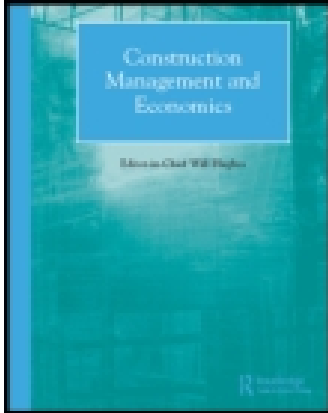


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Community-based protest against construction projects: a case study of movement continuity

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Community-based activism against proposed construction projects is growing. Many protests are poorly managed and escalate into long-term and sometimes acrimonious disputes which damage communities, firms and the construction industry as a whole. Using a thematic storytelling approach which draws on ethnographic method, within a single case study framework, new insights into the social forces that shape and sustain community-based protest against construction projects are provided. A conceptual model of protest movement continuity is presented which highlights the factors that sustain protest continuity over time. The model illustrates how social contagion leads to common community perceptions of development risk and opportunity, to a positive internalization of collective values and identity, to a strategic utilization of social capital and an awareness of the need to manage the emotional dynamics of protest through mechanisms such as symbolic artefacts.

Keywords: Protest, construction project, community relations, contagion, social networks.

Introduction

Construction and engineering projects can have enormous impacts both positive and negative on the ecological, social, cultural and economic environments in which they take place and it is critical that these impacts are perceived to be managed effectively in the public's eye (Awakul and Ogunlana, 2002; Mandelik *et al.*, 2005). For example, while dam, road and hydropower projects can generate clean energy and promote economic development, they can also cause significant environmental degradation and large-scale social displacement of local populations arising from compulsory land acquisition. Similarly, while large-scale housing projects can alleviate housing availability and affordability problems in society, they can also destroy large areas of natural habitat and cultural artefacts, overburden existing social infrastructure such as roads and schools, and even disturb social harmony and balance within local communities. If community perceptions of risk associated with such projects are not managed effectively then they have the potential to trigger long-standing and acrimonious

community protests that are played out in the media incurring significant social, political and economic damage to the interests of all concerned. For example, as Bing *et al.* (2005) point out, one of many problems in the controversial Lane Cove Tunnel project in Sydney was that, while the actual health risks of exhaust emissions to the community was scientifically proven to be very low, the construction consortium were unable to allay public perceptions that the risks were very high. Similarly, while the failure of Sydney's Cross-City Tunnel to reach expected patronage levels can be put down to many factors including poor financial modelling, a contributory factor was also customer boycotts arising from public perceptions that they were being forced by government road changes to use the tunnel. While there are some instances of these community perceptions and relationships being managed sympathetically and effectively in the construction industry, there is a prevailing tendency to assume that: community consultation is the responsibility of planners; community concerns are resolved during early planning processes and; community consultation will delay progress or spark protest

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(Loosemore *et al.*, 2005). The result is that many managers engage in token community consultation and dismiss or disregard community concerns as irrational, uninformed, ignorant or driven by nostalgia (Beder, 1998; Foster-Fishman *et al.*, 2007; Teo, 2009). To avoid the potentially damaging community conflict which such disengagement can bring and to facilitate improved consultation strategies, there is a need to better understand the factors that create and sustain community-based protest over time. Armed with such knowledge, triggers to protest can be avoided or better managed, and community engagement processes improved.

While there has been some research into continuity of protest movements in other contexts, this has received very little attention in construction. The aim of this paper is to address this research gap by investigating the social networks and relational ties that underpin movement continuity against construction projects. By addressing this issue, we will help move construction management research from traditional frameworks where it is assumed that community consultation and engagement is 'ticked-off' at planning stages, to recognition that negotiation with communities is an ongoing process. Our objective is not to find solutions to 'reduce protest', but to build conceptual understanding of the importance of collective action, alongside the challenges in negotiating complex issues and divergent interests as they come together in built form.

Collective action and movement continuity

Collective action refers to the range of activities that facilitate the furtherance of interests of or well-being of a group (Sandler, 1992). 'Grassroots' collective action, which is the kind often experienced in construction projects, focuses on collective efforts at the local level aimed at the advancement of local interests. Theories of collective action have the potential to provide useful insights into what influences movement continuity against construction projects over time. For example, Olson's logic of collective action disputed the widely held connection between self-interest and willingness to engage in collective action (Monge and Contractor, 2001). Critical mass, threshold and diffusion theories argue that a minimum group size must be reached before other people are willing to commit without any personal interest (Valente, 1995; Monge and Contractor, 2001). Resource mobilization theory is based on the premise that competition for resources is intense in modern society, and that a group's ability to effectively acquire and recruit people, resources and expertise is central to its success and continuity over time (Dalton

et al., 2003). Furthermore, to achieve legitimacy for their cause and to attract and retain resources, groups adopt formal governance procedures to mirror the formal organizations they are fighting. More recently, political opportunity structure (POS) theory has shown how changes in political opportunities and social trends provide the context for protest (Klandermans and Staggenborg, 2002). While useful in starting to build an understanding of movement continuity, none of these theories address the important role of internal group dynamics in sustaining participation in collective action.

The role of group dynamics in sustaining collective action

Group dynamics can affect movement continuity at two levels: intragroup and intergroup. At the heart of intragroup dynamics are feelings of identification and interdependence which make a group meaningful to its members, strengthening cohesiveness and feelings of belonging, attachment and long-term commitment to its cause and other members (Castells, 2004). Intergroup dynamics arise out of competition or alliances between different protest groups that come together to share resources and exchange information to fight a common cause or to support complementary protest agendas and goals (Brown, 2000). Diani (2003) found that short-term alliances are more common than permanent coalitions in protest groups and that the number of groups participating in a protest tends to change over its life, being higher in the early stages when public profile and interest are heightened, and a sense of excitement and hope builds. Passy (2003) found that members of protest groups also tend to switch between different movements over time depending on the perceived profile, innovation, and saliency and urgency of issues. Both Crowther and Cooper (2002) and Cummings and Higgins (2006) discovered the existence of two separate types of network in an ecoprotest movement that are typical of those found in community-based protest against the construction industry: the traveller network; and the local community network. They also found that movement networks have a centralized core of highly dedicated and persevering protestors who represent the heart and soul of the network and who remain for the life of the protest. This core group is critical to movement continuity since they foster intergroup alliances and relationships, set the strategic direction of the movement, organize activities which tie the group together and demonstrate leadership through fierce commitment to the cause.

The role of contagion in sustaining collective action

Movement networks also play a critical role as conduits for the transmission of ideas, information, assumptions, beliefs and perceptions about development risks. Social contagion theory has evolved to explain this process. According to contagion theory, behaviours and perceptions initiated by one group member will influence others in the same network, with the strength of the contagion effect being influenced by the structure and quality of the relationships with others within the network (Scherer and Cho, 2003). Monge and Contractor (2003) have acknowledged the potential influence of social structure on the contagion effect suggesting that some people may be more susceptible to contagion than others or be able to promote contagion due to their unique location in a protest network. They also suggest that total contagion is rare, and that the existence of any interconnecting ties between actors in a network is not necessarily an indication that contagion is guaranteed to occur. For example, there may be resistance to contagion due to the existence of counter resistance networks in a protest group which promote other ideas and perceptions of development risk.

The role of collective identity in sustaining collective action

The shared experience of engaging in collective action, nurtured through networks of relations among activists helps to create shared cultural meanings and interpretations of activism which evoke emotions, a sense of belonging and solidarity which can sustain activists' participation in protest over time (Johnston, 1995). Movement culture is dynamic and takes the form of shared symbols, rituals, artefacts, norms and language that facilitate the development of a shared collective identity (Jasper, 2003). There has been a considerable amount of research which has explored how protest groups and social movements foster a sense of collective identity to mobilize and retain activists' participation in protest (Bickerstaff *et al.*, 2006). Ashmore *et al.* (2004) attempted to draw together the many schools of thought in this area by identifying five key drivers of self-identity: self-categorization (degree to which someone identifies themselves with a group identity); evaluation (positive or negative attitude towards group association); importance (degree of importance attributed to group membership); social embeddedness (degree to which group members are embedded in a person's everyday social network); and behavioural involvement (degree to which person engages in actions that reflect group behaviour).

The role of social capital in sustaining collective action

According to Stone (2001) another important factor in sustaining collective action is the social capital embedded within the networks of social relations that represent a protest group. This can be effectively utilized to overcome deficiencies in other forms of capital such as financial, physical, intellectual and human that often otherwise limit the ability of protest groups to influence the actions of large, well-resourced developers (Stone and Hughes, 2002). The importance of social capital in sustaining collective action works at two levels. First, there is the social capital embedded within the internal core protest group relationships; and second, there is the social capital that resides in the community on which protest groups can draw. While it is the core group that organizes and leads a protest movement and undertakes specific tasks, Crowther and Cooper (2002) highlight the importance of community spirit and connections into local community networks which can often provide food, donations, expertise, knowledge and materials to support and sustain a protest over time.

The role of emotions in sustaining collective action

Flam (2005) showed how movements strategically use emotional as well as cognitive appeals to attract, recruit and retain protest participants. This involves appealing not only to people's sense of rationality but also to their sense of right and wrong (King, 2005). It also involves establishing internal 'feeling rules' that promote emotionally laden views of reality and a certain common view of adversaries, which act to create strong group norms, inspire action, enhance trust, cohesion, loyalty and determination, and to suppress or overcome any self-defeating feelings and doubts (Norgaard, 2006). One mechanism often used by protest groups to generate sustaining emotions is 'framing', which involves the strategic construction of an opponent's profile to generate collective hatred, anger and action against them. More positively, movements often adopt rituals, cultural events and other drama representations as a symbolic focus for protest efforts (Goodwin and Jasper, 2003). These events are central to movement continuity as they provide opportunities and a common place for activists to meet, to celebrate success or simply to generate fun, enjoyable, stimulating and positive protest experiences while building common identity, a sense of belonging and family (Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004). Also important in promoting protest participation is the symbolic use of protest

artefacts, rituals and/or symbols to appeal to, attract and sustain activists' involvement in protest. These protest artefacts or symbols serve two functions, working on one level as a cognitive and emotional appeal to different target public, while also serving as an initiation mechanism to mobilize emotions and foster a sense of belonging among activists. It is this second purpose that is instrumental in sustaining activism in movements over time. For example, Greenpeace recently cordoned off a construction site in the UK to portray it as a crime scene because of its use of timber from endangered rainforests. Such symbolic actions might achieve nothing tangible but are very effective in exposing malpractice in a way which appeals to the imagination, humour and underlying emotional values of mass audiences, garnering sympathy, empathy and support and attracting national media attention.

Theoretical model and propositions

A theoretical model that draws together all of the concepts discussed in the preceding section is presented in Figure 1.

While each of these concepts has been identified individually in the literature as contributing to movement continuity, it is unclear how they are linked. This model combines these concepts in a way that facilitates a deeper understanding of the different determinants of movement continuity against construction projects. Three research propositions derived from the proposed theoretical model in Figure 1 are produced below:

- Proposition 1:* Protest movements consist of complex and dynamic networks of social relations.
- Proposition 2:* Networks of social relations are sustained by the contagion effect, which is driven by network structure and social cohesion.
- Proposition 3:* The contagion effect shapes the cultural experience of activism and promotes movement continuity via the creation and retention of collective identity, social capital, emotional dynamics and symbolic artefacts.

Methodology and method

The ontological basis of this research is social constructionism (Cudworth, 2003). The advantage of using social constructivist theories is that they assume that protest is socially constructed and that community perceptions of development risk may be different from those of industry professionals and scientists. In contrast, traditional rational structuralist approaches

that inform much of construction management research (Dainty *et al.*, 2007) would leave our project conceptually tied to the traditional and misguided perspective which sees communities as outsiders (out-groups) which are irrational, ignorant and misinformed. The associated epistemological position for social constructionism is naturalist which argues that community activism is best studied as a reflection of its embeddedness in the social world. The naturalist approach is more consistent with understanding the dynamic nature of collective action and how it shapes people's experiences within it. Further, there is currently no integrated theoretical model to explain movement continuity, which ensures that this research is concerned with developing understanding, rather than testing pre-existing theories. The intention is to provide a rigorous theoretical foundation for future research in this area and this is done within a grounded theory framework.

Grounded theory is an approach that inductively generates a theory that is 'grounded' in data derived from fieldwork to explain a particular social phenomenon within natural settings, so as to study people's perceptions, response and reactions to it (Glaser and Strauss, 1968; Glaser, 1992; Oktay, 2004). The output of a grounded theory process is a theory which consists of 'a set of concepts and the proposed relationships among these, a structure that is intended to represent or model something about the world' (Maxwell, 2005, p. 42). The grounded theory approach is best suited to exploratory or emergent areas of research, or where relationships between concepts are ambiguous. It is particularly useful in this research because the factors that inspire and sustain movement continuity are currently poorly understood, especially in the context of community-based protest against construction projects. Theoretical sampling is an important consideration in the grounded theory approach, and aims to select a purposive sample based on their ability to continually contribute to the issues of theoretical importance in the study. Our purposive sample were the core group of community activists involved directly in the protest, through the distinct role they played whether simply by sitting on the picket, contributing to newsletters, organizing and attending activities, contributing specialist knowledge or coordinating and organizing other members. More information on the grounded theory approach adopted in this research can be found in Teo (2009).

The single case study approach we adopted complemented the theory generation and inductive nature of the grounded theory method by providing a research strategy on which data and findings could be generated in sufficient depth to explore the theoretical issues of interest—particularly the role of collective action, social capital, social contagion and social identity in sustaining the protest movement's continuity. These theories

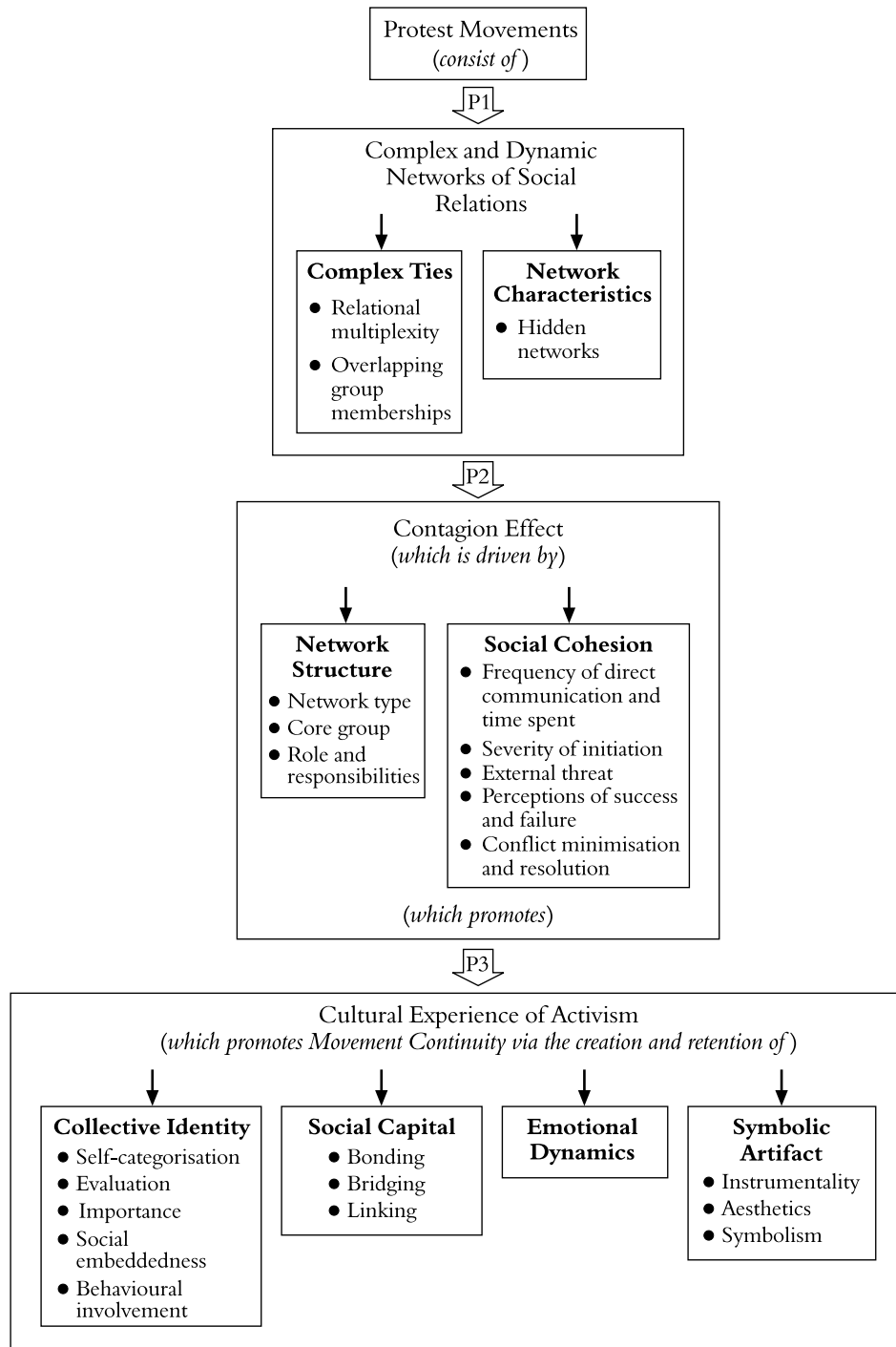


Figure 1 Proposed revised theoretical model of protest movement continuity against construction projects

allowed us to create a conceptual model of factors that inspire movement continuity, as depicted in Figure 1, which are multifaceted and complex in nature, necessitating a lengthy immersion in the research environment over time to gain a true and meaningful account of their role in sustaining protest (Robson, 2002; Snow *et al.*, 2006). While there are acknowledged limits in using a single case study in terms of reliability, the depth and

richness which this approach provides ensures high validity and further single case studies over time will be needed to reliably validate the propositions in Figure 1. The suitability of single case studies to explore the social and behavioural phenomenon intensively and in great depth means that it has been used extensively in investigating community activism (Stake, 1995; Appleton, 2002; Snow and Trom, 2002).

Case study

The case study was chosen to epitomize movement continuity at work and represents one of the longest standing, high profile and organized community protests against a construction project in Australian history. The protest was against a large-scale 61 hectare housing project in a sensitive coastal area south of Sydney, Australia, recognized as being of great natural beauty and ecological, cultural and historical importance to local communities and Aboriginal groups. This development has been the subject of a long-standing, sometimes bitter and even violent community protest spanning at least 15 years, which led to the establishment of Australia's longest standing 24-hour community picket in early 2001, but was controversially destroyed by arsonists in 2006. The proposed development also resulted in the erection of an Aboriginal tent embassy to protect the many thousands of aboriginal artefacts dug up on the site which included ancient 6000-year-old Aboriginal human remains. This tent embassy is recognized nationally in Aboriginal communities as one of the few places where indigenous and non-indigenous people have stood united in their fight for a common cause. While this protest has divided many in the community, the social and community networks which have sustained the protest over such a long period of time are extensive and underpinned by widespread support from other community groups in the region. There have been and continue to be numerous court battles between the community protest group (represented by individuals) and the developer. During the height of the protest in 2001–2003, numerous public meetings and rallies were held, hundreds of petitions with thousands of signatures were signed which eventually contributed to a government-appointed 'Commission of Inquiry' (CoI) to determine the best use of the disputed land. The CoI found in favour of the community, recommending to bring certain portions of the development back into public ownership, although a subsequent review of the CoI by a new planning minister reduced the recommended area of land to be placed under public ownership, ensuring that the protest continues to this day.

Research method

The methods of data collection and analysis used in this research are depicted in Figure 2.

As Figure 2 shows, a combination of methods was used to provide multiple and mutually correcting insights into the research propositions. One cannot possibly describe in a paper of this length the practical and emotional challenges faced in undertaking research of this nature into a highly committed and determined

community group made up of Aboriginal and non-indigenous groups which itself was factionalized and which had an inherent and sometimes justifiable distrust of outsiders. Establishing trusting relationships with community members and gaining access to reliable and quality data were exceptionally intensive and involving processes which required complete immersion in the protest movement over a 15-month period. This involved the researcher taking on a participant observation role by sitting on community pickets, attending community meetings, rallies and protest events, participating in informal discussion networks and circulation lists, etc., where numerous discussions and casual conversations regarding different aspects of the protest and influences on movement continuity occurred. Ethnographies, or comprehensive field notes depicting observational data on protest group processes, norms of behaviour, patterns of communication and the context in which they occurred were written in as much detail as possible to document group interactions as they took place. This was complemented by two rounds of semi-structured interviews with activists which allowed the researcher to elicit questions relating to network characteristics, patterns of communication, group dynamics, etc. so as to provide insights into their relationship with fellow protestors and what drives their involvement and contribution to protest events over time. Other data collected included internal newsletters, newspaper and other media reports of the protest, government documents such as the Commission of Inquiry (CoI) report and photographic evidence of protest events and artefacts. Collectively, these methods of data collection allowed rich descriptive accounts to be produced of activists' experiences of protest that were cross-referenced to construct context-specific explanations of the experience of protest as understood by protestors. This ethnographic process was critical to facilitate cultural insights into the process and experiences of activism, independent of the researcher and to provide a deep understanding of group dynamics, networks and behaviours.

The researcher's journey through this research was a tricky, unpredictable and emotional one, with responses ranging from warm welcome from the majority of the group, through to scepticism from a minority, and through to outright hostility from one member of the group who saw the research (being led from a built environment faculty) as a potential infiltration by the developer. This required compliance to strict ethical guidelines and absolutely no connections or interactions with developers of any kind, which also meant we couldn't investigate the developer's side of the story. We acknowledge this as a limitation of the research but also acknowledge that such experiences, which are common

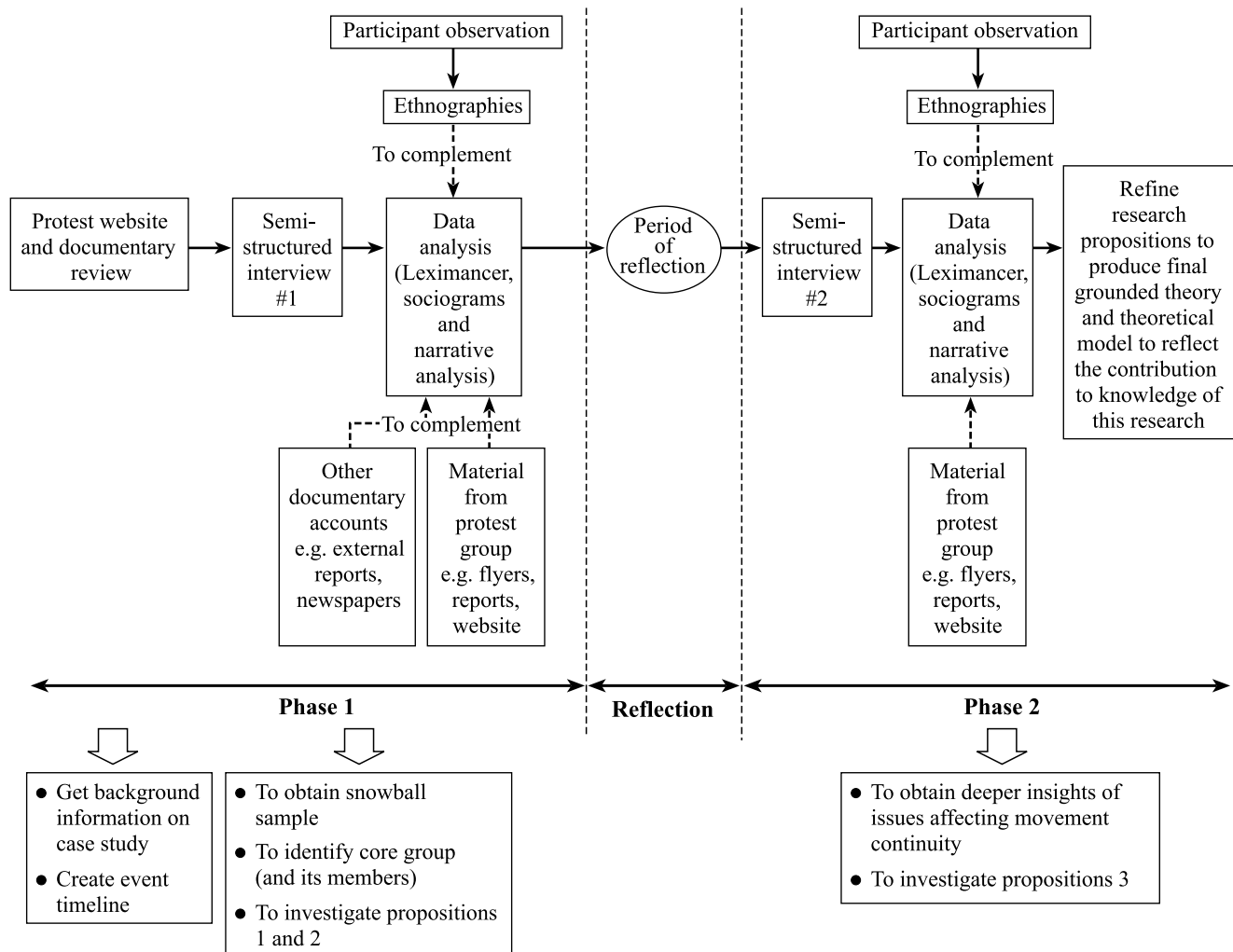


Figure 2 Conceptual representation of research method

as a ‘rite of passage’ into the group as also experienced by other new group members, were a necessary part of gaining detailed insights into the movement’s internal culture and to enable people to share their ‘stories’ in an open and trusting environment, with complete assurance that information provided will not be used against them or threaten the interests of the protest.

Data analysis

The rich qualitative data collected were analysed in three ways, namely using text mapping, social network analysis and narrative analysis, which collectively have a mutually reinforcing effect that allows a rich and descriptive portrayal and explanations of the influences on movement continuity over time to emerge. To identify codes and emerging themes as part of the grounded theory approach, data were analysed using Leximancer, a text mining and visualization tool which uses computational linguistics and Bayesian theory, to

identify important common themes and their interrelationships in the activists’ stories enabling us to build an understanding of the main issues and factors affecting movement continuity (Leximancer, 2005). An example of a concept map is shown in Figure 3.

In Figure 3, individual concepts that emerged as important from the data are represented by individual nodes which are grouped into themes by circles. Related concepts tend to occur close to each other, with the size of a concept reflecting its connectedness to others, while similar colours indicate similar themes. Themes that are similarly connected are collected into thematic groups by rectangles. In Figure 3, activists’ perceptions of positive and tangible benefits reaped from the protest campaign are categorized into two conceptual boundaries, with the smaller thematic group reflecting the positive empowerment of the community, while the larger thematic group depicts the delayed status of the project as achieved through the protest.

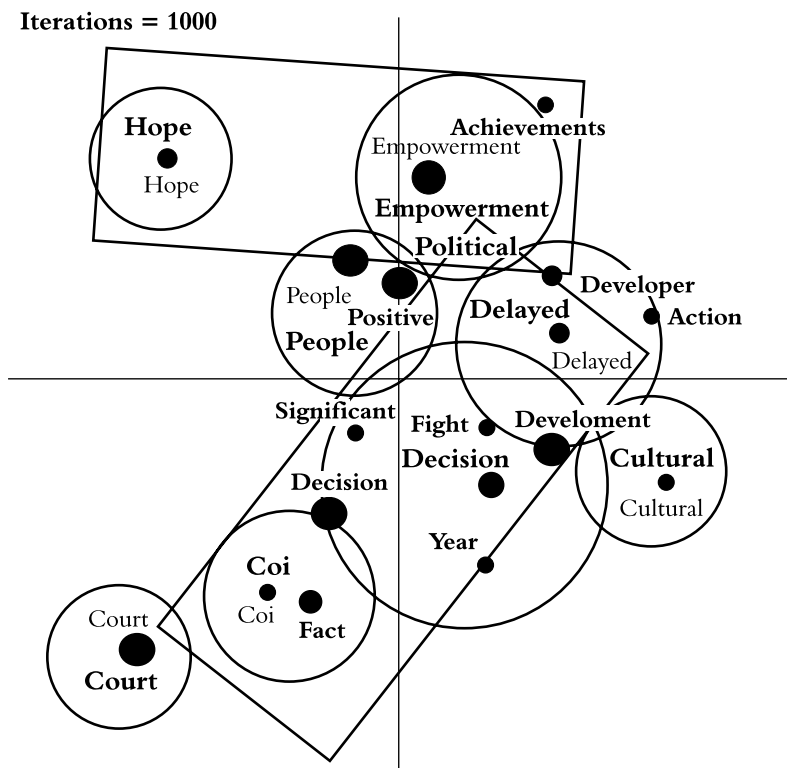


Figure 3 Typical concept map

To integrate and provide a richness of explanation for understanding the different key concepts and themes highlighted in Leximancer, narrative analysis was used to construct a shared account of the community opposition process in the form of shared stories to ground the theoretical insights and arguments derived from the data so as to make practically visible, the influences on movement continuity over time. Narrative analysis is an interpretive approach which incorporates the use of topic-centred storytelling to explore the deeper meanings that people attach to their world and their role within it (Polkinghorne, 2007). Used extensively in community-based research but rarely used in construction research, narrative analysis of stories about the protest were used to ground the theoretical insights derived from multiple data sources such as documentary analysis, ethnographies, concept maps, sociograms and literature. Activists' stories were obtained through a series of semi-structured questions, and these were examined from a wide range of different perspectives so as to construct a coherent and collective account of movement continuity that transcends activists' individual voices, and which preserves the rich and descriptive nature of that collective knowledge and is critical as part of the inductive process within the grounded theory approach. The result of this exhaustive process is a series of shared stories that depict the experiences common among the protest group that

allows the researcher to obtain a deeper understanding of the theoretical concepts depicted in Figure 1 that could influence movement continuity over time.

Finally, sociograms were produced using a social network analysis software called UCINET (Borgatti *et al.*, 1999; Katz *et al.*, 2004) to provide visual representations of how individuals and groups are linked and situated in a movement network. They were used to reveal relational and communication patterns within the protest network at a particular point in time or map changes over time, as well as the structural characteristics and attributes that underpin the protest networks. A simple sociogram is illustrated in Figure 4 with nodes identifying other protest groups involved in the protest and the lines between them indicating the existence of a relationship (communication, friendship, family, power, etc.). Each node/actor is represented by a letter 'A', 'C', etc. to preserve anonymity of the activists within the network.

Results

Proposition 1: Protest movements consist of complex and dynamic networks of social relations

Our findings indicate that collective action in protest networks was maintained by a high degree of

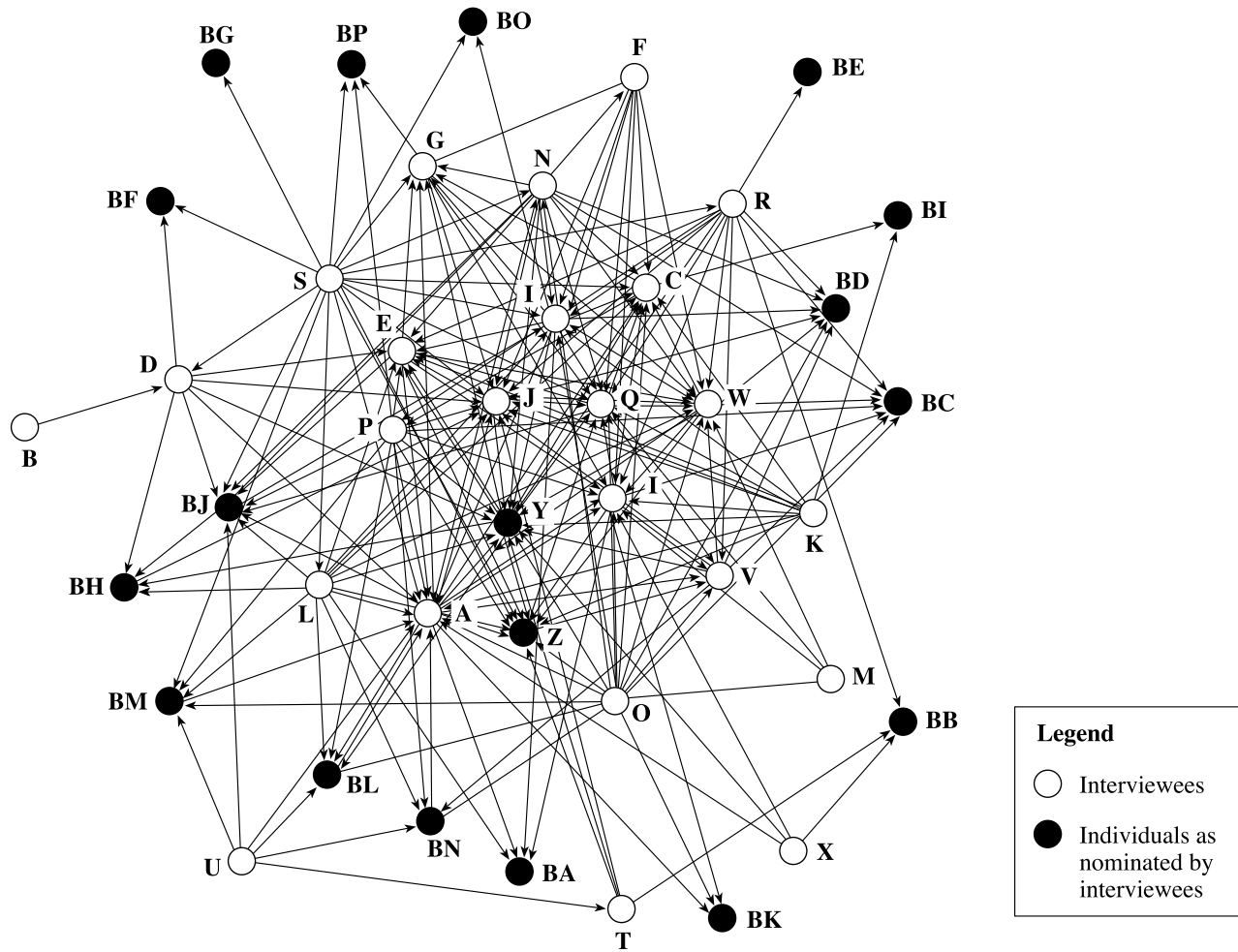


Figure 4 Social network of interpersonal ties between activist groups in the protest network

interconnectivity and relational multiplexity between participating individuals and groups that was characterized by overlapping ties and group membership. This extends Passy's (2003) and Broadbent's (2003) research into the importance of relational multiplexity in mobilizing and sustaining protest participation over time. However, our finding that overlapping group membership had a beneficial effect on protest continuity through access to back-up resources, knowledge and support contrasts with Kitt's (1999) and Brown's (2000) research which showed competition for resources between groups with similar ideologies, and confusion over roles and responsibilities for public speaking on behalf of the protest. These contradictions need to be further explored and are perhaps due to the different complexities in the range of issues faced by the protestors in the various studies. Our findings also support McAdam's (2003) work by indicating that pre-existing ties play an important role in initiating participation but that their importance diminishes over time. Later, the quality of social ties, friendships, camaraderie and

common experiences of success and failure in the new group emerge as the main determinants of sustained participation.

Another important finding was the role of hidden networks in sustaining movement continuity. Maintaining participatory anonymity of individuals, relationships and groups within the movement meant that it became extremely difficult for the developer to manage the protest and to seek an effective resolution of protest issues. There is no evidence to suggest however that this was a deliberate strategy but it was one which emerged as an important protection mechanism over time. Weak and multiple ties between activists, poor internal communications and an anarchic leadership structure all contributed to a sense of ambiguity for the protestors themselves, as well as for outsiders who had to interact with them. This brings us to the issue of activist turnover. Here our findings support those of Gould (2002) and Diani (2003) which indicate that levels of activist participation vary over time in response to movement needs, the cyclical nature of protest

activities, activists' burnout, internal conflict and changes in community demographics.

Finally, the symbolic importance of physical artefacts like the picket and Aboriginal tent embassy should not be underestimated. As the physical manifestation of the project, these artefacts played a crucial role in communicating the continued existence of the protest to the wider community, and as a critical recruitment mechanism and meeting point for protestors. Not only does our research support Crowther and Cooper's (2002) findings that community-based protest networks are critical to movement continuity but it shows how protest artefacts can play a critical role in maintaining these networks by breaking down social and cultural barriers within a community and highlighting its continuation and salience to the local context.

Proposition 2: Networks of social relations are sustained by the contagion effect, which is driven by network structure and social cohesion

Our findings support those of Myers (2000) and Scherer and Cho (2003) who found that the socialization and communication processes within networks facilitate a contagion effect which influences perceptions of development risk and opportunity. Our findings extend this further by indicating that the contagion effect is primarily driven through the informal networks and relationships that exist among activists.

While we found little evidence of any formal organizational structure, we did find layers within the network that have provided a useful categorization of activists in terms of their levels of participation, knowledge and contribution to the protest. The existence of activist layers highlighted distinctive patterns of behaviour that had emerged during the protest, and we also found that activists would move through these layers over time depending on various constraints such as work-protest-family balance and saliency of protest issues, etc. The core protest group had the least permeable boundary and the highest level of consistency in membership and dedication to the cause. Members of this group could be defined by certain common attributes and this group played a particularly important role in sustaining movement continuity over time. While we could identify a core group of activists driving the protest, we could not identify any specific leadership position. This was a deliberate strategy to avoid being targeted for legal action by the developer, among other reasons. Instead, we found a rotating leadership structure where activists would informally adopt leadership roles as their skills and ideas became relevant to emerging issues. This temporal issue-specific leadership structure was important in avoiding burnout and in maintaining momentum and movement continuity over time, particularly during

periods of disillusionment. The discovery of this leadership structure is not evident in the literature and needs further exploring since it appears to contrast with Taylor's (1989) research that protest survival depends on centralized leadership.

Another finding that emerged was that social contagion was also strongly dependent on the concerted and deliberate efforts of activists to build social cohesion within the network through shared protest actions, social events and experiences of success and failure over time. Although our findings support those of Staggenborg (1998) and Robbins *et al.* (2004) that levels of connectivity and cohesion tend to decline over time, particularly during the winding-down stages of protest, we also found a tendency for the movement to rejuvenate itself as a number of departed activists re-entered the protest after a period away. This re-entry of rejuvenated activists back to the protest movement was important to combat high levels of activist turnover that would have made the protest unsustainable otherwise over time. Our findings also extend Staggenborg's (1998) work in identifying several influences on social cohesion. In particular we found that cohesion was affected by the frequency of face-to-face interactions among activists via meeting places such as the picket. The picket was particularly important as a symbolic artefact and common meeting place for activists and it is through their mutual association and socialization in and around the picket that activists developed a sense of collective identity and belonging to the protest. Another contributor to social cohesion was the initiation process which activists would go through to gain acceptance into the protest. People had to work to gain acceptance, particularly to the core group where initiations and rejection could be quite rigorous and, sometimes destructive, if not accepted by the rest of the group. This extends Taylor's (1989) finding that initiation rights create feelings of in-groupness. Our findings also support McPherson and Smith-Lovin's (2002) research that collective perceptions of external threat strongly contributed to feelings of cohesiveness.

Proposition 3: The contagion effect shapes the cultural experience of activism and promotes movement continuity via the creation and retention of collective identity, social capital, emotional dynamics and symbolic artefacts

Our finding that collective identity is an important driver of movement continuity supports Castells' (2004) work which found that shared experiences of protest are internalized by activists over time. It also extends this work by emphasizing the existence of multiple dimensions of collective identity such as 'family' and 'picketer' which in part was influenced by

activists' self-categorization of their centrality to the protest network: core group or peripheral groups. Movement continuity was also determined by whether the evaluation of the collective identity was positive or negative, both internally and externally. This supports and extends Ashmore *et al.*'s (2004) finding that both private and public evaluation of protest are important to people's participation in protest. Furthermore, in support of Crowther and Copper's (2002) research, the strength of collective identity was also found to be related to the implicit importance of the protest objectives, e.g. saving Aboriginal cultural heritage and one of the last remnants of coastal flood plain. This acted to sustain involvement by promoting a sense of belonging, loyalty and obligation to achieve something worthwhile that had much wider benefits to the local community. We also found that the strength of collective identity was shaped by the level of social embeddedness and behavioural involvement in the campaign. Social embeddedness is reflected by the multiplicity of ties between activists (friendship, social, work, protest, leisure, etc.) and behavioural involvement is related to the level of personal participation in protest activities and events such as picket duty, writing letters, attending rallies, etc.

Another factor found to strongly promote movement continuity was the community-based social capital which had built up over time through the protest campaign, and through links with other activist groups and respected organizations such as political parties and unions in the region. These acted as a hidden source of intellectual, financial, physical and human capital to sustain activists' participation in collective action. We also found that close-knit community networks, which were the primary source of this social capital, played an important role in counterbalancing the largely unstructured and anarchic nature of the protest group. Related to the importance of social capital in sustaining action over time, our findings also emphasized the importance of symbolic artefacts such as the community picket as communal spaces and meeting places which served to connect normally disconnected parts of the local community and also as physical, visual and aesthetic reminders and evidence of the protest's continued existence. This supports the findings of Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz's (2004) research but extends it by showing that the instrumental value of artefacts such as the picket is determined by their symbolic salience to the local community (e.g. built out of local materials sourced by or donated by the community). Protest artefacts however, have only temporal significance and a limited lifespan, due in part to the resources needed to maintain them over time and activists' differing perceptions over their continued relevance to the constantly changing context of protest. Finally, in support of Goodwin *et al.*'s

(2001) and Jasper's (2003) research we discovered that a rich array of emotions were experienced by activists over time. In particular we found that anger, frustration and a sense of injustice were the primal emotions which underpinned continuity. Potentially destructive, these emotions were effectively channelled against the developer, legitimized by the protest group and consciously used to build trusting, cooperative and cohesive internal relationships which sustained activists' commitment to the protest. However, in extending Jasper's (2003) work, we also found that protest groups have a limited capacity and time period in which to channel and manage anger positively, and that over time, anger becomes a destructive force which can damage internal relationships and discourage movement continuity.

Conclusion

In line with the grounded theory approach, the findings discussed above resulted in a refined theoretical model (Figure 5) of protest movement continuity against construction projects which provides the foundation for a series of grounded theories which require empirical testing and refinement by further empirical research. These are described below.

Proposition 1: Protest movements consist of complex and dynamic networks of social relations

Grounded theory—movement networks are deliberately complex and dynamic. They are dynamic to counter the evolving nature of protest issues, and they are complex to provide anonymity to activists and ambiguity to out-groups which may threaten movement continuity. Movement continuity is also driven by high degrees of interconnectivity and relational multiplicity between different sub-groups, which facilitates transferability of protest resources across different network domains. Social participation in particular helps to sustain the quality of social relationships and levels of loyalty and commitment between activists, helping to maintain participation over time.

Proposition 2: Networks of social relations are sustained by the contagion effect, which is driven by network structure and social cohesion

Grounded theory—the anarchic and unstructured nature of protest impedes the designated pathways through which perceptions of development risk and opportunity can spread, and produces a reliance on informal networks for this to occur. In the absence of formalized leadership and roles, transient role-specific leadership positions undertaken on a voluntary basis

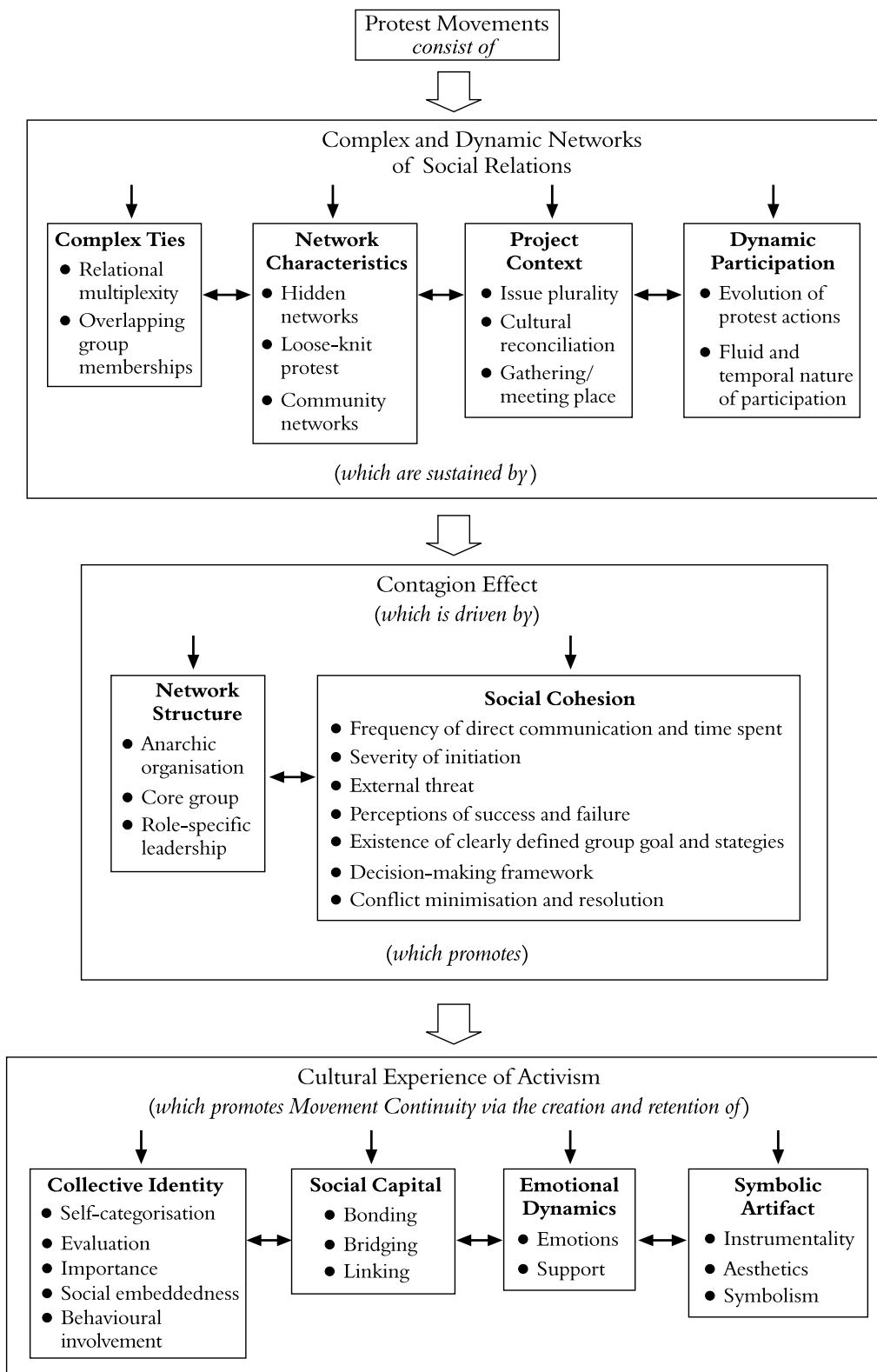


Figure 5 Revised theoretical model of protest movement continuity against construction projects

emerge as an important means of managing the anarchic nature of protest. This also equips protest groups with the social capital needed to respond to protest challenges and issues as they emerge, helping to overcome inertia and burnout. Core activists are particularly important drivers of contagion since they function as central and relatively consistent links overcoming many of the potential problems of an anarchic structure. Core group activists share four key attributes in which their contagious potential manifested, namely: expert knowledge, skills, consistency of commitment, and respect. Social cohesion, influenced by activists' communication frequency, social participation rates, external threats and clearly defined goals, is also important to movement continuity, although social cohesion becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the longer protest continues.

Proposition 3: The contagion effect shapes the cultural experience of activism and promotes movement continuity via the creation and retention of collective identity, social capital, emotional dynamics and symbolic artefacts

Grounded theory—the cultural experience of activism and its relationship to movement continuity is mediated by the quality of social relationships among activists within a protest network and the extent to which it promotes: the positive internalization of a collective identity; the strategic use of social capital; an ability to balance the emotional dynamics of protest; and the temporal significance of symbolic artefacts. Where the quality of social relationships is high and positively oriented, these create conditions that are conducive to a positive cultural experience of activism which acts to sustain movement continuity over time.

The refined model of protest movement continuity, and the three propositions presented above, collectively provide a unique and integrated model in which to better understand the social dynamics of protest groups and the factors that influence protest movement continuity against construction projects. In so doing, we hope to contribute towards the achievement of mutually beneficial development of social outcomes for communities, governments and firms affected by and involved in controversial projects, with improved reputational outcomes for the construction industry as a whole.

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