

P R E F A C E

During my teens and twenties, I spent many weekends in punk rock clubs throughout New York City. Though not in a band, the music scene was an important part of my life. I was a member of that community. Things that were important to that community were important to me. Music meant many things to that community. It was entertainment. It was a voice. It gave us rituals around which to form collective identities. The scene was also judgmental. We had codes of what constituted appropriate behavior. If someone fell while slam dancing, someone else picked them up. The touring band always received the biggest cut of the door. Above all, members of the community expected bands to maintain their independence from corporate culture. In practice, this meant recording with small, independent labels. If a band signed a contract with a major label, they were considered “sellouts,” ostracized from the community and excoriated by many of its members. In that community, being true to the music was more important than the financial security of the bands that produced it. At the same time, we understood that signing with a major label was often the only way to make a decent living from music.

The punk rock scene of the 1980s and 1990s exposed me to the key social phenomena that have driven my research interests since: How do actors collectively construct and negotiate authenticity while maintaining relevance and growing their ranks? How do groups produce social boundaries and enforce moral codes to ensure authenticity? What happens when those boundaries and codes are compromised or break down? As I became interested in economic sociology, I saw these tensions play out in other social settings. I began studying entrepreneurs in Silicon Alley, a high-tech industrial district in New York City. Throughout my time in the field, I witnessed many entrepreneurs struggle to get their companies off the ground while trying to remain true to the dreams that animated them. They compromised their business plans to attract venture capital funding. When that dried up, they compromised further

to attract bank loans and angel investors. Within the market, organizations alternately competed and cooperated. At times, they denounced each others' business plans as laughably untenable. Other times, they applauded the success and decried the injustice of failure when firms seemed to "get it right" according to the new rules of the new economy.

Later on, I had a unique opportunity to combine my interests in economic sociology, social studies of technology, and social movement studies to study a nonprofit technology start-up called NPower NY. At first my research was an ordinary organizational ethnography: examining how one entrepreneurial organization coped when growth outpaced the organization's technical ability to deal with it. However, I soon learned that NPower NY was among the largest members of a much larger organizational field, which itself had a fascinating and contentious history. Contrary to the moral simplicity of the punk rock scene (or of my youth), the organizational field of nonprofit technology assistance providers was morally complex. NPower was at times heralded as the future of technology assistance in the nonprofit sector and at other times called a corporate puppet threatening to homogenize the sector with mediocre technology—often by the same groups. Groups did not fall neatly into one camp or another. The Circuit Riders, who I thought were opposed to NPower, would sometimes collaborate with the organization. Yet, even when a market arose out of the movement, NPower and the Circuit Riders continued to coexist in an uneasy tension.

This book grapples with the moral complexity of markets. As movements increasingly target businesses, markets are becoming morally complex social spaces. Yet, social scientists have few theoretical tools to make sense of such arrangements. In this book, I offer ways to understand how actors manage the ongoing tension produced when contradictory values coexist. I do so by tracking the formation and growth of a social movement that unintentionally creates and shapes a market. Although a small corner of the nonprofit sector, the story of the technology assistance market provides a rare opportunity to simultaneously examine movement outcomes and market creation. In this way, I show how movements imbue markets with certain social values.