

INVERTING THE BOOMERANG

**Examining European NGOs' Use of
Developing Country Partners
in Legitimizing Transnational Advocacy**

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ASSUMING SOUTHERN INITIATION

- The majority of literature on North-South advocacy campaigns assumes campaigns form in response to Southern needs and – in many cases – activism by Southern populations
- Boomerang activism (Keck and Sikkink 1998) is most notable and enduring model (e.g. Hochstetler 2002; Bertone 2003; Friedman 2009)
 - Norm spirals (Risse 2000; Risse and Sikkink 1999)
- Non-boomerang literature also reflects assumption of a North-South-North pattern (e.g. Rumansara 1998; Royo 1998; Clark 2001)
- Significantly, even critical literature focuses on Southern activists' role in wooing or selecting Northern partners (Bob 2005; Pallas and Urpelainen 2013)

THE PROBLEM

- An important minority of key North-South campaigns originate in the global North. For example:
 - International Campaign to Ban Landmines (Anderson 2000)
 - ChristianAid's anti-SAL campaign (Nelson 2000)
 - Oxfam-UK on labor standards (Atkinson 2004)
 - Protests against the World Bank-funded China Western project (2009)
- **Question (1): How does Northern initiation impact the legitimacy of campaigns by European NGOs?**
- **Question (2): Are EU institutions more susceptible to such Northern-initiated campaigns?**

APPROACH

- Identify standards used to judge legitimacy in transnational advocacy
- Examine how Southern initiation affects campaign legitimacy
- Develop a model of Northern initiation
- Conceptualize the incentives for such initiation by European NGOs and analyze the likelihood of success
- Examine legitimacy and effectiveness empirically in a sampling of transnational campaigns initiated by European NGOs

WHAT LEGITIMATES NGO ADVOCACY?

- Legitimacy: ‘conditions under which power is rightfully exercised’ (Steffek and Hahn 2010)
- Representivity: Speaking on behalf of a group of identifiable stakeholders (Uhlin 2010; Grzybowski 2000; Steffek and Hahn 2010; cf. McKeon 2010).
 - Some favor participation as a means of ensuring credible representation (Bexell, Uhlin and Tallber 2010; Uhlin and Tallberg 2012)
- Accountability: The ability of some actors to ‘hold other actors to a set of standards, to assess whether they have fulfilled their responsibilities in light of these standards, and to impose sanctions if they find that these standards have not been met’ (Tallberg and Uhlin 2012). Widely used: Steffek and Hahn 2010; Scholte 2004; Ebrahim 2007; Reiser 2010.

SOUTHERN INITIATION AND LEGITIMACY

- Southern initiation significantly enhances representivity (at least at campaign outset)
 - Campaign is de facto representative, insofar as initial objectives are chosen by the impacted stakeholders
 - Demands perceived to reflect local knowledge and interests
- Moderately enhances accountability
 - Renders Southern populations the principals in a principal-agent relationship
 - Campaign will impact the Southern population, providing an opportunity for evaluation of the outcomes

LIMITS TO THE LOCAL-INTERNATIONAL-LOCAL MODEL

- Number of international campaigns focusing on global South issues, without local initiation
 - ChristianAid – anti-SAL in Jamaica and the Philippines
 - International Labor Rights – Foul Ball campaign
 - Oxfam International – Workers' rights in Sri Lanka
 - London-based Tibetan activists – Opposition to China Western agricultural project
 - Danish Muslims – Cartoon caricatures of Mohammed
 - International Campaign to Ban Landmines

*‘International NGOs collectively are not conduits from “the people”... from the bottom up. Rather, they are a vehicle for international elites to talk to other international elites about the things . . . that international elites care about’
(Anderson 2003)*

MODELING NORTHERN INITIATION

- Hypothesis: An inverse (N-S-N) boomerang
 - Northern NGOs with Northern policy objectives encounter blockages in their ability to persuade Northern policymakers
 - May be perceived as lacking representivity or accountability
 - Skepticism towards claims to pursue 'global' good
 - Lack of moral authority
 - Lack of popular support
 - Northern NGOs recruit Southern partners (who were not previously active on the issue), who undertake advocacy and participate in the global campaign
 - Combined campaign renews lobbying of Northern policymakers with increased public support or moral authority

THE INVERSE BOOMERANG

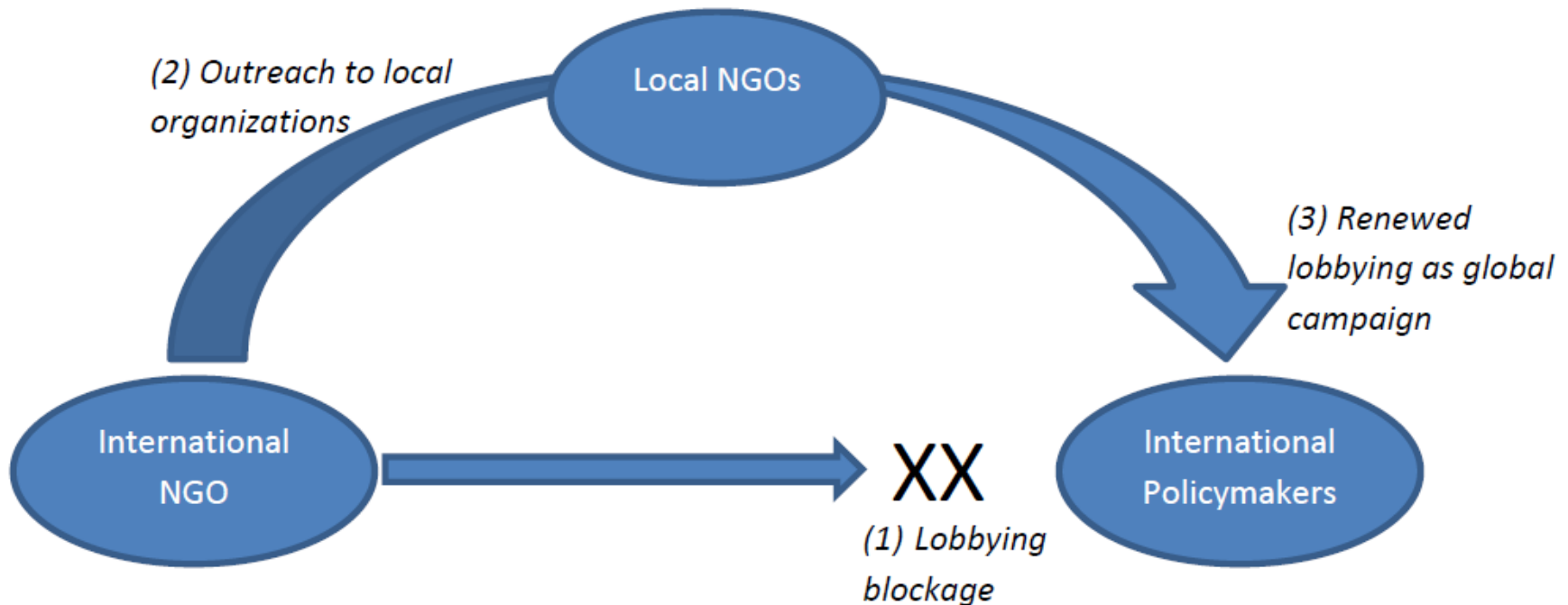


Figure 1: The Inverse Boomerang. *International NGO encounters a blockage in its attempts to influence international policymakers. It responds by recruiting local NGOs and then renewing lobbying via a globalized campaign.*

MORE COMMON IN THE EU?

- EU provides substantial opportunities for NGO engagement
- EU policy makers (especially MEPs) susceptible to domestic political pressure
 - Rallying supporters behind 'legitimate' / 'global' campaign?
- However: EU policy maker remit focuses on European issues
 - 'Globalizing' a campaign → less European?

CASES

- International Campaign to Ban Landmines (1992-1999)
- Oxfam International 'Make Trade Fair' (2002-2005)
- Danish Muslims protesting Muhammad caricatures (2005-2006)

FINDINGS:

INVERSE BOOMERANG AND LEGITIMACY

- European NGOs do use inverse boomerang advocacy strategies:
 - North to North lobbying → Northern blockage
 - Southern recruitment → 'Global' lobbying of Northern policymakers
- The inverse boomerang enhances campaign effectiveness
 - Improves perception of representivity
 - May improve perception of accountability
 - Is an intuitive strategy for NGOs across a range of issues and with a range of advocacy experience

FINDINGS (2): INVERSE BOOMERANG AND LEGITIMACY

- Undercuts representivity
 - Agenda chosen by Northern actors; represents Northern actors' interests
 - Or: Issues framed according to Northern perspective/sensibilities (e.g., Southern participants as 'victims' rather than partners). See Hahn 2010.
- Undercuts accountability
 - Southern role in partner selection is minimized
 - Campaign does not rebound to South, limiting opportunities to judge or critique outcomes

FINDINGS (3): INVERSE BOOMERANG AND THE EU

- Not very effective tactic for NGOs engaging with EU policy makers
 - Does assist in mobilizing popular pressure but...
 - Does not result in policy maker alignment/support
- EU-focused remit of MEPs and bureaucrats, rather than global remit → low levels of alignment
 - Exception: Where call to action is linked to European identity
 - European morality vs US self-interest in ICBL
 - Sweatshop activism before Athens games

IMPLICATIONS

- Dynamics of North-South campaign formation likely exist on a spectrum
 - Traditional boomerang (high Southern interest; low pre-existing Northern interest)
 - Inverse boomerang (low pre-existing Southern interest; high Northern interest)
- Location on this spectrum impacts campaign dynamics and degree of Southern empowerment
 - Southerners 'lose control' – or never had it to begin with?