Bridging the Disciplinary Gap: An Analysis of Legitimacy and Legitimation Practices Among Transnational Private Organizations

Abstract

Private transnational organizations have grown in number and in influence. However, sociologists and political scientists often study them separately, either as transnational social movement organizations (TSMOs) or the larger category of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). TSMOs are defined in terms of their aspiration to fight against dominant political order. Does the difference between TSMOs and INGOs justify the disciplinary gap? In this manuscript, I call for bridging the gap by exploring how organizational legitimacy is constructed among TSMOs. Drawing on the insights of INGO networks, I investigate factors associated with the legitimacy of TSMOs. Empirically, I find that legitimation benefits already prominent organizations than those that are not. Networking thus helps reproduce the hierarchy among the TSMOs, challenging the earlier notion that TSMOs are horizontally networked. However, I also find that Southern TSMOs are more likely to gain legitimacy than Northern TSMOs once they are visible to their peers. The analysis of TSMOs thus cautions our bias to study Northern INGOs and generalize the findings to INGO population. Overall, my findings reveal that the incentives and strategies that INGO research has documented exist among TSMOs despite their counter-hegemonic ambitions.

Private, non-profit transnational organizations are regularly engaged in the pursuit of social change, working on human rights, eco-systems, gender equity, and more. The work of such transnational organizations has been noted in seminal studies of transnational social movements (Boli & Thomas, 1999; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Tarrow, 2005). The typical picture of these groups is of small, principled actors seeking to hold the powerful to account (Smith & Wiest, 2012). Existing research documents that some private organizations consistently wield vast authority, commanding the attention of global media outlets, policymakers, corporations, and their peers (Bob, 2005; Carpenter, 2014; Dauvergne & LeBaron, 2014; Hadden, 2015; Schofer & Longhofer, 2011; Seabrooke & Henriksen, 2017; Stroup & Wong, 2017).

Both sociologists and political scientists have extensively analyzed these organizations but used different terms to describe them, with the former preferring the term "transnational social movement organization" (TSMO) and the latter employing "international non-governmental organization" (INGO). Conceptually speaking, TSMOs are a subset of INGOs, defined as INGOs "explicitly involved in work to change the dominant political and social order" (Smith & Wiest, 2012: 46). As INGOs include organizations that resist anti-systemic movements, on the surface TSMOs and INGOs fall into different conceptual categories of social groups. However, little empirical investigation has been done to demonstrate the differences. Is the difference between TSMOs and INGOs so large that they must be studied separately between two different disciplines?

The question is not just about the terminology of transnational organizations. The difference in the terminology also signifies different ways research is conducted among TSMO and INGO scholars. While TSMO researchers often explore the processes of transnational social movements in which TSMOs play a central role (Caniglia, 2001; Smith, 2001, 2002; Smith, Chatfield, & Pagnucco, 1997; Smith, Gemici, Plummer, & Hughes, 2018; Smith, Plummer, & Hughes, 2017), research on the differences in organizational legitimacy has been relatively scarce. By contrast, INGO scholars have focused on the differences in organizational legitimacy, demonstrating differential effects that INGOs have on international norms and regulations (Bob, 2005; Carpenter, 2014; Murdie, 2013; Stroup & Wong, 2017). The analysis of organizational legitimacy is important because neither TSMOs nor INGOs have coercive power to affect social changes. Instead, they must rely on legitimacy—a *right* to act—conferred by their audiences. Although the analysis of social movements offers a useful insight into organizational strategies

and networks, the analysis of organizational legitimacy is essential in understanding the effect of transnational organizations on the broader political and social phenomena.

Taken together, I establish two main points in this manuscript. The first is to emphasize the need to bring the literatures on INGOs and TSMOs closer together, as many of us use these literatures interchangeably in our work on civil society, and yet theoretical debates create veritable gulfs between the two. To do this, I leverage a newly updated TSMO dataset to evaluate whether explanations for INGO legitimacy can also be used to account for TSMO legitimacy.[1] In other words, I examine whether the anti-systemic goals of TSMOs challenge the current understanding of INGOs. The second point is to explore the factors that bolster TSMOs' organizational legitimacy. In recent years, the legitimacy of civil society as a whole has been challenged, as they set up ambitious goals for themselves (Deloffre & Schmitz, 2019). However, we know little about how individual organizations build or defend their legitimacy due to observation bias. That is, while we know how some organizations became prominent INGOs (Stroup & Wong, 2013), we cannot easily observe those that failed to become prominent. The TSMO dataset allows us to observe low-profile organizations that would otherwise be missed in research on organizational legitimacy.

Empirically, I focus on the legitimacy of TSMOs among their peers, rather than other types of actors. While the legitimacy of TSMOs can be built on a variety of sources (Smith et al., 2017), the focus on peer evaluations and organizational attempts to "fit in" offers two analytic advantages. First, the focus on peer-based legitimacy allows us to explore Suchman's (1995) classic distinction between strategic versus institutional legitimacy. Are TSMOs capable of shaping their own legitimacy through strategic choices, or is it shaped by structural pressure exerted by shared expectations about organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983)? The TSMO dataset provides a unique opportunity to explore the tension between agential actions and structural pressures.

Second, peer-based legitimacy can be approximated by how TSMOs *self-report* their networking behavior in publicly accessible forums.[2] The TSMO dataset analyzed here is based on self-reporting in the *Yearbook of International Organizations*, an authoritative source of transnational organization research. As there are little validation mechanisms in the *Yearbook*, however, what counts a connection to another TSMOs depends mostly on each organization's claim. The nature of self-reporting could harm the validity in analyzing actual cooperation and

collaboration among TSMOs, but it works well for the purpose of measuring organizational legitimacy. Just like connections to high status firms are often used as a quality signaling in market settings (Kilduff & Krackhardt, 1994; Podolny, 1993), I posit that TSMOs strategically claim their connections to other legitimate TSMOs. From this vantage point, outgoing ties can be interpreted as efforts to be associated with legitimate organizations, which I refer to as legitimation, whereas incoming ties indicate the level of organizational legitimacy.

The results of my analysis below show that legitimation through networking (i.e. claiming a connection to another organization) is relatively rare but effective among TSMOs. My empirical evidence suggests that networking is a deliberate attempt to leverage connectivity for organizational legitimacy rather than driven by functional needs. However, I also find that the effect of networking on organizational legitimacy is larger for prominent TSMOs than low-profile ones, suggesting that the existing hierarchy among TSMOs is persistent. These findings support the value of structural aspects shaping TSMO behaviors. In other words, although networks have been central to the understanding of civil society actions, my findings offer a corrective to say that the shared expectations suppress the ability of individual organizations to build their own legitimacy through networking. These findings are consistent with the established canon explaining INGO behaviors (Lake & Wong, 2009; Murdie, 2013), underscoring the benefit of studying INGOs and TSMOs together.

In the sections below, I explore the concept of organizational legitimacy through the lens of network theory and discuss the differences between INGOs and TSMOs. Second, I describe the patterns of legitimation attempts among TSMOs. I then empirically evaluate arguments about organizational legitimacy through quantitative analysis. I demonstrate that legitimacy is primarily associated with legitimation attempts. However, legitimation advantages already prominent TSMOs rather than those that are not, helping the reproduction of hierarchy among the TSMO community. The final section discusses the implications of my findings.

Understanding Legitimacy in Transnational Private Organizations

Legitimacy is an important concept to the study of non-state actors. I define legitimacy as the belief that an actor is *right* to act in the eyes of audiences. It does not mean that legitimate actors *always* induce behavioral compliance by their audiences (Lake, 2009), but their claims will be heard and taken seriously. If the Brookings Institution offers a view on American politics,

for example, other think tanks may contrast their positions with Brookings' to legitimate them as challengers. As Hudson (2001: 348) points out, legitimacy is "a socially-constructed quality that can be ascribed to an NGO by stakeholders coming from different perspectives." As such, legitimacy is inherently relational, must be conferred by others, and cannot be claimed singlehandedly.

Existing research has adopted network perspectives to understand the legitimacy of INGOs and TSMOs. I highlight four findings from network theories to motivate my subsequent use of network ties in investigating TSMO legitimacy. First, the choice of strategies within networks can shape structural properties, such as international norms, which in turn affect the legitimacy of agents. For example, Goddard (2006) argues that entrepreneurial agents in international networks are able to effect changes in normative structures. Others have explored how organizational strategies, in the context of networks, affect advocacy output (Luxon & Wong, 2017) or their ability to affect international norms (Wong, 2012). Although INGOs and TSMOs are constrained by international structures, network theory allows us to examine if and how organizations can effect changes in broader social structures.

Second, networks between INGOs and other types of actors can be seen as co-constitutive of legitimacy. For instance, given substantial attention to the "democratic deficit" in global governance, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are increasingly "opening up" to INGO participation (Bernauer, Böhmelt, & Koubi, 2013; Tallberg, Sommerer, & Squatrito, 2013). INGOs generate accountability for IGOs, and in turn, participating INGOs increase their voice in global governance. Research has documented that some TSMOs also leverage their networks to increase their legitimacy. Smith (2001) argues that appeals to international law provided legitimacy to the TSMOs protesting the WTO in Seattle. Similarly, the work of environmental TSMOs was legitimated by national elites and marginalized states (Caniglia, 2001; Smith, 2014).

Third, networks among INGOs are frequently analyzed as attempts to build legitimacy. In the analysis of what she terms free-riding behavior, Murdie (2014b) argues that outgoing ties by human rights INGOs to other INGOs are attempts to increase their legitimacy. Carpenter (2011) also argues that agenda setting by INGOs at the center of advocacy networks create "bandwagoning effect" where smaller NGOs join the coalition and bolster their legitimacy by joining the advocacy winners.

Finally, the effect of networks on legitimacy is well-established in sociology, although the focus tended to be domestic organizations. Kamens (1977) shows how universities and colleges create certain discourse about education that legitimates particular organizational structures. Organizations also leverage their connections to influential companies and local communities (Galaskiewicz, 1979). Similar to IGO-INGO relations, corporations and charitable organizations have mutually co-constitutive legitimacy (Galaskiewicz, Wasserman, Rauschenbach, Bielefeld, & Mullaney, 1985; Miles & Cameron, 1982). Others show how the structure of networks affected the legitimacy of small- to medium-sized corporations in the United States (Human & Provan, 2000). In short, the existing network literature on INGOs and organizational sociology has explored how ties among actors, while useful for other purposes, are mechanisms for building and defending legitimacy.

Bringing together these findings of network theories, I treat the reporting of outgoing ties as an indicator of the efforts by TSMOs to increase their legitimacy. Regardless of underlying motivation, associating oneself to a legitimate organization has benefits. Take Amnesty International, for example. Some TSMOs might be particularly interested in Amnesty's global reach and stated commitment to representation of diverse views on human rights. Other TSMOs might appreciate Amnesty's effectiveness in securing attention from global media outlets (Powers, 2018). Whatever the reason may be, TSMOs like Amnesty are likely to end up with having more incoming ties than outgoing ties because peers want to leverage connections with legitimate organizations. This allows us to operationalize organizational legitimacy with network indicators in the subsequent analysis.

Understanding Transnational Social Movement Organizations

To help bridge the insights of studies on INGOs and TSMOs, I explore claims about INGO legitimacy on TSMOs. The concept of TSMOs was introduced more than two decades ago by Jackie Smith and her colleagues (Smith et al., 1997) and led to the construction and revision of a dataset. The TSMO dataset was assembled from the historical records of *Yearbook of International Organizations*. The *Yearbook* is published every year and catalogues numerous international organizations, including IGOs and private national and international organizations. For private organizations to be included, they must hold three or more offices internationally or conduct internationally-oriented activities.

In building the initial and revised TSMO dataset, Smith and her colleagues reviewed the *Yearbook* for organizations committed to social change. Smith and Wiest (2012: 46) define TSMOs in terms of their goals and objectives; an INGO is a TSMO if it is "explicitly involved in work to change the dominant political and social order." The logic of inclusion by itself does not imply the ideological orientations of TSMOs. However, Smith and Wiest (2012) recognize that they are mostly progressive and even anti-systemic, since right-wing, nationalist groups tend to avoid publicizing their work. Organizations whose primary focus is research, religion, service provision, or education are also excluded (Smith & Wiest, 2012: 70). TSMOs are thus a subset of the national and international NGO population with an anti-systemic focus.

By contrast, INGOs are defined very broadly or have multiple competing definitions (Vakil, 1997). Just like the study of TSMOs, existing research uses the *Yearbook* extensively to analyze INGO behaviors (Hafner-Burton & Tsutsui, 2005; Murdie, 2013, 2014a). Although INGO scholars typically analyze a subset of INGOs on the *Yearbook*, the subset is not chosen by organizations' anti-systemic ambitions. They are chosen simply by issue areas, such as human rights and development, to avoid definitional problems. As a result, INGOs tend to mean a broader population of private organizations that include TSMOs.

There are several reasons to think that patterns of legitimacy are different among TSMOs, relative to INGOs in general. First, as many TSMOs explicitly commit to anti-systemic social change, they should be less interested in the response of the members of that system (i.e. states and corporations) than INGOs that frequently partner with states and corporations for service provision and education. These pro-system actors try to undermine rather than help transnational social movements (Smith et al., 2017). Accordingly, TSMOs might be more interested in cultivating legitimacy by networking with their peers and engaging with the general public. In addition, because the sizeable ambitions of social change organizations, robust networks might be functionally necessary to advance their goals. Perhaps encapsulating these dynamics, Smith et al. (2018) claim that today's counter-hegemonic movements are less hierarchical and more networked than traditional left-leaning groups or elite-oriented INGOs. In short, the range of differences in legitimacy within the TSMO community may be rather small.

On the other hand, the TSMO community is not flat. TSMO scholars also note that unity within counter-hegemonic movements is limited by divisions over framing and strategies (Kwon, Reese, & Anantram, 2008; Siméant, 2013). There is also substantial research documenting

inequality within the TSMO community (Hughes, Paxton, Quinsaat, & Reith, 2018; Smith & Wiest, 2005). Whether those divisions emerge because of tactical differences or because of TSMOs' shared expectations about legitimacy is an important empirical question. The primary questions are thus whether observable differences in legitimacy exist among TSMOs and whether the differences can be explained by existing INGO studies.

Patterns of Legitimacy Among TSMOs

Legitimacy and legitimation are two related concepts that should be disentangled in order to understand how we interpret networking behavior. In short, legitimacy is something organizations have because of deference conferred by audiences, for any number of reasons, whereas legitimation is a process that seeks to attain legitimacy for a particular actor. It is important to separate the two because legitimacy is an outcome of actions, whereas legitimation is a process of action.

Legitimacy is a social fact, and the measures for assessing materialist indicators of power or capacity do not translate easily to measuring whether and why one actor thinks another actor is *right* to act. However, there are a few ways to capture the deference by one actor to another, leveraging data based on self-reporting (e.g. Mitchell & Stroup, 2017). More concretely, Murdie and Davis (2012) drew upon the *Yearbook* data on INGOs to create a matrix of network ties. Using this matrix, Stroup and Wong (2017) provide a ranking of INGOs in terms of authority based on the number of incoming ties. I build upon these efforts to use incoming ties as an indicator of organizational legitimacy.

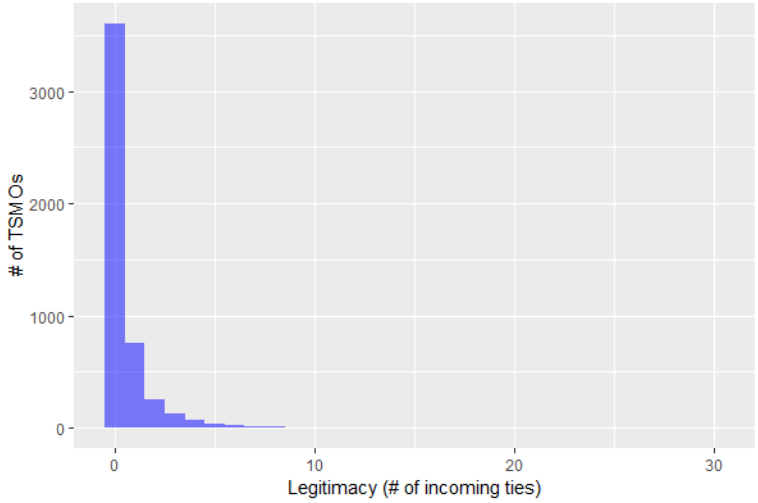
Who Is Legitimate?

In this section, I describe different levels of legitimacy of TSMOs using the latest TSMO dataset. The dataset by Smith et al. (2018) reports a variety of organizational attributes as well as ties among TSMOs in 1993, 2003, and 2013.[3] These ties capture all sorts of "horizontal," collaborative connections between TSMOs. In other words, they do not indicate formal hierarchies, such as founder-founded relationship or official membership to an umbrella organization.[4] However, as some TSMOs receive more ties than others, these ties create *de facto* hierarchy in terms of organizational legitimacy.

Importantly, these connections are self-reported. Logically speaking, if A reports a tie to B, then B should also collaborate with A, but such collaboration does not necessarily mean that B *reports* a tie with A. TSMOs do not have to validate their ties when reporting to the *Yearbook*, so they may aspirationally name other organizations as a way to legitimate themselves before their peers. Conversely, even if a TSMO works with other organizations, it may not mention some unimportant ones. From this vantage point, the number of *incoming* ties can be understood as an indicator of organizational legitimacy. The more legitimate a TSMO, the more likely it is to have incoming ties from other organizations seeking to benefit from association with a legitimate actor. Conversely, I use *outgoing* ties to approximate the intensity of their legitimation efforts.

Network data alone are insufficient for this project, however. As the observation of positive cases alone would introduce selection bias (Geddes, 1990), I need to observe TSMOs that engaged in networking *and* ones that did not. My analysis thus includes the latter group, TSMO isolates.

Figure 1: Histogram for legitimacy of TSMOs

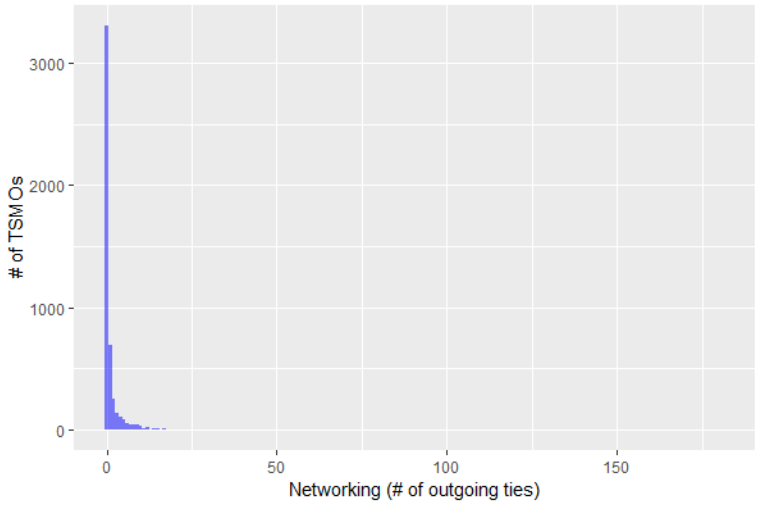


Descriptively, the TSMOs that are legitimate or involved in legitimation are relatively uncommon. We can see this from both incoming ties and outgoing ties (see Table A1 for summary statistics). As Figure 1 shows, the majority of the TSMOs receive no tie (73.1%). This pattern by itself challenges the widespread portrayal of TSMOs as a highly networked community (Carroll, 2007; Juris, 2008; Wolfson & Funke, 2017). More importantly, it suggests that organizational legitimacy is rare, or very few TSMOs are legitimate enough to induce others

to claiming association. Yet, the finding is consistent with existing INGO research. For example, Stroup and Wong (2017) find that only a handful of INGOs have authority before multiple audiences and the vast majority of them have none.

In terms of legitimation, the majority of the TSMOs also do not send ties (67.1%), as shown in Figure 2. Some TSMOs have extreme values due to the self-reporting nature of the *Yearbook*,[5] suggesting that the strategy of networking is not uniformly distributed among TSMOs. The low number of outgoing ties suggests that TSMOs do not just "name drop." It represents costly networking, in which TSMOs strategically send ties to other INGOs rather than sending them automatically by working in the same issue area.

Figure 2: Histogram for networking effort of TSMOs



The scarcity of observed networking behavior among TSMOs does not necessarily mean that they lack an interest in developing and defending their legitimacy. As a point of comparison to INGOs, I use Stroup and Wong (2017)'s list of top fourteen INGOs in terms of the amount of attention paid by a variety of audiences, such as states, corporations, and peer INGOs. Among the fourteen INGOs, eleven are identified as TSMOs.[6] As Table 1 reports, not all leading INGOs are highly legitimate in the TSMO community, which suggests that TSMOs might be unique in terms of their ideas about what a legitimate organization should look like (See also Table A2 for 1993 and 2003 data and Figure A1 for network diagram). As discussed above, Smith and Wiest (2012) define TSMOs in terms of their counter-hegemonic goals and objectives, a position that is

not always welcomed by other actors, especially states and corporations. Below, I take a closer look to investigate which factors explain the legitimacy of TSMOs.

Table 1: Legitimacy ranking of TSMOs from 2013 data

Rank	TSMO	# of Outgoing Ties	# of Incoming Ties
1	GLOBAL CALL FOR ACTION AGAINST POVERTY	85	27
2	AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL	1	25
3	INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES	6	21
4	INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT	4	18
5	OXFAM	10	16
6	WORLDWIDE FUND FOR NATURE (WWF)	0	15
7	UNIVERSAL ESPERANTO ASSOCIATION	31	14
8	FRIENDS OF THE EARTH INTERNATIONAL	5	11
9	ALLIANCE FOR LOBBYING TRANSPARENCY AND ETHICS REGULATION (ALTER-EU)	23	10
10	CARE INTERNATIONAL	0	10
11	ACTIONAID	18	9
12	GREENPEACE INTERNATIONAL	4	9
13	INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS	0	9
14	UNREPRESENTED NATIONS AND PEOPLES' ORGANIZATION	36	8
15	HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH	13	8
16	ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT ACTION IN THE THIRD WORLD	3	8
17	WORLD SOCIAL FORUM	0	7
18	HAGUE APPEAL FOR PEACE	59	6
19	INTERNATIONAL ALERT	22	6
20	INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE AGAINST HUNGER (IAAH)	12	6
	Mean	1.33	0.55
	Sum	2,684	1,118
	SD	5.36	1.59
	N = 2,022		

What Explains Legitimacy?

If some TSMOs stake their legitimacy on being counter-hegemonic actors, what are the organizational attributes that satisfy such expectations? Here, I derive several hypotheses from the literature on INGOs. First, networking behavior, such as making a claim to work with other INGOs, can be used as an attempt to increase legitimacy. To be sure, legitimacy also comes from other places. For example, differences in INGO legitimacy can be observed from the frequency by which media outlets quote INGOs: legitimate INGOs are more often cited to boost the credibility of news stories (Thrall, Stecula, & Sweet, 2014). Bob (2005) also argues insurgent groups seek to obtain the endorsement of highly legitimate INGOs. However, these dynamics cannot be readily observed if TSMOs in question do not receive any attention, *even if* they are engaged in legitimation practices. I therefore posit that one important source is the links that

TSMOs take to peers (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). I expect that the more they send ties, the more others will respond in kind, thereby creating legitimacy (through incoming ties) for themselves.

H1: The more ties a TSMO will send, the more incoming ties it will receive from its peers.

Another plausible explanation is that affiliation with IGOs increases TSMO legitimacy by sending credible signals. Murdie (2014a) finds that INGOs with IGO consultative status are more likely to be effective in international development, as consultative status works as a costly signal to local and international donors. It is costly because the requirements for such consultative status are heavy, and an INGO must have the capacity to go through the long process of obtaining consultative status. Moreover, consultative status gives INGOs standing before states in IGOs and helps them link to other INGOs. Murdie (2013) finds that human rights NGOs with IGO consultative status are more likely to be connected with one another. However, as social movements frequently target IGOs as neoliberal institutions (Ayres, 2004), consultative status may tarnish TSMO legitimacy by signaling pro-system positions. INGO signaling behavior is measured by the number of IGO affiliations.

H2: A TSMO will receive more ties as the number of IGO affiliations increase.

The divide between the global North and South is a critical element that counter-hegemonic movements seek to address (Evans, 2012; Smith et al., 2018; Smith & Wiest, 2012). And yet, the existing literature suggests that the connection with Northern INGOs is essential for Southern INGOs to achieve their goals, mainly because Northern INGOs enjoy larger social and economic resources necessary to influence states and IGOs (Bob, 2005; Carpenter, 2007; Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Northern TSMOs may therefore induce networking behavior of others. Here, TSMOs are treated as Northern INGOs if they have primary or secondary headquarters in the global North.

H3: *TSMOs located in the global North will receive more incoming ties than those located in the global South.*

Finally, organizational age may be associated with TSMO legitimacy, as TSMOs may be able to establish their brand associated with their issue areas of operation over time. Household names, such as Amnesty International and Oxfam, were indeed established more than half a century ago. Operating for a long time also signals an ability to survive in a changing environment. Organizational age is computed as the data year (1993, 2003, or 2013) minus the year of TSMO founding.[7]

H4: On average, older TSMOs will receive more incoming ties than younger TSMOs.

Estimation methods

To test the hypothesized relationships, I control for other factors that might confound TSMO legitimacy. First, the size of a TSMO can shape prominence and thus organizational legitimacy. Typically, size is seen as budget, but the dataset does not report the budget of TSMOs. Instead, I use the number of countries where a TSMO operates as the measure for organizational scale, with the assumption that operating in more countries indicates greater fiscal capacity. Second, TSMOs working in multiple issue areas may have greater legitimacy because they can bridge different clusters of organizations (Granovetter, 1977; Murdie & Davis, 2012). I therefore control for whether or not a TSMO operates in multiple issue areas.

Even though the dataset is panel-structured, the variation among the indicators within each TSMO is over time quite low. For example, once a TSMO is established in the global South, it is uncommon to move its headquarters to the global North. Therefore, rather than including time fixed effects or a lagged dependent variables, I resorted to a pooled regression with organizational fixed effects. Organizational fixed effects account for the unobservable, idiosyncratic effects on organizational legitimacy that are specific to each TSMO (Vaisey & Miles, 2017).

It is important to note that the dependent variable is not tie activation itself, but the number of incoming ties. In network terms, it is called indegree centrality. While tie activation is estimated with exponential random graph models (ERGMs) (Cranmer & Desmarais, 2011), indegree centrality is often estimated by regression analysis with some caveats (Faris & Felmlee, 2011; Lyle & Smith, 2014). In my case, the dependent variable is a count variable with many zero observations (73.1%). To account for overdispersion and zero-inflation, I adopted a zero-

inflated negative binomial (ZINB) model. ZINB regression assumes that observed zeros are generated by two different, unobservable processes: the zero-inflation stage estimates the latent group membership of the sample that could have *never* received a tie (*structural zeros*), while the conditional stage estimates the number of ties for the rest of the sample, some of which happened to receive no tie (*incidental zeros*) (Hendrix & Wong, 2013; Long, 1997). In my interpretation, structural zeros may be generated by *visibility*. In other words, if a TSMO is not visible to its peers, it could never be mentioned. By contrast, incidental zeros may result from the lack of organizational attributes necessary to TSMO legitimacy, even if the organization is known by others. As a robustness check, I also conducted ERGMs to explicit account for network dependency (see Tables A3 and A4), but the results are consistent with my findings below.

Determinants of legitimacy

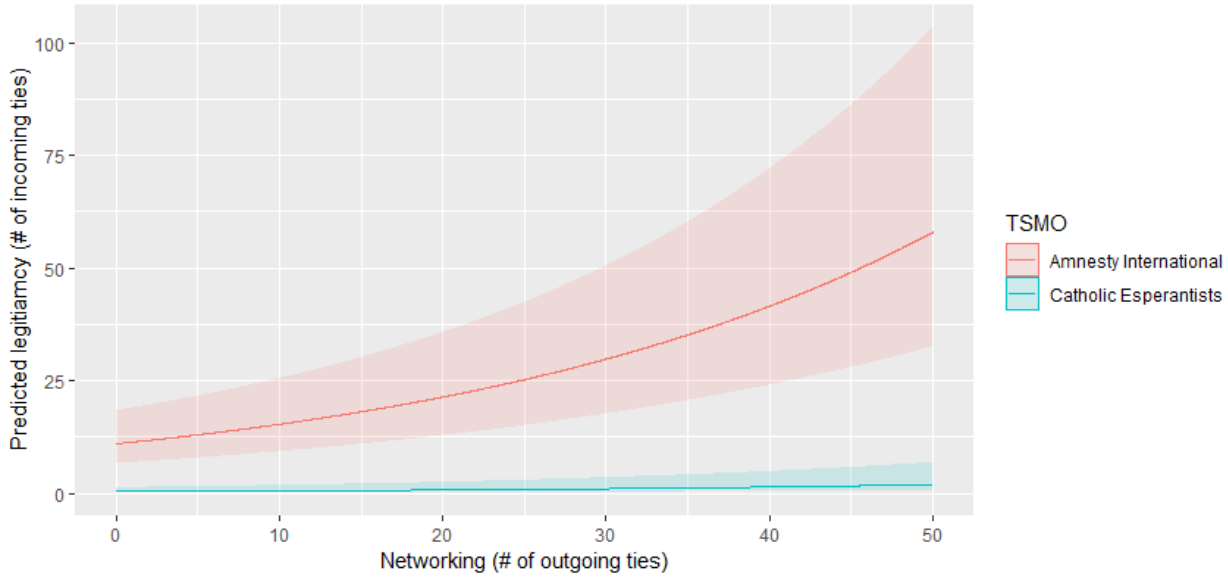
Table 2 reports the results of regression analysis. Observations with missing data were removed, which gives us a total of 3,447 observations. For robustness checks, Model 2 (ZINB without random intercepts), Model 3 (negative binomial model: NB), and Model 4 (zero-inflated Poisson model: ZI Poisson) are also reported. Note that the zero-inflation stage estimates the membership for the *structural-zero* group, so negative coefficients mean that such variables are, in short, positively associated with visibility of a TSMO among peers.

Table 2: Results of regression analyses on the legitimacy of TSMO

Models:	**ZINB**	**ZINB**	**NB**	**ZI Poisson**
Conditional stage (Estimating # of incoming ties)				
Random Intercepts	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Networking	0.033***	0.060***	0.052***	0.022***
	(0.003)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.002)
IGO Membership	0.073***	0.090***	0.078***	0.048***
	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.008)
HQ North	−0.251**	−0.237**	−0.219*	−0.262**
	(0.090)	(0.079)	(0.086)	(0.087)
Age	−0.004*	−0.002	0.005**	−0.003
	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Country Count	0.006***	0.005***	0.007***	0.007***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Multiple Issue Areas	0.125	0.203	0.125*	0.134
	(0.087)	(0.074)	(0.087)	(0.085)
(Intercept)	−0.582***	−0.344***	−1.531***	−0.499***
	(0.108)	(0.093)	(0.093)	(0.104)
Zero-inflation stage (estimating structural-zero membership)				
Networking	−2.794***	−2.410***		−2.351***
	(0.331)	(0.430)		(0.373)
IGO Membership	−0.023	−0.024		−0.061
	(0.048)	(0.043)		(0.039)
HQ North	−0.184	−0.155		−0.178
	(0.242)	(0.226)		(0.212)
Age	−0.075***	−0.060***		−0.048***
	(0.018)	(0.017)		(0.011)
Country Count	−0.010*	−0.010*		−0.006
	(0.004)	(0.004)		(0.003)
Multiple Issue Areas	−0.012	−0.145		−0.042
	(0.264)	(0.248)		(0.226)
(Intercept)	2.221***	1.990***		1.931***
	(0.331)	(0.317)		(0.252)
N	3,447	3,447	3,447	3,447
Akaike Inf. Crit.	6,902.6	7,036.6	7,162.5	6,969.6
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	7,000.9	7,128.8	7,217.8	7,061.8

Across all models, I find support for H1 that networking behavior is positively associated with TSMO legitimacy. In the zero-inflation stage, outgoing ties are negatively associated with the structural-zero membership. This means that by sending a tie to other INGOs, not only do TSMOs increase organizational legitimacy among peers but also increase their visibility among the broader TSMO community. However, the real effect of networking might be extremely limited for smaller TSMOs. Figure 3 illustrates the marginal effect of networking behavior for two TSMOs—Amnesty International and International Union of Catholic Esperantists (IUCE)—while everything else is held at the mean for each TSMO. The marginal effects differ between these organizations because they are dependent on the values of other independent variables, but they are illustrative of the fact that already legitimate TSMOs can easily legitimate themselves with networking, while low-profile ones (like IUCE) have a much more difficult time. Collectively, this effect would help reproduce hierarchy among TSMOs despite the claims that TSMOs are often horizontally organized (Smith, 2002; Smith et al., 2018).

Figure 3: Predicted legitimacy of Amnesty International and Catholic Esperantists



I also find support for H2 that IGO consultative status increases TSMO legitimacy. The effect of each additional affiliation with an IGO is substantially larger than that of networking in the conditional stage. In the zero-inflation stage, the effect is much smaller than networking and not statistically significant. That is, no evidence supports that affiliation with IGOs by itself can

increase the visibility of a TSMO. It is only when the TSMO is known among other TSMOs that IGO affiliation can increase organizational legitimacy. This may be because, while IGOs serve as a venue in which TSMOs can claim credit over outcome (Betsill & Corell, 2008), civil society participation in IGO meetings may not be visible to outsider TSMOs. The results also suggest that, despite the critiques that IGOs are coopted by neoliberalism (Bond, 2012; Charnovitz, 1996; Mooney, 2012; Willetts, 2006), affiliation with IGOs does not damage TSMO legitimacy. Perhaps, pragmatism is important for the legitimacy of counter-hegemonic movements, and anti-systemic positions can be more about market positioning.[8]

Contrary to my expectation in H3, having headquarters in the global North is negatively associated with TSMO legitimacy. In the zero-inflation stage, the substantive effect is positive but statistically insignificant. No evidence supports that Northern TSMOs are more visible in the TSMO community, perhaps because the majority of TSMOs are headquartered in the global North anyway (74.8%). It is still puzzling, however, that they receive fewer ties than Southern TSMOs once they are known. One could argue, given that the current structure of global governance favors Northern INGOs (Barnett & Walker, 2015), Southern TSMOs that brought themselves to visibility might exhibit exceptional qualities. Alternatively, organizations with counter-hegemonic ambitions, such as TSMOs, might favor actors from the global South. The result also points out the problem of observation bias. We know that the density of ties among TSMOs is higher among Northern countries (Hughes, Peterson, Harrison, & Paxton, 2009), but it does not follow that Northern TSMOs are on average more legitimate than Southern TSMOs.

Finally, I find limited support for H4, and organizational age has two different effects in the zero-inflation and conditional stages. In the zero-inflation stage, organizational age is negatively associated with the structural zero group, meaning that TSMOs are more likely to gain visibility as long as they stay active. However, in the conditional stage, organizational age is negatively associated with legitimacy. There are two possible reasons for this. First, older TSMOs have likely amassed long track records that other TSMOs can exploit to challenge their legitimacy. Second, organizations that have survived for a long time may have developed a narrow, path-dependent vision. If TSMOs have been successful in effecting change in the past, they could be trapped in the past success model (Yanacopulos, 2015).

Future research may need to address why TSMOs send a tie in the first place. Perhaps, rather than at the organizational level, we may need to pay attention to different levels of

analysis. For example, interpersonal networks are known to be an important determinant of social mobilization (Kitts, 2000), and those networks may remain active after organizational platforms are established.

Conclusion

In this manuscript, I evaluated self-reported networks as proxies for the legitimacy of TSMOs. The self-reported nature of TSMO data allowed me to exploit the incentives and disincentives of associating with other organizations in a publicly accessible forum. A TSMO that reports a network tie is, whether genuine or not, engaging in a strategy of legitimation. I demonstrated the insights of INGO research can also explain how different strategies and organizational attributes affect TSMO legitimacy. The main empirical finding is that, while TSMOs can improve their legitimacy by leveraging connectivity to other TSMOs, such networking helps those that are already prominent rather than less well-known TSMOs.

The analysis begs further research as to why the hierarchy of TSMOs is so persistent despite their counter-hegemonic ambitions. I suspect it has to do with the credibility of the claims (Gourevitch, Lake, & Stein, 2012). Perhaps, there is a bias in the ways in which receiving audiences, including peer TSMOs, interpret claims to have network ties. A legitimate TSMO's claims to work with other organizations should be true, 1) as their reputations negate their need to make spurious claims about partners; and 2) the prominence makes it more likely that misrepresentations will be reported. Such a display of collaborative behavior might further increase the legitimacy of the TSMO, potentially creating "free-riders" (Murdie, 2014b). Other TSMOs, on the other hand, may aspire towards having connections with better-known peers, but paradoxically, the lack of erstwhile interpretation makes it hard for others to interpret whether a reported tie is genuine or not. Moreover, even if such TSMOs genuinely reported ties, the networked TSMO may not see them as important and legitimate enough to report. In short, audiences may not want to react to some TSMOs based on their claims, but they trust other TSMOs because of existing levels of legitimacy. This insight of the winners keep on winning seems to be a logic that is true in other social relations, such as corporations and individuals (Sauder, Lynn, & Podolny, 2012). More broadly, structural pressure to maintain the hierarchy among TSMOs is persistent, and strategic choices have positive but limited effects on most TSMOs.

The results also suggest that explanations for INGO behaviors generally work for TSMOs despite the latter's inclination against the status quo, with the possible exception that Northern TSMOs are less likely to be legitimated than Southern TSMOs. This finding is interesting and could reflect both an ideological and a supply issue that is not reflected with INGO research in general. Because many TSMOs are explicitly anti-systemic, it is no surprise that they prefer to work with Southern organizations in rejection of the current world order. It is more surprising that other determinants of INGO legitimacy, such as IGO affiliations, translate to positive effects on TSMO legitimacy. In other words, TSMOs are strategic about how they might be able to achieve counter-hegemonic goals, just like how INGOs pursue their objectives.

My analysis also contributes to efforts to understand the networking behavior of transnational private organizations. I have shown that sending an outgoing tie is an attempt at legitimation *that actually works* despite its limited effect. This is a different conclusion from a prominent interpretation in the INGO literature. Murdie (2014b) argues that INGOs with more outgoing ties than incoming ties are "free-riders." She finds that INGOs that have been less active in advocacy events in the past are more likely to report outgoing ties, which she argues as evidence of these INGOs not actively contributing to the network. While Murdie may be partially correct that free-riding could happen around extremely prominent TSMOs, my finding that outgoing ties increase the expected number of incoming ties offers a different insight.

Thus, this manuscript contributes to the call for more research on the strategic concerns of TSMOs and INGOs. While the structural pressure exerted by shared expectations about TSMOs is strong, it does not mean that TSMOs are impossible to construct their own legitimacy. Recent research on INGOs has emphasized the structural properties of issue areas in legitimating certain forms of organizations (Abbott, Green, & Keohane, 2016; Bush & Hadden, 2019), but the agency of INGOs should not be left aside. Most importantly, if TSMOs and INGOs collectively act, as often stated in their goals and objectives, their definition of legitimacy may shift in the way that would be more conducive to the emergence of entrepreneurial transnational private organizations.

Notes

[1] Smith, Jackie, Dawn Wiest, Melanie M. Hughes, Samantha Plummer, Brittany Duncan. 2017. Transnational Social Movement Organizations Dataset (TSMOD), 1953-2013. [Computer file]. Pittsburgh, PA: World Historical Dataverse [distributor]. And, Hughes, Melanie M., Samantha Plummer, and Jackie Smith. 2017. Transnational Social Movement Organization Networks (TSMOnet), Version I, 1993, 2003, & 2013. [Computer File]. Pittsburgh, PA: World Historical Dataverse [distributor]

[2] Importantly, there may be reasons why TSMOs do *not* report their networking behavior. To establish whether this is a topic worth more exploration, we must first find out why it is reported.

[3] These years were chosen by the coders, Smith et al. (2018). Since I am interested in deferential relationships among TSMOs, I focus on the particular kind of ties that is described as any collaborative relationships, coded as "1" in the TSMOnet dataset.

[4] For more, see the codebook of the TSMOnet. Hughes, Melanie M., Samantha Plummer, and Jackie Smith. 2017. Transnational Social Movement Organization Networks (TSMOnet), Version I, 1993, 2003, & 2013. [Computer File]. Pittsburgh, PA: World-Historical Dataverse [distributor]

[5] For example, International Campaign to Ban Land Mines has 181 and 161 outgoing ties in 2003 and 2013, when the mean of TSMOs in those years are 0.96 and 1.33, respectively.

[6] Ten TMOS were leading INGOs in 1993, and they were 11 in 2003 and 2013. International Campaign to Ban Land Mines were not included in1993, presumably because it was too young (established in 1992).

[7] A few TSMOs indicated negative ages, which were dropped from the analysis.

[8] For example, Sea Shepherd International, which rejects pro-system advocacy methods (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni & Bondaroff, 2014) recently won funds from several postcode lottery charities http://www.theideatree.ca/sea-shepherds-8-3-million-euro-award-and-the-idea-tree/ (Accessed June 11, 2019)

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Appendiecs

Table A1: Summary statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
# of Incoming Ties	4,938	0.607	1.711	0	30
# of Outgoing Ties	4,938	1.448	5.439	0	181
IGO Membership	3,651	2.053	3.159	0	44
HQ North	4,756	0.744	0.436	0	1
Organizational Age	4,756	24.672	21.687	0	174
Multiple Issue Areas	4,938	0.212	0.409	0	1
Country Count	4,919	21.837	28.605	0	188

Table A2: Legitimacy ranking of TSMOs

1993

Rank	TSMO	# of Outgoing Ties	# of Incoming Ties
1	CENTRE FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE	96	30
2	INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT	46	24
3	WORLD ORGANIZATION AGAINST TORTURE	30	20
4	INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES	41	17
5	WORLDWIDE FUND FOR NATURE (WWF)	47	16
6	ELC INTERNATIONAL / ENVIRONMENTAL LIAISON CENTRE	14	16
7	UNIVERSAL ESPERANTO ASSOCIATION	71	15
8	EUROPEAN YOUTH FOR ACTION	23	15
9	INTER-AFRICAN COMMITTEE ON TRADITIONAL PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HEALTH OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN AFRICA	28	14
10	AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL	21	13
11	FRIENDS OF THE EARTH INTERNATIONAL	21	12
12	INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS	23	11
13	WOMEN'S GLOBAL NETWORK ON REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS	18	11
14	WOMEN'S EXCHANGE PROGRAMME INTERNATIONAL	16	11
15	WORLD FEDERATION OF DEMOCRATIC YOUTH	18	10
16	DEVELOPMENT INNOVATIONS AND NETWORKS / ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT INNOVATIONS AND NETWORKS	6	10
17	WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS	6	10
18	NGO COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY	3	10
19	INTERNATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS	27	9
20	INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN	17	9
	Mean	2.56	0.10
	Sum	2,663	1,142
	SD	6.00	2.47
	N = 1,042		

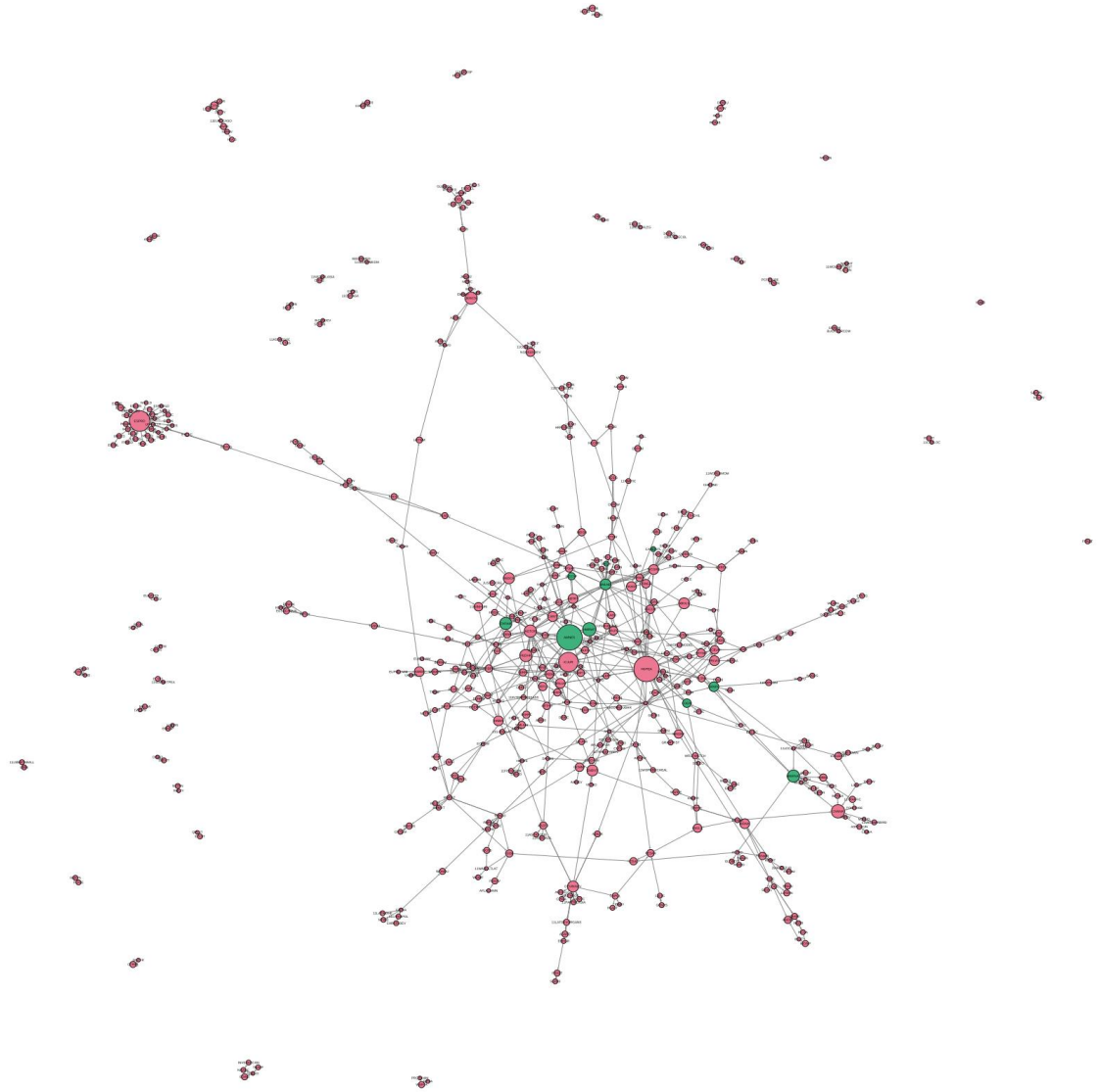
2003

Rank	TSMO	# of Outgoing Ties	# of Incoming Ties
1	THE HAGUE APPEAL FOR PEACE CAMPAIGN	24	19
2	AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL	5	18
3	UNIVERSAL ESPERANTO ASSOCIATION	17	14
4	NTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS	1	13
5	HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH	2	8
6	INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES	0	8
7	OXFAM	0	8
8	WORLD ORGANIZATION AGAINST TORTURE	36	7
9	WORLDWIDE FUND FOR NATURE (WWF)	6	7
10	INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS LEAUGES	5	7
11	WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS	1	7
12	INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO BAN LAND MINES	181	6
13	DEVELOPMENT INNOVATIONS AND NETWORKS / ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT INNOVATIONS AND NETWORKS	51	6
14	INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT	5	6
15	ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT ACTION IN THE THIRD WORLD	3	6
16	ABOLITION 2000-GLOBAL NETWORK TO ELIMINATE NUCLEAR WEAPONS	0	6
17	INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN	0	6
18	WORLD CONFERENCE ON RELIGION AND PEACE	28	5
19	ARAB LAWYERS' UNION	9	5
20	PAX CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC PEACE MOVEMENT	4	5
	Mean	0.96	0.39
	Sum	1,804	737
	SD	5.10	1.19
	N = 1,874		

Figure A1: Network diagrams
Green nodes are leading INGOs identified by Stroup and Wong (2017). Node size is proportionate to legitimacy (# of incoming ties). Isolates are removed. Graphs were generated by the Force Atlas algorithm in Gephi.

1993

2003



2013

Appendix 3: Exponential Random Graph Models

I conduct the analysis of exponential random graph models (ERGMs) to estimate the chance of having a tie between two TSMOs. Although the dependent variable is different from the ZINB model discussed in the main text, it measures a similar outcome: what drives TSMOs to confer legitimacy on another organization. The advantage of ERGMs is that they can estimate the effects of different logics of tie activation, while explicitly taking account for network structures through Markov chain Monte Carlo simulations (Cranmer & Desmarais, 2011). ERGMs assume that the observed network is just one realization of many possible networks and simulate a network many times to evaluate if a tie between two nodes occurs randomly or systematically.

First of all, I consider *reciprocity*. This network statistic estimates the likelihood of receiving a tie back when a TSMO sends a tie to another TSMO: when *j* sends a tie to *i*, what is the chance of *i* sending a tie back to *j*? In my interpretation, this represents the mechanism of direct legitimation.

I also consider three types of network clustering. The first clustering is a mechanism by which TMSOs sends a tie because the tie recipients successfully signals its legitimacy through its association with a legitimate TSMO. In network terms, this relationship is called *transitive*: *i* sends a tie to *j* when both *i* and *j* send a tie to *k*. In my interpretation, this represents the case where *k* is locally seen as a legitimate TSMO, and thus being associated with *k* increases the chance of legitimation by peers. The second clustering is called *cyclical*: *i* sends a tie to *j* when *j* sends a tie to *k* and *k* sends a tie to *i*. I doubt this is a common phenomenon because deferential relationship should not be circular. I included this network statistic to evaluate how much more likely transitive relations are to occur relative to other kinds of triadic relations. Finally, I also consider network centralization because the network data, as suggested in Figures 1 and 2, have highly uneven distribution of ties among TSMOs.[ix] The primary purpose of this network statistic to help Markov chain Monte Carlo estimation converge by constraining the degree distribution of a network.

To explore homophily effects, I included headquarter locations (global North) and United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) affiliation, given that these are salient explanations in the regression analysis above. I chose ECOSOC since it is an IGO that is well-known and used widely in the study of INGOs (Murdie, 2014). I also account for organizational age, which estimates the chance of a tie when age difference between TSMOs increase by one year.[x]

Finally, I consider the issue areas of operation to evaluate functionalism. This is statistically equivalent to the inclusion of other organizational attributes, just like the case of homophily. I sperate this mechanism from others because in real-world practices the functional logic that motivates a tie among TSMOs should not be organizational similarities *per se*, but the functional needs to achieve something in the issue area in question.

Table A3 reports the results of estimations. Because the size of a network varies by year, the results are also reported by year. Coefficients are changes in the log-odds of a tie, so they can be interpreted in the same way logistic regression coefficients are interpreted. The number of edges serve as a *baseline* likelihood; when simulation includes this network statistic alone, the likelihood of a tie equals the density of a network, which can be understood as a random assignment of realized ties in the network.[xi]

Table A3: Results of ERGM for 1993, 2003, and 2013

	1993	2003	2013
Edges	−6.887***	−6.640***	−6.957***
	(0.082)	(0.092)	(0.072)
Mutual	7.612***	3.780***	5.232***
	(0.134)	(0.167)	(0.118)
HQ North	0.288***	0.499***	0.361***
	(0.054)	(0.083)	(0.062)
Issue Area	1.201***	1.801***	1.518***
	(0.058)	(0.075)	(0.058)
ECOSOC	−0.164**	−0.140*	−0.081
	(0.051)	(0.070)	(0.057)
Age	−0.0003	−0.002	−0.0004
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	9,112	8,962	13,650
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	9,173	9,024	13,717
Note:			*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001
			Standard errors are in parentheses.

Across all years, I find that a tie is much more likely to occur as a result of *reciprocity* than the other mechanisms I examined. Cyclical relations are statistically significant, but the coefficient is negative. This means that a tie is unlikely in a cyclical relationship, which is in line with my argument about how legitimation works. In fact, transitive relations have the second largest effect among independent variables. That is, association with a legitimate organization does help increase peer legitimacy.

To look at the effects more carefully, I derive the chance of tie activation from the cumulative probability distribution of the latent variables of interest. In 2013, the chance of a tie in any given dyad (*i.e.* baseline likelihood) is 0.1%. The very low baseline is expected given that the network is both large *and* directed. The chance of a tie, however, increases to 16.7% when I consider reciprocity. That is, when A sends a tie to B, B sends a tie back to A with a 16.7% chance.[xii] This is significantly higher than that of transitivity (0.7%), in which association with a legitimate TSMO increases the chance of tie activation. Thus, networking increases the legitimacy of a TSMO *directly* rather than indirectly. Signaling through a third party seems a reasonable strategy at first glance, but perhaps because peers are more knowledgeable about other organizations around them, it does not have a substantively important effect.

The chance of a tie via *homophily* is also quite low. The ECOSOC affiliation is negatively associated with tie activation, and the statistical significance is inconsistent (not significant in 2013). A tie is negligibly more likely among Northern TSMOs, and so is the effect of organizational age. However, the chance of a tie via *functionalism* is slightly higher, 0.4%. Overall, while I confirm that different mechanisms are at work in tie activation, direct networking is by far the most effect way of increasing legitimacy. Table A3 summarizes the estimated chance of tie activation.

Table A4: Probability of a tie based on reciprocity and shared attributes

Year	Baseline	Reciprocity	Northern TSMO	Issue area
1993	0.1%	67.4%	0.1%	0.3%
2003	0.1%	54.2%	0.2%	0.7%
2013	0.1%	15.1%	0.1%	0.4%

References

Cranmer, Skyler J., & Desmarais, Bruce A. (2011). Inferential network analysis with exponential random graph models. *Political Analysis, 19*(1), 66-86.

Murdie, Amanda. (2014). *Help or harm: The human security effects of international NGOs*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

[ix] I use indegree distribution since the network is a directed network.

[x] More accurately, it estimates a change in log-odds of a tie.

[xi] Network density = # of the observed ties / # of all possible ties. In a way, this is like the "intercept" of regression analysis.

[xii] The chance of reciprocity is very high in 1993. I suspect this is due to a smaller size of the network (441 vs. 509, 727). Note that network matrices expand quickly with an additional node.