

# 'Corporate response to stability and change'

Understanding corporate strategic action in response to stability threatening events, a case study of Lonmin Plc. and the Marikana Massacre.

Thesis MA Conflict Studies and Human Rights (first Draft)

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7 July 2016

A Thesis submitted to the Board of Examiners in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in Conflict Studies & Human Rights

Supervisor: Dr. Chris van der Borgh  
Date of submission: 8 July 2016  
Programme trajectory: Internship and Research (15 ECTS) & Thesis Writing (15 ECTS)  
Word count: 15.550 words

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## List of Abbreviations

AMCU	Allied Mining and Construction Union
ANC	African National Congress
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DGP	Gross Domestic Product
LRA	Labour Relations Act
MNO	Multi National Corporation
MPRDA	Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
RDO	Rock Drill Operator
SAF	Strategic Action Field
SAPS	South African National Police Services
TEBA	The Employment Bureau of Africa

## Chapter 1: Background and Introduction

On Thursday 16 August 2012 the MNO Lonmin Plc., a British mining corporation operating a platinum mine in Rustenburg, South Africa, was confronted with a crisis of severe gravity. Following a series of violent events and casualties, the stunning amount of 34 mineworkers were massacred by the South African Police Force (SAPS) and paramilitary units in an alleged attempt to disperse a wildcat strike of Lonmin rock drill operators (RDOs) near Marikana. The 'Marikana Massacre', is widely regarded as a turning point in South African history as it resembled the most violent assault on civilians by the national authorities since the 1960 Sharpville massacre during Apartheid, bringing to an end the era and hopeful prospects of the 'rainbow nation' (Alexander, 2013: 605; Alexander et al, 2013: 150; Hart, 2013: 2; Frankel, 2013: 5). Twenty years of post-apartheid democracy and capitalism had ultimately resulted in little to no change for the poor masses, and some would go as far to say that the racist apartheid had been no more than replaced by an equally repressive capitalist system (Coles, 2013). Indeed, the circumstances at Marikana, where protesters were not occupying any strategic point or mining property, nor holding hostages or posing any direct threat to the environment, leaves little space for any other rationale than risking the manoeuvre 'to drive strikers back to work at any cost on behalf of the bosses who were anxious to resume profit making operations' (Ronnie Kasrils, in Alexander et al, 2013; 140).

An independent Commission was appointed by president Zuma to investigate how and why the dispersal of the strike had escalated into such lethal disaster, and to determine who could be held responsible. The outcomes of the commission's investigations and four years of simultaneous research by academics, activists and journalists has shed light on many aspects of the massacre. Reconstruction of the strike and the violent escalation itself, (re)militarisation of the police force, labour union rivalry, governmental stakes and media performance have been thoroughly analysed, as well as the more structural micro-level conditions of the corporation that gave rise to the strike and the violence surrounding the escalation such as working and living conditions at the Lonmin mine, mine-induced environmental degradation, and labour contracting systems of brokering and migration. Furthermore, the macro-level structures of South African society and South African history have been a popular analytical lens to explain the grievances and disappointment with the post-apartheid regime and the related societal tensions that have come to an extreme at the massacre.

With such an extensive literature on this undeniably historic event, a remarkable void appears. Against the backdrop of increased attention for corporate performance and business ethics of international and multinational corporations operating outside their national territory, it seems puzzling that the corporation involved in the most lethal violent crisis that South Africa has experienced in 20 years since apartheid, remains relatively un(der)studied. Because Lonmin did not 'pull the trigger' and therefore does

not bear direct responsibility for the massacre itself, the mining house has been spared severe international scrutiny and (attempts at) prosecution. From previous research on the role that Lonmin played in the Marikana Massacre, the image emerges of Lonmin as a mere bystander in the development of conflict, caught into a violent escalation of a strike gone wrong. Research into these pre-massacre conditions that set the scene for the strike is highly valuable in understanding the case. However, attempts at analysis of the role of the corporation in the development of the conflict has failed to approach the conflict as a gradual process with Lonmin having agency at every moment, from setting the preconditions, throughout the strike, the escalation and the aftermath of the crisis. Hence, this thesis sets out to fill the chasm of Lonmin's part in the development of the drama. It should be clear, that the intention is not to cast blame or to hold Lonmin responsible for what has happened, but to analyse and understand the corporate agency in response to stability threatening events.

A careful review of the 'common' theoretical approaches for the analysis of a (corporate) institution remained fruitless in tackling this gap of agency during the development of conflict. As will become clear in the following chapters, the relative new theory by McAdam and Fligstein holds a variety of qualities that adequately fill the theoretical void by using the anatomy of the theory as a literal framework to create a new representation of reality. By conceptualizing the conflict as taking place within a 'strategic action field', where both powerful and less powerful actors are constantly jockeying for position; incumbents actively protecting and reinforcing their position of power and order, and challengers actively looking to improve their position at any given opportunity. This approach, as designed by McAdams and Fligstein in their 'theory of fields', enables the researcher to study the interaction between actors in a meso-level social order in the balance between stability and change. With the relationship between stability and change at the core of the approach, a very different image arises of Lonmin; an incumbent actively using social skill, internal governance units and calling upon (state) allies to protect the status quo and stability of the field at any given point in time. This allows for a far more complex and detailed analysis of the corporation's role in the conflict than has been given to date. This new attempt at analysis of Lonmin's role in the Marikana Massacre will be guided by the following research question:

*How did the British mining company Lonmin Plc. develop a response to (field) stability threatening events surrounding the Marikana Massacre in the strategic action field of the corporation and the broader field environment of the South African Platinum mining industry between 2011 and 2015?*

To answer this main research question, the following sub questions, sequenced in four stages of stability and change, will need to be answered:

Stage 1: The strategic action field and the broader field environment.

- What did the strategic action field look like in times of stability precipitating the crisis and how is it connected to the broader field environment?
- How did Lonmin protect and reinforce the stability of the field? How did it employ social skill to legitimise its position vis-à-vis the working force?
- How is Lonmin's position reinforced by governance units, and other external actors/strategic action fields?

#### Stage 2: The onset of contention: exogenous shocks

- What mix of exogenous "shocks" and internal processes precipitate the field crisis?
- What specific social processes mediate between the destabilizing events and the actual mobilization of strikers?

#### Stage 3: The episode of contention and crisis

- With what forms of action and collective action frames does Lonmin respond to the developing crisis in the form of an unprotected strike? How do these change over the life of the episode?
- What role do key external actors/strategic action fields play in precipitating the episode and shaping its trajectory, and ultimately helping to affect a new field settlement?

#### Stage 4: Settlement

- What are the terms of the new settlement? And to what extent does it alter the prior power structure of the strategic action field?
- How does Lonmin respond to the escalation of the strike vis à vis the victims, the broader workforce and the media? Does the corporation make efforts to legitimise its position in the post-Marikana settlement? Towards whom?

The rationale behind these sub-questions is the following: The four chronological stages of change (stability, the onset of contention, crisis, and settlement) need to be studied in order to analyse a field-crisis. The contours of each stage are first addressed in one sub-question, whereafter the specific role of Lonmin in that stage is addressed in one or two additional sub-questions. These sub questions are derived from the research questions recommended by McAdam and Fligstein for the analysis of field-crisis (2012:166).

To be clear, this study seeks to answer, by way of the questions as defined above, how Lonmin Plc. responded to the (looming) field crisis that culminated in the Marikana Massacre. By using the theory of fields to make sense of the conflict, a new representation of reality will emerge. At the same time, this case-study will serve as a test-case for application of this relative new theory to fill the current conceptual void in analysis of corporations involved in (violent) crisis, highlighting whether the theory and hypotheses posed by McAdam and Fligstein prove useful and consistent within this specific type of field-analysis.

I propose that the theoretical frame of the theory of fields does not only fill the conceptual void in analysis of corporations' agency in the shift between stability and crisis, but that it also helps to tackle the methodological impasse of access to the company. By analysing the meso-level relations in and between the strategic action fields that Lonmin operates in, it is possible to make a representation of reality based on facts of interaction, rather than (biased) information shared by the company itself.

After this introductory chapter, this thesis is organised as follows: The second chapter sheds light on how the theory of fields is used as a theoretical framework for the case study of Marikana, as well as the ontological, epistemological and methodological stances underlying the research. Subsequently, the third chapter provides the analysis of the sub-questions divided in four subsequent stages of change as formulated in this introductory chapter. In the fourth and final chapter conclusions on the research question are drawn, limitations of the research are explained and suggestions for future research are proposed.

## Chapter 2: Theory of Fields

This chapter is devoted to outline the theory that guides this cases study of Lonmin and the Marikana Massacre. It will start by explaining the ontological and epistemological stance underlying the theory, followed by a general outline of the theory of fields by Doug McAdam and Neil Fligstein (2011/2012), with attention for the particular 'stage' of the field, namely field-crisis, and its application to this specific case study of a corporation in conflict.

### Ontology

The ontological stance underlying this theory is of particular relevance to this endeavour of overcoming the current conceptual void in the analysis of Lonmin's role in the Marikana conflict. Current research on the role of Lonmin leaves a gap of agency between the development of abusive and frustrating structures of employment, and the response to the escalation of the protest. This is in line with institutional theory, which would be the general approach to study institutions and corporations. Institutional theory's view of institutional action is that, once a set of rules and resources become institutionalized, they become 'taken for granted' and 'fields' become powerful systems that reproduce themselves without the need for people to do anything (McAdam and Fligstein, 2012: 179). This is in line with the general image of Lonmin and the Marikana Massacre, where there is little to no attention for what happened between the creation of abusive structures of employment, and the response to escalating conflict. I suggest that this approach is not useful in the study of the role of a corporate actor in the development of contention, because it suggests that the corporation does not have active agency in between setting the stage (structures), and responding to the escalation derived from these structures. What is needed to close the analytical gap, is an approach that recognises the agency of the corporation (or any actor in the field) as a constant factor, without undermining the basic structures of social order characteristic to institutions.

This ontological duality of interaction between agency and structure is precisely what McAdam and Fligstein have sought to operationalise within their theory. They reject the idea that people only have agency when they are helping to form new social fields/institutions 'because our everyday experiences suggest that we exercise at least some degree of agency all of the time, and because it ignores the fact that social life is largely played out in fields' (2012: 180):

'Our theory of action stresses that individuals or groups are always acting and they are always looking for an edge. But it is the structuring of those fields that determines which kinds of action make sense. The position we occupy in a field has a huge effect on how we enact our capacity for agency. In settled fields, incumbents will generally work to reproduce their advantage, while challengers can be expected to jockey for position and

look for signs of any crack in the system that might reward more innovative forms of action (McAdam and Fligstein, 2012: 180)

## Epistemology

This clear account of interaction between structures and agency brings us to the epistemological and methodological implications of the research. This research is a single-case study with a positivist theory-testing potential. It will provide a thick qualitative description of the Marikana case guided by the interpretative frame of field analysis; the theory helps to make sense of the case. The case study has the potential and goal to test the generic theory and its corresponding hypotheses for application in this particular context; if the theory is useful and hypotheses are correct, this may be interpreted as an explanation for how and why Lonmin responded the way it did. However, it should be clear that the social realities described by this theory are far too complex to be reduced to a positivist testing of hypotheses. If the hypotheses are correct this only indicates that the theory makes sense and is a useful avenue for future qualitative research on similar cases in order to gain better understanding of what type of action ‘makes sense’ in each unique social context.

## Method

The implications of the theory on the method used to analyse the case have already been touched upon above, where I suggest that the theoretical frame of the theory of fields does not only fill the conceptual void in analysis of corporations’ agency in the shift between stability and crisis, but that it also helps to tackle the methodological impasse of access to the company. I would like to take it one step further by proposing that from the field analysis perspective, access to the corporation is less relevant than the information obtained from field analysis. According to McAdam and Fligstein, individuals and groups are always acting and interacting while looking for improvement or reinforcement of their position in the field, but it is ‘the structuring of those fields that determines which kinds of action make sense’ (2012:180). This means that in order to make sense of what happened and why, we need to analyse the actions of the actors in relation to the structuring of the field. By analysing the meso-level relations in and between the strategic action fields in which Lonmin operates, it is possible to make a representation of reality based on facts of interaction, rather than (biased) subjective information shared by the company itself. So the theory does not merely circumvent the problem of access (which does not only derive from the temporal and spatial limits of this particular thesis, but is highly problematic by definition due to the reputational stakes corporations have to deal with nowadays), it deems it less relevant.

Hence, the method used for this study is to use the theoretical framework of the theory

of fields to (I) capture the field structures and (II) pair the field structures with data on Lonmin's actions and reactions derived from secondary literature, in order to make sense of how Lonmin responded to the unfolding conflict, forming a new representation of reality. This data includes all types of action and interaction by and between Lonmin and other actors inside and outside the field as disclosed by reliable secondary sources.

### A Theory of Fields

According to McAdam and Fligstein, scholars of organisations and social movements '*and for that matter; any institutional actor in modern society*' are interested in the same underlying phenomenon to the question of what accounts for stability and change in society: collective strategic action (2011: 2). Yet research is still fundamentally compartmented in distinct theories and approaches unsuitable for mutual reinforcing synthesis. The current literature on Marikana is a good example of this compartmented potpourri of approaches shedding light on isolated 'forms' of collective strategic action rather than adding to an inclusive understanding; each party in the conflict is analysed from a different approach. Field theory is designed to transcend the limits of the myriad of disciplines and theories interested in strategic collective action. The central idea of the integrated theory is that stability and change are achieved by social actors in circumscribed social arenas (McAdam and Fligstein, 2012:3). These social arenas, or strategic action fields, are the fundamental unit(s) of analysis. The structures of any given strategic action field are the same as in any other field regardless of whether or not the field is made up of individual people, groups, organizations, or nation-states (McAdam and Fligstein, 2012:59). This means that the analysis of stability and change and collective strategic action can be approached by a generic method, as the social arenas accommodating strategic collective action, no matter how different, share the same underlying structures by default. So whether we study a social movement, a firm, a market or state, the principles of field-interaction will be the same.

Also, by putting the social actors (in this case: corporation) at the centre of a meso-level analysis of social order, an embedded picture of that actor's role and strategy will arise rather than an isolated one: Actors have agency all of the time, but the structure of the field determines which type action or response makes sense, inclining that actors are never isolated in their decisions. So what comprises a strategic action field (hereafter SAF), and which generic principles account for strategic action in the field? McAdam and Fligstein distinguish seven elements of the theory that help to answer these questions and together illustrate how the theory works. These elements will be discussed below. Then the three different 'stages' of stability and change that strategic action fields can shift between will be discussed shortly, zooming in to the stage of crisis, since this is the particular field-state this case study of the Marikana massacre will deal with. It should be noted that the following is not a critical discussion of the theory, but that it is a very brief, and for that matter, incomplete representation of the theory of fields, necessary to familiarise the reader with the theoretical jargon and framework which guides this

thesis. For a full account of the theory the reader is referred to McAdam and Fligstein (2011, 2012).

## Central Conceptual Elements of the theory

### 1. Strategic Action Field

Strategic action fields are the fundamental units of collective action in society. So what defines a SAF? In McAdam and Fligstein's definition 'A strategic action field is a meso-level social order where actors interact with knowledge of one another under a set of common understandings about the purposes of the field, the relationships in the field (including who has power and why), and the field's rules' (2011:3). As such, the social constructionist aspects of institutional theory are combined with a focus on how field processes are about who gets what (idem). As McAdam and Fligstein put it, 'We see SAFs as socially constructed arenas within which actors with varying resource endowments vie for advantage' (idem).

SAFs do not have fixed boundaries, but change depending on the definition of the situation and the issues at stake. New fields are constructed on a situational basis, as shifting collections of actors come to define new issues and concerns as important. (McAdam and Fligstein, 2011: 4) Moreover, SAFs are like 'Russian dolls', where each SAF may be host to a variety of smaller SAFs, and itself be part of many larger SAFs. Again boundaries are not fixed and may shift and overlap depending on the situation. To be more specific, the authors distinguish four aspects of the kind of meanings that underlie SAFs. First of all, there is a diffuse understanding of what is at stake in the field. This does not mean that everyone is content with their position in the field, but at least there is a shared consensus on what is going on in the field (2011: 4). Second, there is a division in sets of actors possessing more (incumbents) or less (challengers) power in the field. Each actor in the field is aware of its position and the position of others, and has an understanding of who its friends, enemies and competitors are. Third, there is a shared understanding of the 'rules' of the field, meaning that actors understand what tactics are possible, understandable and legitimate for all the players in the field. Finally, the interpretative frame that individual and collective actors use to make sense of any other actor's actions is by no means set. Each actor uses its own subjective frame of reference to make sense of what others are doing in the field. The reactions of more and less powerful actors to the actions of others are likely to reflect their social position, and repertoires of behaviour associated with this position of either challenger or incumbent (idem).

### 2. Incumbents, challengers, and internal governance units

As has become clear, the dynamics of order/stability and change/conflict is reflected in a general social composition of the SAF which comprises of more and less powerful actors

named *incumbents*, and *challengers*. *Governance Units* form a third category to this generic composition.

Incumbents, are 'those actors who wield disproportionate influence within a field and whose interests and views tend to be heavily reflected in the organization of the SAF' (McAdam and Fligstein, 2011:6). This means that 'the purposes of the field are shaped to their interests, the positions in the field are defined by their claims on the lion's share of the resources in the field, the rules tend to favour them, and shared meanings tend to legitimate and support their privileged position within the field' (idem).

Challengers find themselves on the other end of the power balance, having little influence over the overall operation of the field. While recognising the dominant logic of incumbent actors, they may not agree with it and may perceive an alternative vision of their role on the field (idem). This raises the question why challengers would stay in a position of inequity, and abide rules set by others that do not favour them. This is answered by the logic of 'prisoner's dilemma'; Challengers contribute to the stability of the field and will shun open revolt, because they are dependent on the structuring of the field for survival. Although their interest would be best served by changing the status quo of the field, this also brings huge risks, 'inviting the wrath of the incumbents' (McAdam and Fligstein, 2011: 14). Therefore, acceptance of the situation, and waiting for future opportunities that decrease this risk would generally be the best strategy for survival.

In addition to incumbents and challengers, many SAFs have 'internal governance units'. Formal governance units are organisations and associations within the field that are charged with overseeing compliance with field rules and to ensure routine stability and order in the SAF (McAdam and Fligstein, 2011: 6; 2012: 76). Overall internal governance units can serve administrative, informative, and regulative internal functions, as well as executing enforcing, and certificating functions. Being internal to the SAF, these governance units are also usually the facilitators of interaction between the SAFs and various external state fields (idem).

### 3. Social skill

Social skill is an important element of the theory. Departing from Fligstein's definition of strategic action, as 'the attempt by social actors to create and maintain stable social worlds by securing the cooperation of others (Fligstein, 2001)', the need to operationalise this 'effort' to influence others into cooperation emerges. This is what McAdam and Fligstein coined as *social skill*. It is central to the theory because it endorses the ontological principal that structures, once institutionalised in a stable field do not reinforce themselves, but need constant effort by strategic actors in order to maintain and legitimate the social order as it is. To do this, simply enforcing your will on others is not enough. Strategic actors must think beyond their own interest and be able to find some collective definition of interest that speaks to all the actors involved. McAdam and

Fligstein define this social skill as 'how individuals or collective actors possess a highly developed cognitive capacity for reading people and environments, framing lines of action, and mobilizing people in the service of these action "frames" (...). These frames involve understandings that offer other actors identities' (McAdam and Fligstein, 2011: 7).

#### 4. The broader field environment

All fields are conceived as embedded in complex webs of other fields. The theory offers three sets of binary distinctions that help to characterize the nature of these other fields and the relationships between them. This includes proximate and distant fields, vertical and horizontal fields, and state and non-state fields (McAdam and Fligstein, 2011: 8).

The first distinction of proximate and distant fields, refers to the level of connection between respective fields. Proximate fields have close or recurring ties to each other, and actions in one field have impact on the other. Logically, distant fields lack ties and the capacity to influence each other. (Idem).

The second distinction of vertical and horizontal fields refers to the type of hierarchical relations that exist between fields. In a vertically linked set of proximate fields one field exercises authority over the other which, consequently, is in a subordinate position. If this is not the case and a set of fields is mutually dependent upon each other, they are horizontally connected.

The third and last distinction is between state and non-state fields. In the modern world, barring situations of conflict and war, state actors alone have formal authority to set rules, intervene in, and pronounce on the legitimacy and viability of non-state fields. 'This grants to states considerable and generally unrivalled potential to impact the stability of most SAFs' (McAdam and Fligstein, 2011: 8). However, instead of reifying the notion of singular, hegemonic states, McAdam and Fligstein stress the fact that states are themselves made up of myriad social orders and SAFs which can be described as proximate or distant, horizontally or vertically connected, and 'whose relations can be as conflictual and constraining as any other field' (Idem).

The relationships between fields are also an important aspect of the theory, giving it a more contextual, embedded character than most existing conceptions of fields. As Fligstein and McAdam explain: 'For all the attention paid to meso-level orders by other analysts, the failure to take seriously the constraints (and opportunities) imposed on those orders by the myriad ties they share to other fields significantly truncates our understanding of field dynamics, in particular, the potential for conflict and change in any given field' (2011: 8). In this view, the stability of a field is largely dependent on its relations to other fields. While fields can move into a state of conflict as a result of internal processes, a crisis is also commonly the result of an exogenous shock emanating from a proximate field (idem).

## 5. Exogenous shocks, field ruptures, and the onset of contention

The main theoretical implication of the interdependence of fields described above, is that a significant change in any given SAF is 'like a stone thrown in a still pond, sending ripples outward to all proximate fields' (McAdam and Fligstein, 2011: 9). Hence destabilisation of a field often emanates from outside the field itself. Yet most exogenous shocks are not intense enough to threaten the stability of proximate fields. Especially because incumbents are generally able to withstand destabilising pressures due to their significant resource advantages over field challengers, or even the mere perception by challengers that incumbents are secure in their power (Idem). Also, incumbents are fortified in their position by the support of loyal allies within governance units both internal to the field and embedded in proximate state fields' (idem). Hence, only rare instances of extremely heavy exogenous shocks have the potential to threaten the stability of social order in one or more proximate fields, especially to those fields that have a vertically dependent relationship (idem). There are three principal external sources of field destabilization: invasion by outside groups, changes in fields upon which the strategic action field in question is dependent, and rare macro-events like war and depression, 'that serve to destabilize the broader social/political context in which the field is embedded' (McAdam and Fligstein, 2012:99). Rather than leading to an instant crisis of social order, severe exogenous shocks tend to unfold a process that addresses the capacity for social construction and strategic agency that is central to this perspective (Idem).

The 'onset of contention' is a 'highly contingent outcome of an ongoing process of interaction involving at least one incumbent and one challenger' (Idem). The process is shaped by three key mechanisms: The collective construction/attribution of threat or opportunity, organizational appropriation, and innovative action. First of all, the threat to stability, or possibility thereof, must be recognised by at least one player in the field. This should be followed by active mobilisation of organisational resources that are needed to mobilise and sustain action in the face of the perceived opportunity or threat. *Organizational appropriation* is thus the process by which the emergent definition of either threat or opportunity becomes anchored within a specific organisational vehicle. The next step in the process of contention is the violation of field rules by certain actors in defence or support of their group interests, engaging in *innovative action* (McAdam and Fligstein, 2011:9). Once one actor starts to violate the field rules by innovative practices, this is likely to mobilise others to respond setting off an episode of contention.

## 6. Episodes of contention

Drawing from the early definition by Sidney Tarrow, 'collective action becomes contentious when it is used by people who lack regular access to institutions, act in the name of new or unaccepted claims and behave in ways that fundamentally change others' (1994:2). This definition is in line with the conception of innovative action and contention within field theory, although field theory emphasised the idea that the

contention can start at both ends of the social order as incumbents may just as well be the first to perceive a change in the proximate environment as a threat to their position and interests and start to act in innovative ways. Besides innovative action on either side of the power balance, McAdam and Fligstein recognise two other hallmarks of an episode of contention, namely 'shared sense of uncertainty/crisis regarding the rules and power relations governing the field, and sustained mobilization by incumbents and challengers' (2011:10). Hence, a contentious episode can often feed on itself and lasts as long as there is a shared sense of uncertainty regarding the structure and dominant logic of the field (idem). Also McAdam and Fligstein eloquently describe how this process of contention and innovative action tends to corrode the taken-for-granted social order: 'Along with the generalized sense of uncertainty, perceived threats and opportunities generally change the consciousness of field actors by exposing rules that had been taken for granted, calling into question the perceived benefits of those rules, and undermining the calculations on which field relations had been based' (McAdam and Scott 2005:18–19 in: McAdam and Fligstein, 2011:10).

A central form of action in the contentious episode is framing. All parties to the field crisis are expected to be keen to seek and propose a certain new conception of the field, and try to build consensus on this new frame. Again Incumbents are usually resourced with ties to powerful state allies and governance units who may even be in a position to impose a new settlement to the field crisis. But challengers may well succeed in sustained mobilisation against the dominant logic of the field which can even lead to the institutionalisation of new practices and rules according to their frames of change and innovation (Idem).

## 7. Settlement

Contention ends when sustained mobilisation or outside imposition gravitates towards a new 'or refurbished' *institutional settlement* regarding field rules and cultural norms (2011). We can say that a field is no longer in crisis when a generalized sense of order and certainty returns (McAdam and Scott 2005: 18–19; Schneiberg and Soule 2005: 152–53 in: McAdam and Fligstein, 2011). The authors stress that settlements are not necessarily consensual, but reflect a relative acceptance of a new status quo (2012: 19). This will be elaborated on in more detail below.

### Change and Stability in Strategic Action Fields.

Having elaborated on the basic conceptual elements of the theory, we move on to a brief description of the conditions that account for stability and change in SAFs, as well as the role that strategic actors potentially play in these processes. First of all, we have to take into account the fact that SAFs are situational and changeable, and can be placed on a continuum of 'stages' of stability and change. Roughly, three basic 'stages' or conditions of the field can be discerned: Emergence, stability, and rupture or crisis. This distinction is made because each stage raises different questions for analysis of a SAF. In this case

study of Marikana, the SAF of interest falls into the third category as it will focus on the moment where the stability of the field is compromised and a crisis unfolds. Clearly, the analysis of the destabilisation of a SAF is only possible when we understand the point of departure; the composition of the SAF in times of stability. For this reason, I will briefly touch upon the state of emergence, and elaborate more thoroughly on the stages of stability and rupture and crisis relevant to this thesis.

### Field emergence

Unorganized social spaces may tend towards field emergence when two or more actors occupy a social space in which they are oriented towards each other, but where agreement over the social order and basic conditions of the SAF have not been settled yet. For example, a new market may arise over a new commodity, where emerging competitors will have to take account of each other's existence in the emerging SAF. Another example would be a legislative change that will touch certain set of formerly unrelated actors, which causes them to unify around this new shared cause and form a new SAF (McAdam and Fligstein, 2011: 11).

### Towards settlement and stability

Once a new SAF is emergent, the actors involved will take part in a process of finding consensus over the rules and order of the field. This process is typically informed by a sequence of four factors, including the resource disparity between the parties, the social skill of the negotiating actors, the extent to which state actors intervene to help effect or impede a settlement; and the creation of internal governance units to help routinize and implement the terms of the settlement (McAdam and Fligstein, 2012: 96). The results of the settlement can produce a continuum of outcomes, from strongly hierarchical, imposed settlement to more consensual coalition-based cooperation. What McAdam and Fligstein emphasize in contrast to the idea of 'institutional logic'<sup>1</sup>, is that the nature of any settlement is much more about competition and conflict. This is because consensus and settlement concern a relative acceptance (2012: 90). This is in line with the basic envision of the SAF as an organised social space where more and less powerful actors *constantly* vie for advantage (McAdam and Fligstein, 2011: 3). Hence, field stability is a relative concept, because it requires constant action of incumbents to maintain the status quo of the field as acceptance of the order of things is not taken for granted and less privileged actors may constantly seek opportunities to improve their situation at the expense of others.

### Field rupture and Crisis.

Once a SAF is settled and relatively stable, it is likely to prove highly resistant to challenge because the whole field is directed towards the incumbent's interests. Only

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<sup>1</sup> 'Institutional logic' refers to the idea that once a settlement over social order is reached, this is based on consensus

heavy exogenous shocks are likely to create a threat to this deeply sustained settlement. Incumbents are well positioned to withstand pressures and to react to challenges based on their privileged resources in terms of money and strategic allies with governance units, state actors and other incumbents in and outside the SAF. Challengers on the other hand operate from less resourceful and highly fragile positions as their survival is mainly dependant on the incumbents they seek to oppose. This does not mean that a stable field is static as the status quo does not reify and sustain itself and incumbents constantly worry to maintain their advantage and challengers constantly seek for tiny cracks in the system to advance their position, causing a constant flow of change and adjustment in the field (McAdam and Fligstein, 2012: 96).

In this view actual destabilisation of the SAF is normally only caused by external forces or: exogenous shocks. As mentioned before, the three main external sources of field destabilisation are invasion by outside groups, changes in fields upon which the SAF in question is dependent, and rare macro events like war and depression. As explained earlier, SAFs are embedded in a broader field environment made up of other SAFs, including state fields, and a change or crisis will send out 'ripples' to other fields, like a stone thrown in water. If severe enough, this may have the effect of destabilizing relations within the SAF in question, as both challengers and incumbents may realise (or perceive) that the current state of affairs may be under pressure (McAdam and Fligstein, 2012: 104). In this scenario, incumbents are likely to call upon their allies, especially within the state, for help. As mentioned, state actors are often key to ending a field crisis as they are resourced and formally entitled to enforce a new settlement. However, a field crisis may also catalyse such a strong oppositional force that enforced (re)settlement along the lines of the pre-crisis SAF is untenable. McAdam and Fligstein offer a set of 4 propositions on the possible outcomes of a field crisis and the type of settlement that is forged. The first scenario is a re-imposition of the old order with some adjustments. The second scenario will see the SAF break down into unorganized social space, which will eventually lead to the migration of groups to other social spaces. The third scenario is that the SAF is partitioned into several social spaces. The final scenario is that challengers manage to build a coalition to produce a new SAF (McAdam and Fligstein, 2011: 19).

In conclusion, this chapter has offered two things. It has illustrated on the basis of ontological and methodological considerations why the theory of fields should be used to study the response of Lonmin to the destabilising events surrounding the crisis in Marikana. Secondly, this chapter has offered a condensed overview of the main features of the theory. Off course the theory of fields is far more detailed and elaborate than described in this chapter. Hence, the following chapter will go into more depth and detail on the theory where needed.



## Chapter 3: Results and Analysis

This chapter seeks to answer the sub-questions of this thesis in the sequence as described in the introduction, so that in the concluding chapter a thorough answer can be given to the main research question. The first part will provide an interpretation of how the strategic action field and the broader field environment surrounding Lonmin was organised in times of relative stability precipitating the Marikana crisis. This is a crucial exercise because it will show how field stability was institutionalised and maintained, and provides a canvas against which changes in stability and strategy can be measured. Here the first four basic elements of the theory serve as an analytical guide. Then, the 'onset of contention' is discussed, which entails an analysis of the exogenous shocks that destabilized the SAF. Thirdly, a corporate-focused account is given of the episode of contention and crisis that results from the destabilisation. This does not only focus on the 5 days of protest at Marikana, but includes the entire process of destabilisation sprouting from the exogenous shocks that set the field into motion. The final part then elaborates on the settlement of the crisis and how this affects the composition of the field.

### 1. Stage 1: Defining the strategic action field and the broader field environment

The first question that needs to be answered in order to study what happens when stability is under threat is what the SAF looked like in times of stability precipitating the crisis and how it was connected to the broader field environment. Defining a SAF is tricky as boundaries shift depending to the issue at stake and every SAF is embedded in- and host to- many other SAFs. I am aware that many choices can be made at this point to study Lonmin, therefore I will start with a clarification of the rationale behind this specific decision to study the SAF that captures the corporation Lonmin as a whole.

The elaboration starts with defining what is meant exactly with 'Lonmin', which is the core focus of this thesis. Broadly speaking, Lonmin Plc. is a British mining corporation that operates a platinum mine in Rustenburg, South Africa. The company split from the mining conglomerate Lonhro and acquired a leasing agreement to mine in Marikana in 1969 (Chinguno, 2013, 4). On a closer look, this corporation is made up of a pyramid shaped, complex hierarchy of employers and employees. Often when referred to 'Lonmin' analysts actually refer to the owners, or those individuals in power at the top of the pyramid instead of the entire corporation, as is the case in this thesis. Other interchangeable markers for this top of the pyramid found in literature are 'management', 'executives', 'mine-owners', 'employers' and 'senior-managers'. The rest of the pyramid covers over 28.000 employees of whom the majority are unskilled workers who perform physical work under harsh conditions underground for relative low wages.

This is the rough division that often appears in literature on Marikana, as the strike was organised by Rock Drill operators (RDOs) who represent the lowest part of the pyramid, and were demanding direct dialogue with the top executives of the corporation. Obviously this binary division between low-paid physical work and powerful rich managers cuts short of the many levels of employment between the two hierarchical extremes. There is a rich variety of team-leaders and supervisors, office clerks, junior, medior and senior managers that gradually cover the middle ranks of the pyramid. In this thesis a diffuse distinction between the lower workforce and senior management will be maintained for the reason that researchers have unanimously pointed out that the lower workforce and management above ground are literally 'worlds apart', referring to the stark contrast between the harsh conditions underground and the airconditioned offices of management, and the fact that communication up and down the pyramid is ill-organised, with managers often having no clue of what goes on underground (Frankel, 2013: 57).

The sharp contrasts between the top management and the unprivileged workforce in the context of a former racially segregated nation makes a compelling case to approach the corporation itself as a SAF. In this SAF Incumbents are those 'in charge' at the top of the pyramid. The boundary between who is in charge, and who is under pressure to follow up orders in the line of command remains diffuse because the stakes of making profit exceed far beyond the senior management and owners, to shareholders and even the national economy. Also, along the way, boundaries and power positions may shift. This shows how this case study of Lonmin cannot be done in isolation of the broader field environment, but it also means that the exact definition of the Lonmin's 'top management' remains vague. The working definition of the incumbents in this context will refer to those in high ranking senior and executive positions at Lonmin that have the power to make important decisions, and who have access to the lion's share of resources, both financial and strategically to regulate the corporation and to maintain order. Logically, the lower workforce at Lonmin finds itself on the other end of the power balance and are the so called challengers of the field. Their interests would be best served if the profits of the mine would be more equally divided between rank and file, but open revolt against those in power is a risky path as the Massacre at Marikana has shown. More importantly, the hard physical and dangerous underground work for low wages mainly attracts un-educated, dirt-poor (mainly migrant) workers that are reliant on their job for the livelihood of one or more families, and have little to no other options of employment. Combined with the ease in which Lonmin fires and hires these workers, they do not possess a good bargaining position to improve their situation.

In line with McAdam and Fligsteins conception of a SAF, both incumbents and challengers are aware of who has more power and why, and have a general sense of what is 'at stake' in the field: Precious ores are obtained from the soil and brought to the surface to be processed and sold on the world market for profits. This sense is 'general' because workers are aware of the huge differences between the profits the owners and

managers make from this process, and the meagre subsistence wages they earn themselves. They have less knowledge of what happens to profits when the market for platinum plunges like it did in 2008. Lonmin's top management is aware of the consequences of market plunges and the profit it needs to make to maintain the company (as well as royal salaries and revenues for the top), and has proven willing to retrench at the expense of the lower workforce in a variety of ways that will be discussed later on. Here, it suffices to say that everyone in the SAF is reliant on- and oriented towards the same goal of processing ore for profits, although in different proportions, and that individuals and collectives use their own interpretative frame to make sense of what other actors in the field are doing and why.

Less self evident than the concept of incumbents and challengers is the concept of governance units. Governance units are internal to the SAF and ensure some level order and compliance with field rules. In my opinion the trade unions, that have special significance in South Africa since the Labour movement has been crucial to the ending of Apartheid little more than 20 years ago, could be regarded as governance units in this SAF. The right to join trade unions and for trade unions to collectively bargain and strike is recognised within the 1996 Constitution of South Africa, and has translated into the Labour Relations Act, that prescribes the framework for industrial relations for both employers and unions. As such, the trade unions are the designated avenue for legal collective bargaining and dialogue with the employers. At the Lonmin mine the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) used to be the dominant trade union, but the conflict at Marikana has been associated with union rivalry between NUM and the newly established Allied Mining and Construction Union (AMCU). Alexander et al. show that the union rivalry argument for provoking the Marikana crisis has been flawed on several grounds (2013: 137), which will not be elaborated on in more detail in this thesis. However, as will be discussed in more detail later, NUM had a central role in the escalation of conflict in the 5 days before the massacre. I would argue that these unions, that are also entire SAFs in themselves, are internal to the field due to their deep intertwining and presence at all levels of the mine, including close relations between senior officials and the mining management.

In terms of the broader field environment of the SAF in question, Lonmin is embedded in a larger commodity market SAF with the 4 other large platinum mines of South Africa; Anglo platinum, Impala Platinum, Xstrata, and Aquarius. These mines are all located along the Rustenburg 'platinum belt' or 'Bushvelt complex' and together produce more than 80% of the worlds platinum. Although this SAF is relevant to Lonmin as its competitive market, the horizontally organised character of more or less equal competitors is of less interest to understand the destabilisation in the platinum industry than the vertical relations between the mines upper-class management and lower workforce (Chinguno, 2013: 4). In this view the competing mines in the Rustenburg area each represent proximate SAFs, that share similar internal structures to the Lonmin SAF.

As the second stage of analysis will point out, exogenous shocks have the potential to disturb stability in this cluster of proximate fields, but destabilisation or shocks in one of these proximate fields is also prone to spill over to the other horizontally connected proximate fields.

On an international scale, the South African platinum mines compete on a world-market with other platinum producing mines. Though South African mines have the largest market share by producing over 80 per cent of the world's platinum, they have an 'incomparably bad operational climate', in terms of machinery, research, efficiency, safety and employee well-being (Frankel, 2013: 10). This is not only exemplary for the platinum mines, but for the mining industry in South Africa as a whole. The lack of industrial development implies that competition is solemnly based on pressing labour costs by means of cheap labour, regular layoffs and flexible contracting, especially in times of platinum price plunges and market distress.

Certain state institutions are also part of the broader field environment in various ways. First of all the relevant state bodies have a formal regulating capacity. South African Mining Law is regulated by the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act 28 of 2002 (MPRDA). The mining industry in South Africa is administered by the Department of Mineral Resources. Labour is regulated by the Labour Relations Act and administered by the Department of Labour that is responsible for matters related to employment, including industrial relations, occupational health and safety, as well as trade-union regulation. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a state is (like other SAFs) shaped like a 'Russian doll', meaning that the SAF consists of many smaller SAFs (for example ministries) that also consist of smaller SAFs at every level of the chain. This is to stress that only certain governmental 'fields' are proximate to Lonmin. As formal legislative and regulative external institutions, these proximate state bodies have great power over the mining industry and corporations like Lonmin. As the third-largest mining house in South Africa, the performance of the mine is a relevant asset to the national economy that is 'still structured around a minerals-energy complex and focused on export-led growth' (Alexander et al., 2013: 151). As the state has a stake in running a healthy national economy, a certain understanding between big business and state authorities is implied.

Apart from formal state governance and regulation, there appears to be a far less tangible and informal type of relationships between 'state' and 'business' that serves more personal goals of money and power. Business owners may seek alliances with well-placed politicians and the other way around. Furthermore, there are individuals that have overlapping interests between the state and business. The outstanding example in this case study is Cyril Ramaphosa who is a high ranking politician within the ANC, a former trade union leader and a businessman who owned 9,1% of Lonmin at the time of the massacre. We will return to this issue of informal alliances and brokering later on.

Finally, mining of natural resources has come under increased attention of academics and activists who are concerned with the ethics of such industries and big businesses. Globalisation and increased capitalist expansion from rich western corporations to lesser developed/organised, fragile, and conflict-torn countries has raised concern over the ethical standards these corporations maintain outside the (well-organised) legislation of their home country. Abuses are particularly stark in the extractive sector, with companies competing with each other to mine scarce and valuable resources, tempting mining corporations to seek countries with the least developed regulations for their activities (Bench Mark Foundation 2008; Govindan et al., 2014: 215). Although most of these links with academia and activists are distant as they are addressing the general issue or industries rather than specific corporations, this does increase the pressure on states and big businesses to amend malpractices and avoid scandal (*idem*). But increasing research does also mean a growing chance on more proximate interference by research organisations. Coincidentally, the South African Bench Marks Foundation published a critical report on CSR in the platinum industry in the North West province (where Rustenburg is located), in the same week that the strike at Marikana escalated. The massacre obviously triggered more research and attention to the mine, as well as attention from the media.

Having sketched the elements and relationships within the field and the broader field environment, we move on to the second question that allows for a deeper analysis of maintaining the stability of the SAF: How did Lonmin protect and reinforce the stability of the field? How did it employ social skill to legitimise its position vis-à-vis the working force? The most important observation in this regard is the communication failure signalled by several researchers. Communication up and down the Lonmin pyramid is generally marked as absent: (top) managers are structurally shielded off or isolated from the workforce by layers of bureaucracy, and up-wards communication is gate-kept by supervisors and shaft authorities who mainly inform supervisors about what they want to hear (Frankel 2013: 58; Hartford, 2012: 19). This results in a chain of managers that are relatively oblivious of what goes on in the mine, and believe that their official protocols for safety and human relations are representative for life in the mine, even though this is often far from reality (*idem*).

In absence of internal avenues for contact between top level managers and the lower workforce, the unions are the designated intermediaries. The crisis at Marikana culminated around the demand of the RDOs to talk directly to their employers, instead of seeking representation from the unions which would be the legal way to address labour issues. This 'innovative action' by the RDOs to circumvent NUM will be addressed later on, but what is relevant here is the relation between Lonmin and NUM in times of relative stability precipitating the crisis and how this relationship seemed to be employed to reinforce stability by undermining the workers ability to seek proper legal representation.

As the central governance unit in place to bargain with the incumbents (employers) on behalf of the challengers (employees), NUM became more and more regarded as corrupted and as no longer serving the people it claimed to represent. The union leadership was broadly regarded to be 'in the pockets of management' and highly corrupted due to the exorbitant wages earned by the NUM high ranking representatives (Frankel 2013: 59; Hartford, 2012: 7), the reluctance to bring workers' issues to the Lonmin board and the fact that jobs were being 'sold' by shop stewards (NUM) in conspiracy with persons in the human resources department of the company (Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu in: Alexander et al. 2013: 145; Frankel, 2013: 87; Hartford, 2012: 20). Furthermore, senior officials are now caught up in close relations with mining companies through 'the formation of a jointly owned bank that extends credit to impoverished workers while the mining companies garnish wages' (Hart, 2013: 87). From its strategic relation with NUM, it seems that Lonmin protected and reinforced the stability in the field more by disabling and obstructing the legal ways for issuing discontent than by employing social skill to convince people into acceptance of the status quo. Not only are claims of corruption in the movement widely shared among analysts as well as the tendency to use the unions as managers (Chinguno, 2013: 20; Hartford, 2012: 10), there is also the issue of contracting migrant workers through labour brokers, which conveniently impairs high numbers of the workforce (at Marikana 30 to 40 per cent are believed to be contracted) to join the trade unions. Because these contracted workers are technically not employed by Lonmin but by shifty broker offices that employ human-trading and modern-slavery-like strategies, these workers cannot seek representation by the unions that are representing the mine workers in Marikana (Frankel 2013: 59; Idem: 88; Chinguno, 2013: 14).

As contact between employer and employee is structurally shunned, it seems like Lonmin management did not need to make efforts to legitimate their *mode d'emploi*, having a firm grip on its disgruntled workforce with the latter being highly dependent on the mercy of its employer. The huge surplus of unemployed and un-educated men ready to take their place reducing their bargaining position even further (Hart, 2013: 87). This is best illustrated with the 2011 layoffs, where the striking number of 10.000 workers were fired over mine disturbances, of whom many were later rehired as contractors (Frankel 2013: 14). The process of hiring (mainly labour migrant-) contractors also creates deep partition within the workforce. Permanent workers feel highly threatened in their position by the flexibility of migrant contracted workers, resulting in partition and hostility within the mine rather than sympathy and solidarity, affecting —among many things— safety in the mine and the surrounding settlements (idem).

In answer to the third sub question, Lonmin's position is firmly reinforced by the structuring of the union and the practice of hiring migrant workers through labour brokers that structurally alienates a large part of the workforce and undermines legal

ways for seeking representation from the (corrupted) unions. This practice is further reinforced by the relevant state bodies that are charged with regulation and protection of labour. Sub-contracting is not necessarily illegal, and there are a lot of perfectly “official” labour brokers like TEBA that is the historically largest broker, that follow strict protocols of recruitment and have even increased focus on developmental work. But in recent years smaller organisations have filled the gap in the supply chain who are less selective in whom they recruit (Frankel, 2013: 85). Nowadays half the market is taken up by ‘an estimated 3000 organisations of varying degrees of size and legality (idem). As mentioned, these shifty broker organisations are closely associated with human trafficking, bringing illegal migrants into the country and hiring them to the mines in modern-slavery like scams. Frankel states that there are hardly any prosecutions for labour broking activities because the criminal justice system has ‘neither the means nor the knowledge to recognise what amounts to human trafficking in one form or another’ (93). It seems that despite widespread knowledge of these inhumane practices, the South African mines are unhindered by state authorities to continue subcontracting the work in their mines through these avenues of exploitation.

## 2. Stage 2: The onset of contention: exogenous shocks

With a clear picture of how the field was structured and maintained in times of stability, we will now move on to analyse what mix of exogenous “shocks” and internal processes precipitate the field crisis, and what specific social processes mediated between the destabilizing events and the actual mobilization of strikers. I would argue that there are three exogenous shocks to be distinguished that set the destabilisation in motion: the global financial crisis that lead to a drop in platinum prices, the looming ‘South African post-apartheid political crisis’ that represents a gradual unravelling of the South African government that prioritises capital over the people, and the weakening grip and corruption of the once powerful unions that inspired innovative action by the mineworkers.

The first exogenous shock has its origins in economic depression, one of the rare macro-events that McAdam and Fligstein ‘that serve to destabilize the broader social/political context in which the field is embedded’ (McAdam and Fligstein, 2012:99). Explaining this global financial crisis of 2008 and how it unsettled the platinum market requires a thesis in its own and is not the case in point here. What suffices here is the fact that it manifested in the tangible rupture of the price for platinum, which dropped a third of its worth in less than two months in 2008 (The Guardian 2008). Excessive stockpiles of platinum continued to depress the prices causing an extended financial crisis in the platinum industry. In the case of Lonmin, the financial burden was felt deeply in the lowest ranks of the workforce, where huge lay-offs were met with hiring of contract-workers that can easily be employed in times of need and as easily repelled in times of less production.

The second exogenous shock finds its origins on a national level of post-apartheid politics. As Gillian Hart has argued in her book 'Rethinking the South African Crisis', the post-apartheid era has been marked by the re-nationalisation of the people, and 'de-nationalisation' of capital, as the end of apartheid allowed corporations to (re)connect with the international economy, whilst the inclusive rhetoric of inclusiveness and forgiveness of the 'rainbow nation' under Mandela and the ANC coincided with the exclusion and expulsion of immigrants that fed into a discourse of xenophobia (2013:8). The ANC that is still the ruling party has become associated with prioritising capitalism over its early revolutionary rhetoric of a two staged socialist revolution that would accommodate the 'the inequalities of post-apartheid capitalism as a transitory phenomenon, to be superseded by the (ever retreating) second phase' (Hart, 2013: 8). After 20 years of liberation, this rhetoric has started to unravel as the inequalities of apartheid have remained under an arguably equally repressive capitalist system. South Africa is still one of the world's most unequal societies (Worldbank 2014), has a poverty rate of 63 per cent and unemployment has spiked since apartheid from 16 to 26 per cent (IMF 2016). Disappointment with the promises of liberation have become voiced by seditious politicians like Julius Malema<sup>2</sup>, who criticised the ANC and its allies for having sold out the black people of South Africa to capitalism as cheap labour for businesses, and advocates nationalising the mines and land redistribution (Hart, 2013: 79). With the bulk of the job opportunities for the masses of un-educated and un-employed South Africans remaining in the mining sector, this is a site where the inequalities are deeply felt and where the EFF 'party for the poor' is likely to find support.

A third rupture finds its origins in the weakening grip of the once powerful unions on its constituencies, which correlates with the previous two exogenous shocks that set the mining industry on edge. With the labour movement at the core of the apartheid-struggle, labour unions have evolved into powerful institutions that mitigated between employer and employee disputes on behalf of the employees. As described, these unions have become more and more entwined with the mines management, illustrated by increasingly high wages for senior officials, and a jointly owned bank (Hart. 2013:87), as well as the perceived corruption of union officials (Frankel 2013: 59; Hartford, 2012: 7). With the massive drop in platinum prices and Lonmin's alleged tendency to intercept losses by pressing labour costs (Hart, 2013: 86), it seems logical to tighten the noose of labour relations by putting more pressure of the union officials to keep the workforce under control. This could be interpret as a form of innovative action on the part of the mine management, in reaction to the destabilising threats of bad financial performance.. This tendency of unions to drift away from serving the interests of their membership to serving that of management is illustrated by Chinguno with the shift of 'class

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<sup>2</sup> Julius Malema is a former ANC Youth League leader that has been expelled from the party for sowing divisions within the ANC. He formed the political party 'Economic Freedom Fighters' (EFF) in 2013.

compromise' to 'class capture'<sup>3</sup> (2013, 20). I would argue that this shift's coincidence with Lonmin's financial challenges is more than a coincidence, it is a purposive achievement that strategically paralyzes the disgruntled workforce into acceptance of the situation of regular lay-offs and replacement of permanent workers with (migrant) contractors who are not able to seek representation for the unions at all.

The social processes that mediated between the destabilising events and the actual mobilisation of strikers is therefore best described by the obstruction of communication. Upward communication with the employer through the designated union was obstructed. Moreover, to my knowledge there was also no sign downward communication or other form of social skill employed by the employer in effort to legitimise its moves and inspire collaboration. According to McAdam and Fligstein the 'onset of contention' is a 'highly contingent outcome of an ongoing process of interaction involving at least one incumbent and one challenger' (2012:99). In this regard, a structural obstruction of communication is also a form of communication.

The onset of contention is further shaped by the collective attribution of threat or opportunity, organizational appropriation, and innovative action (idem). The collective attribution of threat/opportunity by both incumbents and challengers is here best explained as a general knowledge of the industries financial challenges by both parties. The incumbent/employer is under financial stress and invites growing discontent under its workforce that suffers from the strategies of cutting of labour costs and moving from permanent to contract labour. The challenger/employee on the other hand is not only under threat of losing jobs to layoffs and migrant contractors, but also suffers under increased work pressure to reach daily targets at the expense of personal health and safety (Frankel, 2013: 52). For example, many RDO's are forced to perform a two-person job with heavy, dangerous machinery as assistants have been laid off. (Alexander et al., 2013:28). In combination with appalling living conditions in and around the mine which induces high rates of illness, death, addiction and violence<sup>4</sup>, the increasing work pressure and threat of being laid off actually created an incentive for mineworkers to risk a move. Inviting 'the wrath of the incumbents' seems less risky when everyday work for this incumbent proves equally dangerous and degrading. As one mineworker expresses: 'We will go to the employer ourselves because the work we do there is very hard and is killing us' (Alexander et al., 2013: 29).

The organisational appropriation that precipitated the innovative action of the mineworkers goes generally unrecognised as the strike at Marikana is often depicted in

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<sup>3</sup> 'Wright makes a distinction between class compromise and class capture. Class compromise is the acceptance of the inherent conflict within industrial relations with an emphasis on cooperation between opposing classes. Class capture is when the relations shift from mutual to skewed benefits. For workers NUM had shifted from class compromise to class capture.' (Wrights, 2000 in: Chinguno 2013, 20)

<sup>4</sup> Issues that have been well documented and analysed by the Benchmark foundation (2012), Alexander et al. (2013), Frankel (2013) and (Chinguno 2013).

media as an unstructured gathering of violent, irrational and even criminal people (Duncan, 2014: 12). At the Lonmin mine, dissatisfaction over payments had been an issue amongst RDO's for several months with protests spreading from shaft to shaft (Alexander et al. 2013: 28). Local NUM management decided the demands should be 'presented to the central Lonmin structures rather than handled locally' (idem). By the 6<sup>th</sup> of August elected representatives from across the mine had established an informal committee for co-ordinated action. This committee convened a meeting for all Lonmin RDOs on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August at the Wonderkop stadium. Alexander et al. give a detailed account of how this committee was elected and how it was designed to be representative for all shafts, cultural constituencies as well as union affiliations (idem). As such, the shared sense of threat of the corporation's financial distress culminating in unacceptable work pressure, and the subsequent opportunity of desperate solidarity became anchored in a coordinated organisational vehicle. The general sense that 'NUM was not advancing workers' claims for better remuneration', lead to the collective decision to engage in innovative action by circumventing NUM (29). According to field theory, innovative action is the next step of contention, when certain actors violate field rules in support of their group interests (McAdam and Fligstein, 2011:9). Also, once one actor or starts to violate the field rules by innovative practices, this is likely to mobilise others to respond setting off an episode of contention (idem).

Here it should be noted that innovative action started in the proximate field of the neighbouring Impala mine, where RDOs had already engaged in the innovative action of successfully circumventing the union in a bid for better wages (Marikana commission of inquiry report 2015:46). Their success inspired the Lonmin RDOs to do the same (Hartford, 2012: 4). In this regard Frankel's remark that what happened at Lonmin on August 16<sup>th</sup> could have occurred at just about any mine in South Africa (2013: 8), is interesting. From a field theory's perspective, this remark is too blunt as developments within broader field environments can spill over crucial 'ripples' that have the potential to destabilise fields. Hence, in this reasoning, the neighbouring Bushveld complex mines have faced similar exogenous shocks, but the reactions and developments in these separate fields also have potential to influence each other. This means that the decision of Impala's management to comply with the RDOs demands without intervention of the union, is a game changer for the entire mining SAF. As Hartford states, this decision sent out the message that despite their financial crisis, the mines had 'additional cash to spare for certain categories of workers within the bargaining unit' (2012: 4), as well as the fact that this could be effectuated by striking and direct negotiation between management and workers. In this way, not only the inspiration for innovative action and opportunity spread from one proximate field to another, it also confronted the mine owners/incumbents of these fields with the fact that this could potentially lead to a domino-like situation of strikes and pay rise demands (Alexander et al., 2013: 150).

### 3. Stage 3: The episode of contention and crisis

The contention and crisis that followed the onset of contention in the form of exogenous shock, proximate field spill over, collective attribution of threat and opportunity, organizational appropriation, and innovative action, covers the 7 days between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> of August. Rather than reproducing the whole sequence of events that has been thoroughly analysed and reconstructed by independent academics like Alexander et al. (2013) and Frankel (2013), this particular analysis of the crisis will be guided by questioning with what forms of action and collective action frames Lonmin responded to the developing crisis in the form of an unprotected strike, and how these changed over the life of the episode? A brief overview of the events between 9 and 16 August are presented in box 1.

The question which collective action frames were used by Lonmin, and whether they changed over the life of the episode is therefore simple: Lonmin maintained its stance of refusal to engage with the strikers 'outside of official bargaining structures' until the very end of the episode. According to the Farlam report, Bernard Mokwena, Lonmin's vice-president at the time, refused the SAPS request of intervention by the union's and company's leaders on the 15<sup>th</sup>, and set out Lonmin's stance to be conveyed to the strikers as follows:

"We are willing to engage our employees within the structures that are known. In a very safe environment where there are no weapons. Not on the mountain. So we are willing to meet our employees through their structures, through their leaders to discuss any issue. Not when they are armed. Not when they are actually outside Lonmin property. So when the workers are back, disarmed, tomorrow, tonight, through their leaders we will meet them. That is our position. So we are not against meeting, discussing issues with [our] employees through their right structures. We are prepared to do that" (Marikana commission of inquiry report, 2015: 179)

On 16 August, the day of the massacre, Lonmin also invariably refused to talk to the strikers who were gathered peacefully on the public space of the 'wonderkoppie' mountain west of Wonderkop stadium since they had been refused re-entry to the stadium on the 11<sup>th</sup>. This is consistent with the attribution of blame by the Farlam commission, on behalf of Lonmin for its continual refusal to comply with the demands of the strikers to talk directly with management (idem). Arguably, Lonmin did act and communicate 'behind the scenes' with relevant state parties. First of all Lonmin took out an injunction against the striking RDOs naming 3650 individuals on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August, the first day of the strike (Alexander et al., 2013: 31). Furthermore, it has provided the police with valuable logistical support in the form of barracks, transport and a detention camp (Alexander et al., 2013: 143). The fact that Lonmin had meetings with the SAPS and a number of other stakeholders on several occasions is defended by the corporation as an attempt to contain the damage and to ensure that the situation in and around

Marikana was addressed in the appropriate manner by the police force who is legally entitled to handle public order (Lonmin, 2012d).

#### Box 1.

##### **Recapitulation of the events at Marikana between 9 and 16 August 2012**

The strike started on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August when an assembly of Lonmin's rockdrill operators had decided the previous day that their grievances over wages and work pressure were best helped by issuing a strike and by delivering their demands for a higher wage directly to the mine's management. The strikers marched to the head-offices but were informed after 3 hours that their demands had to be channelled through NUM. They returned to the Wonderkop stadium where they had held their meeting but were prohibited access. They decided to gather on a large 'koppie' on public land west of the stadium where they would gather the following days.

The morning of 11 August the strikers followed the instructions and a group of approximately 2500 unarmed strikers marched to NUM's office in order to discuss how to move forward. But they were met by a line of armed men who opened fire on the crowd. Allegedly these men included NUM local leadership. Two men were left badly injured, and word spread that these men were killed by NUM, evoking an atmosphere of betrayal rage and fear (Alexander et al., 2013: 33). The next morning the same strikers returned to the NUM offices, now armed with traditional weapons, but were stopped by mine-security and police who opened fire at the crowd. This time the crowd did not disperse and moved forward, and two mine-security men were dragged from their vehicle and killed with spears and pangas<sup>5</sup>, as were two NUM members later that day.

On 13 August a group of approximately 200 strikers set out to inform working employees about the strike. They were sent back to the Koppie by mine security through an alternative route. Here, the strikers were blocked by a line of well-armed police who encircled them and ordered them to disarm. Mambush, one of the strike-leaders responded to the police that they were willing to disarm but only if they had reached the safety of the mountain and suggested that the police could escort them to do so. The police officer addressing the strikers warned that they would open fire after the count of 10, and when the counting started the strikers started singing and moving towards the mountain through the weakest point in the police line, and the police opened fire. Three strikers and two police officers were killed in the commotion that followed.

The strikers again assembled on the mountain, and on 14 August a police negotiator arrived to the mountain together with numerous armed vans, inviting five representatives to talk to him. The five 'madodas' repeated their claim that they wanted to talk to their employer. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of August the negotiator returned but without a representative of Lonmin. Later that afternoon the president of NUM arrived in an armed van with the crude message that he wanted the strikers to return to work. After this, the president of AMCU arrived and expressed his sympathy to the crowd but urged them to return home fearing for their safety.

Meanwhile police presence had increased dramatically, and on the 16<sup>th</sup> even more forces and equipment arrived, including paramilitary forces, trailers with razor wire and helicopters and ambulances. The strikers were alarmed when the police started to reel out the razor wire and a group of leaders plead to the police to leave an opening in the wire for the strikers to leave the mountain. Police now had their guns pointed at the crowd ready to shoot. A large group of strikers rushed to the direction of their homes in Nkaneng in order to flee, and at this point the fire of automatic weapons was opened and within seconds a twenty strikers were killed and many more were wounded. On a second location near a small koppie the police killed 14 strikers were killed. Many of the strikers were shot in the back while fleeing or while surrendering. In Within minutes a total of 34 people were killed and an additional 78 were injured. Another 270 miners were detained and charged with 'public violence'.

*(Source: This overview is based on the reconstruction of events by Alexander et al. 2013: 29-44*

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<sup>5</sup> Traditional machette-shaped weapon.

On the question what role key external actors/SAFS played in precipitating the episode and shaping its trajectory, Cyril Ramaphosa emerges as the key link between Lonmin management, and the broader field environment including the SAPs and a variety of high ranking state officers such as mineral resources minister Susan Shabangu and police minister Nathi Mthethwa. As mentioned, Cyril Ramaphosa is a former union leader who served as vice-president of the ANC and owned 9,1 percent of Lonmin shares at the time of the massacre. Emails from mr. Ramaphosa that were presented to the Farlam commission, revealed how mining bosses lobbied him to influence government officials to take action. He advised police minister Nathi Mthethwa to 'come down hard' on the striking miners, and referred to the strike as a 'dastardly criminal act' that should be met with 'concomitant action'. One of the emails to Senzeni Zokwana, president of NUM also refers to conversations with ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe to suggest that the ANC intervene (Daily Maverick 2012). Although these emails only show one man's words, it is valuable evidence of the powerful connection between business and the state. In this case it illustrates the powerful ways in which a well-connected stakeholder was able to broker for action at a political level on behalf of the mine. From a field theory perspective, Ramaphosa's lobby with the ministers illustrates the incumbent seeking help from its state allies (in this case through the help of a well-placed stakeholder) to settle the field crisis. By deeming the unprotected strike as a criminal act and advising that silence and in-action by the state is bad for the government, Ramaphosa also implicates that the strike will not only hurt the mine, but that the government also has stakes in maintaining order. It is not clear why he describes inaction as bad for the government, and whether this does or does not support the hypothesis that both mines and the national economy would suffer from a domino-like situation of unprotected strikes and pay rise demands, and that this is why the strike had to be broken rather than rewarded with direct negotiations. Apart from formal state interests and stakes in retaining order and stability, the brokering of Ramaphosa on behalf of the corporation may also suggest that there are personal networks and hidden alliances in place to protect personal interests of money and power.

The determination to end the strike and disperse the strikers eventually lead to the death of 34 people and the injury of another 87 people. Following the shootings Lonmin issued a statement expressing regret for the fatalities, but disassociating the violence from the industrial dispute by stressing the responsibility of the SAPs for security during the strike (Lonmin, 2012a). From a field theory perspective, this is a problematic stance. McAdam and Fligstein reason that state actors are often key to ending a field crisis as they are resourced and formally entitled to enforce a new settlement. Lonmin argues that it had nothing to do with the police violence, but it is questionable whether the police force was 'just' doing its job of public order policing or whether it enforced the termination of a peaceful protest, and as such became an asset to an industrial dispute. This point was also made by the Ronnie Kasrils, former ANC minister of intelligence, who captured this logic perfectly by stating that 'these people were hardly occupying any strategic point, some vital highway, a key city square. They were not holding any

hostages. They were not even occupying mining property. Why risk such a manoeuvre other than to drive the strikers back to work at all costs on behalf of the bosses who were anxious to resume profit making operations' (Ronnie Kasrils, in Alexander et al, 2013; 140). This reasoning suggests indeed that the police was not just protecting public safety, and that it was acting on behalf of other interests. With regard to the main research question, field theory seems inadequate to expose the exact nature of hidden alliances and networks between business and state. In the Marikana case it seemed like the state deliberately intervened to end the industrial conflict and restore order in the field, but the Ramaphosa emails do not disclose who's interests are actually being served.

#### 4. Stage 4: Settlement

This final stage of field analysis concerns the process of settlement after the crisis. McAdam and Fligstein offer a set of 4 propositions on the possible outcomes of a field crisis and the type of settlement that is forged. The first scenario of a re-imposition of the old order with some adjustments (McAdam and Fligstein, 2011: 19) seems to be the most suitable to the scenario of this case study. This brings me to the last sub questions of this thesis: What are the terms of the new settlement? And to what extent does it alter the prior power structure of the strategic action field? How does Lonmin respond to the escalation of the strike vis a vis the victims, the broader workforce and the media? Does the corporation make efforts to legitimise its position in the post-Marikana settlement? Towards whom?

According to McAdam and Fligstein, contention ends when sustained mobilisation or outside imposition gravitates towards a new 'or refurbished' institutional settlement regarding field rules and cultural norms (2011): 'We can say that a field is no longer in crisis when a generalized sense of order and certainty returns reflected a relative acceptance of a new status quo'(2012: 19). In this view, the innovative action of an unprotected strike and the subsequent escalation was ended by outside imposition of the state: First, the national police force engaged in the enforced termination of the strike, which resulted into a bloodbath causing public outrage. The following interventions in the field were also state-led, as president Zuma called off a week of mourning and issued an independent commission to settle the confusion and rage over the massacre in legal terms. The commission's terms of reference required the commission to complete its work within a period of four months from the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 2012, but the final report was submitted to president Zuma nearly three years later at the end of June 2015 (Government Gazette, 2012).

To settle the initial industrial dispute over wages between Lonmin and the RDOs, a series of 'Peace Accord Meetings' were set up directly after the mourning period. These meetings were also mediated by state parties including the Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration and 'the Government of the Republic of South Africa'

(Lonmin: 2012b). In subsequent press releases on these meetings, Lonmin kept referring to their initial argument for not engaging with the strikers based on legal considerations, stressing the companies' commitment to discuss real issues with their employees, but that they are 'bound by legal frameworks on workplace conditions. So negotiations on real issues need to take place within those frameworks.' (Lonmin, 2012b; 2012c). As such, the contested settlement marked by a relative sense of order was predominantly based on a return to the prior structure and field rules. Lonmin issued its employees to return to work as soon as the 20<sup>th</sup> of August with the penalty of dismissal, and official bargaining structures were reinforced with state support. The return to normality, or pre-existing order, is literally and repeatedly mentioned in Lonmin's press releases following the massacre: 'All stakeholders agreed in ceremonies this week that it is time to move forward and begin the gradual journey back to *normality*' (emphasis added. Lonmin seeks sustainable peace at Marikana.).

The re-imposition of the old order between incumbents (Lonmin), challengers (workers) and governance units (unions) and concomitant field rules (official bargaining structures), was frail because the magnitude of the massacre, the subsequent (inter)national exposure and the confusion surrounding the events. While video footage of the shootings had been broadcasted live around the world showing the police mowing down fleeing strikers, this shocking footage was immediately countered by heavily biased media coverage that suggested the strikers had attacked the police causing them to shoot in self-defence (Alexander et al., 2013: 138). Duncan's analysis of early national newspaper reporting shows that initial media coverage was heavily biased towards official accounts of the massacre as business and state sources were the primary definers of news stories, with mineworkers only covering three per cent of the sources (2014: 1). With the official investigation taking almost three years, a lot of space was left for the advancement of alternative explanations for the violence. By the time more critical journalist started to include the perspectives of the miners and strikers the 'agitator theory' of aggressive, unreasonable miners had already been widely accepted (Alexander et al. 2013: 139; Duncan, 2014: 1), effectively tempering public outrage. At Marikana the situation was also returned to a frail stability, despite the significant wage increase that was the result of the peace accord meetings. According to Frankel, miners remained distrustful of the deal and believed rumours that the companies accountants would manipulate the agreement. Moreover, loan sharks and brokers also immediately raised their rates on the back of the indebted workers (2013: 155).

In 2014 an inclusive 5 month-strike of 70.000 platinum workers from across the Bushveld platinum mines compromised order again, but this time field rules were respected with AMCU leading the strike and the successful negotiations for better wages. The 'strike wave' that followed the Marikana Massacre and spread from the platinum industry to the gold industry and then to a variety of other industries, indicates the 'adjustment' to the re-imposition that McAdam and Fligstein mention in this scenario quite aptly: Despite the re-imposition of field rules of legal bargaining, the conflict in

Marikana amplified the sense post-apartheid disappointment which inspired widespread legal protest and strikes for better wages. Despite the fact that strikes now generally followed legal route of union representation, the wave of strikes did threaten the financial survival of some companies. Lonmin for example suffered huge production losses during the subsequent strikes, followed by investor's reluctance to invest in the unsteady company anguished by its problematic labour-relations. In combination with declining prices for platinum, this has left the company on the brink of bankruptcy, resulting in further retrenchments and shutting down shafts (Lonmin 2015 Fourth Quarter and Full Year Production Report; Frankel, 2013: 151).

Lonmin's response to the escalation of the strike vis à vis the victims, the broader workforce and the media shows an inconsistent position. As Duncan's statistics of sources used in media coverage between 12 and 22 August shows, mining-bosses and business sources had an overwhelmingly dominant disposition in presenting their story to the press (Duncan, 2014: 7; Van Baalen, 2013: 34). 'Early reporting included references to the strike being illegal, and the inclusion of quotations from Lonmin and the Minister of Mineral Resources Susan Shabangu, referring to the miners engaging in an illegal strike and breaking the law (Rees et al., 2012: 17; SAPA, 2012a: 15; Speckman et al., 2012: 17 in: Duncan, 2014: 11).' As early as 12 August Lonmin representative Bernard Mokwena told the press he 'did not know what sparked the Marikana violence because he had not received any grievances' (Alexander et al., 2013: 142), which seems unlikely as the strikers had marched to the Lonmin offices to present their grievances *en masse*.

These early reactions to the press by Lonmin direct blame to the strikers for illegal and unannounced protest. Broader workforce and victims also received little consolidation. For example, the ultimatum of the employer that workers should return to work on the 20<sup>th</sup> was received as an insult by the grieving community of workers, and was only prolonged with 24 hours due to the official mourning period issued by Zuma. According to Frankel, a 'brief flirtation with remorse', soon made way for the tried ways of reducing labour costs by laying off more people (2013: 151). On the other hand, increased media attention and research into the industry, like the Benchmark Foundations report, did urge the corporation to legitimise its operations on some levels. For example, in a reaction to the presentation of the Marikana Commission of Inquiry's report in 2015, Lonmin CEO Ben Magara stated that 'we as a company have worked hard over the past two-and-a-half year years to build a more open, transparent and mutually trustworthy environment (...) We have placed particular emphasis on living conditions and employee indebtedness, two burning issues that we believe will make a profound impact on the wellbeing of our employees' (ENCA, 2015).

As such, efforts to legitimise the corporations position in the post-Marikana settlement are limited but increased in contrast with the stability precipitating the field crisis. The fact that state forces intervened in the strike gave Lonmin an excuse in terms of

responsibility for the violence, which was supplemented with the ever recurring argument that it would have been illegal to talk directly to the striking miners which legitimises the fact that they did not intervene in the strike in an attempt to end it peacefully (Lonmin, 2012d; Alexander et al., 2013: 143). This brings me to the remarkable observation that post-Marikana expressions of industrial-improvement to legalise its operations are not driven by internal field relations between incumbents and challengers, nor state allies or governance units, but by the 'magnifying glass' of international media and academia that were attracted by the conflict: living conditions and indebtedness were issues that were not under the focus of the official commission of inquiry, but were brought up by researchers (Benchmark foundation 2012& 2013; Alexander et al. 2013; Chinguno, 2013).

## Conclusion

This final chapter of the thesis presents the observations that are made in the previous chapters and makes suggestions for future studies. Most importantly it formulates and answer to the central research question:

*'How did the British mining company Lonmin Plc. develop a response to (field) stability threatening events surrounding the Marikana Massacre in the strategic action field of the corporation and the broader field environment of the South African Platinum mining industry between 2011 and 2015?'*

This question emanated from the analytical gap in current research that leaves a gap of agency between the development of abusive and frustrating structures of employment, and the response to the escalation of the protest by mine-owner Lonmin. To close the analytical gap, the theory of fields by McAdam and Fligstein was chosen as a theoretical framework, as this theoretical approach recognises the agency of the corporation (or any actor in a strategic action field) as a constant factor, without undermining the basic structures of social order characteristic to institutions. Using field theory for the analysis of one actor's agency in a field crisis requires mapping of the sequence of stability and change in the specific SAF as well as its the broader field environment. The sub questions helped in structuring the thesis by describing the four sequenced stages of (I) field stability, (II) exogenous shock and onset of contention, (III) field crisis and (IV) settlement, as well as providing analytical depth into Lonmin's agency in each of these stages.

The analysis of the first stage of relative stability precipitating the crisis lead to the image of Lonmin as a powerful incumbent that strategically cut of challenger's routes to legal representation by the corrupted unions, and through the habit of contracting migrant workers through labour brokers. The obstruction of communication both up and down the hierarchy of the company also suggests that the incumbent Lonmin did not need to employ social skill to legitimise the power balance in the field.

The exogenous shocks emanating from the 2008 economic depression and South Africa's looming post-apartheid crisis, did not change Lonmin's silent disposition. The collective attribution of threat and opportunity sprung from Lonmin's solution to combat the financial threat by retrenching labour costs at the expense of the miners their jobs, work pressure and safety. This 'solution' to the problem drove challengers to the desperate decision to risk un-protected protest in order to ask for higher wages, inspired by the successful unprotected 2011 strike at the Impala mine.

What became clear during the unfolding of the conflict, was that Lonmin kept refusing to communicate directly with the striking RDOs with the argument that it was illegal to

negotiate outside 'lawful structures'. In my opinion these are the same lawful structures that they helped to obstruct through building alliances with the leading union, and by maintaining labour-brokering structures that excludes contractors from joining the unions. State allies were lobbied into action to end the stability threatening innovative action by the miners through Lonmin's well connected and powerful shareholder Cyril Ramaphosa. Whilst Lonmin claims that it only appealed to 'the appropriate stakeholders' for intervention because the company is 'not responsible for law-enforcement' (Lonmin, 2012d), it remains questionable why such excessive law enforcement measures were needed 'at all costs', to disperse a relatively peaceful striking crowd at an un-strategic piece of public land (Ronnie Kasrils in: Alexander et al., 2013: 140).

The settlement of the conflict in terms of a re-settlement of the old order with some adjustments was state-imposed as the strike was managed and terminated by the SAPS and additional paramilitary forces without any attempt on the side of Lonmin to terminate the strike on other terms. As the dispersal manoeuvre and subsequent escalation into a massacre was state lead, this absolved Lonmin of direct responsibility for the tragedy. The subsequent national outrage and confusion over the events were managed by the state through the appointment of an independent commission of inquiry, as well as the wage dispute between employer and employees that was also mediated by state parties. Field stability returned as the legal framework of union-lead bargaining with the employers was re-enforced. Adjustment to the pre-existing order in the SAF and the broader field environment of the South African platinum mining industry can be recognised as the explosive increase of legal strikes and wage demands that structurally altered the labour relations in the industry and beyond, and puts a straining pressure on the resilience and related power of the mine owners.

What stands out in the analysis of Lonmin's strategic action in the subsequent stages of stability and change is that the company only changed its levels of communication and investment in certain aspects of labour conditions and worker wellbeing post-settlement. I suggest that this is not a response to the internal developments of the Lonmin SAF and the need to legitimate its power position in the new settlement vis-à-vis its workforce. Instead it seems like this emanated more from the increased attention of media and academia that was triggered by the field crisis, based on the fact that Lonmin engaged in reform projects focused on structural problems in the industry that were denounced by researchers and activists, rather than by the commission of inquiry. This observation implicates that Lonmin did not feel pressure to legitimate its conduct and to use social skill to reinforce stability within the field, presumably feeling confident in its powerful position in the face of a chanceless and desperate workforce, influential power over governance units and backed by the state allies who have a stake in the corporations' and industries' survival. This inspires avenues for further research into the subject of how critical media and research has the potential to influence corporations strategic action.

Field Theory turned out to be a useful framework for closing the analytical gap of agency in an institutional setting and provided the Marikana case with a new insight and a new take on Lonmin's engagement throughout the crisis. For the most part, the case also fitted neatly into the structures and hypotheses of the theory. Although the theory served as a highly functional framework which resulted in many insights, some issues remained hard to apply in practice. Especially the concept of governance units remained problematic in this context, as well as the exact nature of informal alliances between business, unions and state. In the Marikana case, NUM resembled some characteristics of McAdam and Fligstein's take on governance units, but the highly intertwined structure of the union, that runs like veins through the entire Lonmin hierarchy and various state bodies is hard to imagine as a single 'unit'. The same accounts for the hidden alliances and personal networks between business, state and unions. The theory helped to map and unpack some of the more obvious liaisons but also issues more questions on their exact nature. I suggest that these limits also inspire further research and analytical elaboration into the specific role of governance units and personal networks.

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