

Dear Politics and Protest workshop participants,

This paper stems from PhD research I conducted on the campaign for gender parity in France. I first formulated the concept of “field of women’s advocacy” in this specific research context, and I have been developing it in the following years. This is the first draft of a paper in which I try to link the category to theoretical debates in the field of social movement analysis. I would be glad to have your comments on how to rework the paper, which I am aiming to submit to a social movement journal.

Many thanks, in advance, for the time you will spend reading it, and for your comments. I am looking forward to next Thursday,

Best,
Laure.

Thinking the Transversality of Contentious Politics The Field of Women's Advocacy

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Introduction

In the past fifteen years, definitional debates over the category of social movement have been brought at the center of social movement theory (Fillieule 2009). Traditional definitions have been increasingly criticized for being too narrow and rigid, and unable to account for the path of social movement's institutionalization observed in the past decades. The view of social movements as marginal actors deprived of institutional resources and networks, using non-conventional means of action and adopting a clear confrontational stance toward the State no longer prevails. Boundaries between institutional and non-institutional politics, civil society and the State, insiders and outsiders, have become increasingly fuzzy (Giugni, McAdam, & Tilly 1998; Giugni & Passy 1998; Meyer & Tarrow 1998b; McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly 2001; Goldstone 2003).

Although not at the center of theoretical debates, several works on women's movements have provided precious insights with respect to the definition of social movements. Since their emergence as organized forces in the second half of the 19th century, women's movements have adopted a wide range of organizational forms, discourses, and means of action. In the last decades, these movements have been particularly affected by institutionalization dynamics, not only through a routinization and professionalization of their forms of action, but also through the incorporation of feminist discourses and actors inside mainstream institutions, and most notably inside the State (Sawer 1990; Mc Bride Stetson & Mazur 1995; Banaszak, Beckwith, & Rucht 2003; McBride, Mazur, & Lovenduski 2010). Placing the emphasis on the proliferation of "unobtrusive", "under the radar" feminist protest inside dominant institutions, some women's movements scholars have pointed to the theoretical limits of the persisting conflation between location, means, and goals of protest in the dominant definitions of social movements (Katzenstein 1998a; Banaszak 2010).

One of the main theoretical challenges faced by these critiques of the traditional visions of social movements is to find a definition that could be broad and flexible enough to encompass a variety of forms of social protest, without diluting the conceptual specificity of this social phenomenon, as opposed to other forms of political action (which can be called, depending on what we want to put the emphasis, mainstream, conventional, traditional, routinized, or institutional politics...).

Drawing on the study of a specific empirical context, namely the campaign for gender parity in France in the 1990s (Bereni 2007a), the concept of Field of Women's Advocacy (FWA), presented in this paper, seeks to provide a new framework to think the architecture of women's collective struggles. Beyond this specific kind of protest, it is also aimed at bringing a new perspective on contentious politics.

I define the field of women's advocacy (FWA) as the *relational structure of groups and organizations mainly devoted to the cause of women in a variety of social fields*. As we will see in further details in the remainder of the paper, this category challenges a series of assumptions conveyed by the dominant definitions of social movements and contentious politics. Firstly, unlike most definitions of social movements, the FWA cuts across the lines between movements and institutions, civil society and the state. Secondly, the concept of FWA puts the emphasis on both the heterogeneity of women's struggles, which are embeddedness in a variety of social fields, and the convergence mechanisms that make possible, in certain contexts, the emergence of women's transversal campaigns. Thirdly, rather than focusing only on "public" "episodes of contention" (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly 2001, p.6), the FWA refers to the continuity of the set of actors and activities that fuel these visible episodes.

In what follows, I first present why my study on the campaign for gender parity in France led me to map out the concept of FWA. I then discuss the two distinct sets of literature on which the concept of FWA is mainly indebted to: on the one hand, the literature on social movements' institutionalization and its consequences on the definition of contentious politics; on the other hand, theories placing the concepts of social field and networks at the center of social movement analysis. Finally, I present the concept of field of women's advocacy, which has two distinct variants: the first one draws directly on my research on the parity campaign, and insists on the cross-sectionality of the FWA through institutional lines; the second variant is a more abstract proposition, which stresses out the embeddedness of the FWA in a multiplicity of social fields.

1.The campaign for gender parity in France (1992-2000)

The category of FWA was initially mapped out in order to answer specific research questions, which came up from a specific empirical case: the campaign for "gender parity" that took place in France in the course of the 1990s¹.

A paradox to account for

Eight years passed between the public emergence of the parity claim (the demand for a law imposing a fifty-fifty representation of men and women in all representative assemblies²) in 1992, and the introduction of a law mandating 50% gender quotas on electoral lists, in 2000. By the mid 1990s, a dozen of women's groups and umbrella

¹ Only a small part of my research on the gender parity campaign is presented here. For more details, see (Bereni 2007a; 2007b; 2009).

² The claim was firstly proposed in a book written by three women's advocates, which appeared in 1992 (Gaspard, Le Gall, & Servan-Schreiber 1992).

organizations had formed around the parity claim, followed by a growing number of activists from preexisting women's organizations. Between 1992 and 2000, parity campaigners pressured political parties, government leaders, and the media, using various – mainly conventional – means of action, including conferences and meetings, petitions, manifestos, letter-writing campaigns to political leaders, newspaper articles and books, demonstrations in front of the Parliament, etc.

During the first years of the campaign, no major political party or leader seemed to take this claim seriously. While the Parti socialiste's³ leadership had endorsed the motto by the mid 1990s, it was considered as a new phrasing of gender equality rather than a commitment to electoral gender quotas. Yet, in 1997, at the surprise of most political elites and parity campaigners, new socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin – appointed by conservative president Chirac after the PS won the early general elections – announced his will to add the “principle of parity” in the French Constitution. Within the three following years, two major institutional reforms were introduced. In 1999, the Parliament passed a constitutional amendment stating: “the law favors equality between men and women in elected offices” – which enabled the legislator to pass a law imposing gender-based quotas among candidates. Indeed, one year later, the French Parliament passed a law (known as the “parity law”) mandating a 50-50 representation of women and men among candidates at all elections with a list system (local, regional, European, and half of the Senate's seats), and imposing financial penalties to political parties who don't respect the 50% quota in their candidacies for the legislative elections⁴.

This successful political fate of the parity claim appeared, at first sight, as eminently paradoxical. On the one hand, parity campaigners encountered sharp resistances to their claim in the highly male-dominated political field. In the 1990s, women accounted for less than 6% of the members of Parliament, and made up less than 10% of the main political parties' leadership, both on the left and on the right (Sineau 2001). Until the very end of the decades, most French political elites either ignored or expressed a strong hostility towards any demands of recognizing women's specific voice in politics (and moreover through gender quotas). The political field was not only highly male-dominated, but also permeated with a strong, cross-partisan commitment to the discourse of “republican universalism”. Until the last years of the decade, the gender parity claim remained widely considered as totally incompatible with this political model, supposed to be the very essence of French political identity – as opposed to the so-called “multiculturalist” model that was commonly associated with the United States (Scott 2004; Bereni 2007b; Lépinard 2007).

On the other hand, the weaknesses of women's collective mobilizations around parity appeared as striking. The campaign for gender parity attracted a small number of women activists (a few hundreds at the climax of the campaign in the last years of the decade), who were located outside and at the margins of the political-electoral field. Many feminist activists and intellectuals opposed parity because they found that it

³ The Parti socialiste is the main left-wing party in France. It is a center-left political force.

⁴ For an assessment of its impact on women's political representation, see (Scott 2005; Achin *et al.* 2007).

conveyed an “essentialist” vision of gender. Parity campaigners were spread in a multiplicity of small associations, and many conflicts arose among them. They eventually never reached public visibility *as a social movement*: in many academic, political and media accounts, the history of parity has been commonly associated with the fierce public *debate* that involved renowned intellectuals and political figures in the press at the end of the 1990s, rather than with a social movement. This sense of marginality of the mobilizations for parity was consistent with the traditional numerical weakness of the French women’s movement, its lack of political legitimacy, its few links with political parties, its harsh ideological divisions, not to mention the demobilization process it had undergone since the beginning of the 1980s.

However, the main outcome of my research is that, in combination with other factors⁵, the mobilizations for parity played a decisive role in the successful career of this claim in French political life. I found that the *transversality* of the movement for parity – encompassing a wide range of actors from various social spheres and ideological backgrounds – was a key factor in the success of the campaign, likely to compensate its weaknesses and to overcome many of the resistances it encountered.

A transversal campaign

With respect to ideology, the movement for gender parity seemed to overcome the strong divides inherited from the 1970s. From this time on, the gap between the predominantly radical second wave feminist groups born in the aftermath of May 68 protests and the older, moderate women’s organizations dating from the first wave seemed so huge that these two branches didn’t have the sense of belonging to the same movement. Another vivid line of conflict opposed “anti-essentialist” (committed to Beauvoir’s vision of women’s liberation) and “differentialist” (praising the social and symbolic value of sexual difference) visions of feminism. The lines of divisions stemming from the political field (right-wing *vs* left-wing) had also been extremely polarizing since the 1970s. Yet, surprisingly enough for many women’s movement activists, the campaign for parity attracted from the outset a wide array of women’s advocates across a variety of lines of conflict: “feminine” and “feminist” organizations, right-wing and left-wing activists, “anti-essentialist” and “differentialist” proponents, etc.

In addition to this ideological diversity, the campaign for gender parity drew activists mobilizing for the advancement of women in a large array of social settings, inside and outside institutions. During the first years of the campaign, “autonomous” women’s organizations (notably located outside political parties and outside the State) were the campaign’s centre of gravity. Parity campaigners had the strong feeling that

⁵ In spite of the strong resistances that gender quotas encountered in the French political field, parity campaigners could take advantage of some political opportunities to advance their claim. On the one hand, EU institutions made the case for “positive action” enhancing women’s presence in political life, and gender quotas gained a growing legitimacy in several European countries. On the other hand, French political elites were increasingly concerned, at that time, with the so-called “crisis of political representation”, and increasing women’s presence in politics could appear as a possible way to “renew” democracy (Bereni 2007b).

their movement was born and grew up in the “civil society”, outside the political realm. In the first years, autonomous women’s organizations were, indeed, the driving force behind the campaign. After the reform was set onto the governmental agenda, in 1997, the associative component of the campaign for gender parity continued to expand: new women’s organizations joined the campaign, at a time when the claim’s chances to be translated into institutional reform were increased. However, between 1997 and 2000, the centrality of the “autonomous associations” within the campaign declined, as the involvement of other groups and activists in other social spheres increased.

Women mobilized for the cause of women inside political parties or elected assemblies were an important component of the parity campaign. The movement for parity was from the outset strongly linked to women’s groups within political parties. Several leaders and rank-and-file activists of the “autonomous” women’s groups in favor of parity belonged at the same time to women’s party sections, and mobilized within the political arena. From the time the parity reform was put on the governmental agenda in 1997 on, an increasing number of women’s advocates in the political field joined the campaign to strengthen the degree of constraint of the parity bill.

Another feature of the campaign for parity was the strong participation of women academics. From the very beginning, several scholars specialized in women and gender, and linked to feminist networks and groups within the academia, participated in the campaign: some of them were active in parity associations, while others occasionally provided their scholarly expertise on women and gender to increase the legitimacy of the claim. They gave talks in meetings and conferences organized by parity campaigners, published newspaper columns, academic journal articles, books, and participated in a number of TV and radio events, most visibly in the heydays of the public debate, at the end of the decade. Several feminist academics advocating for parity were appointed to the main bureaucratic body concerned with parity, the Parity Observatory, and participated to the hearings held by the Parliament when the parity bill came to discussion.

Finally, members of State instances devoted to women’s rights joined the campaign for parity by the middle of the 1990s. Crucial to this extension of the campaign into the State was the creation of the Parity Observatory (*Observatoire de la Parité*), an advisory board to provide reflections and institutional propositions on the issue of parity. This body was created in 1995 by newly elected President Chirac, responding to parity associations’ demands in the context of the UN world conference on women in Beijing. It came up two years later with a public report that turned out to be decisive in the designing of the parity reform. During the 1997-2000 parliamentary discussions around the parity bills, the Parity Observatory, along with other women’s policy agencies, played an important role in providing feminist expertise to support an extensive vision of parity, countering the dominant views among left-wing and right-wing political elites.

The transversal dimension of the parity campaign not only rested on the concomitant mobilizations of a diversity of women’s groups, with respect to their ideologies and the social site in which they mobilized. After the claim was set on the governmental agenda, the degree of cooperation among its various components

significantly increased. Between 1997 and 2000, in the heydays of the firm public and parliamentary debates around parity, members of women's "autonomous" organizations, women's party sections, feminist academic bodies and women's policy agencies participated in a number of common activities to promote the parity claim. Together, they launched petitions, lobbied political elites, and demonstrated in front of the Parliament.

I found that the cross-sectional dimension of the campaign turned out to be a strategic resource, likely to compensate its numerical and political weaknesses. This finding led me to pose a broader analytical question on women's collective struggles: what were the structural conditions that could account for the emergence of such a cross-sectional campaign? It was clear that the campaign for gender parity stemmed from a broader space of women's mobilizing, which provided activists, resources and discourses. Shifting the focus toward this "prior" social universe, it appeared that the cross-sectional dimension of the gender parity campaign didn't emerge out of nowhere: it derived from a pre-existing, cross-sectional configuration of women's advocacy actors, pertaining to a wide range of ideological stances and located in a variety of social sites, inside and outside institutions, and yet linked together by social ties and common commitments. I initially developed the concept of field of women's advocacy to capture this new vision of collective women's struggles. Before detailing the meaning of this analytical category, I now present the bodies of literature I mobilized to map it out.

Movements, Institutions, Fields, and Networks

Two bodies of literature have been influential in elaborating the concept of FWA: 1) a series of works that have addressed the theoretical consequences of the path of institutionalization undergone by social movements in contemporary Western democracies, especially by students of women's movements; 2) theoretical reflections on fields and networks in the study of social movements.

Social movements theorists facing social movements' institutionalization

Social movement theorists have reflected upon the path of institutionalization followed by many social movements in the last decades⁶.

Social movement theorists have traditionally considered institutionalization as the *end* of social protest. On the one hand, the process of incorporation of social movement

⁶ Under the heading of institutionalization, a variety of social phenomena are often subsumed. Walker nicely clarifies the notion, by distinguishing three processes of movement institutionalization (Walker 2010): "political institutionalization" refers to a "changing location of social movement actors from a position largely external to the state to one in which movement actors are either recognized members of the state or work in close relationship to the state or assist the state in policy making" (p 14); "cultural institutionalization" refers to the "institutional incorporation or acceptance of movement ideas (...) both within and beyond the movement" (p 20-21); and "organizational institutionalization refers to the process by which movements come to be dominated by the concerns related to organization" (p 28) – in other words, it relates to the formalization and professionalization of social movement groups.

actors and ideas into dominant institutions (first and foremost the state) has been considered as a criterion of social movements' *success* (Gamson 1975). On the other hand, and inseparably, this process has been seen as a process of cooptation and *deradicalization* of social movements. The association between movements' institutionalization and the decline of their challenger's status still prevails in today's social movement theory. As Giugni, McAdam and Tilly put it, "it may well be that, by thoroughly legitimating and institutionalizing protest, the western democracies will render it increasingly ineffective as a social-change vehicle" (Giugni, McAdam, & Tilly 1998) – going back to the idea of a "movement becalmed" (Zald & Ash 1966).

While institutionalization is still being seen as a dilution of social movements' protest dimension, social movement theorists have provided new definitions that blur the traditional boundaries between movements and institutions, civil societies and the states.

The concept of contentious politics, coined by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, is partly an attempt to respond to the theoretical challenges posed by the path of institutionalization of social movements in contemporary societies (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly 2001). As the authors put it, this concept challenges the boundary between "official, prescribed politics and politics by other means". Contentious politics is divided into two subcategories: "contained (when actors and means of action are "well established) and transgressive (at least some parties of actors are new, and at least some parties of collective action is innovative)". However, what distinguishes contentious politics from non-contentious politics is that the former is "episodic" and "public": Contentious politics "excludes regularly scheduled events such as votes, parliamentary elections, and associational meetings" as well as "claim making that occurs entirely within well-bounded organizations, including churches and firms" (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly 2001, p.5). In this definition of contentious politics, continuous forms of collective resistance that occur within the walls of institutions (like the "unobtrusive mobilization" studied by Mary Katzenstein (Katzenstein 1998a)) are, by definition, excluded.

The model of "social movement society" proposed by Meyer and Tarrow (Meyer & Tarrow 1998b) is another attempt to bring institutionalization at the center of social movement definition, in line with McCarthy and Zald's early analysis (McCarthy & Zald 1973). "Social movement society" refers to three social phenomena: episodes of social protest are part of normal politics ("recurrent feature of democratic politics"); a wider range of interests are represented through protest politics; contentious claims increasingly enter the realm of conventional politics, in terms of organizational forms and tactics (Meyer & Tarrow 1998a, p.4). Protestors and authorities, as the authors put it, increasingly adhere to a "common script".

One of the central dimensions of this blurring line between social movements and authorities is the increasing *cooperation* between them. Giugni and Passy point out that "new social movements intervene in the political process in two ways: by challenging existing or proposed policies and by helping to elaborate and enforce government policies" (Giugni & Passy 1998, p.82). In their view, women's movements, environmental movements, and solidarity and health movements particularly exemplify

this new kind of social movement/state relationship, characterized by conflict *and* coregulation of public policies. This “conflictual cooperation” breaks with the idea that confrontation with the state should be the core of the definition of social movements and contentious politics.

However, what is striking in many reflections on the definition of social movements in the era of institutionalization is the way they paradoxically (and implicitly) sharpen the boundary between civil society and the state, movements and institutions. While social movement and state actors increasingly look alike, and engage in various forms of cooperation, it becomes increasingly hard to differentiate between them based on their forms of organization, tactics, and discourses (Fillieule 2009). Thus, the only criterion that seems to be implicitly taken into account to define social movements is their *location*. Although social movements might use in conventional tactics and goals, and spend some time in conventional politics arenas (lobbying and cooperating with political parties, the State, etc.), it seems increasingly obvious that they are primarily defined by their location in the civil society, *outside* institutions (state, political parties, academia, etc.). While these reflections on the contemporary forms of contentious politics in democratic societies draw an increasingly complex picture of social movements, it could be argued that they haven’t drawn the full theoretical consequences of the rising heterogeneity of the state and other political institutions. It might be on this aspect that the research on women’s movements has brought the most valuable contribution to the theoretical debates around social movements’ institutionalization (Bereni & Revillard 2011).

Women’s movements have been paradigmatic examples of the process of political incorporation undergone by social movements in recent decades: in most contemporary democracies, notably under the pressure of international organizations (most notably the United Nations and the European institutions), women’s policy agencies have proliferated at different levels of government. In the past two decades, a body of research on “State feminism” has developed in the field of feminist policy analysis. These works have called into question the assumption, strong in both social movement theory and early feminist theory (Ferguson 1984), that the state is by definition patriarchal, hostile to women and furthermore to feminist ideas and actors. Drawing on a vision of the state as a heterogeneous, complex institution comprised of conflicting interests, ideologies and bodies, state feminism theorists have argued that a feminist presence within the state is possible. Some have put the emphasis on the presence of individuals (often called “femocrats”) pursuing feminist goals within the state, in continuation with the women’s movement outside the state – a movement from which they often stem (Sawer 1990; Outshoorn 1994; Eisenstein 1995). Others have focused on institutional bodies (often called “women’s policy agencies”) that are devoted to the promotion of women’s rights inside the state, stressing out that these bodies might bring feminist ideas and actors into the policy making process (Mc Bride Stetson & Mazur 1995; Revillard 2007; McBride, Mazur, & Lovenduski 2010). The literature on feminist policy coalitions has been another important contribution to rethink women’s advocacy activities across the boundaries that are traditionally drawn between the state, the polity, and civil society (Holli 2008). The metaphor of triangle has been often used, in line with dominant conceptualizations in the

field of policy network analysis. Used by Vargas and Wieringa, the concept of “triangle of empowerment” refers to “the interplay between three sets of actors – the women’s movement, feminist politicians and feminist civil servants (femocrats)”. “Bridging civil society and the state”, these triangles “articulate women’s demands, translate them into policy issues and struggles to widen political support for their agenda” (Vargas & Wieringa 1998, p.3-4). At the European institutions level, Alison Woodward has used the concept of “velvet triangle” to refer to the alliance between women’s advocates coming from the state, civil society and the academia (Woodward 2003).

Although scarcely read by social movement analysts, these works bring precious insights for revising traditional definitions of contentious politics. They point out that the state and traditional political actors are not unified bodies; disruptive, feminist voices might develop inside of them. However, since most of these works have occurred in political science, they have been more concerned with the feminist dimension of policy-making than with (re)defining social movements. The focus has been placed on the extent to which feminist instances and bureaucrats *reflect* feminist movements demands and *achieve* their integration into public policy. In most of these works, the boundary between feminist movements and feminist actors within dominant institutions has, paradoxically enough – from a social movement perspective –, mainly remained unquestioned (Bereni & Revillard 2011). State feminism instances and femocrats have mostly been seen as *allies* of the women’s movement: they are relaying and translating, within the state, protests that find their origins in the civil society, outside the state. Besides, works on women’s policy networks have remained silent with respect to the social conditions that account for the emergence of these networks: they have been more studied for what they do than for how they form, who joins them, and why they last (or not).

While taking into account the legacy of this field of research on feminism, politics and the State, Katzenstein and Banaszak have more specifically addressed the theoretical consequences of the institutionalization of feminist protest from a social movement perspective. Working respectively on women’s protest inside the Catholic Church and the Military (Katzenstein 1990; 1998a; 1998b), and on feminist activists in the bureaucracy in contemporary United States (Banaszak 2005; 2010), they have both challenged the common assumption that social movements are necessarily located *outside* the state or other mainstream institutions. In her study of “unobtrusive” women’s claim making within the Church and the Military, Katzenstein argued that feminist protest moved from the streets to mainstream institutions after its heydays in the 1960s and 1970s. Women’s groups have formed and feminist claims have been made within as male-dominated institutions as the Catholic Church and the Military. While feminists within the military took a “moderate” stance, focusing on bringing the legal equal opportunity framework into their institution, feminists within the Catholic Church engaged in a more “radical” discursive politics. In Katzenstein’s perspective, “[the] presumed inconsistency between movement politics and institutional politics is based on a frequently drawn linkage of location, form, and content. When social movement actors doing street politics (location) opt for or ally themselves with those who use conventional modes (forms) of political activism such as lobbying or voting, a social movement is generally deemed to have

crossed the threshold separating protest politics from institutional politics, and the result is presumed to be de-radicalizing (content)” (Katzenstein 1998b, p.195-196).

Katzenstein uses two main concepts to theorize social protest inside institutions. First, she suggests that feminist activists who struggle within institutions might have multiple, possibly diverging, “accountabilities” (namely organizational, discursive and financial), which bind them to both the bureaucratic and the movement realms. Another key concept in Katzenstein’s theorizing is the notion of “organizational habitat”. In her view, protest inside institutions not only relies on individual feminist activists who have penetrated into mainstream institutions. “The institutionalization of feminist activism [...] refers to the establishment of organizational habitats of feminists within institutional environments. Such habitats are spaces where women advocates of equality can assemble, where discussion can occur, and where the organizing for institutional change can originate.” (Katzenstein 1998b, p.197). These institutional habitats can be seen as a continuation to “free spaces”, those social settings in which members of dominated groups find themselves relatively protected from outside power relations, and where a form of politicization of identity might develop (Evans & Boyte 1986).

Banaszak takes a similar starting point as Katzenstein: she argues that social movement analysts often conflate location, tactics, and goals, and that location outside institutions cannot be considered as the ultimate criterion to define social protest. She builds up the model of a “movement state intersection”, a zone comprised of a network of feminist activists who are working for women’s rights inside the State. The women’s movement is not located outside of the state, but cuts across it. Feminist bureaucrats are not “allies” of the women’s movement; they are part of it. While their mobilizations are hardly visible because often conducted “under the radar”, they have played, Banaszak argues, an active role in the development of the contemporary feminist movement in the past 50 years: they have taken advantage of their insider’s position to provide new political opportunities (that she calls “endogeneous” political opportunities) for the movement and to improve its chances of success. A number of feminist bureaucrats have endorsed radical views, and their conventional means of action have sometimes had a highly transgressive dimension (such as litigation around gender discrimination in the workplace in the first years following the Civil rights legislation). They maintained their activism when the women’s movement “outside” disappeared from the political scene. Moreover, Banaszak argues, the distinction between insiders and outsiders should be reconsidered, because « *exclusion* from the polity is not completely synonymous with *location* » (Banaszak 2010, p.8): since feminist bureaucrats are in structurally marginal (numerically, organizationally, symbolically) in the male-dominated state, they can be considered as outsiders inside the State.

Fields and networks

Along with these theoretical reflections on social movements’ institutionalization, works that have articulated the concepts of field and network with social movement analysis have been instrumental in elaborating the concept of field of women’s advocacy.

The term of field, as I use it, doesn't refer to a single theoretical definition. It borrows certain of its features to Bourdieu's concept of field (*champ*) (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992), and more specifically to the ways this concept has been discussed and appropriated by some social movement analysts (Topalov 1999; Mathieu 2007). It also refers to the concept of multi-organizational field (Curtis & Zurcher 1973) and to a series of works that have placed the focus on the network structure of social movements (Rosenthal *et al.* 1985; Diani 1992; Rosenthal *et al.* 1997; Mische 1998; Diani & McAdam 2003; Mische 2003).

The concept of field was coined by Bourdieu to reflect on social reproduction in the context of an increased division of modern societies into specialized areas of social activities. It refers to the structure of objective relations uniting social actors with respect to a specific activity. Bourdieu notably studied the art field, the religious field, the political field, the academic field, but the concept is potentially applicable to a multiplicity of social activities. It has several definitional characteristics: it puts the emphasis on *structural/objective relations* between actors; the field is partially *autonomous* from the rest of the social world: it revolves around its own specific stake, its own rules, and rests on specific processes of socialization; the field is structurally *hierarchized* along the lines of different types of capital: not only economic, cultural and social (relational) capital, but also the specific capital that is related to the specific social activity; the field is an agonistic space: social actors are fighting around the capital valued in the field (literary prestige, political offices, etc).

The field of women's advocacy borrows to Bourdieu's concept of field the accent put on objective relations between the actors of the field (these relations are characterized by a certain degree of stability); the pursuit of a common goal and the acceptance of certain common rules of the game, through a series socialization processes; the agonistic dimension – the idea that actors are struggling around the definition of the stake (here the cause of women) – which doesn't prevent them from cooperating. However, the concept of FWA is a *weak* version of the field. While in Bourdieu's framework no field is totally autonomous from the rest of the social world (they are always in a state of "relative autonomy"), some social fields display a higher degree of autonomy than others, because they are regulated by strong institutions that impose their rules and distribute professional positions. Compared to the bureaucratic field, the political field, or the academic field, the field of women's advocacy lacks the degree of institutionalization that would enable a high degree of internal unification. In the French, I use the term "espace" rather than "champ", to assert this weak dimension of the field of women's advocacy, drawing on Lilian Mathieu's concept of "space of social movements" (*espace des mouvements sociaux*), SMS⁷. This concept refers to the specialized universe of social protest outside traditional and more institutionalized actors of the polity. It insists on the blurred, shifting boundaries of this social universe vis-à-vis neighboring, "stronger" fields, such as the State, political parties and unions. In Mathieu's view, the relative autonomy of the "space

⁷ In the English translation of the "*espace de la cause des femmes*", I keep the word "field" because it doesn't have the same orthodox meaning than it has in the French academia, and because it also refers to other definitions of the field, such as the notion of "multi-organizational field".

of social movements” expands and shrinks according to the historical context. In the aftermath of May 68 in France, the SMS gained a stronger autonomy, spilling over the boundaries of the neighboring fields. In the 1980s, the boundaries of the SMS shrunk back under the increasing pressure of traditional political fields (Mathieu 2007). Topalov also uses the idea of a “weak field” to refer to the configuration of actors who were struggling for advancing social reform ideas and practices in the early 20th in France. The social reform field (*champ réformateur*) was formed by a set of social actors who shared a set of common discourses and goals, who were connected together by a network of social links, but whose social positions were still predominantly defined by three stronger, neighboring fields, namely the state field, the academic field, and the partisan field. The social reform field disappeared during the interwar period, when social reform goals became increasingly incorporated in the neighboring, dominant fields (Topalov 1999).

While the Bourdieusian notion of field is not necessarily associated with network analysis, the field of women’s advocacy also draws on the social movement concept of multi-organizational field (Curtis & Zurcher 1973), which stresses out the importance of the network structure of social movements.

Networks have long been at the center of social movement theory. Scholars have notably focused on networks to account for recruitment and mobilization processes (McAdam 1988; Jasper & Poulsen 1995). Others have put the emphasis on the inter-organizational dynamics of social movements, trying to make sense of a variety of aspects in their development, such as resource mobilization, collective identity building, sustainability, political success, and the power-relationships among their participants (notably through the study of “centrality” and “brokerage” positions) (Diani & McAdam 2003).

Organizational and personal links are recurrently distinguished in many of these works. In their classic text on the “multi-organizational field”, Curtis and Zurcher argue that “interorganizational processes within the field can be identified on two levels, which conceptually overlap: the organizational level, where networks are established by joint activities, staff, boards of directors, target clientele, resources; the individual level, where networks are established by multiple affiliations of members” (Curtis & Zurcher 1973, p.53). Network analysis rests on a series of other important analytical distinctions, including the following: strong vs. weak ties; reticulate vs. segmented networks; centralized vs. decentralized networks, etc (Diani 2003b; 2003a).

A wide range of research has addressed the impact of network structures on social movements. Here, I would like to draw attention to a few insights that were particularly instrumental in the elaboration of the category of field of women’s advocacy.

Firstly, network ties might favor cooperation between protestors. McCarthy and Zald argue that organizational interlocks and overlapping constituencies tend to constrain SMOs in a same SMI toward cooperation (Zald & McCarthy 1980). Network ties tend to favor the circulation of ideas, resources, tactic, etc. However, as Mische stresses out,

there is no mechanical relationship between networks and cooperation. Studying multiple affiliation ties of students in Brazil in the 1990s (Mische 1998; 2000; 2003), she writes that “the superimposition of different forms of involvement often creates conflicts, barriers, and disputes, as well as opportunities for innovation and joint action” (Mische 2000, p.16).

Secondly, Reticulate networks (or “cliques”) with strong ties are not necessarily a greater resource for social movements than decentralized networks with weak ties. As Mische puts it, “at certain times in the life of a movement, “bridges” (or the lack of them) are more important than webs” (Mische 2000, p.4). Focusing on bridges in polycephalous (decentralized and quite segmented) networks⁸ can help understand how alliances are built between disparate organizations. In their studies on women’s organizations networks (based on multiple affiliations of women’s organizations’ elites) in the turn of the 20th century in the US, Rosenthal and al. draw the picture of a segmented, decentralized network structure linking together a wide range of women’s organizations (from feminism to “non-insurgent voluntarism”), with a majority of weak ties. However, this wide network structure can account for extended possibilities of organizational support for women’s rights campaigns, although women’s rights organizations are in minority among this network (Rosenthal *et al.* 1985; Rosenthal *et al.* 1997).

Thirdly, placing the emphasis on networks doesn’t mean that cultural meanings disappear from the picture. Many social movement scholars have been concerned with articulating network analysis with a close attention to culture. Mische, for example, reformulates networks as ‘multiple, cross-cutting sets of relations sustained by conversational dynamics within social settings’ (2003). In her “culture-as-network” drawing from the study of conversational exchanges among students engaged in a variety of youth movements in Brazil, she looks at how collective identity and discourses emerge (or not) through communication processes. The dynamic of conversational mechanisms accounts for “the dramatic convergence among otherwise contentious sets of movement actors” (Mische paper p 15). Diani also studies networks and collective identity as intertwined in each other. In line with other scholars (Taylor & Whittier 1992), he stresses out the “the role of ‘latent’ networks’ (...) connecting different organizations through activists’ multiple involvements and personal connections, play in generating broader collective identities and specific boundaries” (Diani Forthcoming, p.6-7).

The concept of field of women’s advocacy borrows several elements to these theoretical frameworks in terms of field and networks: the focus on the relational structure of the movement; the idea that social ties between actors might lead to cooperation *and* conflict; the idea of a self-fulfilling dynamics between relational structure and collective identity.

⁸ As opposed to a “clique”, which is perfect model of a reticulate, decentralized network, where all nodes are adjacent to each other.

From movement to field

I chose to refer to a “field” of women’s advocacy rather than to the traditional term of “women’s movement” for two sets of reasons. First, the term of movement conveys the idea that social movements are primarily defined by their location outside institutions, or at least the idea that the origin of a movement lies in the “civil society”, outside the State and other “traditional” political institutions, such as political parties. The FWA refers to a configuration of actors that cuts across the lines traditionally drawn between civil society, the state and other institutions. Second, I chose to move away from the term “movement” because it tends to associate contentious politics to the idea of a public, episodic social protest. With the concept of FWA, I want to emphasize on the continuity of women’s claim making, and on the structural conditions that account for the emergence of public episode of feminist protest. In this respect, the FWA is inspired by the notion of “abeyance structures”, which refers to the organizational structures that preserve contentious discourses, tactics and resources between two “waves” of protest” (Taylor 1989).

3.The field of women’s advocacy

The FWA refers to the relational structure of groups and organizations mainly devoted to the cause of women in a variety of social fields.

Organized women struggling for women

This definition refers to *groups and organizations* rather than individuals. Empirically, when it comes to mapping the field, it is easier to identify groups and organizations mainly devoted to the advancement of women (from their public platforms or historical records) rather than trying to assess individuals’ commitment to the cause of women. An organization that sporadically joins feminist campaigns or includes gender equality at a subaltern level of its platform is not a component of the FWA: the French socialist party, for example, does not belong to the FWA, in spite of its official commitment to feminism. By “groups”, I don’t necessarily refer to women’s associations. In line with Katzenstein, I argue that women’s groups within institutions can be considered as “habitats”, in which women can fight for women with a certain degree of autonomy. For example, women’s organizations that are inside of, or affiliated to, the French Socialist party, are a part of the FWA because their main goal relates to women’s concerns (within the party and beyond). While the definition of the FWA primarily rests on groups, it doesn’t exclude individual activists. They are fully considered as being part of the FWA at a given time as long as they belong to/regularly participate to the activities of a group that is mainly devoted to the advancement of women. Individual participants of the FWA are not necessarily women, although women account for a vast majority of the members of groups mainly mobilized around women’s concerns. This definition excludes individuals who might identify as feminist or support gender equality claims

without being included in any kind of collective action turned toward the cause of women⁹.

But what does it mean for a group to be *mainly devoted to the cause of women*? It is one of the thorniest issues to tackle when it comes to delimitating the boundaries of the FWA. The literature on women's movement has pointed out the distinction between "women's movements" and "feminist movements". Women's movements refer to the wide variety of organizations who speak on behalf of women, i.e. « address their constituents as women, mothers, sisters, daughters » (Ferree & Mueller 2004). Many women's organizations have historically pursued a variety of goals (peace, social reform, nationalism, etc.) without necessarily seeking to advance the status of women and challenge the gender order. Some women's organizations have devoted an important part of their energies fighting against feminist ideas and organizations. Thus, several women's movement scholars have suggested delineating a subcategory of "feminist movements" within the universe of women's movements. Feminist movement organizations are women's organizations that adhere to a "feminist discourse", that can be defined, broadly, as « the goal of challenging and changing women's subordination to men » (Ferree & Mueller 2004, p.577). However, historians of women's movements have insisted that this analytical boundary should not be reified. Several studies have showed that non-feminist women's organizations (such as female philanthropic or moralist organizations in the 19th in the US) have been the roots of future struggles for women's rights (Giele 1995). Many women's organizations and individual activists challenge certain aspect of the gender order while embracing conservative views on other aspects of this order. The category of field of women's advocacy refers to a quite flexible definition of the cause of women. It excludes women's organizations and groups that don't place the advancement of women's status among their main goals. Women might gather as women (based on their gender identity) to do knitting, steaming, praying, etc., without necessarily seeking to advance women's status in their community or at a larger scale. The field of women's advocacy encompasses all groups that place the idea of changing women's status among their main concerns, and deploy some kind of activism to pursue this goal, even if they don't radically challenge the gender order, and even if they don't self-identify as feminist. For example, a female catholic organization might place the advancement of the status of women among its main goals, participate in some campaigns for gender equity in the workplace and for a better representation of women in politics, while keeping away from campaigns for abortion rights or directed towards lesbians' rights. Such an organization belongs to the FWA.

The two variants of the field: a scattered geography

In what follows, I present two possible geographies of the FWA. The first variant is directly linked to my research on the campaign for gender parity. The second variant has been designed in the following years, and shifts away from the specific features of this case study. Both models emphasize on the high level of internal heterogeneity of the FWA, due to the variety of social spheres it cuts across, and thus on its embeddedness in

⁹ In a quite different perspective, Mansbridge suggests that the women's movement should be defined along discursive, not organizational lines (Mansbridge 1995).

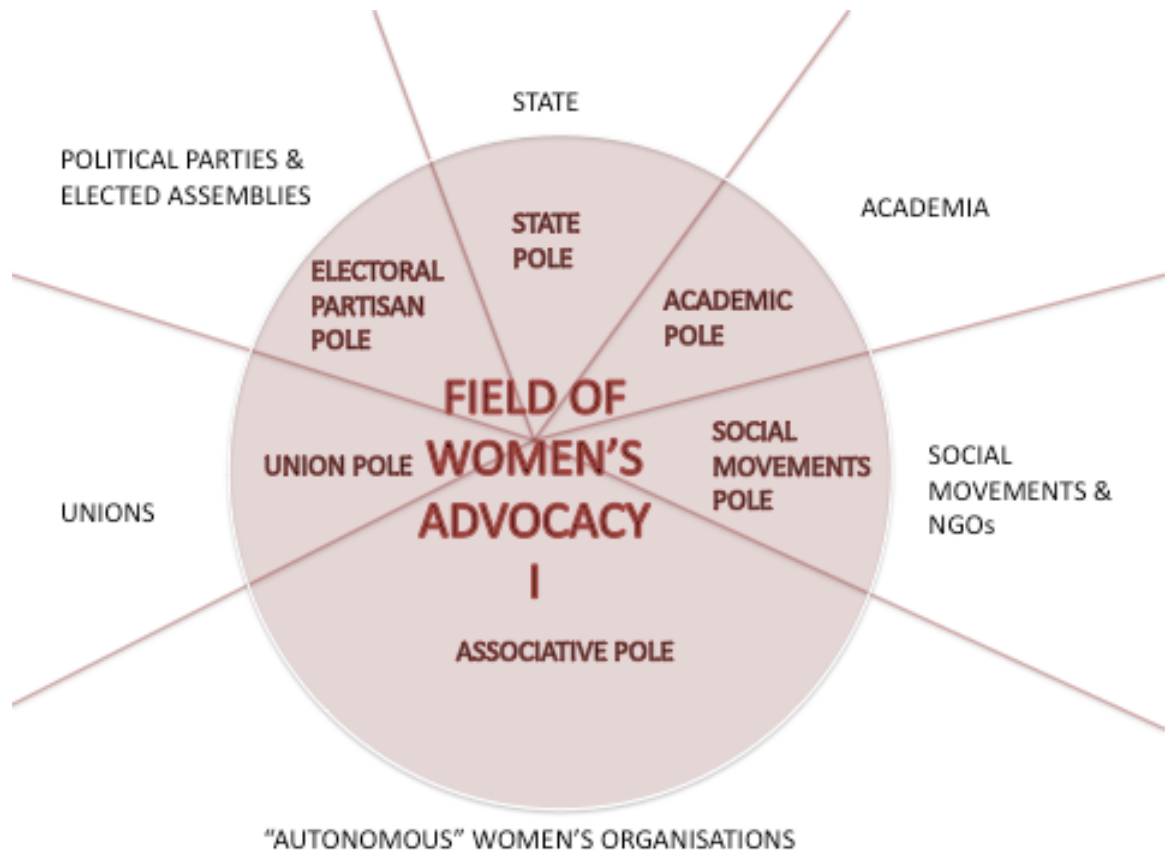
other fields. But while model 1 particularly insists on the transversality of the FWA through the movement/institution boundary, model 2 pertains to a more abstract vision of its intersectionality with a variety (potentially, an infinity) of social fields.

The field of women’s advocacy, model 1

In its initial version, directly stemming from my research on the parity campaign, the main characteristics of the FWA is that it cuts across the movement/institution divide. In this first version, the FWA is divided along two main lines of division: the first one pertains to the location of the struggle (distribution in *poles*), the second one to its ideological dimension (distribution in *streams*).

The first line of division is related to the various locations of women’s groups, beyond the realm of “autonomous” women’s organizations. I chose to use the term “*pole*” to refer to the diversity of possible locations of FWA’s actors, following the traditional lines of divisions among political actors. I delineated six poles: the associative pole, the state pole, the electoral-partisan pole, the academic pole, the social movement pole, and the union pole (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The field of women’s advocacy, model 1



The first pole of the field of women's advocacy is the *associative pole*. It is composed of the set of "autonomous" women's organizations advocating for women, which are commonly referred to, by both actors and analysts, as the "women's movement". This pole undoubtedly occupies a central position in the field of women's advocacy, with regard to its size (number of groups and activists), its centrality in the network structure (activists in the associative pole are likely to have more connections with other poles than those of the other poles with one another), and its symbolic legitimacy (women's struggles are historically associated with autonomous organizations located in the civil society). However, I argue that this pole is not always the driving force behind women's contentious politics, or the origins of women's protest. In some circumstances, (e.g., when the autonomous women's movement is in abeyance, or when women's concerns appear on the public agenda), other poles of the FWA might play a crucial role in fueling feminist contentious politics (Bereni 2009).

In my research on gender parity, I found that three other poles of the field of women's advocacy played a major role in the campaign: the *electoral-partisan pole*, which refers to groups and their participants that are devoted to women within the electoral-political field, namely in political parties and in elected assemblies; the *academic pole*, which refers to the groups and institutional settings supporting feminist views and women within the academia; the *state pole*, which refers to the women's policy bodies (advisory committees, bureaucratic instances...) at different levels of the government bureaucracy (from the local to the national scale)¹⁰. To these four poles, in the French case, could be added a *union pole*, made up of women's groups within employees' unions, and a *social movements pole*, composed of a set of women's groups within a variety of social movements and NGOs (ranging from Attac's women's commission to the women's section of Amnesty International).

In this first model of the FWA, the different poles refer to distinct political locations. Yet, a single women's group can be located at the intersection between two poles, and especially between the associational pole and another pole. A number of women's organizations might define themselves, simultaneously or alternatively (depending on the context and their strategic interest), as a being a part of an institution *and* outside this institution. For example, a women's association might be affiliated with a political party and sometimes act as an autonomous organization. Moreover, activists frequently belong to more than one women's group, and to more than one pole (an activist can be a member of an women's association and of a women's group in a political party).

In the first model of the FWA, other lines of division can be added to the division among poles. The FWA is notably divided along ideological lines, which cut across the poles. I suggest to call "*streams*" the sets of FWA actors who are united along the same ideological lines. While claiming the autonomy of the cause of women, women's movements have historically been embedded in a variety of other collective struggles

¹⁰ Women's agencies among international organizations (such as the UN Commission on the Status of Women or the European Union bodies devoted to women's rights), when intervening in the national arena, can be considered as a state pole subcategory.

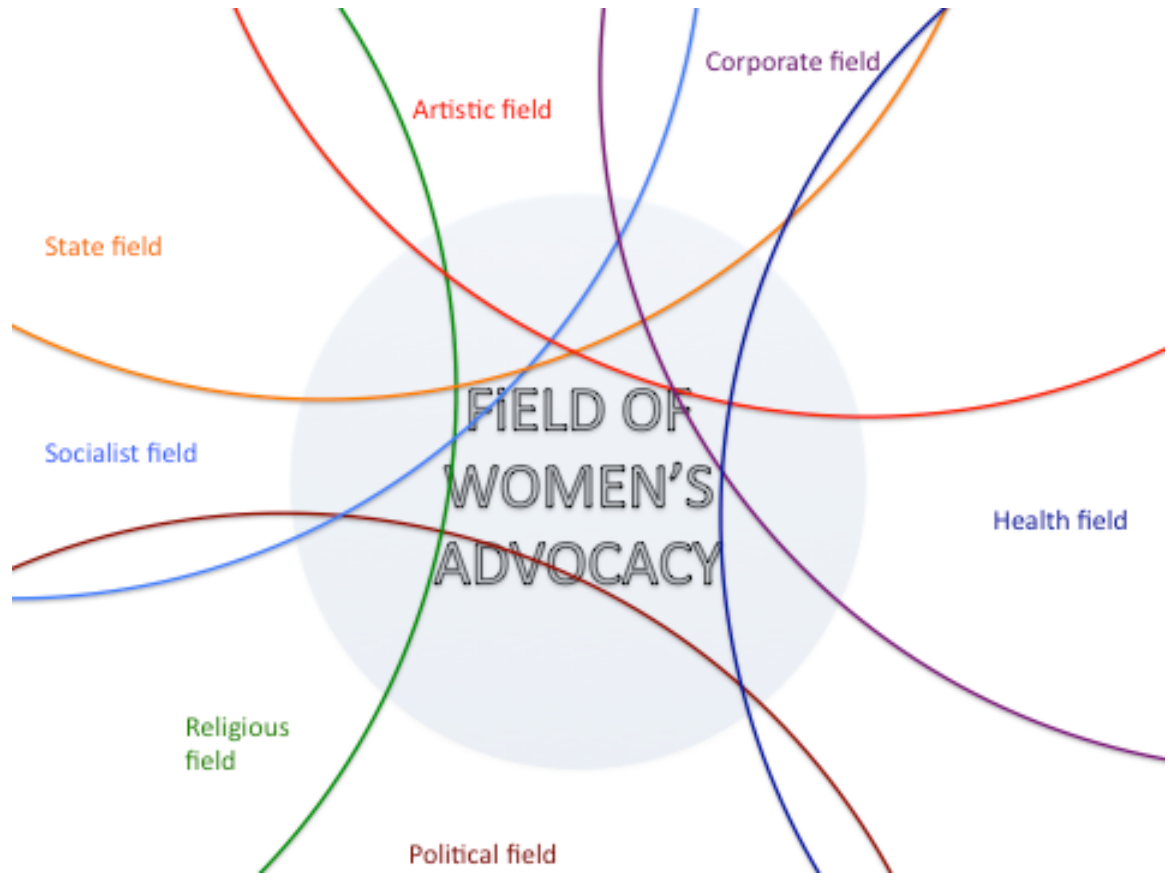
(notably through shared memberships), and women's claims have thus been interwoven with a variety of ideologies: socialist, peace, reformist, liberal, nationalist, conservative, republican, etc. Along with these "imported" ideological lines, other divisions have historically been more specific to the internal dynamics of the women's movement, such as the radical/reformist (extent to which the gender hierarchy is challenged), and the universalist/differentialist (emphasis on the abstract subject or celebration of the sexual difference) divides. In my own research on gender parity, I identified two main streams: the "second wave" stream and the "traditional feminine" stream. Both streams cut across the different poles of the FWA, adding complexity to the heterogeneous geography of the campaign. However, with another research question in mind, I could have delineated a socialist stream, a liberal stream, a radical stream, a lesbian stream, etc.

The field of women's advocacy, model 2

Reflecting further on the architecture of the FWA in the aftermath of my research on the gender parity campaign, I came to the idea that its model could be extended and complexified, and give birth to a second model. The first model has the advantage of giving a quite simple map, which insists on the transversal dimension of the field of women's advocacy through the movement/institution line. It rests on a classical cartography of political actors (bureaucrats, politicians, civil society, unions...). Although FWA actors can be located at the intersection of different poles, or belong to different pole at the same time, all the poles can be represented on the same map as distinct political universes.

I finally came to the idea that the FWA could be a matrix to help think, in more abstract terms, the intersectionality of women's collective mobilizations, and their embeddedness in a multiplicity of social fields. In model 1, the wide range of organizations advocating for women are subsumed in the same pole (associative). Yet, this vision tends to homogenize what's going on in the "civil society": it overlooks the embeddedness of many "autonomous" women's organizations in a variety of social fields. Many of these organizations are located in the field of women's advocacy *and* in one (or more) other social field, which is driven by *another* specific concern. Figure two is an abstract representation of model 2 of the FWA. In this figure, the social fields that the FWA intersects with have been chosen randomly (artistic field, corporate field, state field, socialist field, etc). This figure is not a map, but an abstract representation aimed at insisting on the multiplicity of social fields and their multiple overlaps.

Figure 2: The field of women's advocacy, model 2¹¹



One could think of an endless number of other possible social fields, with varying degrees in size and level of institutionalization (environmental field, sexual politics field, academic field, alter-globalization field...). I use the term “pole” to refer to the intersection zones between the FWA and other social fields. The distinction between streams and poles is blurred in this second model, since a pole can revolve around an ideological stake, such as environmentalism, socialism or nationalism. However, belonging to a same pole doesn't lead to an consensus over the definition of women's advocacy: women's groups belonging to the same socialist pole are divided along a variety of other lines.

In this model, one single women's group can be placed in a variety of social fields at the same time. An organization like the *Planning familial* (French equivalent of

¹¹ Colors need to be seen to properly read the figure.

Planned Parenthood), for example, can be placed at the intersection of the field of women's advocacy, the health field, the sexual politics field, and the socialist field.

It can be argued that some women's organizations are less embedded in other social fields than others, because they are more "purely" and "exclusively" devoted to the advancement of women, as a generic category. These organizations can be associated with what could be called the "autonomous" pole in the FWA, which would be located at the center of Figure 2. However, "embeddedness" and "autonomy" are the two ideal-typical extremities of a continuum. In reality, all women's organizations are, to some degree, embedded in one (or several) other social field(s) that influence the way they mobilize as women and for women¹².

The FWA's embeddedness in a multiplicity of social fields has important consequences on its internal properties. On the one hand, it means that groups constituted on behalf of women and making claims for women are likely to proliferate in an extraordinary vast social perimeter. Women make up half of the overall population, and have entered in a variety of social fields and accessed a growing number of social positions (even it is sometime in small numbers) in the past decades. Dominant institutions and political organizations have increasingly accepted to house settings specifically devoted to women. But on the other hand, the intersectional structure of the FWA plays out as a centrifugal mechanism in the field of women's advocacy. Most women's groups are *not* exclusively devoted to the cause of women, and their vision of this cause is most of the time intertwined with a variety of other stakes. Feminist academics might be, most of the time, primarily concerned with women's issues within the academic field, and Jewish women's groups might be turned, most of the time, around women's issues in their specific Jewish field. Moreover, in many contexts, women's groups might place their commitment to the advancement of women in "abeyance" (Taylor 1989), redirecting most their militant energies towards other stakes. Women's professional organizations, for example, might participate as women in the professional activities of their field, without permanently advocating for women.

Networks as potential convergence mechanisms

The FWA is not only a juxtaposition of groups devoted to women in a variety of social spheres, driven by a variety of logics of action. The various components of the field of women's advocacy are linked together by an interlock of ties, which can be considered as the main *convergence mechanisms* within the field.

Three main categories of convergence mechanisms can be distinguished. Firstly, FWA components are connected together on the basis of *individual's multiple affiliations*. As mentioned earlier, members of women's groups often belong to several other groups at the same time, whether as activists or as simple members. These multiple

¹² This vision is in line with the research on intersectionality, which emphasize on the interweaving of women's identity in a multiplicity of other identities, which are the outcome of a variety of power relations (based on race, social class, age, sexuality, etc.).

affiliations cut across the lines between different poles of the FWA. Multi-positioned activists can be seen as brokers between the different poles. Secondly, FWA's actors are linked together by an *interlock of formal organizational ties*. In the last twenty years, in France like in many other countries, umbrella organizations and advocacy networks have developed, linking together a multiplicity of women's organizations around specific issues, or in temporary campaigns. Some of these umbrella organizations cut across the lines between autonomous women's organizations and women's groups within political groups and institutions. The third basis of the interlock of social ties between FWA actors is provided by what I call *convergence events*. Those are the events that reach out to a variety of women's advocates and women's groups stemming from a multiplicity of social settings. The annual March 8th celebration of the international women's rights day is one of these convergence events, gathering women's advocates from a wide range of social spheres and ideological commitments. State feminism institutions, both at the national and international levels, have played an important role in triggering that type of event in the past thirty years (cf. the United Nations women's conferences regularly held since 1975). There is a multiplicity of other convergence events: women's cultural festivals, conferences and colloquia on women, commemorations of historical heroines, etc. All these events, whatever their size, favor the creation of new links between women's groups activists who usually don't get along, or might ignore each other's existence. They also allow the circulation of distinct understandings of the cause of women, and, possibly, the emergence of some common frames.

Three comments can be made on these convergence mechanisms. First, the ties that connect together the actors of the field of women's advocacy are based on both structural linkages and discursive exchanges. Second, many ties are likely to be weak ties, and the overall network structure is likely to be polymorphous. These characteristics don't hinder, in themselves, cooperation processes. Third, convergence mechanisms don't necessary lead to the emergence of shared discourses and cooperation processes. Many conflicts might arise from the interlock of links between the actors of the FWA: actors who used to ignore each other might be led to fight against each other's views (going back to the "agonistic" dimension of Bourdieu's notion of field). However, convergence mechanisms tend to give to the actors of the field the sense of belonging to an "auto-referential" universe, distinct from others because of its own rules, its own stakes, and its own lines of divisions. In certain historical contexts, these convergence mechanisms might give birth to transversal campaigns around common women's claims and frames, involving various (although not all) components of the FWA.

Conclusion

The concept of field of women's advocacy does not pretend to explain all aspects of women's collective struggles. Other approaches should be deployed to understand many dimensions of the dynamics of women's collective struggles, such as the emergence of new frames and ideas, the cooperation building processes, the strategic choices made by FWA's actors, or the impact of political opportunities on mobilization processes. Yet, this analytical category is aimed at rethinking the structural architecture

of women's collective struggles, and at bringing a series of insights to the definitional debates over the category of social movement.

Firstly, the field of women's advocacy (especially in its first variant) challenges the central position occupied by the *movement/institution boundary* in social movement theory: women's protest occurs unobtrusively inside a variety of dominant institutions, and women's groups acting inside or outside institutions form cross-sectional *field* of social protest.

Secondly, the concept of field of women's advocacy (especially in its second variant) puts the emphasis on the *intersectionality* of women's struggles. Women's groups are embedded in a multiplicity of social fields. This structural characteristic accounts for the scattered dimension of the field, beyond the apparent common commitment to "the cause of women". However, these heterogeneous components are linked together by several convergence mechanisms, which account for possible cooperation processes among the FWA actors.

Thirdly, the concept of field of women's advocacy points out the *continuity* of collective women's struggles, in line with Taylor's concept of "abeyance structures". As she writes, women's movements (and more broadly social movements) do not "emerge out of nowhere" (Taylor 1989, p.761). It enables to envision a universe of actors that promote the cause of women without being continuously "in motion", i.e. actively mobilizing for women, and without being continuously involved in transversal campaigns (together with women's advocacy actors located in other poles).

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