

MAPPING CONTESTED TERRAIN:
MOBILIZATION AND REPRESENTATION IN
TRANSNATIONAL ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

by

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Abstract

This paper identifies two blind spots in the literature on Transnational Advocacy Campaigns (TACs): an overemphasis on the external political impacts of TACs and the lack of conceptual clarity on key analytical constructs such as mobilization and representation. These problems leave the internal dynamics of TACs under-theorized and prevent scholars from categorizing TAC constituencies beyond geographic and class-based dichotomies (for example: North-South, core-periphery). To address these limitations, the paper presents a typology that distinguishes TAC constituencies based on observed levels of mobilization and representation. Using two online TACs as case-studies, the paper demonstrates the feasibility of the typology and challenges the prevailing assumption in the TAC literature, which conflates the *quantity* of mobilization with the *quality* of representation. Overall, the paper pursues an integrated research approach that draws on the comparative method and international relations scholarship in its examination of advocacy in contemporary transnational politics.

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Introduction

The fertile discourse on transnational politics is now replete with success stories of transnational advocacy networks (TANs) and their politically astute campaigns (Kaldor, 2003; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Price, 1998). Blending traditional campaign tactics with the expansive reach of modern communications technology, the resultant *cyberactivism* propagated through some TANs highlights how burgeoning numbers of techno-savvy activists have not only incorporated the Internet and related mediums as tools for political expression, but are also re-defining the meaning of activism, collective identity and democratic change (McCaughey & Ayers, 2003). Avaaz.org is an emblematic case in point, having mobilized over 3 million people in 192 countries through the use of online petitions on a variety of campaigns ranging from climate change to economic justice (Avaaz, 2009, About us, ¶3). But how much do we really know about the politics of transnational cyberactivists, and what do online forms of mobilization imply for broader concerns with the democratization of the transnational political sphere?

In this paper, I argue that despite remarkable gains in theorizing TANs and a rich repository of empirical case work on transnational advocacy campaigns (TACs), we have few analytical mechanisms to guide research on transnational activists. Because online forms of activism represent the cutting edge of TACs, I use them as specific unit of analysis to suggest that there are two factors which contribute to the noted blind spot in the literature. First, the scholarship overemphasizes the external political impacts of these campaigns and consequently does not account for their “internal politics”, and second, crucial analytical constructs such as mobilization and representation are contested, making scholars somewhat averse to specifying their dynamics within TACs. Both these aspects pose analytical barriers to the study of TACs. In the first instance, the failure to adequately unpack the internal political dynamics of TACs has

prevented scholars from categorizing campaign constituencies beyond static geographic and class-based categories. Moreover, drawing on the insights of deliberative democrats, I contend that a reluctance to address contested concepts in the prevailing literature leads to conflation of the *quality* of representation with the *quantity* of mobilization (i.e. a large constituency is assumed to be representative) and obscures the possibility that mobilization and representation may not always be positively correlated in TACs. To summarize, this paper problematizes the unsatisfactory engagement with issues of representation and mobilization in TACs and the lack of de-territorialized conceptions of campaign constituencies within the distinct but complementary literatures on transnational politics and digital democracy,¹

In response to these identified problems, I then advance an analytical framework that distinguishes between TAC constituencies on the basis of observed levels of political mobilization and representation, and yields a typology of four possible “ideal-type” constituencies. Utilizing the Avaaz 2007 Climate Change Campaign and 2009 Pink Chaddi Campaign as illustrative case studies to demonstrate the viability of this typology, I further argue that being able to accurately map TAC constituencies has important methodological implications for the study of transnational politics. Before proceeding to these specific arguments, I first clarify the key terms which are central to the analysis.

Committing to contested concepts

Drawing on resource mobilization theory, mobilization is defined as the process by which a group assembles resources and places them under collective control for the explicit purpose of pursuing the group’s interests through collective action – in this case transnational advocacy campaigns (TACs) (Canel, 1997). Resources can be of a material or non-material nature. The

¹ This denotes the use of electronic information and communication technologies (ICT) such as the Internet, mobile phones, SMS text messaging, etc. in enhancing democratic processes.

former include money, organizational facilities, human resources and means of communication; the latter include legitimacy, loyalty, authority, moral commitment and solidarity (Jenkins, 1981, 117). This definition resonates with the instrumental dimension (the process of employing means of action) of Nedelman's (1987) sociologically grounded conception of mobilization.² The instrumental focus on mobilization also permits the concept to be clearly distinguished from issues of participation in TACs. This distinction is important to note because TACs may be criticized for relying on "armchair activism"³, which does not require much effort from individual participants and can therefore impede *meaningful* mobilization.⁴ In my view, this critique mistakenly confuses the process by which a political constituency is formed (mobilization) with the eventual type of political action initiated by that constituency (participation). Since the paper is not concerned with determining preconditions for successful transnational campaigns, a detailed exploration of issues of participation remains outside of the scope of discussion here.

For the purposes of this paper, representation is viewed as a multi-dimensional process that exhibits the following four components, as identified by Dovi (2006, ¶ 4):

1. some party that is representing (the representative, an organization, movement, state agency, etc.);
2. some party that is being represented (the constituents, the clients, etc.);
3. something that is being represented (opinions, perspectives, interests, etc.); and
4. a setting within which the activity of representation is taking place (the political context).

² For Nedelman (1987), the analytical concept of mobilization activities consists of three processes: the process of interest formation (cognitive dimension), the process of community building (affective dimension), and the process of employing means of action (instrumental dimension). As noted, this paper focuses only on the instrumental dimension of mobilization. It is plausible to infer that the three aforementioned processes occur progressively, where the instrumental dimension is predicated on successful processes of interest formation and community building. Thus, if the instrumental dimension of mobilization is evident, it is assumed that the affective and cognitive aspects have been established as well.

³ For example clicking "send" on an internet petition is less onerous than having to handwrite a letter or attend a demonstration.

⁴ I thank Lisa Sundstrom for raising this observation (personal communication, 15 July 2009).

Following Dovi (2006), when alluding to the concept of a TAC “constituency” I refer to the party being represented. In order to evaluate claims of representation made within the selected cases, the analysis employs Pitkin’s (1967) framework which identifies four different types of representation: formalistic, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive. However, this analysis discounts Pitkin’s notion of formalistic representation on two grounds. In the first instance, Pitkin framed this concept around the formal procedures of authorization and accountability *within* nation states (Dovi, 2006), making the concept ill-suited to the more international operating context of TACs. Moreover, most TACs do not extend formal institutional arrangements that initiate and precede representation as would be expected in electoral democracies (Dovi, 2006; Warren and Castiglione, 2004). For instance, Dovi (2006) observes:

Increasingly international, transnational and non-governmental actors play an important role in advancing public policies on behalf of democratic citizens—that is, acting as representatives for those citizens. Such actors “speak for,” “act for” and can even “stand for” individuals within a nation-state....Given these changes, the traditional focus of political representation, that is, on elections within nation-states, is insufficient for understanding how public policies are being made and implemented (Dovi, 2006, ¶ 15).

The second reason for discounting the concept of formalistic representation is the analytical barrier posed by Pitkin’s failure to extend the dimensions of authorization and accountability to other categories of representation (Dovi, 2006). In particular, it would seem to absolve non-formal representatives from being accountable to their constituents, a move that appears overwhelmingly rejected by the now burgeoning volume of scholarship on the need for greater accountability on the part of transnational political actors (see for example: Collingwood & Logister, 2005; Edwards & Hulme, 1996; Kovach et al, 2003; Rubenstein, 2007; Slim, 2002).

Nonetheless, the three remaining views (symbolic, descriptive and substantive) formulated by Pitkin (1967) offer a valuable approach for assessing representation in TACs. *Symbolic representation* denotes the ways that a representative acts in place of the represented

(92-111), while *descriptive representation* refers to the extent to which a representative resembles those being represented (61-91) and *substantive representation* is the extent to which outcomes advanced by a representative serve “the best interests” of their constituents (113-143).

As noted, TACs are the specific unit of analysis adopted for this paper, as they illustrate the main theoretical gaps identified in the problem statement (see next section). In this regard, I mirror the approach taken in Keck and Sikkink’s (1998) seminal work, whereby the authors study transnational advocacy networks by examining the campaigns waged by these networks. I follow their definition of campaigns as “sets of strategically linked activities in which members of a diffuse principled network...develop explicitly visible ties and mutually recognized goals in pursuit of a common goal” and generally against a common target (6). I also view TACs as a subset of transnational advocacy networks (TANs), which in-turn are nested within the broader concept of global civil society (GCS). In this respect, the paper draws on claims advanced in the wider literature on TANs and GCS, which speak to issues pertinent for TACs, and where relevant, the particular relationship between these nested concepts is clarified.

Black Boxes and Blind Spots: Problematizing Constituencies in TACs

The study of modern TANs and their campaigns has made tremendous progress in recent years. For example, efforts have been made to develop typologies of TANs in order to distinguish them from broader social movements or other forms of global political organization (Rosenau, 2006; Tarrow, 2001). Likewise, Jordan and Van Tuijil (2000) offer a typology of campaigns in their recent work on political responsibility and TANs. Some studies have sought to explain how TANs influence the behaviour of states (Boli & Thomas, 1999; Kaldor, 2003; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Price, 1998), while others examine how states influence the operating environment of these networks (Collingwood & Logister, 2005; Florini 2004; Naughton, 2001). In addition, scholars have examined the political impact of TANs by exploring specific campaigns such as the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (Price, 1998) and the campaign against the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Multilateral Agreement on Investment (Tieleman, 2000). Notwithstanding the advancements in the study of TANs, a number of aspects remain obscure and under-theorized. Two particularly problematic issues in this respect are the lack of conceptual clarity on important concepts such as mobilization and representation, and the under-theorization of the internal dynamics of TANs more broadly and TACs in particular.

It is apparent that much of the literature on TANs deploys mobilization and representation as analytical categories, but often fails to offer a cogent articulation of what these concepts signify, or how they may be mutually reinforcing. An apt illustration of this problem arises in Kathryn Sikkink's (2002) observations in "Restructuring World Politics: The Limits and Asymmetries of Soft Power". Here, Sikkink compellingly demonstrates that power asymmetries

within TANs are connected to the kinds of influence that these networks exercise in global institutions (Sikkink, 2002, 307).⁵ However, Sikkink's effort to employ these insights to marshal an argument for why closer attention is due to the *internal* democratic character of TANs falls short in two key respects. First, rather than crafting a precise and systematic relationship between representation, deliberation and accountability, these concepts are reduced to being indicators of the internal democratic character of transnational advocacy networks (Sikkink, 2002, 311- 315). Second, this move is curious, given that Sikkink's subsequent discussion of deliberation focuses on the ability of TANs to contribute diverse viewpoints to deliberations on global issues, rather than on the "internal" deliberative quality of discourse within the networks. For example, she argues that imperfectly representative organizations may still increase international deliberation. However, her analysis is unable to convey an assessment of the impact of imperfect representation on the *internal* deliberative potential of TANs. In this respect, Sikkink's work not only highlights the lack of workable definitions of mobilization and representation prevalent in this literature, but also how this discourse maintains a skewed focus on the external political effects of TANs and their campaigns.

How might the identified problems of under-theorized core concepts and a partial view of the internal effects impede our understanding of the role of TACs in transnational politics? The case of online TACs is particularly illuminating in this instance. As Sikkink's piece indicates, analyses of the political role of TACs have benefitted from the relatively recent wave of scholarship on what has come to be known as deliberative democracy (Dryzek, 2002; Habermas, 2001). Hindman (2009) crystallizes the deliberative democratic position when he writes that "despite their differences, these deliberative democrats all agree that democracy

⁵ Contrary to expectations, less influential Southern NGOs have more contact with certain International Organizations than their Northern counterparts.

should be more than a process for bargaining and aggregation of preferences. All suggest that true participation requires citizens to engage in direct discussion with other citizens” (Hindman, 2009, 7). He also astutely points out that it is against this backdrop of deliberative democracy that we have seen an explosion of scholarship documenting Internet-organized political activism that looks strikingly different from traditional patterns...scholars have found examples that would have been impossible in the pre-Internet era” (Hindman, 2009, 10). Aided by the libertarian ethos of the Internet, TACs have thus been seen as channels for voicing the demands of “civil society” within the structures and processes of global governance (Anheir, Glasius & Kaldor, 2001; Warkentin, 2001).

This Habermasian view is tempered by scholars such as Norris (2001), Hindman (2009) and DiMaggio, Hargittai, Celeste & Shafer (2004) who shed light on the problem of the so-called digital divide⁶ and its exclusionary impacts on the political process. For instance, Norris cautions that “the optimistic claims that the interactive capacities of digital technologies will facilitate a new era of direct democracy, characterized by widespread citizen deliberation in affairs of state, like a virtual Agora, while attractive as a normative ideal, is ultimately implausible in practice as soon as we understand who becomes involved in digital politics” (Norris, 2001, 19). Despite accounting for the exclusionary impacts of the Internet on deliberation and digital democracy, Norris oddly immunizes civil society processes such as TACs from her otherwise compelling critique. She writes:

⁶ This refers to the gap between people with effective access to digital and information technology and those with very limited or no access at all. It includes the imbalances in physical access to technology as well as the imbalances in resources and skills needed to effectively participate as a digital citizen (Rice, 2002: 105-129).

The main democratic potential of digital information and communication technologies lies in strengthening organizational linkages and networking capacities in civic society. Strengthening these bonds, it will be argued, has the capacity to produce sudden disruptions to politics as usual, especially for flash coalitions mobilizing suddenly like a guerrilla army, then dissolving again, exemplified by events such as the anticapitalism violent protest in the City of London in June 1999, direct-action campaigns against the World Trade Organization on the streets of Seattle (Norris, 2001, 21).

Such occurrences remain relatively rare, but they can have immediate impact on the policy processes and they are important as indicators of the disruptive potential of digital politics (Norris, 2001: 20).

In other relevant works, even where transnational patterns of exclusion are highlighted within particular advocacy networks, the impacts on representation and mobilization are rarely examined together (for example Hindman, 2009). It is evident that in these discussions too, as with Sikkink's work discussed earlier, under-theorizing the internal dynamics of TACs and failing to demystify concepts like mobilization have far-reaching analytical consequences.

Specifically, it is possible to infer from both the deliberative perspective and its critique that the relationship between mobilization and representation within TACs is both positive and progressive. The logic of this relationship can be summarised as follows: To the extent that the Internet allows cheap, quick, and in general, anonymous access to large groups of (web-connected) citizens, it is a valuable tool deployed by TACs to mobilize large numbers of people (DiMaggio et al., 2004; Lai, 2004; Naughton, 2001). For example, Kahn and Kellner's (2004) dialectical critique of Internet politics maintains that "emergent (ICTs) have facilitated oppositional cultural and political movements and provided possibilities for the sort of progressive socio-political change and struggle that is an important dimension of contemporary cultural politics" (Kahn & Kellner, 2004, 1). Next, insofar as such mobilization efforts yield a group of supporters galvanized around common ideals, TACs are able to claim that they are

representative of a relevant and often transnational constituency (Cogburn, 2006; Lai, 2004; Mohanty, 2007; Olesen, 2005; Rucht, 2000).

Indeed, this notion of a cosmopolitan constituency (Held & McGrew, 2007) appears to be a cornerstone in arguments that highlight the role of TACs in democratizing global governance (i.e. democracy on the outside), but also invites critiques for a closer examination of the democratic character of TACs themselves (i.e. democracy on the inside). This inside/outside distinction underpins Sikkink's (2002) argument that TANs exert a democratizing influence on global politics through the exercise of soft power, while at the same time arguing that their ability to do so would be enhanced through a closer attention to their internal democratic character (301). Nevertheless, the aforementioned logic that attributes democratizing influences to TACs, particularly by virtue of their use of ICTs, is questionable. In particular, it raises two significant problems with regard to TAC constituencies. This view conflates the *quality* of representation with the *quantity* of (frequently virtual) mobilization (i.e. a large constituency is assumed to be representative) and precludes the possibility that mobilization and representation may not always be positively correlated.

As this paper argues, one important effect of the under-theorization of intra-network aspects of TANs is that their specific constituencies tend to be black-boxed (Orenstein & Schmitz, 2006). Where existing studies have examined these internal dimensions, the scope of inquiry has been fairly restricted. Although insightful, these works have narrowly centred on issues of hierarchy and power distribution (Kovach, Neliman & Burall, 2003; Mohanty, 2007; Sikkink, 2002; Sperling, 1999; 2009; Stein, 2008). Moreover, while these studies offer valuable perspectives on what patterns of interaction may be at work within specific TACs, the literature lacks a framework that distinguishes various types of transnational constituencies from each

other beyond static, geographically or class determined categories (for example: North/South, developed/developing, core/periphery, local/global dichotomies) (Mohanty, 2007; Sundstrom, 2006). Consequently alternative and dynamic conceptualizations of TAC constituencies have been neglected. In response to this perceived gap in the literature, I suggest that one such alternative model can be developed by viewing TAC constituencies as entities shaped by dual processes of political mobilization and representation.

In order to advance this possibility, I first present an analytical framework that facilitates the mapping of mobilization and representation within TACs, and which allows for four possible constituency types to emerge. To test the applicability of this framework and the resulting typology, I apply it to two recent cases of online TACs, Avaaz.org's 2007 Climate Change Campaign and the Pink Chaddi Campaign.

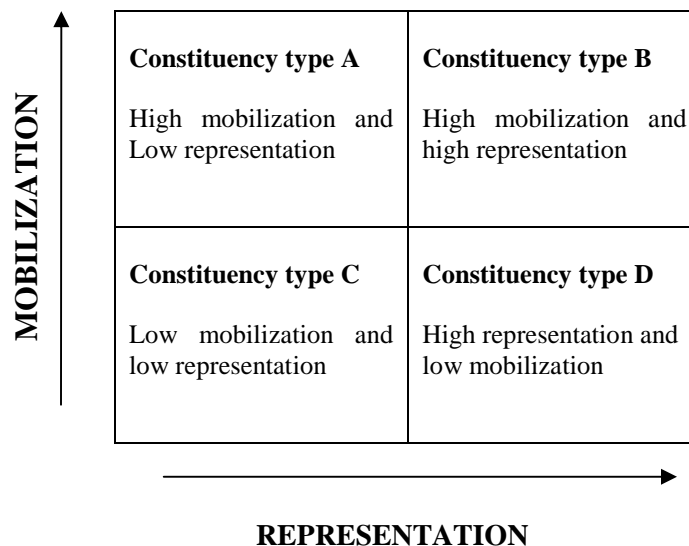
The campaigns both relied heavily on the Internet to mobilize transnational constituencies, whom they subsequently claim to represent. In addition, the core galvanizing issues in the sample cases resonate with democratic values – democratization of global governance (Avaaz) and the right to freedom from oppression and violence (Pink Chaddi). As will be demonstrated, Avaaz's model coincides with the prevailing logic in the literature which expects high levels of both mobilization and representation, and is therefore considered as an archetypical example of TACs. However, bearing in mind the earlier critique that it may be theoretically imprecise to assume mobilization and representation will be always be positively correlated in TACs, the Pink Chaddi case offers an important counterpoint to the archetype. The case findings are also relevant to broader methodological concerns in relation to the study of transnationalism.

Analytical Framework

This analytical framework establishes parameters that guide the analysis of mobilization and representation within the selected cases. Mobilization is evaluated by examining the process along two dimensions (material and non-material), in keeping with the instrumental conceptual definition provided earlier. Indicators of material mobilization include the level of internal and external campaign support, financial resources deployed and media coverage of the campaign. Indicators of non-material mobilization include factors such as official responses from campaign supporters, campaign targets and endorsements from influential agents of public opinion, such as high-level politicians.

Following Pitkin's (1967) framework explained earlier, processes of representation are examined through a discourse analysis of primary and secondary sources including campaign materials, blog content and commentary, and media reports. Starting with the proposition that mobilization and representation may not always be positively correlated, we can begin to hypothesize ideal-type constituencies depending on the levels of mobilization and representation evident in particular cases. Figure 1 (on the next page) illustrates one such concept of ideal-types.

Figure 1 Typology of TAC Constituencies



Although the impetus for this analysis stems from identified shortcomings in the deliberative perspective, it should not be seen as a rejection of deliberative ideals. Rather, by advancing a non-territorially bound concept of political constituency, this paper can be seen as modest contribution to theorizing transnational politics beyond the limits imposed by spatial or class-based constructs noted earlier⁷, and is compatible with discourses on transnational politics that emphasise the de-territorialisation of global governance, as asserted by scholars from the cosmopolitan and deliberative democratic traditions (Habermas, 2001; Hardt & Negri, 2000; Held & McGrew, 2007; Dryzek, 2002). I now turn to the specific cases to test the applicability of the aforementioned analytical framework and the plausibility of the hypothesized constituency types.

⁷ The analytical framework for TAN constituencies offered in this paper need not be restricted to the study of “progressive” organizations. Constructivist commentary on transnational politics has been particularly susceptible to charges of a skewed focus on “civic” oriented organizations and progressive norms. Viewing constituencies as entities constituted by mobilization and representation offers an analytical framework that may be productively applied to networks with explicitly “uncivic” aims and motivations as well (such as terrorist groups and organized criminal networks).

Case Studies

Case 1: Avaaz.org as an archetype

Campaign background

Avaaz.org (hereafter Avaaz) frames its mission as a direct response to globalization-induced democratic deficits, whereby “international decisions are shaped by political elites and unaccountable corporations - not the views and values of the world’s people” (Avaaz, 2009, About us, ¶ 1). This movement has displayed an impressive growth trajectory, with a self-proclaimed 3.2 million members in its first year of operations (Avaaz, 2009, About us, ¶ 3). The network has also garnered impressive media attention and endorsements by high-level political figures (Dion, 2007; “Electronic protest,” 2007; Gore, 2007; Revkin, 2008; 2009; York, 2009). The core of Avaaz’s model of transnational advocacy and organizing is an email list, operated in 13 languages. By signing-up to receive messages from this list, members are rapidly alerted to urgent global issues and opportunities to achieve change (Avaaz, 2009, About us, ¶ 3). As such, Avaaz’s modus operandi can be seen as an archetypical case for examining how TAC constituencies may be conceptualized by examining processes of mobilization and representation in the context of online campaigns. A brief overview of the 2007 Bali Climate Campaign is presented next, followed by a detailed examination of mobilization and representation within this campaign.

Avaaz organised numerous advocacy actions as part of a year-long campaign with a view to the UN Summit on Climate Change in Bali in 2007. Some observers would be quick to dismiss Avaaz’s online petition and offline campaign tactics (rallies and mock awards) (Avaaz, 2009b, Bali, ¶ 10-12) as mere “street theatre” – entertaining, but with little to no impact on the substance of negotiations. However, such claims are difficult to sustain in light of the speed with

which the Avaaz network moved as the Bali negotiations careened towards deadlock when the US, Canada and Japan blocked consensus and objected to targets for developed countries to reduce their emissions. Within seventy two hours, Avaaz used its online network to harness transnational public opinion as a means to put pressure on these states and leverage political influence on climate change policy at the global level (BBC, 2007). In this instance, tens of thousands of American Avaaz members co-signed a message urging conference delegates to ignore President Bush's negotiating team as they did not represent the American people (Avaaz, 2009b, Bali, ¶ 14). In addition, 110,000 Canadian citizens demanded that their country stop blocking the talks, supported an ad campaign in Canadian newspapers, and called the Prime Minister's office and their Members of Parliament (Avaaz, 2009b, Bali, ¶ 15); Avaaz, 2007b). Globally, 180,000 Avaaz members added their name to a global emergency petition calling on President Bush and Prime Ministers Harper and Fukuda to support emissions cuts. The signatures were delivered in a full page advertisement in the special conference section of the Jakarta Post, which was distributed to every delegate in Bali (Avaaz, 2009b, Bali, ¶ 16; Avaaz, 2007a).

The course of events following Avaaz's mobilization efforts are as follows. Since the negotiations ended in repeated deadlock, the conference deadline was extended by 24 hours when Japan gave in to the consensus ("Envoys Take," 2007, ¶ 4). Shortly thereafter, the Canadian government reversed its position, and allowed the smaller group of Kyoto countries to agree to reduce carbon emissions by 25-40% by 2020 (Climate Action Network Canada, 2007, ¶ 8; DeSouza, 2007, ¶ 5; York, 2009). The U.S. delegation's refusal to alter its position and subsequent rejection of a compromise proposal was poorly received by the assembled delegations, and especially condemned by developing countries (International Institute for

Sustainable Development, 2007; York, 2009, ¶ 10). At this juncture in the negotiations, Kevin Conrad, a member of the Papua New Guinea delegation challenged the U.S. by saying: “We seek your leadership. But if for some reason you are not willing to lead, leave it to the rest of us. Please get out of the way” (Revkin, 2008, ¶ 3, Rivers, 2007, ¶ 10). Following these remarks, Paula Dobriansky, head of the US delegation, declared that the U.S. would join the consensus (Revkin, 2008, ¶ 4; Rivers, 2007, ¶ 11). It is impossible to determine the precise extent to which Avaaz may have affected the outcomes of the 2007 Bali climate change negotiations. Even so, there are obvious indications, as discussed below, that the weight of public opinion Avaaz mobilized and claimed to represent was among the factors which prompted shifts in the Canadian and Japanese positions in particular.

Analysis of mobilization and representation

Recall that for the purposes of this paper, mobilization involves material and non-material aspects. Material indicators of mobilization include the money, organizational facilities, human resources and means of communication. In this respect, high levels of material mobilization in the Avaaz climate change campaign are evidenced by the relatively high number of supporters reported within the various campaign actions and the online petitions in particular (Avaaz, 2009b, Bali, ¶ 4-5). Likewise, Avaaz was able to mobilize significant financial and human resources in order to develop and run full-page campaign ads in major newspapers (Avaaz, 2007a; Avaaz, 2007b; Avaaz, 2009b, Bali ¶ 3, 17-18), fund the cost of “real life” campaign stunts at the conference venue, as well as shoulder the logistical burdens involved in the scale of campaign coordination efforts that were underway (Avaaz, 2009b, Bali ¶ 11-13).

Event feedback, comments from Avaaz members on the campaign website (Avaaz, 2009b, Comment), and the response from high-level politicians in target states (Aarhus, 2007, ¶

8-9; Dion, 2007), serve as sites to investigate aspects of non-material mobilization. Discourse analysis of these sites of communication highlight the role played by Avaaz in eliciting authority, legitimacy, moral commitments and solidarity (indicators of non-material mobilization) for its 2007 Climate Campaign from a variety of sources including politicians, the media, members and like-minded organizations. For example, in an expression of moral commitment to the Avaaz model, Anna, an Avaaz member from Australia comments on the campaign web page: "I've realized that I can't do it by myself, but the world can't do it without me" (Avaaz, 2009b, Bali). Similarly, Stéphane Dion, the leader of Canada's Liberal party (Canada's domestic opposition party) at the time of Bali negotiations, was among the influential political actors who personally attributed the reversal of the Canadian position to Avaaz and further applauded Avaaz's campaign methods in Bali as "democracy at work" (Dion, 2007). This type of support from an elected official can be viewed as a significant legitimating mechanism for the Avaaz campaign.

In addition to the mobilization efforts in response to the deadlocked negotiations at Bali noted earlier, Avaaz coordinated the largest joint climate petition delivery in history, combining petition efforts from nearly a dozen major environmental and progressive organizations for a total over 2.6 million signatories (Avaaz, 2009b, Bali, ¶ 18). The level of cooperation required for this action suggests a high-level of solidarity between Avaaz and its coalition partners that include: Live Earth, Oxfam, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the Climate Action Network Canada, and the Global Call to Action against Poverty (Avaaz, 2009b, Bali; CAN, 2009). This level of cooperation is evident for example in Vice President Al Gore's promotional video for the Live Earth Climate Pledge, he explicitly directs viewers to the Avaaz.org website and acknowledges Avaaz as an important partner in the Live Earth Concerts, which aimed to raise public awareness about climate change prior to the Bali talks in 2007 (Gore, 2007). Thus,

analysing these material and non-material indicators suggest high levels of mobilization are evident in the Avaaz 2007 Climate Campaign.

Following Pitkin (1967), the level of representation in the Avaaz case can be gauged by examining how this process was manifested in its symbolic, descriptive and substantive forms. *Symbolic representation* denotes the ways that a representative “stands for” the represented — that is, the meaning that a representative has for those being represented (Dovi, 2006; Pitkin, 1967: 92-111). This entails assessing representatives by the degree of acceptance that the representative has among the represented (Dovi, 2006). The sheer volume of signatories to Avaaz’s petition efforts during the campaign suggests a high level of acceptance of Avaaz’s ability to present and defend the core values of campaign supporters in a variety of global governance forums.⁸

Descriptive representation refers to the extent to which a representative resembles those being represented (Pitkin, 1967: 61-91). The research question here is whether representatives look like, have common interests with, or share certain experiences with those represented (Dovi, 2006). When Avaaz campaign rhetoric is explicitly grounded in representing the views of Avaaz members or petition signatories, their claims to descriptive representativeness can be seen as valid. Claims to this effect can be seen on the main climate campaign web pages through the following statements (emphasis added):

The threat of catastrophic climate change is at the top of Avaaz *members’* concerns (Avaaz, 2009a, Stop climate catastrophe, ¶ 1).

Avaaz *members’* petitions have also been amplified by high-profile media campaigns (Avaaz, 2009a, Stop climate catastrophe, ¶ 2).

We [Avaaz] brought 550,000 *members’* voices inside the conference center with a high-profile “virtual march” of young people bearing world flags representing the nations of *Avaaz members* that signed our global petition (Avaaz, 2009b, Bali, ¶ 11).

⁸ This initial assessment of symbolic representation could be reinforced through survey and interview methods aimed at campaign supporters. These methods were not deployed at this stage due to resource constraints.

The above finding is bounded by one important caveat. Avaaz's assertion that its members hail from every country (Avaaz, 2009a, They're paying attention, ¶ 1) seems to have particular discursive importance when the network *occasionally* extends its claims of representativeness beyond its member base to encompass "global public opinion". For example, in reporting on the Bali Summit, the campaign website claims, "Our mission [for the Bali Summit] was simple: Bring the *voice of the world's people* directly into the summit." (emphasis added, Avaaz, 2009b, Bali, ¶ 9). On the one hand, the extensive geographic reach and relatively large numbers of members within the Avaaz network appear to validate the movement's claims that it represents a significantly large and globally dispersed constituency. However, on the other hand (and hence the caveat), the propriety of Avaaz's claims of "global" representation may be credibly challenged in light of traffic statistics for the campaign website, which highlight segments of society that may be under-represented by the network. These statistics show that people under the age of 34 and over the age of 65, as well as those without graduate-level education tend to be under-represented among Avaaz members relative to the general internet population (Alexa.com, 2009). On balance however, given that more claims of representation made by Avaaz in relation to the 2007 Climate Campaign were based on references to its members, in this instance, it is appropriate to view this case as demonstrating a high level of descriptive representation.

Finally, a high degree of *substantive representation* – the extent to which a representative serves "the best interests" of their constituents (Dovi, 2006; Pitkin, 1967: 113-143) – is also evident in this Avaaz campaign. A poll of Avaaz members concluded that government action on climate change was their primary priority for global action (Nelson, 2008). By prioritizing climate change in their portfolio of campaigns, Avaaz can be seen as being responsive to their

members' preferences. This method of determining organizational priorities was confirmed as standard practice by Ricken Patel, Executive Director of Avaaz, in a 2007 interview with the BBC. Patel reiterated that all Avaaz campaigns are initiated only after polling the network's membership on specific issues and campaign objectives, as well as analysing public opinion data from variety of sources in order to establish whether Avaaz.org is able to affect a desired change on a particular global political issue (BBC, 2007). Moreover, the rapid deployment of resources toward the Bali Summit again emphasizes a resonance between the preferences of individual Avaaz members and the interests advanced by the network as a whole.

Based on the evidence presented here, the resulting constituency formed in the Avaaz 2007 Climate Campaign is characterized by high levels of mobilization and representation (constituency type B in Figure 1). In addition, the analysis of this campaign suggests that within archetypal TACs globalized information and communications technologies provide important mechanisms and platforms through which constituencies are mobilized and claims of representation are voiced. How far can we extend such archetypal conceptions of TAC constituencies? Following the typology presented earlier, the Pink Chaddi Campaign illustrates the limits of accepting the prevailing perspective within the literature which poses the relationship between mobilization and representation as being positively correlated.

Case 2: The Pink Chaddi Campaign (contesting the archetype)

Campaign background

The Pink Chaddi Campaign was launched on the social networking website Facebook in February 2009, following violent attacks on women in a pub in the South Indian city of Mangalore. The attacks were carried out by the Sri Ram Sena (SRS), an orthodox Hindu group

based in Mangalore led by Pramod Muthalik, a member of India's right-wing political apparatus ("Pub Attacked," 2009). The Pink Chaddi Campaign's founder Nisha Susan explains its inception as being prompted by Muthalik's threats following the attacks and the lack of subsequent government action:

The attack had been caught by a news crew, discussed, dissected, and was ready to be forgotten. It was considered natural that the attackers got out on bail and the girls were afraid to press charges. It was the aftermath which caught our attention. The SRS was stepping up its efforts. Its leader Pramod Muthalik announced that his group would ensure that no couples were seen together in Karnataka on Valentine's Day. Any couple who defied them would be married off immediately. One would imagine this would have been the cue for the arrival of the men in white coats. But no. All the spectators understood that SRS, a new and unwelcome franchise of India's favourite corporation, the moral police, was announcing a play for greater power. Karnataka's government watched to see what would happen next. Could Muthalik pull off what he boasted? (Susan, 2009, ¶ 2-3)

Supporters of the Pink Chaddi Campaign labelled themselves "The Consortium of Pub-going, Loose and Forward Women" and coordinated specific acts of protest through their campaign Facebook page (Pink Chaddi Campaign, 2009b). First, people who disagreed with Muthalik's Valentine's Day plans were invited to send him pink *chaddis*.⁹ Those who joined the campaign were also asked to e-mail or post photos of their chaddi packages to Muthalik on Facebook (to inspire others to act). Second, turning the iconic freedom struggle slogan "*jail bharo*" (court arrest) on its head, the group coordinated a "*Pub Bharo*" action on Valentine's Day, when campaign supporters were asked to go to a pub to raise a toast to Indian women and to send in photos or videos of the action to the campaign organizers who would then forward them to the SRS (Pink Chaddi Campaign, 2009b, Info). Third, the campaign identified its post-Valentine's day goal as pressuring elected officials to clarify that violence against women was not culturally endorsed. This included flooding the Home Minister of Karnataka's blog with messages from campaign supporters (Pink Chaddi Campaign, 2009b, Info ¶13), organizing

⁹ "Chaddi" is a colloquialism in India for underwear and can also be used as a slang term for right-wing hardliner.

“Take Back the Night” events and creating awareness-raising poster campaigns aimed at bystanders to the violent attacks (Pink Chaddi Campaign, 2009a). In addition, the group launched the “Indian Cultures Campaign” (original emphasis), which included the dissemination of virtual posters and videos of campaign supporters expressing what Indian culture means, in order to develop a counter-narrative to the Shri Ram Sena’s vision of appropriate cultural norms (Pink Chaddi Campaign, 2009a; Sanghani, 2009).

Since the campaign was first announced, it evoked unexpected interest across the world and early indications suggest that this novel form of protest captured the public imagination. For instance, Nisha Susan (2009) writes: “A Bollywood lyricist wrote a poem in honour of the rose-coloured chaddi. Amul, India’s best-known brand of butter put up a billboard featuring a pink chaddi. More than 2,000 chaddis arrived at the SRS office” (Susan, 2009, ¶ 5). The campaign was formally endorsed by the Indian Minister of State for Women and Child Development, (Dhawan, 2009) and received considerable media attention at the national and international level (Mishra, 2009).

Perhaps the campaign can claim victory given Muthalik’s subsequent retraction of his threat of Valentine’s Day violence or for the fact that he and almost 140 of his supporters were placed in preventive custody (Susan, 2009, ¶ 7; “Muthalik arrested,” 2009, ¶ 1). However, as crucial as Facebook was to the campaign’s mobilization efforts, it was also the group’s Achilles heel. Shortly after the campaign launched, its Facebook page was attacked by trolls¹⁰ and was eventually hacked and compromised. The hackers renamed the group and included racist slurs and death threats in its description (“Moral Police,” 2009; Pink Chaddi Campaign, 2009a,

¹⁰ This is an Internet slang term which refers to someone who posts controversial, inflammatory, irrelevant or off-topic messages in an online community, such as an online discussion forum, chat room or collaborative content community with the primary intent of provoking other users into an emotional or disciplinary response or to generally disrupt normal on-topic discussion (Herring et al., 2002).

Hackers). The attacks continued despite appeals to Facebook's customer support department for help. Eventually Facebook disabled the group administrator's account and access to the group ("Moral Police," 2009; Pink Chaddi Campaign, 2009a, Hackers). The core campaign network decided to avoid Facebook and now rely on another website as their primary means of communicating with supporters. Other effects of a socio-political backlash were also evident. For instance, the week following Valentines Day was marked by three reported random assaults on women who claimed they were picked out for their "western clothing" by groups of two to four men (Arwind, 2009, ¶ 1).

An alternate reading of mobilization and representation

As with the Avaaz 2007 Climate Campaign, the Pink Chaddi Campaign was able to mobilize international and domestic public opinion and obtain enough leverage to affect important political outcomes. Both campaigns also heavily relied on viral online communication methods to garner support for their specific objectives. When analysed against the indicators of mobilization and representation identified in the analytical framework, important similarities and differences emerge between the two campaign constituencies.

With regard to the indicators of material mobilization (money, organizational facilities, human resources and means of communication), the Pink Chaddi case shares a few commonalities with Avaaz such as the scale and speed of online mobilization. For instance, in terms of human resources, it took less than a fortnight for the campaign to amass over 30,000 supporters when it was formed in February 2009, and by April this number had grown close to 60,000 (Ramadurai, 2009, ¶ 3; Susan, 2009, ¶ 5). The mainstream media in India, as well as prominent global news channels provided significant coverage of the campaign (Crowder, 2009; Dhawan, 2009; Maddow, 2009; "Mutalik Calls," 2009; *New Delhi Television Limited (NDTV)*,

2009a; *NDTV*, 2009b; Susan, 2009; “Underwear Protest,” 2009; “Valentines Commandos,” 2009). In addition, almost 500 blogs were linked to the Pink Chaddi Campaign as calculated by the blog traffic website Technorati.com (2009). These findings speak to the campaign’s ability to mobilize important communication pathways. Moreover, stressing the global scope of their efforts, the campaign webpage urged “Go to a pub wherever you are. From Kabul to Chennai to Guwahati to Singapore to LA women have signed up” (Pink Chaddi Campaign, 2009b, Info, ¶ 14).

Commentary from the campaign’s global base of supporters, influential elites such as Bollywood entertainers, high-level politicians, and prominent businesses serve as sites to investigate aspects of non-material mobilization in the Pink Chaddi Campaign. Due to the contentious campaign tactics deployed by campaigners, the record on non-material aspects of mobilization (authority, legitimacy, moral commitments and solidarity) is mixed at best. For instance, the campaign was endorsed by Renuka Choudhary, Indian Minister of State for Women and Child Development (Dhawan, 2009). However, Choudhary’s comments about the “Talibanization” of India drew criticism from some quarters, including the mayor of Mangalore and right wing politicians (*NDTV*, 2009c). While Choudhary’s support may have helped to legitimize the campaign among certain segments of the domestic public in India such as liberal youth, the backlash that resulted from her comments served as a distraction and diversion from the campaign’s objectives. Similarly, while in a stunning show of solidarity, prominent food manufacturer Amul supported the campaign through a series of large billboards in Bangalore (Mishra, 2009), the campaign was negatively received by other shapers of domestic public opinion. For example Bollywood actress Suchitra Krishnamoorthi (2009) writes on her blog:

For Gods sake ...Look at Pramod Mutaliks (the Sri Ram Sene chief's) face... and lets ignore him for the bully and loser he is. He doesn't merit all this fuss. Does he deserve something as beautiful and precious as your underwear? As a woman dont you think you should be particular about who sees your panties? The libbers who burnt their bra's in the sixties realized too late that it was a garment meant to keep their boobs from falling to the ground. Those who kept their bras on still walk tall (sic) (Krishnamoorthi, 2009, ¶ 14-15).

Based on the conflicting evidence it is difficult to gauge the extent to which such actors endowed the campaign with attributes of non-material mobilization. However, the campaign was more successful in its mobilization of non-material aspects such as solidarity, from its group of Facebook supporters, as the following statements illustrate:

Benjamin Eugene Nelson: I am not female. I am an American. But when I heard about the bravery you women are showing here I have but one thing to ask. What can I do to help? (Pink Chaddi, 2009b, Just fans, ¶ 5)

Todd Collisson: Hello. Rogers TV's South Asian TV Focus program, airing in Brampton and Mississauga in Punjabi and Hindi, is looking for a representative from your organization to be interviewed for a 10 minute segment. We are interested in helping you promote your cause. (Pink Chaddi, 2009b, Just fans, ¶ 21)

Sunita Prasad: hi all - I'm a feminist social justice activist and artist in new york city (sic). your smart, funny interventions have really gotten the attention of the world, especially those of us in the Indian diaspora who feel extra compelled to get involved, show our solidarity, and contribute to the momentum and AMAZING good humor of this movement. please keep us updated and let us know where we can send our panties (or a piece of our mind) to next. Thanks! (Pink Chaddi, 2009b, Just fans, ¶ 13)

The evidence reviewed suggests that it would be fair to conclude that the Pink Chaddi Campaign demonstrates high levels of material mobilization and high levels of non-material mobilization among campaign supporters in particular. The Pink Chaddi Campaign's constituency can thus be viewed as highly mobilized.

The fact that the Pink Chaddi Campaign was sparked in relation to violence against a specific group of Manglorean women, coupled with the campaign's broad allusions to the right of Indian women to freedom from violence, suggests that Manglorean women and urban Indian

women are two possible subgroups within the constituency being represented by the Pink Chaddi Campaign. For example, the Facebook campaign page notes: “*Most women in this country* have enough curbs on their lives without a whole new franchise [the Sri Ram Sena] cashing in with their bully-boy tactics” (emphasis added, Pink Chaddi Campaign, 2009b, Info, ¶ 2). Similarly, Nisha Susan’s commentary in the Guardian suggests that the campaign’s advocacy was in some respects on behalf of the Mangloorean survivors, when she writes: “Last week, a Hindu girl in Mangalore, who had been harassed by right-wingers for talking to a Muslim boy, committed suicide. Even the supportive media flinch when we talk about such things. Whatever happened to the cute story of Indian girls sending pink panties to save Valentine’s Day from the clutches of evil?” (Susan, 2009, ¶ 7). Members of the campaign’s Facebook page form the third aspect of the Pink Chaddi’s constituency. While advocacy claims are usually not advanced on behalf of these supporters, they are frequently cited in descriptions of the campaign and on whose behalf the campaign claims to act (Mishra, 2009; Pink Chaddi Campaign, 2009b, Info ¶ 2; Susan, 2009, ¶ 5).

Applying Pitkin’s (1967) framework to this case provides a few insights into the processes of representation at play in the Pink Chaddi Campaign. Assessing the level of symbolic representation requires an examination of the degree of acceptance that the representative has among the represented (Dovi, 2006). Due to data limitations, a systematic analysis of the views of the Mangloorean survivors’ perspective on the extent to which the campaign was symbolically representative was not possible in this instance. With respect to urban Indian women more broadly, and campaign members in particular, blog analysis and review of comments on the campaign website reveals that support for the message conveyed by the campaign and support for the methods used to convey this message were not always complementary (Mishra, 2009).

These findings suggest lower levels of symbolic representation within the campaign's constituency.

In addition, two aspects suggest that the Pink Chaddi Campaign appears to have relatively low levels of descriptive representation (the extent to which a representative resembles those being represented). First, it is not apparent that any of the Mangloorean survivors publicly endorsed the campaign or joined the Facebook group (Pink Chaddi Campaign, 2009b). Second, it is important to note that while the campaign rhetoric claimed to advocate for the rights of Indian women more broadly,¹¹ and the Mangloorean women in particular, it simultaneously encouraged broad based support from outside these specific groups (for example: men, the Indian diaspora, and non-Indian supporters) as its diverse Facebook membership suggests (Pink Chaddi Campaign, 2009b, Just fans). In this respect, although the campaign's global support was a positive indication of mobilization, the gender, geographic location and lived experiences of these supporters diminish the Pink Chaddi's ability to claim that it is descriptively representative of its mobilized constituency.

The eventual escalation of violent attacks on women in Bangalore (the capital city of the state of Karnataka, where Mangalore is located) calls into question whether the Pink Chaddi Campaign's controversial tactics were ultimately in the interests of urban Indian women (Arwind, 2009; Pink Chaddi Campaign, 2009a). Likewise, little progress has been achieved in holding the perpetrators of the Mangalore attacks to account in a court of law (NDTVc, 2009; Susan, 2009, ¶ 2). These findings indicate that on the issue of substantive representation (the

¹¹ The campaign's petition to key political leaders illustrates this type of advocacy claim. For example, with reference to the Bangalore and Mangalore attacks, the petition asserts "this is not just a "women's issue," when one woman is attacked, we are all diminished; we all have our rights as citizens eroded along with her. We, the people, ask you for justice and for protection. We hope and trust that you will not fail us" (Pink Chaddi Campaign, 2009).

extent to which a representative serves “the best interests” of their constituents) too, the Pink Chaddi Campaign is less successful.

In summary, both cases of transnational advocacy are similar in that they have used online methods of mobilization as means to claim legitimacy as representatives of particular constituencies. Both cases, while displaying relatively high degrees of mobilization however, differ in their representativeness of the constituency on behalf of whom advocacy efforts are claimed. The Avaaz case conforms to prevailing assumptions in the literature wherein the use of the Internet as part of transnational advocacy may be conducive to a progressive relationship between mobilization and representation, as characterized by constituency type B in Figure 1. This case is contrasted with the Pink Chaddi Campaign, where relatively high levels of mobilization did not coincide with high levels of representation, yielding constituency type A in Figure 1. In demonstrating this pattern, the paper calls into question fundamental assumptions guiding the prevailing logic of expectations regarding the relationship of mobilization and representation within TACs. The preceding analysis explicitly responds to the lack of de-territorialized conceptions of campaign constituencies and resolves the unsatisfactory engagement with contested concepts within TACs, by drawing on resource mobilization theory and Pitkin’s models of representation.

Aside from posing this challenge to the prevailing assumptions within the literature, why should mapping TAC constituencies be viewed as a useful research exercise within the discipline of political science? In response to this question, I suggest that the findings and typology of TAC constituencies presented here may be seen as a contribution to the study of transnational politics on methodological grounds. In particular, the paper can be seen as an example of the integrated research approach advocated by Orenstein and Schmitz (2006). These authors argue that research

using comparative methods can push forward the agenda of the study of transnationalism, particularly in studies of the “domestic politics” of transnational organizations themselves. They note “just as comparative politics scholars have unpacked the black box of the state, they also have an edge in doing the same for international governmental and non-governmental organizations” (Orenstein & Schmitz, 2006, 497). Moreover, such examinations of TACs are warranted because “while states remain a powerful source of collective agency, intergovernmental and transnational non-governmental organizations add significant variance to the question of who governs and what rules of governance prevail” (Orenstein & Schmitz, 2006, 498).

Conclusion

The cases analysed in this paper point to what Stolle and Hooghe (2005) identify as a changing form of civic participation. They suggest that loose, flexible networks are better adapted to the needs of information driven societies that rely on electronic communication and spontaneous, irregular, easy-exit, emotion-driven forms of protest and mobilization (Stolle & Hooghe, 2005, 160). At the outset, this paper questioned what such processes of mobilization may mean for broader processes of transnational democratization. Moreover, it asked how do indicators of online mobilization function as legitimating mechanisms for claims of representation made by TACs?

With reference to these questions, this paper advanced two specific arguments. First, using broader debates on digital democracy and adopting online advocacy campaigns as a unit of analysis, I argued that transnational constituencies are under-theorized in the literature on TACs. I also suggested that one mode of operationalizing these constituencies is to view them as entities shaped by dual processes of political mobilization and representation within TACs. However, a review of the relevant literature revealed that although mobilization and representation are frequently employed as analytical categories, they are often vaguely defined and vehemently contested.

The above observation leads to the second key argument advanced in the paper, namely that the lack of conceptual clarity within the prevailing scholarship on online TACs perpetuates a flawed logic that conflates the *quality* of representation with the *quantity* of mobilization (i.e. a large constituency is assumed to be representative) and obscures the possibility that mobilization and representation may not always be positively correlated. Based on these findings, the paper then presented a potential typology of constituents within online advocacy campaigns as means

to address under-theorization of this issue in the literature, as was previously noted. This typology was demonstrated by examining two cases of online transnational advocacy campaigns which highlight the possibility for high levels of mobilization to co-exist with both high and low levels of representation.

TACs are still a relatively new subject of study, but there are many creative and engaging opportunities to broaden the scope of the existing research agenda. The early phase of the literature on TACs sought to demonstrate the influence of these forms of activism, and in a way legitimated them as a political force in the transnational realm (Price, 1998; Keck & Sikkink, 1998). The next decade or so focussed on the interaction between these networks and state actors by exploring how these interactions impacted the political outcomes achieved by TACs (for example Sundstrom, 2006). Based on these impressive foundations it is time to open up TACs to internal scrutiny rather than viewing them as a black box, as rightly noted by Orenstein and Schmitz (2009). This effort could productively bridge scholarship on international relations and comparative politics and borrow from studies on civil society both at the domestic and global levels. As has been argued in this paper, this set of literature could further benefit from the development and of analytical tools and frameworks that are particularly tuned to *transnational* political processes, and which resist homogenized narratives of agency.

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