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Simulating the Cause: How Grassroots Organizations Advance Their Credibility Through the Dramaturgical Curation of Events

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Abstract. To survive, nascent grassroots organizations—and their respective causes—must earn the trust of various audiences that can impact credibility advancement. However, it can be quite difficult for grassroots organizations to access suitable settings, times, and collocated audiences. One context that can yield this type of access is an event as it constitutes a rare opportunity for organizations to engage in practices that impact credibility advancement. We investigate how a volunteer-based grassroots organization orchestrates a high-profile event at the United Nations to promote African diaspora entrepreneurs as a valuable force in the mitigation of development challenges in their home countries. We employ qualitative data collected from ethnographic observations, interviews, and secondary sources and apply grounded theory approaches to demonstrate how organizational credibility can be advanced through performative strategizing within event settings. Drawing from heuristics used in theatrical performances, we found that the grassroots organization mobilized specific audience groups in participative role-playing across two acts, thereby producing and consecrating a temporary simulacrum of a cause-related community it claimed to represent. Our findings demonstrate how an unproven organization can strategically use audience mobilization to convert event settings into performative spaces for simulacrum creation and credibility advancement.

Keywords: nonprofit organizations • grassroots organizations • social movements • simulacrum • simulacra • qualitative methodologies • credibility advancement • practices • performative strategizing

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The relatively recent rise and proliferation of grassroots organizations present an important area of focus within the ongoing development of institutions (Beck et al. 1994). Defined as self-organized groups of individuals pursuing common interests through a volunteer-based, nonprofit organization (Davis et al. 2005), grassroots organizations represent a critical actor within the "third sector" (Uvin and Miller 1996, Barman 2016). They embrace a bottom-up, activism-oriented approach to organizing in contrast to the often top-down approach of other organizations. Within international development, intergovernmental organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), function as vital resource providers and operate by aggregating the resources of several member states to solve development challenges. Historically, the interventions of intergovernmental organizations that were intended to improve the living conditions within developing settings have proven to be difficult because the intended beneficiaries were often left out of the process of intervention design (Bernards 2017).

However, grassroots organizations that are focused on serving developing settings show great promise as they are able to assert greater agency and self-determination on behalf of their beneficiaries. In the pursuit of a cause, these organizations seek to create a supportive community, and in their presence, novel opportunities may exist to advance the focal cause (Powell and Bromley 2020). However, the presence of a cause-supportive community is insufficient; grassroots organizations must also win the support of resource providers, such as intergovernmental organizations, foundations, grantors, and donors, to continue their mission and to survive as an organization. The support provided by benefactor groups reflect their trust in the grassroots organization: its capability as an organization, its tenability to influence stakeholders, and its relevance to a cause. In terms of the social advancement and future survival of an organization, such acts of support point to its credibility, which is broadly defined as the quality of being trusted and believed (Cattani et al. 2017, Mueller 2018). However, the ability of a grassroots organization to garner favorable responses from relevant resource providers is challenged by its limited ability to reach and engage with high-status governmental and intergovernmental actors (Smith and Grønbjerg 2006). Specifically, the receptivity of those in charge of channeling critical resources to

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causes determines the success of organizations in obtaining broader recognition (Cattani et al. 2017). Thus, the receptivity of high-status actors also directly influences the survival prospects of lesser known or novel (hence, vulnerable) grassroots organizations (Amagoh 2015).

To improve their chances for survival, grassroots organizations must devise strategies to mobilize different audiences connected to the cause to address their credibility deficit and overcome the perception that they are unproven players. For example, mobilization strategies that engage grassroots volunteers (Minkoff 1997) may sharply differ from strategies that appeal to economic resource providers, such as donors (Fulda and Hsu 2020) and institutional elites who can act as "agents of consecration" for a cause (Cattani et al. 2014, p. 258). Among the different contexts in which grassroots organizations actively engage in mobilization, official events represent a setting in which these organizations may deploy mobilization strategies that simultaneously target several audiences and orchestrate interactions all in one place (Mair and Hehenberger 2014, Mueller 2018). Unlike other settings used for audience mobilization (e.g., social media platforms and the popular press), official events offer unique—and often more immediate—access to audiences that represent social (Anand and Jones 2008), symbolic (Cattani et al. 2014), and economic resources (Goffman 1959, Pitches and Popat 2011). Accordingly, official events can be strategically leveraged by organizations that wish to design and enact opportunities for credibility advancement (Kornberger and Clegg 2011).

Drawing from the literature that addresses strategizing within event settings (e.g., Lampel and Meyer 2008), we explore an annual, professional event at the UN in Vienna that focuses on the cause of African development. To investigate an event-bound orchestration of audience mobilization by a grassroots organization, we place the context of strategizing in the foreground. Specifically, we focus on the strategic practices that a grassroots organization uses to direct multiple audiences in unique roles in order to bring attention to it and the cause it wishes to serve. We utilize ethnographic methodologies to reveal how a grassroots organization curated scenes of multiple audiences that were cast and mobilized as actors and spectators in a sequence of scenes spanning two theatrical acts. The organization then applied event-bound strategic practices to direct a performance that approximated (i.e., rather than substituted or imitated) a cross-audience devotion to the cause. The empirical discovery of the performance of a simulated community—captured as a simulacrum (e.g., Baudrillard 1994, Ezzy 2001)—was found to be a meaningful strategy to advance the credibility of both the cause and the organization.

Deviating from work that emphasizes the improvisational practices for impression management (e.g., Whittington 2011), we extend work that focuses on the role of performance in social settings (Goffman 1959, Mueller 2018). Specifically, we contribute to the understanding of performative strategizing within event settings by unpacking the curational opportunities that grassroots organizations can leverage to advance their credibility. By employing ethnographic methods, we also elucidate how a grassroots organization can take on a director role to not only curate the professional event, but also mobilize audiences toward the production of a performance that simulates a supportive community for the cause—that is, a cause-representative simulacrum. Rather than focusing on the utility of the event itself, we attend to event-bound elements that can be strategically utilized by organizers. Thus, this work differs from previous event research that has emphasized how events can serve as important settings for the creation of scripts that can shift issue discourse (Hardy and Maguire 2010), how unique event spaces allow for dissimilar interests to be reconciled among actors (Mair and Hehenberger 2014), and how events of varying prominence can be coordinated to serve institutional change (Schüßler et al. 2014). Overall, we uncover the practices of performative strategizing that can be leveraged by an event-organizing actor through dramaturgical curation and how this curation can advance the credibility and cause of the actor.

We first present the theoretical domain that informs our study of how credibility advancement can be realized by grassroots organizations and the practices that can be used within event-bound settings. We then present a detailed account of the qualitative methodologies applied in this study and the findings of our analysis. Finally, we conclude by discussing our theoretical contributions as well as future research opportunities that could address the limitations of this specific empirical context and approach.

Theoretical Development

Credibility Advancement Strategies

Organizations lacking professional credentials struggle to obtain the necessary credibility to survive. In grassroots organizations, known strategies for credibility advancement include formalizing organizational structures and/or demonstrating differentiation within an issue field (Galaskiewicz and Bielefeld 1998, Barman 2002). These strategies can enhance the appeal of a grassroots organization among critical audiences, such as political elites (Blau 2008). For organizations, these audiences can then impact prospects for survival through endorsement (Cattani et al. 2017) and facilitate access to resources that can help grow or sustain

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opportunities to thrive (Minkoff 1993). One way of increasing the appeal of a grassroots organization among critical audiences is to highlight its attentiveness to—or engagement with—a cause (Chetkovich and Kunreuther 2006). This can be achieved by presenting the organizational structure of the grassroots organization as formalized, professionalized, or following accepted templates. Here, the strategy of credibility advancement is constituted by practices that demonstrate conformity to professional norms for organizing (Hwang and Powell 2009). For example, credibility advancement can emerge when an organization establishes (expected) formal structures and practices that can signify compliance with known organizing templates (Meyer and Rowan 1977, Staggenborg 1988) and follows blueprints for action that can unlock access to material resource providers (Galaskiewicz 1985). To convince relevant audiences of their claims and advance their credibility, grassroots organizations "are subject to and draw from established definitions of success, merit, and prestige" (Barman 2002, p. 1195).

Although pursuing activities, such as governance formalization or other similar efforts to professionalize according to understood and accepted forms, may bolster the credibility of grassroots organizations, an alternative repertoire of practices is available in the area of performative strategizing (Kornberger and Clegg 2011). This approach views credibility advancement of organizations not as a challenge of compliance with legitimized templates of organizing, but rather as a challenge "to convince powerful actors—potential members, sponsors, and authorities—of the validity of what they are doing and why they are doing it" (Minkoff 1993, p. 888). This form of strategizing requires a grassroots organization to exert a greater degree of agency and ingenuity in its strategic actions to increase the visibility of the cause to relevant audiences and to convey competence in serving it (Barman 2002). Kornberger and Clegg (2011) propose that understanding how organizations succeed in tackling this approach to strategizing prompts a need to conceive of strategic actions as performative activities that differentiate an organization from others and that create a responsive social space in which key audiences are acclimatized to a new cause, and their cooperation to advance it is forged (McInerney 2015).

One performative activity of credibility advancement includes the use of discursive practices to reconstitute or redefine problems in advance of offering the cause as the solution (Knights and Morgan 1991, Vaara 2010). As a strategic action taken with an audience in mind and with the intent to elicit a response or reaction (Gond et al. 2016), performative strategizing can also assert the uniqueness or value of the organization to the cause to incentivize and foster social connections (Barman 2002). For example, a grassroots organization may nudge credibility-granting audiences toward alliance building (Mitlin 2008) or influence other organizations to accept its role as mediator between disjointed groups (Brown 1998, Kornberger and Clegg 2011). Thus, performative strategizing can help establish more durable relationships with key audiences to help secure the support needed for a grassroots organization to pursue its interests (Minkoff 1993, Barman 2002, Cattani et al. 2014). In sum, performative elements of strategizing manifest in scripts, rationalizations, and role enactments that can be leveraged by a grassroots organization to differentiate it from other organizations and to promote its cause.

Previous research suggests that, in addition to discursive practices (Vaara 2010), performative strategizing for credibility advancement also requires "the process through which people could be mobilized" (Kornberger and Clegg 2011, p. 148). Thus, the setting or context can determine the form, boundaries, and fruitfulness of performative strategizing when it is leveraged to mobilize people. It can also provide material and symbolic resources that can support mobilizing efforts of organizations that are unfamiliar to critical audiences (Johns 2017). A theoretical framework that helps reveal the role of context—in shaping the processes and practices of mobilizing audiences—can be informed by the event-bound strategic work literature (i.e., field-configuring events, following Lampel and Meyer 2008), which positions events as unique contexts that are defined by relational spaces between different audiences. These relational spaces can be orchestrated to reach certain outcomes within constrained and limited time frames (Mair and Hehenberger 2014). In assessing the strategic and performative possibilities of event contexts for credibility advancement of grassroots organizations, we propose that convening different audiences at an event is a distinct form of performative strategizing—that is, a nondiscursive form of audience mobilization that creates space for performances and orchestrates role-playing within uniquely confined settings. To determine performative aspects of strategizing through event orchestration, we explore what aspects are available to an organization in an event setting.

The Performative Potential of Event Settings

Events are unique spaces for performative strategizing because they serve as meeting places where distinct audiences can interact with each other (Lampel and Meyer 2008). Events are also settings in which new ideas and practices are advanced through the use of social skills (Mair and Hehenberger 2014) and "where networks are constructed, business cards are exchanged, reputations are advanced, deals are struck, news is shared, accomplishments are recognized,

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standards are set, and dominant designs are selected" (Lampel and Meyer 2008, p. 1026). Following Schüßler and Sydow (2015), events are defined as intentionally programmed, temporally bound spaces in which diverse groups of actors come together, interact around issues, and relate with each other in ways that may yield strategically significant outcomes. Thus, events can be important spaces for grassroots organizations to influence public perception and strengthen support for their cause (Claus and Tracey 2020). For organizations also searching for credibility advancement, events are spaces in which "a relationship with an audience" (Cattani et al. 2014, p. 260) can be built and applied to concrete strategic ends.

Following Lampel and Meyer (2008) and drawing from insights offered by Baker and Faulkner (1991), we assert that events have five defining features that can be utilized by grassroots organizations to foster cause responsiveness and advance organizational credibility: (1) events assemble actors from diverse professional, organizational, and geographic backgrounds at the same time and in a shared location; (2) events are limited in duration and, therefore, condense and intensify interactions with multiple audiences; (3) events provide unstructured opportunities for simultaneous interactions with multiple audiences; (4) events include ceremonial activities and generate social, theatrical, and symbolic resources that can be deployed to capture the attention of audiences and to create relational entanglements; and 5) event organizing is a role that can grant access to resources and aid the pursuit of interests. These five event features are indispensable to grassroots organizations for credibility advancement because they help convert event settings into performance spaces in which organizations can carry out what Goffman (1959, p.31) coins "dramatic realizations"—performances that can highlight the desired vision of a cause and the accomplishments of the organization for the cause. Goffman (1959, p. 26) defines performance as "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which, in any way, serves to influence any of the other participants." The central premise of a dramaturgical perspective is that "individuals are persuasive and influential in mobilizing the behavior of other people" (Brissett and Edgley 1990, p. 4). Consequently, an adoption of a dramaturgical perspective prompts a focus on how people express themselves to—and in conjunction with—others to create meaning and influence (Gardner and Avolio 1998).

Building on the insight that actors simultaneously attempt to influence and are influenced by the settings in which they act, Mair and Hehenberger (2014) demonstrate that assigning specific event settings to particular audiences plays a pivotal role in reconciling opposing interests. They find that practices of backstage convening—in the context of organizational philanthropy events—support front-stage performances and helped to manufacture consensus between different audiences.

Thus, event settings allow organizations to orchestrate performative scenes to reveal exchanges between specific audiences either within exclusive settings or during specific event moments. Event settings also allow other actors to appreciate—and respond to—performative scenes. By leveraging event contexts, grassroots organizations can arrange scenes to convey the relevance of a cause to critical audiences. This, in turn, can allow organizations to advance their credibility by influencing audiences who have the power to legitimize the organization and its interests.

Orchestrating Audience Role Playing in Event Settings

We contend that interactions during an event can be orchestrated to occur in particular ways and that these interactions determine how different audiences can influence one another when formulating favorable perceptions of both the event and the cause (Kornberger and Clegg 2011). When pursuing credibility, grassroots organizations must attend to the various roles that different audiences are able to play within event settings (Wooten and Hoffman 2008). Each audience provides varying types of cooperation and support (McInerney 2015, Cattani et al. 2017) as informed by how each audience relates to—or aligns with—the cause of the grassroots organization. For audiences who hold the power of endorsement—that is, by recognizing a cause or a grassroots organization—events can provide a visible setting in which their credibility-granting roles may be asserted and exercised (Cattani et al. 2014). For example, Anand and Jones (2008) reveal how award ceremonies provide structure and opportunity for recognizable public figures to take part in rituals of awarding and appraising less famous event participants.

Although all audiences at an event may be supportive of the cause, differences in social status imply that different audiences can serve in distinct roles (e.g., advocates, ambassadors, organizers, and beneficiaries) and can potentially contribute to the performative features of an event through role playing (Islam and Zyphur 2009). According to Goffman (1961, p. 38), "by … spontaneous involvement in the joint activity, the individual [i.e., actor] becomes an integral part of the situation [i.e., performance], lodged in it and exposed to it." Therefore, an important strategic tactic of event organizers is creating performance spaces for event attendees to engage in role-playing that "harnesses the moral energy" (Douglas 1986, p. 99) of a cause and its representation.

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We propose that, in assuming the role of event organizers, grassroots organizations can draw from multiple event moments, including but not limited to award ceremonies. These orchestrated event moments can help create opportunities for credibility advancement by fostering favorable impressions of the cause. Event organizers can also create sites for mobilization and performative role playing through dramaturgical activities, such as selecting, assembling, staging, facilitating, and orchestrating exchanges between different audiences. Given the time and setting constraints inherent in event contexts, organizers can convey a "competent, credible, and believable" image of what they are representing and supporting (Mueller 2018, p. 18). For new or unproven actors, such as nascent grassroots organizations, events, thus, represent a strategic opportunity to enhance their prospects for survival (Minkoff 1993).

Embracing the concept that performative strategizing is "an activity that *does* something" (Kornberger and Clegg 2011, p. 138), we investigate how an unproven organization advances its credibility by applying specific strategic practices to organize an event. We employ a single case study to analyze how a grassroots organization orchestrated an event—held in 2017 at the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Vienna—to gain visibility for the cause of using African diaspora entrepreneurship to address African development challenges.

Methods

Research Context and Design

We used a single case study and qualitative methodologies to investigate how a grassroots organization leveraged event-bound strategic work to advance its credibility. Held annually over a three-year period, the 2017 focal event focused on African development and was hosted at the headquarters of the UNIDO. The focal grassroots organization—the African Diaspora Movement (ADM)—orchestrated event activities to further its cause—that is, promoting the African diaspora as a valuable yet underappreciated force for solving development challenges in Africa. The ongoing pursuit of how to improve development across the African continent addresses a vast, dynamic, and complex mix of challenges as well as a persistent question of how economic development can alleviate poverty, a focal area of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), international governmental organizations, and consultancies (Boyle and Kitchin 2014). These actors work alongside political stakeholders, such as specific African governments, regional pacts, and the African Union (AU), who are responsible for fostering development.

This empirical context offers a valuable setting for investigating how a grassroots organization leverages an event for credibility advancement. It was also a relatively rare research opportunity to access an in vivo orchestration of an organizational event (Siggelkow 2007). Accounting for the interests of its intergovernmental members, the host organization (i.e., the UNIDO) was a pivotal actor with a long history of shaping large-scale interventions, channeling resources, and guiding development goals, actions that were clearly reflected in its mission "to eradicate poverty through inclusive and sustainable industrial development" (United Nations Industrial Development Organization 2018). Thus, the UNIDO demonstrates a level of accountability to its mission and to its application in African development. Further, the events that it hosted in prominent locations were infused with the prospect of having meaningful future influence and of representing significant historical moments (Schüßler et al. 2014). In turn, these important event sites could justify the attendance of actors regarded as instrumental to African development. The collocation of these actors at the UNIDO (i.e., at the same time and in a shared location), alongside direct research access to all front-stage and backstage scenes, represented an ideal setting to observe how the activities of the ADM were regarded by audiences who could, in turn, impact the credibility of the ADM. Thus, establishing an event theme that embodied the narrative of the cause (i.e., African development challenges) and obtaining access to an exclusive event location (i.e., the UNIDO) were valuable preconditions that aligned with the interests of the grassroots organizer in the preparatory stage of event organizing. With an openness to exploring the activities of the grassroots organization in orchestrating the event, we draw from previous ethnographic research (Barley 1996) to provide a rich, inductive case study that addresses how a grassroots organization leveraged an event by engaging in performative strategizing.

The Grassroots Organization

The nascent ADM—a volunteer-based, grassroots organization based in both Brussels and Vienna—had focused on activism projects that ensured the social representation of African diaspora youth within their respective host communities, which were mainly based throughout Europe. According to historical documents provided by the organization, the ADM operated as a nonprofit organization that did not assume a political stance or discriminate against anyone wishing to join. Early on, its focal cause was to promote the value and relevance of African diaspora youth to current and potential audiences (i.e., stakeholders) who were involved in African development. Since its inception in 2013 as a university student association in Vienna, the main projects of the ADM had been smaller scale events that provided training and

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awareness programs for their EU-based members. The ADM used these programs to open dialogue on diaspora-related issues between members of the African diaspora and audiences connected to African development. Prior to the 2017 event, the ADM received limited financial donations from Austrian economic development organizations and in-kind support from the UNIDO (i.e., access to event facilities). The ADM established ties with some personnel and received some support from their respective organizations; however, its annual event had been shrinking in size each year because of funding limitations. With the founder and primary representative of the ADM growing older, the link with African diaspora youth was also weakening. Each year, volunteer turnover required the ADM to balance strategic responsibilities with necessary administrative tasks associated with the annual event. In prior years, the amount of funding that the ADM received resulted in break-even ventures. Although the financial situation of the ADM just prior to the 2017 event was considered similarly vulnerable, there was the extra weight of knowing that this event would be the last that the UNIDO offered the host location as in-kind support. These various ongoing challenges not only increased the roles and obligations of the ADM leadership team, but also stressed the volunteer model of the organization.

The Focal Event

Consistent with the mandate of the UNIDO to serve the broad area of international development by providing space to host related events, the focal event in this case study was the annual forum on issues related to African development and diaspora, held at the UNIDO headquarters in Vienna in August 2017. The UNIDO agreed to provide event space as part of a four-year commitment, beginning with an inaugural forum in October 2014. One member of the author team (the first author of this study, "researcher 1") had attended the last three (out of a total of four) ADM events held at the UNIDO, providing training workshops for attendees, collecting video and audio recordings, and assessing the event as a potential research site. This preparatory work helped the author team obtain permission from the ADM to have unique access to event spaces, its leadership team, and volunteers. Across the five days of the focal event, researchers 1 and 2 (the third author of this study) observed the implementation efforts of the ADM in support of the forum theme: "accelerating African development." In honoring the in-kind offer of the UNIDO, the ADM understood that the 2017 event would be the final one offered at the UNIDO headquarters. The ADM, thus, viewed this event as a pivotal moment that could potentially impact its ability to continue its work into the future.

The 2017 event—structured as two sequential parts—focused on how development could be served by entrepreneurship—that is, through the pursuits of African diaspora youth. Drawing from theatrical performance (Goffman 1959), these two sequential parts were identified as acts I and II as determined by a clear boundary that surfaced during the analysis of the field notes and coding memos.[1] In act I, which spanned from day 0 through the first half of the morning on day 3, the ADM orchestrated the hosting, socializing, and training of specific event attendees. The attendees of act I were both proven and unproven entrepreneurs, and programming included interactive workshop sessions, group meals, and selection rounds for practicing idea pitching. Act II spanned the afternoon of day 3 through to day 4 and incorporated new event attendees—that is, benefactors and political elites. The main scenes in act II were panel-style sessions at the UN, a cocktail hour at the Austrian Federal Chamber of Commerce (AFCC), an informal gathering at an African-themed restaurant, and the pitch tournament finale and awards ceremony at the UN.

Because planning began several months before the focal event, including the confirmation of the UN as the designated meeting site, the ADM was able to prepare invitations to the event. The budget for the event included support for flying in and hosting specific attendees that were important to the cause. Following field observations taken by researchers 1 and 2 during day 0 of the focal event—in the presence of two leaders of the ADM at two different Vienna shisha cafes, the main tasks first ranged from basic administration to more critical (i.e., strategic) planning. Basic administrative tasks were important for impression management; much of day 0 was spent on several phone calls made to hotels and to local friends with larger vehicles who could provide airport pick up for "VIP" attendees. Between these calls, there were two main activities: (1) changing the names and time frames of certain panel sessions that were planned for act II and choosing the attendees who would best support these scenes and (2) asking researchers 1 and 2 for advice concerning the timing and themes required for training participants in act I. After being presented some ideas for training, the two leaders of the ADM offered alternative ideas or additional concepts for integrating and socializing the attendees.[2] These activities continued until roughly 12:00 p.m. on day 0 when the ADM leadership team began greeting and socializing with event attendees who were arriving at the hotel (i.e., where most were designated to stay during the focal event).

Data Collection

Using qualitative methodologies, we derived our data from three sources: (1) field observations (and

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associated field notes that provided context) at the 2017 focal event; (2) semistructured and narrative interviews; and (3) secondary data sources, such as program pamphlets, and pre-event and postevent email communications and social media postings from Twitter. Table 1 provides a summary of these data sources.

Field Participatory Observations

Participatory observation data captured at the focal event was the main data source. These data included the field notes of researchers 1 and 2, who were present during the focal event, as well as supplementary photos and audio recordings.[3] Data also included video recordings that had captured the "main stage" from the perspective of the audience (i.e., the podium and raised stage). The opportunity for direct observation was facilitated by researcher 1, who had been a workshop trainer at two (of the three) prior ADM events (i.e., in 2015 and 2016). In total, researchers 1 and 2 spent five and three days, respectively, observing the ADM leadership team and event attendees. On the day prior to the four-day event (i.e., day 0), field observations included the last-minute planning efforts of the ADM and the arrival of the attendees. The topics at the workshops provided by researcher 1 concerned entrepreneurial strategies and approaches to idea pitching. With researcher 1 in the role of workshop trainer during act I, researcher 2 collected observation data, and researcher 1 captured field notes later in the day.

Because researcher 1 had attended the 2015 and 2016 events, this created some expectation of how the 2017 focal event would unfold as well as some likely observation settings and opportunities. In contrast, researcher 2 was able to provide an unbiased view of the 2017 focal event as it was a new experience. During the prior events, researcher 1 not only spent each day in its entirety with the ADM leadership team and event attendees, but also attended evening social outings and impromptu organizational meetings. These interactions helped researcher 1 establish trust with the organizers and some actors related to the cause of the ADM.[4] These interactions also helped researcher 1 distinguish aspects that were unique to the 2017 focal event (i.e., versus the two prior events in 2015 and 2016) and identify key locations and activities for observation. Each day, researchers 1 and 2 met and discussed what they had observed, including social interactions, demonstrations of status and social boundaries, planned and unplanned activities, and shared or conflicting views among attendees. These exchanges, which led to descriptive memos and enhanced field notes, occurred late at night once opportunities for meaningful observation had passed. By pairing researcher 1, who was familiar to the context, with researcher 2, who was not, professional distancing from the ADM was managed dynamically during the event (Anteby 2013). The pairing of researchers 1 and 2 also yielded rich exchanges dedicated to understanding expected and emergent behaviors witnessed in both the front-stage and backstage at the event site. Consistent with grounded theory building, this approach supported theoretical sensitivity to and theoretical sampling of the event (Charmaz 2008). This approach also followed the strategy-as-practice literature, which contends that event performances are best studied in the moments as they happen (Mueller 2018).

Semistructured and Narrative Interviews

During the 2017 focal event, four semistructured interviews were conducted with event attendees representing different audience groups related to the cause, and five narrative interviews were conducted with successful African entrepreneurs (Riessman 1993). To better understand certain event moments that later emerged as particularly relevant, eight postevent, semistructured interviews were conducted with actors related to the event. These postevent meetings supported a deeper understanding of thematic elements that had emerged from these data and the relevance of nascent themes within our broader theory (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, Charmaz 2008). Postevent meetings were also helpful in uncovering how specific event scenes were perceived by different audiences. In total, 16 hours of interview data were collected from actors of the relevant audiences.

Secondary Data

Four hundred pages of secondary data related to the 2017 focal event and the three prior events were also collected. These data included internal and external documents of the ADM, such as attendee invitation emails, attendee surveys, speech transcriptions, prior event programs, focal event program drafts, training materials, postevent summaries and reports, and published promotional videos. After consulting the field notes and video recordings, selected event moments were transcribed to inform new observations and triangulate existing observations. All Twitter data connected to the ADM from 2016 to 2020 was also collected, coded, and analyzed. These data amounted to 485 Tweets posted by the ADM and 1,192 Tweets posted by others who either mentioned the ADM or Retweeted ADM posts.

Reflexivity

During fieldwork, the ADM leadership team was consulted to confirm the meaning of observations, decisions, and conversations. On occasion, the ADM leadership team consulted researcher 1 for general advice about particular challenges beyond the event as

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Table 1. Description of Data Sources

Data source	Amount	Content details	Time periods represented
Field observation (focal event)	105 person-hours	Participatory observation	August 2017 event
Field observation (three prior events)	150 person-hours	Participatory observation; setting familiarization and contextualization	June 2015 event, June 2016 event
Interviews	17 interviews	On-site at 2017 event: narrative interviews (five), open-ended interviews (two); postevent (2017–2020): semistructured interviews (one in Brussels, one in Vienna, eight via Skype); subjects represented different audience groups related to the event; all were digitally recorded with each interview lasting 40 to 110 minutes	August 2017 event, 2018/2019 postevent
Audio recordings	5.1 hours	Onsite at 2017 event: meetings, entrepreneurial pitches, and deliberations of judges of pitch tournament	August 2017 event
Video recordings	20.5 hours	On -site at 2017 and 2016 events: subjects captured varied in status, including proven entrepreneurs, Secretary of State of Tunisia, President of ECOWAS, senior officials from the International Labor Organization and Ministry of Malian Diaspora, Ambassadors from Austria, and senior officials from the UNIDO	August 2017 event, June 2016 event
Photographic documents	945 photos	Professional photographer hired by the ADM (835 photos); WhatsApp group shared by ADM volunteers (18 photos); 2015 event (50 photos); 2016 event (42 photos)	August 2017 event, June 2016 event, June 2016 event
Social media documents	1677 Tweets	All Twitter data connected to the ADM (2016–2020): posted by the ADM (485 Tweets); posted by others as mentions or Retweets of the ADM (1192 Tweets)	April 2016 to April 2020
Text documents	408 pages[a]	Field notes, web content, email communications, and event-related archival documents	June 2015 event, June 2016 event, August 2017 event, 2018/2019 postevent

[a]Page count does not include interview transcripts.

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well as for potential changes to the training scheduled during act I. In these event moments, the ADM leadership team was reminded of the dual role of researcher 1 (i.e., as researcher and trainer). Although some ideas that could help the organization as a whole were offered by researcher 1, none was offered that would have influenced the curation of the event. These inquiries revealed that researcher 1 was not only regarded as an expert on entrepreneurship by the ADM, but also someone who could be trusted with sensitive information (e.g., revealing the vulnerable position of the ADM). Researcher 1 had a perspective distinct from those of other senior attendees—that is, having the opportunity to self-reflect on the expected role of trainer (i.e., coach during act I) while maintaining the independent role of researcher throughout the data-collection process.

During two postevent meetings with two leaders of the ADM, researcher 1 shared the theoretical model derived from this case study. These interactions offered an opportunity for shared reflexivity and a validation of the findings (Gaskell and Bauer 2000). These interactions also allowed the author team to reach communicative validation and to hear the views of

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the ADM concerning the knowledge that had been uncovered. The two leaders strongly agreed with the findings and, in many cases, offered additional examples of engagement in event-bound practices. Overall, the two postevent meetings provided the author team with greater confidence in the validity of the analysis, findings, and model.

Analysis

Following methods prescribed for grounded theory construction (Strauss and Corbin 1997; Charmaz 2008, 2014), we initially worked with observational data collected from event-related settings. The architecture of our theory was created from field notes, supportive memos, video and audio recordings, and 75 hours of detailed conversations among the research team. Given the sequence of unique settings and actor assemblies that unfolded during the focal event, our analysis was organized by the temporal phases in which data were obtained (Langley 1999). Initial themes that emerged within the ordered scenes of acts I and II were generated inductively. These themes were then analyzed in terms of whether they had a bearing on broader theoretical concepts.

Identifying Audience Groups

The first step of data analysis identified relevant audience groups according to their roles at the ADM-led event, their presence in acts I and II, and their connection to the cause. By identifying boundaries around sets of actors, we were able to classify attendees as distinct audience groups within the space of the event. We noted which members of these audience groups were designated by the ADM to take on specific roles within event scenes. Observations of the social interactions between the ADM and other attendees in specific scenes in acts I and II helped identify audience group boundaries. For example, we noted how specific attendees were introduced to each other by the ADM leadership team and how specific characteristics were attributed to these attendees according to their importance to the cause. These designations included titles, affiliations, accomplishments, and the amount of attention attendees received before, during, and after they occupied a particular position on the stage. Data analysis also identified what information was exchanged between attendees, which individuals spent more time together, and how social interactions varied according to the setting or event scene (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Thus, the first stage of analysis provided an initial understanding of how the ADM leveraged attendees affiliated with different audience groups and designated different event roles and which audience groups were actors on the stage versus spectators in the crowd. By identifying which audience groups were performing versus spectating within specific event scenes, we were able to uncover how the ADM influenced its future by organizing the event. Table 2 presents four audience groups that were identified as being important to the cause—that is, the benefactors, the champions, the prospects, and the coaches. Table 2 also includes the approximate number of attendees for each audience group and the different roles of each group during the event (i.e., beyond the shared role of event spectator).

The benefactors represented the audience group that carried the most prestige during the event and that was affiliated with policy and scaled-project initiatives. Most of these individuals occupied professional roles within proven resource-providing and -controlling institutions with a history of involvement in African development. Thus, the benefactors provided the symbolic presence of an audience who could sponsor the cause (e.g., in the role of donor) and were perceived as having ties to political or economic capital. Although the benefactors were not part of act I, they were assigned highly visible, front-stage positions in act II (days 3 and 4) as participants in the panel sessions and as an audience of potential resource providers. Conversations with the ADM leadership team revealed that the benefactors were commonly referred to as VIPs.

The champions were exemplar or archetypical actors that had records of African diaspora and/or African youth entrepreneurship success. Despite having attained varied levels of achievement, all champions had progressed from a position of launching to sustaining their respective ventures. Throughout acts I and II, the champions were tasked with different roles and represented contemporary and proven examples of how prospective African and African-diaspora entrepreneurs could actively serve the cause of serving African development challenges. The champions also judged the entrepreneurial ideas of the prospects and acted as spectators in the crowd.

The prospects represented the largest audience group, which included attendees from either African countries or the African diaspora in Europe who wanted to engage in entrepreneurship-related development work in their home countries. All prospects were outspoken and recognized as having the potential to engage in future African development in either their host or home countries. The prospects were invited by the ADM to participate in the workshop and plenary sessions in act I as budding "cadets" for the cause. For the prospects that advanced in the selection process, they also participated in the pitch competition in act II. In both acts I and II, all prospects served as spectators in the crowd, and others, for specific scenes, volunteered or were selected to appear on stage.

The coaches formed the smallest audience group, which included researchers 1 and 2, who provided

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Table 2. Description of Audience Groups and Their Roles During the Event

Audience group label (number present)	Audience group description	Typical roles during event scenes
Benefactors (35[a])	Professional roles in the UN, the European Commission, the International Labor Organization, the AU, African governments, NGOs, development organizations, and consultancies	Keynote speakers, panelists, or judges/ award announcers for the pitch tournament finale during days 3 and 4 (act II)
Champions (five)	Young, successful, and proven African entrepreneurs with businesses in different sectors and at various stages of development	Mentors, informal trainers, judges for the preselection round pitching tournaments (act I), or speakers in plenary sessions/ panels and crowd members when not on stage (acts I and II)
Prospects (50[a])	Young, educated Africans and African diaspora living in the EU with an expressed interest in entrepreneurship	Trainees/mentees, crowd members, or—if selected in act I to advance—prospects in the pitch tournament finale (act II)
Coaches (two)	A professor and postdoctoral researcher from universities in North America and Europe, respectively	Trainers/experts on subject matter during days 1 and 2 (act I) and observers or interviewers (acts I and II)

[a]Exact numbers of prospects and benefactors are reasonable estimates since some were present only at selective sessions during acts I and II.

educational material and training exercises for entrepreneurial skill development. Because researchers 1 and 2 facilitated workshops for the prospects (i.e., with the champions, the ADM, and at times UNIDO staff who attended as spectators in the crowd) in the afternoon of day 1 and most of day 2, they were primarily regarded as entrepreneurship experts in developing country settings by all event attendees.

Identifying Key Spaces for Actor Assemblies and Scenes

The second step of data analysis addressed physical event spaces. Descriptive information for key episodic scenes was generated as part of the initial coding. Accounting for audience assemblies within physical spaces revealed where dramatic activities occurred, who engaged in these activities, and who was the "viewed" versus the "viewer" of these activities within captive crowds. The episodic scenes of the event were then coded for actual and metaphorical "theatrical stages," where performative activities occurred and spectators gathered to observe as part of a focal scene (Goffman 1959). Both formal and informal spaces were included in the analysis to account for features that could affect scene activity (Mair and Hehenberger 2014). Taking the scheduled and unscheduled event moments in chronological order, temporal brackets were established around the ordered event spaces where key scenes occurred (Langley 1999). From the compiled scenes, event programming was analyzed according to which audience groups were present and what scene position each audience group took (i.e., on stage, in the crowd, or neither) to capture their role in the scene. Within the framework of each scene (i.e., accounting for time, setting, and event position), the composition of the crowd was analyzed to reveal which audience groups were observing a scene on a stage. Identifying distinct audience members interacting in physical and temporal settings provided the initial structure for theorizing. Figure 1 (act I) and Figure 2 (act II) are graphic representations of the timeline for each of the event scenes, according to the formality of the setting, the audience groups assuming roles on stage, and the audience groups assuming the role of spectators in the crowd.[5]

Following Strauss and Corbin (1997), the subsequent stage of analysis involved moving from the initial open coding of relevant actions and results taken from the episodic event scenes to the identification of broad analytical themes that could represent these actions and higher order outcomes. New or repeated actions observed within certain settings were noted and revisited to reveal what, if any, meaning they later had in identifying consequential practices. The analytical themes were discussed among the authors across several meetings. During this time, the team underwent an extensive process of mapping activities performed by specific actors in specific spaces to ascertain the meanings of various scenes in and between acts I and II. Finally, the analytical themes identified in the second order coding were analyzed to discern practices animated in our theory (Charmaz 2008). Figure 3 summarizes the results of our inductive approach to coding, and Table 3 provides the illustrative data and proof quotations that support the development of our theoretical model. Table 3 also represents how and where the ADM engaged in activities of dramaturgical curation and how credibility was ultimately advanced.

Findings

Focusing on activities of the grassroots organization—studied across various scenes at the 2017 focal event—and actions taken by the different audience groups

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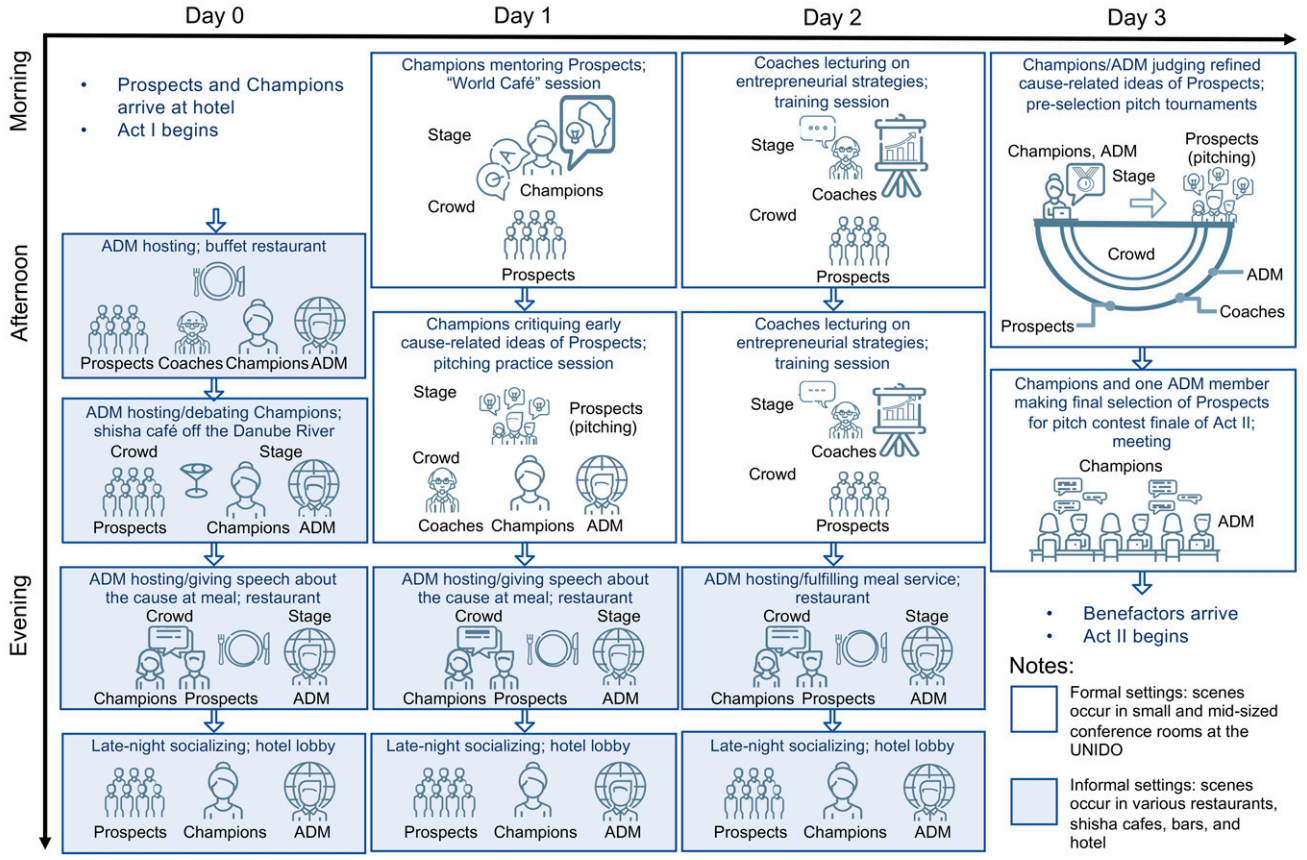
Figure 1. (Color online) Temporal Flow of Key Scenes in the Dramaturgical Curation of Act I



during and in response to the event, our findings show that nurturing benefactor responsiveness to the cause occurred through the orchestration of performative role playing at the focal event of the ADM. The theoretical model depicted in Figure 4 presents the strategic practices of the ADM that animated a process of dramaturgical curation—as performative strategizing—for credibility advancement. Figure 4 also accounts for the pre-event, which was captured as a preparatory stage in the dramaturgical curation of the focal event. These initial activities included establishing an exclusive event setting and choosing an event theme that captured the narrative of the cause.

From these practices, we represent credibility advancement through within-event and postevent responsiveness to the cause and the grassroots organization (i.e., the ADM). Credibility advancement was enacted by the benefactors, such as senior members of the UNIDO, the Austrian government, the AU, and the European Commission, who served as the critical resource-providing audience. In act I, the key practice was the assembly of a cast by the ADM to support an event performance in act II. In act II, the key practice was the production of a simulacrum of a cause-supportive community by the ADM as realized through event-bound work. Through event orchestration of acts I and II, the ADM was able to influence audiences that were capable of advancing the credibility of the ADM.

Dramaturgical Curation in Act I: Assembly of Cast for Event Performance

The dramaturgical curation of act I assembled a cast of viable performers to actively participate in the event performance in act II. The process of assembling such a cast was accomplished by (1) seeding professionalized scripts related to the cause through the curation of exchange opportunities across audience groups and (2) auditioning performers who could positively represent the cause during act II.

Seeding Cause-Related Scripts

Scripts related to the cause—that is, professionalized language connected to African development, entrepreneurship, and the diaspora—were instilled directionally from the champions, the coaches, and the ADM to the prospects within scenes that occurred at the UNIDO. In addition, the ADM often echoed and

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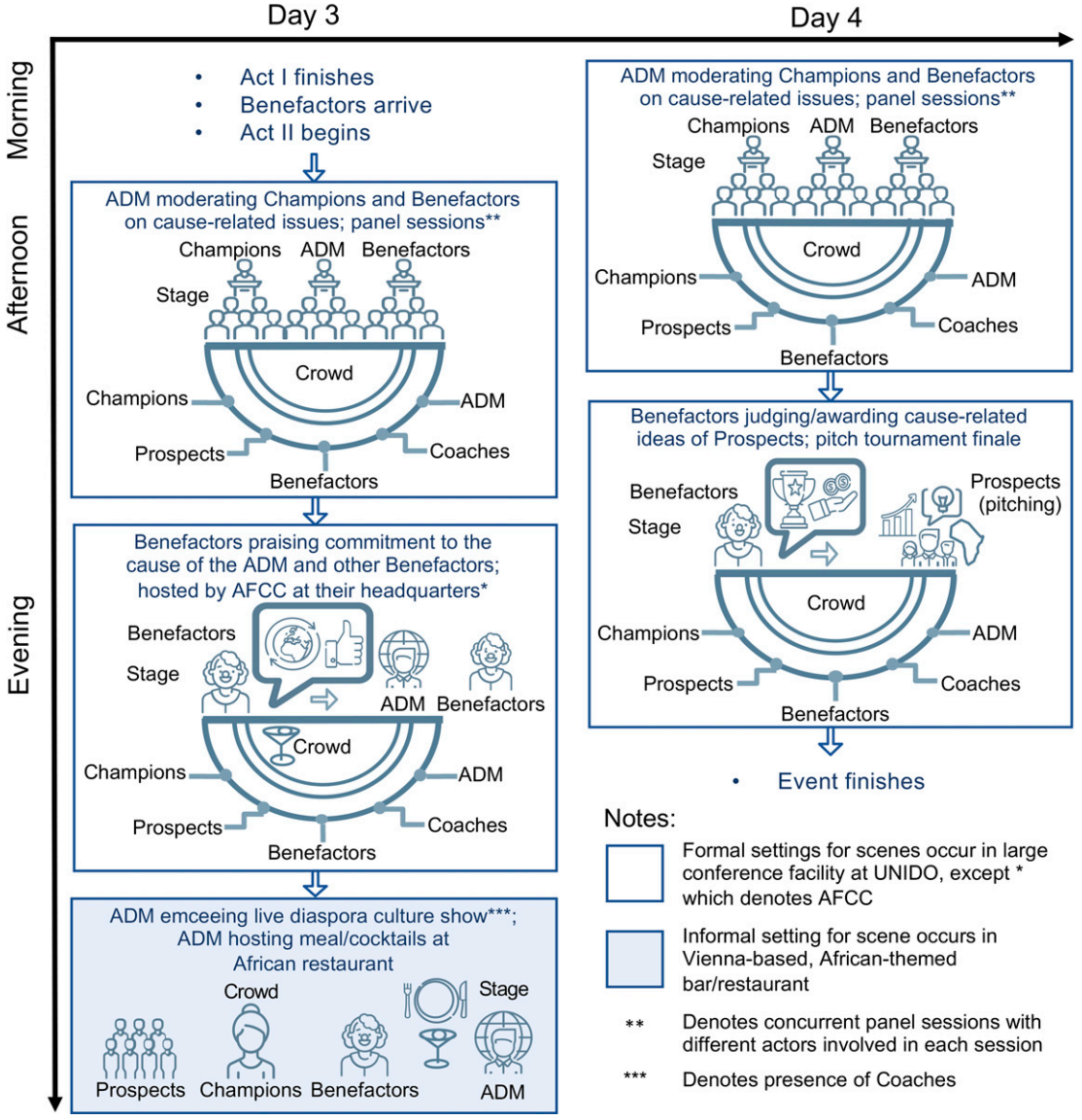
Figure 2. (Color online) Temporal Flow of Key Scenes in the Dramaturgical Curation of Act II



emphasized specific points made by the coaches and the champions, who passed on key knowledge and frameworks related to entrepreneurship and African development challenges, respectively. These activities contributed to the creation of an event cast that was assembled in a few key scenes.

For example, champions were designated by the ADM to provide "inspirational talks" in a "World Café" session on the morning of day 1. Here, the priming of conversation boundaries on the cause was instigated by the champions, who conveyed "how they succeeded as diaspora entrepreneurs" (field notes). During this session, each champion recounted the entrepreneurial journey and then answered questions posed by groups of up to 10 prospects. Every 20 minutes, each group of prospects rotated to a different table or room where another champion engaged with them in the same type of role. This process allowed the prospects to experience five different champion narratives that animated scenarios of successful African diaspora entrepreneurship. Given the variety of backgrounds of the prospects, these interactions between the champions and the prospects established a set of tangible and legitimized scripts and vocabularies around entrepreneurship-based challenges. Champions, who were proud of their achievements, were designated by the ADM to take on a mentor role for the prospects, a role that required building mutual trust and support. The setting in which these activities occurred—that is,

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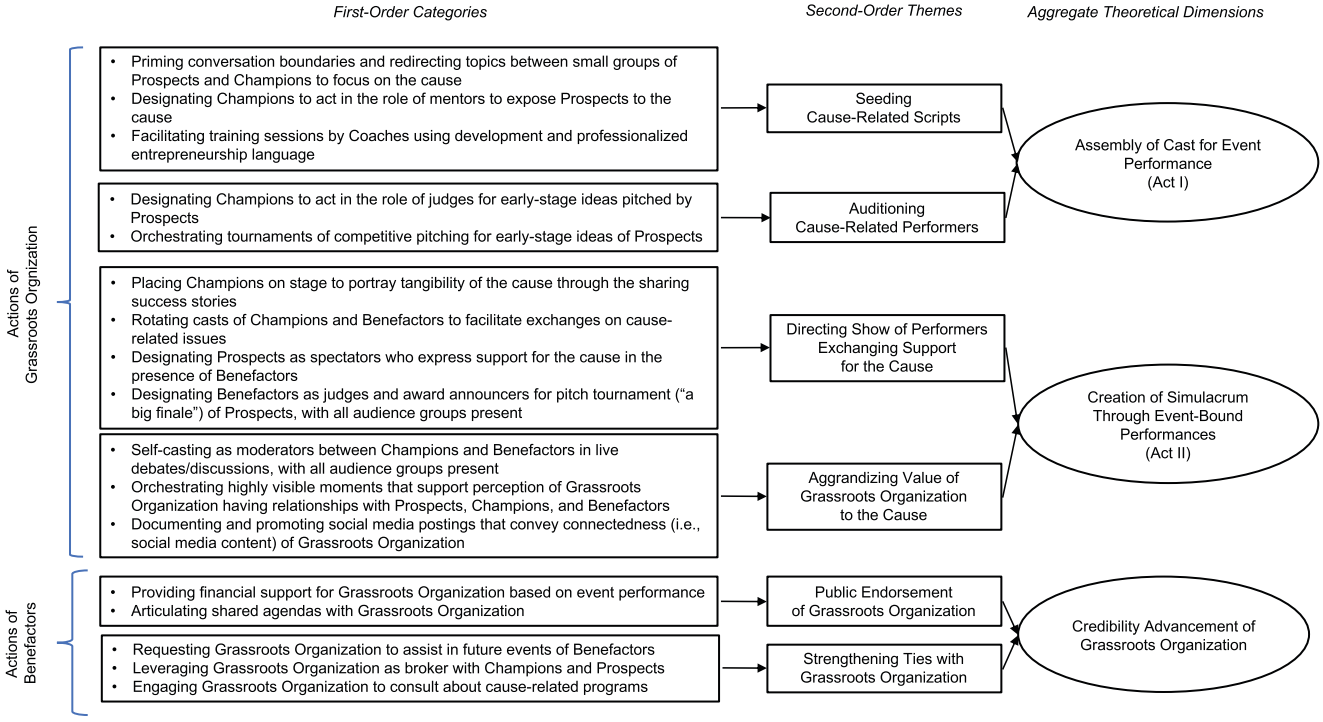
Figure 3. (Color online) Data Structure: Actions of Grassroots Organization and Benefactors



formal space at the UNIDO—clarified and reinforced this mentor role, and it helped prospects gain respect for the champions who had achieved success in diaspora pursuits. This scene comprised the delivery (i.e., by the champions) and the acquisition (i.e., by the prospects) of valuable and rare knowledge with the champions designated as advice-providing mentors and the prospects as advice-seeking pupils.

Another example of the seeding of cause-related scripts was prescribed by the ADM leadership team, who primed conversation foci and social interactions between the prospects and the champions at the World Café session. A few minutes before the beginning of the session, the ADM told the prospects to ask each of the champions, "What are the entrepreneurial challenges you face within an African context?" This brief—but direct—request helped reinforce topics that emphasized the cause. Then, the ADM—in a more discrete fashion—prescribed to the champions response guides that outlined the type of advice that should be offered for this type of question. On several occasions, any attempt to stray from the planned conversation was immediately addressed—and redirected—by ADM members who were hovering among the different groups of prospects that were being engaged by the champions. When the recorded video of this event moment was transcribed and analyzed, we observed a prospect being redirected after an attempt to deviate from the expected interaction in the scene: "A roundtable participant [prospect] is challenging [a champion] on the differences between doing business in Africa and the U.S. An ADM staff member interrupts the participant [prospect]: 'No, we don't need to focus on Europe and America. We know that things are alright [in those places].'"

Because of these priming actions taken by the ADM, champion–prospect interactions stayed on topic and within the language boundaries related to the cause. Thus, the boundary guides that were given to both audience groups served the seeding process.

To further the priming of conversational boundaries, the ADM sought to ensure that the professionalized language used by the champions was adopted by the prospects. Following the World Café session, the ADM asked the prospects to meet as a team and present the main takeaways as confirmation that they had retained the cause-related elements from this interaction with the champions. Among the groups of prospects who shared, we observed strong convergence around their understanding of specific types of challenges and the various means of implementing entrepreneurial ideas in African settings. Thus, this curated scene was critical in ensuring a greater alignment between the understanding of the cause by the prospects and the professionalized language used to represent it. To further seed professionalized and stylistic language, the ADM asked one coach (i.e., researcher 1) to give a workshop on

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Table 3. Aggregate Theoretical Dimensions, Second Order Themes, First Order Categories, and Illustrative Data

Aggregate theoretical dimensions, second-order themes, first-order categories	Illustrative data
Assembly of cast for event performance (act I)	
Seeding cause-related scripts	
A. Priming conversation boundaries and redirecting topics between small groups of prospects and champions to focus on the cause	A1. During a shared meal on day 0, an ADM member addressed prospects and champions as the food was arriving: "…every time people come to our activities, it's important we tell them what we are, when we created [the ADM], what is our momentum, what is our mission, what we want to achieve." The ADM member said, "The initiative has to come from us… We need to continue developing our countries." (Field observation)
	A2. A prospect at a roundtable discussion panel with a champion challenged the champion on the differences between doing business in Africa and the United States. An ADM member interrupted the prospect: "No, we don't need to focus on Europe and America. We know that things are alright [there]." (Field observation)
B. Designating champions to act in the role of mentors to expose prospects to the cause	B1. During the World Café session of prospects meeting champions, prospects introduced themselves to champions who sat in the middle of a round table, and then the champions "held court," talked about their experiences, and answered questions. Prospects listened and took notes or Tweeted: End of first session...such great advice from the Entrepreneurs @ADM @COLEACP @acpYPN @PressACP @UNIDO_Brussels. (Video recording; social media document)
	B2. Prospects from each group explained [speaking to champions/the ADM] for a few minutes what they learned from roundtable sessions chaired by champions. It was highly flattering for champions because it summarized their insights, and specific champions were explicitly praised. For example, one of the prospects holding the microphone said: "I just want to say thanks to all the entrepreneurs who talked to us because we definitely learned a lot and you guys are an inspiration." (Field observation; video recording)
C. Facilitating training sessions by coaches using development and entrepreneurship language	C1. On day 0, when the ADM leadership is very busy with the last preparations, they take time with the coaches to discuss in detail the content of their training sessions. A session on alliances and partnerships is dropped so there is more time for coaching to get better outcome of the pitches. Another ADM member is called to get a list of items that need to be purchased to facilitate the sessions. (Field observation)
	C2. Before the start of the training sessions on day 1, an ADM member briefly introduces one of the coaches while highlighting his role in seeding the desired scripts "I am going to hand it to our trainer, that came from [name of coach and affiliation]—he is still briefing five of your fellow entrepreneurs that are going to share with us their experiences in a setting that [name of coach] is going to explain to you." (Audio recording)
Auditioning cause-related performers	
D. Designating champions to act in the role of judges for early-stage ideas pitched by prospects	D1. Champions were aware of the poor quality of the prospects' ideas but were careful to judge the business ideas with the event's crowd in mind: "When you've done it [starting a business] enough you just pay them lip service and you go on because you know that to burst that bubble is to seem like you're just a dick… you're just a dick! In the U.S. they're so much more brutal with the feedback and it's encouraged. Here, I have to tone down. When I do these types of things in Uganda I have to tone down, but in the U.S.—yeah, I like that style of feedback: 'Your product sucks, I think you're going to fail because you haven't done X, Y and Z—get the fuck out of my office—bye!' Beautiful. That's how I like it. That's being true." (Interview with a champion)

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Table 3. (Continued)

Assembly of cast for event performance (act I)	
	B2. A champion reacted to the pitch of a prospect about an eco-tourism business idea in the Democratic Republic of Congo: "Let me help you. I'm actually helping you because—so, there is a company in Côte d'Ivoire or Benin Republic now. It's called Songhai farms. Alright? And they do exactly what you are talking about … That's the testimony that the model can work, because I know a lot in Nigerians who go on retreat to the Songhai farms. So, it's a good model, as long as you don't do it anywhere near Côte d'Ivoire." An ADM member abruptly closed the Q&A after the suggestion of the champion, leaving the prospect with the idea that he was on to something. (Field observation)
E. Orchestrating tournaments of competitive pitching of early-stage ideas of prospects	E1. There was an incident when a member of UNIDO got up to pitch together with a female prospect from Nigeria. It was an idea about using rice briquettes for stoves for less toxins, less need to use wood, etc., and as soon as the UNIDO member began to pitch, members of ADM told him he could not pitch. It was implied that he could not play the role of prospect and benefactor at the same time. (Video recording; field observation)
	E2. Before announcing the names of the six winners of the preselections, a member of the ADM makes use of the crowd's attention to give some final guidelines to the prospects on how they can best prepare for the final pitch: "Please keep [your Powerpoint presentation] very constructed—3,4 slides we advise. Speak more than looking at the ppt. And I encourage the six to work hard tonight. Please don't sleep." (Video recording)
Creation of simulacrum through event-bound performance (act II)	
F. Placing champions on stage to portray tangibility of the cause through sharing success stories	F1. "There is no challenge … on how we assign some responsibilities to people when they come to our event. If we don't know you, that's one thing, but among ourselves, when we are organizing youth events, we are quite good at the management of the capital resources we have." (Interview with a member of the ADM leadership team)
	F2. A prospect Tweeted about the main stage performance of one of the champions and mentioned the ADM: The first panel just started #[name champion] "reduce the labour intensive" #agri4youth @COLEACP @PressACP @ADEPTPlatform @[ADM]. (Social media document)
G. Rotating casts of champions and benefactors to facilitate exchanges on cause-related issues	G1. When one of the champions addressed the audience from a panel session, she said she wanted "to thank the [ADM], for actually inviting me to Vienna to participate in the forum. Actually, it is a great, very rare opportunity to see such young and active people [from Africa and the diaspora] gathered together to talk about our common problems in Europe and in Africa." (Audio recording)
	G2. The ADM made several last-minute changes to the agenda flow and titles, where successful entrepreneurs [champions] were often switched out of a session at the last minute. some complained to me [researcher 1] about this. (Field notes)
H. Designating prospects as spectators who express support for the cause in the presence of benefactors	H1. During act II, day 4: It sometimes appeared that speakers were trying to rally the crowd with their enthusiasm for their topics … Other times, they appeared as if they were trying to take advantage of the moment and deliver a message 'down' to them in terms of how they should be thinking, and what their expectations should be for Africa's future and/or the role of the diaspora. An apparent distance existed between those on the main stage, especially during the Q&A periods at the end of a session. Prospects in the crowd appeared to feel emboldened to speak their mind in disagreement or in support of ideas of specific [benefactor] speakers: "[Perhaps because] they are all sitting next to each other … One on one, it is not apparent that this could happen. Before the plenary session, the prospects have spent a great deal of time together—i.e., bonding and feeling like a cohort. The mentoring [champions] entrepreneurs do the same." (Field observation)

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Table 3. (Continued)

Creation of simulacrum through event-bound performance (act II)	
I. Designating benefactors as judges and award announcers for pitch tournament ("a big finale") of prospects, with all audience groups present	I1. After one of the more successful pitches to the crowd, one of the judging benefactors praised the idea of the prospect by repeating a flattering element from the pitch rather than asking a killer question: "So you said that you won a grant from the Tony Elumelu Foundation, so you are now mentored and coached by … [making forward-moving hand gestures]." The Prospect was further praised nonverbally through supportive head nodding and silence of benefactors when the answer was given. (Video recording) I2. One of the judges drew on her role as benefactor as she announced the winner of the pitch contest to the crowd: "We came to the last name, which is actually the winner of something that, as a representative of a government, [I] think is really needed. You know? We are spending millions of money to foreign—and, and some Western very well known … you know, consultancy identity, that do not always giving the right services. So, if we can have our locals working on that, we assure that we will be way more, and way better advice" [winner coming to the front with big applause from crowd]. (Video recording)
Aggrandizing value of organization to the cause	
J. Self-casting as moderators between champions and benefactors in live debates/discussions with all audience groups present	J1. On day 3, after providing an introduction to several champions by a member of the ADM and the champions' explanations of their respective business, a UNIDO official took the opportunity to provide feedback and share "Let me know what UNIDO can do for you." Prospects sat in the periphery and watched the exchange in the midsized conference room of the UNIDO. (Field observation) J2. Within the formal context of a large UN conference room during a panel session, an ADM member said, "Let's make this a little bit more interactive … [to panelist]. Your questions will come later. They [the crowd] are noting up the questions they want to ask you. So, we are doing the questions later. But who can help me with the definition of private equity and venture capital … Someone sitting out there? Maybe [name of a champion]? [Name of a champion], you go on first." (Video recording)
K. Orchestrating highly visible moments that support perception of grassroots organization having relationships with prospects, champions, and benefactors	K1. "The opening ceremony, those people will come, talk, and go. They never stay all day with us. So, they don't know what we are doing. They don't read reports. They are just politicians. They will come to speak and go. But I wanted them to know who we are and what we are doing. In order to be able to negotiate 2018 [a subsequent event opportunity that arose following the event], like we did. So, the first objective was to prove to our partners that they should trust us, and we are a vision and a dream. So, we had those big entrepreneurs, startups [come to the event]." (Interview with a member of the ADM leadership team) K2. During a social event, an ADM staff member was the master of ceremonies and told the DJ and attendees what to do. Prospects from all countries present were invited to stand up to and receive applause. Many countries were mentioned, both African and European countries, but then the ADM staff member placed special focus on Nigeria, and the Nigerian attendees were invited on the dance floor. The name of one of the champions was explicitly mentioned and he seemed to enjoy the attention. (Event video). Postevent, an ADM member said, "[The champion] is from a rich family and is connected to the former president." (Interview with a member of the ADM leadership team)

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Table 3. (Continued)

Creation of simulacrum through event-bound performance (act II)	
L. Documenting and promoting social media postings that convey connectedness (i.e., social media content) of grassroots organization	L1. Asking an ADM member about the presence of a television crew and an event photographer, he responded, "That was foreseen, absolutely. That was one of the things that was foreseen and we're very good at it—improving our visibility." (Interview with a member of the ADM leadership team) L2. "So, first of all, people like memories, like photos, so we share it with them, participants. Then again, in terms of marketing, visibility of the platform, our aim was to make it more visible—to showcase the things we have achieved. So … but also in terms of social media, right?" (Interview with a member of the ADM leadership team)
Credibility advancement of grassroots organization	
Publicly endorsing grassroots organization	
M. Providing financial support to grassroots organization based on event performance	M1. Asking an ADM member about the feedback of the event partners, he responded that they were: "Very happy. Because they have learned a lot. UNIDO has a mission to develop entrepreneurship and infrastructures. And they are seeing that some way, they can use our entrepreneurs as champions in Africa to show to others. And they can help them to scale their business to another level. This is the first time ever I am working with UNIDO about a new way of funding. Because UNIDO has a budget that contributes—this follow-up will be the first time they are sitting—imagine a budget to strengthen the business ecosystem in [through] incubation centers in Africa." (Interview with a member of the ADM leadership team) M2. "As we're now applying for new investors, meaning also Austrian stakeholders, who kind of finance us for longer time, [the 2017 event] had to be a success. It was one of the last ADM [events] where we were only looking to have short term funding. In order to be sustainable as a platform, I mean, we believe in the idea, we also have stakeholders believe in the idea, and the people buying it. Meaning people from the UN, entrepreneurs, we had a very positive feedback, but hard to be long lasting, we have to have secure funding. And having the success of ADYFE 2017 was key to this." (Interview with a member of the ADM leadership team)
N. Articulating shared agendas with grassroots organization	N1. In a speech from the Secretary General of the AFFC, support for the ADM and their cause was framed as a part of a shared challenge: "[A] very special welcome goes to my friends of the [ADM]. Together with my dear appreciation of the entrepreneurs [champions]. Since it is the generation of youngsters, young businesspeople and investors who will confront the issues of the future and who are willing to bring the necessary changes about. I have trust and faith that these changes will bring poverty to an end, stop global warming, and make our whole planet to one of peace and wellbeing for humankind." (Audio recording) N2. When later asked about the impact of the 2017 event, an official of the UNIDO recognized that the ADM had greatly enhanced their credibility: "Our profit is very simple. It is not money. It is about job creation. It is about reputation of our jobs and programs and it is about how those programs can benefit to a population at large. And [the] ADM has been contributing to that and this is undeniable" (Interview with a senior member of UNIDO)
Strengthening ties with grassroots organization	
O. Requesting grassroots organization to assist in future events of benefactors	O1. "They advanced their credibility … So, because we had a good experience back in 2017, that's why I approached them to join us as partner for the 2018 event." (Interview with a member of AFCC)

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Table 3. (Continued)

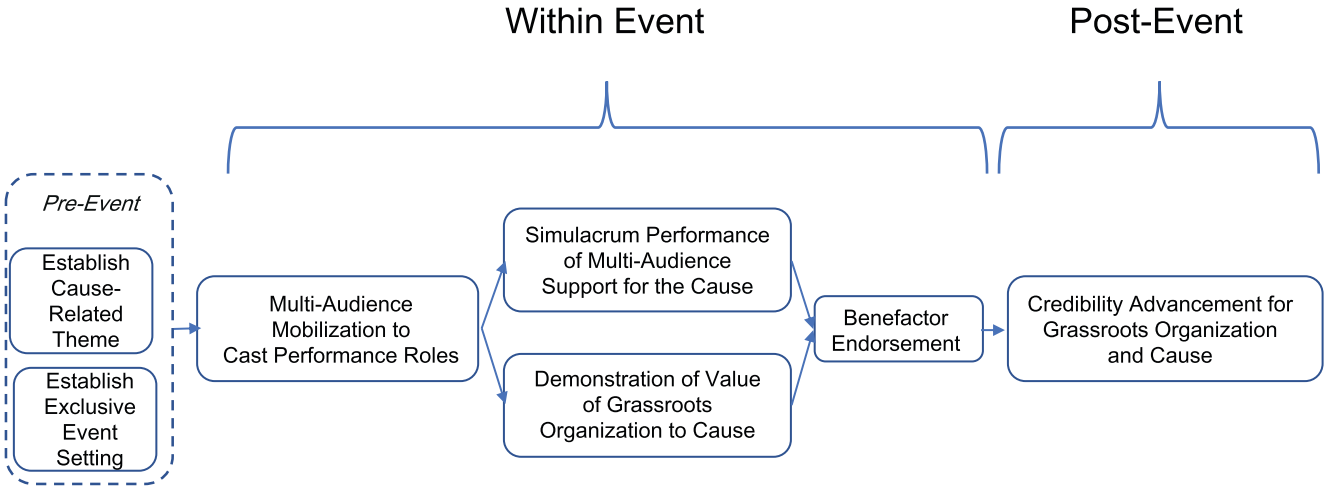
Credibility advancement of grassroots organization	
P. Leveraging grassroots organization as broker with champions and prospects	P1. When asked about the outcomes of the past conference(s), an ADM member responded, "We achieved to build a capacity of a lot of young people. We are obviously reaching our objective in terms of business linkages, in terms of job creation. You know, *only* in my organization about 7, 8 people got a job to the organization of the international institution." (Interview with a member of the ADM leadership team) P2. "So, in terms of what they bring, is first of all, the network is good … There is a good mix between the people from the diaspora, the diaspora of Africa, from Africa, people from the diaspora of other continents … etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. And then they [the ADM] also give us back in terms of partnerships and connections. I should say … I give you the example of the high-level political forum (High-Level Forum Africa-Europe 2018). This was possible because of [the] ADM." (Interview with a senior member of UNIDO)
Q. Engaging grassroots organization to consult about cause-related programs	Q1. "Each conference they will tell us what they [the young people] really want. It is a way to that and it is a way for us to lobby—and advocacy. [The] ADM is doing a lot, for example, each month I am flying around, I am giving a lot of consultancies […] the UN agenda, the African agenda—because I am always there, the European Union agenda." (Interview with a member of the ADM leadership team)

techniques for pitching an entrepreneurial idea. This workshop first offered a universal template of how to pursue an idea, and then it allowed the prospects to take some time to develop an understanding of their own entrepreneurial ideas and how they might be expressed through a pitch. Although we observed varying levels of engagement in this workshop, standardizing how ideas could be organized and encouraging professionalized language aided the adoption of stylized yet more consistent approaches to pitching an idea. The ADM sought to have the prospects use competency-invoking vocabulary (i.e., scripts) because they would be acting as the "future champions" in the pitch tournament finale and taking the role of informed members of the grassroots organization during act II.

Auditioning Cause-Related Performers

Act II of the focal event was set to close with a pitch tournament showcasing six designated prospects to a crowd comprising all audience groups related to the cause. Act I was to serve as a setting to determine which of the prospects would best represent the cause on stage. On the afternoon of day 1, the ADM orchestrated a practice pitch setting in which all prospects seeking to pitch were given the opportunity to

Figure 4. (Color online) Theoretical Model of Event-Bound Dramaturgical Curation



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test their entrepreneurial ideas. The ADM later orchestrated a preselection pitch tournament on the morning of day 3. In the initial practice round, a total of 16 prospects showcased their abilities in conveying early-stage, entrepreneurial ideas to a crowd consisting of the champions, the coaches, and the ADM. The ADM then asked the champions to critique the pitches not only in terms of the feasibility of the ideas, but also the value of the ideas to African development. The champions were also asked to provide constructive feedback on how prospects could further conceptualize their entrepreneurial ideas. Each prospect gave a two-minute pitch that presented a venture concept. These pitches also included various development- and context-related issues, which consistently prompted verbal reactions, such as confirmations and corrections, from the champions. Following each pitch, the champions helped the prospects address gaps in their venture concepts and reframe cause-related issues.[6] These two scenes served as audition event moments for participation in act II. Because the champions were able to offer critical advice consistent with their entrepreneurial backgrounds, they were cast as judges during act I in both the practice pitch on day 1 and the preselection pitch tournaments on day 3.

The prospects were highly engaged in the pitching process with the hope of being chosen to pitch their ideas at the UN during act II. We observed certain actions of the prospects that conveyed the seriousness of their intent to effectively compete in the tournaments. For example, some prospects were working in pairs to help conceptualized better ideas. Many also approached the champions and the coaches to get reactions to their ideas during social interactions within informal settings, such as in the course of the evening meals and while being transported to and from meal settings. On one occasion, a prospect brought a large cardstock board of a "business-model canvas" diagram and accompanying sticky notes to a restaurant so as to work on the venture concept throughout dinner. In general, most of the prospects who intended to participate in the preselection pitch tournaments in act I were also interested in competing for a slot to pitch in act II. Therefore, the ADM instigated and fostered a competitive spirit among the prospects to increase the likelihood of a having a cast that demonstrated an understanding of the cause and intended to serve that cause.

The champions were designated by the ADM to take the role of judges to help ensure that the scripts supporting the entrepreneurial ideas of the prospects were shaped in a way that was consistent with the entrepreneurial accomplishments of the champions (i.e., in a feedback loop). The ADM also hoped to further vest the champions in their commitment to the event as embodiments of ideal-type diaspora entrepreneurs. By designating the role of judges to the champions at this stage, the ADM ensured that the champions would seek out prospects who reflected the same ideals as they had and, thus, could later represent these ideals during act II. This allowed for greater consistency and connectivity between layers of audience groups on the cause-related ideas espoused on stage during act II.

In the late morning of day 3, the prospects pitched their refined ideas to a panel of judges made up of the champions and one leader from the ADM. The success of the champions and coaches in seeding cause-related scripts was revealed at this stage. The ADM heard how the prospects pitched their ideas and which ideas were praised by the team of judges. In line with the view of the ADM on African development, the prospects that were selected to advance to the formal pitching competition focused on feasible (and potentially impactful) ideas as well as a shared, positive image of Africa as a source of untapped opportunities. During the final scene—that is, a closed-door meeting that would determine who would advance to the final pitching tournament (i.e., on day 3), the judges converged on criteria that valued the use of professionalized entrepreneurial language and/or highlighted significant African development challenges by the prospects. At this stage, there was little scrutiny on the quality or feasibility of the ideas. Rather, the focus was on the potential appeal of the ideas, according to their connection to the cause through more superficial reference points.

For example, one prospect hastily pitched an idea that addressed waste collection needs in African cities. The pitch did not offer a basic explanation of the operations and revenue sources of the venture concept, but rather contained broad information that mimicked the scripts of the champions. With few details on implementation, the pitch referred to market entry, opportunity presence, pan-African development gaps, long-run sustainable development aspirations, and scalability confidence:

> My idea is to launch in the market a company which focuses in waste management … I think that the disposal of waste, how to categorize it, and to know how to dispose of it is a great opportunity for business. What I propose is that I will have a whole pickup, to have a lorry, lorry across city that will be picking up different types of waste. Like hazardous waste … and to know how to manage it. … and, I want to develop that system and to scale it up to the next level because, for me, I think that—um—the environment is a first—the first step to sustainable development, and, without this, our city will not have the development level that we are looking for. So, I think that this business will be very sustainable, not only in the short run, but also in the long run.

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During the closed-door meeting of the judges, this pitch—which superficially used the primed language elements of "scaling," "sustainable," and "development" challenges—had clearly resonated with three of the judging champions:

> I also thought that the waste management idea definitely had the legs commercially. You know … he didn't give a great presentation, but the idea itself made sense. (champion 1)

> I liked [prospect's name] as well, especially because he is also looking at scaling … so, starting small and scaling up. (champion 2)

> Then, number two is the guy with the waste management … So, because we all know that Africa is littered, its waste and … so many things can be done with it and create wealth through waste management. And, also, the environment—I love the fact that he talked about keeping the environment safe from hazardous waste and how to collect it as well. (champion 3)

In sum, the seeding of professionalized language offered the prospects an opportunity to enhance the expression of their entrepreneurial ideas. The descriptions of how the champions confronted contextual challenges in their market pursuits also exposed the prospects to solutions used by proven entrepreneurs to overcome development-related challenges. With the confirmation that seeding had occurred in the first round of the pitch tournament, the ADM considered that a sufficient contingent of the prospects embodied the cause. The ADM later communicated to researchers 1 and 2 its intent and hope to have a range of sufficiently talented prospects who could represent the cause on stage in act II. Thus, the preselection pitch tournament on day 3 helped produce a viable cast—that is, made up of prospects and champions showing initiative for the cause—that could be assembled on the final main stage in act II.

In sum, the audience group of champions were mobilized to assist the ADM in leading the audience group of prospects to participate in the cause. By seeding cause-related scripts and casting certain audience groups in cause-supporting roles in different scenes during act I, the ADM entered act II with a cause-supporting cast that could enact the curated scenes of act II.

Dramaturgical Curation in Act II: Creation of Simulacrum Through Event-Bound Performances

In act II, a community boundary was created around the prospects and the champions. Curation by the ADM produced an approximated, albeit temporarily leveraged, representation of the African diaspora community, which we denoted as a simulacrum—an approximate image of a community that supported the cause of the grassroots organization (i.e., the ADM). In act II, the ADM leveraged the work that it had done in act I to create a temporary simulacrum of a cause-supportive community. The simulacrum was effectively mobilized to advance the credibility of the ADM among the benefactors by (1) rotating mainstage performances of all audience groups among different audiences of spectators and (2) showcasing the potential of the cause through the temporary simulacrum. Given the value of presenting a community that exists to uphold the cause—one consisting of actors currently enacting the cause (i.e., the champions) and one of actors seeking to enact the cause in the future (i.e., the prospects)—and given the challenge of demonstrating the reality of a community to resource-providing audiences (i.e., the benefactors), act II allowed for a temporary, event-based simulacrum of this community to be portrayed. On the main stage during act II, the ADM demonstrated that a diverse range of voices across a variety of audience groups were aligned with each other and with the cause of the ADM. The ADM also demonstrated that it could mobilize competent representatives from all relevant audience groups. These activities occurred in a large UN conference room and in the presence of the benefactors who were representing pivotal actors for African development, such as the UNIDO and the AFCC.[7]

Directing Show of Performers Exchanging Support for the Cause

The panel sessions and pitch tournament finale represented the main settings for dramaturgical curation of act II by the ADM. The champions, prospects, and benefactors were cast on the main stage, and these same audience groups also served as spectators in the crowd. By mobilizing which audience groups were cast on the stage and which were in the crowd, the ADM was able to curate various scenes of cross-audience support for the cause. Audience groups in the crowd were, thus, able to see peers of their respective audience group supporting the cause while on stage. Likewise, audience groups not represented on stage could see social connections (i.e., through panel session participation) being created between other audience groups. Each combination of audience groups was able to simultaneously share the stage with the ADM while their peers took part as spectators in the crowd. These casting arrangements created inertia for the cause and the expectation that members of an audience group positively supported the cause while on stage.

In this setting (i.e., the large UN conference room), the ADM acted as moderator, curating panel sessions that included the benefactors and the champions. In these scenes, the crowd was made up of mostly prospects (i.e., with other champions and benefactors), acting as spectators of their peer audience group that was

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performing on the main stage. In these roles, the champions were able to not only actively promote their successes as diaspora entrepreneurs, but also speak candidly about the institutional or market-access challenges they faced. These were the messages that the champions wanted to convey to the benefactors. With the champions on stage next to the benefactors as a panel conversing on these issues, the benefactors were in a position to publicly acknowledge that these challenges were real and resources were needed to overcome them. They were also able to admire the accomplishments of the champions. Thus, the success of the cause was made tangible in these scenes through the testimonies of the champions—and their controversial expressions of candor about their challenges—and through these elements being heard and publicly appreciated by the benefactors sharing the stage.

For those benefactors who were not on stage for a session, their view was the same as that of the prospects in the crowd, who were enthusiastically applauding the interactions on stage. Act II provided many event moments for prospects in a spectator role to show support for the cause, including their emboldened reactions to controversial and, at times, confrontational messages being presented by one specific benefactor. A key event moment that embodied the value of theatrical exchange occurred on day 3 during a heated speech given by a benefactor (i.e., a senior official of the Economic Community of West African States, or ECOWAS) in the plenary session titled "Diaspora Entrepreneurship Perspective." This benefactor took a role of antagonist by stating that the "diaspora should not expect special treatment if they return to their home countries." This statement prompted vocal, disgruntled challenges from both the prospects and champions in the crowd. In conversations at social events that evening, the prospects and champions made remarks such as "nothing has changed" and "this [attitude] is what waits for us if we return" along with comments such as the "old guard [is] still active" (field notes). In another event moment, a more senior ranking member of ECOWAS—who was of a much older generation than the prospects (i.e., several years beyond the designated "youth" cutoff age of 35 years) and who arrived more than two hours late to a morning session on day 4—abruptly took the stage.[8] Speaking in French, the ECOWAS member interrupted the first panelist from the AFCC, who was speaking in English, and declared that all attendees, including panelists from the European Commission and International Labor Organization, should speak in French.

This interruption prompted whispering and murmurs of critique from the crowd, and it highlighted a sharp contrast between the prospects and the champions, who were aligned with the grassroots organization, and the benefactors, who symbolized the "old guard" of their home countries. These scenes revealed that the prospects and champions responded to curated stage performances as a cohesive community—one that was not afraid to react negatively to the actions of influential benefactors. Drawing on actors who were mobilized to support the cause, the ADM curated a key plot element in act II: influential benefactors witnessed what was perhaps an unprecedented dialogue between different audience groups representing African development. During moments of heated exchange between the benefactors on stage and the prospects within the crowd, a member of the ADM would leave the room and return with an influential UNIDO member to witness what was seemingly a rare exchange between audience groups with respect to the cause. The perceived objective of the ADM in bringing UNIDO members to view front-stage activity was later confirmed through private communications with the ADM leaders. Further, the intentionality of the curated panel sessions and how they served the interests of the ADM was triangulated in a postevent interview with an ADM leadership team member: "ADM always tries to be inclusive. We try to have everybody together at one table, not to separate like the UN people at one table and entrepreneurs at one table. No. Everybody is together—together for the struggle."

The ADM also demonstrated its capability in curating roles for actors who were considered important resource providers for the cause. For example, the ADM designated the benefactors—including the Secretary of State of Tunisia—as judges in what amounted to a grand, opus-like event moment. Viewed by a crowd comprising all audience groups, the scene on the main stage consisted of six prospect finalists, each presenting their entrepreneurial ideas for African development to the benefactor judges who were taking notes in the front row. Thus, this scene of a crowd viewing the prospects pitching and the benefactor judges reacting resembled a pageant contest. Once the final pitches of the prospects were complete, the judges stood and exited the large conference room for a closed-door judging session in a small conference room. There, the benefactors concentrated on validating the ideas presented by the prospects, making ad hoc comparisons and unsystematic rankings of the prospect finalists. We observed that the benefactor judges prioritized the ideas of prospects who employed professionalized entrepreneurial language and who formulated their ideas as solutions to recognizable development challenges. After reentering the large conference room, the ADM designated the benefactors to announce the winners and grant the prizes (i.e., publicized by the ADM in the evening of day 4). Thus, in view of all audience groups in the crowd, the ADM curated scenes of actors engaging

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in a live show of sharing, responding to, and validating cause-related ideas. In the role of judges, the benefactors also validated the cause and affirmed the attributes of an "ideal diaspora entrepreneur" as they took turns announcing the winners and praising their talents.

Aggrandizing Value of Grassroots Organization to the Cause

The main-stage panel sessions were curated by the ADM to comprise the majority of the scenes of act II. As a result, there were many event moments for members of the ADM leadership team (i.e., in the role of moderators) to demonstrate their knowledge of the cause and their ability to foster valuable dialogue between the champions, who represented the potential success of the cause, and the benefactors, who represented the potential funders of the cause.

By taking the role of moderators, they controlled the flow of the discussion (i.e., as it related to the cause), for both the champions and the benefactors and for the benefit of the crowd. Although the moderators maintained a relatively neutral position with respect to cause-related issues discussed on stage, they commanded a referee-like presence from the view of the crowd—that is, by redirecting topics in a session, their presence conveyed a value-added quality. The curation of these types of scenes by the ADM provided visible event moments when the audience groups were mobilized and engaged with the cause. These scenes also allowed the champions to publicly respond to or challenge the messaging of the benefactors, and the crowd—largely made up of prospects—could express solidarity and support for candid critiques of past failures and discuss the ineffectiveness of solving African development challenges through other means (i.e., top-down oriented approaches). From the view of the prospects in the crowd, the ADM ensured that the cause was heard and appreciated by powerful actors (i.e., the benefactors). These actions were observed in the panel-session scenes when the champions received endorsements from the different audience groups for their entrepreneurial accomplishments. These accomplishments were understood as progress for the cause. From the view of the benefactors in the crowd, the ADM—acting as broker between the benefactors and the champions and facilitating intense yet honest dialogue on the cause (i.e., in contrast to other alternatives)—showed that it had produced something of value and worthy of their support. By highlighting this intermediary role between and within audience groups, the ADM was able to aggrandize its potential significance to the cause.

To reinforce the perception that the ADM was a valuable facilitator in furthering the cause, the ADM also orchestrated highly visible event moments showing that it had good relationships with all audience groups. These event moments occurred as performative displays of social capital that publicly demonstrated access to instrumental actors related to the cause. Drawing from Goffman (1959), these orchestrated displays were deemed performative because efforts to show close and meaningful liaisons with all relevant actors to the cause occurred through live, visual representations of network access within specific scenes. Because the benefactors were only included in act II, this casting afforded different opportunities for orchestrating visible social scenes to support perceptions that the ADM had special connections to a variety of cause-related audience groups. Although the social ties and their strength might have been real or perceived, the image on display reinforced the perception that the ADM had access to different audience groups representing African development. It also helped mobilize the simulacrum with the ADM viewed as a valuable facilitator between audience groups. Our observations of these orchestrated actions at the event were confirmed in a postevent interview with the head of the ADM: "The conference is the only way to take us to the place we want. Why? Because the conference is a space for us to invite our partners, our stakeholders, the politician, we need space to talk to the young people. We need to see the change in the world. We need to see the new innovative idea[s]. Gathering is very important in Europe … institutionally. The gathering is like our window for visibility."

During act II, we repeatedly observed that the ADM put great effort into giving visible roles to the benefactors as well as developing social contacts with them. These efforts were also prominently on display in formal or prestigious spaces and during key time slots. In these event moments of live brokerage between the benefactors and all other audience groups, the ADM reinforced the perception that it had ties that could be of value to the cause. This was clearly demonstrated the evening of day 3 during a formal cocktail event at the AFCC. Drawing on its position as event organizer, the ADM openly exploited direct access to high-profile audience groups by standing beside the benefactors as they gave their speeches. When one high-profile benefactor (i.e., the same ECOWAS official who, on day 4, demanded that presenters speak in French) surprised the crowd by beginning his speech in French, a member of the ADM leadership team quickly moved next to him on stage and began translating as he spoke. This benefactor praised the UNIDO for supporting the ADM and for mobilizing the diaspora toward development challenges. This endorsement served as a public assertion of the special relationship that the ADM had with prominent actors, such as the UNIDO:

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> We are convinced that without an industrialization approach to our continent, we are speaking out against underdevelopment in the fight against unemployment and immigration. That is why the parliament that I preside over since 2016 wishes to be a privileged partner to your institution in our economic zone of 15 intersecting states. Your [the UNIDO's] initiative to support the African diaspora through the organization of such an event for the ADM is the irrefutable proof that UNIDO is an institution that is concerned about the development of the continent. Today, an integration door of the African diaspora could be an essential tool for the development of the continent. [translation from French]

As viewers of the stage, the prospects and the champions took photos of the scenes and videorecorded the speeches. Thus, this scene—held at the AFCC headquarters—furthered the perception that the ADM endorsed the cause. It showed that the most prominent trade-related institution in Austria recognized the value of the ADM with respect to Austrian economic interests. Performatively, the scene symbolized the support of EU-based political actors for the community of African diaspora entrepreneurs (i.e., including the potential to incorporate the entrepreneurs within Austrian–African economic exchange) and acknowledged the role of the ADM as a capable broker to serve Austrian interests in Africa.

Following the formal AFCC cocktail party, the ADM led attendees to a planned cultural event at an African café (i.e., with traditional food, live entertainment, and alcohol service) at which an ADM leadership team member acted as an emcee in making all the introductions. Although this scene contrasted greatly with the displays of social capital demonstrated earlier at the AFCC, it highlighted the ability of the ADM to foster new relationships between previously disparate audience groups (i.e., between the local diaspora population in Vienna and the prospects and the champions). This bridging activity helped reinforce the image of the ADM as a competent moderator. In a retrospective account of the 2017 event, an ADM leadership team member was unequivocal about the significance of informal evening activities in supporting its image: "Then, when it comes to the events at night, the shisha bar we go to, places where we always go to, like this, we're used to being there. So, we know the people, we know they can make us a good deal, we know there is good music. We know we can influence something, and we know there is space for us."

This performative endorsement was also reinforced visually for the audience. Following each award announcement, the audience watched as the prospects were photographed with the announcing benefactor and the ADM leadership team and as the prospects shook hands and held up their award. The value of this curated scene to prospective resource-providers (i.e., the benefactors) was evident in an interview with an ADM leadership team member three months after the event:

> The idea of the pitch competition is to show to the investors—to the decision makers—those ways to do business with. And it is innovative. So, we need to produce some good example[s], you know, to show them. This is a small group, but we need a multiplier effect. Invest on these young people to get a multiplier effect in term[s] of job creation, in term[s] of employment, in term[s] of investment, in term[s] of business linkages, clustering—all that stuff. That's why the pitch competition is very important, to develop the personality of those young people to set their mind[s] the way it should be, and to help them to reach the goal they have. And, those young people are the one[s] who come and want to be associated. Yes! It happened here … it happened like that. [This] should be one of the procedures to get what we want. This is my perception about it.

Thus, spontaneous social exchanges were captured in photos and videorecordings and then used by the ADM to build the perception of a cause-supportive community (e.g., the ADM orchestrated group pictures documenting cross-audience interactions at the opening ceremony in act II).[9] This type of visual evidence memorialized the mobilization of audience exchanges around the cause by the ADM. The ADM leadership team later emphasized the importance of making the community visible to the benefactors throughout act II: "The opening ceremony, those people will come talk and go. They never stay all day with us. So, they don't know what we are doing. They don't read our reports. They are just politicians—they will come to speak and go—but I wanted them to know who we are and what we are doing in order to be able to negotiate [running the] 2018 [event], like we did."

Thus, the pitch tournament finale served as an opportunity to showcase the future potential of exemplary African diaspora entrepreneurs while simultaneously showcasing the cause-related competencies of the ADM. As curators of the event, the ADM opened act II by drawing the attention of the benefactors—an influential credibility-granting audience—to the cause responsiveness of the champions. From the view of the benefactors, the champions had validated the viability of the cause—a simulacrum of the community that had brought the cause to fruition. Likewise, the ADM-crafted conclusion to the event—at which the ADM presented the prospects as future African diaspora entrepreneurs in a tournament judged by the benefactors—conveyed the potential of future success of the cause. For the benefactors, the simulacrum of a cause-supportive community—between the champions and prospects—revealed layers of talent that were active at different stages of entrepreneurial development.

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Credibility Advancement of Grassroots Organization

Though we found support for ADM credibility advancement during the 2017 focal event (i.e., from data obtained during the event), we also found further supporting data in the weeks and months that followed. To enhance its credibility and to help ensure its future survival, the ADM needed to create benefactor responsiveness to the cause and design a strategy that highlighted the indispensability of the ADM to serve and promote the cause.

Public Endorsement of Grassroots Organization

In the late morning of day 3, the plenary sessions with the benefactors were set to begin, and the entrepreneurial ideas from six prospects were chosen for the pitch tournament finale as a result of the workshop process in act I. Although the pitch tournament finale (i.e., with members of all audience groups) was set, and despite inquiries from the prospects, the prizes for the winning ideas remained undisclosed. When researcher 1 privately asked about the prizes during act I, the ADM shared that they were only able to secure the first prize, which included a plane ticket from an African airline company for the winner to visit Africa to advance the entrepreneurial idea, and the second prize, which included "a communications package that could be used to promote the winner's idea on a Vienna-broadcasted, African radio station" (field notes). During the event, one senior UNIDO official was asked by the ADM leadership team to view specific scenes in both acts I and II. Although researchers 1 and 2 witnessed this event moment, the author team confirmed postevent (i.e., through personal communications with the ADM leadership team) the intent of these encounters: to show the potential of the ADM and to gain the support of the UNIDO. A response to questions from the prospects about the prize details came only in the hour prior to the final pitch tournament when a senior UNIDO official offered a prize of €5,000 and a two-week mentorship and training opportunity at one of the sites of the UNIDO to the eventual pitch competition winner. By supporting the event financially, this senior UNIDO official formally endorsed—in the presence of all audience groups—the cause of the ADM.

In communications with the ADM three months following the event, we learned that both the UNIDO and the AFCC committed to fund ADM initiatives (i.e., events, program ideas, and training) related to African diaspora entrepreneurship. Continued funding was motivated not only because the cause of the ADM was now acknowledged but also because the ADM had gained credibility compared with other organizations working with African diaspora. In an interview conducted in May 2020, a UNIDO official shared the entrepreneurship-oriented agenda of ADM: "The problem of the diaspora is that you have too much agencies working on the diaspora. It's like a little bit like this, a spaghetti ball of associations and agencies working on the diaspora, while ADM at least they had this focus on entrepreneurship, which links with our own mandate."

Also referring to the 2017 event, the UNIDO official shared that it had "built a relation of trust with them [the ADM]" and that the ADM was now viewed as "credible" rather than an "association": "After the 2017 event, we continued to work with ADM on helping them to structure their business and they could be the most effective with their content. … So, from 2018, we said, listen, we are going to start involving the diaspora with our decisions. So, it [the commitment] was sequential."

After the 2017 event, the credibility of the ADM was also enhanced beyond the boundaries of the UNIDO. In an interview conducted in 2019 with a member of the ADM leadership team, we learned that the ADM was asked by the European Commission to design and run a one-day side event (i.e., "The High-Level Forum Africa-Europe 2018") that preceded the EU Heads of State meeting, which took place in Vienna in December 2018. The decision to invite the ADM to curate the Africa–Europe event came from the AFCC. In an interview conducted in 2020, one AFCC official commented that the ADM was invited because of its success in mobilizing a cause-supportive community at the 2017 event: "Well, our main motivation [was] that [based on the event] they managed to bring in entrepreneurs that are doing successful business and that they also have a new approach to business. So, they are trying out new business models or going into areas that are, I would say, new markets that those people are building up. So, they show the entrepreneurs that they have in their network. They are showing that they are innovative and going in new directions and they have a positive and young business spirit."

The president of the EU at the time, Sebastian Kurz, highlighted the unique contribution of the ADM in a post on Twitter: "At the EU-Africa Forum #africaeurope2018 on December 18, alongside many heads of government, almost 1000 companies will also take part. I am particularly pleased to be working with @*ADM*, the largest forum for African diaspora entrepreneurs in Europe, which will bring creative startups to Vienna [translation from German]."

Strengthening Ties with the Grassroots Organization

In addition to benefactor public endorsement of the ADM, further evidence of the enhanced credibility of the ADM came two months after the 2017 focal event. We learned that the UNIDO leveraged the ADM

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network to source four champions and a prospect (i.e., the event's pitch tournament finale winner) to participate in a UNIDO "ministerial conference" that focused on the least-developed countries.[10] "We [are] now with UNIDO … UNIDO was always giving us rooms and small funds. If they are running their LDCs (least developing country) [forum or] if they have their own event, they are giving us side events, some time, and put in some money, but it was their event for their own proposal. But this year [2018], when Austria gave money [for] our approach, [what] we had with UNIDO, we changed it. … We want UNIDO to become [a] partner and for the first time, UNIDO gave 20,000 cash."

In addition to drawing from the ADM network of event attendees, at least two other champions were asked by the AFCC to participate in the "High-Level Forum Africa-Europe 2018."

Within four months after the focal event, the UNIDO and a group from the development cooperation department of the European Commission also forged a formal partnership with the ADM to help provide training workshops for African diaspora youth within the EU, pursue EU-based funding for further outreach inside Africa, and leverage the African diaspora to develop a training center in Brussels for new migrants (personal communication with the ADM leadership team, February 2019). Because of the success of the focal event, the AU initiated a formal contract with the ADM in December 2017. The AU wanted to have the ADM consult on all programs related to the African diaspora as part of the Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) at the AU.[11] According to an April 2019 interview with the ADM leader,

> The good news is that we have a new department in the African Union for the coordination [of diaspora-related programs] and we work with them on this issue. That is why I was in Addis [the week prior]. One thing to conclude, one of the most successful things we did in Africa, next week there is a first scale-up program that is designed by ADM and funded by the African Union, and we are implementing [it] together. This is the most successful thing we've done in Africa. So, we [have] become the first partners [of the AU] in Europe. At the beginning, we wanted to work on it as a consultancy, and we had several meetings and we were advising them on what we want to have and it is really good since they have been listening to us.

Overall, the response of the benefactors to the focal event enhanced the survival prospects of the ADM. Based on the curation of the 2017 event by the ADM, the benefactors publicly endorsed the ADM and the cause, and resourceful organizations (e.g., the UNIDO, AFCC, AU, and EC) formally strengthened their ties with the ADM. Thus, by recognizing the importance of diaspora entrepreneurship for African development and by fostering the belief that the ADM was representing and serving the interests of the African diaspora community in Europe, the ADM enhanced its credibility and survival prospects as a grassroots organization.

Discussion

Although previous research has explored how social, economic, and political trends shape the conditions that enable credibility advancement for new ideas and actors (Cattani et al. 2014, 2017), we investigate how unproven grassroots organizations can survive and advance their cause by securing and stabilizing their access to public support. Specifically, we theorized how event settings could be leveraged for credibility advancement through audience mobilization. In doing so, this study contributes to our understanding of performative strategizing within event settings. Our findings demonstrate how an unproven organization can strategically use audience mobilization to convert event settings into performative spaces for simulacrum creation and credibility advancement.

Nondiscursive Strategizing Through Dramaturgical Curation

Most studies of performative strategizing have emphasized the discursive practices on which organizations rely in their pursuit of public support, credibility, and influence (Vaara 2010, Kornberger and Clegg 2011). However, this study addresses nondiscursive performative practices (e.g., Anand and Watson 2004, Islam et al. 2008), contributing to our understanding of how organizations can make use of contexts—and their associated resources—to enable survival through the mobilization of critical audiences. By studying the performative practices of a grassroots organization within an event setting, we show how nondiscursive performative strategizing can help advance the credibility of the organization and the cause. In this context, the practice of strategy consists of orchestrating a process through which people can be mobilized and ideas can be legitimized (Mintzberg 1987, Samra-Fredericks 2003). This approach resonates with recent research in the social movement literature that explores performativity beyond acts guided by mere speech, and that includes a broader repertoire of actions among audiences. In contrast to previous event-related research that emphasizes the discursive use of text and speech-related content (e.g., Hardy and Maguire 2010), we contend that an assembly of physical bodies—that is, people gathering, acting, and communicating—offers a theatrically expressive dimension that can enhance or encourage responses from audiences that differ from those obtained by emphasizing spoken or written

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dialogue (Butler 2015). Thus, differences in the medium and format used to present a cause can have a significant effect on the visibility of a grassroots organization and its cause.

Our findings demonstrate that the value of performative strategizing for grassroots organizations is not exclusively derived from the direct actions of organizations (i.e., as it is in discursive practices), but rather realized through the mobilization of different audiences in performative role playing. We refer to this practice of performative strategizing as *dramaturgical curation*. For example, this case study reveals the practice of dramaturgical curation in the actions of the ADM: simultaneously constituting a cause-supportive community and representing the voice of that community. Thus, we uncover a new performative practice for credibility advancement through nondiscursive modes of audience mobilization that shape favorable perceptions of the organization and the cause.

The ADM cast the champions in a variety of roles to mobilize the prospects in act I—that is, without the presence of the resource-providing audience of benefactors—and later recast the champions in a variety of performances with the benefactors. As a result of this casting, the ADM was able to utilize available resources within the event setting. The design that the ADM chose for act I provided opportunities to screen and polish suitable actors to represent and exemplify the cause in various scenes in act II. This empirical discovery highlights the strategic value of curating a two-act event structure. A creative component of the dramaturgical curation chosen by the ADM lies in the mobilization of the champions and the coaches to act in roles that helped screen which prospects were more stage-worthy to enact the simulacrum of a cause-supportive community in front-stage settings. Thus, by varying the composition of the audiences in each performance and in each spectator role, the ADM ensured that the appropriate performers and viewers from each of the audiences were present to elicit favorable responses in those scenes. By highlighting the utility of performance curation, our contribution builds on the work of Goffman (1959, p. 43), whereby impressions can be influenced by "correcting performance errors and mistakes prior to the [main] performance."

Event Settings as Performance Spaces

To our knowledge, our study is the first to investigate the event created around a new cause, whereas prior research focuses on the events with established causes (Mair and Hehenberger 2014, Schüßler et al. 2014). This study also contributes to event-bound practices of performative strategizing by addressing how spaces can help shape conditions for action (Lawrence and Dover 2015, Johns 2017). Following previous work (Hardy and Maguire 2010, Mair and Hehenberger 2014), we found that front-stage and backstage settings were leveraged by the ADM to help advance its credibility. However, by applying a heightened sensitivity to performative practices in both settings, we reveal how an event context also provided theatrical and symbolic resources that could be leveraged for credibility advancement. Event settings can bring unique meaning to social interactions because they can serve as sites of authentic performances of gathered audiences (Goffman 2005) and munificent dramaturgical environments for event organizers. Event contexts, such as the focal event at the UN, can, thus, be strategically exploited to orchestrate timely performances of actors. Participation is based on the implicit honor of being present in such an exclusive setting and the assumption that others present share this honor and relevance to the cause.

By studying credibility advancement through the orchestration of an event, we show how dramaturgical curation yields a broad palette of event scenes involving the physical and temporal assembly of influential credibility-granting audiences in temporary roles. The ability of the ADM to curate scenes, such as casting heads of state to serve as judges at a pitch tournament, was made possible through the legacy of that physical UN stage as being a historically significant stage opportunity for influencing cause-related discourse. By turning the event at the UN into a performative space and exploiting the congregation of cause-related actors in this setting, the ADM mobilized specific audiences to perform supportive roles for the organization and the cause. The scene conveyed the potential of the ADM to influence the cause, whereby audience participation and cross-audience interactions (i.e., among prospects, benefactors, and the ADM), as well as cause-endorsement performances (i.e., on the UN stage), provided credence to both the ADM and the cause in the eyes of the benefactors.

The curated sequencing of what may have been perceived in the moment as a front-stage setting—that is, by audience groups that were gathered for training, competing, and judging during act I—could also function as a backstage setting—that is, act I was curated by the ADM to create performative opportunities in act II, when the benefactor audience was cast in a prestigious event setting. Although previous research has emphasized the value of front-stage and backstage settings for neutralizing conflicting interests between event actors (Mair and Hehenberger 2014), we contend that these stage settings within events can also serve as suitable spaces to screen and cast stage-worthy characters, to seed cast members with scripts that influence the perceptions of the crowd, to ensure cross-audience interactions are visible on stage to a specific crowd, and to coordinate which

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audiences are present for specific event scenes. Thus, we contend that the performative potential of event settings underscores the promise of exploring events to study the formulation and execution of credibility advancement tactics for unproven organization and their causes.

Simulacrum Within Strategy

Finally, we contribute to the literature that addresses strategies for social influence and, specifically, its representation through dramaturgical interaction between audiences (Goffman 1959, 2005). In our study, social influence was realized through the production of a two-act event by a grassroots organization attempting to appeal to resource providers and enable credibility advancement. We highlighted the potential for mobilization in act II when the ADM successfully conveyed that an actively engaged and supportive community existed for the cause. The ADM accomplished this goal by creating a performance-based simulacrum to represent a cause-supportive community throughout the event scenes of act II. The practices applied to create the simulacrum made the future for the cause appear as tangible. Resonating with recent work on social movements and the performativity of public assembly (e.g., Butler 2015), the creation of a simulated community—that is, an event-based simulacrum—can be produced through shared imaginaries of territorial or cultural togetherness (Anderson 1983), but it can also be enacted by "the conditions of possibility of [the community's] appearance, and so within the visual field, and by their actions, and so as part of embodied performance … , which include the conditions of staging … as well as the means of conveying a gathering, a coming together, in the visual and acoustic fields" (Butler 2015, p. 4).

In line with this assertion, our study shows how—in the production of simulacrum—successful performances need to be staged not by individuals, but by teams that perform in Goffmanian "front regions," spaces from which they are observable by relevant audiences. Thus, we propose that the strategic employment of simulacra for credibility advancement encompasses two types of effort: mobilization toward credible imitation (i.e., simulating something into being) and believable demonstration (i.e., presenting it as real). Furthermore, our findings make fresh use of Baudrillard's (1994) notion of hyperreality as a creation of a symbol or set of signifiers representing something that may not exist outside the site of display. We demonstrate that official events, with their offerings of effective front-stage props and appropriate role attitudes, can be conceptualized as fertile sites for the production of hyperreality.

Simulacra forms can vary in terms of their permanence and tangibility. In this case study, a grassroots organization (i.e., the ADM) used an event stage (i.e., at the UN) to create a temporary, performance-based simulacrum. We contend that the ethnographic methods applied in this study were instrumental in revealing how this temporary simulacrum was constructed to serve credibility advancement. Although act I prepared the simulacrum, act II engaged multiple audiences in multiple roles that were instrumental in presenting the cause. In this way, act I supported the cause-related performance of act II by offering a setting in which the grassroots organization designated performers—drawn from the audiences of champions and prospects—to serve in the plenary sessions and pitch tournaments with the benefactors. Thus, acts I and II created the space for essential elements that could represent an approximate image of a cause-supported community: actors currently enacting the cause (i.e., the champions), those seeking to enact the cause (i.e., the prospects), and together as actors endorsed by resource-providing and -controlling professionals with a history of sponsoring and addressing the cause (i.e., benefactors).

Limitations

Because our theory of credibility advancement through event-based strategizing was derived from the exploration of a single case—that is, a UN-supported event on African development orchestrated by an aspiring grassroots organization—the generalizability of our findings is limited. At the event level, the development-based cause may share some similarities with other causes in terms of size, complexity, and societal priority; however, the cultural and social intricacies of entrepreneurship-related development are highly context-specific. On the one hand, this case study did offer a remarkable variety of challenges, which could be applied to other causes in other contexts. The types of development- and context-related issues faced in Africa are so broad that they allowed the grassroots organization to leverage a variety of issues throughout the event as being potentially served by African diaspora entrepreneurs. On the other hand, causes that target other geographic localities may offer ample yet different sets of issues and actors that could be curated to mobilize relevant audiences to enhance the survival prospects of the organization and the cause. Thus, case studies of other event contexts and other grassroots organizations may yield very different results.

Another limitation of this study concerns the data sources; the findings rely heavily on participatory observations as well as semistructured and narrative interviews. One author had been immersed in the organization over three prior events, which formed a history of social engagement between the team members and the empirical subjects and, at times, positioned some team members as peers and spectators of

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the prospects. Beyond respecting anthropological traditions that address this level of engagement with the empirical subject (Bulmer 1982), the author team adopted a reflexive approach, discussing role perceptions, biases, and situations that could have prompted different responses from actors at the event. Using auto-ethnographic methodologies to study event processes could yield further insights and findings.

Future Research Directions

Recognizing events as sites of strategic action for audience mobilization helps illustrate the role of space and time in settings that are leveraged by grassroots organizations to further their cause and to achieve visibility and credibility in the broader sociopolitical environment. However, strategic work dedicated to credibility advancement can also be uniquely applied in other contexts. In the study of social movements, activism campaign repertoires can take on various forms, and contexts featuring protests, education, promotion, and advocacy can also have stage-like performance settings (Reinecke and Ansari 2020). Analogous to our focus on how depictions of actors, scenes, and time influence underlying processes of survival, future work should investigate the ways in which curatorial and improvisational elements are manipulated at the action or campaign levels of analysis in social activism settings (Briscoe and Gupta 2016). This research could address how the mobilization of specific audiences helps confront different challenges depending on the visibility of the cause or the multitude of stances related to an issue.

We studied the implications of the various strategies available to grassroots organizations serving underrepresented communities (Bloemraad et al. 2020) and how these organizations scaled their efforts and reached relevant audiences. From this perspective, there are opportunities to explore how similarly structured organizations, such as NGOs and nonprofit organizations, focus their strategic efforts and efficiently apply scarce organizational resources. Although these organizations can vary in the kinds of organizing activities that they pursue to influence target beneficiaries or causes, they share the need to appeal to audiences of benefactors (e.g., politicians and philanthropists), characters capable of providing economic or symbolic capital.

The concept of a simulacrum has not been widely operationalized within organization studies. However, its presence, especially with respect to cause-oriented phenomena, can exist in a variety of forms, such as tangible fixtures or dedicated monuments of permanence. For example, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, is a simulacrum dedicated to presenting the cause of African Americans, including their struggle and contribution to American history. Likewise, films—spanning genres from documentaries to dramas—can serve as simulacra that present encapsulated stories of people, social commentaries, or causes. For example, Klien (2005) contends that Werner Herzog's film *Black Hawk Down* offers a simulacrum of "prosoldier" messaging, resulting in an empathetic audience view of war when appreciated from a soldier's perspective. Somewhat earlier, Ezzy (2001, p. 635) argues that a modern workplace can represent a "simulacrum of trust" by propagating mantras of workers as fellow associates, team members, or "like family" through communications in the workplace environment. Maintaining a simulacrum of trust also creates the opportunity to exploit the time, accountability, and sense of responsibility of workers.

However, the concept of a simulacrum, such as the event-based example in our study, can take the form of a temporary object—occurring within media moments or during watershed events—that can be operationalized in the service of a cause. For example, coverage of a young Greta Thunberg traveling by sailboat across the Atlantic Ocean to present to world leaders at the UN was an event-related simulacrum that helped reinforce her as representative of a global youth generation willing to approach climate change and its associated challenges with capability, conviction, and sincerity. With simulacra occurring in settings defined by time, space, and audience presence, opportunities exist to leverage these dimensions for broader impact. Thus, those organizations producing simulacra are afforded the opportunity of "making believe" or mobilizing creative imagining. Overall, we see a fertile ground for further empirical exploration—across a variety of disciplines and methodologies—of a multitude of simulacra represented in a variety of settings.

Conclusion

With the increasing salience of grassroots organizations in social life, a fuller understanding of how they advance their credibility and survive is essential. We focused on the ADM—a grassroots organization active in contributing to African development—and applied ethnographic methodologies to explore credibility advancement that was realized through the dramaturgical curation of an event. By creating a simulacrum, this organization was able to nurture cause responsiveness and deploy tactics for credibility advancement among key audiences in ways that substantially differ from credibility advancement strategies commonly highlighted within the literature (e.g., through governance professionalization or discourse influence). We found that the organization used the dramaturgical curation of event scenes to not only

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foster responsiveness to the idea that African diaspora entrepreneurs were valuable in improving African development, but also to advance the credibility of the ADM and its value to the cause. By orchestrating actors, space, and time, the grassroots organization built an endorsement for the cause and helped ensure its future survival.

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Endnotes

[1] The boundary between acts I and II was also triangulated through the postevent discovery of a promotional, online video of the ADM leadership team being interviewed in a staged, talk show format.

[2] We later understood that attendees varied in their social status with respect to the cause—that is, according to those who were curious, wishing to explore entrepreneurial pursuits and those who were seasoned professionals, already pursuing their own entrepreneurial ventures. This difference in status was uniquely leveraged by the ADM.

[3] For speeches in French, audio was digitally recorded of the live English translations as provided by the professional translators of the UNIDO.

[4] As supported by the field notes, the research activities of researchers 1 and 2 (i.e., taking notes and recording video) were accepted as typical activities of the coaches. Filming was also common throughout the event as there were several cameras recording (i.e., hired video crew and a professional photographer).

[5] Note that icons utilized in Figures 1 and 2 were made by Slidesgo from www.flaticon.com.

[6] During this event moment, the coaches took the role of timekeeper and asked who would like to pitch.

[7] Activities occurring in the large UN conference room were supported by live French and English translation services provided by the UN. Beyond the prestige and formality of the room, an onsite photographer and film crew had been hired to capture the event.

[8] It was later communicated to researchers 1 and 2 (i.e., in private conversations) that the delay was caused by the ECOWAS member not wishing to start early. Validating the actor's own self-perception of having benefactor status, the whole program was delayed by two hours the next morning on day 4 even though all other attendees had showed up on time (field notes).

[9] Photographs were taken by a professional photographer and were used for ADM social media postings. In all such posted scenes, members of the ADM flanked the benefactor in the front center and were surrounded by the prospects and the champions in the periphery.

[10] According to a personal communication with the prospect (December 12, 2017), he gave a speech during a "B2B panel session, which aimed to show how market research can unlock data-driven decisions in sub-Saharan Africa." We also learned that he was utilizing a new, self-coined title in his email signature, "UNIDO-ADM Pitch Competition winner," leveraging his success at the 2017 focal event.

[11] Tragically, one of the two focal ADM leaders died in the Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 737-Max crash on March 10, 2019. At that time, he was fulfilling postevent contract work that supported the CIDO division of the AU on diaspora projects.

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