoretical categories following a constant comparative method of qualitative analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Data coding and analysis were conducted at the same time, constantly informing each other (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990). Starting with the preliminary analysis of the empirical literature and the available archival data, I went back and forth between the relevant emerging concepts to the literature and the data, progressively refining the lists of codes and categories (Miles and Huberman 1984). Theoretical sampling was employed as main strategy for data coding and analysis. Moreover, triangulation among different sources, such as observations, interviews, and

archival data, helped me refine and strengthen the emerging interpretations until a process model emerged, which I considered robust across constructs and informants.

Phase 1. Build an event timeline and deep knowledge of the context. In the first phase of the research I utilised multiple sources (corporate documents, archival sources, specialised publications and interviews during industry events) to build an accurate account of the evolution of the social media field and the development of the organisational practices. This preliminary analysis was the basis for creating a timeline of events and strategies adopted, and fully framing the broader "historical, organizational and strategic context of the setting" (Ravasi and Phillips 2011, p. 10).

Phase 2. Development of a grounded framework derived from informants' accounts. In the second phase, I followed the method clearly outlined by Ravasi and Phillips (2011), which is a respected methodology in qualitative management research (e.g. Gioa et al. 2000; Corley and Gioia 2004; Nag et al. 2007). I employed grounded theory to generate an "interpretive framework" (Ravasi and Phillips 2011:8) that reflected the perceptions of my informants, describing organisational celebrity building processes through social media. I explored the field, analysing emerging concepts until *theoretical saturation* of the identified categories was reached (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The aim of this second phase was to develop *open codes* that were able to classify the information and observations gathered (interviews, specialised magazines, videos, web sites and web archives) in order to "uncover common themes and an initial set of categories to break up the data for further comparative analysis" (Ravasi and Phillips 2011, p. 110).

These first order descriptive codes were useful to further explore interpretative, causal, and theoretical relationships between categories. Then, from this first-order categories, more theoretical concepts started to emerge, collapsing similar or contrasting categories and continuing to refine the conceptual relationships. The second-order categories derived from this process were grounded theoretical constructs, able to explain the research question in a comprehensive manner. These categories were then compared with the archival material, the literature, and the accounts from key informants to ensure reliability and consistency.

Phase 3. Validation of the emerging theoretical framework. As the main theoretical categories became apparent, I moved on to axial coding (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 123), detecting new

correlations among the second-order categories. The third round of coding resulted in theoretical constructs with an higher levels of abstraction, showing the deeper relationships amongst the second order categories. These relationships were able to explain the phenomenon of interest - online celebrity building through social media and the tactics employed by firms to manage these process and maximise the impact of social media adoption. *The data structure* that emerged from the coding process here described, with the first-order codes, theoretical categories, and aggregate theoretical dimensions, is outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1 about here

FINDINGS

In Figure 2, I describe the process as it unfolded in the Creators Projects I observed during over two years. Building online celebrity through social media in the Creators Project rested on the ability of Intel to shift from a mainly technology-focused strategy to a cultural strategy led by social media, and to partner with an "avant-garde" nonconformist media agency in order to be able to influence and shape the web of meanings that constitute the general consumer culture, adopting novel communication modes. The framework presented here is grounded in the empirical data that I obtained from the case study analysis, and it emerges from the empirical findings. The three phase process is shown in Figure 2 and is explained below.

Figure 2 about here

In the following section I will incorporate a detailed narrative of my offline field research and a narrative constructed through online observations, with theoretical insights generated by qualitative in-depth interviews (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). The emerging model that unfolded from the empirical observations presented in Figure 2 addresses the theoretical gaps exposed in the literature, attempting to answer the study's research question: *How do firms strategically adopt and manage social media to attain online celebrity*?

In the attempt to answer this question, the study will investigate how organisations integrate external cultural resources and key online communities of influencers and consumers to create cultural value, which means investigating the firm's active relationship with networked publics. In order to outline an overview of the process of online celebrity building through social media, I describe the above mentioned three main phases of the process. However, as the initial phase of integrating external cultural resources and co-constructing cultural and symbolic values are known in the literature, I will focus my analysis on how social media has changed these processes and how they impact the outcome of generating firms' online celebrity. Selected quotes and extracts from field notes and interviews supporting my emerging theoretical framework are displayed in Table 4. The informants' perspective is represented mainly by words and quotes in brackets, extracted from interview transcripts and field notes, derived from the analyses.

Table 4 about here

Phase 1. Integrative Use of External Digital Cultures

In the first phase I empirically analyse how firms identify and integrate external communities and cultural resources in order to manage an ongoing relationship with a diverse set of cultures. I describe the way Intel and VICE identify external online communities of digital artists, hackers, online influencers and networked publics. I investigate the way they strategically manage these relationships though social media, attempting to shape and manipulate these interactions with a mix of conventional cultural strategies, and web-mediated relevance strategies that result in novel social media tactics that drive the process of celebrity acquisition.

As recorded during my observations, Intel and VICE were confronted with socially complex and ambiguous contexts in their attempt to build online celebrity. The processes that underlie the production of celebrity through social media, such as the attachment of meanings to brands or products and the diffusion of novel lifestyle practices to attract public attention and emotional responses, rely on the cultural interaction between various social actors. The first outcome of this research leads to the observation already confirmed in the extant management literature that engaging audiences through social media is a cultural production process that links together the firm with a diverse community of influencers (Ravasi and Rindova 2007). According to Ravasi and Rindova (2007) these communities are: (1) lead cultures and subcultures of consumption, (2)

symbol creation experts (advertisers, design and media agencies), (3) institutional intermediaries (in particular mainstream media, PR, and critics), and (4) consumers and brand communities. Social media transform this process and the types of actors involved, since communities of consumption and lead cultures become actively engaged in producing contents and framing collective opinions and judgments through social media. In the case of the Creators Project, I will mainly focus on the role of symbol experts and nonconformist creative agencies, in particular analysing the motivation behind the partnership between VICE and Intel, and looking at the way the partnership started and developed; as well as *lead digital cultures* such as hackers, geeks, online influencers, and digital artists. Ravasi and Rindova (2007) emphasise the role of lead cultures, which are communities that, similarly to Von Hippel's (2005) "lead users", develop a cultural rupture, a new language, or suggest a particular trend ahead of the rest of the market. These communities are important in their capacities to frame new contexts, changing practices, and remixing symbols (Ravasi and Rindova 2007). They develop specific interpretative capacity and sense of emotional engagement with the object of their consumption (brand, product features, logo, digital contents), and may become sources of new symbols themselves (Ravasi and Rindova 2008). Hirschman pointed out that lead users and consumers themselves can be sources of symbolic innovation, by actively contributing to the symbolic meaning associated to a product (Hirschman 1986, p. 329). She uses the examples of subcultures, such as "hippies" or "punks" in the clothing industry, and the way they socially redefine the meaning of clothing, apparels and accessories.

Lead cultures and consumers should thus be seen not as passive recipients but as "producers of product symbolism in conjunction with the marketing system" (Hirschman 1986, p. 330). In previous related research Crane and Bovone (2006) showed how consumers attribute meanings and values to fashion clothing to create a meaningful self-identity in relation to class, life styles, or subcultures (2006, p. 323). In the field of music and culture dance clubs, Thornton (1996) described the process by which cultural niches, club cultures as "taste cultures" are firstly diffused through independent do-it-yourself media and perceived by audiences as "subcultures", and often transformed into bigger cultural movements that attract large-scale public attention with the support of mass media coverage. I will then explain the way VICE and Intel negotiate meanings with institutional intermediaries to valorise *underground cool* and turn them into valuable assets through non-conformist actions. The ability of VICE to identify these online communities and engage them in an ongoing dialogue resulted in the construction of the firm's

credibility though social media, eventually shifting the public's perception within a networked environment.

VICE is today a fast growing media agency, and also produce what is considered one of the world's trendiest magazines for youth. VICE was founded by Shane Smith and Suroosh Alvi at the beginning of the nineties in Canada as a small independent magazine that was freely delivered to a youth audience with an advertisement revenue business model. VICE today sells 1.2 million copies in multiple languages to 31 countries, and the rise of Web 2.0 expanded its goals, focusing on giving artists and creators a platform, contributing to the development of a special connection between youth, "hipsters" and "provocative" crowd (e.g. a youth subculture) and certain brands. Because of its demographic, the magazine appeals to young clothes brands designed for youth urban lifestyle. In 1999 the website and online magazine attracted 2.1 million people. Then in 2003 they launched their music company and it has expanded to include advertising, films, books, and its own online television channel. Recently VICE also bought the "Old Blue Last" a *hipster* venue in Hoxton, London's creative and technology hub, which they turned into a music venue for emergent artists that attracts the East London's creative, and trendy crowd. Slowly VICE shifted from being an underground lifestyle magazine for the hipster youth audiences to a global media agency that can list among its clients CNN and MTV, and that engages in experimental long-term projects. In the technology field, beside the partnership with Intel on the Creators Project, VICE also partner with other technology firms such as Dell for their Motherboard project, a website on open source technology and hacker culture,

The online credibility generated by VICE through their relationship with the digital "avant-garde" was in turn earned by Intel who could associate their brand with this "hip" and "cool" culture. This credibility helped to attract large scale attention and general sentiment from stakeholder audiences though a process of negotiation of meanings collectively constructed mainly through social media, affecting the context that eventually constitutes the cultural fabric that informs a firm's action (Phillips and Hardy 2002). This strategy enables firms to capture the engagement with the cultural meaning systems through social media. Social media help turn this process into a valuable asset, namely online celebrity through a web-mediated social relevance process that I will describe in phases two and three.

Partnering with Nonconformist "Rebel" Creative Agencies

The partnership with VICE media agency is an unconventional alliance for Intel that serve the need of giving Intel "authenticity" and "credibility" with youth within the social media context they want to affect. The main aim of the Creators Project is to incorporate within Intel's culture a company like VICE with a widespread reputation as "underground", "avant-garde", and "hipster", a company focused on the youth markets and capable of connecting with the creative process and attracting creative talents..

The Creators Project is not a traditional sponsorship conceived as a conventional campaign based around the usual company-agency relationship, but a longer-term unconventional partnership programme, with a strong social media strategy at its core. VICE's identity as a nonconforming firm that deviates from existing norms is the reason why its current partnership with Intel is a challenging and ideal case for this study. As confirmed by Intel's Executive Creative Director:

"VICE knows how to reach cool kids online; however the Creators Project was counter intuitive, it was a pretty dramatic move for Intel. VICE was very confident but the project was very new to Intel" (Intel Executive Creative Director).

Rindova et al. (2006) associate celebrity with nonconformity and define "firms that become celebrities by underconforming to existing norms *rebels"* (Rindova et al. 2006, p. 63). VICE provides an example of a rebel firm that took its nonconformist behaviours to existing norm as its core identity. As argued by Intel's Executive Creative Director:

"VICE is the edgiest and most successful youth brand out there. We needed to do something shocking and surprising. We tried all the most conventional partnerships first but nothing worked since you can't relate to young people that way anymore (Intel Executive Creative Director).

As also previously shown in the literature by Rindova et al. (2006), the mutual association between celebrity and nonconformity drove Intel into the partnership with VICE in order to take advantage of VICE's nonconformist and rebel reputation that attracts lead cultures and youth, thus strengthening its overall competitive capabilities within the main target audience of the project. The partnership between Intel and VICE challenged the way Intel used to establish partnerships. This is not what Intel usually does and it represented a shift in the way the company creates partnerships. As explained by Intel's Head of Marketing Partnerships:

"It was a crazy concept and a big risk partnering with VICE. Initially when we spoke to our CEO, he said, "I don't know who VICE is but that sounds weird and I don't want to partner with them". It takes time to accept and embrace unconventional strategies. But alone we didn't know

how to relate to young people, we didn't have connections with artists. When we wanted to talk to artists we ended up talking to agencies and it was about money transactions and not about loyalty" (Intel Head of Marketing Partnerships).

The programme was formed out of the need to find new ways for Intel to engage youth communities and digital creators and to build relevance with them. From various market research previously commissioned by Intel it became clear that the company had to find a way to move out of a neutral space in which young consumers don't know how to relate to Intel, since they don't really know what their role is in developing the technology they use every day. The Creators Project is targeted to digital natives that are growing up with technology, that use technology in their daily activities, perceiving technological devices as organic parts of their lives. As Intel's Global Director of Marketing Partnerships remarked:

"*The meaning of technology has changed for youth and we want to educate them in what is possible with technology. Executives want to win over consumers, particularly arty 19 to 24 year olds who tend to be trend setters in their communities*" *(Intel Global Director of Marketing Partnerships).*

Engaging youth and artists represents a big opportunity for Intel because young people are fast learners and very creative with new technology so it is possible to educate them and expand the possibilities in the way young people use and think about digital technology. One of the stronger characteristics of VICE is their ability to reach out to a big youth market targeted to innovative culture and creativity. The Creative Director at VICE remarked upon the impact this project is having on VICE expansion in new youth markets from a cultural perspective, underlying the value that this brings to Intel who otherwise are not able to reach out to these audiences:

"*VICE is a very innovative company in its structure of having so many offices around the world, and distribution in many countries is also quite unique, because you've got a youth global market in 30 countries all of a sudden. I don't think that anyone has done it before from a cultural point of view" (VICE Creative Director).*

VICE is a talented company in terms of creating relationships with young consumers and lead cultures (such as subcultures, underground artists, open source artists and geeks), since they manage to create a strong process of identification between the cultural context and their image as an agency. Establishing connections to artists, cultural institutions, and intermediaries is essential for building and accumulating cultural capital and for engaging in cultural activities because they are the gatekeepers to the cultural world (see Verganti 2006, 2009). VICE always supports young creative work and young cultural innovators such as new photographers, new fashion designers, models and film makers. The Creators Project fits perfectly with the core

business of VICE because they are always searching for innovators working with digital technology in different ways.

One of the key reasons which explains the success of the Creators Project is clearly VICE's ability to reach out to subcultures, turning their unconventional visions and activities into real art work that could change stakeholders' perceptions of the companies that promoted the project, thus becoming valuable assets. In this way they were able to support artists in realising their creative visions through technology, while at the same time gaining reputation and attracting new talents. As explained by VICE's Creative Director, this is the reason why Intel decided to partner with VICE:

"*Intel came to VICE for our voice, our creative input, how we talk to youth. But they are a real partner, they help us to grow the project, they help us to tell the story globally, and they really embrace the emerging artists in a genuine way. They gave them technical tools such hardware they never got access to, and they are helping them in their careers, giving them new opportunities outside the Creators Project" (VICE Creative Director).*

VICE started as a self-funded edgy punk magazine in Montreal in the 1980s, reporting about street cultures and underground fashion, and has built their credibility as a webzine and media company which is able to reach out to audiences who are part of communities that represent the counterculture and nonconformist trends. Therefore, VICE's reputation is centred on their ability to identify counterculture cool and package it and sell it to large media companies. Intel tried to leverage VICE's networks by keeping authenticity and giving them autonomy in the creative process. VICE has been able to engage the digital generation in ways that were unimaginable for mainstream media channels.

"*We are building a kind of social currency, acquiring credibility as an agency, even among the cutting edge communities. The success of the project was depending on our ability to manage these communities. Our role is increasingly more focused on people, we can't buy audiences' attention anymore, so we need to get people to do it themselves...we need to do work that is more provocative, interesting and useful" (VICE Social Media Manager).*

VICE's early adoption of social media is central to the reasons why they can operate successfully in this fast evolving cultural environment. Intel and VICE built a platform where they could communicate with young people in lots of different ways, using social media with videos and authored contents that are viewed over 160 million times, mixed with a series of other activities to show people what is possible with digital technology and to enable creators to realise their creative visions. The social media platform is continuously updated with streams of information, pictures, videos and original contents that can generate multiple conversations and with an appealing design that attracted users and other companies.

Clearly both Intel and VICE learned from the partnership that it is key to harness the *power of authenticity* and to engage in meaningful conversations, changing the dialogue with audiences. In particular, youth don't have any emotional response if stories are not real and if the programme doesn't build longer-term relationships with the right set of cultures. Through the Creators Project, Intel was able to leverage VICE's core characteristics of being a *rebel* and nonconforming company, simply by letting them do what they do well, exploiting their *authenticity*, and harnessing their connections with hip cultures. These connections represent valuable cultural resources that Intel could utilise, tapping into VICE's global network. This is of course challenging for Intel when it comes down to the fact that they need to keep an image of a company that pursues a stronger business-focus and technology-oriented objectives. I discuss in the next section the way Intel and VICE gained credibility by integrating influencers and lead cultures into the project.

Earning Credibility from Online Influencers, such as Lead Cultures, Geeks and Digital Artists

In the observed case study it became very clear how lead cultures develop social trends that are then used and codified by firms in the process of celebrity building. VICE and Intel's selection process to engage the online influencers was focused on connecting with lead cultures, such as the *open source software movement and digital artists*, that would obviously lead to other innovators who are part of that network, in turn bringing credibility to the companies. A direct involvement with lead digital cultures may be crucial for developing cultural capital through understanding their ethos, dynamics of social structure, and cultural forms of expression, and to deploy it in ways that connect with current cultural meanings and social interpretations. As observed by Intel's Executive Creative Director:

"*In the first year, we just looked like the bank behind this thing and we didn't get the credibility, so we decided that we had to fully embrace this authentic programme and we became proud of what we were able to do, allowing artists to do all kinds of things without restraints. So we started taking a more active stand and magnifying the story, changing the dynamics of the programme"(Intel Executive Creative Director).*

Lead cultures and subcultures thus offer an important source of creative expression (Hebdige 1979). VICE has been able to create a strong identification between lead cultures and their projects and to identify the most significant cultural expressions and latest trends and bring them into the project. The key communities of influencers that were identified and mapped were the tech influencers, hackers, the open source movement, people writing influential blogs, the ones that are reviewing products online, and the ones that are early adopters and taste-makers in the

technological world. The Global Editor of VICE remarked on their ability to reach out to influencers and the importance of retaining their credibility:

"*We said to Intel you have no credibility amongst the online tech influencers...these are the people at the top of know-how in society. Why not take that opportunity, be a little bit braver and approach them, because it suits the project, it has synergy with what that community is interested in*" *(VICE Global Editor).*

The "hacker culture" has a great importance in spreading and shaping online contents, especially because of the rise of the open source software movements and their contribution in the emergence of online communities and collaborative production models. According to Castells (2003) what is valuable are the foundational principles of the hacker culture, "open access and the freedom to innovate and modify, and even the inner joy of creation" (Castells 2003, p. 47). Intel's perspective was to emphasise that today people are using technology in very innovative ways, continuously redefining their possible uses and opening up new perspectives that firms should be able to capture in the social media-driven environment. The hackers and geeks were a central target for the Creators Project, to virally get other people and young consumers to embrace digital cultures. As stated by Intel's Global Director of Marketing Partnership:

"*We want to have a dialogue with the hacker culture, with innovators that are changing the meaning of technology, taking technology apart and building new devices out of them*" *(Intel Global Director of Marketing Partnership).*

In this context the organisations constructed a set of symbolic meanings and affective relations that had been established in the public culture of the social media sphere. VICE, as the unconventional "symbol expert" (Ravasi and Rondova 2007), was then able to turn cultural networks and meanings into intangible assets for the firms involved. Companies are thus trying to capture social interactions amongst online influencers in social media networks, but the strategies are less obvious because companies are leveraging the intrinsic motivation of the members of the communities. As explained by VICE's Global Editor:

"As for the Creators Project, we didn't do much ethnography but more online research, and connected with movements like the open source movement, since we knew they were going to bring us the value we needed. It's long-term to establish the relationships…our commitment to creators and youth stays because it is valuable to us" (VICE Global Editor).

The creators (digital artists and geeks) were mainly approached online, through talking to relevant communities following a snowball effect, and especially using the open source movement networks as an outreach and distribution channel. VICE Creative Director explained how the innovators were selected to become part of the Creators project, mostly indicated by the open source communities themselves. In addition to gathering ground-breaking stories on digital

technology and the arts, VICE also invited users to engage and participate through the project social media platform. As explained by VICE's Creative Director:

"We went through the movement to find the people and eventually all the dots start to connect and you start to realise that they all know each other already" (VICE Creative Director).

In this context, companies aspire to become part of the ongoing cultural fabric of a community. Big technology companies can learn a lot from digital culture. It helps their reputation, it helps to attract talents, and to identify emerging user behaviour trends. The ability to associate themselves with grassroots open communities is often associated to the ethics, the sustainability, the openness, and even social values that can bring credibility to the firm in certain contexts they want to affect.

"This is an additional source of credibility, and Intel being a big tech company embracing the value of open source that this tech community embraces as well is very valuable, especially because it gives you a point of differentiation with closed systems and it hints to your ambition as a business and to the future of what innovation is to come" (VICE Creative Director).

These communities of influencers are thus identified and harnessed to convey a set of values, meanings, and practices that a firm wants to be associated with, being aware that it is important to respect the autonomy of these communities and to maintain authenticity, otherwise the company would risk losing credibility.

With the rise of social media, social network analysis is used to identify "influencers", people or communities that occupy central nodes in networks of relationships and have more impact on public opinion. Today social media websites rank users' social media influence, and through *Facebook social graph* and *Twitter interest graph* it is easier to map networks of influencers, looking at the way communities and individuals are able to cause effect, change behaviour, and drive outcomes online. The users' social graphs evolve over time and include people who are identified as "people of interest", such as a shared interests or hobbies, working in the same organisation, expert in a topic they are following, influencers, heroes, or policy leaders and so on. As explained by VICE's Creative Director:

"We are cultivating people that spread key messages. We identified key influencers and when we are launching a new campaign we give them exclusive contents or exclusive access. Often they are someone particularly vocal within Facebook in that social group, other times maybe in the arts circle or design. They form a range of different relationships" (Vice Creative Director).

With social media it is easier for agencies and firms to map an influence model than it ever was before, because those influencers are easier to find and it is possible to quantify how influential they are. As outlined by VICE's Social Media Manager:

"You can be very influential, but if you don't own a blog, if you don't tweet, if you don't have a Facebook page that people look at, read, interact with and follow, you are not an influencer. With social media it is easier to identify and target these people, because you look at the number of hits they have on YouTube, you look at the number of comments they have on their blog, you see the kind of traffic they are getting, you see the kind of credibility that people give them when they post things" (VICE Social Media Manager).

During one of the Creators Project's live events in Beijing where I carried out part of my field work, the project staged a platform to showcase artists and innovators, taking an entire week to set up the event and work with the local community of digital artists. VICE and Intel were intensively using social media to communicate with a big community of online innovators. Intel acknowledges that this was a key company goal:

"So we identify people who have an open source and creative focus and we bring them in the project and ask for their opinions when we are developing or launching a certain product. You can even empower those people to speak on behalf of the company, and if they are critics you can make sure that their criticism is heard by people within the company, to ensure that any learning is promoted within the company" (Intel Global Director of Marketing Partnership Marketing).

As described, VICE and Intel adopted social media tactics and metrics to map and target influencers. However to better connect emerging digital artists and geeks to more conventional art forms, they combined social media tactics with more conventional cultural strategies, such as staging a travelling event series and art exhibitions, meetups, workshops and panels. The live events are a key mechanism to attract talents. The first big event was organised in June 2010, and has progressed to seven Creators Project free events in 2010, nine in 2011, and eight in 2012. According to VICE's Co-Founder, the strategy was to organise events that could grow into a global artistic collaboration. In 2011 the Creators Project launched "*The Studio*", evolving from a series of events to a platform to commission and promote cutting edge collaborations among artists. The Studio uses a variety of channels to distribute artists' works such as international events and fairs, digital platforms, and more conventional museums and galleries.

"We are experimenting novel ways to support, produce and distribute digital arts and creativity, to give a chance to talented young artists that have no access to distribution channels. We are putting artists at the centre. The first year was a lot about meeting and creating the network. Now we are able to give collaborations amongst creators more time to develop and breath" (VICE Creative Director).

The target of the projects are cutting edge creators that do things differently, digital innovators that want to convey new messages, maybe programming in a different way and making arts interactive, and promoting new values that are continuously renegotiated within society. The

recorded impression from the artists themselves emphasise the impact the initiative is having on both artists and companies, trickling down to the general societal cultural fabric:

"The Creators Project focus on experience, so here all the art is interactive, people can interact with the art and really experience the artist's vision. It is a great platform to support independent artists and designers...people can understand the art better because of the technology and VICE versa. We deal with social trends, we pick them, analyse them, and mesh them into our artwork so it can resonate with people's cultural fabric" (Artist, Creators Project).

Hackers and artists targeted in the Creators Project are the newest contemporary lead cultures, redefining meanings of technology and the future of computing, together with the social practices they promote. Youth in this way can identify themselves with the *hacker culture* and communicate to the society their cultural values, especially in subcultures or communities formed around specific ideological values and interests. VICE attempted to foster new creative relationships between geeks, hackers and emerging artists that can influence the wider public and consumer culture. VICE's Creative Director explained how through their project new meanings and cultural value can trickle down from lead cultures to the general consumer fabric:

"Consumers were convinced that we are involved in some really cool high end arts and technology experiment. The next time they will remember the cool stuff they saw... that's how it trickles down to the general consumer fabric. For example, hackers are now part of mainstream popular culture, especially popularised by movies like Matrix...since there is already an existing dialogue in mainstream culture that is happening around hackers, then people are more likely to pick it up" (VICE Creative Director).

By integrating online influencers (lead cultures, geeks, and digital artists) in the project, VICE and Intel attempted to fuel the birth of a new cultural movement, blending diverse communities and managing the relationship with a set of cultures. This process can influence the general audience and consumer culture, but also feed back into the company's strategic insights to earn credibility and eventually change their longer-term strategy for action. I discuss next how Intel and VICE were able to blend the artistic and engineering cultures inside the partnership and how Intel was able to utilise and absorb this knowledge within the company's product development process.

Blending Cultures - The Collision of Engineers and Artists

The Creators Project provides the production and distribution platform for artists, and the project gives access to the latest digital technologies developed by Intel, ultimately fostering a collaboration between Intel's engineers and the digital artists. One of the biggest achievements of the project is the ability to trigger collaboration amongst artists and engineers that wouldn't

normally have the opportunity to work together to see the possibilities of where technology can go. As VICE's Executive Director explains:

"Intel is an interesting brand since they are almost invisible in a sense. Their processors are in every computer that artists are using to create, and they are in the laptops that we are using when we watch videos and everything online. And yet they are not really aligned with the creative space. One of the challenges of this project was to bring a brand like Intel closer to creativity. They took a risk, they really wanted to add value, creating an initiative that would support artists, and a platform that would distribute their work to a wider audience" (VICE Executive Director).

The project successfully experimented co-development between artists and Intel engineers and initiated a common programme focused on building things together. Part of the programme consists of joint training sessions between artists and engineers in the Intel Lab of Immersive Computing. It is important to consider that this philosophy and vision is also represented in Intel's expectations for partnering with creative agencies. As explained by VICE's Executive Director:

"We are working with the Labs, and Intel engineers are now working with the artists, helping them with the challenges that a small studio might have. Intel can provide technology, hardware, even expertise, to new products that now artists are playing with in their works, and what they are getting for that is new insights from new groups who are using their products. Lots of times Intel has [only] been focused on business, education and efficiency" (VICE Executive Director).

Artists that have a different approach to technology are possibly changing parts of the Intel culture. Younger Intel engineers were particularly inspired by the collaboration, since their perception of what engineers are has changed quite radically with the latest transformation of the computing industry, turning it into some kind of creative engineering process relating to artists. This programme is changing the perceptions of engineers and creating new interactions that feed back into the company's culture. As emphasised by VICE's Global Editor:

"*I tend to believe that artists and scientists are not that different to one another. They use similar inquiry based research-driven methods to create meanings and find out more about the world around us. Artists today are using computational and digital media to explore the creative potential of today's technology and also finding the beauty, the human, the poetry in it" (VICE Global Editor).*

According to the Intel Lab team, there is a real need for the collaboration between engineers and artists. Artists have creative visions that they could realise if they better knew how to explore and harness the potential of new technologies, while engineers can investigate new creative possibilities for future product development. As one of the Intel engineers leading the immersive computing team at the Intel Research Lab and Intel fellow pointed out, he was looking for artists that would inspire him to do something new:

"It is really about collaboration between artists and technologists. We found a way to engage artists and technologists to create future work and the end result can be so meaningful and can have an impact on future product development, figuring out how technology can evolve as a creative engine" (Intel Director of Immersive Computing).

Through the Creators Project, the Intel Director of Immersive Computing got in touch with emerging and talented artists using digital technology in their experimental work, and he discussed with the artists how to design the next computers. Also, engineers started to help artists to realise novel works because the artists looked at Intel engineers as their heroes that could enable them to bring their work to a different level through technology. He recounts how the project favoured a discussion with two Brazilian artists that imagined the future of computing as a forest, where the human body is part of the environment, so they suggested designing a computer interface that will engage with the body in a natural way. In his own words:

"*When I met the artists we started talking about the way they approached art and how people interact with computers…it really made me step back and have a fundamental assessment of the way I see technology" (Intel Director of Immersive Computing).*

In summary, in Phase 1 Intel and VICE acquire the ability to associate themselves with "cool" culture, and to blend diverse sets of cultures, with the attempt to absorb and integrate them strategically into the company's culture to trigger longer-term collaborations. This process, as well as bringing engineers and artists together, was able to influence the way Intel engineers were thinking about computers and how they were building the next computing interfaces. Previous research described how companies integrate diverse cultural resources through a process of "cultural repertoire enrichment", enabling companies to challenge industry conventions though nonconventional strategies, ultimately leading to strategic innovation (Rindova et al. 2010). I will examine in the next phase how VICE and Intel, after having engaged and blended diverse sets of cultures and earned credibility from "cool cultures", went through a process of *cultural absorption and enrichment,* conceiving unconventional strategies driven by social media to construct web-mediated cultural value and negotiate meanings amongst stakeholder audiences.

Phase 2. Co-Construction of Web-Mediated Cultural Value

From Functional to Cultural Value Creation

Understanding how social media impact the construction of firms' celebrity necessitates a renewed interpretation of how firms co-construct, negotiate, and manipulate information, meanings, and symbols with *networked publics,* and how this ability to construct meanings and shape relationships may create mass public attention and affective networks that can be leveraged by firms. This study shows that production of online celebrity and the construction of cultural value are therefore different, but highly interrelated, processes. Through the Creators Project, Intel and VICE built a cultural strategy driven by intensive social media adoption focused on acquiring cultural significance online and moving the focus from technological innovation that emphasises functionality of specific products to *cultural innovation* that emphasises a dynamic cultural context in which a firm is embedded.

This approach shows the need to identify and harness the value of lead cultures and networked publics as an opportunity for cultural innovation in the social media space, giving more importance to stakeholders' perceptions and the cultural value created through online conversations. In this way firms draw attention to the need of becoming part of the cultural fabric of an ongoing community, becoming part of a shared experience with stakeholder audiences. Consumers were deeply identifying with the Creators Project, mainly though the aesthetic work of the artists that they could access online, and that were able to communicate identity and status that consumers could then associate with VICE and Intel's project. These approaches have strong implications for the strategy and organisation of firms. As emphasised by Intel's Executive Creative Director:

"*Today a computer is largely a rational purchase. We trained people over the years that they should look at processor speed and performance and these are all things that we still message, but that's not like giving an emotional connection to the brand. The emotional connection means that it does something that you really value. That's why we really focused on creativity and art as opposed to mathematical or scientific functions that are available to the system" (Intel Executive Creative Director).*

Intel in this sense is a relevant case since they are almost "invisible" to the perception of most audiences. Their processors are in every computer that artists are using to create their work, and in the laptops that most people are using to watch videos and navigate online, and yet they are not aligned with the creative space. One of the challenges of this project was to bring a brand like Intel closer to creativity. Intel's first campaign "Intel Inside", was aimed at creating

consumers' awareness related to the microprocessors as the “brain of the computer”, emphasising the functional characteristics and specifications of Intel processors, such as speed, specification, quality and reliability. Despite the fact that Intel already had a strong and recognisable reputation amongst technology firms, this was the first time a computer manufacturer communicated directly to consumers and end-users about the characteristics of this “invisible” technology (Kotler et al. 2010). This campaign also implied a collaborative effort since thousands of computer manufacturers started to put the *Intel Inside* logo on their computers. The main idea behind the campaign was the conviction that end-users needed to be educated on the importance of the functional characteristics of the technology, and the microprocessor that Intel was producing. Intel’s strategy was of course driven by the ethos of its Co-Founder and Chairman, Gordon Moore, who popularised the “Moore's law”, and showed the exponential growth of chip performance and computing power.

In order to create a strong association with the Intel brand, in 1989 Intel launched a program mainly directed at other computer manufactures to increase the business and later on to general PC buyers, raising brand awareness and making a clear association with the success of the microprocessors and other cutting edge technology developed by Intel. At that time the advertising agency working with Intel was a traditional creative agency specialising in high-tech companies and *Intel inside* was launched. The first *Intel Inside* campaign was thus focused on product quality, functionality and efficiency. Intel chose to associate their image with *“safety,” “reliability,” “power”, “speed” and “affordability”*, all functional and useful characteristics of the technology, and in this way communicating the importance of the microprocessor for the technological functional performance. Intel managed to communicate to their consumers and technology buyers the value of the technology based around functional and utilitarian features, and training the consumers to associate the value of the products with functional features.

“Intel played a big role in educating people to use technology and computers for technical functions that were offered to us, such as basic email, word processing, PowerPoint presentation and Internet access. For a long time, and in the perception of many people, the personal computer was designed to do the calculations, maths and physics, while today people use computers to do amazing creative stuff, and creativity is very different from functionality” (Intel Global Director of Marketing Partnership).

Intel has been always focused on business, education and efficiency and it has been really gratifying for them to learn what an artist might think about their new tools, especially through the collaborations between artists and engineers that transformed some of their research work. As observed in the Creators Project field research, the cultural value and meaning of products,

technology, or even arts is constituted and negotiated within complex relational dynamics among lead cultures, symbol experts, consumers, producers and institutional intermediaries through the practices of online networked communication. I will explain in the next section how Intel and VICE were able to negotiate meanings with institutional intermediaries and networked publics, and how they devised web-mediated unconventional strategies to do so.

Negotiating Meanings with Institutional Intermediaries

The construction of meanings involves a network of relationships and the interpretation and recombination of messages. Social media are not simply a broadcasting medium like traditional press or news media, but an interactive and participatory medium though which networked publics collectively construct a new "public sphere" where masses of people gather for a variety of purposes, including socialisation, status negotiation, consumption, and civic engagement (Boyd 2008). Social media favours direct engagement and dialogue between firms and stakeholder audiences that negotiate meanings and can potentially result in a process of co-creation of meanings that affects stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation. The role of powerful institutional intermediaries and gatekeepers, such as journalists, critics, and PR agencies remain as authoritative sources.

Clearly it was strategic for Intel and VICE to be published in mainstream press and TV, since they still own the channels to reach a mass audience exposed to high end culture, and even if mass audiences won't always be the ones buying the product, they will have a perception of the company as cool and edgy. High visibility media and press are still important, but the Internet has changed the communication game, since organisations can directly interact with stakeholder audiences in a more effective and multidirectional way. There is a transformation from the journalist being the gatekeeper of information to sharing it in a networked public space, emphasising openness, collaboration, and reaching out to the readers. As noted by the PR Manager of Intel:

"What the mainstream media picked up is that Intel is embracing hackers, it's doing something that's edgy and cool. They didn't pick up the functional quality of the technology like the processing power, the memory, or the operating system. The mass readers see the same "isn't that smart, isn't that cool and edgy"; they don't have to understand all the nuances...but if they do they can follow it up on the web. Everyone uses Google; you don't have to hit them over the head. People will go on and find it themselves" (Intel PR Manager).

The community of critics, PR, and mainstream journalists still have a key role in the way a firm's image, reputation and celebrity are perceived within a complex web of meanings

(Rindova et al. 2006). Institutional intermediaries are in a position of power to shape or manipulate the context, by influencing what is valuable in specific contexts (Rindova and Fombrun 1999). As an example, journalists' narratives can influence the way goods are perceived by consumers, and even the way the work of other creative intermediaries such as designers and advertisers affect consumers' desires for products (Ravasi and Rindova 2004). The relationship with institutional intermediaries such as PR, mainstream media and critics was crucial in the Creators Project, since these institutional actors can provide the access to the distribution channels able to reach the wider general public, beyond specialised online communities and niches.

The reaction of prestige media to the Creators Project tended to construct a narrative mainly focused around the unconventional relationship between VICE, a "rebel" and "sexy" firm that started as an underground media and turned into a very successful media agency, and Intel, the chip manufacturer mainly focused on businesses and efficiency. For instance, The *Wall Street Journal* emphasised the need for Intel to "conquer cool" in order to be associated with youth and creative culture, and shows how valuable the ability of firms to create symbolic and cultural value has become, even in the computing industry. They define the Creators Project as "*an attempt to be publicly associated with something cooler than computer chips" (The Wall Street Journal).* The same approach was used by *Forbes* who wrote an editorial titled *"Intel Reinvents Cool With The Creators Project" (http://www.forbes.com/)*, and by two popular Silicon Valley magazines that stressed Intel's attempt to gain symbolic and cultural value out of this partnership, writing *"Intel teams up with the cool crowd" (http://www.siliconvalleywatcher.com)* and *"How Do You Make Semiconductor Chips Sexy?" (http://www.architizer.com).*

Slightly more critical was the reaction of very influential tech magazines such as *Wired* that emphasised the double sword of producing "cool" and unconventional strategies for mass markets, and they questioned the authentic intentions of the project: *"Intel and VICE Launch Creators Project: Selling Out or Boosting Creativity?" (www.wired.com).* However, this media coverage also became a competitive advantage for VICE who managed to be perceived as a nonconformist, cutting edge agency that is able to turn unconventional actions into economic assets, attracting interest, resources, attention and emotional resonance. As another influential online magazine reported:

"VICE has managed to meld its graft on an effective commercial engine onto a punk editorial voice. It's a trick many a media company would love to replicate" (http://www.themediabriefing.com).

Some of the mentioned media criticisms certainly had an impact on the decision of Intel and VICE to emphasise the power of *authenticity* and the need to engage in a direct and intense way in the project. As Intel's Executive Creative Director explains:

"We are very proud about what we bring to artists and the way we are able to magnify the story. The power of authenticity is so strong, especially with youth…they don't like when you are faking it; they don't have any emotional response" (*Intel Executive Creative Director).*

However, the role of powerful institutional intermediaries is transformed in the social media context, since the stakeholders' perceptions of a firm and their products is constructed within these complex communication networks, where a multitude of actors play an important role, thus transforming the nature of interaction between firms and networked publics and enhancing the dialogue among multiple stakeholders. As emphasised by Intel's Executive Creative Director:

"*We are identifying diverse communities of consumers, the academic community, the design community, the tech movements, opinion leaders, critics. We are engaging in a peer conversation with those communities, and starting to think about the overall responsibility as a partnership and how we can structure that relationship with those cultures, because realistically it needs to be consistent*" *(Intel Executive Creative Director).*

Fairclough (2003) points out the importance of discourses and the use of language from actors in order to establish their point of view, interpretations or arguments, and in order to acquire reputation and legitimacy. In the Creators Project, social media conversations constitute a terrain of negotiation of meanings among key intermediaries to establish social relevance of particular topics, conversations and trends. The ability of VICE and Intel consisted of connecting the various networks of publics in a meaningful way, and exploiting the mass reach of prestige media to gather large-scale attention and connect it back to the social media conversations. VICE and Intel were able to prompt meaningful interactions and then let the audiences talk about their experiences, adding new contents and amplifying the messages. This process amplified the Creators Project's relational social ties established with networked publics, by connecting all actors in the communication flows and at the same time strengthening peer connections between communities. This process in turn amplifies the firm's reputation. As explained by VICE's Social Media Manager:

"the news media started writing about it and we had to make sure people would tune in. We did syndication, analysing messages from the audience through social media, and we engineered partnerships with specialised news media that could pick up our stories and deliver the most value. We had thousands of people watching the live stream and engaging in peer conversations over the next few days" (VICE Social Media Manager).

In this way, leveraging the dialogical communication in social media networks, the Creator Project platform became a facilitator in the negotiation of meanings with a globally connected

community of audiences, building a conversational ecology (Boyd et al. 2010). Certainly establishing and nourishing stronger relationships with digital cultures generated learning for Intel and VICE, such as building their celebrity to affect higher business decisions, facilitating the attraction of new talents, and connecting the dots of emerging user behaviour trends that was replicated and integrated across other company initiatives.

In essence, VICE and Intel were adopting a mix of cultural-led conventional and unconventional tactics to negotiate meanings with networked publics and participating in an online conversation with the rest of their network. Stakeholders' social responses send signals to other institutional intermediaries, such as the media and other key institutional intermediaries, that the firm's management of their relationship with stakeholder audiences creates value. Thus the ability of a company to negotiate meanings with stakeholder audiences is a way to create engagement and positive responses inside a community, while contributing over time to the growth and spread of those online communities. In the next section I will focus on the description of the unconventional social media tactics used by VICE and Intel to manipulate the relationships with publics.

Unconventional Social Media Tactics- Manipulating the Social, Conversational, and Affective Relationships of Networked Publics

As already documented in the previous sections, social media were strategically used in the project to manage the relationships between Intel and VICE with a diverse set of external cultures and communities. The experience observed shows that developing and managing a community require longer-term effort, and that social media need to be integrated into a company's cultural strategy, combining a mix of conventional and unconventional tactics. Firms are learning how to exploit social media to influence stakeholders' interactions and improve their relationships with audiences. As explained by Intel's Social Media Manager: "*We identified key conversations amongst our audiences using some social media listening tools and connecting to influencers across all the markets, then we went after them and we personalised contents to get them on board, and to generate a great feedback*" *(Intel Social Media Manager).*

The construction process of building a relationship with the community of influencers includes firms' capacity to manage communities and be part of their cultural fabric, contributing to the social networks' overall dynamics and maintaining cohesion between consumers and firms. Those who can do it effectively, and who can keep their communities happy and engaged, are

likely to have a major advantage. This audience-driven activity generates lots of conversation, *buzz* and press that was constantly monitored and carefully shaped by VICE's Social Media Managers:

"*We focused on using social media to hook people in and engage them and hook them into the experience that we created, so they could film the video, submit it and engage our subscribers through the platform*" *(VICE Social Media Manager).*

The role of the audience is shifting from being passive targets of advertising, television shows, and radio messages to being active interpreters and producers of communication. As shown in Phase 1 of the process firms engage directly in a dialogue and in a relationship with lead cultures and online movements. In the case of the Creators Project, *publics* have a central role since the duration and impact of the project depends on the way they engage through offline events and social media channels. Intel emphasise the open circulation of knowledge needed to engage the publics' emotional and moral communications that drive social interaction (Schultz and Wehmeier 2010). Publics are more efficient at organising the appropriation and productive circulation of common resources like information and knowledge. Publics are also able to activate with non-monetary motivations for participation, and at the same time actively reinforce firms' image schemes through affective activities like creating videos, commenting on posts and participating online (Arvidsson 2013). These novel characteristics of publics were leveraged through the Creators Project social media platforms, as explained by :

"*Audiences met our requests to drive change and do more with a passion. I believe Intel is driving a new way to look at the world of media. We've moved beyond conversations around stakeholder management, reaching and driving engagement and conversations is at the heart of what we do. the team has embraced the idea of driving a new model with enthusiasm and support*" *(Social Media Manager, VICE).*

Due to its strong adoption, social media helped to shape the project from its inception and became the "nerve centre" for the collaboration between Intel and VICE. Users find information trustworthy if they come from people they trust, and social media can potentially increase trustworthiness among a large amount of users. Social media amplify existing offline social relationships and often strengthen networks of interest or affective networks of existing communities. Thus, publics in the Creators Project have a productive role in the sense that their interactions and conversations, if well captured and manipulated, can generate insights and intangible value for firms in the form of reputation or celebrity. As Intel's Executive Creative Director argued:

"As we continue, the relationships with our audiences improve, they talked about Intel in a very different way; they viewed us as cooler and relate us to their culture. Our goal is not to sell stuff,

we want them start thinking about Intel differently and think about what relationship they want to have with us" (Intel Executive Creative Director).

VICE, drawing on the experience of Motherboard TV, created a social network with a combination of user-generated contents and highly edited professional artistic contents. The Creators Project encompasses a user-driven and co-curated experience website, video contents from the selected artists, and reports by editors from VICE and from around the world, incorporating users' comments. This network generated an active community of digital creators, able to communicate directly with large audiences. As explained by VICE's Creative Director:

"We try to understand how these communities change over time, so there is constant tracking, using the most advanced analytics methods. That is then broken off to interest areas in some detail. We try to understand how the firms are perceived by all these communities"(VICE Creative Director).

The use of social media is critical to create an immersive experience for audiences and the artists, experimenting with the mix of online and offline experiences of media sharing. Photos posted to Twitter using the hashtag "#Creators" showed up on the board, allowing visitors to see them intermeshed with other imagery at the location of the Creators public events. Intel and VICE managed to attract some of the world's most talented emerging artists working at the intersection between arts and digital technology. VICE's Co-Founder stressed that the approach used with Creators Project aimed to integrate online and offline platforms though events, collaborative work production, online meetups and ongoing social media interaction.

Intel and VICE were also able to deploy novel *social media analysis* tools to interpret and map relational, conversational and emotional responses from audiences and to integrate the inputs and conversations generated by their publics on social media. The Creators Project pioneered social analytics to understand the relational interactions amongst communities of influencers and monitor consumer behaviour in social media contexts. They gather data through social filtering systems, detecting trendy topics merging arts and technology across social media channels mentioning the Creators Projects, and clustering affective networks of publics though sentiment analysis. In this way Intel and VICE were able to effectively track, manage, and foster their publics' social interactions. This was an attempt to turn online open social spaces, where dispersed communities gather and express themselves, into "managed spaces", making sure that the publics' social interactions converged on the project's social media platforms where they can be recentralised and managed directly by VICE and Intel, as explained by VICE's Social Media Manager:

"Social data are going to be much more valuable for corporations and that's why they are interested in building communities so they can curate, supervise, shape, and push conversations, have control over those communities, launching new products" (VICE Social Media Manager).

The ability of Intel and VICE to adopt social media, to map and manipulate social and emotional networks in which their stakeholder audiences are embedded, led to an attempt to manipulate and influence the perceptions and emotional responses of networked publics. To summarise, Phase 2 shows the importance of *a cultural perspective on value creation* where firms engage with the construction of cultural significance of their brands or products. This implies a shift from technological and functional innovation to *cultural innovation* in complex contexts (Ravasi et al. 2012). VICE and Intel used a combination of unconventional strategies and novel social media analytics techniques to negotiate meanings with stakeholders and to manipulate, manage, and eventually shape their social, conversational, and affective interactions. This process in turn was able to enhance the cultural value generated by the Creators Project and their ability to harness the viral potential of publics through social media to gain intangible assets, namely online celebrity. In the next and final phase I will describe the way that Intel and VICE turn the constructed web-mediated cultural value into a crucial condition to shape stakeholders interpretations and attain online celebrity.

Phase 3. Attaining Online Celebrity

Aggregate Large Scale Web-Mediated Social Ratings and Judgments

As explained in the previous section, the strategies adopted by firms in order to harness the value of networked publics on social media focus on exploiting the connectedness of external actors and capturing them into their social media platforms. In these platforms publics' interactions can be better managed and measured, allowing firms to capture the value generated from the rich cultural and social processes (Arvidsson 2013). Social media participation has been very high and consistent across multiple channels, managing to draw audiences to the sites and retaining large-scale attention through a mix of innovative contents and management of conversations. As argued by Intel's Executive Creative Director:

"*We were measuring percentage of conversations on Twitter that are around arts and technology of which the creators are a part of, and then seeing that impact on audiences' perceptions. To measure the social response level is hugely valuable, also associated with TV shows" (Intel Executive Creative Director).*

In the main social media platforms, the Creators Project has obtained a total of over 450,000 Twitter followers, over 400,000 Facebook fans and over 350,000 subscribers and over 30 million video views in their YouTube channel. Subscribers were bringing expectations to the Creators Project website when they were visiting it, since they had clear aesthetic motivation to visit the site to see emerging artists' work and cutting-edge digital expression. These expectations appear to impact how users responded to inputs on the site. Users are in fact activating cognitive engagement through their online experiences, displaying a high degree of emotional engagement (for instance in specific periods 12,960 people talking about the project on Facebook and 351,508 likes on the social media page). As argued by VICE's Social Media Manager:

"It's not only about creating contents, but contexts and then we created a programme that engages diverse cultures and then we put relevant contents on Facebook and Twitter and the levels of engagement are massive. We created a conversation around a context. It shows how you can make your programme interesting in a social digital environment" (VICE Social Media Manager).

Neurological research has shown that it is not the rational message that drives people towards brands and makes them strong emotionally, but the emotional and creative content (Plummer et al. 2007). It follows that emotional content represents anything that is capable of stimulating preferences, opinions, and feelings of the viewer. Over 2,000 photos were uploaded and shared on social media on the day the project was launched in San Francisco, with more than 25,000 people attending the event. The Twitter hashtag #Creators was a trendy topic on Twitter, aggregating 696,000 followers in the week leading up to the San Francisco event. Furthermore, the Creators Project won two Webby Awards (*Awards for excellent projects on the Internet*) for the best YouTube channel displaying original branded contents and for the best website for advancing the debate in the arts and technology field.

The Creators Project, however, revealed how hard it is to track and measure the success of social media engagement, since these tactics and the related metrics are novel, experimental, and unconventional. Intel focused on measurement and on the relation between measurable data and research, in order to be able to translate the project's achievements through research to prove its value. As explained by Intel's Executive Creative Director:

"It's a combination of new measures, old measures and the right partners. We obviously measure all the kind of traffic, such as the volume of video views, and the number of people attending our events. We did focus groups with kids after every event. The more we are ingrained in cultures the more it raises up products. (Intel Executive Creative Director).

In the fast-evolving dynamic social media environment, lead cultures and networked publics are feeding back into the business of organisations through online systems that aggregate the opinions, evaluations, judgments, and contributions of consumers (Kozinets et al. 2008). Qualitative measurements of this value are spreading fast in the form of recommendation systems based on *social information filtering* and *social rating* based on users' social data. The rise of social media has strengthened the relevance of the creation of relations between companies and consumers that are now constantly embedded in social, conversational and relational streams of information where companies represent one of the numerous voices. As VICE's Social Media Manager argues:

"It is much more about social media, about people participating in something and sharing it themselves. We have to be part of the conversation rather than us pushing the message and engaging in impression management...this has huge implications on us as agency, on what kind of people do you need, how do we realise ideas, whether our ideas fit in the consumers' journey..."(VICE Social Media Manager).

People subjective perception that is shared and aggregated through social media, become a *collective judgment*. This, in particular, applies to social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter that are specifically designed for sharing emotions, feelings and opinions amongst the users. Such web-mediated *attention and affective networks* of users' engagement are what, in the context of this research, Intel and VICE ultimately exchange with institutional intermediaries (such as advertisers, PR, and media agencies), either as spaces in which to insert targeted contents and advertisements, or as data from which to 'mine' market information that can inform future firms' actions and strategies. It has become increasingly important for firms to gain the knowledge and ability to monitor and predict consumers' social and emotional behaviour in online communities so that they can formulate fast and effective responses. In the next section I demonstrate how the Creators Project was successful in aggregating stakeholders' emotional responses in terms of the mobilisation of their affective networks and emotional connections to the Creators Project and to VICE and Intel that delivered the project.

Harness "General Sentiment" from Networked Publics

As explained in the previous paragraph, collective rating systems that are aggregated online are web-mediated collective "trust-brokers" and are becoming increasingly influential in creating social judgments in the form of social rating actions that have a central role in promoting user-generated conversations and activities online (Arvidsson 2011). Since the social media-based conversations taking place between consumers in the Creators social media platform are outside

Intel's direct control, they are motivated to leverage Vice's expertise in using novel techniques to filter, authenticate, curate, and control those conversations, as well as contributing over time to online communities in order to maintain credibility and to capture the value of this interaction.

By applying automated machine learning sentiment analysis to user-generated contents of social networks, it was possible for Intel and Vice to detect opinions, sentiments and emotions of their audiences. It can be distinguished between positive and negative sentiment, reflecting the emotional connection and the strength of a sentiment (Colleoni et al. 2011). Subjective sentiments are then aggregated to express some kind of collective expression that reflects the general feeling towards a project, and they can predict the polarity of the Creators project. These techniques were applied by VICE and Intel in the Creators Project to enhance the audiences' emotional responses which are signals of affective evaluation of different stakeholders towards firms, as explained by an Intel PR Representative:

"We track all postings generated with our activity using new metrics, such as perception shift, and conversation levels online though automated sentiment analysis. We mix different conversation and behavioural metrics. But we analyse in-depth, taking into account the real root behaviours" (Intel PR Representative).

The great potential of sentiment analysis is that it "allows subjective perceptions, like the experience of or affective ties that consumers can construct with a company, to acquire an objective existence as observable and measurable forms of reputation" (Colleoni et al. 2011:11). Therefore, it is possible to monitor and shape audiences' discussions and responses on social media to grow a firm's influence. This technique allows companies to quickly assess public reaction to their communication, and consequently, to respond quickly and adjust their strategies. As explained by Intel's Global Director of Marketing Partnership:

"If we are failing we are honest about it, for example if we are getting lots of volume but not quality coverage it is a failure...if people are reading about it you want to change their perception of the firm. Consumers are more open to consider our actions and products in the future" (Intel Global Director of Marketing Partnership).

Indeed in measuring the success of social media campaigns, agencies measure the campaign's ability to enhance the sentiment of online users, and in particular of influential online users, or groups of users, that are central to particular interest communities (such as lead users, bloggers, artists, celebrities and so on). For instance, many companies target "influencers", who are people that have social media influence and can more easily attract the attention and affective networks of online communities. As a consequence, social media agencies started measuring users' affective value, through sentiment and conversation analysis. Social media is thus being used as

an emotional barometer to predict the mood of the public (Bollen et al. 2011). This means that the source of value in social media is the ability to attract users' affect, constructing the kinds of affiliations that are able to transform the relationship between the firm and its stakeholders. This is a genuine strategic use of social media that allowed the Creators Project to gain new audiences, to channel their attention, and through the artists to create emotional connections and impact the positive perception of firms with their stakeholders.

In summary, Phase 3 was the ultimate step in the process showing how one key achievement of the Creators Project is the acquisition of the firm's capability to move from just providing a platform for artists to showcase their creative work towards enhancing new longer-term collaborations between a very diverse set of cultures (between artists and Intel engineers for instance) that can impact the relationships between firms and its stakeholders, while shaping the future of art and computing. As an outcome of the process Intel and VICE started producing and commissioning new artistic work and distributing it on a global scale, innovating the way art is produced and distributed in the digital age. As shown in the empirical observations, by engaging with networked publics though social media, firms are able to attract and aggregate inter-subjective judgments of their value or utility in terms of web-mediated forms of celebrity, here named *online celebrity*. It was argued how firms adopt social media and unconventional social media tactics to socially construct online celebrity.

Summary of the Process of Gaining Online Celebrity

In this section I outline the grounded framework and explain the relationships among theoretical constructs that resulted from the observations conducted in the case study. I then consider and discuss the significance of the extended theoretical framework on online celebrity building for future management and organisation research.

The emerging framework proposes a number of theoretical relationships in the three phases analysed in the model. Online celebrity was attained in three different phases: (1) by integrating external cultural resources and "cool" cultures, such as digital artists, hackers, and online influencers, thus *earning credibility*; (2) by negotiating meanings with institutional intermediaries and co-constructing cultural value that was able to harness the value of networked publics. The concept of networked publics is key to understanding the importance of the dialogic communication strategy to engage a network of stakeholders and negotiate meanings, trust, and authority within social media environments; and (3) this process of cultural value creation in turn

shapes stakeholders' interpretations, resulting in a novel form of web-mediated social rating and collective judgment formation, namely online celebrity. Firms are able to aggregate audiences' attention and emotional responses, managing the process within collaborative networks of interaction with multiple stakeholders.

As explained above, in the first phase VICE and Intel were able to establish an authentic collaboration with "cool" cultures, and to earn credibility from artists and online influencers through social media. Through the adoption of unconventional social media tactics, VICE and Intel managed to expand the diversity and quality of cultural resources and integrate them within the organisational strategy. This process of *cultural enrichment* led to a second phase of *co-construction of web-mediated cultural value*. In this second phase the diverse cultural resources were channelled and utilised in a process of negotiation of relationships and meanings with networked publics, including cultural gatekeepers, PR, printed press, critics, other firms and consumers. This phase is similar to the process of *reassignment* described by Ravasi and Rindova (2007). However, novel and unconventional social media techniques such as *collective ratings* and *sentiment analysis* were used by Intel and VICE in the second phase to manipulate the social, conversational and relational interaction with networked publics. As previously argued by Ravasi and Rindova (2007), the creation of symbolic value is a complex process that emerges from social interactions amongst a multiplicity of actors and is outside the control of a single firm. However, in the Creators Project VICE and Intel were able to adopt unconventional social media strategies, thus attempting to managing, shaping and manipulating this process. Clearly the process of cultural value creation that has already been analysed in the sociology of consumption literature and in the management literature acquires new characteristics with the rise of social media, and it is deeply linked to the production of online celebrity.

Although celebrity building was investigated in previous literature, scholars didn't fully take into account the development of ICT with novel *web-mediated* social rating systems and relevance systems that allow networked publics to collectively evaluate the quality of a product, a service or a firm. While in previous examples celebrity construction was driven by the authoritative role of traditional news media journalists in developing a dramatised reality and conferring firms with celebrity attributes (Rindova et al. 2006), this research shows that social media add complexity to this process since more actors are actively involved in shaping the intensive media environment where organisations operate. The construction of *web-mediated cultural value* is a key enabler in *shaping stakeholders' interpretations* and expectations. The ability of firms to

affect and manipulate social and affective networks of publics ultimately leads to their ability to shape the process of celebrity construction.

In the described social media strategy adopted by Intel and VICE, stakeholders are the key actors who actively interact with the firms. Firms can then respond to stakeholders' expectations based on direct and timely social media feedback and the analysis of the conversations between firms and their stakeholders. In the extant management literature both processes of cultural value creation and celebrity building have not been extensively interrelated and they have not been observed within the social media context, thus not fully taking into consideration the dialogic nature of new media communication and firms' bidirectional interactions with networked publics. This study shows that in contemporary social media environments firms' production of cultural assets is a pivotal condition for the success of the implementation of social media unconventional tactics that will ultimately lead to the attainment of online celebrity. This research thus expands existing theories on celebrity building by analysing the role of social media and the way they impact firms' strategies for action.

DISCUSSION

The concept of celebrity has evolved tremendously with the rise of social media, resulting in the formation of a new construct of online celebrity that is attained on the basis of a firm's ability to attract large-scale social responses and web-mediated positive "general sentiment" from networked publics. This research shows the need for organisational and strategy researchers to further investigate the function that social media play in influencing firm-stakeholder relationships. The role of the new media environment in shaping public perception of firms and redefining the way stakeholder audiences construct their perception of firms remains under-theorised. This research was motivated by the observation that, whereas research in management and organisation has increasingly emphasised the relevance of mass media as *reputation brokers,* and as an important sources of legitimacy for firms (Peterson 1979; Baum and Powell 1995; Lounsbury and Glynn 2001), it mostly emphasises their role in constructing dramatised images of firms that can shape public perceptions (Elsbach 1994; Deephouse 2000; Pollock and Rindova 2003).

However, new research in the field of communication and social media studies stresses the importance of updating mass media theory with insights from the analysis of the novel

organisational dynamics in social media (Castells 2009). Media accounts today are not following a linear broadcasting form, coming from top down authoritative sources and putting an emphasis on the role of experts such as journalists or critics to shape public perceptions. Turning to social media environments, the process is more complex and bidirectional. As shown in the Creators Project, institutional intermediaries, networked publics, and lead cultures play an active role in shaping media contents and conversations, thus influencing in novel ways the cultural context where firms are immersed.

The Interplay between Cultural Capital and Online Celebrity: The Cultural Side of Value Creation in the Social Media Context

Management scholars have explored in previous research how firms manipulate language and meanings in diverse contexts (Rindova and Fombrun 1999; Lounsbury and Glynn 2001; Lawrence and Phillips 2002; Rindova et al. 2006). The theoretical model I develop in this research expands previous work, demonstrating that through a strategic adoption of social media firms develop capabilities that allow them to actively participate in the construction and negotiation of meanings that constitute the cultural context in which they are immersed (Ravasi and Rindova 2007).

The role of symbolic value has been the centre of investigations on consumers' practices (Holt, D. 1997; Campbell 2005; McCracken 1990; Bauman 2001) in the sociology of consumption literature (Sahlins 1976; Bourdieu 1984; DiMaggio 1997; Miller (Ed) 1995, 2011; Bauman 2007), and cultural anthropology (Douglas and Isherwood 1978; McCracken 1986; du Gay (Ed) 1997; Hirschman 1986), since it is socialisation and participation in shared practices that create the meaning of goods and the social interaction among people that trickle down to influence the consumer fabric (Richins 1994). Users and consumers can be considered as active participants in the symbolic value creation processes (Ravasi and Rindova 2007).

According to Beckert (2010), “the communication between consumers, experts, producers and critics is meant to keep the imaginative value alive and shield it from the disappointment that sets in once the product is actually possessed. The communicative practices surrounding the construction of imaginative value are part of socialisation, and thus part of the fabric of society” (2010, p. 23). As previously argued by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), the majority of consumer research is focused on functional and tangible benefits of goods and services based on

their objective features, whereas alternative perspectives have investigated the symbolic meanings and subjective characteristics of products that motivate consumption behaviours.

The process of symbolic and cultural value creation has already been analysed in the management literature (Lawrence and Phillips 2002; Ravasi and Rindova 2007; Rindova et al. 2011; Ravasi et al. 2012). In previous research Ravasi and Rindova (2007) proposed a cultural-driven approach on innovation that conceive firms as producers of culture and symbolic value, which is "determined by the social and cultural meanings associated with it that enable consumers to express individual and social identity through the product's purchase and use" (Ravasi and Rindova 2007, p. 2). Similarly, investigating how organisations apply culture into their strategy development, Rindova et al. (2010) draw from Swidler's (1986) concept of a *cultural toolkit* to explain a flexible process of integration of diverse cultural resources into the organisations' repertoire that affect long-term strategies and actions, namely "cultural repertoire enrichment" (Rindova et al. 2010).

However, the process acquires new characteristics with the rise of social media and it is deeply linked to the production of online celebrity. Furthermore, in the management literature both processes (cultural value creation and celebrity building) have not been extensively interrelated and they have not been observed within the social media context, thus not fully taking into consideration the social complexity of social media adoption by firms and firms' interaction with networked publics. If firms want to build online celebrity to increase their competitive advantage, they need to develop specialised resources and capabilities in the form of cultural capital in order to leverage such cultural context (Rindova et al. 2006; Ravasi et al. 2012).

Since social media transform the way firms interact with stakeholder audiences and with consumers, the ability of firms to develop symbolic capital leads to attaining celebrity that is negotiated with networked publics though interactive processes that differ from the unidirectional action of traditional mass media and influencers (Hirschman *et al.* 1998). In this context, the accumulation of cultural capital is influenced by the way social media audiences confer credibility and value to firms and their projects and producers (Rindova and Fombrun 1999). For example, as shown in previous research, mass media are becoming the basis of symbolic power in societies, and comments of critics and journalists determine the symbolic content of goods because they are authoritative sources who have the power to endorse celebrity and influence consumers' perceptions (McCracken 1989). Yet today the cultures of the Internet

and social media context have transformed this process. The reality of user-generated and user-distributed contents, citizen journalism, and the dynamics of online mass communication in general, are generating a new understanding of the role of the audiences in networked publics that produce and disseminate symbolic media contents, with the awareness of becoming a connected public in a renewed media sphere.

The accumulation of cultural capital requires firms to establish and manage social relationships with these networked intermediaries in order to build and maintain stakeholder perceptions about the meanings evoked by their names and products (Cappetta and Gioia 2006; Fombrun 1996). Furthermore, as shown by the Creators Project example, firms tend to be associated with cool cultures and to integrated and blend different types of cultures, such as engineers and artists, in order to acquire cultural capital. Acquiring cultural capital may thus provide firms with a unique resource that can serve as the basis for highly inimitable strategies (Ravasi et al. 2012), and in turn result in online celebrity that can be preserved over time.

The specificity of the cultural production process has been previously discussed in the context of product design by Rindova et al. 2011. However, with the growing importance of social media, the process of cultural value construction doesn't invest only “symbolic-intensive firms” or the so called “cultural industries”, but it is common to all firms that need to interact with stakeholders and networked consumers. As shown in this empirical case study, today the same process applies to technology firms that are creating products and experiences that have strong meanings for the consumers, so that technology becomes important for what people “can do with it”, emphasising the artistic and cultural expression and communication capabilities that are possible through the use of digital technologies. Finally, the ability of firms to shape and manipulate the social and affective relationships and the conversations with publics through social media is a key factor for the successful management of cultural value. Firms are trying to capture the cultural context of the brand, combined with effective use of unconventional social media tactics and analytics techniques, linking social media to the production of cultural value.

As emerged from the findings, it is important to emphasise that novel social media tactics have to become fully integrated in a company’s overall strategies of action to be successful. As shown in the Creators Project case, examples of web-mediated collective intelligence are inspiring, but to be able to effectively harness the new opportunities presented by social media, managers need a deeper understanding of how these systems work, combining these new systems with more

conventional cultural strategies, such as cultural repertoire enrichment (Rindova et al. 2010) and co-creation of symbolic value (Ravasi and Rindova 2007). Another possibility as advocated, amongst others, by McCracken (2011), and realised by big technology firms such as Google (Kuntze and Matulich 2010), is to create new job roles, namely "chief culture officers", to show understanding of the way business environments evolve, and manage the company's fast changing cultural strategy. This research is a step forward towards understanding the processes that lead firms to develop cultural capital and cultural innovation and their interaction with other types of intangible assets (Ravasi et al. 2012), where more empirical research is clearly needed.

Expanding Theories of Celebrity Building in Organisations by Framing the Construct of Online Celebrity

Through engaging with stakeholders and consumers in social media networks, firms are able to attract and aggregate collective judgments of their value in terms of *Web-mediated forms of celebrity*. As clearly shown in the celebrity literature, celebrity is socially constructed through a combination of firms' nonconforming actions and their management efforts, and a dramatised reality developed by the media that ascribe exceptional quality to the firm (Rindova et al. 2006). As argued by Rindova et al. (2006), the media strongly influence the process of celebrity building because they are key gatekeepers of the information production and distribution channels that enable firms to reach the public. In this way the media affect the perceptions of firms by audiences (Deephouse 2000; Lounsbury and Glynn 2001; Pollock and Rindova 2003; Rindova et al. 2006).

The insights provided in this case study contribute to the understanding of the specific social media tactics adopted by organisations, affecting the way traditional mass media affect the process of organisational celebrity building. This research investigates how organisations are strategically using social media with the aim of increasing the positive relationships with institutional intermediaries and favour the attraction of "large-scale public attention and positive emotional responses from stakeholder audiences" (Rindova et al. 2006, p. 51). Moreover, celebrity identifies the emotional dimension of stakeholders' reactions to firms that can favourably predict and direct organisational future actions, leading to better future perceptions of a firm's capabilities (Rindova et al. 2006). Rindova et al. (2006) suggested a model that put at the centre the role of journalists and traditional press in using dramatic narratives selecting firms as "protagonists" with specific nonconforming identity-attributes able to solve conflicts and

bring about change. In this way they construct a "dramatised reality", thus affecting stakeholders' perceptions of firms (Rindova et al. 2006, p. 65).

While previous research was focusing on the role of the media as a powerful separate identity shaping the perception of firms, social media shifts the focus on stakeholders' networks and their dialogic relationships with Internet publics. Social media facilitate the creation of relations between companies, consumers and stakeholders, and a set of cultures, while at the same time presenting new challenges. Through social media consumers are now embedded in social and affective networks where companies cannot control the flow of communication, but they can enact novel tactics to manage them strategically. The link to the social context and structures plays a critical role in shaping the frames of understanding around events and practices. Web-mediated communication influences the quality of the interaction and negotiation between the firms and their stakeholders, and consumers become important sources of news and trust. In mass communication theory, journalists were considered "trustees" because the public lacked publishing capabilities and wasn't able to develop reliable, informed opinions without mediation from authoritative centralised sources (Lippman 1922). Well known critics and journalists influence the meanings associated with firms and products since they are recognised as "experts" in the field. They maintain an authority as relevant sources of knowledge, and consumers can trust their judgments, analysis and explanations (Glynn and Lounsbury 2005). Critics thus interpret and manipulate the meanings associated to products or events depending on their professional role and judgment

This dominant conception of the public has been clearly contested with the emergence of social media. The communication ecology of online networks of communication is shaped, framing resources and emotions. The *social judgment* is built by the crowd, since good recommendations online build trust amongst strangers and create social relevance (Arvidsson 2013). Firms are then shaping and mediating these collective processes that happen outside of their control, through managing an intensive interaction with a diverse set of cultures and communities. Identity relevant information that can portray firms as celebrities are not attributed exclusively by journalists that seek to construct a dramatised reality and craft "breaking news" stories that can multiply their impact (Rindova et al. 2006). Social media ratings, recommendations, and reputation systems have changed the credibility landscape, making traditional conventions that determine credibility as originating from a central top-down authority such as critics and

certifiers (Durand et al. 2007), journalists (Rindova et al. 2006) or security analysts (Zuckerman 1999) potentially outdated (Metzger et al. 2010).

Social media challenges traditional gatekeepers' models of trust assessment and established perceptions of credibility, trustworthiness, and authoritativeness, fostering the importance of peer and bottom-up assessment of credibility. Social media challenges the conventional perspective of media objectivity and trustworthiness of the information they provide about firms (Deephouse 2000; Elsbach 1994; Pollock and Rindova 2003). Journalists' tactics in creating celebrity firms, described by Rindova et al. (2006), are thus complemented by a complex process of interactions between the firm and networked publics. Traditional media used to have a unilateral and hierarchical control of the technology and the content of communication and the way information was delivered to large audiences though the authority of journalists. As described in the emerging findings, social media transform this process, changing the way actors engage in a complex social network of relationships that are shaped and manipulated though web-mediated unconventional strategies and techniques (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010).

The way celebrity is attained thus changes with social media adoption, resulting in a bidirectional process between the firms and their stakeholders. Firms are able to manipulate and shape these interactions and eventually attract large-scale social responses from audiences and aggregate web-mediated collective ratings and "general sentiment". Web-mediated collective ranking and judgment systems facilitate comparisons among rated actors based on uncertain selection criteria, affecting behaviours of organisations and their stakeholders (Wade et al. 2006; Fombrun 1996; Rao 1994). As shown in the analysis of this case study, what constitutes value on social media is derived from the aggregation of collective ratings that users express in their online activities, and the ability of firms to integrate these cultural resources and networks into the firm's strategy. The influence of online word of mouth through consumer user-generated opinions and content has been investigated and tested in different online contexts (Dellarocas 2003). The shared opinions of users constitute the trust that enables mass communication and collective action through social media, gathering trustworthy rankings that operate better than previous more hierarchical models of collective judgment formation.

Social media offer groundbreaking opportunities for expanding organisations' ability to track and manage social relationships by providing effective methods for aggregating, tagging, and rating behaviours, and thus achieving new forms of visibility, accountability and, hence, trust and

reputation (Clippinger 2007). Online sentiment analysis detects public moods and emotions from social media, and many companies are now offering these services since its application is very valuable to firms (Dellarocas et al. 2007; Pang and Lee 2008; Chen and Xie 2008; Liu 2007).

The adoption of collective rating and ranking systems can generate user trust about how things are perceived and valued in social networks. Arvidsson and Colleoni (2012) argue that social media business models are based on the ability of firms to extract value from peoples' affective relations with an array of stakeholders through social media. In a social media 'Like economy' (Gerlitz and Helmond 2013), the value is generated from users' direct engagement. This way the value of a website depends on the *relational context*. Indeed, such forms of direct user engagement are managed with the spread of '*social plugins'* and '*social buttons'*. Facebook's *social plugins,* for instance, experiment new ways to gather user data across the Web, gathering "Likes" of its active users. Similarly, Twitter's 'interest graph' detects interest patterns of re-tweets. Through *social plugins*, social media platforms can integrate their user datasets throughout the Web, also stimulating users' engagement outside of the single platform and capturing the overall benefits of that engagement. The power of social media is thus the ability to track the interests and the centrality in social networks of particular users that correspond to the attention they gather within their social graphs that is aggregated by the various social buttons (Gerlitz and Hemond 2010).

Research on *online reputation* has been mainly carried out at individual level and focused on quantitative computer-driven metrics, while distinguishing between online reputation and online celebrity as two interconnected but a distinct asset hasn't been researched before. Listening to and monitoring the Web, mapping and understanding the social graphs between consumers, firms and stakeholders, identifying the important nodes of influence, is key to understanding firms' positioning within this cultural web of relationships. As resulted from the analysis of the Creators Project platform, social media allow firms to aggregate and measure the engagement of users on digital platforms, their connections and relationships with lead cultures, and turn them into metrics for cultural value creation. If strategically used, represent a way to improve a company's positive perceptions towards their stakeholders (Boyd and Ellison 2007; Gerlitz and Helmond 2013; Arvidsson 2013).

As shown in the Creator Project, consumers' expressions of attention and emotional responses due to their engagement with arts and technology are converted into signals of collective trust that firms can transform into intangible assets, namely online celebrity. As a result, the mining of

social media data is emerging as a less ambiguous definition of online celebrity, what Arvidsson calls *general sentiment* (Arvidsson 2011; 2013), as data mining and sentiment analysis spread as possible ways of evaluating corporate celebrity. For instance, *opinion mining* and *sentiment analysis* of social media data provides a valuable indication of how consumers express their sentiments and opinions about companies online. According to Castells (2009), social media "protocols of communication" are based on the culture of sharing within the digitally networked environment, multidirectional feeds and interactive communication generating a common culture, which is "the culture of co-production of the content that is consumed" (2009, p. 126). Increasingly firms use algorithms that can interpret users' social data, taking into consideration the aggregated perceptions and sentiments of stakeholder audiences, predicting new relationships among consumers based on shared interests, or predicting new topics of interest around specific brands or products. Firms can then integrate relevant information in their social media strategies to flexibly respond to stakeholders' demands.

Conclusion and Implication for Future Management Research and Practice

In summary, this paper presents a number of relevant theoretical contributions that can enhance organisational practices of celebrity building in the new context of social media. In particular, this paper presents an early attempt to investigate the way technology firms are strategically adopting social media, increasing their ability to manage relationships with networked publics and manipulate these interactions though unconventional media tactics, thus gaining online celebrity. Whereas in the literature around intangible assets the link amongst intellectual, social and reputational capitals has been already explored (e.g. Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998; Rindova and Fombrun 1999), this research investigates how an important intangible asset such as organisational celebrity (Rindova et al. 2006) is related to cultural capital (Ravasi and Rindova 2007; Ravasi et al. 2012) in the process of building online celebrity through social media. More specifically, my observations support the argument that cultural capital is obtained by harnessing the value of networked publics, by engaging in a process of cultural enrichment and meaning construction with stakeholder audiences, individuals, communities and firms, though social communication and affective networks.

By partnering with nonconformist "rebel" creative agencies, technology firms use unconventional social media tactics to establish connections to a diverse set of cultures such as artists, online influencers, geeks, cultural institutions, and intermediaries. These relationships are

essential for building and accumulating cultural capital and for engaging in cultural activities (Verganti 2006). This process enables firms to recognise new artistic movements, geeks, and lead cultures that can enhance the cultural capital of its brand or projects. In essence, companies are participating in an online conversation with the rest of their network, since the perception of a firm by its stakeholders its increasingly built and negotiated within social media communication and affective networks.

Online celebrity as an intangible asset is thus strongly related to firms' ability to develop "identity-relevant cultural resources" (Ravasi et al. 2012:236) that enable firms to appropriate cultural capital though social media, with important implications for management practice. The proposed cultural perspective on value creation, coupled with a strategic use of social media and the adoption of social media unconventional tactics, can enable firms to influence stakeholders' perceptions though their ability to manage and control the collective activities that happen on social media platforms that ultimately lead to the firm's attainment of intangible assets such as celebrity and reputation. It is only through this enhanced engagement with a set of cultures that firms are able to enter into a productive relationship with publics and tap into the value collectively produced. As argued by Ravasi et al. (2012), this process asks for a re-thinking of the cultural value creation process and its management that "may depend more on skilful use and dynamic updating than on control and protection of intellectual property" (2012, p. 236). This research outcome shows that social media have important strategic implications that need to be incorporated in the core strategy of a firm. Future organisation research can look into different conditions, contexts, and tactics that allow organisations to effectively integrate social media in the overall organisational strategy, resulting in cultural innovation.

In conclusion, the findings of this research cast new light on the growing field of social media and their implication in the process of firms' celebrity building. In this paper I seek to suggest a new direction for strategy research by emphasising the role of social media in the creation of cultural capital and their interrelationships with other intangible assets, namely celebrity, that have already attracted scholarly attention in strategy. It is relevant to empirically investigate in future research how firms can manage the interactions between these different forms of capital in strategy development and implementation.

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Table 1: Quantitative Details of the Interview Data

Informants	**Year 1 (launch), Year2, Year3**
Global Director of Marketing Partnership (Intel)	2
Executive Creative Director (Intel)	2
Engineer (Intel)	1
Marketing Representatives Asia (Intel)	1
PR Representative (Intel)	1
Co-Founder (VICE)	2
Executive Director (VICE)	1
Creative Director (VICE)	2
Global Editor (VICE)	1
Social Media Manager (VICE)	2
Artists & Geeks	10
Spectators	14
Online users	[chat and forums]
Other Media	5
Other PR	4

Table 2: Data Sources and Use

Data Source	Type of Data	Use in the Analysis
Observations and Field Notes	*Field notes from meeting attendance (5 meetings)*. Detailed record of social interaction and conversations observed in the project during the live events I attended. In addition to the Web component, Vice and Intel hosted five Creators Project conferences in five cities. The conferences included concerts, art exhibits, movie screenings, and panels. I conducted investigations at the London launch of the project: Three days observation at Victoria House in Bloomsbury Square and at the closing event of the year, taking place on September 17th in Beijing (one week of observations and interviews with artists, Intel senior managers, VICE members and audiences), and in Paris 19-24 June 2012.	Triangulate interpretations emerging from interviews.
	Informal conversations. Informal talk with managers, artists, marketing and PR representatives, artists, and support staff, ranging from brief exchanges to longer talks during live events I attended or online.	Familiarise with the organisational/project context, gain trust of informants, discuss insights from observations, clarify uncertainties regarding project-related decisions, and support emerging interpretations.
	Picture and Videos. Visual documentation of material and textual artefacts produced during live events and in their online projects (especially YouTube channel and 3D interactive installation).	
Interviews	*Preliminary interviews (17)* with social media firms' senior and middle managers, to investigate continuum's history, culture, and work processes.	Familiarise with the field context.
	First Round June - December 2010: 10 semi-structured and unstructured interviews with members of VICE and Intel, including the Head of Marketing of Intel and the Co-Founder of VICE. Interviews lasted between one and two hours. Artists and audiences were interviewed at the Creators Project final event in Beijing. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, totalling 60 pages.	Integrate observations with informants' accounts to improve our understanding of social dynamics and project-related decisions.
	Videotaped archival interviews of the Creators Project published on the project website were analysed together with archival video materials of project launch in New York and other live events.	
Archival Data	*Company-related documents*: Guide for newcomers, internal presentations of the three groups, guidelines for project managers, maps of the development process Organisation archives and publications of the companies: VICE publications (magazines, books and films), Intel academic research publications and press releases.	Familiarise with the organisational context.
	Project-related documents: Documents and project materials, project website (*http://www.thecreatorsproject.com*), project blog (*http://www.thecreatorsproject.com/blog*) social network sites, such as Twitter 5,331 followers (*http://twitter.com/creatorsproject*) and Facebook- 21,976 friends (http://www.facebook.com/thecreatorsproject); Tumblr (http://thecreatorsproject.tumblr.com). Vimeo: http://vimeo.com/user3552240. I also analysed project publications for all the events (http://media.thecreatorsproject.com) and the content of other media articles about the project.	Support, integrate, and triangulate evidence from observations and interviews.
	External expert's publications from media and academic sources.	Support, integrate, and triangulate evidence from observations and interviews

Table 3: Stages of Analysis

Analytical Goal	Data Used	Analytical Procedures	Analytical Outcomes	Theory Development
Constructing a case history and understanding the social media context	1) Corporate archive 2) Interviews 3) Scholarly publications 4) Media articles	Thematic analysis	A chronology of relevant events, processes, and outcomes	I observed first this fast evolving field and the it changed changes organisational strategies and practices that are different from the way organisations construct reputation though traditional mass media
Identifying key communities of influencers involved in the process and analyse how social media changed main concepts as networked publics	1) Corporate archive containing statements by organisational leaders 2) Interview data 3) Social Media pages	1) Multiple rounds of open coding, moving first-order codes to second-order constructs 2) Axial coding to relate constructs to each other	1) Identification of key external communities 2) mapping complementarities among communities and how firms "earning credibility" from communities 3) Analysing the way meanings are negotiated in a networked environment	The observation of systematic integrative use of a set of cultures and active communities brought to the adaptation of the construct of networked publics. This concept helped to define the way firms negotiate meaning with institutional intermediaries in a multi-directional networked environment
Analysing processes of construction of cultural value through social media strategy	1) Corporate archive providing both descriptions and examples of organisational practices 2) Interview data	1) Multiple rounds of open coding to identify changes in strategies 2) Axial coding to relate new concepts to changes	Comparative analytical tables	Social media transform the process of cultural value creation, since networked publics are actively engaged together with experts and intermediaries. Processes of cultural value creation though social media can lead to online celebrity construction
Documenting changes in the outcome of the process of celebrity building through social media	1) Corporate archive 2) Interviews	Axial coding to related changes in processes of symbolic value creation to the outcome of reputation building	Comparative analytical tables	Rindova et al. (2006) propose a celebrity building model at organisational level centred around top-down sources (journalist and media). In the social media context networked publics contribute contents and meanings and firms "manage communities" and "negotiate meanings", attracting mass scale attention and emotional responses, thus linking symbolic co-construction to celebrity
Development of the grounded theoretical model	Case-archive and all evidence organised in comparative tables as supporting a) specific constructs; b) relationships among them	Selective coding to connect new constructs and relationships in a coherent theoretical framework	Theoretical framework	The need of firms to manage the relationship between a set of cultures and to negotiate meanings with intermediaries lead to the redefinition of social-media strategies to harness the symbolic/cultural value of networked publics. This in turn results in gaining online celebrity as Web-mediated social ranking systems

Table 4: Selected Evidence Supporting the Concept "Integrative Use of External Cultural Resources"

Second-Order Concepts	First-Order Concepts	Representative Quotes
INTEGRATIVE USE OF EXTERNAL DIGITAL CULTURES	Partnering with nonconformist creative agencies	*"We determined that we needed something very different and unique and we needed a guide to take us into this new environment" (Intel Executive Creative Director).* *"In team with VICE we quickly learned that there was an opportunity to do something really different. We are not a sponsor, it's a full partnership and we come up with ideas together" (Intel Head of Marketing Partnerships).* "*At Intel we started from a serious problem, that young people have little knowledge about Intel's products, resulting in a neutral opinion about the company. Young people just don't know what we are and why they should care*" *(Intel Global Director of Marketing Partnership).* "*Supporting creators is at the core of the company. VICE is for people who go out there and do it themselves, who are really innovative in how they do things*" *(VICE Creative Director).* "*Intel came to VICE for our voice, our creative input, how we talk to youth. But they are a real partner, they help us to grow the project, they help us to tell the story globally, and they really embrace the emerging artists in a genuine way, they gave them technical tools such as hardware they never got access to, and they are helping them in their careers, giving them new opportunities outside the Creators Project" (VICE Creative Director).* *"You want to get this community that will give you the most ability to amplify that conversation out there...seeing the value and the future implications of what this project stood for" (VICE Social Media Manager).*
	Earning credibility from online influencers	" *The tech influencers and hackers are the ones that say thumbs up, thumbs down, this is cool, this isn't, these are the gadgets to get and buy, this is the one to pre-order online or not*" *(VICE Creative Director).* *"What I want to do is to make people think differently about what their computer can do for them*" *(Intel Global Director of Marketing Partnership).* *"What is difficult is that for this sort of peer engagement there is no kind of ethical charter yet so it's up to the individual or to the community to identify the best way to collaborate with companies. I am very careful with those relationships because I think it becomes cynical quite quickly" (VICE Creative Director).* *"So we identify people who have an open source and creative focus and we bring them in the project and ask for their opinions when we are developing or launching a certain product. You can even empower those people to speak on behalf of the company and if they are critics you can make sure that their criticism is heard by people within the company, to ensure that any learning is promoted within the company" (Intel Global Director of Marketing Partnership Marketing).* *"Our dream was recreating Paris in the '20s where all these artists gathered together to collaborate and magnify their art. We wanted to do the same on a bigger global scale, so we brought together examples of amazing artists from all different fields, including film, design, arts, open source, architecture, sound and fashion coming from China, Brazil, Europe, US" (Vice co-founder)* *"The Creators Project focus is on experience, so here all the art is interactive, people can interact with the art and really experience the artist's vision. It is a great platform to support independent artists and designers...people can understand the art better because of the technology and vice versa. We deal with social trends, we pick them, analyse them, and mesh them into our artwork so it can resonate with people's cultural fabric" (Artist, Creators Project).* *"Consumers were convinced that we are involved in some really cool high end arts and technology stuff. The next time they are in the market they will remember the cool stuff they saw... that's how it trickles down to the general consumer fabric. For example, hackers are part of mainstream popular culture, especially popularised by the likes of matrix...since there is already an existing dialogue in mainstream culture that is happening around hackers, then people are more likely to pick it up" (VICE Creative Director).*

	Blending cultural resources	*"One of the challenges of this project was to bring a brand like Intel closer to creativity. They took a risk, they really wanted to add value, creating an initiative that would support artists and a platform that would distribute their work to a wider audience" (VICE Executive Director)* *" We will decide which new collaborations and colliding artists and hackers together can work for global distribution" (VICE creative Director).* *"We are working with the labs, and Intel engineers are now working with the artists, helping them with the challenges that a small studio might have. Intel can provide technology, hardware, even expertise to new products that now artists are playing with in their works, and what they are getting for that are really new insights from new groups who are using their products. Lots of times Intel has only been focused on business, education and efficiency" (VICE Executive Director).* "*I tend to believe that artists and scientists are not that different to one another. They use similar inquiry based research-driven methods to create meanings and find out more about the world around us. Artists today are using computational and digital media to explore the creative potential of today's technology and also finding the beauty, the human, the poetry in it" (VICE Global Editor).* *"The artists and engineers are eager to work together, and that changed how young people view Intel" (Intel Director of Immersive Computing).* "*My first interaction with an artist was in October when I attended the Creators Project event and I started observing the installations. Then I met some of the artists and they made an impression on me…it really made me step back and have a fundamental assessment of the way I see technology" (Intel Director of Immersive Computing).*
CO-CONSTRUCTION OF WEB-MEDIATED CULTURAL VALUE	From technological and functional innovation to cultural innovation	*"The emotional connection means that it does something that you really value. That's why we really focused on creativity and art as opposed to mathematical or scientific functions that are available to the system*" *(Intel Executive Creative Director).* "*I see that a computer is becoming an emotional and style decision. It's not just about performance anymore. It's an emotional, visceral purchase, and not one that happens every day" (Intel Head of Marketing).* *"It is about the value that you attribute to it that can capture the community that you want there"* (*VICE Creative Director).* *"Experience is the centre. Even a film for me is an experience. I draw from everything; going to art galleries, concerts, travelling. It's immersive and I am always looking for something that would make you feel you are a little bit inside rather than standing and looking at a painting" (VICE Creative Director).* *"Intel played a big role in educating people to use technology and computers for technical functions that were offered to us, such as basic email, word processing, PowerPoint presentation and Internet access. For long time and in the perception of many people the personal computer was designed to do the calculations, maths and physics. While Today people use computers to do amazing creative stuff and art, and creativity is very different from functionality*" *(Intel Head of Partnership).*
	Negotiating meanings with institutional intermediaries	*"What the mainstream media picked up is that Intel is embracing hackers, it's doing something that's edgy and cool, they didn't pick up the functional quality of the technology like the processing power, the memory or the operating system. The mass readers see the same "isn't that smart, isn't that cool and edgy". They don't have to understand all the nuances...but if they do they can follow it up on the web. Everyone uses Google, you don't have to heat them over the head, people will go on and find it themselves*" *(Intel PR Manager).* *"In the first year, we just looked like the bank behind this thing and we didn't get the credibility, so we decided that we had to embrace this authentic programme. So we started taking a more active stand and be very proud about what we bring to artists and magnify the story. The power of authenticity is so strong especially with youth…they don't like when you are faking it they don't have any emotional response"* (*Intel Executive Creative Director).* "*We are identifying diverse communities of consumers, the academic community, the design community, the tech movements, opinion leaders, critiques. We are engaging in a peer conversation with those communities, starting to think about the overall responsibility as a partnership and how we can structure that relationship with those cultures, because realistically it needs to be consistent*" *(Intel Executive Creative Director).*

		"We were trying to build a succession of success stories about the technological innovation and the new digital cultures beyond the project. Then to get news coverage we pushed it through PR and advertising..." (VICE Social Media Manager).
	Unconventional social media tactics	"*We focused on using social media to hook people in and engage them and hook them into the experience that we created, so they could film the video, submit it and engage our subscribers through the platform*" *(VICE Social Media Manager).* *"….we saw the relationship with young audiences changing, and they viewed the Creators Project as something they trust. They want to learn more about it and participate actively" (Intel Executive Creative Director).* *"For each individual campaign we make decisions based on whether those groups are communicated with and how. It's all about the credibility of people who endorse it"(VICE Creative Director).* "*Social media is strategic for the project. The idea is to make and strengthen the online community so that they can all talk to each other and to offer a platform where that can happen and they can pitch ideas to the studio as well, like the Vimeo group uploading videos there…this would only grow because they have that creative community… put the right people together and then just make sure it is good work… (VICE Social Media Manager).* "*We are investing in the next wave of digital creative geniuses. The Creators Project is now evolving to become a platform where we can commission projects through "The Studio"…there is a huge audience out there that want to see it and their video profile enables them to be part of the social network, giving them an opportunity with thousands of people coming to the event.*" *(VICE Creative Director).).*
GAINING ONLINE CELEBRITY	Aggregate large scale Web-mediated social ratings and judgments	"*We were measuring percentage of conversations on Twitter that are around arts and technology of which the creators (VICE and Intel) are a part of, and then seeing that impact on audiences' perceptions. To measure the social response level is hugely valuable, also associated to TV shows" (Intel Executive Creative Director).* *"It's not only about creating contents, but contexts and then we created a programme that engages diverse cultures and then we put relevant contents on Facebook and Twitter and the levels of engagement are massive, we created a conversation around a context. It shows how you can make your programme interesting in a social digital environment" (VICE, Social Media Manager).* *"….we have done many years of research on that. But this changes in a social media-driven world and it changes the way we measure it" (Intel Executive Creative Director).* *"It is much more about social media, about people participating in something and sharing it themselves. We have to be part of the conversation rather than us pushing the message and engaging in impression management...this has huge implications on us as an agency, on what kind of people do you need, how do we realise ideas, whether our ideas fit in the consumers' journey..."(VICE Social Media Manager).*
	Harnessing "General Sentiment" from networked publics	*" There is a volume of analysis before and after the campaign, picking up some interesting insights, but we don't pretend that is a summary of a sentiment shift. We see cumulative effect and cumulative value on companies' research on audiences' patterns" (Intel PR Representative).* *"If we are failing we are honest about it, for example if we are getting lots of volume but not quality coverage it is a failure...if people are reading about it you want to change their perception of the firm and ...consumers think about the companies differently...and they are more disposed to consider our actions and products in the future" (Intel Global Marketing Partnerships).* *"Not everyone has creative abilities. Some people don't have the same talent, but the emotional connection that people can create with their computer because they know what they can actually do and what makes it possible for people so they can enjoy and potentially create…though social channels this give us the emotional link that we are looking for" (Intel Global Marketing Partnerships).*

Figure 1. Data Structure

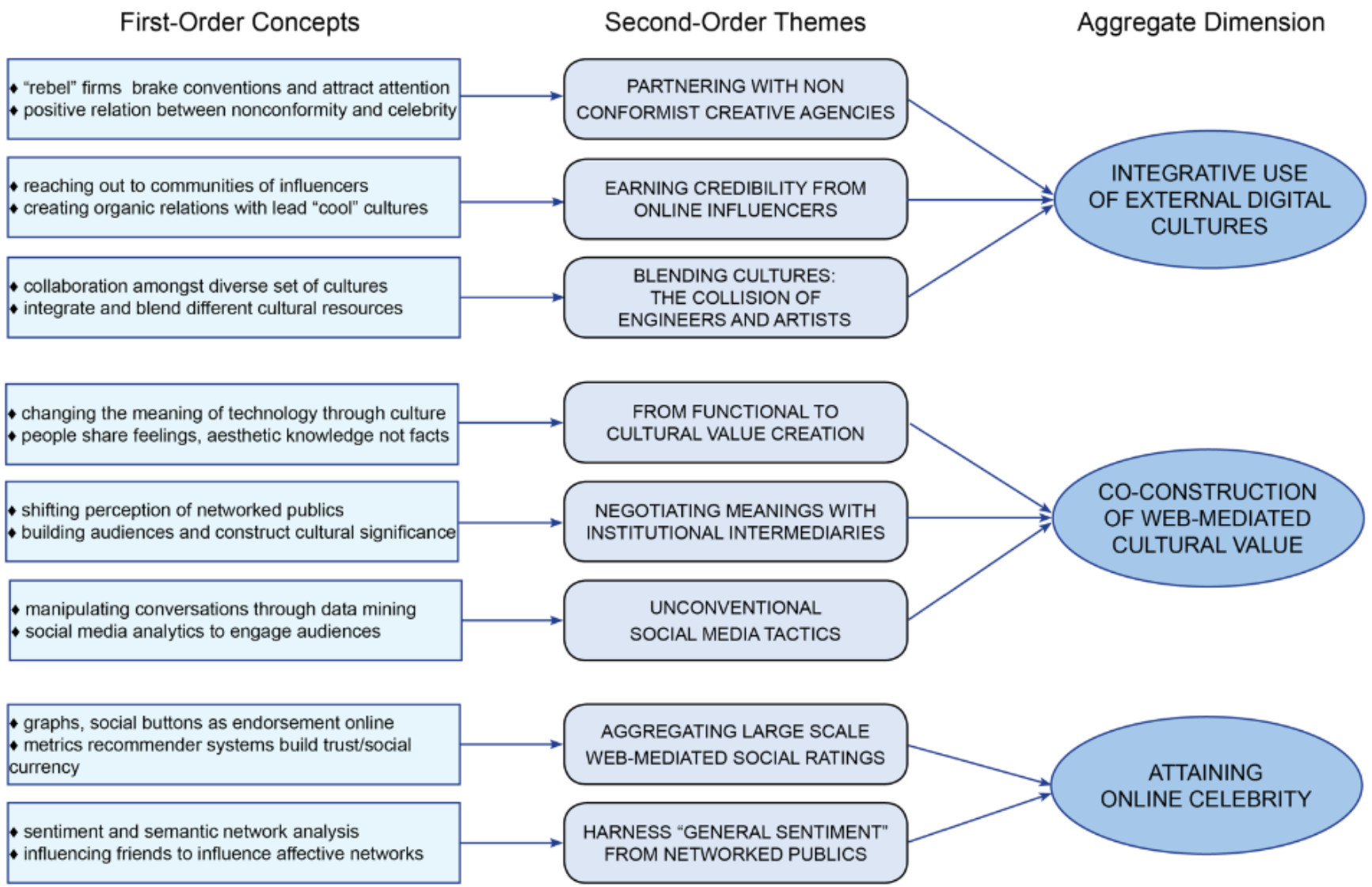
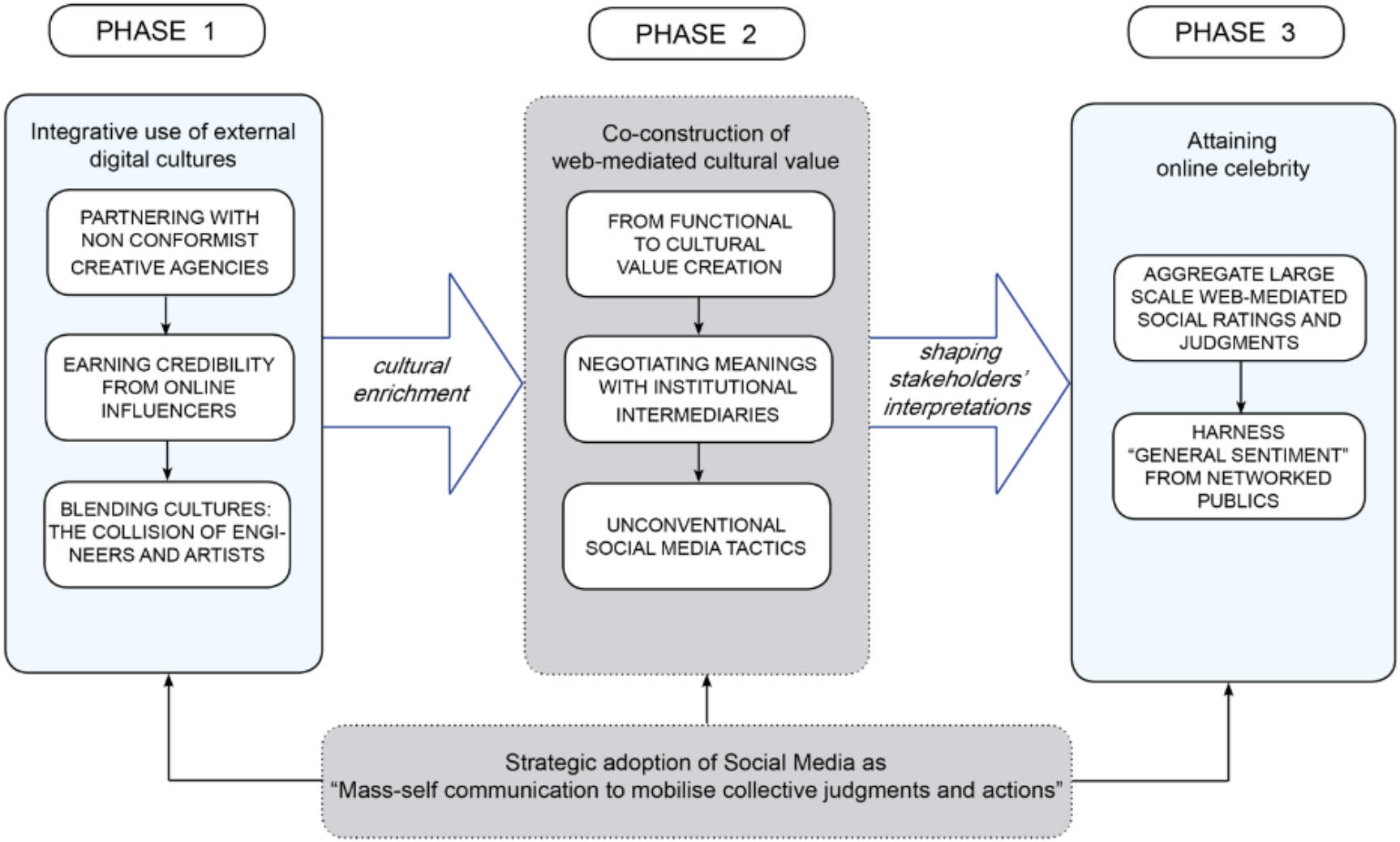


Figure 2. Emerging Model of organisational celebrity building through Social Media



RETHINKING LEGITIMACY THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA:

HOW SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANISATIONS ACQUIRE LEGITIMACY BY CHALLENGING THE LEGITIMACY OF OTHER ORGANISATIONS THROUGH A BLENDING OF ILLEGITIMATE ACTIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA TACTICS

ABSTRACT

Combining insights from institutional theory, social movement research, and social media studies, in this paper I investigate the way social media affect the process of legitimacy acquisition by social movement organisations, an understudied phenomenon at organisational level. Previous works on legitimacy have extensively investigated institutions as taken-for-granted norms and processes that mainly reflect the interest of powerful actors. In contrast, this research argues that movements are able to manipulate organisational legitimacy by mobilising social media-driven collective actions that challenge dominant frames and powerful players. In particular, by drawing on an in-depth case study of Greenpeace's adoption of social media in three environmental campaigns, this paper finds that movements do this by staging controversial and unconventional social media mobilisation tactics such as *tapping the crowd* and *delegitimising corporate online identity* that blend offline and online illegitimate actions. I develop a grounded model that explains how challenger movements are able to acquire collective support by the networked publics, exercising their role as *power switchers* in the *networked space, which* ultimately leads to legitimacy acquisition. Movements are able to connect and disconnect networks, and mobilise actors and resources according to different contexts, interests, and tactics applied. I conclude with a discussion on the implications of social media adoption in the process of legitimacy acquisition for future research and practice.

INTRODUCTION

This paper builds on the convergent scholarship of institutional theory on legitimacy acquisition and social movements (Rao and Giorgi 2006; Lounsbury et al. 2003; Rao et al. 2003; Lounsbury 2001; Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2007; Rao et al. 2000; Deephouse and Suchman 2008; Suchman 1995; Elsbach and Sutton 1992) in order to understand the process of collective action through which social movement organisations acquire legitimacy, by challenging the legitimacy of other organisations. Furthermore, this paper will extend and update the literature on impression management and legitimacy building (Elsbach and Sutton 1992) by considering the emerging role of novel social media tactics adopted by social movement organisations in their campaigns. The approach of this paper is situated in recent theoretical efforts to combine movements and institutional dynamics, while integrating social media research to rethink legitimacy.

Legitimacy is a powerful resource for organisations, a "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman 1995, p. 574). Legitimate organisations are regarded by stakeholders as more worthy and more reliable than illegitimate organisations (Suchman 1995; Dowling and Pfeffer 1975; Meyer and Rowan 1977). Scholars tend to consider organisational legitimacy primarily as the outcome of isomorphic pressures, homogeneity and diffusion (Scott 2008; Suchman 1995), since social actors normally accept and take for granted legitimate organisations (Suchman 1995). According to Suchman (1995), the management of legitimacy relies on the ability of the organisation to establish intensive communication with the social environment in which the organisation is embedded, where actors instrumentally use symbols to acquire legitimacy (Dowling and Pfeffer 1975; Pfeffer 1981). Processes of organisational legitimacy are often connected to powerful actors that have access to appropriate resources and strategies to reach planned objectives (Phillips et al. 2004). However, what constitutes legitimacy is a conflicting concept comprising ambiguity and contradictions (Meyer and Rowan 1977), and it reveals how institutional dynamics are a contested terrain that generally depend on collective actions (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2007).

Extant research suggests that in times of crisis, when legitimacy is challenged, organisations and their spokespersons tend to protect and affirm perceptions of organisational legitimacy (Elsbach 1994; Elsbach and Sutton 1992). Institutional theorists have explained how organisations

respond to conflicting demands and controversial activities by adopting institutionalised practices and norms, and using spokespersons and impression management techniques to manipulate the perception of the organisation's image in order to gain, maintain, or repair legitimacy (Elsbach and Sutton 1992). To deal with such challenging situations, organisations produce texts to confirm, validate, or change the meaning associated with the controversy (Phillips et al. 2004). As stated by Hardy and Phillips, (1998) organisations give signals to external constituencies on a continuous basis in order to secure and maintain their "discursive legitimacy" through a wide range of communication activities and texts, which include organisational effectiveness (Scott 1977), and executive compensation (Ocasio 1999; Porac et al. 1999). In a similar way, theorists analysing impression management in organisations (Giacalone and Rosenfeld 1989; Schlenker 1980; Tedeschi and Reiss 1981) describe how organisations manage their legitimacy by providing narratives and verbal accounts following controversial events that challenged organisational legitimacy.

Elsbach and Sutton (1992) investigated how radical social movement organisations' spokespersons use similar tactics to strategically manipulate stakeholders' or interest groups' perceptions, and eventually, their decisions. In this way movements are able to restore legitimacy in the face of their constituencies after they undertake illegitimate actions. Elsbach (1994) extended a similar study to the cattle industry that developed in California, showing how spokespersons use communicative tactics to restore organisational legitimacy after controversial events. However, researchers have been mainly focusing on the central role of corporate spokespersons and the way they manipulate the news media's representation of illegitimate events, acquiring legitimacy through processes of institutional conformity and decoupling (Meyer and Rowan 1977) that augment the credibility of the spokesperson and set the stage for impression management techniques, such as "justification" and "defence of innocence" (Elsbach and Sutton 1992, p. 709). Hardy and Phillips considered the case of Greenpeace and other environmental groups, which "can affect public understanding, attract media attention and pressure the government, because they are understood to be speaking on behalf of the environment" (Hardy and Phillips 1998, p. 219).

The investigations made in the social movement field enhanced the understanding of the way illegitimate activities and contesting views are necessary steps, which lead to the acquisition of legitimacy. On the other side, in the social movement literatures there is a lack of investigation of stakeholders' tactics, and in particular into how social movements pressure political and

normative power, and shape corporate social change activities motivated by ethical concerns (Den Hond and de Bakker 2007), and by their quest for change at field level (Lounsbury et al. 2003).

In particular, social movements' relation to the media and their impact in gathering broad endorsement and support from large stakeholders' audiences are generally overlooked and under-explored, and no rich, field-based accounts of the phenomenon exist to date. Regardless of a growing interest in rhetorical (Green 2004; Suddaby and Greenwood 2005) and discursive legitimacy that highlight the power of language and communication in legitimacy controversy (Phillips et al. 2004; Vaara and Tienari 2008), most of the existing research follows a one way sender-receiver model, without emphasising the central and complex role of new media in current information-intensive environments, which has been defined as the "*infomediary process*" (Deephouse and Heugens 2009, p. 541). There is lack of research on how traditional media stages actors, edits the messages, and creates dramatised stories in cases of contested issues that lead to legitimacy struggles (Deephouse 2000; Pollock and Rindova 2003). However, the way new media have transformed organisations' communication tactics and strategies for action is an under investigated phenomenon. Social media specifically have increased stakeholder awareness, allowing audiences to easily communicate, create, share and evaluate contents on a global scale (Dellarocas 2003). Social media are characterised by dialogical communication, a low barrier to entry, open participation and the possibility to break up dialogues though the viral diffusion of information, opinions and contents (Arvidsson and Colleoni 2012). These characteristics result in the creation of "networked publics" (Varnelis 2008) and engaged audiences that actively participate in the legitimacy building process that escapes the full control of organisations and firms. This represents at the same time a great opportunity and challenge for organisations and their relations with key external stakeholders and audiences.

Against this background, this research sheds light on the *processes of organisational legitimacy acquisition in the emerging social media contexts.* I seek to address the theoretical gap identified above, investigating the impact of social media on processes of legitimacy acquisition through a qualitative in-depth study of a social movement organisation - Greenpeace. In order to do so, the study focused on the illegitimate tactics (e.g. illegal direct actions or unconventional social media tactics) used by Greenpeace to acquire legitimacy and the way they blend online and offline actions to aggregate the sentiment of networked publics through social media, in order to

gain mass scale endorsement by challenging existing norms and established actors in the field. This research analyses this process in three distinct campaigns carried out by Greenpeace UK in the last two years. The choice to focus on these particular campaigns and on the adoption of social media in the campaign strategies derives from the importance that key stakeholders attributed to the emerging social media environment to effectively direct audiences' endorsements in support of the organisation's causes and values that may contradict and challenge taken for granted norms and institutions.

Despite the fact that all Greenpeace campaigns had a different thematic focus and a different corporate target, the way Greenpeace used illegitimate tactics offline and online, and the way they used social media to mobilise collective action and acquire legitimacy, was consistent across all campaigns. This study finds that the heterogeneous firms' responses in the observed campaigns demonstrate that when companies do something that openly contradicts the values they promote or the image they project, it becomes easier to be exposed through social media, since there is easier access to information and to comparable sources. Greenpeace is a good example of a globally networked social movement organisation that is adapting to the fast evolving media environment by changing its tactics and organisational structure to be able to influence and shape this environment. As shown in the observed campaigns, Greenpeace's ability to aggregate the sentiment of networked publics and to leverage mass attention to support their causes, may ultimately lead to increasing the organisation's legitimacy, while at the same time violating legitimate social expectations and challenging corporate activities. Thus, as described in the study, social movements act as "switchers" that operate in the connections between different networks (prestige and specialist media, corporate actors, competing companies in the targeted industry, political representatives, decision makers, and consumers' networks). Switchers have a key role in the process of legitimacy acquisition, and whose actions need to be analysed in depth because they retain a structurally strategic position in the networks of power (Castells 2011). The study investigates how social movement organisations are able to produce new values and goals around which other actors are shaped and transformed to represent these new values and possibly their conversion into observable changes in norms, governance arrangements and regulatory frameworks.

I conceptualise the construction of legitimacy as a process in which social movement organisations such as Greenpeace are able mobilise to collective action through social media, with the objective of "reintroducing agency, politics and contestation into institutional analysis"

(Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2007, p. 648). The originality of this research is its focus on investigating how social movements adopt social media, and identifies key social media mobilisation tactics that are able to challenge and often openly violate existing established corporate norms, values and meanings, and establish new ones, while at the same time attempting to influence public opinion and ultimately leading to processes of organisational legitimacy acquisition. Social media tactics will be analysed in the three selected campaigns, explaining their different dynamics and similarities across campaigns, contexts and periods. I develop a three-phase grounded model that suggests that challenger movements are able to strategically use a set of *social media tactics* to acquire collective support by a variety of key constituents. This paper finds that social movement organisations increasingly acquire and are given positions in contested legitimacy processes. The framework outlined elucidates the key processes at play, showing how social movements have the capabilities to exercise their role as *switchers* in the network and are able to connect and disconnect networks and players, and mobilise resources according to different contexts, interests, and tactics applied around specific issues.

In this paper I make several contributions. Overall, the findings show how institutional theory and social movement organisations research may be integrated with social media studies to expand our understanding of the way organisations employ tactics to gain support and endorsement from stakeholder audiences and thus enhance models of legitimacy acquisitions. The research points to the importance of considering the political and collective dimensions of the relationships between social actors when investigating legitimacy. In particular, the discourses and practices of social movement organisations are increasingly mediated by the media within an information-intensive environment, and in particular, social media exercises significant power in terms of carrying messages, steering, and manipulating the legitimacy struggles. This framework helps to move away from a sender-receiver model of the legitimation process to a view that emphasises the social actors' strategies and the practices through which the media manipulate legitimacy struggles. The audiences can then make sense of the mediatised discourses in terms of assessing the authority position of the social actors, as well as embracing a very active role in shaping discourses and turning them into collective action. The audiences' responses then have a major impact on both the organisations' positions as well as on the media. Finally, the emergent model provides a methodological contribution, since it suggests new ways to assess the impact of movement organisation activities through social media. Social media are

very compelling in tracking movements' effects on numbers, resources, and the overall influence of movement activity on the public agenda and on processes of legitimacy acquisition.

I present my arguments in three sections. In the first section I give a brief overview of the theoretical background of this study, giving prominence to concepts I believe are essential to understanding social movement organisations and institutional dynamics. In the following second section I introduce the methodology applied, and I develop a process model of legitimacy acquisition by social movements. I integrate concepts from social movement research and institutional theory, blending it with social media studies to construct a model of the relationships among illegitimate actions, social media tactics, and legitimacy acquisition. I also outline my observations regarding the informants' interpretations of the role of social movement organisations and social media tactics in the process of organisational legitimacy. Finally, in the third discussion section I articulate the emerging conceptual framework and discuss its implications for social movement organisations and their quest to acquire legitimacy, along with the study of social media and their impact on institutions.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This paper is situated in the broad realm of institutional theory, organisational legitimacy and social movement theory. The purpose of this paper is to understand the role of social movement organisations in the process of organisational legitimacy acquisition, including the importance of communication activities with stakeholders through social media, leading to the development of new norms, rules and laws, thus influencing corporate social change activities. The review of literature on organisational legitimacy and social movements is pertinent to the topic under investigation. This study is rooted in the stream of research investigating organisational legitimacy and the role of social movement organisations in attaining legitimacy through social media, carrying out illegitimate actions offline and online, and de-legitimising corporate accounts and corporate activities to aggregate broader support from constituencies.

Organisational Legitimacy

Legitimacy is an essential issue in established social theories (Berger and Luckman 1967; Weber 1968; Giddens 1984; Bourdieu 1991). Scholars in the field of organisational theory tend to agree that organisational legitimacy represents an important aspect of organisational life according to

different theoretical perspectives, such as institutional theory (Scott 2008; Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Suchman 1995), resource dependency theory (Pfeffer 1981; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, Dowling and Pfeffer 1975), and organisational ecology (Hannan and Freeman 1984; Hannan and Carroll 1992). Management scholars have examined how legitimacy benefits organisations and their ability to gain resources to improve firms' performance (Dowling and Pfeffer 1975; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978); to construct legitimacy through normative conformity, adoption of new practices, narratives and discourses (Suchman 1995; Lounsbury and Glynn 2001; Suddaby and Greenwood 2005); and to acquire and sustain legitimacy after a crisis or dispute, when legitimacy is challenged (Elsbach 1994; Elsbach and Sutton 1992; Suchman 1995; Maguire and Hardy 2009).

Many definitions of legitimacy exist in the literature. Legitimacy is perceived to be a valuable attribute for organisations (Dowling and Pfeffer 1975; Meyer and Rowan 1977), and is regarded as an asset to access resources from the environment (Hannan and Freeman 1984). Dowling and Pfeffer suggest that organisational legitimacy is achieved when the existing social norms are in conformity with social values accepted by organisations. According to Dowling and Pfeffer, legitimacy is a valuable resource "which a given focal organization attempts to obtain and which competing organizations seek to deny" (1975, p. 125). Suchman grounded his work on the research of Dowling and Pfeffer (1975), defining legitimacy as "a generalized perception or an assumption that actions of an entity are desirable, proper and appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions" (Suchman 1995, p. 574). A central element of legitimacy consists of conforming dominant social norms, values, behaviours, meanings, and institutions (Scott 2001). Overall, institutional theory demonstrated that organisational growth and sustainability depends also on knowledge, information, and other intangible assets such as the organisation's legitimacy perceived by external stakeholders. As investigated by institutional theorists, organisations rely on their legitimacy as a valuable resource to engage and persuade key external stakeholders (Suchman 1995).

Stakeholders evaluate and rate organisations in relation to their conformity with established models, knowledge systems, norms, laws, structures and procedures (Meyer and Rowan 1977, Lounsbury and Glynn 2001; Ruef and Scott 1998). Legitimate organisations will receive support from audiences and easier access to resources. Legitimate organisations are perceived as "more worthy, more meaningful, and more trustworthy" than illegitimate organisations (Suchman 1995, p. 575). Consequently, organisations that are not isomorphic with dominant norms and values are

considered illegitimate. Some dominant norms and expectations are determined by professional associations, states, and powerful actors (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), while others emerge from spontaneous interactions among social actors. In addition, due to the complexity of the institutional environment, organisations tend to challenge inconsistent institutionalised myths (Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio 1991) and, therefore, conform only to some of the different existing institutional paradigms.

To formulate a grounded definition of the legitimacy construct, organisational scholars distinguish non-mutually exclusive legitimacy typologies, identifying specific legitimacy types in the process of legitimacy building (Rao 2001). Researchers have developed typologies in which organisations can apply more than one legitimacy category in specific situations (Aldrich and Fiol 1994; Deephouse 1996; Ruef and Scott 1998; Suchman 1995). For instance, Suchman (1995) identifies a typology of three types of legitimacy; namely pragmatic, moral, and cognitive, while Scott et al. (2000) matched the normative, regulative and cognitive legitimacy with the different components of institutions. By employing all or a combination of these legitimacy types, organisations can then be evaluated according to specific contexts (Ruef and Scott 1998). For instance, regulative legitimacy can be granted without attaining cognitive legitimacy. It is essential to understand that legitimacy can differ in specific institutional contexts and in relation to the identified types of legitimacy. For example, as argued by institutional researchers, moral legitimacy is essential in phases of deinstitutionalisation, and pragmatic legitimacy during re-institutionalisation (Den Hond and de Bakker 2007; Lounsbury et al. 2003).

The types of social norms and institutional logics that determine the evaluation of organisations play an important role (Lawrence and Phillips 2004; Suddaby and Greenwood 2005). Dowling and Pfeffer suggest that organisations can build legitimacy by conforming to existing social norms, altering social norms, and identifying with social values (1975). These authors suggest that the possibility to transform social norms and values is a strong incentive and a source of pressure for organisations to achieve legitimacy (Dowling and Pfeffer 1975). As a consequence, legitimation is a socially constructed process that uses strategies based on collective, rhetoric, and discursive dimensions (Bitektine 2011; Lawrence 1999; Suddaby and Greenwood 2005). Managing communication with external stakeholders to influence stakeholders' perceptions is crucial in the formation of legitimacy, because audiences grant legitimacy based on their perception. By conferring legitimacy to organisations, social actors foster institutions and practices that reproduce values and norms favourable to those organisations and other social

groups (Bitektine 2011). From this perspective, organisational legitimacy relies on the external perception of a network of stakeholders who have the power to attribute legitimacy (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978).

Increasingly, organisational scholars showed how communication is central to organisational actions and is embedded in social and organisational change processes (Yates and Orlikowski 1992). Scholars have shown how impression management tactics affect legitimacy by projecting a reputable image, especially after negative events (Arndt and Bigelow 2000; Elsbach and Sutton 1992; Elsbach 1994). Impression management techniques, if successful, manage to manipulate organisational communication so that the audience can associate the contents produced by the organisation with causes they care about, and can identify with the way arguments are framed. In particular, institutional scholars have shown growing interest in rhetorical and discursive aspects of legitimation (Suddaby and Greenwood 2005; Phillips et al. 2004; Vaara et al. 2013), emphasising the power of language and communication (Phillips et al. 2004). Scholars have in particular identified "rhetorical legitimation strategies" used by organisations to establish, maintain and repair legitimacy (Suddaby and Greenwood 2005).

In particular, in situations of controversy around legitimacy, scholars emphasise the role of communication strategies and manipulative discursive tactics, claiming that legitimacy management is greatly dependent on ongoing communication between multiple stakeholders in the interest of powerful actors (Suchman 1995; Elsbach and Sutton 1992; Elsbach 1994). It is reported that organisations employ a variety of media techniques to manage corporate image, including corporate advertising, publicity events and annual reports. Media represent a means whereby organisations attempt to manage the impressions they generate, and they are also a critical source of legitimacy (Baum and Powell 1995; Dowling and Pfeffer 1975). Researchers have been using media data as indicators of society-wide legitimacy in various domains and sectors (Deephouse 1996; Pollock and Rindova 2003). Mass media can be considered as indicators of legitimacy and sources of legitimacy, since they have an active role in shaping legitimacy by influencing the public opinion (Deephouse and Suchman 2008; Fombrun and Shanley 1990; McCombs and Shaw 1972). Extant legitimacy studies are mainly concerned with the so called "prestige media", which influence societal elites and the cultural mainstream. Prestige media can set the agenda that will then be broadcasted as well by other less popular media, and they are the first reference point for organisations that need to acquire or repair legitimacy (Deephouse and Suchman 2008). However, as outlined in previous research, elite

media tend to express conservative views that are aligned with the status quo, thus amplifying contrasting views between legitimate and illegitimate actors (see Deephouse and Suchman 2008).).

There are few empirical studies that effectively demonstrate how new media and social media facilitate institutional change and how new forms of communication affect legitimacy processes. Despite some relevant work on the role of communication in structuring institutions and organisational practices (Yates and Orlikowski 1992; Orlikowski and Yates 1994), institutional theory has not adequately analysed the role of communication technologies in institutional processes. The emergence of social media such as Facebook and Twitter, have transformed the ways in which organisations, firms, and people socially interact (Castells 2001, 2009). Social media provide important insights on how their intrinsic characteristics differ from traditional mass media, thus transforming their effect on organisations and institutional processes. For instance, social media are distinct from traditional mass media, since they present new features such as direct interactivity, multi-modal and dialogic communication, network effect, the creation and sharing of "user-generated content" and the facilitation of open forums and dialogues that impact organisational practices (Castells 2009; Jarvis 2011; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). The proliferation of social media also creates an opportunity for organisations to engage in institutional work, or to explore novel practices designed to create, maintain or alter institutions (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). Social media provide a new collaborative environment for organisations where publics can gather around shared interests, reach large audiences, and easily exchange information. Because of the growth of social media, traditional mass media have been pressured to keep up with the technological and social change and to integrate digital strategy into their operations.

Few empirical studies have examined the ways in which organisations use social media to reaffirm, maintain or acquire legitimacy. The emergence of new media and social media provide a useful context to examine these changes. Legitimacy studies should therefore benefit by including the analysis of the impact of different types of media, such as social media that are becoming an increasingly prominent channel that connects organisations and external stakeholders and audiences. Social movement organisations are early adopters of social media, providing unique insights on organisational tactics that lead to legitimacy acquisition. I will expand the literature review on social media and their impact on the way social movement organisations acquire legitimacy in the next section. The concept of institutions as nested systems (Holm 1995) addresses how organisations are able to alter institutions by constraining

their choices and actions. Mayerson and Scully (1995) described ambiguous processes of legitimacy building where organisations still become isomorphic, but only with specific institutional rules that function as myths, thus legitimacy is achieved in the specific context in which that myth appears (Greenwood et al. 2008). This acknowledges the existence of multiple and conflicting pressures to conformity in complex institutional environments, instead of seeking complete homogeneity of institutional pressures and organisational responses (Greenwood et al. 2010).

In particular, pressures, contestations and changes can cause legitimacy crises that question strategic decisions, and can threaten the legitimacy of specific illegitimate events or of the entire organisation. Scholars threw light on the heterogeneity of organisational strategies in reaction to institutional demands and pressures (Pache and Santos 2010; Oliver 1991; Pache and Santos 2010; Marquis and Lounsbury 2007; Rao et al. 2003; Thornton 2002). Scholars identify several possible tactics that organisations may utilise to respond to institutional processes, such as acquiescence, compromise, avoidance, defiance, and manipulation (Oliver 1991). Political or social pressures motivate the institutional work of social actors such as movements or social entrepreneurs to create and modify institutions (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006), and to mobilise collective action to reformulate institutional myths (Greenwood et al. 2002; Seo and Creed 2002). Motivations especially emerge when actors are dissatisfied with the status quo because of a misalignment between their interests and needs and the existing social arrangements (Seo and Creed 2002). These actors draw from various tactics, discourses, frames, cultures and logics to theorise new institutions (Greenwood et al. 2002) and to generate new ideas that can adapt to different social contexts (Czarniawska and Joerges 1996; Sahlin and Wedlin 2008). Social movements may be “outsiders” or just actors that are less embedded in the field and acting to encourage change. However, actors within the field, either peripheral fringe players (Leblebici et al. 1991) or central actors (Greenwood and Suddaby 2006) can also be key advocates for change. Further investigating the role of social movement organisations and the way they adopt social media can help to understand the way organisations face institutional pressures and conflicting demands, by reacting to new social and institutional environments.

Social Movements, Legitimacy Acquisition and the Media

As discussed in the previous section, institutional theory provides a rich body of thought about how organisations acquire taken for granted status through isomorphic pressures and diffusion (Scott 2008). However, social movement studies diverge from the established views described in the previous review of legitimacy theory, of institutions based on conformity, taken for granted practices, and approval by powerful actors, such as professions or States. On the contrary, collective action, alternative framing and mobilisation to disrupt current institutions have taken the place of conceptualisations of legitimation based on isomorphism, conformity, and taken-for-granted practices (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2008, p. 649). The criticism of the institutional analysis of legitimacy has focused on the lack of consideration given to the role of agency and social actors in institutional change processes (DiMaggio 1988; Greenwood and Hinings 1996; Hirsch and Lounsbury 1997), and has introduced the notion of 'institutional entrepreneurs', such as states, agencies or professional associations as actors capable of reshaping the social organisation of fields, establishing new practices, framing problems and mobilising constituencies (Greenwood et al. 2002; Greenwood and Suddaby 2006; Lawrence and Suddaby 2006; Rao et al. 2000).

DiMaggio and Powell (1988, p. 147) argued that the nation states and professions serve as rationalisers in contemporary society, but other types of emerging actors can play important roles, such as entrepreneurs and social movements. A recent approach to movements and institutions give centrality to the analysis of heterogeneous actors, multiple logics, the diversity of practice, and organisational fields as terrain of dispute exposing competing logics (Schneiberg and Soule 2005; Washington and Ventresca 2004; Lounsbury 2007; Rao et al. 2003; Lounsbury 2005; Schneiberg 2007). Collective action and social movement actors are increasingly engaged in field level change activities (Seo and Creed 2002) by challenging existing norms, rules, and institutions (Hargrave and Van de Ven 2006; Rao et al. 2000; Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2008).

Institutional change and innovation can thus be promoted also from outsiders at the periphery of a field. For instance, repressed interests and pressing social needs, such as the ones represented by social movement organisations, can give rise to new institutional forms by challenging and disrupting existing routines in order to attract public attention (Scott 2008). Yet the focus on powerful actors within fields has reduced focus from the consideration of the diverse interests of social actors and collective intelligence processes as sources of new practice creation. More recently, the integration between social movement theory and institutional analysis has highlighted the challenge of the relationship between structure and agency by suggesting that institutional

contradictions can mobilise interests and agency, sparking new organisational practices that can lead to institutional change (Seo and Creed 2002). Rather than attributing efficacy only to individual institutional entrepreneurs, by considering actors as "challengers and champions of alternatives, and social structures as outcomes of competing logics, studies linking movements and institutionalism are more deeply rooted in structural perspectives, placing greater emphasis on politics and collective mobilisation as motors of change" (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2008, p. 649).

Many studies support an approach looking at institutions as a terrain of contestation and political struggles that transform fields through the mobilisation of outsiders and challenger groups around competing logics (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2007). Movement scholars emphasise the impact that social movements' use of tactics and protests can have on conventional forms of political action and institutionalised civic practices (Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Minkoff 1997; Lounsbury et al. 2003). Scholars have pointed out that political processes are crucial to explain institutional dynamics, focusing their attention on the way "change flows from actors deliberately mobilise collective action, resources and allies against other groups' interests to defend or change existing arrangements" (Schneiberg 2013, p.575). The above mentioned work defines institutionalisation as a complex interaction process between collective action to achieve change on one side and establish institutional dynamics on the other side (Haveman et al. 2007; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tarrow and Tollefson 1994; Schneiberg 2002). Other studies emphasise the role of movements as engines of change within existing power structures, "as agents of theorization, classification and the diffusion of codified arguments, frames or theoretical resources" (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2007, p. 649). Grassroots mobilisations, coupled with movements that operate within the field as institutional forces, can transform cultural beliefs and discourses in industries and institutional fields, creating conditions for the affirmation of new practices that eventually lead to an institutionalisation of the movement within the new field.

Schneiberg and Lounsbury (2007) have summarised social movement research that investigated how social movements can generate new organisational forms, such as nouvelle cuisine (Rao et al. 2003), coops (Schneiberg 2002, 2007), artisanal breweries (Carroll and Swaminathan 2000), and recycling (Lounsbury et al. 2003; Rao et al. 2000). As a reaction, established institutions can aggregate power and resources to hinder or facilitate the diffusion of new organisational forms. Movements can even promote new organisational forms and institutional diversity (Rao et al. 2000; Schneiberg et al. 2008), or can create favourable political contexts and conditions for the spread of alternatives (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2007). In particular, some studies explore the role of

movements in achieving change by working simultaneously inside existing institutions ("insider" movements), and outside institutional fields ('outsider' movements). The relationship between 'outsider' and 'insider' movements has shown how insider movements can facilitate 'outsider' mobilisations and vice versa. In particular, Ventresca and Hirsch (2003) demonstrate how "outsider" environmental movements and non-profits in the recycling sector in the US set the foundation for the subsequent establishment of a commercial recycling industry in the 1980's. Furthermore, challenger movements from outside institutional fields are able to subvert taken for granted arrangements and logics, generating a legitimacy crisis, and eventually asserting new frames. Other movements, even if they were unsuccessful in generating long-term change, can generate important legacies that become legitimating structures for subsequent collective mobilisation, thus highlighting the effects of movements on organisational fields (Haveman et al. 2007).

Researchers have explored the institutional context in which social movements are embedded, addressing relations between movements, institutions and outcomes, showing how movements' success depends on institutional dynamics (King and Soule 2007; Davis et al. 2005). Institutional theorists borrowed insights from social movement theory to investigate the formation of new forms of organisation (Rao 1998); the creation of shareholder activism (Davis and Thompson 1994), and the way new institutional logics emerge (Rao et al. 2003). This effect doesn't apply only to the emergence of new organisational forms or industries, but also to the establishment of collective identities, frames and logics, or "cultural toolkits" (Swidler 1986) that provide the foundation for ongoing struggles and collective mobilisation (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2007). By building these new frameworks and structures, social movement organizations impact collective action. According to the literature, movements can affect institutional fields at a cultural level, by contributing to a deinstitutionalisation of existing beliefs and values (Rao et al. 2000). Social movements can also influence agenda setting, directing collective attention to critical issues and causes that people care about (della Porta 2005), since the sources and agents that confer legitimacy are part of social networks of influence and communication (Deephouse and Suchman 2008; Carter and Deephouse 1999).

Social movement theorists describe frames as critical cultural resources for group identification and mobilisation, involving diagnostics, prognostics, and motivation (Snow and Benford 1988). Frames are thus political and rhetorical and generate cultural resonance that can lead to change (Lounsbury et al. 2003). Field frame is a concept that has been employed in relation to the way social movement

actors can affect institutional change. According to Lounsbury, social movement organisations try to influence field frames, transforming organisational fields into a battleground for power (2003). Social movements and activist groups that contest current policies or corporate activities try to influence field frames and achieve a shift of power. Social movement organisations employ a variety of tactics and tools to challenge the prevailing field frame and change it to reflect the values of the social movement they support (Den Hond and de Bakker 2007). Den Hond and de Bakker (2007) analysed the way activists impact corporate activities, linking processes of deinstitutionalisation, re-institutionalisation and legitimacy (2007, p. 906). Extant studies examined the role of movements in the process of building of new institutions (McAdam et al.2004) and new forms of organisations (Haveman et al. 2007; Haveman and Rao 1997; Schneiberg 2002; Schneiberg et al. 2008).

Institutional and organisations scholars have recognised that organisations are immersed in environments that influence their social behaviours. Communication and media are important elements of modern organisational cognitive environments. This paper draws from contemporary analysis of the role of communication in the development of social movements as examined by Castells (2003, 2009); Downing (2001); Juris (2008); Rao (2009); Cardoso and Jacobetti (2012). According to the these perspectives, social movements are agents of social change in the network society, prompted by distrust of some of the institutions underpinning the current societal structures (Touraine 1981; Castells 2003, 2012; Snow 2004). Following these authors, social change results from communicative actions that involve connections through communication networks. Recently, the rise of "mass self-communication" (Castells 2009) based on horizontal networks of interactive, multidirectional communication on the Internet, has resulted in new forms of expression and outcomes of collective action and the formation of social movement organisations (Castells and Cardoso (Eds) 2006; Castells 2009; Shirky 2008; della Porta and Mosca 2006). According to Castells, mass communication can reach new audiences and publics, and in particular what has been referred to as networked publics that aggregate and mobilise resources and action through multimodal, globally distributed and interactive communication networks (Varnelis 2008). Castells (2009) explains how the rise of social media, and their use at an unprecedented scale by networked individuals and organisations to reach masses, is challenging the gatekeeping and agenda-setting roles of established traditional actors. Because the messages are self-generated by individual users and organisations, mass self-communication addresses particular issues self-selected by the organisations or the individuals, thus, for instance, empowering social movements that mobilise audiences around specific targets and issues. Mass self-communication means that there are private

senders that can reach mass public receivers, allowing the autonomous source of the communication flows to co-construct contents and meanings. According to Castells, these processes result in the convergence between mass media and digital communication networks, resulting in "a shift of the public sphere from the institutional realm to the new communication space" (Castells 2006, p. 238).

Within this framework, the use of social media as shown in this research can strengthen the role of social movement organisations in a strategic way, fostering a more participatory public debate, and demonstrating that collective action offline can benefit from online interactions. In this view, social media are seen as mediums capable of stimulating new public spheres (e.g. networked publics) since it disseminates alternative information and creates alternative public spaces for discussion and collective action (Bimber et al. 2005; Boyd 2009). As argued by della Porta and Mosca (2005), computer-mediated communication facilitated a process of "disintermediation", giving social movements direct access to the general public, together with the "the possibility of spreading uncensored messages, and of attempting to influence mass media and develop alternatives" (2005, p. 166). Researchers have also started to analyse the advantages and disadvantages of online collective action to assess which organisational strategies would work or fail in an online environment (Bennett 2003; Bimber 2003; Gamson 2001). Research on the way social movements are empowered by the Internet has been carried out, in particular looking at cyberprotests and online environmental networks (Pickerill 2003; Atton 2003; Downing 2008), the Global Justice Movement (della Porta and Mosca 2005; Van Aelst and Walgrave 2004; Kavada 2010; Juris 2008; Calderaro 2010), or temporary mobilisation events (Rheingold, 2002). However, this stream of literature has overlooked institutional and organisational dynamics, such as legitimacy acquisition and institutional change, in their analysis of communication processes, social movements, and collective mobilisation.

Mass self-communication and social media sites are extraordinary platforms for social movement organisations to build their influence and confront the institutions of society in their quest for change. Social movements in the information age are using social media to try to influence public opinion, pressuring both corporate activities and public policy initiatives. For older and new social movement organisations, social media provide a critical platform for debate that involves their members, the volunteers, and the public at large, and ultimately serve as a critical set of tools to pressure policy makers. Social media connect social actors with society at large, and with key institutional intermediaries, conferring a strategic advantage in the attempt of exercising normative pressure on decision makers. However, social movement organisations can fully exploit the power

of social media if the online tactics are well connected with their offline social base. Social actors are indeed very grounded in local realities and derive their strength from the ability to mobilise a network of volunteers and to connect to other local grassroots activist groups. As clearly outlined in Greenpeace campaigns analysed in this research, when social movement organisations plan their actions, they mobilise around specific causes and in specific places, often concurrently with important meetings of the institutions or companies they want to target, such as challenging meetings of Ministers, the G8, the Arctic Council, the European Union or individual companies.

Despite these advances in the understanding of social movement organisations in the processes of institutional dynamics, we have limited knowledge of the specific tactics through which social movements acquire legitimacy by challenging corporate activities and corporate identity, and the role of the media in this process. Mass media have a recognised role as a central channel of communication between the political system, organisations, and citizens that ultimately sets norms, policy and regulatory frameworks (Bennett 1990). The media influence opinions about issues of critical importance for the general public, through framing, agenda-setting and priming (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007; Lippman 1946; McCombs 2013).

However, as already mentioned, Internet-based communication, and social media in particular, change the communication dynamics in organisations and have an important impact on the process of legitimacy acquisition, which is a complex process that involves different publics and key stakeholders. As shown in this study, social movement organisations are able to exploit the "network-making power" logic through their ability to constitute new networks, and to connect and set up strategic cooperation with different networks by sharing resources and pursuing common goals (Castells 2009, p. 45). In this way social media provide new capabilities for social actors and organisations that want to achieve institutional change by reshaping societal values and exercising normative influence. Through social media, social movements are able to generate new institutional dynamics and interactions with stakeholders. By understanding the logic of networks, social movement organisations are thus able to influence, switch and re-programme networks (Castells 2009).

Based on the above literature review, I thus identify some areas of further research that will potentially expand the current theoretical understanding of processes of organisational legitimacy acquisition which will be addressed in this study. To summarise, this study addresses the main theoretical gap in the examined literature, bridging institutional theory and social movement

analysis to explain how social movement organisations acquire legitimacy and challenge corporate activities and their online identity through social media.

The Research Gap in the Institutional Theory and Social Movement Literature

Until now, legitimacy has been mostly treated as static and monolithic sets of assumptions, since existing literature has documented that social actors generally adhere to organisations that are considered legitimate since they conform to given social norms, values, rules, and laws (Suchman 1995; Scott 2001; Meyer and Rowan 1977; Lounsbury and Glynn 2001). This conceptualisation led researchers to focus more on institutional isomorphism and conformity rather than focusing on the role of agency in institutional change, and on the social processes that originate from these transformations (DiMaggio 1988; Greenwood and Hinings 1996; Schneiberg 2007; Hirsch and Lounsbury 1997). The approach taken in this research draws attention to the contested and complex processes of legitimacy construction that ultimately may lead to the construction of new institutions, such as new regulatory and legislative frameworks.

Recognising these limitations, social movements scholars have more recently interpreted legitimacy as a changing and contested issue, acknowledging the existence of multiple and even conflicting pressures to conformity within complex institutional environments (Greenwood et al. 2010). Scholars have emphasised the institutional work of social actors such as institutional entrepreneurs and movements to develop and reshape institutions (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). In particular, social movements are engine of social change, mobilising collective action in the network society, prompted by distrust of some of the institutions underpinning the current societal structures (Touraine 1981; Castells 2003, 2012; Snow et al. 2004). Social movement theory and its relation to institutional dynamics is thus an emerging and fast growing field that needs more investigation.

It is unfeasible to assume that legitimacy would remain stable over time. However, research has so far mostly disregarded the evolving nature of legitimacy, and thus possibly underestimating the ability of social actors to affect change and to be changed. In reality it is more likely that legitimacy has to be maintained and re-established, especially when social movement actors are able to mobilise collective actions to respond to political and social pressure. We lack insight into the tactics and strategies that social movements use to acquire legitimacy, how they evolve and how they contest corporate activities and eventually delegitimise corporate identity to achieve field level change. The apparent consensus in organisational theory is that stakeholders' perceptions and building communication with audiences is crucial in the formation of legitimacy (Pfeffer and

Salancik 1978). Researchers have pointed out the media as a critical source of legitimacy (Deephouse and Suchman 2008; Fombrun and Shanley 1990; McCombs and Shaw 1972), and they have been using media data as indicators of society-wide legitimacy and in various contexts (Deephouse 1996; Pollock and Rindova 2003). As suggested by Deephouse and Suchman (2008, p. 56), media also have an active role in shaping legitimacy influencing the public opinion, thus it can be considered both an indicator and a source of legitimacy (Fombrun and Shanley 1990; McCombs and Shaw 1972).

However, most of the research to date has focused on mass media or elite media, while today the rise of mass self-communication and social media is radically changing the organisational environment. In this context, social change results from communicative actions that involves connections through digital communication networks. We lack an understanding of the social media context and its impact on institutional dynamics. A focus on Internet-based communication and social media in particular change the communication dynamics in organisations and have an important impact on the process of legitimacy acquisition, which is a complex process that involves different publics and key stakeholders. Therefore, there may be other dynamics, perhaps linked to the role of social media in legitimising social movements that have not yet been explored.

Framing the Research Questions

The aim of this research is to understand how social movement organisations acquire legitimacy through social media in the context of contested campaigns. The study examines a social movement organisation, Greenpeace, and in particular three Greenpeace environmental campaigns that target corporate activities, looking at the specific social media tactics employed by the organisation that ultimately led to legitimacy acquisition. The research focuses on the impact and implications of social media as a dominant information-intensive and interactive context in which organisations are embedded, based on socialised "mass self-communication" technologies that have the capacity to influence a variety of key stakeholders and publics, turning social media into arena of contestation.

Social media strongly influence institutional dynamics that ultimately lead to legitimacy acquisition by networked publics. Empirical research on social media adoption by organisations demonstrates that organisations are developing new tactics and using social media strategically to influence external stakeholders, aggregate consensus and eventually shape institutions. During my preliminary observations and interviews, I noticed that social movement organisations made an extensive use of social media during their campaigns and that they were adopting unconventional

tactics that were challenging existing norms and frameworks. This triggered my interest in the way social movement organisations were using social media to challenge corporate activities whilst at the same time building legitimacy for their causes and their organisation during the campaign.

Further elaborating on these empirical questions in consideration of a broader theoretical interest, this study investigates the context-specific factors influencing the process of organisational legitimacy acquisition, exploring the specific relations between social movement tactics and social media context. This research asks how social media in particular affect the process of organisational legitimacy acquisition. Specifically, it investigates what social media tactics social movement organisations employ in different contexts, originating processes that challenge corporate activities. This also uncovers the impact of social media (and their affordances) in opposition to previously investigated non-social media scenarios. I then allocated 12 months to investigating this specific research question and collecting data accordingly.

The findings of this research explain how through social media tactics, combined with illegitimate offline actions, social movements obtain the ability to gather a public's sentiment quickly, adjusting the way a movement can frame their message. Legitimacy is thus ultimately acquired through a blending of illegitimate tactics offline and online. This is achieved by social agents, who can collectively frame new meanings and messages, and mobilise enough people and key intermediaries to eventually shift the discourse in their institutional environment. As a result of social action enabled by the use of social media tactics, actors are able to delegitimise corporate activities and identities, challenging taken for granted norms, meanings and institutions, and eventually introducing new frameworks. Thus we need to know more about the way social movement organisations adopt social media to build legitimacy and influence corporate activities (den Hond and de Bakker 2007).

METHODS

In order to examine the understanding of the process of legitimacy construction from social movement organisations through the use of social media, this research relies on an inductive approach and a qualitative field-base study of a social movement organisation. I combined an in-depth case analysis (Yin 2003) with grounded theory techniques to analyse the data and generate theoretical propositions about the phenomenon of interest (Glaser and Strauss 1967). It discovers a

theory that emerges from the selected research contexts, the empirical data, and the extant literature in the field through a theoretical sampling procedure (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

The adopted design is a single in-depth case-study design (Yin 2003). The empirical study lasted around twelve months from early April 2012 to the end of April 2013 and it investigated three Greenpeace environmental campaigns. Grounded theory was chosen for two main reasons: (1) the phenomenon under investigation is still inadequately understood, and there seems to be no field-based investigation of how social movement organisations use social media to build legitimacy; and (2) the interpretations of the social actors involved in these processes are relevant for developing a theoretical framework coherent with the empirical evidence collected.

Research Empirical Setting

Greenpeace is the largest global environmental social movement organisation in the world, known for its activism and education on environmental issues, and able to influence both the public and the private sector. It is an independent campaigning organisation that uses direct action and communication to expose and challenge global environmental issues (www.greenpeace.org). Within 40 years of existence, Greenpeace have become a successful research organisation, direct action movement, and lobbying group that inspire social movements around the world. During the 1980s Greenpeace became a non-governmental organisation with a global presence and with offices across the world. The organisation was equipped for radical direct actions and civil disobedience against environmental degradation, owing an "eco-force" including ships, a helicopter, and hot-air balloons (Sustanto 2007). Greenpeace employs a staff of more than 2,000 members, hundreds of part-time workers, 15,000 volunteers, and a network of over 4 million supporters worldwide (Susanto 2007; Greenpeace annual report 2012). The Greenpeace organisation consists of Greenpeace International, based in Amsterdam, and offices in over 40 countries globally (Greenpeace International 2012).

Greenpeace was founded in 1970 by members that were active in two main social movements: the peace movement and the campaign for nuclear disarmament. The group started as a combination of "green" for ecology and "ecological peace" for their intentions, beginning to raise awareness for environmental causes. It was established to oppose the nuclear tests carried forward by the US Atomic Energy Commission (Sustanto 2007). Greenpeace managed immediately to attract large media attention that put pressure on Washington to stop nuclear atmospheric tests in the Alaskan Aleutian Islands, since public opinion was concerned it would cause earthquakes, tidal waves and

radiological contamination. Immediately after, the protection of whales became an active part of the Greenpeace agenda, gaining large scale support through spectacular actions. For instance, they held a concert to raise money for educating Japan about the dangers of whaling. In 1975, Greenpeace sailed to the North Pacific to stop Soviet whaling ships, and the year after they launched a campaign against the fashion fur industry, with the aim of disrupting the international fur trade. These actions resulted in a successful strategy that gained thousands of supporters and turned Greenpeace in a real innovator in blending civil disobedience and non-violent confrontation with media exposure and legitimacy acquisition. For instance, by sailing with the famous ship Rainbow Warrior to the sites where Canada and France were conducting nuclear testing, Greenpeace acquired global support and huge media coverage.

Greenpeace's ability to work internationally promoting global environmentalism had a big impact on political institutions. Greenpeace relies on its network of supporters and reputation to successfully facilitate change, confronting big business through grassroots campaigns, direct action or confrontation. Greenpeace has continued over the years to support direct action, while investing in Internet activism and emphasising the role of collective action through the Internet. Greenpeace pioneered unconventional tactics and direct actions (mixing peaceful direct action, illegal activities and confrontation) to create awareness on environmental problems and their social impact, using spectacular direct actions to attract high levels of media and public attention. Greenpeace's actions can be split into four major areas: nuclear, toxic, ocean ecology, and atmosphere and energy combined. Greenpeace was the first social movement organisation to physically organise direct actions to the site of a contested policy, raising social consciousness and public awareness on climate change, environmental devastation, deforestation, pollution and so on. One of the founding principles of Greenpeace philosophy is “baring witness” to environmental destruction and that use direct action to mobilise the public against unjust environmental policies (Mitchell et al. 1991). After convincing people and mobilising audiences in preserving the environment, Greenpeace encourages people to join Greenpeace and take action. Greenpeace strategy is twofold: On one side the organisation focuses on mobilising support for campaigns that target policy and public opinions to provoke change against environmental and social destructions; on the other side Greenpeace focuses on direct, non-violent acts and their activists are trained to engage in risky and illegitimate direct actions, such as sailing to nuclear testing sites, or trying to stop oil drilling in remote locations, climbing on whaling ships and climbing companies’ roofs, parachuting from smokestacks, blocking industrial sites, and camping around power stations (Sustanto 2007).

Those actions of civil disobedience (including illegal acts) are important for Greenpeace since they have a highly symbolic effect (Rucht 1995). Actions are widely communicated through all media channels and are seen as tools to reach out to other citizens, thus generating more political pressure through perfectly executed media campaigns. Greenpeace thus combines civil disobedience and direct actions with impressive efficacy through the tactical use of media to reach consensus, public esteem and legitimacy from society. The approach is to target the source of the problem (for instance directly targeting illegitimate corporate activities) or the centre of institutional power where legislation and policy are passed (lobbying national governments at EU or global level). The strategy of civil disobedience has changed over the years, with a reformative shift in the 1990s after Greenpeace became globally renowned. Due to its unconventional and illegitimate tactics and methods, Greenpeace has generated controversy since the beginning, and its activists have been charged, fined and arrested several times (Weyler 2004). Recently, Greenpeace follows more moderate political strategy to achieve its goals, such as lobbying national and international decision making processes, publishing scientific reports, and organising spectacular actions that engage large audiences and attract media coverage.

As outlined in the Greenpeace 2012 annual report, Greenpeace International coordinates national and regional affiliates all around the world. Greenpeace's annual budget is derived from donations from its worldwide supporters and members. The London office (where the study was carried out) employs over 100 Greenpeace activists, campaigners, researchers, strategists, communication and social media managers, campaign directors, and spokespersons. The Communication group and the recently formed Greenpeace Mobilisation Lab are responsible for formulating communication strategies for each campaign and coordinating the relationship with the media and other institutional intermediaries. The strategy group deals with organising the actions on the ground, the logistics. The Research Group is primarily engaged in carrying out scientific research and reports. The Communication Group is responsible for defining the overall communication strategy, including social media, skills and training for spokespersons and for other teams. Overall, therefore, they consider themselves a united organisation with coordinated campaigns, teams of experts, staff and volunteers working side by side. Campaigns approximately last from one year to several years, depending on the complexity of the campaign process and the issues being tackled. I will describe in detail the three observed campaigns in the findings section.

Data Collection

Diverse sources of evidence and triangulation of data were used to collect data, including extant academic literature, formal semi-structured interviews, field notes, social media analysis, media reports, archival organisational documents, and informal conversations with informants. Interviews were the principal data source to explore the process of legitimacy construction in the three examined Greenpeace campaigns.

Interviews were either semi-structured or open-ended and they included both past events and current and future plans of action. The interviews dealt with a wide a range of issues, some more focused on Greenpeace's organisational history, mission, and campaign strategy, and others focused on the objectives and main drivers of the campaigns, as well as their use of social media and the latest developments in the field, looking at ways Greenpeace was able to adopt social media to pressure policy makers and law making processes (e.g. carbon emission targets for 2020, and influencing environmental legislations in a broader sense). The sampling strategy followed the theoretical sampling procedure (Glaser and Strauss 1967) until reaching redundancy and investigating the depth of the phenomenon under investigation, within a single case study and across different campaigns. The key informants included Greenpeace staff members, but also volunteers, supporters, social media users, and other media and PR organisations. I adopting a snowballing technique (Miles and Huberman 1984), so these informants then suggested other relevant organisations or people that I could interview to better understand the phenomenon, and to include diverse perspectives on strategies, outcomes and main processes.

The first set of interviews was conducted between May and September 2012 in London, with representatives of Greenpeace. The second set of interviews was conducted in December 2012 (during direct actions) and February 2013 with representatives of different stakeholders, and again with Greenpeace informants in March and April 2013. Stakeholders range from Greenpeace supporters online that I contacted through the organisation's social media pages, Greenpeace volunteers, other media outlets that reported on the direct actions, and representatives of the targeted companies. Data collection continued up to April 2013 via Skype interviews and written follow-ups with 10 additional informants from Greenpeace and their online supporters. I used an interview protocol (Appendix 1) that I kept reviewing to integrate feedback and to include new relevant issues that were emerging during the research project, and to explore new constructs that were emerging from the analysis. All interviews were conducted in English and recorded. The

interviews lasted approximately one hour each or less, depending on the informant. A list of informants and their roles is provided in Table 1. The names of the informants are not revealed to assure the anonymity of the sources.

Table 1 about here

In the first phase of data collection I investigated the general field (e.g. environmental activism and social movement tactics), focusing on some main issues that were later developed and analysed. I started to understand how the Greenpeace campaigns were set up and organised, the strategies guiding the campaigns, and the main objectives before and after the campaigns that informed future plans of action. For the purpose of better understanding the process of legitimacy acquisition through social media, I carried out a literature review across relevant studies investigating legitimacy in organisational institutionalism and the role of social movement organisations in acquiring support from constituencies and organisational legitimacy, and in particular the role of social media in this context. This included an historical analysis of the organisation, organisational reports, and materials available on official websites, the organisation's online resources, academic literature and academic articles. This analysis was instrumental in acquiring a deeper knowledge of the contexts within which Greenpeace operates during its campaigns.

The chosen campaigns lasted for two years and are still ongoing since they represent a key area of activity in the organisation. A special focus was the tactical role of social media that became crucial at Greenpeace during the last years. During a second descriptive phase, I discussed emergent concepts with my main contacts at Greenpeace in order to focus and prepare the interviews, taking into account their recommendations to expand the analysis. Online documents, interviewees, and social media conversations highlighted the importance of social media, and its tactical use to delegitimise corporate activities against the values promoted by Greenpeace. As demonstrated by further rounds of data collection and analysis, social media turned out to be a key novel element in the way social movement organisations can ultimately acquire legitimacy. This method aimed to explain the process of legitimacy acquisition though social media in each campaign and to better investigate the relations between illegitimate actions (online and offline) with the organisation's ability to influence corporate social change activities. I provide the details on data sources and their use in the analysis, in Table 2.

Table 2 about here

Data Analysis

In the data analysis I followed an inductive grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Miles and Huberman 1984) to study the process of legitimacy acquisition by social movement organisations through social media. I employed an inductive grounded theory approach since the mechanisms and processes of the phenomena under investigation are relatively unknown, allowing the observation of the behaviours of social actors while unfolding in real social settings. This paper aims to generate an emergent theory from the empirical observations which explains the relationship between the organisational processes observed and also contributes to a specific literature, in this case institutional dynamics and movements. I used an iterative approach, alternating constant comparison techniques and theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990), moving back and forth between the data, emerging concepts, and academic literature, to refine the codes and theoretical categories to develop the process model (Miles and Huberman 1984). Emerging concepts and categories were explored and assembled until reaching "theoretical saturation" (Glaser and Strauss 1967, pp. 61-62). Particularly, the analysis served to confirm whether or not the process legitimacy acquisition was affected by the use of illegitimate actions (online and offline) and unconventional social media tactics to obtain endorsement from constituencies, as it appeared from the interviews and previous analysis. Subsequently, I identified specific phases of the campaign process during which it was possible to detect key elements of the communication strategy and specific social media tactics that were able to aggregate consensus by the broader constituencies while delegitimising corporate activities. I summarised in Table 3 the main direct action events attributed to members of Greenpeace, the use of illegitimate actions, and the corresponding social media tactics used during the campaign. Finally, I analysed how Greenpeace was able to gain large support from constituencies that endorsed the main goals of the campaigns, leading to legitimacy acquisition.

Table 3 about here

The coding process is presented in three steps. In the first stage of coding, the case study data were organised chronologically in an "event history database" (Van de Ven and Poole 1990; Phillips et al. 2013). I ordered the descriptions of events and campaigns reflected in the collected data, which included face-to-face, email, and online interviews, field notes, and other secondary sources such as social media accounts, organisational case studies and documents, or journalists' reports of the campaigns and events, to develop a coherent story of Greenpeace's social media-led strategy for the campaigns and the way it led to organisational legitimacy. The timeline developed for each event was able to show the order in which events unfolded through journal articles, spokespersons' statements and social media accounts. This was crucial for understanding Greenpeace's use of social media and how social media tactics were key in mobilising supporters and gaining endorsement and legitimacy amongst various audiences. The order in which events unfolded was fairly consistent across all the observed campaigns. The data gathered clearly show that social media tactics are used strategically to manage the interpretation of each event, with implications for the organisational legitimacy. In particular, media sources (mainstream media, social media, blogs, forums and specialist newsletters) provided evidence showing reactions to the events from supporters, environmental groups, and journalists, as well as government officials, politicians, companies in relevant industries, and investors. Many of the actions that led to legitimacy could also threaten Greenpeace legitimacy; however Greenpeace managed to use a blending of direct action and social media tactics to attract endorsement and support from stakeholders' audiences, while at the same time managing criticisms.

In the second stage of coding, I derived descriptive codes from the transcripts of interviews and other sources, selecting the dynamics and processes used by Greenpeace to attract the attention of key stakeholders and the reactions of the media and of audiences through social media. This allowed me to develop an extensive list of open codes to categorise facts and information contained in each interview. These descriptive codes helped attribute temporal order to the events, understand which actors played a role in the process, and identify key ideas. Where possible, these were checked against the archival data and available records to assure reliability and consistency. From the number of codes resulting from this first phase, first-level categories were derived. I further analysed these first-order categories to discover new relationships amongst the categories and built the theoretical model upon them.

I used interview transcripts as primary data for the analysis, and I used field-notes to support and refine the interpretation of emerging theoretical categories and to guide the integration of categories into an overall framework. I compared first-order categories to discover corresponding concepts or

redundant once in order to collapse and assemble the categories. Those which contained conflicting or unclear dimensions were further analysed. In this way I was able to identify emerging relationships between the refined codes at increasingly higher level of abstraction. Theoretical constructs linked to the role of social movements in the process of legitimacy acquisition, started to emerge during different stages of the analysis.

In the third stage of coding, I collapsed the first-order categories into second-order themes looking for grounded theoretical relationships amongst the categories. As core categories emerged from the analysis of the campaigns and the social media tactics employed, I turned to axial coding (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 123) to uncover theoretical relationships among my observations. The analysis followed an iterative method, moving between data, emerging relationships, and the extant literatures until conceptual categories explaining social movement legitimacy acquisition through social media started to emerge from the observed empirical relationships, and were integrated into the theoretical framework, informing the theory building. The emerging categories identified specific social media tactics that Greenpeace applied during the campaign strategy, while other categories highlighted the dynamics and drivers that led to legitimacy acquisition through a process of "switching power". The data analysis comprised different stages that I describe here in detail. Selected quotes and excerpts from field notes supporting the emerging interpretation are displayed in Table 4 (e.g. Pratt 2009).

Table 4 about here

Developing a Grounded Model

The final round of coding combined observations, relationships amongst second order categories and theoretical dimensions that led to the development of a process model proposing an explanation of the way social movement organisations acquire legitimacy through social media. I followed as a model qualitative research using similar methods (Corley and Gioia 2004; Nag et al. 2007; Ravasi and Shultz 2006; Dacin et al. 2010). I created an "event history database" (Van de Ven and Poole 1990) to track the chronological relationship with the different offline actions and online tactics employed by Greenpeace to test the process model against the different phases I observed in the selected cases. I thus built a chronological table that ordered the observed events to track the relationships with the different practices and tactics employed by Greenpeace in the observed

campaigns in order to verify that the emerging model is congruent with the different phases identified in the process of organisational legitimacy acquisition. The following section outlines the chronology of events and provides a timeline and a description for the processes in the three campaigns that led to legitimacy acquisition (see Table 2). Further, I introduce to introduce an analytical narrative table, comparing how the process unfolded in the three campaigns, organized around the second order codes of the process model.

Table 5 about here

Based on primary and secondary data and adopting a "temporal bracketing" strategy (Langley 1999), the study identifies four phases of the legitimacy acquisition process across the three observed campaigns. Greenpeace acquired legitimacy through four distinct but interconnected phases, which are described in Figure 2. In order to provide an overview of the process, I describe the implication of all of the four phases. However, as the initial phase of illegitimate actions and the final phase of legitimacy acquisition are well-known in the literature, I focused my observations on the less explored relationships between live direct illegitimate actions and the social media tactics, and in particular on how unconventional social media tactics impact on legitimacy acquisition.
The data structure that derived from the coding and analysis is shown in Figure 1. The first-order codes, second-order categories, and aggregate theoretical dimensions are outlined.

Figure 1 about here

In order to provide useful information about the empirical grounding of the model, examples of selected evidence, quotes and correspondent first-order categories are shown in Table 4, as well as in the text when analysing the findings of the study. Subsequent meetings with key informants at Greenpeace were carried out to verify internal and external validity. I evaluated other possible theoretical explanations until I connected the conceptual categories into a general framework that reflects all the evidence (Golden-Biddle and Locke 2007) outlined in Figure 2. I present the emerging process framework in the next section.

Figure 2 about here

EMERGENT FINDINGS

The Empirical Campaigns Setting

The findings outline the process of legitimacy acquisition by a social movement organisation (Greenpeace) in the three observed campaigns, showing evidence to ground and shape the development of a process model.

I studied three Greenpeace campaigns focused on environmental activism, targeting corporate activities of Shell and the Volkswagen Group, with the ultimate objective being to pressure policy makers and influence environmental legislation in Europe and globally. Greenpeace heavily adopted social media elements in all campaigns, and one specific campaign targeting the partnership between Waitrose and Shell was entirely conducted on social media. Therefore, I was able to easily gather information about the underlying strategies and processes of social media adoption. Greenpeace often targets very recognisable and established brands that resonate with a large audience base. In the case of the Shell Arctic Ready campaign, Shell is a company with a contested reputation, especially targeted by environmental groups for their controversial practices of drilling in the Arctic. In this campaign Greenpeace used the Arctic as their main mobilisation theme since it's an iconic place where people can observe more visibly the dramatic effects of climate change due to unfair corporate practices. The campaign was about focusing attention on climate change through being able to communicate a powerful and emotional story. As the ice melts it opens up the minerals beneath attracting investors' interests, oil companies, industrial fishing, and shipping companies that see it as a business opportunity. Greenpeace started the campaign to stop the oil from being extracted by physically preventing companies from drilling and industrially exploiting the area, and asking politicians to declare the Arctic a global sanctuary.

The campaign was launched in 2012 at the Earth Summit, with a declaration signed by hundreds of people, including renowned celebrities. Greenpeace implemented a powerful mix of illegitimate direct actions and social media tactics. Shell was the biggest oil company to drill in Alaska and the Arctic, so last summer activists of Greenpeace, along with the actress Lucy Lawless, occupied the

Shell ship for several days, and that was the start of the petition to declare the Arctic a sanctuary. Activists were arrested and attracted huge media attention that prompted millions of people to sign the petition a few days after the first action. After that, Greenpeace organised a series of direct actions (blockades and ship occupations to stop the companies from reaching the Arctic and shutting down 78 of Shell's petrol stations), coupled with unconventional social media tactics, such as hijacking the online identity of Shell, building a social media campaign around it that was able to delegitimise Shell's activities in the Arctic and damage the company's online identity.

In the second campaign, Greenpeace chose to target Waitrose for their decision to partner with Shell by experimenting two pilot partnership schemes that enabled Waitrose to sell their products in Shell's gasoline station shops. Greenpeace's intention was to use the Waitrose campaign as an indirect way to keep fighting against Shell's Arctic drilling and implement a full scale campaign against Shell, targeting every level of the company's operation, from infrastructure, to brand, to their relationship with investors and partners, to social media. Contrary to Shell, Waitrose is generally seen as an environmentally friendly brand that built their reputation on being ethical and sustainable. They have collaborated with Greenpeace in the past to make sure that their fish was sourced more sustainably. This campaign was solely based on social media and its outcome was particularly interesting for this research. Greenpeace initially targeted their Christmas advertising that focused on Waitrose's ethical reputation, donating money to charities and promoting sustainable food, and positioning themselves as different from the rest of the industry and helping people save money during Christmas. Greenpeace created a spoof of their Christmas website, got access to celebrity chefs talking about the Arctic and hijacked their Facebook page and other social media channels, turning their customers against the partnership with Shell. The campaign received such a favourable response that Waitrose was pressured to publically drop the partnership.

The third environmental campaign analysed targeted the Volkswagen Group (VW), which similarly to Waitrose, is a well-respected company that invests resources in their green image and is often considered a champion of sustainability in the car industry. Volkswagen declared publically that they were going to reach the EU car carbon emission target of 2020 without loopholes. However, Greenpeace revealed that they have been pushing against this target for years, trying to lobby legislators. Greenpeace denounced the German car industry and lobbied heavily on the European parliament against any industry binding environmental law, thus halting the environmental regulatory process. Volkswagen is the biggest car company in Europe that didn't commit to the reduction of carbon emissions, while they spend more than any other company on advertising. Greenpeace tried to put responsibility onto Volkswagen, appealing to the business case that other

companies were supporting the CO2 emission cuts and ‘Volkswagen can’t afford to be left behind’. Greenpeace used a mix of offline actions and a highly innovative and unconventional social media campaign. They decided to ride on the widespread success of the Star Wars advertising campaign launched by Volkswagen that was the most successful branding campaign of the year featuring Star Wars themes, and they orchestrated a brand attack against them through social media, subvertising their brand and their advertising campaign. Greenpeace created an imitation of the Star Wars video of the Volkswagen advertisement and spread it through direct actions all around the world, and followed up with a mix of ambitious social media strategy and user-driven actions. The campaign created massive endorsement from stakeholders' audiences and was very well received by EU policy makers, enhancing Greenpeace's legitimacy as a defender of environmental and sustainability issues.

Greenpeace target these companies to ultimately create awareness with the company’s consumer and customer base and with a wider networked audience that is critical in order to acquire legitimacy and to influence policy makers and other key stakeholders. Although social movements act as “outsiders”, with little resources and through controversial tactics in attempts to challenge established corporate interests, they can effectively cause material and symbolic damage to the companies they target in their campaigns. Subsequently, they can also influence the media accounts and media reports of corporate activities. The ultimate objective of the observed campaigns is enlisting a bigger audience to pressure policy makers to better regulate the field by imposing new laws or sanctions to prohibit companies' illegitimate activities. This process results in the acquisition of legitimacy, and may have influenced policy makers and corporate targets. These operational and implementation mechanisms are very clear in all observed campaigns, especially the ones targeting Shell, the US Government and the European Union on the climate consequences of Arctic Ocean drilling, and the one targeting Volkswagen, which was ultimately aimed at influencing the way the European Union will legislate on CO2 emissions targets for 2020. Both campaigns were clearly successful in contributing to the EU's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and recognizing that establishing new emissions standards for the European car industry is an imperative.

Social media are the primary channels through which Greenpeace communicated with external audiences and stakeholders and achieved engagement, support, or criticisms from such audiences. This represents, in my view, a remarkable shift from the way media reports were previously used by organisations. It also changes the role of the spokesperson, which is now largely replaced by horizontal communication networks, and interactive processes mediated by social media to actively

engage and mobilise a large number of audiences in the campaigns. Social media management at Greenpeace includes many activities carried out by the organisation's supporters themselves in a spontaneous way. Other activities are encouraged and curated by the Greenpeace Communication Team (Greenpeace Mobilisation Lab) and amplified by the campaign spokespersons. The use of social media is a tactical tool that includes *subvertising* and *hijacking* corporate branding of the company targeted by Greenpeace.

The examined campaigns are pivotal case studies for such analysis of legitimacy acquisition, because social movement organisations adopt social media to renew their tactics, inducing a set of responses from the targeted corporations, other organisations and policy makers. The outcomes were documented through media accounts and the analysis of the use of social media, showing how campaigns mattered in pressuring firms and legislators to respond. I also critically assessed the impact of firms' non-responses or slow responses on social media. The availability of detailed organisational data on Greenpeace and their campaigns allowed me to use rich data suitable for assessing effects of legitimacy acquisition across campaigns that can be extended also across social movement organisations.

In the following section I intertwine a detailed narrative of observations during live illegitimate direct actions and social media tactics in the three campaigns, generated by interviews and ethnography, with theoretical insights from the literature to articulate an emerging model (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007).

Phase 1. Social Media as Unconventional Mobilisation Tactics

Greenpeace has experienced in recent years a major shift in their media and communication strategy, since the increasing significance of social media motivated the organisation to find new ways to mobilise stakeholders and their thousands of volunteers for their campaigns, with new ways to measure the resulted impact. Various informants attribute the shift to the collapse of the 2009 UN Climate Talks in Copenhagen, when *"Greenpeace entered a new phase rethinking organisational processes and communication structure that could be more aligned to current global social movement organisations and their communication processes" (Greenpeace UK Director)*. As an outcome of this evaluation process, Greenpeace set up the *Mobilisation Lab*, composed of strategic cross-department teams that coordinate the communication strategies of campaigns, comprising two or three people from fundraising, communication, and participation, leading social media strategies. According to the coordinator of the Volkswagen campaign, each campaign follows similar patterns:

> "*A campaign is an intense stream of activity that begins with a foundation period, moves to a campaign kick-off, has periodic peaks, and culminates in a final event peak, followed by an evaluation. Each campaign builds on what we did in the past and creates a foundation for the next activities, building the story, structure, strategy, and action necessary to succeed*" *(Greenpeace MobLab).*

Multiple departments work together to plan campaigns. During the planning process, which I observed for several months from December 2012 until April 2013, there is a significant amount of collective discussion, brainstorming, and negotiation that goes on between departments about strategy, goals, and tactics. However, at the end of the planning process a project team will create a "campaign brief" to streamline organisational processes and practices:

> "*We use similar ways of operating with all our campaigns: we identify the problem, the solution, and how we are going to talk to people about it, and see what people can do about it and what tactics you can use" (Greenpeace Campaign Director).*

The change in organisational structure is determined in particular by the ability of organisations to exploit the potential of mass media, and social media in particular, to mobilise collective actions and to disseminate narratives, information and images on an unprecedented scale (Taylor and van Dyke 2004). Social media have the potential to galvanise civic participation, by providing social movement organisations with access to new audiences and allowing them to spread their messages to the users' existing social networks. As argued by Friedman (1999), protests of social movement organisations targeted to expose and contest corporate activities have recently turned from "market place oriented" to "media oriented". As observed by the Greenpeace Campaign Director:

> *"Greenpeace is shifting to the adoption of people-centred digital communication to mobilise social change. Access to critical resources, expertise and funding are everywhere and can no longer be found only within the organisation. For instance, Greenpeace pay for their campaigns through donations or crowdfunding. People mobilise around causes that are relevant to them, whether or not Greenpeace organises a successful campaign" (Greenpeace Campaign Director).*

The media are important indicators of legitimacy at society-wide level and decisive sources of legitimacy. Media reports have been used by scholars to measure legitimacy at population and organisation level in different industry sectors (Dowling and Pfeffer 1975; Deephouse 1996; Pollock and Rindova 2003). As shown from the Greenpeace coordinator's account, the campaigns were able to create emotional attachment from stakeholders' audiences that generated good press coverage:

"We had very good press. The press was very positive…it is such a dramatic thing, even for somebody not really into environmental causes or not hugely concerned with climate change. I think the Arctic is a place that resonates with everybody who has an emotional attachment with that place and with polar bears; people feel a connection with that place. We hear statements from people like Richard Branson that drilling oil in the arctic crosses a line that we should not cross" (Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).

Attracting media attention and press reviews certainly helps to legitimise organisations and the messages of their campaigns, as well as expanding the support and audience base. Mass media are therefore important sources of legitimacy that social movement organisations can exploit to their advantage. However, it is often hard for social movement organisations to draw large scale media attention, since the campaigns are often grounded on contested issues and causes. Thus, it is important to release scientific research on the subject (see the examined Greenpeace report "The Dark Side of Volkswagen"; "Four Steps to a Three-litre Golf"; and "Out in the Cold: Investor Risk in Shell's Arctic Exploration Report") that can be discussed and validated by experts and by the scientific community and can then be re-published by the media. However, in the observed campaign, digital networks and social media were crucial for Greenpeace to build a mass user base and leverage public opinion that could then attract news media attention and even influence the framing of the discourse around the main issues raised by the campaigns.

The power of social networking consists in the capacity to link to other already existing institutional networks, and enhance them as network structures. Actors and organisations follow a networked communication model that combines interpersonal online communication, traditional communication sent from one to many, and mass-self communication (Castells 2009). According to social movement theory, to become involved in movement activities, people need to share the movement's beliefs, be targeted by mobilisation efforts, become motivated to take action, and overcome barriers of participation (Benford and Snow 200). Following this perspective, social media can be used as a channel for broadening the scope of mobilisation and amplifying movements' endeavours to affect power dynamics by reaching out to new audiences that can attract attention and re-frame issues. Social media users can easily become the targets of mobilisation efforts to achieve collective awareness when friends share and broadcast messages about specific campaigns. Social media sites may also lower barriers to participation, as they help in turning online mobilisation into practical action. As Greenpeace Campaign Director explained:

"*Our campaigns today are mainly based on social media. We can reach a numbers of people through social media, Twitter and YouTube that was unimaginable before. Social media are not anymore a one-way communication flow, but they create a viral snowball effect…we emailed some of our supporters in the first weekend of December and we immediately had*

> *20,000 people signed up the first weekend, and from the Monday we released the campaign film and we emailed the rest of our supporters…we had a huge response (Greenpeace Campaign Director).*

A good example is the *Arctic Ready* campaign, where Greenpeace was able to draw favourable media coverage that was influenced by the strong public reaction against oil drilling in the Arctic, which resulted in a mass scale effective social media-led pressure involving consumers, celebrities, investors and other stakeholders globally that pressured for change both the US Administration and the EU.

Tapping the Crowd: Leveraging the Aggregate Opinion and Sentiment of "Networked Publics"

Organisations use predominantly social media, blogs and other online channels to conduct their campaigns and to build an engaged audience that include bloggers, journalists, volunteers and campaigners. A goal of most advocacy campaigns is to ensure key audiences see messages and can share them with their social media network, thus enlisting their friends to sign the campaign petitions. In most cases the campaigners seek to maximise the number of people that see a message by making sure a story reaches across audiences. Furthermore, the observed cases show that social movements use social media to transform emotions into action. The emotions that are most relevant to social mobilisation are positive or negative effects that direct individuals to rewarding experiences and move them towards goals they care for (Damasio 1994; Castells 2009).

Greenpeace was successful in leveraging people's negative reactions towards the lack of corporate social change. The Volkswagen campaign emphasises a key role of social media in the mobilisation process, focused on delegitimising Volkswagen's rhetoric and environmental image. The campaign was coordinated by Greenpeace offices in EU countries and focused on calling on governments and car companies to support a 30 percent cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. Greenpeace's mobilisation team was spread across several countries and time zones. The groups from Greenpeace France, Greenpeace Germany and Greenpeace UK were able to collaborate and create mass scale interactivity and gaming elements that engaged thousands of people. As described by the MobLab:

> "*Part of the digital team's success was that we had plenty of freedom to experiment, as the digital work wasn't viewed as important as the campaign film, for example. And this gave us space to innovate the way we were building our message*" (*Greenpeace MobLab* and *Volkswagen case study)*

In this process social media play a fundamental role for creating bridges between social actors who share interests, reaching heterogeneous stakeholder groups. As stated by Jenkins (2006a) the power of media producers and audiences is increasingly interactive, giving rise to cultures of "networked belonging" aimed at social mobilisation. Social media thus attract mass attention that can be measured and exploited by organisations to mobilise action:

> *"We built keywords that can help us in tracking key conversations online, so we can measure and monitor the volume of "social mentions" and posts throughout the campaign and compare the level of attention that other campaigns are raising" (Greenpeace Communication Department).*

The Volkswagen campaign is also an example of how to engage the networked publics using viral social media contents as a main channel. The main campaign film was a huge driver in attracting attention, since it quickly became the most shared content on the Internet. The film was being shared by more than 100,000 people on Facebook and on YouTube when Google asked Greenpeace to remove the video from the website for copyright infringement, following the request of the producers of *Star Wars*. As a result, the censorship built more attention and attracted new audiences. The campaign took full advantage of that censorship to spur people into more action, capitalising on the video takedown while further building momentum against Volkswagen.

> "*The campaign asks people to become active, to recruit more friends and to participate. People can have credentials to set up their own training page and they receive points to unlock Star Wars characters according to their level of engagement and to the number of people they convince to join the campaign. People reacted with a huge participation*" (*Greenpeace Social Media Director*).

Despite the censorship, the film has been uploaded in many places making it difficult to know how many times it's been viewed exactly. Two million plus views is considered by Greenpeace a close estimate. However, the firm's reaction to the social media mobilisation strategy varies from firm to firm and, according to the Greenpeace Mobilisation Lab team, it had a big impact on the campaign's outcome:

> "*We used emails and petitions to get the campaign supporters to pressure companies to change and then used social media for people to share contents, engage in conversations, spread the word about the campaign and get more involvement. We create a journey for supporters where we propose different levels of engagement to stimulate people to pass from social media engagement to active participation in Greenpeace offline actions" (Greenpeace MobLab case study).*

In social media-led campaigns, supporters tend to use online networks to gather friends and group them in fan *communities* or supporters' communities that can provide valuable input into the campaign. Organisations often rely on user-led projects that directly include consumers' online activities. That's why many organisations are putting new emphasis on strategies like *viral communication and communication guerrilla tactics*, which can actively leverage the spontaneous sociality of supporters, the word of mouth that flows fast and freely in a networked communications environment, to ensure the most effective mobilisation of their organisation's user base. As outlined in Greenpeace MobLab case study:

> *"The imperative was energising a large audience. Engagement, and being able to share messaging and to rapidly react to our supporters' postings was essential" (Greenpeace MobLab case study).*

A strategy for a successful campaign increasingly becomes a matter of initiating and sustaining a *public* around a message and a campaign, a public that is able to contribute to maintaining the strength of the campaign's values and contribute to ongoing development by offering input that ranges from information and content sharing, to direct mobilisation. A networked public, which is generated by social media, is defined in the literature as a mediated association among strangers that is directed towards the pursuit of a common goal (Varnelis 2008); in this case the campaign goals. Publics can involve a larger range of actors with weak ties. In this case millions of people contribute to sustaining Greenpeace campaigns, but they do not all interact or mostly even know of each other. At the same time the people involved experience themselves as part of a common pursuit and have, however weak, common values that are associated to the goals of the campaigns or of the organisation they support. As explained by Greenpeace campaign coordinator:

> *"Lots of people driving Volkswagens were proud of their environmental commitment and records, so their position was about alienating these people…our campaign was about bringing people with us and asking Volkswagen to change. A lot of people who signed up to the campaign identified as Volkswagen drivers and we knew that there was a big overlap with Volkswagen drivers and Greenpeace supporters, in the same way that Waitrose is that kind of brand that you have to bring people with you" (Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).*

While until recently the main way to spread awareness for the organisation's goals consisted of sending emails, taking part in forums, and mailing lists, targeting interpersonal interaction, nowadays it is easier and cheaper for supporters to actively participate in the campaigns in a casual way, by re-tweeting its communication, posting on blogs, or simply "liking" and sharing its viral communications on Facebook or other social media (Arvidsson 2013). Watts and Dodds (2007) argue that information diffusion is driven by a critical mass of loosely connected individuals, what

they call "accidental influencers" that are connected to each other by weaker forms of mediated association (like re-tweeting a message or sharing a content on social media). As explicated by the Greenpeace Campaign Director:

> *"... people get really angry when companies censor things on social media. As happened with the Waitrose campaign when the company was deleting our posts, it is absolute suicide for companies to censor on social media. We had the same experience with a Nestlé campaign, and now it is taught on PR and marketing courses as an example" (Greenpeace Campaign Director).*

Consequently, organisations promote the ability of such loosely associated individuals to create a buzz in a coordinated way to enhance the "network value" of those messages. In the words of the Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator:

> *"We spent 6 months emailing them, writing them letters explaining what Shell was doing in the Arctic and asking them to explain how that was fitting with their sustainability policy. The response was very cold, they wouldn't meet us and they denied responsibility for this partnership. But two days after we launched the campaign, they called us to arrange a meeting" (Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).*

Once Greenpeace is able to aggregate and quickly mobilise the public sentiment of the networked crowd, they move on to more sophisticated tactics able to directly target online corporate identity, and in this way prompt viral reactions from their supporters and key intermediaries. As described by Greenpeace campaign coordinator:

> *"Companies responded in different ways, Volkswagen decided not to respond. When we started the campaign they didn't seem to have a clear social media strategy and they were outsourcing it to an external company and probably not yet very experience dealing with a social media crisis that we provoked" (Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).*

Tapping the crowd thus leads to the organisation's ability to leverage the social media network in a strategic manner to enhance the organisation's capacity to generate mass scale public attention. However, generating attention is not enough if it is not followed by effective tactics that use the attention surrounding causes that people care about to specifically target corporate activities and online identity.

Delegitimising Corporate Online Identities

In a very effective way, Greenpeace used successful and contested social media mobilisation tactics in the campaign against Shell, aimed at delegitimising the online identity of the targeted firm. At

arcticready.com, Greenpeace collaborated with the *"cultural jamming"* group, "The Yes Men", well known for spectacular media actions and hoaxes, to create a spoof Shell website. People were able to create their own advertisements, educating the public on issues of Arctic drilling, setting up the website (http://arcticready.com/arctic), and it was also launched on Twitter. The website looked almost identical to the official Shell website, and people were visiting the website thinking it was the official Shell page despite being circulated online that it was a fake. The website was encouraging people to create their own spoof advertisements with pictures of the Arctic to share on social media. Users selected the photo templates featuring Shell's slogan of "Let's Go" and submitted a variety of new contesting slogans that Greenpeace was then printing as posters. Greenpeace published links on social media sites and arcticready.com, the social media hub for the campaign, with users' authored advertisements, such as:

> "*We at Shell are committed to not only recognise the challenges that climate change brings, but to take advantage of its tremendous opportunities. And what's the biggest opportunity we've got today? The melting Arctic" (arcticready.com).*

The user-generated advertisements were then displayed in a gallery of user submissions. A video was also spread on YouTube and Twitter with the hashtag *#ShellFail*. The video was viewed over half a million times, showing what appeared to be an official Shell press conference that goes wrong because during the PR presentation a model oil rig starts spilling oil on the public, with Shell failing to master the incident. At the end of the press conference a Shell security staff member evacuates the press room and tries to impede a reporter with a camera filming the scene. Only later did Greenpeace directly reveal that it was part of a Greenpeace *social media hoax* that led the strategy of their anti-Shell campaign centred on a novel use of social media to delegitimise the targeted corporate online identity, by taking over the Shell online corporate account. The site continued to generate controversy for Shell, turning into a media disaster for the online identity of Shell. As reported by The New Statesman:

> *"It's behaving, smelling, looking as though it was Shell under siege so the only way that you would ever know that it wasn't Shell is through the Twitter 'verified account' but I know that a lot of brands haven't gone through the verified account process" (The New Statesman).*

The *cultural jamming* tactics were used across different social media channels. A fake Shell Social Media Team Twitter account was set up to post multiple tweets with threats, intimidating bloggers and users to terminate the contribution of contents to the fake campaign website, or the Shell legal team would take legal action against them. Greenpeace posted an email using Shell's PR fake twitter account, telling their web audience that *"Shell is monitoring the spread of potentially*

defamatory material on the Internet and reporters are advised to avoid publishing such material". Thousands of people believed the email until they realised it was part the social media spoof campaign. The hoax attracted a lot of attention on the web and in the news media.

This strongly damaged Shell's online identity, since audiences really believed it was the real Shell account. Shell was very slow to respond and once they realised it was too late they started deleting users' comments from their social media pages. Like other social media fails, people enjoyed making fun of Shell and their apparent lack of understanding of social media. As a Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator remarked:

> *"It is considered really bad to delete posts on social media. People themselves write contents and posts, they come from supporters spontaneously and people get really angry when posts are deleted and when companies are behaving badly on social media" (Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).*

The action provoked large-scale support for the campaign, with widespread endorsement for Greenpeace. For instance, various enthusiastic comments were published online. At the same time these tactics also provoked criticisms against Greenpeace, in particular reflected in the negative media accounts that emphasised the negative effect on Shell's image. As stated by the Sydney Morning Herald:

> *"Shell's brand has been hijacked in what marketing experts say is a social media oil spill and a coordinated online assassination of the Shell brand" (The Sydney Morning Herald).*

A second spike of criticism a couple of days after the campaign coincided with media coverage of the spoof, including articles in mainstream "prestige media" such as Forbes and a gallery on the Guardian, and social media coverage such as Twitter. Forbes was one of the most critical media, and after the Greenpeace online actions continued to attract attention, they wrote:

> *"It may have been done for noble reasons, but that doesn't change the salient fact that they are manipulating the media by creating a fake scandal and lying about it to get more coverage" (Forbes).*

Forbes declared the delegitimation of Shell's online identity as illegitimate action, using criminal metaphors and emphasising the illegal aspects of the Greenpeace action, calling the *détournement* an "identity theft":

> *"Is this a successful parody, protected by free speech, or a case of corporate identity theft? Twitter's terms of use say you can't impersonate another person or account, but the site has not taken the Shell Social Media Team account down yet" (Forbes).*

The New Statesman also published a comprehensive critique of the social media-driven illegitimate action, looking at the dark side of social media that generates mass scale attention from the public:

> *"For several weeks now I've watched endless re-tweets of "epic Shell PR fails" cascading down my timeline… Another hilarity-inducing epic Shell PR fail? Nope, another cynical Greenpeace hoax…Throw in the awesome power of social media, and one blogger's late night fuck-up can become a truth spoken by millions before breakfast" (The New Statesman).*

Similar tactics were used for the Waitrose and Volkswagen. The campaign that targeted Waitrose had the main objective to break and expose the partnership between Waitrose and Shell that, according to Greenpeace, was damaging the Waitrose image of being environmentally aware:

> "*So we made a spoof advert very quickly in a week, we got access to other celebrity chefs talking about the Arctic and we super-imposed the Shell token over the green Waitrose… Firstly we made a spoof of their Christmas website …it really snowballed from there" (Greenpeace Campaign Director)*.

Greenpeace decided to use both normal media channels with an intensive social media effort. Posts were uploaded directly to the Waitrose Facebook page and Greenpeace tweeted directly to the company Twitter and social media accounts. Greenpeace was using a dedicated hashtag #dumpshell which received heavy traffic, gathering massive attention. As reported by the Greenpeace Head of Campaigns:

> *"When the campaign started on the 1st of December we managed to trend on social media in the UK, and it was on the Saturday night during XFactor when it is very difficult to trend. Then on the Wednesday 5th of December, Waitrose had planned on their Facebook page the Christmas Q&A with Delia Smith, where customers could go on their Facebook page and ask this famous chef different questions about Christmas cooking, and our supporters kind of hijacked it. Waitrose deleted our supporters' posts, and they added a new code of conduct to their Facebook page".*

As clearly shown in the Waitrose campaign, Greenpeace social media unconventional tactics surprised the targeted company that was not ready and prepared to respond fast to the social media mobilisation. Certain corporate behaviours, such as deleting subscribers social media and responding slowly to users' requests or challenges, could be seen to violate social media community norms and makes companies appear non-human and ineffective. These responses don't work on social media and ultimately damage the online identity of the company.

For the Volkswagen campaign Greenpeace decided to build the social media tactics on the back of the company's successful advertising campaign. The original Volkswagen advertisement was one

of the most popular advertisements of the year, with over 40 million views, so by building the campaign on this popular advertisement, Greenpeace managed to tap into popular culture. To come up with the main ideas for the campaign, Greenpeace first sought advice from external creative agencies. As a result, a filmmaker working with Greenpeace suggested that the campaign play off the already massively popular Super Bowl advertisement. Greenpeace carried the Star Wars theme through every element of the launch (for example, their policy report is entitled "The Dark Side of Volkswagen" and is introduced by R2D2). In this way Greenpeace was able to capture the popular attention around Volkswagen Star Wars based advertising, mobilising the Star Wars fan base, while delegitimising Volkswagen environmental messages that, according to Greenpeace, were not followed by concrete corporate activities. Greenpeace also ran a film competition, asking filmmakers from around the world to help expose Volkswagen. The competition received 82 submissions, 62,000 people visited the film competition site and 16,000 people voted.

The digital mobilisation tactics attracted attention that was mostly was generated by social media, which also managed to attract Volkswagen drivers and customers. The Volkswagen Dark Side site used games and funny jokes as a *détournement* of the original meaning of the Volkswagen advertising in order to give it a new meaning. Détournement is a tactic to modify and re-signify existing meanings transmitted by the media, substituting them with new meanings that resonate with audiences, with the intent to criticise and appropriate the media message. As explained by Greenpeace:

As noted by a member of the MobLab:

> *"The campaign became a two-part video that shows the Volkswagen Death Star plotting to destroy the planet. The video ends with a message about Volkwagen's opposition to cutting CO2 emissions from cars, and engages people with one simple ask: join the rebellion and turn Volkswagen away from the Dark Side. It played on the popularity of Star Wars, which has a huge currency, and we signed over 500,000 people all on social media" (Greenpeace MobLab case study).*

Greenpeace went beyond creating a popular video and website by also developing a social media game in order to engage Greenpeace supporters and their friends, spreading the campaign's contents and rewarding people's participation through game mechanics, and providing incentives for people to actively participate in the campaign:

> "*The competitive gaming element would prove essential in driving traffic*; *nearly 80 percent came through referring sites, mainly Facebook and Orkut" (Greenpeace MobLab case study).*

The Volkswagen campaign was deployed across 14 different languages and mobile platforms. It engaged a huge amount of people through the social media side; more than 5.5 million people visited the campaign website. The day the campaign launched the video went instantly viral, 130,000 people viewed the film and 400,000 people visited the campaign's website. According to the statistics released by Greenpeace, 30 percent of the people who signed the manifesto also took part in Jedi training, increasing the diffusion among their peers:

> *"The large numbers were instrumental in giving the movement power. Every signature added to the rebel manifesto was sent to the chairman of Volkswagen, which gave them a real-time sense of the public's growing opposition. In total, 526,000 people signed the rebel manifesto calling on Volkswagen to make their cars more efficient. In the UK office, average open and click-through rates were 37 percent and 9 percent respectively, higher than the office's other campaigns" (Greenpeace MobLab case study).*

The online mobilisation team planned the digital tactics after the campaign's launch. They were able to experiment with real-time campaign information, creating new social media tactics such as a social media hijack with a *Facebook Slicer*, a crowdsourced video competition, and a geo-tagged live Twitter map signalling the various actions across Europe during the day of action. The social media mobilisation tactics - in particular the Volkswagen advertisement *détournement*, the video and the social game - proved very effective and drew lots of attention, so that Volkswagen was forced to change the Facebook page policy in response to the social media campaign.

It is of course hard to say exactly what sequence of events triggered the spike in attention and conversation. However, it seems clear that the week of direct actions and the online action reinforced and strengthened each other with a feedback loop effect, and an increase in user-generated content across social media platforms. The media actions also received negative reactions from prestige media outlets, mainly concerned about the inability of firms to react in an effective and quick manner. Further, companies themselves reacted very differently to Greenpeace's effective social media campaigns. However, mostly the responses from the targeted companies showed that they were unprepared to manage a social media legitimacy crisis. As argued by the Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator:

> "*Companies responded in different ways.* Volkswagen *decided not to respond. When we started the campaign they didn't seem to have a clear social media strategy and they were outsourcing it to an external company, and probably not yet very experienced in dealing with a social media crisis that we provoked" (Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).*

The result is that in this fast-changing environment there is an increased transparency that allows customers and users to react quickly since they have a forum to act very directly and publicly. The

way consumers use social media to mobilise action can have a direct effect on corporate change activities and their perception of audiences. As noted by the Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator:

> "*Social media is like an open forum. Volkswagen didn't realise that a person on social media can be at the same time a Greenpeace supporter but also their customer. What they did was kick everyone out of their page making comments on our campaign, but the vast majority were their own customers" (Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).*

The heterogeneous firms' responses in the observed campaigns show that when companies do something that openly contradicts the values they promote or the image they project, on social media it becomes easier to be exposed, since there is easier access to information and to comparable sources. This helps social movement organisations to harness negative sentiments and to spin them positively for their campaigns that demand social change.

Phase 2. Constructing the "Networked Space"

Illegitimate actions by social movement organisations generate attention from the media and stakeholder audience

Greenpeace makes use of several other methods and tactics in their campaigns, such as developing in-house scientifically peer reviewed reports, using effective political lobbying, and raising public awareness through media activities and direct actions (Jarecka and Pajak 2008). In the second phase of the model I use the concept of illegitimate actions as described by Elsbach and Sutton (1992), since there is evidence that Greenpeace carried out intentionally strong and spectacular illegitimate actions to attract attention to their campaigns. However, while in the past illegitimate actions were only conducted offline, in the three campaigns I observed, illegitimate actions started first online through a social media presence and then through combined hybrid elements of online and offline actions. Through their spectacular direct actions, which often entail illegal activities, Greenpeace was able to attract great media coverage, gaining recognition for the campaigns and for the goals of the organisation. Often these actions ended up with the arrest of some Greenpeace members, as shown in the case of the direct actions observed here during the Shell campaign and the one targeting Volkswagen (see Table 2 for a timeline of direct actions in the three campaigns observed).

Beyond getting coverage, direct actions provoke a public reaction that gives social movements endorsement within mainstream news discourse. In this way the framings proposed by social movements acquire credibility amongst stakeholders and, in turn, the social movement becomes

influential in raising certain issues, generating media hype and attracting public awareness. Greenpeace focused on building convincing campaigns based on the scientifically documented facts (even if the quality of the scientific report is contested within the scientific and academic community), social media engagement tactics and spectacular actions. Here the Greenpeace Campaign Director describes the integrated nature of the campaign:

> *"We try to have good reasons to do something...Shell is a huge multinational corporation, a very hated company, while our little boats are activists trying to stop them, and we think that is legitimate and non-violent direct action. Nearly three million people across the world signed up for the campaign, and we have a mandate from these people to take action" (Greenpeace Campaign Director).*

In the observed campaigns, to influence corporate activities Greenpeace chose to target companies that represent policies or images Greenpeace wanted to tackle but in different ways. For instance, Volkswagen is an engaging target for Greenpeace since it is different from Shell, a petroleum company, which is arguably easier to portray as a malicious corporation with a bad brand reputation concerning environmental awareness. As explained by the Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator:

> *"Very often we are picking on one company that is doing things that other companies won't do because they would be afraid of being isolated since we succeeded in damaging their brand and social reputation. So in the case of Shell and Volkswagen, the way we operate is very similar" (Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).*

For a company like Shell, whose success isn't necessarily based on consumer trust, environmental issues don't determine their failure. However, for businesses such as Waitrose, who promote themselves as ethical, customer-centric companies, it is damaging to their legitimacy and reputation to be associated with other firms that contradict those values, especially if exposed to the attention of the general public.

> *"Waitrose's decision to partner with Shell damages their legitimacy based on ethical and environmental awareness. Greenpeace is then rightly asking Waitrose to end the relationship with Shell. I participated in the direct actions against Waitrose and I went with other Greenpeace volunteers in front of their stores to spread information materials that people were very happy to receive, since they didn't seem to like this strange partnership" (Greenpeace volunteer).*

Different to the Shell campaign, the Volkswagen campaign was aimed at targeting and influencing a very recognisable brand, and one that has cultivated a progressive, environmentally engaged image that Greenpeace activists defined as "environmentally rhetoric". In the case of Volkswagen,

one of the main Greenpeace objectives was to create awareness with Volkswagen customers, using the Arctic case that emotionally resonates with people. Greenpeace didn't target the company's brand but leveraged on their good environmental reputation without alienating the company. But after revealing the firm's inability and lack of will to meet the promised environmental standards, Greenpeace then launched the Volkswagen global campaign together with an influential report that was published afterwards in mainstream media, with the objective to attack Volkswagen's credibility in relation to their environmental responsibility.

In all observed campaigns, Greenpeace launched their days of action with some direct actions considered as illegitimate, such as hanging banners, climbing down from roofs, blockades, lobbies, occupations of offices and petrol stations and so on. Most of these actions ended with Greenpeace members being arrested, usually for a few days, and then released, attracting huge media attention and public pressure. For instance, in February 2012 during the Shell campaign, Greenpeace activists embarked without authorization a Shell water drillship on its way to the Arctic, with the intention to stop it. One month later, Greenpeace activists also went on board Shell's icebreaker in Finland. Furthermore, in May 2012 Greenpeace activists again boarded and occupied a vessel in Swedish waters. Activists chained themselves to the ship and created a human blockade.

These actions give media visibility and credibility vis-à-vis the other actors in the field, which helps the organisation to gain endorsement and support. Media reports that follow illegitimate actions, such as in the case of Greenpeace, sometimes contain positive comments on the organisation's tactics used, but can also sometimes damage legitimacy. For instance, subsequent to the above mentioned actions against Shell, in March 2013 the US Court of Appeals approved a court verdict forbidding Greenpeace to get close Shell's sites in Alaska. The Court concluded that the injunction was necessary since *"Greenpeace would commit tortuous, unlawful, and illegal acts against Shell's Arctic drilling operations in the absence of an injunction and the resulting harm would be irreparable"*. Shell also argued that *"Greenpeace activists used illegal direct actions to interfere with legal oil drilling activities on a number of occasions, including boarding vessels to try and halt drilling activities, painting slogans and unfurling banners" (Shell press release).*

Illegitimate actions such as blockades and occupations carried out by Greenpeace in the observed campaigns can also violate accepted social norms and damage legitimacy by providing a fertile terrain for adversaries that want to undermine an organisation's reputation (Elsbach and Sutton 1992, p. 712). According to influential journals, such as the Wall Street Journal Europe, Greenpeace

was using a controversial story to attract attention, despite the scientific evidence being used not having been rigorously tested:

> *"One of Greenpeace's recurrent campaigns is global warming. This is an issue steeped in controversy, both scientifically and politically, which affords Greenpeace ample media opportunities….Greenpeace is in the business of crafting scary stories, in the hope that the media will pick these up and the public will give it money to campaign against the supposed problems that it highlights"* (Wall Street Journal Europe).

These accusations were broadcasted and reported in specialised press and journals linked to the oil industry and very positive about Shell's operations in the Arctic (e.g. Shell press releases; oil.fuelspace.com; oilfielddailynews.com; petroleumnews.com; upi.com). A media outlet specialised in the oil industry news reported Greenpeace's illegitimate actions that provoked material damages to Shell, condemning the actions:

> *"Greenpeace joined forces with dismantlers who stood to profit from towing the platform to shore, and incited boycotts and attacks against Shell stations and employees, particularly in Germany. 50 gas stations were attacked, two were burned. The conflict cost Shell a quarter of a billion dollar…given Greenpeace's reputation for seeking to create blockbuster spectacles rather than actual results, how well did their "Guide to Greener Electronics" report capture and portray facts and reality?"* (http://www.roughlydrafted.com)

Consequently, Shell attacked Greenpeace over the information they released to justify their actions. According to the corporation, the information spread by Greenpeace was false and from scientific reports that don't present clear evidence. The scientific reports produced by Greenpeace for the campaigns also sometimes receive criticisms from industry stakeholders. For instance, the National Fisheries Institute strongly criticised a Greenpeace report and asked the media and the public to challenge the Greenpeace report that they considered "unscientific". Also, the IPCC report on climate change was labelled by part of the media as "Greenpeace influenced propaganda", thus accusing Greenpeace of influence the institution and promoting their own campaign under the cover of the authoritative and trustworthy IPCC: *"A more scandalous conflict of interests can scarcely be imagined"* (Lynas 2011). McIntyre pointed out that the Greenpeace report destroyed the credibility of the IPCC as a respectable institution.

It is clear that social movement organisations use a variety of tactics, which range from tactics that cause material loss and economic damages to firms to tactics that affect a firm's legitimacy through symbolic damages and a clever use of mass media (den Hond and de Bakker 2007). Researchers, such as della Porta and Diani (1999), have shown that social movement practices can have an effective impact on policy makers. They have an impact in "forcing decision makers to change or abandon contested practices or policies if the protest raises the cost of continuing the contesting

practices or policies" (den Hond and de Bakker 2007, p. 909). This "logic of material damages" is a tactic used by Greenpeace in the observed campaigns. As confirmed by the Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator:

> *"For example, Total said they won't drill for oil in the Arctic, and that was quite powerful. In this country £1 every £6 that is invested in the pension funds goes to Shell and BP; it is risky for investors. Shell already invested 5 million pounds and hasn't seen any oil yet, and they will lose this year. They don't have the right equipment and it is too dangerous." (Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).*

The logic of material damage is grounded on economic predictions, while the campaign can also engage thousands of people through the "logic of numbers" (den Hond and de Bakker 2007), where protesters contest policies or decisions since they are no longer accepted by a vast number of people and they can leverage these numbers to pressure policy makers and companies to change. In all observed campaigns, social media were instrumental to enlist a large number of people and to stimulate their active participation and pressure on the issues Greenpeace wanted to promote. As outlined by the Greenpeace spokesperson and by the Greenpeace MobLab, the logic of numbers was critical in both campaigns to get a reaction from policymakers and legislators, and to justify the illegitimate direct actions:

> *"After 2 years and over 500,000 people pressuring Volkswagen, the company has finally agreed to comply with more efficient standards and meet the EU 2020 emissions targets to address climate change" (Greenpeace spokesperson).*

Greenpeace was successful in their attempt to gain mass media coverage and mobilise attention through illegitimate actions, provoking strong reactions from stakeholders and framing the discourses around the campaigns. The two logics inspiring Greenpeace's illegitimate actions of damage and gains are clearly both present in the movement's motivation and justification for their campaigns, as noted in the interviews with Greenpeace informants. Increasingly, social movement organisations employ tactics based on mass participation (online and offline), and protests are even more focused on mass media and communication strategies. As explained by a Greenpeace spokesperson:

> *"We asked supporters to sign a petition demanding that the Obama Administration would release all information related to oil spill disasters. The campaign generated thousands of emails directed to Obama and support letters" (Greenpeace spokesperson).*

Greenpeace was able to exploit the attention generated through the illegitimate offline actions, by channelling it though the social media campaign platform. Through social media and web-based

petitions, Greenpeace was able to mobilise a large number of people that were pressuring the targeted companies on behalf of Greenpeace, thus obtaining a symbolic effect and, at the same time, having a material impact on corporate activities.

Blending Tactics: Blurring the Boundaries between Offline and Online Actions

The combination of illegitimate actions and social media tactics are used by social movement organisations to create a "hybrid space" between the online social networks of information flows and the physical direct actions, connecting cyberspace and physical spaces in constant interaction (Castells 2007). This careful tactical mix constitutes a networked environment, where publics can mobilise quickly on various campaigns. This horizontal process of communication ultimately leads to the mobilisation of collective action. The organisations negotiate the diversity of interests and values present in the organisational networks and focus on a common set of goals and tactics that can motivate and mobilise supporters and audiences. Activists are able to gain and sustain media exposure through the use of a variety of social media mobilisation tactics just described, while at the same time they arouse mass support and address public concerns by staging big spectacular protests that are often illegitimate in nature. As confirmed by the Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator:

> *"We are trying to create a sort of journey for supporters where you stimulate different levels of engagement, asking them to become volunteers, participate in the actions, and do things that are fun and meaningful…figuring out which people would move from social media engagement to participating in offline actions" (Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).*

By targeting controversial firms' activities, social movement organisations can amplify the contradictions and vulnerabilities, and impose their alternative views. In these campaigns I observed how Greenpeace increasingly use social media to intensify spectacles and garner media coverage, while at the same time discrediting corporate activities, and creating awareness on environmental policy. As expressed by the Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator, the synergy between offline illegitimate actions and online activities was a key ingredient for the favourable outcome of the Volkswagen campaign. So when the Volkswagen plant in Wolfsburg was picketed the video went viral and helped the campaign to start getting mass attention.

Thus, Greenpeace uses a blending of illegitimate actions and social media tactics, combining the use of legitimate organisational structures, forums and media attention arenas to their advantage, often winning the contest of framing by exercising pressure and leveraging public sentiment. At the same time, as described in previous literature by Elsbach and Sutton (1992), they use decoupling techniques to separate illegitimate actions from legitimate organisational structures, when needed.

For instance, in the Shell campaign, Greenpeace combined institutional conformity with decoupling to distinguish illegitimate tactics that delegitimised online corporate identities from the legitimate structures Greenpeace uses in their daily communication strategy. In order to do so, the Shell hoax campaign was executed in team with the Yes Lab, a non-conformist agency assisting activists groups with unconventional media strategies.

Greenpeace is able to supply information about firms to consumers through attention-grabbing tactics, ranging from illegitimate actions (e.g. direct actions) to lobbying, and media campaigns. Furthermore, in their campaigns targeting individual firms, they promise a reward if the firm complies or threaten a penalty if it doesn't. In response, firms are very careful to not damage their reputation or legitimacy in front of their constituency. In the analysis of the Arctic Ready campaign it was possible to observe evidences of the way Greenpeace was able to blend offline and online activities, leveraging the power of multiple unconventional tactics in particular during the Shell week of action (see Table 2 for a timeline of events). In particular, on July 16th 2012 Greenpeace shut down 76 Shell stations across the UK, and it was also broadcasted live on TV. The direct actions against Shell coincided with the opening of Shell's drilling window, which run from July to October, and Greenpeace was able to communicate the urgency of the action to their audiences, resulting in wide support. As shown in the account of a Greenpeace volunteer:

> *"During the global week of action we shut down 78 of their petrol stations in one day to really stop them operating and draw lots of attention… we attracted a huge amount of sympathy since people really understand what's at stake and how important this type of actions are" (Greenpeace volunteer).*

The UK illegitimate direct actions against Shell acted like a catalyst. This generated a big spike on social media and in Twitter interest. According to the social media site YouGov, nine percent of the UK Twitter population (about 1 million people in the UK) heard something negative about Shell on 16th of July 2012. After 16th July, real world actions against Shell started – the social media engagement for the Arctic Ready spoof took off, as shown in the analysis of the Twitter timeline and metrics. Furthermore, the coverage of Greenpeace actions was mainly focused on the reporting of the *Shell social media and PR fail*, gathering attention, which resulted in actual damage of Shell's image. As reported by The Sydney Morning Herald:

> *"Why chain yourself to polar bears in the Arctic when you can create a fake Twitter page and do more damage?" (The Sydney Morning Herald).*

These criticisms raise the question of whether social media have the ability to strengthen political participation from consumers and audiences. Indeed, Greenpeace takes this issue very seriously,

and they are using specific tactics to increase the percentage of people that become more structurally involved in other organisational activities. As noted by the Greenpeace Campaign Director:

> *"At Greenpeace we have different audiences that we want to mobilise. There are Greenpeace supporters, and people that signed up to the campaign and are engaged online. We want to take them on a journey that would lead them to become more committed and take further actions, online and offline" (Greenpeace Campaign Director).*

The Volkswagen campaign followed a similar procedure, showing that Greenpeace tend to follow uniform tactics and strategies across campaigns. The launch of the Volkswagen campaign ensured a very effective synchronisation between the offline spectacular action and the online tactics. The *Volkswagen Dark Side* campaign was launched with a big spectacular direct action at Old Street, London's hub for digital marketing and technology businesses. Hundreds of people demonstrated in the streets, four giant billboards were filled with the campaign advertising material and 15 "Stormtroopers" dressed in white armour were distributing the campaign's material. Greenpeace volunteers protested with banners and distributed information materials on European environmental laws and the inability of Volkswagen to conform to emission standards. Greenpeace unrolled a banner with the slogan 'Volkswagen. The Dark Side', and a link to the campaign website.

The campaign also aimed to engage Volkswagen drivers directly in the sign-up of the webpage, since the Greenpeace team saw a big overlap they could exploit between Volkswagen's customers and Greenpeace supporters and they knew they could attract more public support for the campaign by addressing to the drivers directly. People could endorse the manifesto at vwdarkside.com, pressuring Volkswagen to meet EU CO2 reductions targets, and the public was asked to contribute to the movement, choosing among a suite of engagement tactics proposed by Greenpeace, where users could collect reward points based on their activity. In the Volkswagen campaign, the illegitimate action was done online, while the offline direct actions were very peaceful and communicative. Greenpeace decided to target the image of the company reproducing Volkswagen advertising, but altering the meaning of the brand and subverting the message of the campaign. As pointed out by the MobLab:

> *"The video was put on YouTube and with no warning, YouTube pulled the film. Then other websites followed…Greenpeace set up a site called vwdarkside.com with Volkswagen logos and a look and feel that would elicit long writs from trademark lawyers. Actually, the makers of Star Wars asked them to remove the film x copyright violations" (Greenpeace MobLab case study).*

In summary, Greenpeace acquired the ability to stage new forms of illegitimate actions that are carried out online through social media, instead of in the physical public space through illegitimate direct actions. Greenpeace alternated in a clever and effective way illegitimate actions offline and online, demonstrating an ability to link, connect, or disconnect central nodes joining politics, media, public opinion, and business networks. In this way they were able to create a network that has the ability to influence multiple networks, and exercising some degree of control over wider organisational dynamics (Arsenault and Castells 2008). This is an important step in obtaining endorsement from stakeholders' audiences, since letting key stakeholders, such as competing companies or policy makers, know that the public genuinely care about the issue, which helps turn audiences' attention and awareness into meaningful action that put pressure on legislators.

Phase 4. Organisational Legitimacy Acquisition

Legitimacy acquisition through a blending of offline illegitimate actions and social media mobilisation tactics

The final step in the process is the acquisition of legitimacy for social movement organisations that use a blending of illegitimate actions and social media mobilisation tactics that de-legitimise the targeted corporate activities. In the observed Greenpeace campaigns I was able to identify clear signs demonstrating that legitimacy was achieved despite the illegitimate actions carried out by Greenpeace both offline and online. Legitimacy is ultimately dependent on legitimacy judgments or people's interpretations of legitimacy or illegitimacy (Bitektine 2011). Various audiences or stakeholders may have different perceptions and ways to evaluate legitimacy (Lamin and Zaheer 2012; Vaara et al. 2013) and the practices may vary across audiences. In the observed cases legitimacy is constructed around multidimensional networks, programmed in various domains of organisational activity. Communication networks, such as social media, are crucial networks of power in society, since they can influence a large number of people. Networks of power engage in strategies of partnership and competition by forming networks around specific campaigns, and by changing partners and challengers depending on their interests and objectives in each campaign. Networked publics are collaborative networks who interact in highly mediatised ways and who coordinate their interaction through adherence to a common set of values. For instance, Greenpeace was able to aggregate networked publics' attention to exercise normative legitimacy and pressurise Governments by signing the petitions, participating online, and engaging in offline actions. At the same time they expose competitors and other companies that are not engaging in corporate change activities or are not meeting the targeted regulatory frameworks.

Switching Power

I employ the concept of "*switching*" used by Castells (2009) to describe the dynamic of power acquisition in networked forms of organisation, linked through hyper connected nodes. Castells applies the computer programming metaphor of a 'network switch' to refer to a device that connects different parts of the network. Social movement organisations have traditionally acted by trying to pressure policy makers and to influence the way laws and regulations are written, interpreted and implemented, as well as lobbying for better regulations; for instance, environmental protection laws and CO2 emission standards. Scholars have been investigating how the influence of social movements on policies is largely dependent on their potential contribution to the agendas of political actors. As stated by Amenta et el. (2010) "for a movement to be influential, state actors need to see it as potentially facilitating or disrupting their own goals - augmenting or cementing new electoral coalitions, gaining in public opinion, increasing the support for the missions of governmental and institutional bureaus" (Amenta et al. 2010, p. 298). It is one of the main objectives for social movement organisations to challenge institutional arrangements, since their legacy is mainly made of the cultural change it has produced through its actions and mobilisation tactics (Castells 2012, p. 245).

In the observed cases, Greenpeace maintained close cooperation with other environmental movements so that they could strengthen the environmental social movement network, sharing information and strategies on the political developments of the Arctic legislation process and of EU emission targets by 2020. Greenpeace is an "outsider group", which keeps a clear independence as an organisation in relation to governments or corporate policy. However, Greenpeace is involved in a complex process of interaction with policy makers and legislators, such as national governments and the EU, in order to influence policy and normative structures on fuel efficiency standards, emission cuts, and environmental legislation. The bigger Greenpeace protests observed often took place during EU and international summits, big industry fairs, or official governmental meetings when there are more chances to give visibility and effectiveness to the organisation's demands and claims (e.g. the Foreign Ministers Meeting of the Arctic Council in mid May 2013; EU vote on carbon emission standards; The Geneva Motor Show in 2013). It is, however, still very difficult to estimate and effectively measure the real effect of social movements in pressing legislators to change EU environmental and CO2 legislations, due to the complexity of factors influencing political choices and decision making processes.

Greenpeace certainly played an important role in pressing Volkswagen to publicly agree to meet EU standards, setting a best industry practice and having a big impact on the overall campaign to make car manufacturers raise their efficiency targets to EU levels. During the Geneva Motor Show, one Volkswagen's Executive decided to meet the Greenpeace Executive Director of the campaign, following Greenpeace direct action that attracted lots of media attention during the motor show. He decided to comply with the publics' requests and to commit to the changes requested by Greenpeace, thus conferring legitimacy to Greenpeace's actions through his declaration, stating:

> *"I guarantee that we will do everything in our power to reach carbon dioxide emissions of 95 grams without any reservations. However, this will only be possible if customers accept our advanced alternative power trains. This is of course our objective" (Volkswagen Media Service).*

The public face of the project was based on convincing Volkswagen to stop undermining the EU's work to strengthen car efficiency standards, since lower car emissions will make it is easier for the EU to meet the 30 percent cut. The campaign was also preparing for the new EU fuel efficiency standards that were announced at the end of 2012. As outlined in the Greenpeace MobLab case study:

> "*The Volkswagen is a brilliant example of a coherent campaign within an organisation, and the movement that took off based on a really strong concept and some exciting campaign tactics. It's great to see that people power can shift one of the biggest car companies into a new brand position*" *(Greenpeace MobLab case study).*

Actors of social change are able to influence decision making processes by using "mechanisms of power-making" (Castells 2011) that result in processes of legitimacy building in the network society; for instance, by using social media networks and by producing mass media messages; subverting the existing meanings and creating new messages that can be broadcasted to many. As emphasised in the narrative of a Greenpeace spokesperson:

> "*Over a half million people signed the online petition signatures and thousands of people emailed the legislator, who clearly responded to such a pressure. It was a straightforward play with a straightforward message to law-makers and to company executives: thousands of people are monitoring your decisions" (Greenpeace MobLab).*

To summarise, social movement organisations are able to produce new values and goals around which the institutions of society are transformed to represent these new values by generating new norms and institutions. The technological metrics of the campaigns were impressive thanks to the reach of social media, impacting on the campaign's success since people understood the immediate

concerns and took action. The result was engaging the public on several levels, via social media that spilled into mass media, to make them understand the impact of CO2 emissions and oil drilling in the Arctic. The campaign organised and executed with a powerful combination of traditional and social media, had an immediate effect in creating mass scale public awareness that provoked a change in policy and consequently influenced corporate reactions from the targeted firms, but also from their competitors and key stakeholders.

Novel Discursive Tactics Pressure Governments and Lead to Legitimacy Acquisition

As shown in the literature, social movement organisations aim at achieving field-level change, trying to affect coercive, normative, or cognitive institutional pressure by lobbying to change regulations and raising public awareness or even trying to initiate a new organisational field (den Hond and de Bakker 2007). In particular, Greenpeace aims at pressuring policy makers at national, European and global levels. Referring to the attempt to lobby powerful players, such as national and EU policy makers, and decision makers in the UN, the Greenpeace Campaign Director stated:

> "*The UK is an observer state to the Arctic Council, they can set regulations on oil drilling and can demand certain things from firms. In terms of the EU, they just voted to tighten the regulations and proposed to set up an environmental commission. We are also starting to have a dialogue with individual countries in the UN to turn the Arctic into a global sanctuary" (Greenpeace Campaign Director).*

The existence of these lobbying activities successfully resulted in the setting up of a new Committee and the publication of new reports, giving Greenpeace the legitimacy to campaign and to act. Another important audience group for Greenpeace are influential stakeholders who, if they sign up to the campaign, could make a difference. Stakeholders such as international policy makers, investors, and businesses, particularly ones with expertise in this area, such as competing oil companies in the case of the Arctic campaign. To influence such key stakeholders, Greenpeace uses conventional tactics for institutional change that have been discussed in previous social movement literature (della Porta and Diani 1999). Over time the combination of diverse unconventional tactics led Greenpeace to the acquisition of legitimacy and to exercise strong pressure on the targeted corporations or governments. As exemplified by the Greenpeace Campaign Director:

> "*Two years later, and a movement of 526,000 people stronger, VW have finally agreed to make greener, cleaner cars and meet the emissions targets needed to tackle climate change" (Greenpeace Campaign Director).*

The first influential group is made up of other companies in the field, whether competitors or companies, that act differently to the ones targeted by Greenpeace. As reported by the Wall Street Journal Europe, Greenpeace actions have the objective to pit firms against each other:

> *"Greenpeace seeks to divide and conquer: To attack one part of an industry while leaving the rest untouched. But companies that are unaffected in one attack (and possibly even benefit while their rivals suffer) don't see that sooner or later they will be under attack" (Wall Street Journal Europe).*

Greenpeace wrote an academic report that was published by The Independent, stating that the Volkswagen Group was not abiding by their environmental promises and, regardless of their green image, they are doing less to improve fuel efficiency than their competitors such as BMW and Toyota. Furthermore, the report stated that Volkswagen was actively obstructing the EU regulatory efforts to reduce climate change emissions by 2020 (http://www.independent.co.uk). As a reaction, competing firms were trying to portray themselves as progressive and environmentally conscious to differentiate themselves from the targeted company and to capitalise on audiences' protests, thus attracting public consensus and earning credibility. The tactic of playing one company against the others to mobilise key influencers and to impress crucial stakeholders was also confirmed in the words of the Greenpeace Volkswagen Campaign Coordinator:

> *"Other car companies must be angry with Volkswagen. They have a chance to support this legislation, which could cut the amount of oil our vehicles use and emissions. If Volkswagen continues to obstruct and delay then the industry will miss out on new innovation opportunities. Progressive car makers need to stand up in opposition to the policy of Volkswagen" (Greenpeace Campaign spokesperson, also on Greenpeace website).*

A key point is that legitimacy is multifaceted in terms of involving multiple levels of analysis as to what is being legitimated or delegitimated. As emphasised by Vaara (2013), legitimacy judgments are controversial and ambiguous since "legitimacy judgments focus on specific events, actions or decisions that may be seen as legitimate, illegitimate, or something in between" (Vaara 2013, p. 14). This means that specific actions can be considered legitimate or illegitimate, which won't affect the overall judgment of the organisation. Furthermore, legitimacy acquisition is a dynamic process since perceptions and judgments can change over time, especially in today's fast changing media environment. Thus, it is particularly interesting and important to examine the different dynamics of legitimacy acquisition within specific contexts/events, as was done with the examined campaigns. As illustrated by the Greenpeace Campaign Director:

> *"We focus on public opinion, investment, political opinion at every angle to create real pressure for a normative change, so we are doing very communicative actions on one side and institutional pressure at the same time" (Greenpeace Campaign Director).*

According to Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993), the institutions and practices of public communication are critical for social movements to mobilise audiences and attract wide support, gaining visibility and endorsement in the public domain. However, instead of just examining prestige media and mainstream news media data to detect signs of support and endorsement, in this research I also include the endorsement and engagement generated through social media and measured through social media metrics. As emphasised by the Greenpeace MobLab Director:

> *"The digital mobilisation attracted attention from a Volkswagen staff member who contacted Greenpeace in confidence to let them know how influential the campaign was. Their social media ability gave Greenpeace an advantage, engaging the public in a personal way, as opposed to Volkswagen who, from a public's perspective, stayed silent on the issue during the campaign" (Greenpeace MobLab case study).*

In order to assess such support, I utilise the concept of "General sentiment" (Arvidsson 2013), which is a dynamic peer-based measurement that consists of the aggregation of the affective investments and ethical decisions that a variety of social actors have in a specific asset or issue and that can change over time (Arvidsson and Colleoni 2012). Social media largely contributed to the construction of legitimacy for Greenpeace during the observed campaigns. Volkswagen tracked customers' reactions online by maintaining their YouTube channel and Facebook page with 75,000 fans with over 20 million friends and 800,000 talking about the issue online. According to the metrics released by the Super Bowl, the advertisement was seen by over 900,000 people 24 hours later, and it was trending on Twitter (usatoday.com). According to PRWeek, "seven percent of 2,000 respondents to a PRWeek reputation survey were aware of the Greenpeace campaign but, of these, 60 percent said they now trusted Volkswagen less as a brand" (http://www.prweek.com).

Many users started to support the Greenpeace protest, linking contents, pictures and videos from the action online. A few hours after the launch, over 38,000 people sent a message to Volkswagen, there were over 10,000 likes on the rebellion Facebook Page, and the Twitter campaign hashtag was trending in London and thousands of people saw the video spoof of the Volkswagen Star Wars film. Social media metrics also include: 8,000 tweets using #vwdarkside from June-Dec. 2011 [source: Topsy.com]; 12,000 tweets on #Greenpeace for the same period [source: Topsy.com]; and the weekly reach of the page was about 30,000. 62,000 people visited the film competition site – 16,000 of them voted, with over 2 million views of the main campaign films. There are over a hundred clone versions that were uploaded to YouTube and Vimeo when the video was taken down

by LucasFilms. [Source: YouTube and Vimeo search]. Thousands of comments on Twitter and Facebook registered wide support and endorsement from customers and followers, demonstrating the type of user engagement and conversations that resulted online.

External enhancement is sometimes linked to specific spectacular events or campaigns, as demonstrated by the cases of Shell and Volkswagen. However, more often approval and support were directed to the organisation as a whole and to their overall goals and objectives. The evidence shows that Greenpeace was able to use and manipulate social media through communicative mobilisation tactics, being able to set the stage and the framing for the events that prestige media would pick up and re-broadcast through their channel. The reaction from a social media strategist at SR7 provides evidence of the success of social media enabled campaigns in gaining endorsement and legitimacy:

> *"By not responding, Shell looked corporate and out of touch. Social media had enabled modern day activism to reach an entire new level. Large organisations often put a value on their brand, and having their brand attacked and ridiculed via such an innovative approach is something the modern corporation must come to grips with" (Social Media Monitoring, SR7).*

An article in the Sydney Morning Herald reported on how social movement activism has reached a new level of effectiveness through innovative and controversial social media tactics that actively engage audiences, generating a large amount of conversations that influence the public discourse:

> *"Large organisations often put a value on their brand, and having their brand attacked and ridiculed via such an innovative approach is something the modern corporation must come to grips with" (Sydney Morning Herald).*

The events also provoked criticisms and negative reactions, especially from specialist media or companies influenced by Shell or Volkswagen. The illegitimate offline and online actions caused very different media reactions, encompassing a mix of enthusiasm and strong criticisms for the organisation and their supporters. Newspapers, online magazines and the specialist press published negative reactions to some of the illegitimate actions. For instance, the social media-based Shell hoax was badly received by some influential newspapers such as The New Statesman:

> *"The real villain here is Greenpeace. This is an NGO that thinks it is acceptable to lie to the public, to lie to bloggers and journalists, and to then intimidate writers with threatening emails warning of legal action…" (The New Statesman http://www.newstatesman.com).*

Forbes also published a very negative review, however emphasising the strategic and somehow effective relationship that Greenpeace was able to achieve through online and offline illegitimate tactics:

> "*Greenpeace has apparently discovered that it's far more effective to arm Shell online than it is to send Greenpeace boats out to protest or to handcuff themselves to drilling equipment in the snow. Combining a fake corporate site with a fake corporate reaction seems to legitimise the content, and convince or at least confuse most people on Twitter who have limited attention spans"* (Forbes, July 2012).

In summary, the model proposes that a careful blending of illegitimate offline actions and social media mobilisation tactics, what I call "constructing the networked space", was a crucial step in a process that ultimately led to the social movement organisation's acquisition of legitimacy. The model proposed that the legitimacy acquisition happens through a fundamental mechanism of power-making in the network society, and that movements are "power switchers" that can connect and reconfigure networks according to different issues they want to challenge.

DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

In this last section I present the theoretical insights that unfolded from the analysis of the findings of the observed Greenpeace campaigns. The result is a grounded process model that presents relevant implications for future research.

The theoretical model emerging from the empirical observation of the three Greenpeace campaigns, explains the implication of social media adoption on the way social movement organisations acquire legitimacy. This study was motivated by the consideration that while most research in this field has studied the role of mainstream media (such as Forbes and the Wall Street Journal Europe) in shaping and conferring legitimacy (Baum and Powell 1995; Dowling and Pfeffer 1975; Deephouse 1996; Pollock and Rindova, 2003), or the use of impression management techniques by organisational spokespersons (Elsbach and Sutton 1992), research on the impact of social media by organisations to acquire legitimacy is lacking. In the theoretical model that emerges from this study, I highlight a set of relationships that elucidate how movements adopt social media, staging unconventional mobilisation tactics, namely "*tapping the crowd*" and "*delegitimising corporate online identities*" to actively mobilise the collective action of stakeholder audiences while delegitimising corporate online activities. These tactics in turn confer the movement the ability to exercise their role as "*power switchers*" in the networked space, which ultimately leads to the

acquisition of organisational legitimacy, while at the same time violating legitimate social expectations and challenging corporate activities.

The emergent model makes three main conceptual contributions. First, the study expands extant research that analyses the impact of social movement campaigns and activities on corporate social change (den Hond and de Bakker 2007; King 2008; Walker 2009). I will explain how challenger movements successfully mobilise collective action (Davis et al. 2005; King and Soule 2007) online and offline by suggesting that Greenpeace was able to attract stakeholder and media attention through unconventional social media tactics that orchestrated the spontaneous self-mobilisation of networked publics. The emergent model describes the adoption of novel tactics employed in specific cases and the use of media accounts and social media metrics to assess the campaign's impact in the legitimacy acquisition process. Second, this research adds to our understanding of the role of social movement organisations in institutional dynamics. It is argued that social movement organisations exercise a specific form of power in the network society, as "power switchers" through their ability to connect nodes between different strategic networks (Castells 2009). For instance, this research gathers evidence that legitimacy stems out of the switcher's capacity to connect and disconnect social media audiences, business networks and decision making networks in order to dynamically reconfigure the policy and corporate agenda. Third, I will explore some aspects of the relationship between legitimacy, movements and social media. Elsbach and Sutton (1992) argue that individuals, groups, and organisations that strive to gain legitimacy, tend to first violate the taken for granted cultural and normative frameworks. In this paper, I extend this perspective, by integrating institutional theory, movements and social media to describe how the blending of illegitimate actions offline and online can ultimately lead to the acquisition of organisational legitimacy. This study adds novel insights to the impact of social media in allowing the networked publics to actively be part of and co-construct the processes that influence stakeholder audiences and exercise positive pressure on corporations and policy makers.

Mobilising Collective Action through Unconventional Social Media Tactics

This study provides new evidence of the news media as important players that often intensify the legitimacy struggles. The important role of the media as a"discursive agency" (Vaara 2013) has emerged in the literature on legitimacy struggles that lead to field configuring events (Hardy and Maguire 2010) or when the appearance of corporate scandals lead to legitimacy crises (Boje et al. 2004). The media are key actors that control issue-framing and information gatekeeping

(Deephouse 2000). It is, however, argued that the media often reproduce the "taken for grantedness" as that is what the audience feels comfortable with and want to hear. For instance, the media tend to affect the development of celebrity firms (Rindova et al. 2006) and media amplified spectacles around corporate scandals (Boje et al. 2004). However, there are key differences between how traditional news media and social media operate, transforming also the role of organisational spokespersons in the process, as previously described by Elsbach and Sutton (1992). In the observed campaigns, social media clearly played a key role in the legitimacy acquisition process, introducing novel tactics in relation to those tactics used pre-social media.

Previous literature analysed corporate communication activities and impression management techniques used by organisations and their spokespersons to achieve discursive legitimacy (Hardy and Phillips 1998) and to positively influence the interpretations of those actions and the perception of the organisation's image (Elsbach and Sutton 1992; Drory and Zaidman 2007; Phillips et al. 2004; Giacalone and Rosenfeld 1989; Tedeschi and Reiss 1981). Elsbach and Sutton (1992) describe how organisations strategically manipulate stakeholders' or interest groups' perceptions by providing narratives and impression management techniques, following controversial events that challenged organisational legitimacy. However, due to the rise of social media that favoured a democratisation of media and a widespread use of digital networks (e.g. Castells 2009; Varnelis 2008; Jenkins 2006b; Rheingold 2002), organisations started to combine established tactics well analysed in previous literature, with social media tactics that directly engage large networks of audiences and stakeholders. Furthermore, when Elsbach and Sutton analysed the contested process of legitimacy building from movement organisations, access to media was controlled by few gatekeepers, such as elite media journalists. It was not easy for radical groups with low resources to access the media and get their news published. That is why radical organisations were opting for illegitimate direct actions to attract large audience attention, but they were then employing "decoupling" strategies to conform to stakeholders' expectations. With the spread of social media, organisations can easily organise their campaigns online, and social media channels are replacing traditional broadcast media as favourite channels of social movement groups.

Gamson and Wolfsfeld emphasised the importance of mass media as a strategic channel in the communication process of social movement organisations since they can reach out to the relevant audiences, engaging in debates that influence the public (1993, p. 116). Social movement organisations are also using social media in a tactical and strategic way, experimenting novel social media mobilisation tactics that represent a challenge to established firms' communication strategies,

as shown in the case of the delegitimation and damage of Shell's online identity. These new social media tactics have led organisations to experiment novel combinations of non-conformist online and offline techniques, translating contested offline actions into online spaces. This results in a different process model from the one described by Elsbach and Sutton (1992) that showed how organisations were using impression management tactics to combine institutional conformity of procedures with the decoupling of illegitimate activities from legitimate structures. Now that radical organisations can easily access social media and develop novel challenging online tactics, audiences have learned to accept contestations and rebel online mobilisation tactics that generate mass consensus and support instead of provoking negative reactions.

As analysed in this research, social media possess new characteristics (interactivity and user participation, dialogic communication, network effect) that confer organisations the ability to establish interactive communication networks to initiate and manage two-way conversations with networked publics. To describe the new interconnection between the organisation and its audiences, I employ the concept of *networked publics* to redefine the interaction between the organisations and their stakeholders through social media. Publics are an organisational form that is well established in modern societies, and they have been substantially empowered by the spread of social media, becoming connected (Arvidsson 2013). Social media facilitate the association of thousands of individuals that can come together to engage in collective actions though digital communication platforms, resulting in the creation of networked publics. Greenpeace orchestrated this dialogic communication with networked publics by using a mixed method consisting of editing their news and initiating conversations on social media accounts, whilst at the same time letting users spontaneously self-organise their communication and media activities, such as independent Facebook groups, crowdsourced film contests, online games and so on. In this way Greenpeace was able to leverage the online aggregated sentiment of their audiences to mobilise the collective action of networked publics and exercise active pressure on key stakeholders. This process ultimately led to legitimacy acquisition, and the achievement of organisational aims.

In analysing the novel mobilisation tactics employed by Greenpeace, this research draws from the typology of movements and stakeholder tactics developed first by della Porta and Diani (1999), and later elaborated by den Hond and de Bakker (2007), to analyse activism towards firms. The original typology is grounded in the type of gain (material or symbolic) that movements want to achieve, and in the number of participants they mobilise in their campaigns (participatory, non-participatory). Furthermore, de Hond and de Bakker also built a second typology that links

stakeholder tactics to institutional change processes, combining the deinstitutionalisation of practices and the re-institutionalisation of alternative practices within a field frame (de Hond and de Bakker 2007, p. 918). According to Rao (2009), social movements can sustain and achieve their objectives "by activating new identities through hot causes that arouse emotions and create a community of members, and through cool mobilisation that allows participants to realise collective identities" (Rao 2009, p. 172). Cool techniques "are oppositional, dramatic, and insurgent and they need audience participation to be filled in and to be learned" (Rao 2009, p. 172). Rao distinguished four organising principles underpinning cool mobilisation techniques: (1) Worthiness: mobilisations have to improve the sense of collective identity and self-worth of participants; (2) Unity: foster a community and collective identity; (3) Numbers: involve a large number of people to display full potential; (4) Commitment: elicit commitment from participants through proselytising and displaying symbols that increase commitment to a cause.

Going beyond the existing typology, this study identifies novel unconventional social media tactics used by social movement actors that are tailored to the online space. The model shows the tactics employed during the observed campaigns, which are a careful blending of illegitimate events (e.g. offline direct actions such as blockades by the Greenpeace ships, hanging banners, street protests, spectacular events) and social media mobilisation tactics, namely "*tapping the crowd*" and "*delegitimising corporate identities*". "Tapping the crowd" means exploiting the ability of catalysing public opinion and discussion, and adjusting the way a movement can frame their message and spread it virally though social media. In the Arctic Ready campaign, social media-driven cultural jamming (Lasn 2005) and *online détournement* tactics resulted in mass mobilisation of supporters and the consequent delegitimisation of Shell's corporate identity. The delegitimisation of the corporate online identity happened through the hijacking of their Facebook timeline in the Waitrose campaign and their Twitter account in the Arctic Ready campaign.

Research on organisation and strategic change refers to organisational identity as a central feature in ensuring coherence in communication to influence how the public interprets the organisation (Fombrun 1996; Glynn 2000; Ravasi and Schultz 2006; Ravasi and Phillips 2011). It is decisive for organisations to project their preferred organisational image (Gioia and Thomas 1996), and to create a positive judgment among stakeholders through "identity claim-making" (Hatch and Schultz 1997; Ashforth and Mael 1989; Glynn 2000). Previous research has shown how identity discrepancies can result from this process (Ravasi and Phillips 2011), especially as outcome of the media portrayal of the organisation that can influence audiences' perceptions (Elsbach and Sutton

1992). That's why organisations engage in strategic projections (Rindova and Fombrun 1999) through impression management (Elsbach 2003), to restore the external perception of the organisation's image (Gioia et al. 2000). Recent research also suggests that members can be influenced by positive media coverage leading to acceptance of a new organisational identity (Kjergaard et al. 2011).

Research on organisational identity management can be useful for highlighting the importance for organisations to consider new environmental conditions and new communication tactics, such as social media tactics and their effect on organisational identity online, since social media mobilisation tactics can impact and manipulate the perception of networked audiences. In the observed social media-led Greenpeace campaigns, illegitimate actions serve to attract the attention of key audiences, while social media tactics serve to capture that attention and aggregate public sentiment measured through social media ratings (such as number of users, likes, shares, comments per post, or average re-tweets, followers, video views, subscribers, and so on). As a result, users' activities amplify endorsement and positive reactions from stakeholder audiences. As previously observed by Elsbach and Sutton (1992), illegitimate actions can provide media recognition that is essential for social movement organisations challenging social norms, while influencing public opinion (1992, p. 711).

Social Movements as "Power Switchers" in the Networked Space

The model shows how social media mobilisation tactics provoked a response from stakeholder audiences that differ in relation to the actors' positions in the network. Social movements are able to turn the "blending of tactics" into legitimacy acquisition by publics through a process of "power switching", described in phase three. Greenpeace is able to orchestrate spontaneous and self-organised communication from publics, triggering a process of construction of a "networked space". Greenpeace exploited their position as "switchers" in the networked space to harness the endorsement gained from the networked publics through social media by aggregating public sentiment in real time. Through this process, Greenpeace manages to exercise influence on policy makers and other key constituents, thus acquiring legitimacy. Communication platforms are an important field of action to understand power dynamics in the networked society. I apply the hypothesis tested by Castells (2009) that social movements have the authority to act as "*switchers*" through their ability to control the connecting points between various strategic networks such as prestige and specialist media, networked publics, and other key institutional intermediaries such as corporate actors, competing companies, policy makers, investors, and consumers' networks. This

process explains the specific impact of social movement organisations as switchers in the network who are able to connect and disconnect networks, and mobilise resources according to different situations, interests, and tactics applied around specific campaigns.

The presented model demonstrates that social movement organisations use a blending of oppositional offline actions (such as street direct actions, boycotts, blockades and spectacular events) and adding unconventional social media mobilisation tactics and implementing them with novel organisational practices, while aggregating mass scale endorsement and delegitimizing corporate online identity. Researchers have pointed to a radical change of the audience system from reference groups into belonging groups formed around a mix of social media and face-to-face interaction with family and friends. The mass media model fosters mainly the integration of the individual in the already existing institutions of society without moving towards new institutional settings in the new networked communication model (Castells et al. 2013). It is a change in mediation (Silverstone, 1999), which resulted in a new networked communication model (Castells 2009; Cardoso 2011). Li and Bernoff (2011) describe a social trend towards grassroots social media enabled activism where people use technology to get what they want from each other rather than from institutions. Social movement organisations have been historically reliant on specific communication mechanisms, depending on the means of communication available, such as newspapers, pamphlets, radio, TV, or other forms of cultural expressions. Today social media are the most interactive, accessible, viral and self-configurable means of communication, and are changing the organisational characteristics of the movements that use them. This is why, according to Juris (2008), social movement organisations can be defined today as "networked social movements". According to Castells there is a synergy between the development of Internet social networks and networked social movements, connecting real networks of people to connected computer networks in a network society based on perpetual connectivity (Castells 2010). Social movements as social actors that do not fully trust the current institutions, engage in a collective process to create new institutional forms or new practices by utilising digital technologies and social media. This is what Castells defines as "networked social movements" (Castells 2012, p. 233).

Through this process of "constructing a networked space" the social movement organisations are able to aggregate and use their networked power, the power to switch between different networks following the strategic alliances between key intermediaries and social actors of various networks. This "switching power" led to the discouraging of the switches that reflected

dominant interests or behaviours (for instance oil drilling in the Arctic), replacing them with alternative norms and values (for instance pushing for new environmental legislations or for the enforcement of current regulations). Mass endorsement though social media legitimated these tactics perceived as unconventional and sometimes illegitimate, thereby enhancing the organisational legitimacy acquired by Greenpeace.

Movements are thus able to leverage social media and spectacular illegitimate actions, to challenge dominant frames and exercise pressure from stakeholders. This finding is in line with previous studies arguing that movements can disrupt existing arrangements and spark legitimacy crises (Schneiberg and Soule 2005). These observations also suggest that movement pressure can activate strategic responses from competing firms that need to maintain or re-establish legitimacy, and occasionally promote new institutional arrangements though policy changes (Hargrave and Van de Ven 2006; Bartley 2007; Bartley and Child 2011; King and Pearce 2010). For instance, in the Arctic Ready campaign, Greenpeace managed to shift the position of competing firms, such as Total in the oil industry that had to publicly commit to stop drilling in the Arctic, as a result of strong public pressure. Another example is the campaign that targeted the Volkswagen Group in which Greenpeace asked the company to put its weight behind strong climate change policies in Europe towards an emission reduction target of 30 percent by the year 2020. The campaign pressured Volkswagen to commit to this target as a reaction to the public pressure received from audiences.

In this paper, the dynamics of social movement organisations are analysed in order to demonstrate how social movement organisations negotiate the legitimacy dynamics in the network society to gain endorsement and acceptability by social actors and exert pressure on policy makers to enforce legislations. When fields are contested, mobilisation and movements play a key role in acquiring legitimacy, especially through the use of social media that can reach out to key audiences and mobilise mass actions. Movements can potentially reconfigure institutions by exerting pressure on legislators at national and global levels. Greenpeace managed to aggregate wide support for stringent car efficiency legislation from diverse audiences, including competing firms in the car industry. The main findings of this study also suggest several constructive trajectories for further research. Future research could use social media metrics and network analysis on user-engagement and influence graphs to analyse precisely how movements mobilise collective actions through "power switching" in the network (Castells 2009). According to Castells (2010), communication networks, such as social media, are decisive sources of power making that can influence and control

the definition of rules and norms of society, in particular through the political system. Also according to Castells, mass self-communication networks process the construction of meanings on which power relies, and provide the technological platform to mobilise collective social actors, challenging the institutions of society. In the network society, power and legitimacy are multidimensional and organised around networks programmed according to the values and interests of social actors (Castells 2011). The ability of organisations to engage in effective processes of communication and persuasion is key to their capacity to program and influence.

The Interplay between Legitimacy, Social Movements and Social Media

Recent organisational research has investigated the relationship between social movements and institutions, arguing that social movements generate novel and contested organisational forms and institutions (Haveman et al. 2007; Rao 1998; Rao et al. 2000; Schneiberg et al. 2008; King and Pearce 2010) and challenge dominant frames and players as agents of theorisation or the formation of identity (Lounsbury et al. 2003; Weber et al. 2008), providing the political framework for the diffusion of alternative models (Schneiberg 2013). Other institutional scholars have emphasised the role of pressure from "outsider" movements though boycotts, illegitimate actions and protests to trigger legitimacy crises (Schneiberg and Soule 2005; King 2008). Movement pressure can then activate strategic responses from firms that need to maintain or re-establish legitimacy and occasionally promote new institutional arrangements (Hargrave and Van de Ven 2006; Bartley 2007; Bartley and Child 2011; King and Pearce 2010). However, despite the variety of research combining social movements and institutions, surprisingly little work has attempted to address their relationship with mass media, and with social media in particular.

This study explains how social media enable a very different response from publics compared to traditional news media. While traditional mass media construct accounts of organisational actions in a unilateral way, following a hierarchical one-way communication models, social media open up this process enabling the publics to play a very active role in supporting Greenpeace causes and constructing new frames or suggesting novel tactics. Compared to the traditional mass mediated public sphere, the observed cases suggest that the networked space orchestrated by Greenpeace is more dynamic, diverse, and effective in actively mobilising audiences and activating responses from firms in order to maintain their threatened legitimacy. The data suggest that, at least in the three observed campaigns, the collective mobilisation of the networked publics enabled a dynamic discourse that involved the social movement organisation, individual dispersed supporters and other

stakeholders. For instance, in the *Arctic Ready* campaign, and in the Volkswagen campaign, Greenpeace supporters created their own spoof posters and pictures, created their own Facebook groups, and participated in crowdfunding a film competition through a digital platform promoted by Greenpeace.

Social media accounts and the public's spontaneous and self-organised activities have a key role in co-shaping the perception of stakeholder audiences and in pressuring them to act accordingly. At the same time, Greenpeace orchestrated their supporters' engagement by developing an online game, encouraging users to share the game with their friends, and launching a film competition. I was able to identify clear evidences demonstrating that legitimacy was conferred and enhanced despite the illegitimate actions carried out by Greenpeace, both offline and online, due to the growing public awareness and the mass attention from the public for Greenpeace's environmental agenda. This process went even further to exert influence on policy actions. The potential of social media engagement to translate directly into practical mobilisation for a specific cause or campaign is a debated issue in the social media literature, since it can be seen as a form of "clicktivism" or "slacktivism" (Gladwell 2010; Morozov 2011). According to Gladwell (2010), online communication builds weak ties between action participants, which are not enough to motivate supporters to take to the streets. The effectiveness of such tactics in terms of real policy change is also debated (Morozov 2011). Other concerns regard the capacity of social media to foster a real sense of collective identity. Fenton and Barassi (2011) suggest that the proliferation of individual voices on social media can stifle organisational messages. The findings from the observed case shows the need to adopt social media strategically, and it suggests important possibilities for learning about what conditions influence novel tactics and social movement organisations' repertoires. In this context, social media is a fast changing environment that is informing and affecting organisational trajectories, tactics, and outcomes, and needs to be investigated across different organisational settings and times.

The limitations of this research offer opportunities for future work in the field. The proposed systematic analysis of the social movement organisation tactics to acquire legitimacy focused around social media, suggests important direction for future research that is confronted with pressing and fast changing strategic organisational transformations. First, this study focuses on a single social movement organisation, Greenpeace that has a specific history, mission, culture and values that influence the way they conduct campaigns and exercise influence over policy makers and stakeholders. To better understand why and how social movement organisations use social

media together with other mobilisation tactics to acquire legitimacy, while at the same time challenging the legitimacy of other organisations, future research should look more in-depth into other examples, across organisations and across campaigns. Future research should try to better capture the nature of social media management challenges and new tactics needed to strategically manage social media internally and in relation to external audiences.

Finally, the socio-cultural context may have affected the way Greenpeace conduct and manage relationships with internal and external audiences, in particular relations with the media that are different in every national context. However, Greenpeace is a multinational organisation with offices in over 40 different countries, and many offices tend to collaborate to streamline organisational processes and campaign mechanisms. Nevertheless, future research should make sense of how different environmental contexts affect both the way social movement organisations adopt and manage social media, the reactions by firms to the adopted tactics, and their acceptance by organisational members, other social groups and networked audiences.

This study proposes significant scope for learning across contexts, times, and type of organisations about the contested relationship between social movement organisations, firms, publics, and the strategic use of social media to establish and acquire legitimacy. Social media issues and tactics are likely to influence the interplay between movements and institutional dynamics, such as legitimacy acquisition, even though the exact impact is still difficult to measure and attribute. These findings suggest new avenues to extend future research on the dynamic relationship between movements, corporations, media, and key institutional stakeholders, such as exploring novel organisational tactics and the overall impact of collective action through social media.

Appendix 1. Interview Protocol on Legitimacy Acquisition and Tactics Used Across Greenpeace Teams and Campaigns

- What is the mission of Greenpeace and what are the main themes of the campaign?
- What are the objectives of the campaign and how are you trying to achieve them?
- Do these objectives affect the accomplishment of your tasks and goals?
  - Can you give me some examples of how these objectives have influenced the accomplishment of your campaign tasks and goals?
  - Can you elaborate on the structure of your Department and teams executing the campaigns?
- Do these objectives have particular meanings and/or associations for you?
- What kind of actions are you carrying out?
- Are they illegitimate?
- What are the organisation's responses to illegitimate actions?
  - Can you mention some examples of your responses when activists were arrested?
  - What kind of justifications did you use for their actions?
- As a result of the actions, did you have any bad press?
- How do you manage your relationship with the media?
- How do you manage your relationship with internal and external stakeholders/audiences?
- Can you explain in particular your social media strategy?
  - How do you measure the social media impact of your campaigns?
  - Do they have a real impact on the objectives and outcomes of your campaign?
- Do you think you are changing the rules of the game in your particular field?
  - Do you obtain increasing endorsement and support for Greenpeace?
  - How do you internally measure this support?
- Are you able to pressure and influence policy?
- What did you learn during past and current campaigns?

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Table 1: Interview Summary Table

Type of Interview	Position	Number of Interviews
Preliminary Interviews	**Director of Communication**	3
	Campaign Director	3
	Outreach Staff	1
	Mobilisation Lab	3
	Social Media Director	3
	Mobilisation Lab Communication Manager	1
	Volunteer Coordinator	1
	Volunteers	5
	Action Coordinator	1
Interviews during Actions	**Supporters**	5
	Online Users	6
	Other Media	3
	PR	2
	Campaign Mobilisation Team (spread across countries - UK, France, Germany)	2
	Publishing coordinator	2
Retrospective Interviews	**Campaign Director**	2
	Mobilisation Lab	2
Total Interviews		**45**

Table 2: Data Sources and Use

Data Source	Type of Data	Use in the Analysis
Observations and Field Notes	*Field notes from meeting attendance (10 meetings)*. Detailed record of interactions and conversations observed during Greenpeace meetings and internal sessions I attended. I attended a *two-day planning brainstorms session* that happens every six months, bringing all staff together to brainstorm ideas for new campaigns. I also attended Greenpeace Digital Mobilisation Skillshare training session in February 2013. I conducted investigations during the organisation's weekly internal meetings and during a strategy session of three days. Meetings provided valuable information about organisational structure, campaign strategies and tools for past and upcoming events. In addition, I attended and observed the direct actions with Greenpeace volunteers, supporters and stuff in London in June 2012 (Volkswagen campaign launch), July 2012 (Arctic campaign, anti-Shell actions) and December 2012 (Waitrose/Shell campaign). During the actions I interviewed Greenpeace spokespersons, campaign managers, and volunteers. I also briefly talked with people passing by or joining the actions that were not formally associated with Greenpeace to register audiences' reactions.	Triangulate interpretations emerging from interviews. Produce a chronology of the campaigns and the tactics that were used as members engaged in these actions, and link tactics with the outcome of the campaign (Table 3).
	Informal conversations. Informal talks with spokespersons, strategists, communication managers, volunteers and supporters, ranging from brief exchanges during protests to longer in-depth conversations.	Familiarise with the organisational/project context, gain trust of informants, discuss insights from observations, clarify uncertainties regarding campaign-related decisions, and support emerging interpretations.
	Pictures and videos. Visual documentation of material produced during direct actions and events in their online projects (especially YouTube channel, social media, and visuals used during campaign actions).	Keep record of the outcome of decisions and actions that members engaged in during the campaign (e.g. illegitimate actions or street protests).
	Direct Actions (illegitimate events)	
Interviews	*Preliminary interviews (10)* with Greenpeace staff and volunteers to investigate Greenpeace's history, culture, and internal organisational processes.	Familiarise with the field context.
	First round June - December 2010: 10 semi-structured and unstructured interviews with members of Greenpeace across departments. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, totalling 60 pages. *Second round* something missing here? Date? Details?	Integrate observations with informants' accounts to improve understanding of social dynamics and campaign-related decision .
	Videotaped archival interviews of Greenpeace live actions or media interviews published on the campaign website and on social media were analysed.	Familiarise with the field context and analyse the dynamics of the actions and protests.

Archival Data	*Organisation-related documents*: Minutes of meetings (confidential), internal presentations of the groups, strategy documents of the campaigns, press releases by Greenpeace, internal confidential documents (letters, emails, support, internal reports). Toolkits and case studies, materials used during workshops (2013 Digital Mobilisation Skillshare – DMS. In February 2013, over 100 sessions and internal brainstorming sessions where 140 Greenpeace staff and allies met for four days of learning and collaboration on creating campaigns). Organisation archives and publications about company. Greenpeace reports (magazines, specialist journals, policy reports), TV news and documents, articles in newspapers and journals, academic research publications.	Familiarise with the organisational context. Support the reconstruction of the set of concepts produced in each campaign. Support, integrate, and triangulate evidence from observations and interviews.
Online Data	*Online Greenpeace materials*: http://www.greenpeace.org.uk http://twitter.com/greenpeaceuk http://www.youtube.com/greenpeaceuk http://vimeo.com/greenpeaceuk http://www.flickr.com/greenpeaceuk http://www.myspace.com/greenpeaceuk http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/rss @greenpeaceuk vwdarkside.com http://euvsco2.org/ http://www.scribd.com/doc/58810526/Le-cote-obscur-de-vw-fr http://www.greenpeace.org/france/PageFiles/300718/Costpercent20ofpercent20Driving_FRpercent20.pdf http://www.savethearctic.org/ www.greenpeace.org/obamashell http://arcticready.com http://www.wagggs.org/en/flagforthefuture http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/waitrose **Other Types of Online Data Sources:** General online news media; Tech media; Private Sector; Activist groups; User-generated social media; Policy official sources; Campaign; News aggregators; Social linking sites	Support, integrate, and triangulate evidence from observations and interviews.

Social Media Data (Analytics)	8,000 tweets using #vwdarkside from June-Dec., 2011 [Source: Topsy.com] 12,000 tweets on #greenpeace for same period [Source: Topsy.com] 74k fans to Facebook campaign page, who themselves have 20.3 million friends. Weekly reach of page about 30k 62,000 people visited film competition site – 16,000 of them voted Over two million views of main campaign films. It is difficult to get accurate numbers since there are over a hundred clone versions that were uploaded to YouTube and Vimeo when the video was taken down by LucasFilms [Source: YouTube and Vimeo search].	Support, integrate, and triangulate evidence from observations and interviews. Gain insights on the expressions of Greenpeace supporters through social media, and the reaction of stakeholders. Social media activities are also often reported to the mainstream media. Social media also provide important engagement metrics.

Table 3: **A Chronology of Illegitimate Actions and Social Media Tactics Attributed to Greenpeace in the Observed Campaigns**

Campaigns	Live Direct Actions [Illegitimate Events]	Social Media Mobilisation Tactics	Date
Save the Arctic	1. Greenpeace activists join actress Lucy Lawless as they climb Shell's drilling rig docked in New Zealand, calling attention to Greenpeace's Save the Arctic campaign. Six people arrested. Shell granted a legal injunction against Greenpeace which prohibits even legal protests within a certain distance of Shell's vessels involved in Arctic drilling operations.	Mass petition (3 million people) and letters to Shell, protesting its plans to drill off the coast of Alaska.	February/March 2012
	2. Occupying a Finnish Alaska icebreaker.	Hijacking Shell online identity*:* Greenpeace teams up with the Yes Men to spoof the ludicrous Arctic drilling plan with "Arctic Ready", a giant Internet hoax. #shellfail campaign: They created a "ShellisPrepared" Twitter account. Fake guerrilla Viral video of Shell oil Part disaster, a fake lawsuit faking Shell's reaction to the campaign (two million page views). Six weeks afterwards Greenpeace and the Yes Men manage to fool thousands more with the same hoax with the "Let's Go!" Shell campaign spoof.	June 2012
	3. Shadowing two Shell drilling vessels to the Arctic.	Crowdsourced funding from supporters to put adverts in main newspapers. July 13th Shell accidentally creates an anti-Shell meme generator.	July/September 2012
	4. Global week of actions against Shell manage to shut down 78 Shell petrol stations in London and Edinburgh in one day (100 stations targeted). 25 people arrested.	Celebrity-fuelled campaign: 2.7 million people signed on to the campaign at SaveTheArctic.org. calling for the uninhabited areas around the Arctic to be put off-limits to industry.	September/December 2012
	5. Following a number of mishaps, Shell abandoned its off-shore drilling programme in Alaskan Arctic waters for 2013. Greenpeace UK activists gatecrashed Shell's party at the National Gallery in London. Greenpeace unfurled a 40metre long banner from the roof showing a picture of an oil rig with the message 'It's No Oil Painting'.	Greenpeace commission art oil painting. YouTube video and online exhibition go viral.	February/March 2013
	6. Protesting Russia's Arctic oil and gas drilling agenda. 10 activists arrested in Moscow. Shell announces it will not drill in 2013. A cross-party group of MPs call for a halt to oil exploration in the Arctic.	Production of viral online videos. Signed petition sent to Obama, since Greenpeace will continue to campaign for the Arctic Council and for President Obama to establish the Arctic as a refuge, safe from drilling from any company.	March 2013
	7. A team of young explorers, activists and storytellers launched an expedition to the North Pole to declare this region protected, Trekking through the Arctic with the Flag for the Future.	"*Eyes on the Arctic*" online participatory ART project and *'Flag for the Future'* online crowdsourcing competition.	April 2013
	8. Global day of action for the Arctic: human banner events on April 20, 2013. more than 10,000 people came together in more than 280 cities in 38 countries	"*I love Arctic*" global mobilization project. Greenpeace supporters upload photos live to Twitter and Instagram using the hashtag #Ilovethearctic. The pictures and messages	April 2013

	to take a stand for the Arctic the Arctic Council, meets for its biannual meeting: Greenpeace global mobilisation involve 20 offices representing 30 countries co-creating events with their volunteer networks to host massive on-the-ground protests April 20.	are aggregated and viewable on the Save the Arctic website. Aerial photographs of all human banners from around the world will be taken to the Foreign Ministers' Meeting of the Arctic Council in mid May in Kiruna, Sweden.	
	9. Production of the biggest Arctic landscape /3D projections the streets of London and 25 events across the UK.	Greenpeace launches whistleblowing website to expose Arctic drilling truths: http://www.arctictruth.org/	April 2013
Shell/Waitrose	1. Greenpeace contacted Waitrose three times since April 2012, raising their concerns and requesting a meeting. Waitrose did not agreed to meet.	Waitrose branded microsite with a spoof of the Waitrose Christmas advertisement on YouTube.	December 2012
	2. Campaigning in front of Waitrose supermarkets during Christmas for 12 days during busy Christmas shopping period. Several store visits.	Nearly 40,000 people sign a petition asking the supermarket to drop the partnership with Shell.	December 2012
	3. Subvertising of Waitrose advertising to promote their 'Community Matters' scheme where customers in stores receive tokens, and can 'vote' which local charity Waitrose will donate money to.	"Social media meltdown": Greenpeace supporters "hijack" Waitrose's live webchat Q&A with celebrity chef on Facebook. Waitrose delete many comments and remove the ability to comment on the page.	December 2012
	4. Appearance of a life-size polar bear at Waitrose Islington store in London.	Mass scale Twitter campaign using the hashtag #DumpShell., urging customers to tweet Waitrose.	December 2012
Volkswagen Dark Side	1. The global campaign launches in 14 countries including China, Canada, US, UK, Germany and France. The campaign was developed across 14 different languages and mobile platforms.	A spoof advertisement on YouTube, and a site called "vwdarkside.com" with Volkswagen logos. The makers of Star Wars asked Greenpeace to remove the film x copyright violations. Video goes even more viral in response to censorship (100,000 shares on Facebook, two million views).	June 2011
	2. European-wide day of action: Launch in London, Greenpeace has taken out billboard advertisements in Old Street while activists dressed as Stormtroopers protest outside Volkswagen's UK head office in Milton Keynes. Several volunteer actions in the streets dressed like Stormtroopers.	Greenpeace produce a live-action map to which a visitor sends a geolocated tweet or adds messages. An online game, encouraging users to share the game; a film competition challenging filmmakers to help expose Volkswagen (http://films.vwdarkside.com/); and released a scientific report featured in major newspapers. A social media hijack using a Facebook Slicer.	June 2011
	3. Volkswagen's plant in Wolfsburg is picketed, and other direct actions during Volkswagen car shows (hanging banners, climbing down from roofs…).	Social Media Subvertising: The Volkswagen Darth Vader advertisement first launched in the US during the Super Bowl and becomes the most watched viral advertisement of all time. Greenpeace launch a spoof 'Darth Vader' advertisement, featuring a Volkswagen-branded Death Star encouraged customers to sign up to its "Rebel Manifesto". 526,000 people join online petition.	September 2011
	4. Target European politicians to vote to reduce pollution from new cars by supporting car efficiency target of at least 95g CO2/km by 2020.	New website (http://euvsco2.org/). This campaign now connects with the Arctic campaign.	February 2013

Table 4: Selected Evidence

Second-Order Categories	*First-Order Categories*	*Selected Evidence*
Tapping the Crowd	**Leveraging public opinion and participation**	*"We're at a level where we're trying to figure out the nuts and bolts of how we get better at designing campaigns and putting people at the centre and unleashing all the potential of the 22 million people we're connected to globally."(Greenpeace MobLab).* *"We started building social media at the core of our strategy, to amplify the message of our campaign and to talk to key audiences" (Greenpeace MobLab)* *"People take action on issues that matter to them, whether or not Greenpeace organises the perfect campaign" (Greenpeace MobLab Director).* *"Greenpeace has been winning battles for years, but we were not winning anymore on the scale we need to. That's why we started building social media at the core of our strategy, to amplify the message of our campaign and to talk to key audiences" (Greenpeace MobLab Director)* *"It takes a global movement to stop the biggest companies in the world from destroying the Arctic for profit. Our campaigns are only made possible thanks to social media and the passion and dedication of the people who make our movement what it is" (Greenpeace MobLab Director).* *"Of course we wanted to motivate people to better understand the cause, but we also need a strong viral component. The imperative was energizing a large audience. Engagement, and being able to share messaging was essential" (Greenpeace MobLab) .*
	Spectacular actions to engage public	*"Greenpeace activists used spectacular direct actions to interfere with legal oil drilling activities, including boarding vessels to try and halt drilling activities, painting slogans and unfurling banners. These actions generate mass participation" (Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).* *"…. You're given your own training page and the more friends who join, take action on your recommendation, or view your special page, the more points you get, which helps you unlock new characters from Star Wars (Greenpeace MobLab Social Media Director)* "*The protest initially appeared to be some sort of flash mob given the number of protestors and the fact the imperial march was being blasted out across the roundabout. Closer inspection, however, revealed the Stormtroopers had upside-down Volkswagen symbols printed on their armour before the banners revealed the true nature of the stunt*" *(metro.co.uk).*
	Mobilise collective actions and "public sentiment" of networked audiences (crowdsourcing and crowdfunding)	*"We mixed radical direct actions and civil disobedience online and offline. Our main target was engaging all our members, politicians, and create awareness amongst companies and the public" (Greenpeace Campaign Director)* *"We have a mandate of nearly 3 million people across the world that signed up for the campaign and we have a mandate from these people to take action" (Greenpeace Campaign Director).* *"With social media metrics we can track number of social mentions, and we can use them strategically to engage the right people in the conversation" (Greenpeace Communication Department)* *"We were doing street activities as well. We had volunteers in the streets dressed like Stormtroopers and all the time it was very popular - massively well received by the public and by the media" (Greenpeace Campaign Spokesperson).* *"That got a huge amount of PR media. We developed an online game, encouraging users to share the game and find*

		friends. We also had spectacular actions that were attracting people to our platform" (Greenpeace Campaign Spokesperson).
	The logic of numbers	*"Greenpeace also asked 400,000 email subscribers to take action. The email was one of the best-performing of the year and over 3% of those taking action were new to the organisation, a high growth rate. The campaign generated 53,000 letters of support" (Greenpeace MobLab).* *"Through Twitter and YouTube we now have the ability to reach huge numbers of people and have a strong interaction with them... The more engaging, innovative and creative we and others can be with social media the better, and it is important to realise this is no longer a one-way flow of communication (Greenpeace MobLab).* *"The element of competition is inspired, and has meant that it's been passed on a huge number of times" (Greenpeace MobLab Social Media Director).* *"We signed up over 500000 people for the EU 2020 emissions campaign" (Greenpeace Spokeperson).* *" The campaign had a very successful petition that generated thousands of emails and support letters" (Greenpeace Spokesperson).*
Delegitimising corporate online identities	**Hijack corporate social media presence though media jamming techniques:**	*"The activist group set a perfect trap and created an authentic looking and believable Shell clone site Shell now have the equivalent of a social media oil spill on their hands but one they have no control of" (Amnesia Razorfish).* *"It was the most advanced brand hijack I had seen in a long time. These activists have basically appropriated the Shell brand online and are doing a very good job of generating a conversation, not only about the issue they are trying to highlight but also the campaign itself"(VML Social Media Strategist).* *"We started online with a brand attack that was launched at PR media though social media, subvertising their brand and their advertising campaign, which was Star Wars-based" (Greenpeace MobLab Communications Manager).* *"It got massive social media coverage, since it was a guerrilla ad campaign and that was kind of our target since they spent so much money on adverts and their campaign" (Greenpeace MobLab Communications Manager).* *"Visitors to the site who haven't been exposed to media coverage like this continue to think it's real" (Kashmir Hill, Forbes).* *"These hoaxes are something much more cynical and dangerous: media manipulation, a very deliberate attempt to deceive and mislead their audience." (Forbes)* *"there was a big overlap between our social media fans and VW customers. and people were sympathetic to environmental issues among their Facebook pages, so they started hijacking their Facebook page" (Greenpeace campaign Director)*
	Symbolic damage	*"Not only did Greenpeace ineffectually and pointlessly cause a huge amount of damage, but it also destroyed its own credibility"(http://www.roughlydrafted.com)* *"Volkswagen spent more than any other company on advertising, and we launched a brand attack against them. We wanted to highlight key failures by Volkswagen to live up to the company's 'carefully crafted reputation as a family-friendly and environmentally responsible car manufacturer. The language works well by putting the responsibility on Volkswagen. Greenpeace says Volkswagen is not doing enough to save the planet. Volkswagen on the other hand thinks the company is the epitome of environmental responsibility"(Greenpeace Communications Manager).* *"Even people who were not engaging with the campaign to begin with got angry and started participating on our behalf. We got quite a lot of people blogging about it we got in the retail press, Marketing Week, Adweek and we also*

Illegitimate actions to attract audiences	**Changing authority over what is acceptable**	*got an article in the printed Independent" (Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).* *"The messages included 'ask Yoda to explain the Rebellion,' in Yoda speak, and a full page focus describing how the Light Side of the Force is clean, green and renewable while the Dark Side is accelerating the rush for dead, dirty energy" (Greenpeace MobLab case study).* *"Greenpeace had realised that it was much more effective to campaign online rather than appearing as "hippy do-gooders" (The Sydney Morning Herald).* *"Greenpeace would commit tortuous, unlawful, and illegal acts against Shell's Arctic drilling operations in the absence of an injunction and the resulting harm would be irreparable"(UK Court).* *"In the case of VW, they had a good reputation initially and we used its brand to create awareness with their consumers, leveraging their good reputation. With Shell we couldn't really use their brand but we used the Arctic case since people are emotionally attached and care about it. Ultimately we are trying to get politicians to do something and companies to do something" (Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).* *"There was an investigation by the US Government since we released a report saying they don't have the right equipment since it's too old, it's too dangerous if they would have a spill they won't be able to clean it up and they don't know what they are doing"(Greenpeace Campaign Director).* *"To behave in this deceitful way demonstrates an astonishing amount of contempt for the public - not least for environmentalist supporters who spread their message in good faith only to find themselves forced into embarrassing retractions" (The New Statesman)* *"Very often we are picking on one company that is doing things that other companies won't do and make these companies think that they won't do it because you isolated that company and damage their brand or their social reputation. So in the case of Shell and Volkswagen the way we operate is very similar" (Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).*
	The logic of material damage	*"Waitrose's decision to partner with Shell damages their legitimacy based on ethical and environmental awareness. Greenpeace is then rightly asking Waitrose to end the relationship with Shell. I participated in the direct actions against Waitrose and I went with other Greenpeace volunteers in front of their stores to spread information materials that people were very happy to receive, since they didn't seem to like this strange partnership"(Greenpeace volunteer).* *" During the direct actions 50 gas stations were targeted and some were burned. The damages cost Shell a quarter of a billion dollars (roughlydrafted)* *"It turned out that Greenpeace was wrong in its estimates of the oil still remaining in the platform - there was actually a hundred times less oil than they insisted" (Shell spokesperson)* *"Shell is a huge multinational corporation, while our little boats are activists trying to stop them and we think that is legitimate and non-violent direct action. And we have a mandate of nearly 3 million people across the world that signed up for the campaign and we have a mandate from these people to take action" (Greenpeace Head Campaign Coordinator).* *"What happened after the first weeks of the campaign, our Volkswagen plant in Wolfsburg was picketed and the video went viral" (Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).*

Blending tactics between online and offline actions	**The logic of numbers mobilising volunteers: Mobilise people online to act offline**	*"The terms 'Stormtrooper' and 'Old Street' were trending globally on Twitter, pushing the campaign to audiences who wouldn't have otherwise seen it. As a result, the campaign team encourages others to consider a launch strategy that incorporates social media focused on a key audience that can spread the message and live direct actions that can physically activate people" (Greenpeace MobLab case study).* *"We use emails to get to our supporters and we ask companies to change and then use social media for people to share contents, engage in conversations, spread the word about the campaign and get more involvement. We move from offline to online and vice versa to effectively mobilize people" (Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).* *"What happened after the first weeks of the campaign the Volkswagen plant in Wolfsburg was picketed and the video went viral"(Greenpeace Campaign Coordinator).* *"We expected that people driving pass that wanted to use the petrol station could be hostile to our action, but when we explained people really understand what's at stake and how important this is and the right and the wrong of this (Greenpeace volunteer).* *" It got massively viral through YouTube and when Google pulled it people just replicated it everywhere and it went way more viral than it ever would have done" (Greenpeace Social Media manager)* *"On an international level the Volkswagen campaign engaged more than half a million people via non-traditional channels, mainly social media and direct actions"(Greenpeace volunteer).*
Switching power	**Changing social norms, values, regulations, and corporate social practices**	*"I guarantee that we will do everything in our power to reach carbon dioxide emissions of 95 grams without any reservations. However, this will only be possible if customers accept our advanced alternative power trains. This is of course our objective"(Volkswagen Media Service).* *"The Volkswagen commitment to ensure its cars meet strong CO2 targets on March 6 stems directly from the campaign's ability to engage the public on the issue. On an international level the Volkswagen campaign engaged more than half a million people via non-traditional channels, mainly social media and direct actions" (Greenpeace MobLab).* *"The Volkswagen is a brilliant example of a coherent campaign within an organisation, and an amazing movement that took off based on a really strong concept and some exciting campaign tactics. It's great to see that people power can shift one of the biggest car companies into a new brand position" (Greenpeace MobLab case study).* *"Over half a million people signed the online petition signatures and thousands of people emailed the legislator, that clearly responded to such a pressure. It was a straightforward play with a straightforward message to lawmakers and to companies executives: thousands of people are monitoring your decisions" (Greenpeace MobLab).*
	Build and control networks by connecting and disconnecting publics around causes	*"Greenpeace seeks to divide and conquer: To attack one part of an industry while leaving the rest untouched. But companies that are unaffected in one attack (and possibly even benefit while their rivals suffer) don't see that sooner or later they will be under attack" (Wall Street Journal Europe)* *"Volkswagen has a chance to support this legislation which could cut the amount of oil our vehicles use and emissions they belch out. But if they continue to obstruct and delay then the industry will miss out on new innovation opportunities. Progressive car makers need to stand up to the likes of Volkswagen and get them to see sense." (Greenpeace Campaign Spokesperson; also on Greenpeace website).* *"We focus on public opinion, investment, political opinion on every angle to make real pressure for a normative change, so we are doing very communicative actions on one side and institutional pressure at the same time" (Greenpeace Campaign Director).*

Novel discursive tactics to pressure Governments	**Obtaining endorsement from stakeholders audiences**	*"The digital mobilisation attracted attention from a Volkswagen staff member who contacted Greenpeace in confidence to let them know how influential the campaign was. Volkswagen communications staff were giving hourly updates on social media activity to the Volkswagen head office when the VW Dark Side campaign launched. In comparison, Volkswagen staff needed to sign off on tweets and Facebook posts two weeks in advance" (Greenpeace MobLab case study).* *"By not responding, Shell look corporate and out of touch. Social media had enabled modern day activism to reach an entire new level " (Social Media Monitoring SR7).* *@markthomasinfo It was a hoax, but a brilliant one! http://huff.to/Llzqb1 @thomyorke Yes! Chance in Europe to make cleaner cars law, follow Greenpeace campaign euvsco2.org?@seaotter Decades of building trust and goodwill, blown in an instant. @S.Dashow Just made another donation to Greenpeace. Brilliant. @roelani This is a gorgeous example of social media trolling, and proof that some folk on the Greenpeace team understand how to get a viral message out there. It's funny, it's cruel and it was almost guaranteed from the get-go--especially if you include the ad contest now running on that Arctic Ready ghost website--to garner their cause a tremendous amount of media attention… was a stroke of social media genius.*
	Normative legitimacy informed political pressure	*"When we launched our campaign to get Volkswagen to commit to making greener and more efficient cars, they said what we were demanding was completely impossible. (Greenpeace Campaign Director).* *"We focus on public opinion, investment, political opinion on every angle to make real pressure for a normative change, so we are doing very communicative actions on one side and institutional pressure at the same time" (Greenpeace Campaign Director).* *"The UK can set regulations on oil drilling that will affect firms. In the UK an environmental audit committee was set up in Parliament, and they vote in the EU Parliament where EU regulations are set"(Greenpeace Coordinator).* *"They did an enquiry into this and questioned the oil companies and did a report recommending a moratorium on oil drilling in the Arctic" (Greenpeace Coordinator).*

Table 5: Analytical narrative table comparing how the process unfolded in the three campaigns

	Shell Arctic Ready	**Greenpeace vs Volkswagen**	**Waitrose #DumpShell**
Tapping the Crowd	Greenpeace targeted the perception of Shell's brand and their contested reputation, especially by environmental groups for their controversial practices of drilling in the Arctic. The Arctic is the main mobilisation theme since it's an iconic place where people can observe more visibly the dramatic effects of climate change due to unfair corporate practices. Mobilise people's emotional connection with the Arctic	Volkswagen Group (VW), which similarly to Waitrose, is a well-respected company that invests resources in their green image. Greenpeace denounced the German car industry and lobbied heavily on the European parliament against any industry binding environmental law, and they were successful in leveraging people's negative reactions towards the lack of corporate social change.. Slogan of the campaign 'Volkswagen can't afford to be left behind', GP exploited *big overlap with Volkswagen drivers/customers and Greenpeace supporters*. The campaign is also an example of how to engage the networked publics using viral social media contents as a main channel (e.g. 2 million views spoof video).	Greenpeace chose to target Waitrose for their decision to partner with Shell by experimenting two pilot partnership schemes that enabled Waitrose to sell their products in Shell's gasoline station shops. Contrary to Shell, Waitrose is generally seen as an environmentally friendly brand that built their reputation on being ethical and sustainable. Greenpeace created awareness amongst their consumers that are concerned about environmental issues.

Delegitimising corporate online identity	Greenpeace orchestrated a Social media hoax, hijacking the online identity of Shell, building a social media campaign that was able to delegitimise Shell's activities in the Arctic and damage the company's online identity. Greenpeace collaborated with the *"cultural jamming"* group, "The Yes Men", well known for spectacular media actions and hoaxes, to create a spoof Shell website. The website looked almost identical to the official Shell website, and people were visiting the website thinking it was the official Shell page despite being circulated online that it was a fake. The user-generated advertisements were then displayed on the website. The *cultural jamming* tactics were used across different social media channels.	Greenpeace decided to ride on the success of the Star Wars advertising campaign launched by Volkswagen that was the most successful branding campaign of the year featuring Star Wars themes, and they orchestrated a brand attack, *subvertising* their brand and their advertising campaign. GP created an imitation of the Star Wars video of the Volkswagen advertisement and spread it through direct actions all around the world, and followed up with a mix of ambitious social media strategy and user-driven actions. GP video was taken down of YouTube for copyright infringement, creating even more support from their fans and the video went viral globally.	Waitrose had planned on their Facebook page the Christmas Q&A with Delia Smith, where customers could go on their Facebook page and ask this famous chef different questions about Christmas cooking. Greenpeace created a spoof of Waitrose Christmas website, got access to celebrity chefs talking about the Arctic and hijacked their Facebook page and other social media channels, turning their customers against the partnership with Shell. Waitrose started deleting and censor GP messages and people got really angry. This created more support for GP campaign. Users themselves spontaneously hijacked a live webchat with chef Delia Smith on Facebook. A dedicated hashtag #dumpshell received heavy traffic. T
Illegitimate actions to attract audiences	Activists of Greenpeace, along with the actress Lucy Lawless, occupied the Shell ship for several days, declaring the Arctic a sanctuary. Activists were arrested and attracted huge media attention that prompted millions of people to sign the petition a few days after the first action. After that, Greenpeace organised a series of direct actions (blockades, ship occupations to stop the companies from reaching the Arctic and shutting down 78 of Shell's petrol stations)	In the Volkswagen campaign, the illegitimate action was done online, while the offline direct actions were very peaceful and communicative. Greenpeace decided to target the image of the company reproducing Volkswagen advertising, but altering the meaning of the brand and subverting the message of the campaign. The spoof video was uploaded on YouTube, and with no warning YouTube pulled the film. Then other websites followed…Greenpeace set up a site called vwdarkside.com with Volkswagen logos. The makers of Star Wars asked them to remove the film x copyright violations	The Waitrose campaign was mainly conducted on social media, and the illegitimate action happened online. However, many illegitimate direct actions against Shell's drilling in the Arctic were happening at the same time (e.g. petrol station occupations). Other street actions and volunteers handling information in front of Waitrose supermarkets were happening during Christmas period

Blending tactics (online and offline)	Combination of "logic of material damages" and "logic of numbers" Greenpeace launched their days of action with some direct actions (Shell week of actions with occupations, blockades, petrol stations shut down, street actions, banner dropping) that acted as a catalyst. Then they used emails and mass petitions to get to their supporters and asked Shell to change and then use social media for people to share contents, engage in conversations, spread the word about the campaign and get more involvement. In this way they moved from offline to online and vice versa to effectively mobilize people. The week of direct actions and the online action reinforced and strengthened each other with a feedback loop effect, and an increase in user-generated content across social media platforms	Greenpeace launched their days of action with some direct actions considered as illegitimate. when the Volkswagen plant in Wolfsburg was picketed the video went viral and helped the campaign to start getting mass attention. The *Volkswagen Dark Side* campaign was launched with a big spectacular direct action at Old Street, London's hub for digital marketing and technology businesses. The campaign also aimed to engage Volkswagen drivers directly in the sign-up of the webpage, since the Greenpeace team saw a big overlap they could exploit between Volkswagen's customers and Greenpeace supporters.	Greenpeace initially targeted their Christmas advertising that focused on Waitrose's ethical reputation, donating money to charities and promoting sustainable food, and positioning themselves as different from the rest of the industry and helping people save money during Christmas. The campaign started on social media and then moved in front of Waitrose supermarkets during Christmas for 12 days during busy Christmas shopping period. Several store visits.
Switching Power	Greenpeace was successful at targeting Shell, the US Government and the European Union on the climate consequences of Arctic Ocean drilling. Social media metrics, mainstream media accounts and policy responses clearly show a shift in public perception around the need to protect the Arctic from corporate drilling and to declare it a sanctuary.	The campaign created massive endorsement from stakeholders' audiences and was very well received by EU policy makers, enhancing Greenpeace's legitimacy as a defender of environmental and sustainability issues. After two years, and a movement of 526,000 people stronger, VW have finally agreed to make greener, cleaner cars and meet the emissions targets needed to tackle climate change"	The campaign received such a favourable response that Waitrose was pressured to publically drop the partnership with Shell, and to stop the plans to open more Waitrose's shops at Shell petrol stations.

Novel discoursive tactics	The camping ultimately aimed at changing the UK. EU and US policies on drilling in the Arctic. The UK is an observer state to the Arctic Council; they can set regulations on oil drilling and can demand certain things from firms. In terms of the EU, Greenpeace lobbied actively policy makers to vote to tighten the regulations and proposed to set up an environmental commission. Greenpeace also initiated a dialogue with individual countries in the UN to turn the Arctic into a global sanctuary	Greenpeace was successful "to divide and conquer". They managed to pressure other companies to comply with the 2020 EU emission standards, to publicly differentiate from VW's lobbying practices. The campaign was ultimately aimed at influencing the way the European Union will legislate on CO2 emissions targets for 2020. The campaign was successful in contributing to the EU's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and recognizing that establishing new emissions standards for the European car industry is an imperative.	Nearly 40,000 people sign a petition asking the supermarket to drop the partnership with Shell. After the campaign Waitrose decided to put its work with energy giant Shell on hold. Greenpeace's campaign was ultimately directed to Shell, but they targeted Waitrose since Shell was trying to be associated with a sustainable and ethical brand to refresh their image and gain more public support amongst environmentally conscious audiences**.**

Figure 1. Data Structure

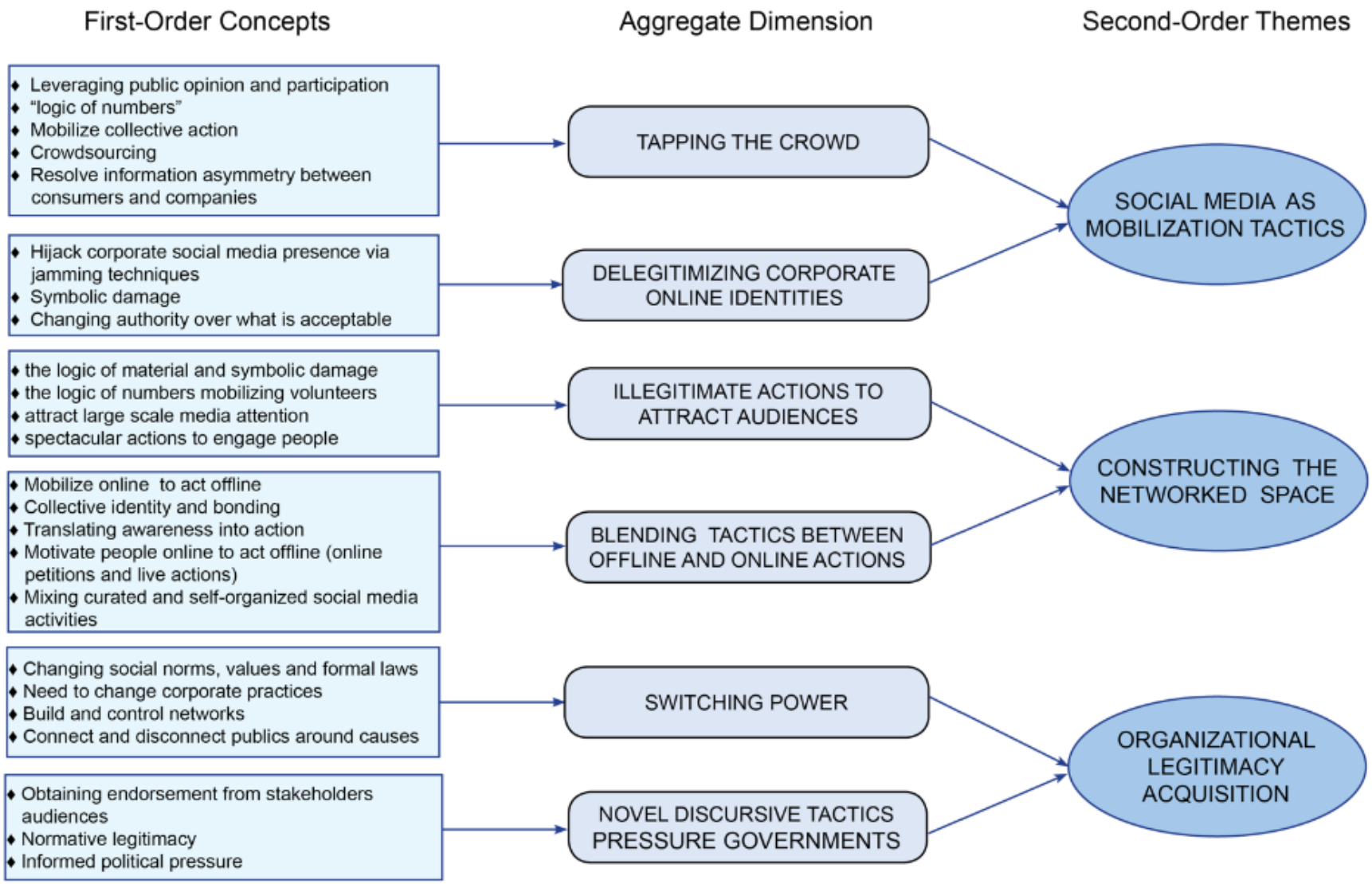
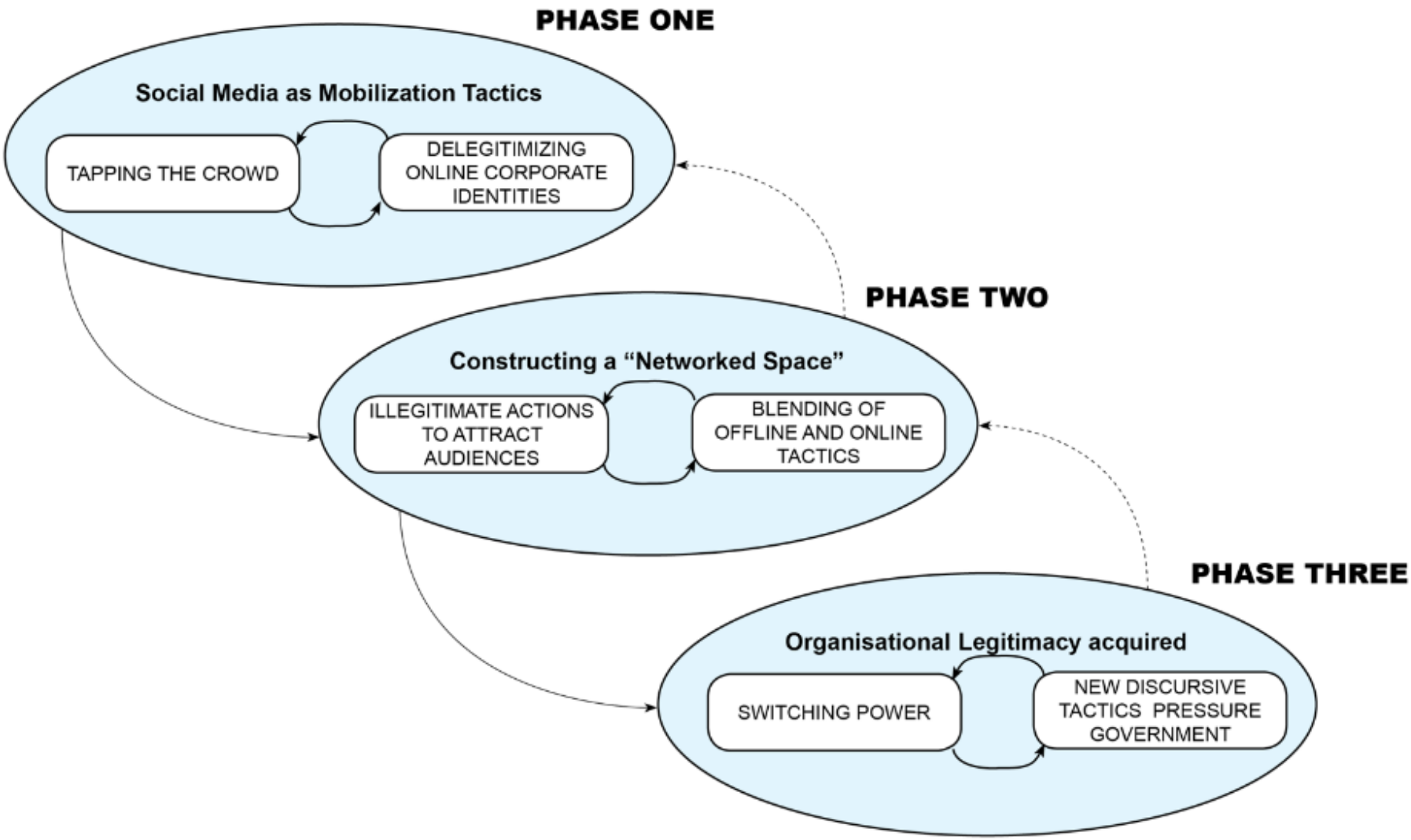


Figure 2. A process model of how social movement organisation acquire legitimacy through a blending of tactics



GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Overall Contributions of the Study

This conclusion summarises the contributions of this thesis. It discusses the findings of the overall research in relation to the existing body of literature and to the current knowledge about organisational celebrity and legitimacy and the impact of social media. It clarifies the overall theoretical contributions of the thesis, linking up the three papers, as well as the implications for future research. It also discusses some limitations of the study and addresses alternative explanations of the examined process. It concludes by presenting areas of potential future research in view of the findings of this thesis.

This thesis contains the early endeavours towards the classification of empirical and theoretical work on the topic of social media and their impact on organisations, focusing on the different fields of inquiry wherein social media is becoming an important subject of investigation, thus contributing to emergent theoretical frameworks in the field of organisation theory. More work needs to happen in this space, but it is becoming clear that social media are increasingly relevant for organisations. Today, through the use of social media, *networked publics* are actively engaging in mobilising collective actions based on affiliations and common interests and publishing and disseminating information about themselves and about organisational actions, products and services. This research suggests implications for the development of institutional and social movement research, integrating the social media perspective in the framework, thus contributing novel insights into the impact of new media adoption on organisational processes.

In summary, this thesis investigates how social media are affecting organisational strategies, and in particular the way organisations build celebrity and acquire legitimacy within contested and complex institutional contexts. Particularly, it suggests the concept of *online celebrity* as a process whereby social actors and the networked publics co-construct meanings, cultural value and web-mediated social ratings and judgments that impact the social evaluation of organisations. Further, it extends institutional theory on legitimacy by investigating how social media affect the process of acquisition of organisational legitimacy. It shows how social movement organisations adopt illegitimate actions offline and online, provoking changes in the institutional environment, and challenging taken for granted cultural norms, dominant frames and powerful actors. Finally, it outlines key social media tactics, which focus on shaping the external organisational environment and the cognition and perceptions of key audiences and networked publics. In conclusion, the findings of this thesis throw some light on the growing field of social media and their implications

for organisations, in particular in acquiring social approval assets, namely celebrity and legitimacy.

Implications for Future Research on Social Media and Organisations, and for Management Practices

I seek to suggest new possible directions for strategy and organisation research by emphasising the role of social media in the creation of intangible assets, namely celebrity and legitimacy, which have already attracted attention of organisational scholars. It is pertinent to investigate in future research how firms can successfully manage the interaction between different stakeholder audiences (including new formations such as networked publics and social movements). Firms should be able to develop capabilities that enable them to manage the interactions between social media and organisational strategies and the implementation of a variety of tactics in different organisational contexts.

The limitations of this research offer opportunities for future work in the field. Practical recommendations can be derived for firms and organisations. It is important to emphasise that the development of social media has made institutional and communication processes increasingly more networked, dialogic and interactive, and thus future research on organisation studies should focus special attention on the nature of these organisational dynamics that affect stakeholders' perceptions of organisations and their judgments. For instance, with the rise of social media, legitimacy measurements use real-time online audiences' perceptions to assess stakeholders' endorsement of organisations or of particular events and causes. Increasingly, stakeholders are analysing big data and digital influence trends to make decisions concerning conferring organisational reputation, celebrity, and legitimacy.

While this analysis has focused on the key role of social media on organisational processes and strategies, it is important to go further in analysing the distinctive features across social media mobilisation tactics and their implementation in different contexts. In particular, the way social media are linked with the conventional news media, but also differentiate from traditional media by generating new forms of networked communication, should be given special attention in future research. Future research should explore the different roles of various audiences (e.g. networked publics) and their communicative practices to better understand how publics actively engage in processes of legitimacy acquisition. In particular, as an outcome of this research, future work should examine the different roles of the various stakeholders engaged in social media networks and the how the various actors interact though social media in the process of "switching power".

Future research could use comparisons across types of organisations and types of social media tactics employed to expand existing inventories of tactics on how different organisations ultimately acquire social approval assets. Such comparisons would provide powerful leverage, both for understanding what is distinctive about different types of organisations and for identifying the contextual conditions that shape the trajectories and outcomes of their activities in relation to institutional dynamics.

This is also valuable research for firms that should build new responses and counter tactics vis-à-vis these new information-intensive environments, for instance in order to maintain and re-establish legitimacy in response to legitimacy crises. Taking social movement organisations and social media seriously means encouraging managers to consider the new social media environment in which organisations are immersed and to consider these mobilisation tactics and activities as important organisational practices that, if successfully managed, can facilitate a rethink of certain strategies Firms can therefore derive lessons on how to engage in corporate social change activities due to societal demands, thus keeping or gaining some degree of control over processes of celebrity and legitimacy acquisition, and finding a good balance between control, and interaction with their consumers. In this direction, better insights into social media tactical repertoire enable a better level of understanding and anticipation of collective action. Throwing light on social media tactics adopted by social movement organisations can help executives to have an overview of the sources of pressure and change for corporate activities. In addition, this research offer insights into the way organisations are able to mobilise resources and incorporate members in a fast changing media intensive context, by framing issues to increase acceptance of the causes and claims they promote, and to finally exploit the political opportunities generated.

To summarise, these insights show how social media tactics can be strategically managed by organisations, and at the same time also put forward several new research questions that could be further investigated. First, we need to elaborate on the described phenomena at a field-level, and the commonalities across organisations and across cases, since there are great variations across geographies and different sectors. Second, we need to know much more about the types of organisational competences and capabilities that organisations need to develop in order to strategically master social media activities. The present research indicates advancement in this direction. This study proposes significant scope for learning across contexts, times, and type of organisations about the contested relationship between social movement organisations, firms, publics, and the strategic use of social media to establish and acquire social approval assets.

Social media strategies and tactics are then likely to influence the interaction between social media and institutional dynamics, such as celebrity and legitimacy acquisition, even though the exact impact is still difficult to measure and attribute.