

Article

The dynamics of ‘Moralized Markets’: a field perspective

Philip Balsiger  *

Institute of Sociology, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

*Correspondence: philip.balsiger@unine.ch

Abstract

This article describes the distinctive features and structural properties of ‘moralized markets’, that is, markets in which producers set higher moral standards than those governing conventional market practices, and consumers buy products that respect those higher moral standards. Starting from a critical discussion of existing theoretical conceptualizations in terms of conventionalization/co-optation, quality conventions and resource partitioning, this article conceptualizes moralized markets as fields where actors are in strategic interaction. Using illustrations from several empirical studies, it suggests that all moralized markets are composed of a plurality of actors whose understanding of and commitments to moral principles vary. It reveals the main dimensions of the field, characterizes typical positions, and identifies and describes the core strategies used in struggles around field boundaries and the issues of policing and regulation of field settlements. The article concludes by offering six propositions regarding different possible outcome scenarios for the dynamics of moralized market fields, highlighting the role of the state for the stabilization of field settlements.

Key words: markets, moral norms, social movements, theory

JEL classification: L1 market structure, firm strategy, market performance

1. Introduction

Over the past decades, a process of ‘market moralization’ (Stehr *et al.*, 2006) has led to the emergence of new markets around specific issues often related to the moral provenance (Fischer, 2014a) of goods, such as organic or fair trade. While the economy is always embedded into normative orders (Fourcade and Healy, 2007, Zelizer, 2011a; Beckert, 2012) and, as Fischer (2014b) puts it, all markets are ‘shot-through’ with morality, the process of market moralization has led to the emergence of *particular kinds* of markets where explicit morality is the key principle of market interaction (Suckert, 2018). Such markets can be

termed ‘moralized markets’, and this article attempts to describe their distinctive features and structural properties.

In moralized markets, producers set and follow higher moral standards than the standards governing conventional market practices, and consumers buy products that respect those higher moral standards. Most often this concerns environmental, animal rights or social justice issues; typical examples are markets for organic produce, fair trade or free-range eggs. Moralized markets emerge when social movements engage with markets: consumer and producer movements criticize and mobilize against conventional market practices, advocate higher moral standards and set out to develop categories, practices, products and markets respecting superior moral standards (Balsiger, 2014). Exchange in moralized markets is thus explicitly coordinated through social as well as economic values (McInerney, 2014). Such markets are increasingly frequent, as morality has become a form of market valuation.

In the literature, one finds two main accounts of moralized markets. ‘Multiple markets’ approaches focus on how moralized markets (or moralized market categories) emerge and distinguish themselves from their conventional ‘cousins’. Different theoretical frameworks describe such processes: resource-partitioning theory (Sikavica and Pozner, 2013), convention economics (Diaz-Bohne, 2013), cultural sociology (Weber *et al.*, 2008) or Zelizer’s (2011*b*) notion of ‘circuits of commerce’. The focus of such approaches is on how moral entrepreneurs create niches governed by moral standards or (quality) conventions differing from dominant market conventions. Market devices such as labels or brands specifically designate and differentiate ‘moral’ products from conventional ones. The main question here is the exploration of the mechanisms through which these external boundaries can be maintained.

The second type of accounts is critical approaches that focus on processes of co-optation or conventionalization of moralized markets. Building on critical political economy, such accounts argue that moral or alternative ways of producing can ultimately not withstand the forces of the market—price competition, in particular—and that moralized markets therefore undergo processes of conventionalization, through which they come to resemble conventional markets (Guthman, 2004*b*). The main question here is the dynamics of moralized markets and in particular the description of the mechanisms that explain the process of conventionalization.

This article argues that both these perspectives are theoretically unsatisfactory. Because they are mainly interested in describing the quality conventions that allow (or fail to allow) specific segments of markets to be distinctive from other segments, diversity and conflict within moralized markets remain either unaddressed or are interpreted as a sign of failure. The perspectives thus fail to account for the internal diversity of actors and strategies and the ensuing conflicts reflecting power struggles and structural positions. Just like the social movements they are related to, moralized markets are commonly made up of different groups with differing ideological beliefs who disagree on tactics and strategies. These different orientations are reflected in moralized markets, and theoretical perspectives need to be capable of accounting for them.

The observation that moralized markets are populated by a diversity of actors with varying commitments to moral standards must become the starting point for their theoretical description. Only a relational perspective is capable of bringing into view this diversity. Drawing on Bourdieu’s field concept and his discussions of markets of symbolic goods (Bourdieu, 1984, 2005*a,b*) as well as other field perspectives in economic sociology

(Fligstein, 2001; Fligstein and McAdam, 2012), this article suggests conceptualizing moralized markets as fields driven by struggles about moral status among producers and consumers. This makes it possible to describe the relations between different approaches that coexist within moralized markets without interpreting this plurality as a form of market demise and failure. It puts into focus the centrality of struggles around field settlements *within* moralized markets and thus opens up new research questions unaddressed by other theoretical accounts.

Starting from a critical discussion of the main theoretical approaches to moralized markets, this article develops a field perspective by describing the general properties of moralized market fields and the struggles characterizing them. After discussing the strategies of actors occupying different positions within the field, I describe the core strategies used in the struggles on moralized market fields, around field boundaries and the policing and regulation of field settlements. I end with six propositions regarding different outcome scenarios for the dynamics of moralized market fields.

To develop and illustrate this field theoretical approach, I mainly rely on two case studies: one on the rise of moral categories regarding animal welfare in the market for eggs in Switzerland (Balsiger, 2016a) and one on the rise of 'ethical' fashion in Switzerland and France (Balsiger, 2014, 2016b, 2018). In both cases, I conducted qualitative fieldwork and archival research in order to understand the interactions between social movements and economic actors and the ensuing transformation of markets (see the referenced publications for details on methods of data collection and analysis). In addition to this, I also draw on a variety of studies done by other researchers on different examples of moralized markets.

2. Major theoretical approaches of moralized markets

Economic sociologists have become increasingly interested in various ways how markets are related to morality, leading to the development of a thriving field of study (Fourcade and Healy, 2007; Quinn, 2008; Anteby, 2010; Massengill and Reynolds, 2010; Abend, 2014; Reich, 2014; Balsiger, 2016a; Balsiger and Schiller-Merkens, 2019). One specific aspect of this is the rise of 'moralized markets' as I understand it here, that is, particular kinds of markets where explicit morality is the key principle of market interaction (Suckert, 2015).

Two broad theoretical perspectives describe and explain moralized market dynamics: conventionalization theories and various 'multiple markets' perspectives. While they build on very different theoretical traditions, they all suggest some sort of theoretical account of how moralized markets work and evolve. Conventionalization or co-optation accounts originate in critical political economy studies. The developments in markets for organic produce, in particular, have been described in this way, but it basically reflects a larger and very common account of co-optation of alternatives by market forces (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007; King and Busa, 2017). The conventionalization thesis, defended notably by Guthman (2004a,b), maintains that the involvement of agribusiness in organic markets endangers the distinctiveness of organic production methods; under pressure from powerful market participants, organic producers are forced to adapt production methods and organizational forms that resemble the ones we find on conventional agricultural markets in order to be able to compete. Market forces conventionalize organic production, which loses its status as an alternative production form. Other accounts in social movement studies (Chasin, 2000; King and Busa, 2017) or in critical studies of capitalist dynamics (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007;

Johnston, 2008) also describe this process through which alternative forms of production and consumption fall prey to capitalist forces and are thus co-opted by markets.

Not everyone studying organics subscribes to this view. An alternative position is taken by Coombes and Campbell (1998) who suggest that there are multiple paths to sustainability; not all of organic production needs to become conventionalized and it is thus possible to reconcile markets with organic production. This position is reminiscent of theoretical approaches that stress the plurality of markets. Variants of this have developed out of a number of theoretical traditions. In the French *économie des conventions* (EC), scholars have revealed how market coordination is made possible by quality conventions, which rely on multiple ‘economies of worth’ (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006). Conventions are ‘cultural logics [of] how to coordinate in economic institutions to collectively produce products. EC assumes a coexisting plurality of such quality conventions as the industrial convention, the market convention, the domestic convention, the green convention and others’ (Diaz-Bohne, 2013, pp. 46–47). A plurality of quality conventions often coexists in markets for a given good, allowing for the production of different qualities and processes of valuation.

The strength of multiple market approaches lies in identifying the orders of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006) to which qualities refer, and in analyzing how different qualities are built and sustained in markets—in particular, the different forms of market ‘equipment’ that materialize them and distinguish segments and products within markets (Callon *et al.*, 2002; Cochoy 2002; Karpik, 2007). Doing so, they reveal the valuation processes through which forms of worth that are often foreign to the market—such as green worth, for instance—can be transferred into market value (Thévenot, 2015). This, of course, is at odds with the supposed existence of a single ‘law of the market’ as suggested by economic theory, but also by critical political economy analysis advancing the conventionalization thesis.

A different theoretical tradition of approaching the plurality of markets is through the lens of resource-partitioning developed by studies from population ecology (Hannan and Freeman, 1977). Resource-partitioning theories see the subdivisions of markets as highly unstable and investigate the mechanisms that allow for the partition of markets into niches with different logics. In particular, studies have analyzed how collective identities can serve as a basis for market partitioning (Carroll and Swaminathan, 2000). Building on this framework, Sikavica and Pozner (2013) discuss the case of organic agriculture and ask why in this case a first stage of niche creation through resource partitioning gave way to a dilution of the boundaries between movement-based organic producers and conventional producers—the process of conventionalization described above. Unlike critical political economy, they analyze it as a cultural problem of organizational identity. Contrasting the organic case with the successful niche creation of microbrewers (Carroll and Swaminathan, 2000) and satellite radio stations (Navis and Glynn, 2010), they find that it is precisely the lack of a strong organizational identity that explains why resource partitioning in organics was lost over time. ‘[O]nly when specialist organizations develop a sharply defined specialist form identity are they able to forestall competition from generalists, who by definition violate the normative code associated with the specialist form and are therefore not capable of meaningfully competing in the specialist space’ (Sikavica and Pozner, 2013, p. 637). Failure to sanction ‘generalists’ (i.e. conventional producers, such as agro-industrial firms launching an organic production line) who ‘masquerade as specialists’ (i.e. as truly organic producers) results

from an open organizational identity, which undermines niche creation and resource partitioning.

While those different theoretical approaches identify crucial features characterizing moralized markets, they have important limitations. Conventionalization accounts are correct in identifying dynamics of change affecting moralized markets, but neglect that conventionalization is but one possible dynamic among others, and is thus not inevitable. They also build on a ‘hostile worlds’ view (Zelizer, 2011a) operating with a binary opposition between markets and moral alternatives, thus underestimating the diversity of actors within moralized markets and the possibilities of moral valuation. Pluralism approaches, such as the economy of conventions, are right in identifying the coexistence of plural logics within markets; but they are relatively silent when it comes to describing and theorizing the relations between these plural orders and the struggles within specific orders or conventions around the legitimate way of putting them in practice.

Theorizations in the framework of resource partitioning usefully identify the importance of boundaries and struggles around them, but they fail to acknowledge that the instability of niche markets is not necessarily a sign of their failure. An interpretation of moralized markets with this theoretical lens (which was developed in the different context of identity-driven markets) misses that some of the promoters of moralized markets often *want* this ‘alternative’ way of producing and doing business to spread to dominant market actors. Such promoters want to attract actors from conventional markets and are not necessarily interested in maintaining strong boundaries, or at least they disagree with actors with stronger, ‘closed’ identities over where such boundaries should be drawn. This leads to struggles around the boundaries of moralized markets (Balsiger and Schiller-Merkens, 2019). Rather than being a sign of the failure of a moralized market, these boundary struggles are actually a characteristic feature of such markets. What the resource-partitioning perspective sees as a cultural problem should be interpreted as an issue of conflict and power.

3. The promises of a field perspective

Conceiving of moralized markets as fields contains the promise of integrating the insights from other perspectives while overcoming their shortcomings. At a very general level, this means that markets are local social orders of actors that orient their actions toward each other (White, 1981) ‘on the basis of shared (which is not to say consensual) understandings about the purposes of the field, relationships to others in the field (including who has power and why), and the rules governing legitimate action in the field’ (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012, p. 9). It is a relational approach to markets: the strategies and actions of market actors can only be understood with regard to their relation to other market actors.

In Bourdieu’s understanding, fields are characterized by struggles for position between actors that are structurally unequal in terms of the volume and structure of capital they possess (Bourdieu 1984, 1989, 2005a). In field struggles, actors mobilize resources and invest their capitals. The struggles are about position and about the criteria that are the ordering principles of unequal positions—about what kind of capitals provide legitimacy and status. A conception of markets-as-fields thus puts the emphasis on dynamic, strategic interactions between different market actors jockeying for positions within the field or trying to change the rules of the game and the boundaries of the field to their advantage. The strategies engaged by actors are related to their structural position within the field. Once we know an

actor's endowment with relevant capitals (and thus her position in the field) we can explain strategic choices.

While struggles for position are characteristic of fields, both Bourdieu's (2005a,b) and Fligstein and McAdam's (2012) perspectives also picture them as more or less stabilized social orders. Stability—a central issue in Fligstein's (2001) conceptualization of markets—results from power relations and cultural mechanisms of legitimation through which 'field settlements' (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012) (the formal and informal rules and cultural norms governing the field) are accepted by all participating actors. To achieve stability, actors often turn to the state, which 'contributes at every moment to [the economic field's] existence and persistence, and also to the structure of the relations of force that characterize it' (Bourdieu, 2005b, p. 12). Appeals to state intervention often allow dominant market actors to defend and maintain their position. Field perspectives are therefore also uniquely positioned to take into account the important ways through which states shape markets.

In sum, the field perspective allows us to put the interactions and struggles between actors with different conceptions of moralized markets at the center of the analysis, rather than ignoring differences within moral conventions, seeing them as simply juxtaposed or analyzing them as inevitably leading to moralized markets' decline or co-optation. Additionally, the field perspective leads us to consider the role of the state in the structure of markets. And finally, the perspective also enables us to link producers (and their relative structural positions) with consumers, whose tastes (or 'preferences') also depend on their positions within socially differentiated fields (Bourdieu, 2005a). To the moralized market field of producers corresponds a field of "ethical consumers" (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2013a) who compete for moral status with each other.

In the next sections, I first discuss the structure of moralized market fields, identifying typical positions within it based on empirical observations on a number of such markets. In the second step, I go on to show how such a perspective can make sense of the typical struggles and producer strategies characterizing such fields.

4. Varying commitments to moral standards and the structure of moralized market fields

Moralized markets are composed of a plurality of actors whose understanding of and commitments to moral principles are varying. They are not characterized by one overarching moral 'quality convention' that distinguishes them from their conventional market 'cousin'. Rather, they consist of a number of subtly differentiated quality conventions corresponding to different locations in the field, and distinguished by specific market devices that signal and make visible internal differences (such as labels, certification schemes, brands and advertisements).

4.1 Positions on the moralized market field

In moralized market fields, struggles on the moral legitimacy of practices take place between actors who come to this fight from different structural and ideological positions. Core actors are producers, shops or retailers, but also activist organizations participating in the critique of production processes, the establishment of norms and moral standards, or the development of certification schemes or alternative production forms. A number of empirical studies have documented the variety of positions and approaches one commonly finds on moralized

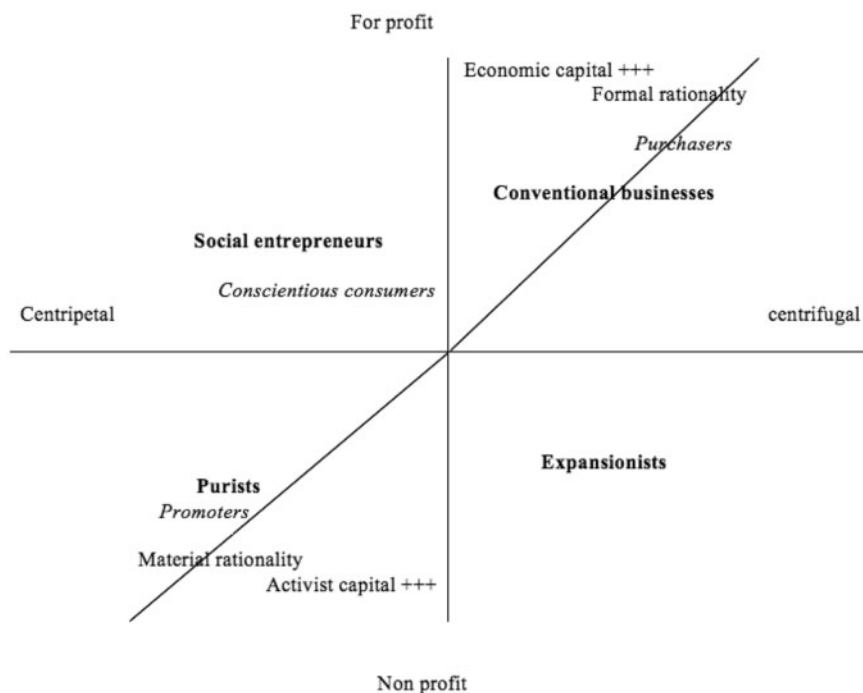


Figure 1. Moralized market field.

markets. In the case of fair trade, for example, scholars distinguish between two main approaches: one based on a specialized niche market strategy and one based on a delegation strategy, with labeled products sold in general retail stores (Le Velly, 2007; Raynolds *et al.*, 2007; Wilkinson, 2007). In the organic market (Sikavica and Pozner, 2013), producers with strong activist identities are joined by more commercially oriented producers. In the market for sustainable coffee, at least four different standards coexist, some originating with activist organizations, others with big coffee brands (Reinecke *et al.*, 2012).

In each of these cases, approaches and actors can be aligned on a continuum between a 'moral' and a 'commercial' pole. Here, following Le Velly's (2006) suggestive analysis, we can build on the distinction established by Weber (2013 [1922]) between material and formal rationality in the economy. Formal rationality designates economic activity in which actors pursue a unique goal, which can be quantified in monetary terms, without taking into account moral, esthetic or political values. Material rationality, on the contrary, concerns the pursuit of such other goals through economic activity. Some actors within moralized markets are more business-oriented and willing to make compromises to the formal rationality of the market. Others try to stick to moral principles (material rationality) and are much less willing to succumb to market forces. It is between such differently positioned actors that struggles take place.

Figure 1 gives a visual representation of the theoretically elaborated moralized market field. The distinction between formal and material rationality constitutes the first dimension

of such fields. It translates into the strategic orientations of actors on moralized markets. Strategies can be either centrifugal or centripetal. Organizations with a centripetal orientation are turned toward purity; they value the respect of high moral standards more than market reach. Organizations with a centrifugal orientation are turned toward expansion; they are ready to compromise on moral standards in order to make them more attainable, increase sales and touch broader consumer audiences.

The second dimension of moralized market fields reflects the fact that moralized markets contain both movement actors and economic actors—both *moral* entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs. Moralized markets emerge when movements engage with markets and come to include both activist and business organizations. Take the example of fair trade in France. Besides movement organizations with centripetal versus centrifugal strategies, one also finds specialized for-profit companies like Alter Eco, as well as big retailers offering fair trade products. These observations lead us to distinguish types of organization as a second crucial dimension of moralized market fields, opposing non-profit to for-profit organizations. The former belong to the world of activism, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or other kinds of social movement organizations. The latter have their origin in the world of business, be it companies that have existed for a long time and either turn ‘ethical’ or simply launch some ethical products, or newly founded ethical businesses and social enterprises. In other words, this dimension distinguishes between an activist pole where actors are mostly endowed with activist capital and a business pole where actors have mostly economic capital. Oppositions, however, are not always that clear-cut, since all actors on moralized markets blend moral and commercial goals. Social and ethical businesses, in particular, often have activist backgrounds and may see themselves as part of a broader social movement, in spite of their for-profit form.

Starting from this structure, it is possible to identify and describe four ideal-typical positions in moralized market fields, corresponding to different structures of capital and commitments toward moral standards: purists, expansionists, conventional businesses and social entrepreneurs. The four types are constructed from empirical observations in a range of moralized markets.

Before presenting these positions, it is important to emphasize that every actually existing moralized market has its specific history and structure that is likely to differ from this theoretical account. *The* moralized market as such does not exist. Each moralized market is a historically grown and spatially and temporally delimited market for specific goods—for instance, the market for organic milk in the years 1990–2000s in Germany (Suckert, 2015). Describing the emergence of specific markets is therefore crucial to understanding the positions, capitals, struggles and issues that characterize them; every field is different.

This also means that not all four ideal-type positions will necessarily always be occupied in actually existing moralized markets. In addition, moralized markets can change over time. Actors may move from one position to another as they change strategies or react to changing environments—although, depending on an actor’s endowment with specific capitals, not all such movements from one position to the other are equally possible, as some of them will be highly contested (see the discussion on boundary struggles below). New actors may also appear in moralized market fields, and the issues defining moral status may evolve over time. The field perspective is uniquely suited to capture this dynamic nature of markets. The description of typical positions and issues/struggles in moralized markets developed here is meant to offer a stylized and theoretical perspective, which can be used as a heuristic

starting point to analyze ‘really existing’ moralized markets, identifying positions and strategies within them.¹

4.2 Purists

In moralized markets, one usually finds social movement actors with strong collective identities and strong ideological commitments toward changing markets. They are the ones most often described in the literature on moralized markets and whose move toward conventionalization is regretted. Often at the origin of moralized markets, they build up alternative ‘circuits of commerce’ (Zelizer, 2011b) around high moral standards that privilege material rationality over market concerns. This subordination of market concerns under moral values has consequences for qualification and valuation (Beckert and Aspers, 2011) and concerns the questions of product quality and price. Quality is redefined in terms of production processes, as opposed to aesthetics or taste (Balsiger, 2016a). Higher prices are seen as necessary in order to enable the respect of higher moral standards, even when such higher prices make it hard to be competitive.

Those who buy products from such producers often share the strong ideological convictions of the social movements at the origin of the markets—indeed, one might see them as part of the movement. Since the goals of purists are primarily ideological and not business-oriented, selling goods is in this case both an economic exchange and a means to raise awareness and recruit sympathizers to a cause. If buyers do not already share the convictions, the selling process is designed to convince them of the movement’s goals—through package information, place of exchange or the information given by salespersons (often volunteers who are both part of the movement and committed consumers of moral products). Buyers must share the moral commitments of promoters because without embracing the moral quality, it is unlikely that they would be inclined to make compromises on other qualities. For instance, Le Velly (2006) recounts how French customers of the ‘Artisans du monde’ fair trade shops in the 1980s were willing to buy coffee from El Salvador in support of the Sandinista revolution even though they themselves widely characterized its taste as ‘disgusting’.

4.3 Expansionists

Next to purists, one finds social movement actors with expansionist strategies. Because all social movements are irreducibly heterogeneous (Jasper, 2011; Duyvendak and Fillieule, 2015; Duyvendak and Jasper, 2015), one inevitably finds diverging strategies and ideologies within movements. While a specific movement might share a general goal, the means through which this goal should be achieved are very often contested. The difference between purists and expansionists in moralized markets corresponds to the antagonism between movement groups who value ideological purity above all, and more pragmatist actors who are ready to compromise and advocate incremental solutions.

1 Bourdieu and his followers usually identified field structures and positions within them through statistical methods, in particular multiple correspondence analysis (Bourdieu, 1984, 2005). While the approach here is also based on empirical observation, it differs from such orthodox analysis by (a) not using statistical methods to objectify the field structure and (b) developing a theoretical description of moralized markets as fields that can be applied to a diversity of really existing moralized markets.

Within moralized markets, the strategies of expansionists often contain some sort of collaboration of movement actors with companies, for instance, in the form of labels. In order to reach a broader range of customers, expansionists develop strategies that are attractive for conventional businesses, too. In this course, they often compromise on certain aspects of the moral standards. For instance, in the case of fair trade labels like Fair Trade Labeling Organization (FLO), some of the core standards such as an exclusive focus on small-scale producers may be weakened in order to accommodate businesses. Market ‘feasibility’ with the goal of reaching more consumers is valued more highly than fulfilling strict moral standards—which does not mean, however, that moral standards disappear from the goals of expansionists. To stick with the fair trade example, both purist and expansionist actors share the same general goals, but they differ on the means to achieve them, in particular whether or not it is legitimate to compromise on some aspects of standards in order to reach a broader audience. As a consequence, in the case of expansionists, the ‘conversion’ of consumers to the goals of moralized market promoters is less important, even if it does not disappear altogether.

4.4 Conventional businesses

Conventional businesses are actors in moralized market fields when they set higher moral standards for the production of all or some of their products and/or refer to moral issues in their corporate communication and product marketing. Even if in some (and perhaps even many) cases moral communication is nothing but marketing and lacks substantial commitments, it is important to keep in mind that, from a sociological perspective, this refers precisely to the kind of struggle that characterizes moralized markets. It is therefore important to include conventional businesses in the moralized market field, even in cases where they are only in it for communication. Besides, the fact that conventional businesses develop moral discourses and initiatives is of course not unrelated to the rise of social movement actors attempting to moralize markets through different means (King and Pearce, 2010).

Conventional businesses enter moralized markets in different ways. Often it is through collaborations with expansionist social movement actors: fair trade or organic labels, collaborations on sustainability initiatives and partnerships with human rights NGOs. Collaborations give companies legitimacy to appear as actors on this market. But collaborations also come with costs, and companies might therefore prefer to adopt only cosmetic changes to their practices when entering moralized market fields (Soule, 2009). This, however, can expose them to critique from activists. With regard to consumers, conventional businesses hope to capture growing segments of conscientious consumers, but they are also content with selling moral products to purchasers who are not informed about the moral qualities of products, and they are usually not in the business of raising awareness of consumers but respond to critique and already existing awareness and evaluative criteria (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2013b).

4.5 Social enterprises

The final category consists of businesses that are founded with explicit moral goals. They are businesses but want to make ‘another kind’ of business; business is used as a means to achieve moral goals. However, (some sort of) profit orientation is not seen as in

contradiction to this goal, which makes social enterprises fundamentally hybrid organizations (McInerney, 2014; York *et al.*, 2016). In the fashion industry, for instance, a range of small ‘ethical fashion’ companies produce clothes with ethical goals—sustainability, fair trade, supporting local communities and so on (Schiller-Merkens, 2017).

Social enterprises differ from purists and expansionists to the extent that they may or may not directly originate within a social movement. Although this distinction is not always clear-cut and social movement boundaries are always blurry, it is possible to conceptualize social enterprises as a kind of spin-off from movements; they draw on social movement ideas and make them the core of their businesses. Founders may have biographical links to social movements, or they may be latecomers or second-generation producers, who join a market once it has become lucrative; or it may be that the form of for-profit social enterprise has become an increasingly legitimate way of pursuing social change projects over time. Depending on their history and orientation, social enterprises will have slightly different positions in the field. Their for-profit orientation distinguishes them from social movement organizations with market activities, which usually have other legal forms (for instance, as part of the non-profit solidarity economy or as co-operatives). But social enterprises also differ from conventional businesses in the field because contrary to the latter, they were founded with explicit ‘moral’ goals.

Like conventional businesses, social enterprises may collaborate with expansionist actors, for instance, by using fair trade or organic labels. However, because of their often small size and proximity to social movements, they are generally less under scrutiny from social movements policing moralized market boundaries, and can thus also rely on self-declaration, or on a combination of both. They then draw their credibility also from other sources, often by building a strong story around the moral commitment of the brand’s founder.

4.6 The consumer side

The structure of moralized market fields can also be described with regard to consumers of moral products. The different positions and strategies of producers correspond to different consumer profiles and identities. Based on a study of the fair trade movement and its consumers, Brown (2014) suggests a distinction between promoters, conscientious consumers and purchasers, which can be applied to this field description of moralized markets. Promoters ‘view themselves as part of a movement and see all forms of consumption as having political and ethical implications’ (p. 25). They are thus on the activist side of the field and correspond to the position of purists. Conscientious consumers are the majority of fair trade consumers; they buy such products when they are readily available and differ from promoters insofar as they ‘do not see themselves as part of a larger movement and do not partake in the rituals or consciousness-building activities that serve to foster a fair-trade identity’ (p. 26). We can situate them toward the middle of the field. Purchasers, finally, are people who ‘know little to nothing about fair trade’, whose lives ‘are not organized around socially responsible consumption’ and whose motivations to shop for ethical products is therefore difficult to ascertain (p. 27). They belong to the commercial quadrant of the field and might buy moral products for other qualities than their moral standards.

5. Strategies in struggles on field boundaries and field settlements within moralized market fields

Moralized market fields are characterized by struggles about moral status.² To better understand what these struggles are about, we need to go back to the fundamentals of field theory. Fligstein and McAdam's (2012) formulation of how strategic action fields emerge and stabilize is particularly useful. In their account, fields stabilize around field settlements, which are the formal and informal rules and cultural norms governing the field and enabling local market orders (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012). In stable fields, these rules and norms are settled and accepted by all field participants, if interpreted slightly differently according to their position. In emerging or transforming fields, these settlements are challenged and agreements have yet to be reached. Actors use cooperation and conflict in order to develop and enforce a field settlement that reflects their interests.

Most moralized market fields have emerged recently and are not settled yet. As a consequence, within moralized markets, one observes struggles around the 'right' way of pursuing moral projects within markets, with different actors coming at it from different positions. Specifically, these struggles concern two fundamental issues concerning the properties of the field: field boundaries and questions related to the enforcement of field settlements through regulation and policing.

5.1 Defining symbolic boundaries: expulsion and expansion

For Bourdieu (2017), a main stake within field struggles is the question of who belongs to a field. Sociological analysis must retrace the struggles around the legitimate criteria of membership through which actors themselves establish a field's boundaries and try to impose them on others. In moralized market fields, such boundary struggles are about the 'right' way of pursuing market moralization, and thus implicitly about the field settlements, that is, the (mostly informal) rules and cultural norms governing the field. Fligstein and McAdam (2012) discuss this issue of boundaries mainly through the idea of field invasion (p. 99). Successful field invasion by powerful actors challenges and alters established field settlements, and thus field stability. In moralized market fields, the question of boundaries and 'invasion' is particularly thorny because of the existence of divergent strategies (purist and expansive) and of different types of organizations.

In the lower left corner of the field—the space where one finds purists, with high activist capital, material rationality and centripetal strategies—actors tend to define the moralized market in restrictive terms. The further away one moves from this corner, the broader the definition of the moralized market. Purists tend to see their practices and definitions of moralized markets as the only real, authentic version of it. Others are dismissed as fraudsters, fake, 'watered down'. Greenwashing is a typical example of this kind of struggle on

2 While this part's focus is on social movement organizations and producers, it is worth noting that these struggles also concern consumers. 'Promoters' with high and encompassing moral commitments will accuse 'conscientious consumers' or occasional purchasers as opportunists or question their motivations for buying ethical products, which are said to be inauthentic, a mere practice of distinction. In turn, purist promoters of moral consumption are ridiculed by less committed consumers as fundamentalists, idealists, do-gooders. To this general structuring of consumer struggles on moral status, one can add many specific struggles on particular issues such as veganism versus vegetarianism versus flexitarianism, conscious consumption versus degrowth, etc.

symbolic boundaries. The accusation of greenwashing means that the accused party only pretends to participate in the moralized market; the participation is in words only, not in deeds, and the company accused of greenwashing is only in it for the symbolic profit it can draw. It is ‘masquerading’ (Sikavica and Pozner, 2013) or, in Fligstein and McAdam’s (2012) terms, an ‘invader’ who does not respect the rules of the field. From the perspective of purists, such practices are therefore not within the boundaries of the moralized market. Accusing a company of greenwashing means symbolically excluding it from the boundaries of the moralized market.

Of course, the force and publicity with which such claims are voiced depend on who voices them against whom. Purists, but also expansionists and sometimes even social entrepreneurs, call conventional businesses out for their moral strategies. Often the more responsive a company is to moral issues, the more it actually gets criticized along these lines because they can be held accountable against the standards they set for themselves (McDonnell *et al.*, 2015). The right to use specific denominations is what is often at stake in these struggles. In the case of ethical fashion in Switzerland, for instance, the supermarket chain Coop collaborated with a social enterprise producing ethical clothes under the label Naturaline. When they started to call this line of clothing fair trade, they attracted the ire of activist organizations who claimed that this was a deceitful use of the term (Balsiger, 2016b). To them, fair trade had to mean third-party certification by FLO Naturaline and Coop contested this and said that their clothes were just as fair as FLO certified ones. Nonetheless, they ended up yielding to the pressure and stopped using the term.

But struggles around symbolic boundaries of moralized markets also concern fights between purists and expansionists, and often these fights are fought even more passionately, in spite of (or possibly because of) the structural proximity of actors in the field. This kind of struggle always arises when movement organizations develop labels that take up moral goals but, in order to make them more viable in markets, adapt them.

For instance, in Switzerland, the organization KAG built up a niche market for free-range eggs in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1988, the Schweizer Tierschutz (STS), Switzerland’s main animal welfare organization, which had led a successful fight for the ban of battery cages in Swiss egg production (Balsiger, 2016a), announced the launch of a new label called ‘Gourmet mit Herz’ (Gourmet with a heart). This was meant to be a label for free-range eggs produced by the egg industry catering to the mass market. KAG reacted by publishing a special edition of its newsletter, calling the new label a watered-down version of free-range. The label was said to be a danger for the market for free-range eggs: copycats, with the caution of the STS, were about to discredit a whole movement, by selling free-range eggs that, according to the KAG, betrayed the idea of free-range production.

In this case, where the social movement organization KAG was at the same time directly acting on the market by organizing the production and labeling of free-range eggs, commercial and moral interests were directly interwoven. KAG criticized the new label for its questionable moral practices and attempted to limit the moralized market boundaries, but it also saw it as a potential competitor. If consumers do not clearly distinguish between the ‘real’ version and its imitator, purists might lose some of their market share.

Boundary struggles thus usually originate from actors who want to defend moralized markets against ‘conventionalization’ by assessing their moral authority. In the other direction—from the upper right corner toward the lower left—the struggle is generally not about exclusion, but about ‘degrees of inclusion’ and thus about expanding the moralized market.

Actors who are less purist usually don't try to erect symbolic boundaries that would exclude purist actors, but rather try to re-define the market, in particular by diminishing the importance of purist actors. Portraying them as fringe actors 'preaching to the converted', their narrow definition of moralized markets is dismissed as a strategy that yields limited results. From this point of view, actors located at a distance from purists argue that there exist different paths to increased moral standards, and that theirs is the more viable way, capable of actually bringing about broad social change. While they usually take up moral issues initially launched by purist movement actors, they reinterpret them to make them viable—that is, profitable—for their business model.³ The reason why less purist actors do not seek to symbolically exclude purists from the field lies with the high moral status of purist actors in the field, which cannot easily be dismissed. This imbalance between exclusion and inclusion in boundaries testifies to the power of activist capital for moral status.

However, in some cases, conventional businesses or social enterprises may try to discredit purist (or even expansionist) social movement actors more firmly. They can accuse them of being interested by goals such as publicity, reputation or market share, and not 'disinterested' as they claim—that is, pursuing a purely moral goal. Purist actors are then precisely accused of defending symbolic boundaries to preserve and advance their self-interested agenda, not in the pursuit of the broader moral interest they claim to be advocating (Balsiger, 2018). This last accusation is powerful because it inverts the capitals on which actors build to defend their positions. Generally, activist capital procures moral status and thus legitimacy in moralized market fields. But to some extent, economic capital can also be used to assess authority, through the commercial viability of moral standards, and the capacity actors with high economic capital have to reach a broad range of producers and consumers and therefore to impose their interpretation of moral standards and dominate the moralized market field.

Underlying the disputes about field boundaries are different visions about who are legitimate actors ('members') of the field, what types of organization are admitted and what kinds of strategies, claims and discourses (fair trade, free range, ethical, etc.) different participants are allowed to use—the 'rules' that govern the field. These are core dimensions of field settlements. It suggests that moralized market fields are characterized by a certain degree of conflict over field settlements. These struggles are played out rhetorically, through public statements aiming at affirming the informal terms of the settlement. But they also go beyond rhetoric: further strategies concern the question of policing and regulation, to which I shall now turn.

5.2 Policing and regulating

In most cases, the sanctioning of invaders or trespassers is limited to public statements and denunciations that aim at affirming the boundaries and disputed settlements of moralized markets. They target particular actors that are seen as 'masquerading', for instance, through deceptive declarations. Actors sometimes actively deploy resources in order to unveil such cases. In the case of free-range eggs in Switzerland, KAG denounced the use of fantasy names for eggs, which flourished in the early 1980s when cage-free eggs became increasingly

3 Often, critical scholarship speaks of cooptation. However, because of the existence of expansionist social movement actors, this term is frequently misleading. It is a reinterpretation, but not necessarily a form of cooptation.

popular and could yield higher prices. Denominations such as Sun-egg, Land-egg or ‘fresh from the farmer’ suggested a somehow more natural form of production, but in no way guaranteed that eggs were produced free-range. Later, KAG claimed that producers illicitly packaged battery eggs as cage-free or even free-range eggs. To prove it, they sent ‘egg detectives’ to buy eggs in supermarkets and examined them under UV light to reveal grid traces, characteristic for cage production. They published the result of these tests in their newsletter, naming the supermarkets where they found wrongfully declared eggs. Similar methods were later used in a consumer TV show.

In this case, a single moralized market actor (KAG) acted as a ‘police force’ trying to enforce core aspects of the field settlement. However, such an actor cannot really be disinterested but will be perceived as an interested party defending its peculiar interpretation of a settlement. In other cases, we find actors a little more removed from participants assuming the same role. Very often, NGOs, consumer associations or journalists, claiming expertise and legitimacy on specific issues and acting as neutral and ‘disinterested’ parties, act as watchdogs and thus play a role of unofficial ‘police force’ within moralized market fields. Such watchdogs evaluate, classify, rate and rank different initiatives often using sophisticated methodologies and deploying significant resources to investigate them. They denounce and symbolically sanction moralized market actors who make illicit claims, although they usually lack the power for more substantial sanctioning. Their moral status gives them authority to publicly name and shame actors. But nonetheless, their legitimacy is generally not accepted by all moralized market actors; they remain associated with a specific position in the field, and therefore they only partly resemble the ‘internal governance units’ [Fligstein and McAdam \(2012\)](#) have in mind when discussing how field settlements are implemented.

Field order thus often relies on informal (and contested) self-regulation, but the reach of sanctions of this type is limited. They rely on actors’ capacity of gaining the attention of the public sphere and the mechanisms of reputation damage, but lack constraining enforcement mechanisms and are often seen as partisan. This is where states come into the picture. Moralized market actors can and do appeal to the state for rule-making and rule-enforcement. States are important because they have the authority to impose the rules of the game—the field settlements—within fields. Influencing rule-making by the state can thus be a paying strategy ([Bourdieu, 2017](#)), as states may come to back certain groups ([Fligstein and McAdam, 2012](#), p. 92) and their definition of core aspects of moralized markets.

We can distinguish between two forms of recourse to state regulation in the control of moralized markets. On the one hand, moralized market actors can appeal to regulatory instruments governing competition in markets in general. Even in cases where declarations and certifications are not officially sanctioned by states, actors can appeal to regulatory instances denouncing illicit practices that are in opposition to general market regulation. For instance, KAG appealed to the Swiss ‘Federal commission for integrity in competition and advertising’ to denounce the ‘dishonest’ practices of some egg producers using fantasy denominations. The same organization also repeatedly filed charges against certain competitors and appealed to control instances such as cantonal chemists to denounce irregularities in product declaration.

On the other hand, appeals to the state can also directly concern the public regulation of denominations and declarations regarding moral standards. Should there be state-sanctioned categories, official declarations, state certifications? Those are contested questions within moralized market fields themselves. Empirically, one finds different

situations. For instance, there are public standards for organic production such as the USDA organic standards in the USA or the Bio label in the EU. But for fair trade, there are only private standards, no government-backed definitions or certifications. Processes of public standards-making are themselves part of the struggles within moralized markets. Their establishment is often highly contested and the negotiations of their content reflect the struggles between the interests of different actors in moralized market fields. The case of the establishment of the USDA organic standard is a paradigmatic case of this; in such a process, different definitions of moral standards clash (Ingram and Ingram, 2005).

It is not always clear who could benefit from state-sanctioned standards. Purist actors may have an interest in government-backed certifications because they could gain protection from usurpation. KAG in Switzerland was initially very keen on getting the state to regulate egg declaration—in their case, to officially define ‘free-range’ eggs and its standards. However, purist actors are also generally small actors with low economic capital and they risk not being able to impose their definitions when regulations are made. Moral standards could get defined in much less demanding ways, and some actors could lose their privileged legitimacy on the use of a specific designation such as fair trade or free-range. Because of power imbalances, public regulation is likely to be skewed toward the interest of conventional actors. This has important consequences because public standards act as ‘moral leveling devices’, giving all certified producers the same moral credibility (Miller, 2017, p. 198).

The existence of public regulation on designations does not end the symbolic struggles on moral status in moralized market fields. It can, on the contrary, give new impetus for further differentiations and distinctions, through which new or so far peripheral aspects of the moral provenance of goods come into focus. For instance, in the case of Swiss free-range eggs, the adoption of a public definition of free-range led KAG to emphasize aspects such as herd-size, which enabled it to differentiate its free-range eggs from free-range eggs marketed by conventional producers.

6. Possible outcome scenarios

The structural properties of moralized markets (oppositions between centripetal and centrifugal strategies and between non-profit and for-profit organizations) and the dynamics of interaction that they entail (struggles around field boundaries and settlements) are general features we can expect to find in all moralized markets. Yet the outcomes of these struggles differ from one ‘really existing’ moralized market to another, depending on field-historical conditions and strategic action.

Fligstein and McAdam (2012, pp. 86–96) present field emergence as a social movement-like process; fields are the result of (competing) skilled social actors fashioning field settlements through strategic actions and resource deployment. Power imbalances and resource endowments at the onset are the main factors they advance to explain divergent outcomes. In cases with strong power imbalances, one expects to find hierarchical fields, which are clearly dominated by one type of actor capable of imposing rules and dominating others. In cases where power and resources are more equally distributed among actors with different conceptions of the field, one will find either conflictual fields or, if actors can reach agreements, cooperative and consensual field settlements. The field perspective thus not only describes the relational functioning of interdependent spaces, but can also say something

about the power distribution within these spaces. If applied to moralized market fields, this analytical approach can help distinguish possible outcome scenarios.

Proposition 1. Due to their dynamics of interaction, moralized market fields are always characterized by internal diversification.

The relational approach of the field perspective takes as its starting point that varying commitments to moral standards are a structural feature of moralized markets. Some degree of diversification will always be present in these markets. This is in particular related to two of the properties of moralized markets. First, the emergence of such markets as a result of social movement engagement, which means that activist capital is an important ‘resource’ in such markets.⁴ Economically strong conventional businesses depend on activist capital for legitimacy and are therefore not necessarily the most powerful actors in moralized markets. Second, it is related to the ‘games of distinction’ that characterizes social fields more generally (Bourdieu, 1984). Even in markets that become dominated by the economically most powerful actors (conventional businesses), this ‘conventionalization’ is not necessarily the end of the story. Such domination is also an opportunity for the rise of new dimensions of distinction. Especially purist actors are likely to start putting forward other distinctive criteria in order to differentiate themselves, thus displacing the moral issue and creating new divisions in the field. This can be successful if we remember that consumers, just as producers, are also socially situated in fields, and ‘promoters’ are likely to stay faithful to purist producers.

If some degree of diversification is built into the very structure of moralized markets, the different approaches within a given field cannot be assumed to all have the same weight. Depending on power imbalances and the deployment of skilled strategies such as coalition-building, resource mobilization or framing, we can distinguish four typical outcome scenarios, each corresponding to a different dominant actor within the field configuration.

Proposition 2. Moralized market fields get conventionalized when conventional businesses manage to shape state-backed definitions/certifications of moral standards in their interest.

Conventionalization results when conventional business actors manage to impose their weak definition of moral standards, often in public regulatory schemes, and thus shape the field settlement in their favor and come to occupy a dominant position in the field. This is the story of the US organic market or of the Swiss market for free-range eggs, which is today dominated by the conventional egg industry and not by the social movement that initially started it. In both cases, thanks to their resources, lobbying power and unified position, mainstream industry actors influenced the political process and strongly shaped the content of state-backed certifications, thus managing to define the very issue of the moralized market—organic, free-range—in their interests.

The fact that the certifications are state-backed is important here. There can be conventionalization outcomes without them, but it is more difficult because in such cases, settlements are likely to be more contested. State certifications make the definitions of moral

4 While Fligstein and McAdam (2012) are relatively silent on what kind of resources count in what fields, a Bourdieu-inspired close attention to specific fields or types of fields (i.e. moralized markets) brings to view the specific capital that counts within them.

standards appear as ‘disinterested’ and neutral, reflecting the general interest and not the particular interests of conventional businesses. As ‘moral leveling devices’ (Miller, 2017), they make attacks on the grounds of moral status more difficult. This proposition thus highlights the role of the state in processes of conventionalization and how unified industry actors can use their lobbying power to shape moralized market fields.

Proposition 3. Expansionist movement actors tend to dominate moralized market fields when they develop skillful strategies that allow them to find business partners for their labels and when there is no state certification available in the field.

Expansionist movement actors can dominate moralized markets in combination with social businesses and/or conventional businesses whose products they certify. A strong presence of such labels on markets can be expected in cases where expansionists with high activist capital develop successful strategies to find strong industry partners for their labels, and where there is no official government certification, which means that businesses have to rely on movement labels to gain legitimacy in the market (generally speaking, government-backed certifications undermine the main business model of expansionist labels, which is why expansionists are often opposed to public certification).

An example of such a market is the Swiss fair trade market. The Max Havelaar (today FLO) label in Switzerland was founded by a broad coalition uniting the most important Swiss development aid organizations, which gave it broad support and legitimacy. They also quickly convinced the two major Swiss retailers to carry some fair-trade labeled products like bananas and coffee. Through a mix of resource deployment, framing and skilled marketing strategy, the label managed to impose itself as the very definition of fair trade at the expense of most other actors.

Proposition 4. Social enterprises can dominate moralized markets where movement engagement is strong and gives way early on to a strong for-profit spin-off of social entrepreneurs and where conventional businesses have a weak presence and/or arrive late.

There can be cases where ethical enterprises dominate moralized markets, too. This can happen in niches where movement engagement is strong and gives way early on to a strong for-profit spin-off of social entrepreneurs and where conventional businesses are either not strongly involved or arrive late on the market. A case in point might be the German market for organic milk, where a number of specialized organic milk producers occupy a central place in the market (Suckert, 2015). In such cases, social entrepreneurs can take full advantage from their unique combination of activist and economic capital.

Proposition 5. Purist actors dominate moralized market fields in the beginning, but the entrance of more market-oriented actors makes continued domination unlikely.

Purists rarely dominate moralized market fields, except at the field’s emergence, when the issues at stake are (still) marginal and remain confined to the fringes of society. As soon as more market-oriented actors enter the field, purists’ preference for centripetal strategies will put them at a disadvantage, and they are therefore likely to persist only as a niche for the most ethically committed consumers.

For instance, fair trade in most Western European countries started with a purist approach, which dominated the field as long as there were no expansionists actors around.

While in many countries, the rise of the latter threatened their dominant position and put them under pressure (Le Velly, 2006), in Germany and the Netherlands, the original purist actors managed to maintain their dominant position over time (Doherty *et al.*, 2013). It appears that the maintenance of this dominant position is due to the absence or relative weakness of expansionist actors using a labeling strategy (*ibid.* pp. 169/172). Detailed case studies would need to be carried out to examine the strategic actions undertaken by purist actors to prevent efforts of expansionist actors.

Proposition 6. Changes in the broader social space and in particular in the field of consumers are translated into internal power dynamics within moralized market fields.

The above propositions point at the importance of strategic action through which differently situated actors can shape the market in their vision. This is consistent with a field perspective which puts struggles and strategic action at its center. Yet one also has to look at evolutions in the broader social space. I have insisted on the role of states whose intervention often shapes fields. But in the case of markets, field evolution is also tied to changes in the field of consumers, which is characterized by analogous oppositions as the field of production (Bourdieu, 2005a). The success of actors with centrifugal strategies is only possible if there are enough consumers with moral dispositions to consume ethical products.

Changes in the consumer field are therefore also important to understand the evolution of moralized markets. An increase in ecological awareness or events such as food scandals favor the development of moral dispositions of consumers and thus make possible the successes of expansionist strategies and the entrance of conventional enterprises on moralized market fields. This is not to say that the power balance of moralized market fields simply reflects demand; such an affirmation would neglect the internal diversification of moralized market fields (and for instance gloss over distinctions between conventional enterprises and expansionists). External changes are translated into internal power struggles, but it is clear that a field analytical approach of moralized markets must take into account both the dynamics of the consumer field and the field of producers.

7. Conclusion

Moralized markets, defined as markets in which producers set and follow higher moral standards than those governing conventional market practices, and consumers buy products that respect those higher moral standards, are on the rise. While there is a great variety of issues and products concerned and therefore a great variety of empirical cases of moralized markets, I argue that they all share some common structural properties. This article attempts to describe them and to develop a theoretical perspective that accounts for the defining features and dynamics of moralized markets in general. To do this, I developed a relational perspective, which promises a more accurate picture of the dynamics within moralized markets and overcomes shortcomings of existing theoretical perspectives. The field perspective puts at its center the varying commitments to moral standards within such markets and thus the existence of differentiated moral quality conventions and the symbolic struggles about moral status that ensue and characterize such markets. Examining these struggles, I develop different outcome scenarios for moralized markets, between conventionalization and

differentiation. Future research should focus on empirically comparing and explaining such moralized market dynamics across fields and cross-country between different varieties of capitalism.

The field theoretical account of the dynamics of moralized markets given here is innovative by bringing together insights from field theoretical developments of Bourdieu (1984, 1989, 2005b, 2017) and Fligstein and McAdam (2012). To some extent, moralized markets are similar to Bourdieu's symbolic economies (such as fields of artistic production) (Bourdieu, 2017), and some authors have suggested such an interpretation (e.g. Suckert, 2018). Symbolic economies are characterized by the opposition between an autonomous and a heteronomous pole; actors situated at the autonomous pole dissimulate or even actively reject the economic logic and do not see commercial success as a desirable goal.

The case of moralized markets is similar insofar as there is a non-commercial logic and a form of valued symbolic capital (moral status) that is different from economic capital. Status builds on this symbolic capital. However, there are significant differences, which result in moralized markets functioning differently from symbolic economies. One is that the dissimulation of the economic logic is not a crucial component of moralized markets. Another difference—perhaps the most important one—is the existence of actors with what I call centrifugal strategies; that is, the fact that for at least part of the actors of moralized markets, the goal is the expansion of the market in order to achieve broader social change. There is no equivalent of this type of strategy in the cultural economies discussed by Bourdieu. It is not satisfactory to simply treat moralized markets as symbolic economies.

Yet Bourdieu's core insight that fields—even market fields—can have opposing structural forces is important to understand moralized markets; it reveals that moral status, in such markets, is not just a fig leaf but a structuring force with which all actors have to cope. This core insight is combined here with Fligstein and McAdam's (2012) approach of strategic action fields, whose approach systematically discusses field emergence and the struggles around field settlements. Fligstein and McAdam focus on the challenger-incumbent opposition. However, in the case of multi-dimensional fields, this binary is too crude to understand field dynamics; one needs to understand the 'content' of the oppositions that constitute different dimensions of fields, as well as at the capitals that are valued within specific fields and allow actors to dominate.

Only by combining insights from these two theoretical perspectives can one develop a systematic description of moralized market fields. Beyond moralized markets, I would argue that this combination of field theoretical approaches is powerful also to understand markets in general. It holds three core analytical insights. First, the need to empirically identify the issues at stake in markets and the ensuing multiplicity of positions within market fields, which can often not be reduced to the challenger-incumbent binary. Second, the perspective shows that in markets, actors use typical 'market strategies', such as distinctions through qualities and market conventions, but they also use other discursive and political strategies to defend or challenge field settlements and field boundaries. Market orders result from both types of strategies. And third, it points at the crucial role of state intervention in power struggles and field stabilization.

Of course, for all its insights, the field approach in general and the particular one developed here also have limitations. Let me briefly discuss two that are often put forward. First, field theory is often criticized for its focus on competition and power struggles and its neglect of collaborative action. This also relates to the question of the micro-foundations of meso-

level interactions, which field theory tends to portray as essentially strategic and self-interested. This might seem as being somehow at odds with an analysis of apparently principled and value-based moral action. However, it is precisely in such instances that field theory can help us see beyond ideal motivations and look at the broader structural logics that guide actors' strategies. Furthermore, and building on Fligstein and McAdam (2012), the strategies we find in moralized markets prominently include collaborative strategies—specifically in the case of expansionists. The second limitation concerns the focus on meso-level relational dynamics between field actors. It is clear that the perspective thus loses sight of the subtleties of other dynamics, for instance, of how value and quality conventions are created within segments of the market, or of the role played by the forces and dynamics of supply chains. Other theoretical perspectives may be better equipped to grasp such dynamics.

Funding

Part of the research for this article was made possible thanks to a post-doctoral grant of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

References

- Abend, G. (2014) *The Moral Background: An Inquiry into the History of Business Ethics*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
- Anteby, M. (2010) 'Markets, Morals, and Practices of Trade: Jurisdictional Disputes in the U.S. Commerce in Cadavers', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 55, 606–638.
- Balsiger, P. (2014) *The Fight for Ethical Fashion. The Origins and Interactions of the Clean Clothes Campaign*, Farnham/Burlington, VT, Ashgate.
- Balsiger, P. (2016a) 'Moral Struggles in Markets: The Fight Against Battery Cages and the Rise of Cage-Free Eggs in Switzerland', *European Journal of Sociology*, 57, 419–450.
- Balsiger, P. (2016b) 'Tactical Competition and Movement Outcomes on Markets'. In Bosi, L., Giugni, M. and Uba, K. (eds) *Consequences of Social Movements*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 237–259.
- Balsiger, P. (2018) 'Explaining Dynamic Strategies for Defending Company Legitimacy: The Changing Outcomes of Anti-Sweatshop Campaigns in France and Switzerland', *Business & Society*, 57, 676–705.
- Balsiger, P. and Schiller-Merkens, S. (2019) 'Moral Struggles in and around Markets'. In Schiller-Merkens, S. and Balsiger, P. (eds) *The Contested Moralities of Markets (Research in the Sociology of Organizations, Volume 63)*, Bingley, Emerald Publishing Limited, pp. 3–26.
- Beckert, J. (2012) 'Die sittliche Einbettung der Wirtschaft. Von der Effizienz und Differenzierungstheorie zu einer Theorie wirtschaftlicher Felder', *Berliner Journal Für Soziologie*, 22, 247–266.
- Beckert, J. and Aspers, P. (eds) (2011) *The Worth of Goods. Valuation & Pricing in the Economy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Boltanski, L. and Chiapello, E. (2007) *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, London, Verso.
- Boltanski, L. and Thévenot, L. (2006) *On Justification. Economies of Worth*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1989) 'Social Space and Symbolic Power', *Sociological Theory*, 7, 14–25.

- Bourdieu, P. (2005a) 'Principles of an Economic Anthropology'. In Smelser, N. J. and Swedberg, R. (eds) *The Handbook of Economic Sociology*, Princeton, NJ/Oxford, Princeton University Press, pp. 75–89.
- Bourdieu, P. (2005b) *The Social Structures of the Economy*, London, Polity.
- Bourdieu, P. (2017) *Anthropologie Économique, Cours au Collège de France, 1992-1993*, Paris, Raisons d'Agir/Seuil.
- Brown, K. R. (2014) *Buying into Fair Trade*, New York, NY, New York University Press.
- Callon, M., Méadel, C. and Rabeharisoa, V. (2002) 'The Economy of Qualities', *Economy and Society*, 31, 194–217.
- Carroll, G. R. and Swaminathan, A. (2000) 'Why the Microbrewery Movement? Organizational Dynamics of Resource Partitioning in the American Brewing Industry after Prohibition', *American Journal of Sociology*, 106, 715–762.
- Chasin, A. (2000) *Selling out. The Gay and Lesbian Movement Goes to Market*, Houndmills/New York, NY, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cochoy, F. (2002) *Une sociologie du packaging ou l'âne de Buridan face au marché*, Paris, PUF.
- Coombes, B. and Campbell, H. (1998) 'Dependent Reproduction of Alternative Modes of Agriculture: Organic Farming in New Zealand', *Sociologia Ruralis*, 38, 127–145.
- Diaz-Bohne, R. (2013) 'Discourse Conventions in the Construction of Wine Qualities in the Wine Market', *Economic Sociology - the European Electronic Newsletter*, 14, 46–53.
- Doherty, B., Davies, I. A. and Tranchell, S. (2013) 'Where Now for Fair Trade?', *Business History*, 55, 161–189.
- Dubuisson-Quellier, S. (2013a) *Ethical Consumption*, Winnipeg, MB, Fernwood Publishing.
- Dubuisson-Quellier, S. (2013b) 'A Market Mediation Strategy: How Social Movements Seek to Change Firms' Practices by Promoting New Principles of Product Valuation', *Organization Studies*, 34, 683–703.
- Duyvendak, J. W. and Fillieule, O. (2015) 'Patterned Fluidity. An Interactionist Perspective as a Tool for Exploring Contentious Politics'. In Duyvendak, J. W. and Jasper, J. (eds) *Players and Arenas. The Interactive Dynamics of Protest*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, pp. 295–318.
- Duyvendak, J. W. and Jasper, J. (eds) (2015) *Players and Arenas. The Interactive Dynamics of Protest*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press.
- Fischer, E. F. (2014a) *The Good Life*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press.
- Fischer, E. F. (ed.) (2014b) *Cash on the Table. Markets, Values, and Moral Economies*, Santa Fe, NM, School for Advanced Research Press.
- Fligstein, N. (2001) *The Architecture of Markets. An Economic Sociology of Twenty-First-Century Capitalist Societies*, Princeton, NJ/Oxford, Princeton University Press.
- Fligstein, N. and McAdam, D. (2012) *A Theory of Fields*, Oxford, NY, Oxford University Press.
- Fourcade, M. and Healy, K. (2007) 'Moral Views of Market Society', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33, 14.1–14.27.
- Guthman, J. (2004a) *Agrarian Dreams. The Paradox of Organic Farming in California*, Berkeley, CA/Los Angeles, CA/London, University of California Press.
- Guthman, J. (2004b) 'The Trouble with 'Organic Lite' in California: A Rejoinder to the 'Conventionalisation' Debate', *Sociologia Ruralis*, 44, 301–316.
- Hannan, M. T. and Freeman, J. (1977) 'The Population Ecology of Organizations', *American Journal of Sociology*, 82, 929–964.
- Ingram, M. and Ingram, H. (2005), 'Creating Credible Edibles: The Organic Agriculture Movement and the Emergence of U.S. Federal Organic Standards'. In Meyer, D. S., Jenness, V. and Ingram, H. (eds) *Routing the Opposition. Social Movements, Public Policy, and Democracy*, Minneapolis, MN, London, University of Minnesota Press, pp. 121–148.

- Jasper, J. M. (2011) 'Introduction: From Political Opportunity Structures to Strategic Interaction'. In Goodwin, J. and Jasper, J. M. (eds) *Contention in Context. Political Opportunities and the Emergence of Protest*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, pp. 1–33.
- Johnston, J. (2008) 'The Citizen-Consumer Hybrid: Ideological Tensions and the Case of Whole Foods Market', *Theory and Society*, 37, 229–270.
- Karpik, L. (2007) *L'économie des singularités*, Paris, Gallimard.
- King, B. G. and Pearce, N. A. (2010) 'The Contentiousness of Markets: Politics, Social Movements, and Institutional Change in Markets', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36, 249–267.
- King, L. and Busa, J. (2017) 'When Corporate Actors Take over the Game: The Corporatization of Organic, Recycling and Breast Cancer Activism', *Social Movement Studies*, 16, 549–563.
- Le Velly, R. (2006) 'Le commerce équitable: des échanges marchands contre et dans le marché', *Revue Française de Sociologie*, 47, 319–340.
- Le Velly, R. (2007), 'Is Large-Scale Fair Trade Possible?'. In Zaccai, E. (ed.) *Sustainable Consumption, Ecology and Fair Trade*, London, Routledge, pp. 201–215.
- Massengill, R. P. and Reynolds, A. (2010) 'Moral Discourse in Economic Contexts'. In Hitlin, S. and Vaisey, S. (eds) *Handbook of the Sociology of Morality*, New York, NY, Springer, pp. 485–502.
- McDonnell, M. -H., King, B. G. and Soule, S. A. (2015) 'A Dynamic Process Model of Private Politics Activist Targeting and Corporate Receptivity to Social Challenges', *American Sociological Review*, 80, 654–678.
- McInerney, P. B. (2014) *From Social Movement to Moral Market: How the Circuit Riders Sparked an IT Revolution and Created a Technology Market*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press.
- Miller, L. J. (2017) *Building Nature's Market. The Business and Politics of Natural Food*, Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press.
- Navis, C. and Glynn, M. A. (2010) 'How New Market Categories Emerge: Temporal Dynamics of Legitimacy, Identity, and Entrepreneurship in Satellite Radio, 1990-2005', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 55, 439–471.
- Quinn, S. (2008) 'The Transformation of Morals in Markets: Death, Benefits, and the Exchange of Life Insurance Policies', *American Journal of Sociology*, 114, 738–780.
- Raynolds, L. T., Murray, D. L. and Wilkinson, J. (2007) *Fair Trade. The Challenges of Transforming Globalization*, London, Routledge.
- Reich, A. D. (2014) 'Contradictions in the Commodification of Hospital Care', *American Journal of Sociology*, 119, 1576–1628.
- Reinecke, J., Manning, S. and von Hagen, O. (2012) 'The Emergence of a Standards Market: Multiplicity of Sustainability Standards in the Global Coffee Industry', *Organization Studies*, 33, 791–814.
- Schiller-Merkens, S. (2017) 'Will Green Remain the New Black? Dynamics in the Self-categorization of Ethical Fashion Designers', *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 42, 211–237.
- Sikavica, K. and Pozner, J. -E. (2013) 'Paradise Sold: Resource Partitioning and the Organic Movement in the US Farming Industry', *Organization Studies*, 34, 623–651.
- Soule, S. A. (2009), *Contention and Corporate Social Responsibility*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Stehr, N., Henning, C. and Weiler, B. (eds) (2006) *The Moralization of the Markets*, New Brunswick, NJ, Transaction Publishers.
- Suckert, L. (2015) *Die Dynamik ökologischer Märkte. Eine feldanalytische Betrachtung des Marktes für Bio-Molkereiprodukte*, Konstanz, München, UVK Verlagsgesellschaft.
- Suckert, L. (2018) 'Unravelling Ambivalence: A Field-theoretical Approach to Moralised Markets', *Current Sociology*, 66, 682–703.

- Thévenot, L. (2015), 'Certifying the World: Power Infrastructures and Practices in Economies of Conventional Forms'. In Aspers, P. and Dodd, N. (eds) *Re-Imagining Economic Sociology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 195–226.
- Weber, K., Heinze, K. L. and DeSoucey, M. (2008) 'Forage for Thought: Mobilizing Codes in the Movement for Grass-Fed Meat and Dairy Products', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 53, 529–567.
- Weber, M. (2013 [1922]), *Economy and Society*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press.
- White, H. C. (1981) 'Where Do Markets Come from?', *American Journal of Sociology*, 87, 517–547.
- Wilkinson, J. (2007) 'Fair Trade: Dynamic and Dilemmas of a Market Oriented Global Social Movement', *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 30, 219–239.
- York, J. G., O'Neil, I. and Sarasvathy, S. D. (2016) 'Exploring Environmental Entrepreneurship: Identity Coupling, Venture Goals, and Stakeholder Incentives', *Journal of Management Studies*, 53, 695–737.
- Zelizer, V. (2011a) *Economic Lives. How Culture Shapes the Economy*, Princeton, NJ/Oxford, Princeton University Press.
- Zelizer, V. (2011b) 'Circuits within Capitalism'. In Zelizer, V. (ed.) *Economic Lives*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, pp. 311–343.