

While there has been increasing attention in institutional theory on how purposeful actors can disrupt even deeply entrenched practices, we focus on the role of the context in fuelling these efforts. We analyse one of the largest anti-corruption operations ever launched in Brazil: the 'Lava Jato' (Car Wash Operation) and its antecedents, the contextual enablers of change and the institutional work of agents involved in this operation. We find that the confluence of jolts, gradual changes in the field, and the cumulating work of purposeful actors were essential for anti- corruption actions to gain traction across the country and lead to a breakthrough in the fight against corruption. We develop a model to explain how actors seeking institutional change are contextually empowered and their efforts yield breakthroughs only at certain points in time when the context is "ripe" for change. Our findings contribute both to institutional theory and the corruption literature.