Master Thesis in Business Administration

Business and Economics Programme / International Business and Economics Programme

In the Pursuit of Influence
– A Study of Transnational Advocacy Networks’ Legitimacy Efforts

Andreas Larsen
Naima Yosef

Supervisor:
Rebecca Stenberg

Spring semester 2015
ISRN number: LIU-IEI-FIL-A--15/01994--SE
Department of Management and Engineering
Linköping University
Title:
In the Pursuit of Influence – A Study of Transnational Advocacy Networks’ Legitimacy Efforts

Authors:
Andreas Larsen and Naima Yosef

Supervisor:
Rebecca Stenberg

Type of publication:
Master Thesis in Business Administration
Business and Economics Programme / International Business and Economics Programme
Advanced level, 30 credits
Spring semester 2015
ISRN number: LIU-IEI-FIL-A--15/01994--SE

Linköping University
Department of Management and Engineering
www.liu.se
Abstract

As organized global actors, transnational advocacy networks (TANs) are an emerging way of people getting their voice heard and to make a change in global governance. Influencing policymakers through advocacy has an identified connection to the legitimacy of the organization where the general assumption is that a higher legitimacy facilitates influence.

In this thesis we have approached this situation from a strategic standpoint. Seeing as TANs – like most organizations – follow a strategy in order to achieve their goals, we wanted to see how legitimacy can be included as a part of the TANs strategy. This included describing the connections between the TAN as an organization and the legitimacy potential in both the organizational form and their actions.

Our empirical findings suggested a close relationship between a TAN’s legitimacy and their stance with a policy-making institution, which led to a focus on these institutions as a target for TANs and their advocacy. We developed on this relation and outlined a suggestion for a strategic framework for TANs to consider when strategizing around legitimacy. We found that two main paths – named the Insider and the Outsider strategies – illustrate the options and implications a TAN is faced with on the topic of strategic legitimacy.

The results constitute a contribution to the development of TAN strategy, a field that in the time of our writing this remains underexplored territory. We suggest that this field can be further developed by continuous research and we hope that this thesis is a contribution to that development.
Acknowledgements

As the authors of this thesis we are responsible for its contents and the process from start to finish. However, we cannot take full credit for the quality and success in completing it.

We would like to start out by expressing our gratitude towards the representatives from the organizations: CIVICUS, GAMIAN, the BIAC and the TUAC, who did much more than provide us with the information this study ultimately rests upon. Hoping you will recognize yourselves, we would like to thank you for continuously changing our society for the better, for giving us the strength to believe in the power of dialogue, and for comforting us in the idea that we have chosen the right path.

We would also like to especially thank our supervisor, Rebecca Stenberg, whose expertise, energy, tough-love and insight, as well as her coaching capabilities not only kept us on track both intellectually and emotionally, but truly inspired us as human beings.

Other contributors to the development of our thesis that we would like to mention are the students and friends who read our work and voiced their opinions loud and clear. Reading many of our colleagues’ works has reinforced our belief that our generation will be one to look up to.

Last of all, much of our success in completing this thesis is attributed to our respective families. The comfort our mothers’ words brought got us through the most wonderful yet painful project of our lives, and we therefore dedicate a special thank you to Sylvie Yosef and Yvonne Larsen for their support.

Linköping, May 2015

Andreas Larsen and Naima Yosef
Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Background</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Transnational Advocacy Network</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy shapes an organization</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Problematic</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Contextualization and knowledge contribution</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Purpose statements</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Delimitations</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Theory</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 The Organizational Side</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Society Organizations – A Background</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network organizations</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Legitimacy</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An overview of the concept</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizations and Legitimacy</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 The Strategic Side</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Methodology</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Research philosophy</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social constructivism</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Research approach</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative research</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnography</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Chosen methods of data collection</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Internal structure.................................................................................................................62
Position.................................................................................................................................64
Members and stakeholders .....................................................................................................66
Advocacy ..................................................................................................................................71

Narrative summaries...............................................................................................................72

6. Conclusions.........................................................................................................................75

The Fundamentals .....................................................................................................................75
Insider........................................................................................................................................79
Towards A Strategic Framework...............................................................................................81
A Final Word ..............................................................................................................................81

References..................................................................................................................................84
Literature......................................................................................................................................84
Web............................................................................................................................................88

Appendix 1: Documents Analyzed
Appendix 2: Interview Guide
1. Introduction

*This introductory chapter will provide the reader with the background knowledge and information that this thesis, its research and discussions are based upon. The chosen field of study and its limitations, this paper’s overall purpose and goal, and its knowledge contribution will be presented and concretized as research questions by the end of this first chapter.*

1.1 Background

Organizing with a purpose of achieving societal change has traditionally been motivated by the widely accepted reason that ‘*it is a mere matter of common sense to recognize that the State, the community, the citizens acting together, can do a number of things better than if they were left to individual action*’ (Roosevelt, 1910, p. 9).

The case of social entrepreneur Joe Madiath will perhaps illustrate the motivations leading many to unite and become one voice. This leader of what is now one of the most influential non-governmental organizations (NGO), brought to light the issue of water and sanitation in India. He argues that approximately eighty percent of all diseases in India and most developing countries are caused by the poor quality of water. According to Madiath, one of the major causes of the water’s poor quality is due to society’s attitude towards the disposal of human waste that ends up contaminating the drinking water. He expressed in his speech the hope that his ‘government will realize that the poor should not be further humiliated by being given third-rate facilities. It’s more than water and sanitation, it’s about human dignity’. (TEDGlobal URL)

The previous quote marks the turning point for the advocated cause – the issue had been addressed not as a domestic one but as a global concern: human rights. The problem of disposal of waste in India could be acknowledged by human rights activists, and thus included in a powerful network. Problematics on the subject of human rights are dealt with on bigger forums, lead by actors with considerably more resources. Joe Madiath’s role was now that of an issue-specific expert within a bigger, more influential network organization.

**The Transnational Advocacy Network**

Organizing as a network across national borders to jointly advocate an issue is a common way of raising awareness and making a change. Keck and Sikkink (1998) identified this tendency and were the first to describe this rather different organizational form, which they named Transnational Advocacy Networks, or TANs. The explanation is derived from its name: it is a **network of actors** (ranging from big established non-profit organizations to experts,
entrepreneurs and activists), **collaborating transnationally** with the purpose of **advocating for a cause** (ibid.). These causes can be very different among various TANs, and so also the structure, size, and tactics. Let us present the four studied cases that will illustrate how vastly a TAN can differ from another.

Mental health awareness and the combating of stigmatization of mental illness was the common issue that in 1997 brought together 12 advocacy groups and associations to form GAMIAN, the **Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks**. United, and through efficient use of their network, they speak as one to advocate for their cause.

In 1991, leaders of civil society organizations saw the need for citizens’ action and participation in global governance to be promoted and reinforced. This initiative lead to the birth of CIVICUS, an alliance seeking to engage citizens globally and in their own words *strength civil society and citizen action around the world*’ (CIVICUS URL).

The BIAC, or **Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD**, is an international network of over 2,800 business experts unified to advocate for open markets and bring a business perspective into policy discussions by communication with OECD committees (BIAC URL).

Similar but different, the **Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD**, or TUAC, is in accordance with its name an international trade union organization that has a consultative status similar to that of BIAC.

All of these are examples of TANs even though their causes, values, size, scope of activities, and targets are different. They are however unified in the sense that their reason to exist is the advocacy of their cause, or more specifically: the interests and values driving them. The conception of a transnational advocacy network in fact starts, according to Keck and Sikkink (1998), with a core attribute. Florini and Simmons (2000) reinforce this statement by declaring that working collaboratively and progressively towards a common-ground issue requires shared values to gather around. This then, is the most fundamental unifying concept for all TANs regardless of origin.

Grouping TANs for easier overview is a bit difficult due to their diverse nature. A way to categorize TANs is to base their affinity on where their cause is rooted: whose interests are represented. Most TANs belong to either the private or the voluntary (also referred to as non-profit) sectors of society: the interests advocated for are either the needs of corporate business, or the concerns of civil society.
Civil society is a concept that may require a bit of explanation to withhold clarity in this paper. In grouping organizations rooted in the civil society it is common to use the appellation civil society organization (CSO), a broad term that includes any non-profit organization expressing interest and values pertaining to their stakeholders and that undertake actions motivated for example by philanthropic or ethical aspirations, but even by scientific, religious or cultural vocations (Billing, 2011). The term CSO is often used interchangeably with the denomination NGO (non-governmental organization). Due to disparities in the definition of NGOs between countries, and in the interest of clarity, the term CSO will be employed throughout this thesis when referencing to such organizations.

Since most organized advocacy on the topic of human rights and social issues are usually rooted in civil society, many examples of TANs are CSOs, and most of the research on TANs focuses on civil society. It would however not be a correct statement to say that all TANs are necessarily CSOs, and treat them as a subcategory of the larger CSO field. As long as the criteria of transnationality, network-form of organization, and the basis on advocacy are met, the organization will meet the requirements to be treated as a TAN. This thesis will argue that a network of businesses (i.e., based in the private sector) that is formed to advocate the united interests of private enterprise can just as well be treated as a TAN.

A TAN is often focused on a policy-making arena with the goal of either making a change or promoting interests. The OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) is an example of such an arena. The mission of the OECD is to be an objective, independent forum where member governments work together to ‘share experiences and seek solutions to common problems’, meaning discussing policies, regulations and standards (OECD URL). They in fact mention BIAC and TUAC as the two most essential relationships as they are both formal, permanent partners of consultative status. The two are included as ‘key stakeholders’ and are both influential in OECD policy making.

**Strategy shapes an organization**

Rare are the organizations that can afford to let their environment and existing structural conditions guide their strategic choices. For TANs, the high stakes of the causes they advocate suggest many motivations leading such organizations to adopt dynamic strategies that allow them to bend and adapt their game plan to a rapidly changing environment (Miles et al, 1978; Miles and Snow, 1992). A valid deduction would therefore be that the very mechanisms and actions of such organizations vary grandly, since none the challenges they face are influenced by the same factors.
The strategic nature of a TAN is based on a few underlying assumptions worth mentioning in this section. One of the most apparent features is derived from the non-profit aspect and is exactly that: the goal is not to make a profit or maximize shareholder returns, as opposed to profit-driven corporations. For TANs, the goal is rather to carry out the mission of expressing the stakeholders’ interests in a way that has the most impact and efficiency, as expressed by Matti and Sandström (2013). Members of an advocacy network can have set different issue-specific goals and agendas yet be grouped as a unity, on the basis of a mutual understanding that they are working for the same big-picture goal, which will categorize the network as a whole. Following this logic, the goal setting of a TAN can be understood as *aiming to achieve influence*.

Forming a network and regrouping multiple issues that fall under one same category leads to the creation of an organizational form that presents numerous advantages. Returning to our first example, the cause that activist and entrepreneur Joe Madiath worked for could be categorized as a Human Rights issue, thus including his movement in a network that had already facilitated access routes to arenas and forums where solutions could be discussed, potential resources could be made available, and awareness could be raised. Members of transnational advocacy networks may each have different agendas that can be addressed with more ease if restructured within a TAN organization. Actors in such networks will serve as experts within their specific issue, allowing governing institutions and policy-makers to have a facilitated access to information regarding the treated issue.

### 1.2 Problematic

To quote Brown (2008):

> “It is increasingly clear that economic, political, and social problems cannot be solved by focusing on their local manifestations if they are caused by international institutions, policies, and events. [...] Civil society actors are undertaking expanding roles in relief and development activities, in shaping global norms and expectations, in defining policies and practices of multinational corporations, and in influencing the projects and policies of intergovernmental institutions. Transnational arenas offer opportunities for civil society actors to shape discourses and policies that affect millions of people” (p. 10)

TANs have an uncontested impact within our society. There seems, however, to be a gap in the knowledge of these organizations if understood as strategic actors. Building on the recognition of TANs as organizational entities that aim to achieve influence, we will in this chapter begin by tying together the three elements upon which the purpose of this study was built upon.
Legitimation and Legitimacy – The Process that determines our Reality

As citizens, we require the legitimation of our governing and policy-making institutions. We require ways by which their existence can be justified and those tools for judgment are passed on to us through our human experience, that essentially allow us to interpret the meaning of those organizations (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

I am Legitimate, so I Influence

It is following this reasoning that we deduct that if a transnational advocacy network aims to be included in influencing policies, the institutions they aim to influence are going to require (to simplify) an explanation justifying their existence and actions (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The question remains whether or not all TANs wish to carry out their advocacy through policy-making institutions.

Legitimacy, Strategy and TANs

All TANs are united in their existential purpose of advocacy, they however still vary in terms of priorities and focus in their individual strategies. This inconsistency in tactics but consistency in end goal – they all want influence but they pursue it differently – implies that there is more than one way of achieving it. In our experience, our society’s legitimation processes are what give organizations the power to influence the institutions that are now anchored in our society. A TAN is required to either follow a strategy that will allow them to work their way through those institutions and carry out their advocacy on the corresponding arenas, or adopt a strategy that enables their influence through other circuits.

1.3 Contextualization and knowledge contribution

The multidisciplinary nature of TAN theory has been covered by various disciplines. This thesis and its approach find their roots in the field of business, including corporate strategy, organizational theory, and related fields. Within this school of thought, not as much knowledge has been developed regarding TANs, as is the case with other older and less complex organizational types. On the other hand, upon researching the topic of TANs and their influence one finds that most existent literature seems to come from fields within the social sciences other than business administration and management. Activism, advocacy, and related topics are to a large extent treated in the context of sociology or political science studies. Miles and Snow (1992) emphasized the importance for a network organization to maintain the necessary attributes in order to make it work: the dynamic network organization relies on relationships characterized by voluntarism, interdependence, a willingness to share information and to adapt,
and efficient administration. Applying existing strategy models that do not consider these aspects might then result in inefficiency or failure.

This dilemma presents us with a peculiar situation: we find the crossover knowledge between organizational strategy and the influence of TANs in world politics is relatively thin. As the strategies of TANs to achieve influential power both concern strategy and political influence, the subject addressed in this thesis finds itself in the middle of more than one academic discipline. A part of this thesis’ ambition is to bridge that gap.

The second theoretical deficiency is the lack of transnational applicability in existing research, as most of it is developed for the national level. Research on how policy networks play a role in policy processes exists and has according to Marsh (1998, in Farquharson, 2003) been treated by numerous researchers, but it has mainly focused on domestic networks. Continuing the argumentation above, this knowledge is indeed helpful as it emphasizes the strategy side of TANs. What it does not provide, though, is generalizable knowledge of TAN strategy on an administrative, transnational level - only on a domestic, operational level.

In order to put the problematic into a context and shed light on its meaning in reality, it is reasonable to point out the knowledge contribution of this thesis and what this extended knowledge would mean to society.

Because of the knowledge gap presented above, it is arguable that TANs and their operations are lacking the extent of knowledge and tools possessed by organizations that fall within the more traditional and well-researched categories of organizational strategy. Since the nature of CSOs in general and TANs in particular are different from the mainstream discourse within both corporate strategy and organizational theory, to various degrees, this lack of scientific coverage limits the understanding of these organizations. An increased knowledge of the topic would mean a more efficient, theoretically supported operation for these organizations. Having a strategy to be not only heard but listened to, would be of high value if your goal is to influence. The ambition is that the knowledge contribution of this thesis will serve a function in this way.

Since TANs and similar organizations focus their efforts around societal issues and conduct their operations accordingly, the performance of a TAN is linked to the degree of progress made in the matter advocated. Hence, constructive findings in this study that improves the strategic and organizational efficiency could be viewed as potentially important to civil society and advocacy in general. In short, the knowledge contribution from this thesis might indirectly matter in a global, societal context.
1.4 Purpose statements

Given the background and implications presented above, we can outline the purpose of this thesis. The aim is to understand where the knowledge of strategic legitimacy applicable to TANs needs to be developed, and to look for strategic implications of how legitimacy can be used to facilitate influence.

Guiding the research, the study is directed by the following research questions:

- **What strategic options do TANs have in achieving legitimacy as a prerequisite for influence on international policies?** This question maps out the present tools and tactics used by TANs, while at the same time aiming at identifying any use of strategy logic.

- **What is the connection between a TAN’s legitimacy and achieving an influential position?** The aim is not to just to confirm whether or not legitimacy is the reason behind influence, but to look for general strategic rules or patterns.

These questions are to be explained in the thesis, but our ambitions are to not only answer them but to through the answers start the foundation of a strategic framework on the issue. TANs are here seen as conscious actors moving intentionally within an institutional field, and this led us to peek into the world of institutionalism. The aim of understanding how these processes and concepts are created and co-created set the stage for a constructivist take on the topic.

1.5 Delimitations

Due to the limited amount of time available for conducting the research, this study will have some intentional delimitations regarding subject of research, empirical volume, and methodology employed.

The potential goal of maximizing influence is achieved by a number of things, as declared above, and the driving factor chosen for this thesis is legitimacy. This relatively narrow field in focus is motivated by the fact that legitimacy seems to be of strategic importance in more than one way; for advocating and negotiating, and for the forming of powerful partnerships. By focusing mostly on legitimacy, the study becomes viable while still remaining relevant enough to fulfill the purpose of finding strategic implications.

Upon making the decision of which TANs to include in our empirical data, attention was focused the generalizability of the conclusions to be drawn from analyzing their organization. Efforts
were set on obtaining data that would illustrate the differences that this particular form of organization understands.

The problematic above (namely sections 1.2 and 1.3) describes how the existing theory used to understand TANs come from more than one academic discipline. Therefore, the delimitations dictating which theories to use and which ones to deselect will not be based on scientific heritage (for instance, focusing only on the economic or the political aspect). What instead connects the employed theory is their connection and relevance to TANs, with regard to the problematic of this thesis. Apart from that they can be rooted in strategic management, network theory, organizational theory, sociology, studies on civil society and advocacy, to mention a few. They will however all be clearly motivated as they are presented.
2. Theory

In this chapter we go through existing and applicable knowledge in This chapter will review existing knowledge to equip the reader with the right tools to understand and follow the upcoming analysis and conclusions. As our purpose takes more inductive standpoint, the research presented here should be viewed as the theoretical context for the study, rather than a predetermined set of truths to be followed.

2.1 The Organizational Side

The transnational advocacy network is an organization with its own characteristics and aspects. In order to understand TANs and build a foundation for analysis, let us first have a look at the TAN in organizational terms.

Civil Society Organizations - A Background

The ways in which civil society organizes have, as is the case with most organizations, evolved over time. TANs, being closely connected to the trends and progress in civil society, have a lot in common with the history of how civil society evolves. In accordance with the statement of Miles et al (1978), ‘an organization is both an articulated purpose and an established mechanism for achieving it’ (p. 547). Organizations form for a reason and will adapt to their environment to best suit their purpose, and attributes and changes in the environment will impact how an organization operates. Globalization has meant an increased ability to communicate and mobilize thanks to reductions in cost of communication and the rise in Internet access. This has been beneficial to civil society, but has also meant new circumstances to take into consideration and adapt to. A trend of general instability in the organizational infrastructure of global civil has been shown to have an impact on how civil society organizes (Anheier et al, 2002). What has been stable, however, is the rate of globalization and how it is changing the rules and attributes of the global arena. Taking the step, as an organization, from being domestic to transnational means an increase in the complexity and unpredictability that has to be managed (ibid.).

Bigger and better platforms for advocacy

Focusing on the TAN – which is already transnational by definition – it has potential to enjoy quite a few benefits enabled by globalization identified by Anheier et al (2002). The establishment of new international, interstate and interregional forms of governments such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), and others has modified those arenas in which advocates aspire to make a change. The modifications policy-making arenas have
undergone are visible for example by the creation and development of national civil society
centers in OECD member countries. (Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor, 2001; in Anheier et al, 2002).

In Sweden, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) exists as the
state organ for supporting civil society. In short, SIDA gives aid to CSO projects that meet a few
criteria based on public benefit, democratic values, and long-term perspective among other
things (SIDA URL). According to Osander (2007), it was the very pressure of a rising number of
CSOs that led to the start and growth of Swedish state cooperation in the first place.

Non-governmental platforms have also been established to serve the global arena: a good
example is the International Civil Society Centre, based in Berlin, which is focused solely on
helping international CSOs develop a strategy to maximize their impact (ICS Centre URL). Acting
as a non-profit consultant owned by the served organizations, they hold conferences,
workshops and meetings to help international CSOs respond to challenges and opportunities
derived from the progress of globalization (ibid.).

All of these examples are illustrations of how globalization has lead to increasing activity of
TANs (and other CSOs) to achieve influence, as it made space for them to participate and
advocate. The political opportunities are no longer limited to national politics and domestic
increasing opportunities for non-profit organizations to develop and grow gave rise to the
economic importance of these organizations, most commonly in social services, education and
health care. From this theory it is derived that increased opportunities means increased
importance, which means more space and influence.

The challenges of globalization raises to the question of how to best organize across borders,
given the complex and less predictable environment. This leads to a discussion of organizational
form – what kind of organization is best suited for the task of transnational advocacy? A TAN is
best categorized as a network organization, a type of organization that has its own structure and
attributes, and the following section will give a closer examination of it.

**Network organizations**

As stated previously in this paper, a TAN is commonly rooted in civil society but does not
necessarily have to be a CSO. So long as the network is transnational and has the purpose of
conducting united advocacy, it will classify as a TAN (see above for definition). Therefore,
organizational theory may provide the tools needed to understand the structural aspect of
TANs, more specifically tools from the field of network organizations.
**What is a network organization?**

Emerged in the 1980’s, network organizations started as a response to the pressure on firms and organizations to adapt to rapid changes in competition, standards, logistics and the overall rising trend of internationalization (Miles & Snow, 1992; Buono, 1997). The need to coordinate multiple units in different parts of the world put emphasis on exchange agreements, contracts, relationships, and the ability to change partners and units to include called for an organizational form capable of administering such a system (Miles & Snow, 1992.). Networks use the collective assets of the included entities and the managerial focus is the administration of the flows of information and resources, and on managing relationships and cooperative efforts (ibid.). Ekbia and Kling (2005) describe the network organization as heavily information-oriented. Initially evolved and progressed by private enterprise, the business overtone is no longer dominant and the network organization logic is adopted by other types of organization, as will be shown.

Identifying the ‘right’ allies with the compatible mindset and ambitions one of the required managerial skills mentioned by Buono (1997), an ability that is particularly central to TANs where congruence with partners is dominant, namely congruence in the driving values.

**Drivers behind forming a network**

Networks have their structural benefits and these have traditionally been the main motivation for forming such an organization. But the resource- and logistics-based reasons are not the only ones; there is also an intangible and symbolic side to consider. Any organization that is founded on an ideological basis will have this aspect determining which partnerships are favorable and which ones are not, based on the partner’s perceived beliefs.

Matti and Sandström (2013) base their discourse of what they call the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) on the founding idea that actors cluster and form relationships based on their ‘ideological similarity’. The ACF assumes that coalition partnering is based on actors identifying ideologically close actors using their belief system as the guide and reference. This belief system is, according to the authors, the ‘glue that holds [advocacy] coalitions together’ (p. 243, brackets added). The main reason why this is the case is, it is argued, that actors forming a network or coalition is essentially motivated by their own personal beliefs.

Sharing ideological values is indeed an important factor, but it is however not a sufficient factor alone for the formation of a TAN (Kiel, 2011). Any project or effort within the scope of TAN concerns that occurs far away will bring higher costs than those geographically close. With everything from information gathering to concrete action, the increased cost will initially discourage participation in a TAN or its activities.
Research has identified other incentives in joining and forming a network. Organizations whose purpose is ideological usually enjoy a relatively more attractive identity in the sense that the members feel like a part of a larger unity that represents their values. This belonging sprouts the incentivizing reward of individual pride and satisfaction when the organization’s goals are achieved (Kiel, 2011).

The centrality of shared values for TANs puts extra emphasis on certain factors for successful management. Buono (1997) points out that a partnership-focused organization needs to reinforce capabilities for relationship building, cooperation and contracting for mutual gain. Roles and their assigned responsibilities need to be clarified, values and targets should be institutionalized and clearly communicated, and organizational learning should be facilitated. Especially important for new entities, having a relationship orientation and placing the initial focus on it during the start-up phase is crucial (ibid.).

**The network as a tool in itself**

Another element of TANs that is worthy of treatment is the beneficial reliance on internet and other virtual forms of communication, organizing and networking. Yang (2013) asserts that activists can facilitate their networking platform, reinforce the internal motivation and mobilize action through their websites. One particularly emphasized aspect is the public relations function, where websites serve as an interactive communication tool with the general public. The notion by Keck and Sikkink that “transnational networks multiply the voices that are heard in international and domestic policies” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, in Yang, 2013, p. 247) is quoted as a reference to the positive amplifying effect of networking visibly. Not only do disclosed partnerships and hyperlinks communicate strong unity, it also functions as a search mechanism for the attraction of potential allies (Yang, 2013).

In summary, networking is for TANs not only a organizational-structural matter, it is a form of collective action that due to its proactive nature is a part of the whole advocacy operation. Johansen and LeRoux (2012) extensively discuss networking as a practice, and mentions a number of reasons for managers to network – typically to maintain relations with stakeholders, to reduce uncertainty, follow up on goals and enhance legitimacy. For non-profit organizations specifically, the authors state three main reasons for networking, namely to reinforce the sustainability and survival of the organization, to improve its position in the environment, and, again, to achieve and enhance its legitimacy. In this context, networking can be either political (as in between individuals) or towards the local community. They conclude that political networking increases the effectiveness of advocacy but has no confirmed effect on organizational effectiveness. Conversely, community networking is stated to improve
organizational effectiveness but has significance for advocacy (ibid.). This reveals the connection between successful networking and successful advocacy and their relation to legitimacy, which will be treated below.

**Weaknesses**

The network form of organization is not completely unproblematic. Anheier et al (2002) mention that activities that require the coordination of collective action are often more difficult, as is the formation of a common identity and, in cases, the legitimacy of speaking and acting as one unit. The same authors do however point to the economic benefits of being a decentralized network of autonomous units. The benefits of decentralization, cooperation, mutual empowerment and united interests are however not the only characteristics of network organizations. Ekbia and Kling (2005) stress the occurrence of the opposite: concentration of power, coercive relations, and locked compartmentalization are examples of possible cons in network organizations. The size and complexity of the network can lead to complications in communicating and maintaining good relationships with all included partners. Yang (2013) explains that large networks tend to cause clustering of subgroups within the bigger network. This often creates a scenario where members of a cluster are tightly linked, but the connection between the subgroups are looser less prioritized - causing an isolation that risks making the unified action of the network as a whole more difficult. The reliance on information and communication knits networks close to the development of such technology, and even though this means benefits it also carries with it risks of information overload, false sense of control and the alienation of units from each other.
2.2 Legitimacy

An overview of the concept

As this thesis will cover the notion of legitimacy, a relatively large portion of the theory review will here be devoted to exploring the concept and its many aspects and implications.

Definition

The concept of legitimacy has been developed both by new redefinitions of the word itself and with the development of the research fields that have made use of it. Based on a review of literature on legitimacy and related topics, a general definition has been formulated and will constitute the basis for all following discussion regarding legitimacy. The word legitimacy in itself refers here to an attribute that is a result of a process of perception and evaluation, hitherto most accurately phrased by Suchman (1995):

"a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (p. 574, emphases added)

Noteworthy in the discourse is how the word is being used - one can both have legitimacy and be legitimate. These phrases are used interchangeably to some degree in existing research, but they do have different implications as to whether legitimacy is something one achieves as an attribute, or something one possesses as a resource. This level of detail in defining legitimacy is perhaps a bit excessive given the framework of this thesis, but it does however serve to point out the duality/width of its use.

Legitimacy is influenced by a number of factors and events occurring in time. Examples of those factors are autonomy, meaning the reliance on audience support; visibility, where a high visibility generally means higher expectations; and distinctive competence, as in the capacity required for the organization’s activity (Hannigan & Kueneman, 1977).

Types of legitimacy

From the above definition, research has proceeded to develop sub-categories of it, shining light on the versatile nature of legitimacy. The basic form is commonly referred to as legal legitimacy, and is simply focused on the organization’s compliance with formal rules and legislation (Brown & Jagadananda, 2007). Pragmatic legitimacy refers to the interaction between the organization and their constituents and is based on the perceived value of the activities (Suchman, 1995).
Moral legitimacy, also known as normative, is based on the subjective judgment of the righteousness of the organization’s existence and its activities (Suchman, 1995; Brown & Jagadananda, 2007). Cognitive legitimacy is derived from the audience’s comprehension of the organization, evaluated as to whether it makes sense or not (Suchman, 1995). These types are widely used and most often agreed upon, but subcategories exist and vary both in use and frequency. An example is influence legitimacy, a form of pragmatic legitimacy regarding the representativity of constituents’ values; higher influence legitimacy would be achieved by integrating constituents and their values in standards and decision-making (ibid.).

**Legitimacy as a resource**

The beneficial nature of legitimacy has made it a desirable feature for organizations to achieve (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Bitektine, 2011). Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) sees the connection of organizational survival and its enhancement by legitimacy as a reason to treat legitimacy as a resource. Suchman (1995) identified a pattern of studies to interpret legitimacy as an ‘operational resource’ to be sought by organizations as a mechanism in the pursuit of their goals. The same author stated that legitimacy is ‘possessed objectively, yet created subjectively’ (Suchman, 1995, p. 574) with reference to its origins in the individual mind but effect on a higher, collective level.

Legitimacy would, following Suchman’s argument (ibid.), enhance the organization’s persistence since being viewed as desirable, proper or appropriate is associated with a higher likelihood of constituents/audiences supplying resources to the organization.

The processes of gaining and maintaining legitimacy have influenced the way organizations formulate their strategies, which will be treated in depth further on.

Treating legitimacy as a resource is not completely unproblematic. Even though legitimacy can be and is treated as a resource, it is not a resource that can simply be extracted from the organization’s environment (Suchman, 1995). It is, following the given definition, a reciprocal process where the behavior of both the organization and the audience will determine the degree of legitimacy, since legitimacy, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. Another problematic aspect is the lack of objective measurement (Singh et al., 1986). The most common variable for objectively estimating an organization’s legitimacy is its age, where older organizations are seen as more legitimate than younger, mainly because older organizations generally have more developed and extensive relationships and are approved by powerful actors (ibid.). Do however note that this is more of a tendency than an actual rule.

**Legitimacy process**
Legitimacy as an organizational attribute is not unaffected by the element of time. Research usually structures the situational dependency of legitimacy into three main categories: gaining, maintaining, and defending legitimacy. They all have their own strategic implications and will here be reviewed respectively.

**Gaining**

Gaining legitimacy can either mean establishing oneself as legitimate as a new entity (i.e., from previously being unknown not needing to be legitimate), or an effort to elevate the achieved legitimacy status. Either way, Suchman (1995) stated that gaining legitimacy is a proactive process based on the by management identified need to be legitimate. The same author also proposed general strategies for building legitimacy, namely conforming to norms within the given environment (treated in depth in section 2.2.2), selecting an audience that has a belief system aligned with the organization, and manipulating the environment and their beliefs. In addition to these basic strategies, more specific tactics exist and varies among organizations based on their purpose, structure, environment and so on.

**Maintaining**

The second category is the ‘phase’ in which most organizations aim to remain in; a continuous equilibrium where the organization enjoys the status of legitimacy without any imminent threats or risks of losing it. As proposed by Ashforth and Gibbs (1990), legitimacy is the hardest to either gain or defend, but generally easy to maintain. The process of maintaining legitimacy means basically protecting the status and try to keep it unchallenged. Suchman’s (1995) sums up two major strategies for maintaining legitimacy, namely perceiving change (in order to avoid challenges that might threaten legitimacy) and protecting accomplishments (ensuring visibility of positive efforts and policing internally, among others). Ashforth and Gibbs (1990) add the suggestion of stockpiling goodwill and support to buffer against the backlash of an imperiled legitimacy. A relevant addition by Brown (2008) is the recognition that early attention to challenges to legitimacy (or accountability; not treated here) does not guarantee a full prevention of them. It does however increase an organization’s capability for handling them appropriately.

**Defending**

Used interchangeably with repairing, defending legitimacy is the process where an organization has either had its legitimacy questioned or threatened, or damaged or lost. Often due to unfavorable actions by the organization, the formerly stable legitimacy is imperiled and needs to be recovered. Defending legitimacy resembles the process of gaining it as they are both about
increasing it to a favorable level. The strategies and effect do however differ between them in some places. Suchman (1995) proposed restructuring the organization to ‘admit’ dysfunctionality to the public and communicate positive change, make normalizing efforts such as excusing or denying the problem, and for managers to remain calm and not impair their decision-making by panicking. Ashforth and Gibbs (1990) reinforce the negative effects of panicking, resulting in the legitimating efforts to backfire by the organization acting clumsily, provocative, intolerant, evasive, or exaggerating somehow – all resulting in illegitimacy.

Defending one’s legitimacy is important, as the resource-nature of it has connections to the overall economy of the organization and might carry fiscal consequences when lost. Nilsson (2014) reported that annual donations to nonprofits decrease by 42.4% after public revelations of embezzlement. These effect do however vary between organizations. Nilsson (ibid.) states that well-established and known organizations often enjoy a more forgiving constituent base as opposed to new, unknown ones. Contradictingly, he also points out that embezzlement in a trusted and highly reputable organization might trigger harder penalization due to the bigger shock.

**Organizations and Legitimacy**

Legitimacy issues play a part in the behavior of organizations and are subject of ongoing debate (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Suchman, 1995; Brown, 2008; Bitektine & Haack, 2015). Researchers over the years have had different perspectives on its role and have studied it within different fields, but a common denominator in conclusions within an organizational context is that legitimacy is one of the factors influencing an organization’s behavior. Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) even declare 'legitimate behavior' as one of the three main 'sets' of behavior that organizations will consider; the other two being behaviors that are legal and behaviors that are economically viable.

**Form**

From present research is it clear that organizational form and legitimacy are connected. An example mentioned by Anheier et al (2002) is how the ‘organizational blueprint’ carries with it some associations regarding origin – an organization structured in a way resembling Western tradition rather than Chinese or Indian might be perceived as more legitimate (ibid.). Another relevant point is that donors often pressure CSOs into bureaucratization and high reporting as criteria for receiving funding (ibid.), causing standardized bureaucracies with a high degree of control and monitoring to be perceived as more legitimate.
These examples are a part of the larger discourse of institutionalism and the way organizations adapt to each other and their environment for various reasons. As developed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), a pattern of homogenization of organizational forms and structures has been identified and given the name *institutional isomorphism*. The process of institutional isomorphism is the general pressure on organizations to resemble one another and can be of coercive, mimetic or normative nature (ibid.). *Coercive* institutional isomorphism is a phenomenon that comes from the pressures and expectations from the environment in which the organization is operating. Formal or informal, these pressures cause organizations to be increasingly homogeneous within their given domain, aligned with the institutionalized rules and prevailing norms (ibid.).

The homogeneity within an organizational domain can be explained by two main reasons: the tendency of organizations to imitate peers perceived as more legitimate, or because a legitimacy-granting entity has established requirements for organizations to meet if they want to be perceived as legitimate. An example would be when a government visibly partners with an organization - as an advisor or contracted partner, represented on committees, being recommended, and so on - which in effect is a way of giving the chosen organization legitimacy.

In summary, Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) state that organizational legitimacy is ensued when congruence between the social values communicated by the organization's actions, and the established norms of the larger social system. Conformity to these norms and expectations signals a willingness to adapt to them (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). An example of practical benefits derived from isomorphism is provided by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) who point out that similarity among organizations eases their interactions with each other in both finding and forming trusted relationships, and in joint operations.

*What is special about TANs*

The concept of institutional isomorphism and its connections to legitimacy is described above in general terms, meaning a generic applicability but at the same time a superficial depth when applied to particular organizations. A TAN is formed around a non-profit purpose, it has a network form, and the goal is influence. These specifics constitute a natural delimitation of applied theory and make it necessary to review what being a TAN means to one’s legitimacy.

In connection to the legitimacy types above, cognitive legitimacy can here be applied as making sense only helps an organization to avoid questioning, but to gather support, resources and general affirmation it needs to have *value* – a degree of moral/normative legitimacy.
Berg and Jonsson (1991) state that movements and organizations that represent popular interests and rests on their support (org. *folkrörelseorganisationer*) have three bases for legitimacy: support from their own members, support from the public opinion, and the compliance with institutions regulating their activity. The authors believe that the first one out of the three is of the most important one, as they assume that a strong unity in internal values - for instance, a strong belief in the cause or ideology represented - is what holds the organization together. This statement goes along with the conclusion by Ashforth and Gibbs (1990) that organizations claiming to serve a trustworthy moral purpose are faced with constituents’ expectations on their conduct and accountability to be higher.

The network structure of TANs ties them to the concept of linkage legitimacy, a subcategory that is based on the relationships and associations with other actors that have high legitimacy (Bitektine, 2011).

*Legitimate advocacy*

Not only the organizational form will carry implications regarding legitimacy. The fact that transnational advocacy networks concern themselves with *advocacy* as the main activity raises aspects that need to be considered. The role as an advocacy organization means, in layman words, the aspiration of being an entity that other entities listen to – which requires the audiences’ affirmation, ipso facto, legitimacy. A brief treatise on advocacy strategies will follow below.

### 2.3 The Strategic Side

In our first chapter we presented three assumptions that linked our three major subjects in this thesis. For a quick repetition, in the context of this study we accepted legitimacy as one of the central prerequisites for influence. A TAN that aims to successfully advocate for change would then have to establish their game plan and coordinate their operations – in other words, formulate their strategy. Let us now move on from the organizational theory relevant to TANs and shed light on the challenging strategic side.

*How can we be sure that TANs have strategies?*

The complex organizational form that is the one of transnational advocacy networks described in the previous chapter not only assumes the need, but confirms the obvious existence of strategies. In the relatively successful cases studied in the context of this thesis, those strategies were definitely formulated. Strategies as a general term for an organization’s plan to achieve a targeted goal have developed and evolved over time – which was observed by DiMaggio and
Powell (1991) and listed in four stages: The first one noted was the obvious increasing rate of interaction between organizations in the same field. Secondly, organizations started to formulate frameworks and highly structure their cooperations. The third observation was one the implications could easily be deducted and concerned the increasing amount of information collected per field. Organizations’ way of handling it subsequently changed. In order for the totality of the data to be treated, they had to collaborate. This leads us to their last point. The fourth observation concerned organization’s progressive increase in awareness of each others’ presence in a field, and some realized they were working towards achieving the same goals (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

The four stages described in the paragraph above serve the purpose of summarizing the rate at which an environment in which an organization evolves changes. In this chapter we argued that transnational advocacy networks were at their core dynamic organizations that change just as much as their environment. Whether it is official or informal, communicated or concealed, deep-rooted or short-lived, dynamic organizations such as TANs must have an understanding of where they will go and how they will get there – in other words, a strategy.

**Applicable theory on TAN strategy**

The literature on strategy provides us with as many definitions of the term as there are types of organizations. As Patton (1990) notes, ‘There are no perfect research designs. There are always trade-offs’ (p. 162). The trade-off for other researches is that since the studied subjects were not on transnational advocacy networks, the generated or developed theories are not completely applicable to the organizational form studied in this research. The structure of TANs is variable, and rare are the organizations in the field that resemble another one of their type. Reviewing existing studies, no theoretical framework for TANs has been made, but rather for closely related fields and organizations. But if scholars and researchers have limited their work to what their studies are, we need to remain aware that it also understands what those studies are not – they are not theoretical frameworks of transnational advocacy networks’ strategies. The conclusions in the analysis later on will therefore be drawn combining the primary discussion of potentially relevant theories and concepts that will then be validated, reframed or dismissed after studying empirical data.

When drawing a theoretical framework of the strategic implications for transnational advocacy networks, parallels can be drawn with the more extensive findings on a similar organizational form – Civil Society Organizations. As explained in the first chapter, most TANs are CSOs but not all CSOs are TANS. Extending some of the theories developed on the subject of Civil Society Organizations is therefore suitable for the majority of transnational advocacy networks.
**Strategy**

The applicability of the term ‘strategy’ is widely limited to the typical profit-driven enterprises. Particularly fitting to the type of organization studied in this thesis is Mintzberg et al.’s (2003), who define strategy as:

> “The pattern or plan that integrates an organization’s major goals, policies, and action sequences into a cohesive whole. A well formulated strategy helps to marshal and allocate an organization’s resources into a unique and viable posture based on its relative internal competencies and shortcomings, anticipated changes in the environment, and contingent moves by intelligent opponents.” (p. 4)

Developing strategies assumes the organizations have goals and tools to measure the degree of success in reaching them. When evaluating the success or failure of a network, Keck and Sikkink (1998) identify five different stages where a TAN’s efficiency can be measured:

> “(1) by framing debates and getting issues on the agenda; (2) by encouraging discursive commitments from states and other policy actors; (3) by causing procedural change at the international and domestic level; (4) by affecting policy; and (5) by influencing behavior changes in target actors.” (p. 201)

After collection of the empirical material, the five stages where TANs’ efficiency were best measured according to Keck and Sikkink (1998) would serve as a reference when assessing the relative success of studied TANs. These five points are of course not specific enough to be used in a comparative analysis for example, but they unequivocally served as strong guides when came our time to analyze our empirical material and identify which characteristics would be used to measure the relative success or failure of a TAN.

**The Challenge of Transnational Strategy**

Transnationality poses however the strongest challenge when it comes to strategizing. If legitimacy is then a prerequisite for influence, how then face the challenge of building credibility transnationally? For most issues, there are sets of standards for what is considered best practice. In a transnational context it becomes problematic, especially when the advocated issue is a new one. When there aren’t existing institutions to be held accountable to, how then can the credibility and legitimacy of an organization be assessed, and if the cause advocated for is an emerging issue are the existing standards relevant? Brown (2008) identifies a second challenge that transnational advocacy networks must face in their pursuit of an influential position. The
TANs that are CSOs most often advocate for a cause that is value-based and try to impact on a level that is international. Governmental institutions however are held accountable on a national level. The third point Brown (2008) is one that we will not risk paraphrasing.

“Third, neither the value homogeneity nor the acknowledged governmental authority that ratifies societal ideals at the national level is available in the transnational arena. So organizational strategic choice and domain negotiations are critical for creating transnational standards and expectations. This is especially true for emerging issues and problems with polarized interests, where best practices or generally accepted solutions do not yet exist. Diverse initiatives across CSOs can generate innovative answers or improved understanding of problems, so encouraging different strategies is appropriate for many poorly understood problems. [...] Civil society leaders who can build coalitions and alliances across such differences can catalyze large-scale changes and impacts.” (p. 27)

The difficulties TANs are subjected to due to global governance institutions are however not the only challenges. We were faced with an organizational type with a complex structure and tremendous differences from TAN to TAN. The lack of theory on strategic theory applicable or even worth mentioning in the case of TANs was for us as authors a strong driving force. We were now uncovering the strategic implications for an organizational type that was surviving – increasingly developing even – and making strategic choices in a societal environment where ideals, rules and standards have not been established and are not widely spread and agreed upon.

For TANs it is often the organization’s mission, ’the values it seeks to promote and the strategies it uses to further them’ that will determine the future of the network. Assuming the created value is through influence which ‘depends on building legitimacy with political constituencies and target agencies’, the ‘operational capacities such as access to media and Congressional lobbies’ will require fairly different strategies than for example capacity-building organizations (Brown, 2008). Those capacity-building organizations face different questions:

“CSOs whose strategy emphasizes capacity building to enable client self-help, in contrast, often must enlist those clients in assessing needs, defining solutions, and implementing actions in order to co-produce new capacities that cannot be ‘injected’ into passive recipients.” (p. 9)

Transnational advocacy networks present us with an organizational form that requires a more complex management than is required for traditionally vertical structures. Even though such
networks are built to adapt to rapid changes in their environment, coordination is not the only challenge they are faced with. Partnerships almost systematically understand an effort of coordination in order to satisfy the cooperating parties needs - whether it is making sure their values and goals are compatible or balancing the individual actors’ interests and that of the alliance (Keck and Sikkink, 1998).

*In summary: TANs do have strategies, structures, and ambition!*

Taking a look back at the theory chapter, any reader can deduct where we have found a lack of applicable research and studies. First shocked that such an important stone had been left uncovered we came to the realization that it was up to us, students and citizens, to further explore this knowledge gap. The emergence of transnational advocacy networks was one of the many results of globalization and made very apparent the lack of transnational coordination structures and global governance structures. TANs highly reactivity to a constantly changing environment, and heavily relying on flow of information naturally adopted the shape of a network, transforming their organizational form into a tool itself. TANs aim to generally advocate for change and in doing so may opt to target governmental institutions. They are in that case subjected to the same legitimation processes that established those institutions in our society. Depending on what a TAN aims to target in order to advocate for change, the type of sought legitimacy will vary. Legitimacy is ultimately seen as a resource, a goal, a strategy and an overall challenge but a prerequisite if one aims to influence.
3. Methodology

With the proper theoretical background provided, this chapter will describe the assumed perspectives and assumptions for this thesis, from initial approach to the interpretation of the results. Further, we declare the methods and tactics used in order to ensure transparency.

3.1 Research philosophy

First of all, we need to address our premises regarding reality and knowledge. Both concepts are socially relative (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and the creation of knowledge will be a significantly different process depending on the epistemological and ontological approaches chosen. The same is true for the outcome of our study; in what ways it can be a contribution.

Social constructivism

Interest in how realities are made has led to the emergence of constructivism. The previous sentence contains clues about its nature: ‘realities’ in plural, and that they are ‘made’. Constructivists assume multiple realities in the sense that reality is something subjective to the individual; a worldview that is to a large degree made up of socially constructed phenomena. Constructivist theory starts with the idea and asks how it is constructed socially in the minds of humans and in interactions between them. Berger and Luckmann (1966) are prominent in their treatise on how knowledge and reality is constructed:

“Human expressivity is capable of objectivation, that is, it manifests itself in products of human activity that are available both to their producers and to other men as elements of a common world” (p. 49, emphases added)

This thesis finds itself within the social sciences and, furthermore, so does the topics and concepts treated. Organizational theory, institutional fields and strategy are all human constructs. Our detailed keywords such as legitimacy, influence, accountability, advocacy and so on are all subject to interpretation. Here, we treat these concepts as the ‘elements of a common world’ – that is, a shared understanding within the organization – that are expressions of the activity at hand: the organized advocacy for a cause. Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain that one form of objectivation is signification, referring to the production of signs that in turn are expressions of meaning. We wanted to examine the notions of legitimacy, and understanding
what this and other concepts mean to the people working with them was on an early stage deemed important.

**Whose construction?**

By constructivist logic, the interpretation of a phenomenon is itself a construction. Bjerke (in Gustavsson, 2003) states that a dialogue that is centered on social constructions will both confirm meaning and create it. The co-creation of social constructions is determined by the participating actors’ activity and control of the conversation, and which words are used (ibid.). Describing and explaining how something is understood and acted upon by other humans in a foreign context is done most accurately by letting the construction resemble the subjects to the largest possible degree. Having covered that we are dealing with social constructions and that they are subjects to interpretation, the spotlight has now shifted to what this interpretation is influenced by.

**Our pre-understanding**

Previous understanding is according to Gummesson (2000) based on a combination of personal experience and ‘intermediaries’ such as research and lectures. This will then serve as the cognitive background of each individual participating in a conversation, which in turn will partly determine the outcome (whose construction it is). Kvale (1997) emphasized the role of the researcher’s initial understanding when the purpose of an interview moves beyond being simply descriptive. In order to explain why or to contextualize, one has to have the right knowledge to do so and at the same time consider one’s own role and possible biases. This includes critique against own assumptions, selectiveness and influence (ibid.).

We, as the two researchers behind this thesis, share a similar academic background. We are students at the same four-year program in business and economics; both specialized in organizational theory and corporate strategy. This is the admitted backdrop that has had influence on both our motives and our interpretation of data. Apart from this, and the overall fact that we ourselves are humans with our respective life stories full of experiences, we aimed to consciously undertake the task with as little bias as possible.
3.2 Research approach

With the science-philosophical perspective as a background, we formulated our approach to how research is conducted, what results can be expected and how they should be treated.

Qualitative research

The methodology employed in this thesis originates from the purpose. In order to fully capture the complexity and depth of the empirical instances (to be described thoroughly below), a qualitative approach has been chosen. As described by Bryman (1988), qualitative research is fundamentally characterized by a focus on viewing, describing and understanding social phenomena, often from the perspective of the reporting subject. This standpoint requires awareness of interpretative lenses and frames that are present, both in terms of how the subject is interpreting and understanding their reality, and how the researcher(s) interpret and understand the subject’s statements (Bryman, 1988). Aligned with this, a qualitative approach is suitable as it emphasizes the importance of an epistemological foundation, and an interpretative focus of the social reality. From an ontological point of view, constructivist assumptions of social attributes being the result of human interaction – and not objectively existing out there – are highly suitable. (Ibid.)

Qualitative research is according to Alvesson and Sköldberg (1994) not solely an objective depiction of a given reality. It is, although empirically grounded, a deliberative research that opens up for the formulation of knowledge rather than confirming facts or truths within a locked domain. The tendency is for qualitative studies to include relatively unstructured and open-ended strategies for this reason - maintaining flexibility and avoiding a locked narrowing to a prescribed framework (Bryman, 1988). Bryman (2011) furthermore states that qualitative research often has a tendency of being inductive, here referred to as the process of drawing probable conclusions based on empirical findings.

Ethnography

As our research questions have both descriptive and explanatory elements a proper approach would be one that provides sufficient background and insight in the organizations studied. Moreover, the concepts we are dealing with, such as strategy, legitimacy, and influence, are social constructions; they cannot be separated from their context (see above). Hence, the chosen approach is an ethnographic one.

Ethnography is in its basic form the explanation of social actions within one culture understandable to members of another one (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994; Gustavsson, 2003).
The transferring of such actions are largely dependent on the context of the social system they take place in, in order for them to make sense to 'outsiders'. For this reason, *meanings, behavioral patterns* and *ways of thinking* are often emphasized in ethnographic studies (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994). Since ethnography was originally a method developed for anthropological studies of foreign cultures, it traditionally required spending prolonged periods of time with the subject of study and emphasized participatory observations by the researcher (ibid.). However, the method has been developed since and has been adapted to suit different scientific purposes. In our case, the studied organizations are geographically distant (transnational, actually) and we used them as case examples to extract data from. This comes close to what is casually referred to as ‘quick and dirty ethnography’, where the time and participation elements are reduced in favor of for instance richer data sourcing from each case and deeper analysis of the findings (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994). This is a common practice when the studied ‘culture’ is in fact a part of one’s own society, where an example is organizations (ibid.). Garsten (in Gustavsson, 2003) explained that the use of ethnography in organizations is about understanding how and why it is created, structured, changed, and how its members are shaped by it.

We combined interviews with relevant persons with complementary document analysis, which will be described further below.

**Inductive ethnography**

We wanted to keep our inductive aspiration of basing theoretical formulations in the empirical data. This is the first adaption of the ethnographic approach we made: the choice of staying close to the organizations studied so their reality is reported as accurately as possible, leading us to a form of *inductive ethnography*. In such studies it is customary to remain ‘empirically close’, that is, approaching data with an open mind and placing the analytical emphasis in it (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994). In metaphorical words, we wanted to analyze data from within the foreign world, given the local context, and report them back to our world. The other way around would be to remain in our world and look at the studied world from the outside. More on the model of analysis will follow below.

When data is open to interpretation in the way that we aspired to keep it, different theories can be applied and lead to different interpretations, which in turn will produce different results (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994). The nature and quality of the conclusions drawn is chiefly determined by the theoretical framework applied; that is, the new context the findings are placed in. Here, the critical point is to find and apply theory that does the data justice. Depending on the degree of inductivity, the theoretical framework (see chapter 2 above) is
more or less dominating. For the purpose of this thesis we settled for induction but quickly found that leaning towards abduction in some stages was both helpful and necessary. The realization that a purely inductive tactic, as is predominant in the realm of grounded theory (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967), would make data incomprehensible pulled us away from that method and pushed us towards a ‘softer’ and more allowing one.

**More on the role of constructivism**

With regard to the social constructivist perspective on the topic, each organization’s data was extracted and presented in a way that provides the reader with the relevant background. Understanding the nature of the concepts treated and following their analyses is severely problematic if using social constructivism without knowledge of their context, and to dismantle this problem the empirical data will be presented in a form of *thick description*. Thick descriptions of ethnographic material include the internal aspects of meaning (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994), which is of vital importance to our analysis.

Another aspect of ethnography that is connected to the constructivist perspective is the role of the researcher. Ethnography, according to Garsten (in Gustavsson, 2003) does not settle for the emic description – i.e., the tale as told by subjects – but aspires to move beyond it and interpret descriptions as *something*. Exemplified, the interviewee might talk about strategy without using the word, and in such a scenario we would interpret the statement as *strategy*.

### 3.3 Chosen methods of data collection

**Primary data**

The process of forming generalizations and either generate new or complete existing theories, is one that will indubitably be reinforced – in terms of validity – through the collection of primary data. This study requires existing data to be renewed and reoriented in a strategic direction. Potential meaningful generalizations can only be made through the collection of new information that will complete previously acquired knowledge (Gummesson, 2000).

**Semi-structured interview**

This study suggests a continuous flow of data, even throughout the process of dialogue with informants. Gathering data through interviews enabled the study to rely on verbal statements, and allows the reader to not only follow but also assess the validity of the logical process all the way to the conclusions that were drawn. Our goal was to awaken the reader’s analytical senses
and throughout the process allow them to ask themselves if they would have came to the same conclusions.

Research on this specific subject suggests that which data and where relevant information can be found is determined throughout the study and along what Gummesson (2000) calls a *journey*. Accordingly, interviews were an ongoing process throughout the study accompanied by continuous revisions and reconsiderations. An example of such a revision is that all interviewees were sent the transcript of the interviews and then returned them with modifications in the forms of complementary comments or clarifications. The addressed questions were closely related to our research questions and directed towards the context in which our study is oriented, enabling all collected information to be classifiable and potentially lead to relevant generalizations. The interviews did however allow space for information outside the predetermined questions.

One interview per TAN was conducted, a total of four interviews. They were done through video chat, and all fell within the time span of 45 minutes to an hour.

**Selection**

The choice of interview respondents is based firstly on the organization represented and secondly on the position or insight of the respondent. That is to say, the organization’s relevance and suitability for this thesis had first priority and after this selection followed the search of the person with the best capacity to answer the questions with credibility and substance. The method of selection can be seen as a hybrid between theoretical selection and typical selection. The choice of TAN was based on an evaluation that considered their different organizational dimensions. The aspects we assessed were the following, in no particular order (Table 1):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Age”</td>
<td>Relatively new or old?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Area”</td>
<td>Reviews the theme, or interest group represented. E.g. Workers’ rights,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>environmentalism, market conditions, peace advocacy…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Position”</td>
<td>A relationship-oriented aspect considering if the TAN is established as a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>partner with an institution or an independent actor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Function”</td>
<td>Addresses the activities of the TAN; if they only advocate, advocate +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>practical operations (e.g. distributes catastrophe aid), support to other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CSOs, or a combination of these</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Size”</td>
<td>Relatively big or small, in terms of both number of members and geographical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>presence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Differentiation grounds for the selection of TANs.

The purpose of these classifications was to keep track of the technical differences among the TANs to see in which way the next TAN differs from the previous one; to assess how similar or how different they are. Please note that these aspects make up a rough framework for quick assessment and do not aspire to suffice for a detailed description of the TANs.

Due to the heterogeneity among the organizations and their structures and roles, the criteria of targeting, say, the specific title of CEO or chairman is difficult. Therefore, the evaluation and selection of respondents was based on their perceived position - they may have titles such as coordinator, communicator, strategist, representative, manager, information, et cetera, all different in name but sharing the insight needed. Consequently, respondents had to be evaluated individually to assess their knowledge, authority, credibility and so on.

**Document Analysis**

Even though interviewing is the primary source of empirical data for this thesis, additional methods of collecting data was be employed for two main reasons. First, to safeguard against the risk that the interview lacked in quality, ended up being too superficial, or revealed to be of lower relevance for our purposes. Secondly, as is the case with most projects conducted within a finite time frame, this thesis is limited both in terms of time and resources available. This entails the use of already existing data as empirical contribution.
In order to extend the empirical body and give it more substance, relevant documents were gathered and analyzed. Analyzing documents does, apart from the previously stated reason of empirical complementation, serve a function of developing our understanding of the field. It can serve as an illustration that can reveal what is going on inside an organization in a more elaborate way than can be achieved from only considering the data itself (Bryman, 2011). Bryman (ibid.) further describes that in scanning documents for usable data one should also search for underlying patterns or themes.

**Selection**

In wide terms, ‘documents’ can in this context refer to official or unofficial material such as reports from governments, corporations and other organizations; policy documents, meeting protocols, and internal information; magazine and newspaper articles, and much more (Bowen, 2009). With regard to the variety among the types of documents available, the selection of documents for complementary analysis was based primarily on availability/access and on the perceived content of them. Among our case TANs, they had different amounts of document resources. In practice, we scanned through each organization’s website and chose documents that had any remote potential for containing useful information. The selection was based on keywords in their titles, descriptions or abstracts; words such as toolkit, guide, policy, instructions, practice, ‘how to’ and similar guided our search. A total of ten documents of various lengths were analyzed.

**Ethical considerations**

This study has addressed the four ethical principles for scientific research as treated by Bryman (2011) and Vetenskapsrådet (i.e. the Swedish Research Council; Vetenskapsrådet URL), namely the information requirement, the consent requirement, the confidentiality requirement and the use requirement. Vetenskapsrådet (ibid.) further clarifies that both the quality and honesty of the research as well as the protection of individuals must be considered.

The information requirement was met by providing all participants with all relevant information needed for them to understand their role in the research and make an informed choice to participate or not. We detailed not only what was expected of each participant but also explained the study and for which purpose it was conducted.

By making sure participants understood the study and their role in it, and that their participation is voluntary with no penalty for withdrawal, the consent requirement was addressed and fulfilled. Interviewees were informed of the brief contents of the interview in beforehand, and were asked for permission to record during interview before the actual audio-recording started (see Appendix 2 for the contents and order of our interview questions).
This shares some common ground with the third requirement of confidentiality. The recordings were authorized by the interviewee and then kept as locally stored files on our personal, password-protected computers. They were listened to only by us and then transcribed into documents that the interviewed person in question was given a chance to review before we used it as empirical data. In the paper, the informants were kept anonymous by structuring the case presentations so that the interviewed person is embedded as the representative informant but never addressed by name or alias. The use requirement was met as the information both directly and indirectly linked to this study has been kept and used for this study and this study only. Neither the transcribed interviews or any information about the interviewees or our communication with them has been used for any other purpose than this study.

3.4 Model of analysis

Alvesson and Sköldberg (1994) emphasized that qualitative research should follow a well thought-through logic and elaborate technique of treatment of the empirical data. This section will cover the methodology in analyzing the empirical findings to assure transparency and traceability in the upcoming analysis.

Narrative structure, content focus

The structure of the empirical material is presented in correspondence with the overall approach; thick descriptions of ethnographically studied case examples. Kvale (1997) suggests two main ways of structuring the material: categorization based on meaning, or a narrative structure. The former entails coding the interviews and documents based on perceived meaning, and then categorize into major thematic dimensions with a few subcategories each. This model resembles content analysis and is commonly used by inductive studies as they base the formulation of theory in the empirical findings; the conclusions are drawn more from patterns and correlation between the codes and categories. This method is appealing to us as we are examining meanings of and actions upon particular concepts, but to ensure the inclusion of context we wanted to move towards a model that kept the connection of these meanings and actions with their background. The other counterpart presented is the foundation for a narrative analysis. This means organizing the text in its context and reveal its meaning by treating it as a story.

Each of these two methods have benefits that suit our purpose. However, committing fully to either of them seemed inadequate as we both wanted to keep the context close yet invent a universal thematic system so that the case examples could be compared satisfyingly. Hence, the
chosen method of analyzing the findings resembles somewhat of a combination of the two. We applied the initial elements of a content analysis, reviewing all raw data and invented general categories based on the themes that were omnipresent in the data. These inductively produced themes then served as the backbone of the narrative presentation where sufficient background is included. The analysis following below (chapter 5) could then be conducted where common themes between the organizations could be compared with regard to each organization’s respective situation.

The categories applied where the following:

1. **Internal structure.** This category maps out the organizational features of the TAN in structural terms, mainly how it is governed or coordinated. Basic facts regarding size of boards, teams, units or such are included to provide a sense of proportion.

2. **Position.** Position, here, is the category where the TAN’s place and status is treated. The main question here is if the TAN is established as a partner with a policy-making institution, or an independent actor advocating from the ‘outside’.

3. **Members and stakeholders.** Not all people whose interests are represented are included as members. This third category includes who the members of the TAN are and what the criteria of membership might be, and who the stakeholders or interest groups are.

4. **Advocacy.** This last theme concerns the activities of the TAN. How advocacy is conducted, what specific actions and tactics are used; generally, how the stated purpose is put into practice.

These categories were applied to walk the reader through the cases and lets the data speak, but make sure it speaks of one thing at a time.

**Iteration**

An aspect of this method of analysis is the non-linear process of data gathering and analysis. The interviews where conducted over a relatively long period of time, and for this reason one interview could be completely transcribed and the transcript reviewed before another had been accomplished. True to the inductive tradition, themes were starting to emerge as the empirical body grew and the insights and realizations that followed came to guide further data gathering. An example of this is the selection of TANs to contact: the characteristics of the first TAN guided us in the question of what type of TAN to contact next.
Interpretation

This section has so far focused on the actual method of analysis without addressing the conclusions or how they are to be understood. As this thesis essentially assumes a constructivist perspective, the results of it were consequentially interpreted accordingly. This brings with it some points of consideration that will be clarified and discussed further below.

Triangulation for conclusions

The material was structured and analyzed following the logic we previously explained. To ensure generalizability and check for mismatches within each case, the interviews were completed with document data to the extent possible. This was described above and does not need further repetition here, but as it is a part of the analytical process we want to point out the conscious comparison of interview and document data from the same TAN.

3.5 Discussion

This concluding section of the chapter will put the whole methodology revised under the microscope. As with any choice situations, choosing something means deselecting something else, and inevitably that decision will have its pros and cons. The aim in this section is to go through methodological concerns and shed light on potential weaknesses, limitations, and alternatives.

Our ‘reality’, interpretations and everything philosophical

Describing ‘reality’ in qualitative research is a problematic enterprise, and especially in interpretative such, with regard to the researchers’ (our) role and influence in the process (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994). Van der Ven and Huber (1990) highlighted the dilemma being sensed by a social system means being a part of it, and this participation means having an effect on it. This affecting of the social system, in turn, makes it impossible to study the system completely isolated from one’s influence on it. Ergo, the findings and analyses based on them will be based on a ‘disturbed’ system. However, this ‘disturbance’ is more problematic when the aim is to find and report objective and existing phenomena, as in the positivistic or objectivist tradition. Within the context of this thesis, social phenomena is admittedly constructed in the interaction between social actors (see review of social constructivism above). Hence, the participatory influence we had in the interaction with subjects and data is not viewed hazardous but a natural element of the socially constructed reality we are describing. Our role were merely one of translating the findings into
However, the constructivist perspective cannot be used as an excuse to state that everything said and read is unquestionably true in its own context and leave it at that. We will not discard questions regarding validity, reliability and generalizability, rejecting them as oppressingly positivistic. This 'holy trinity' of scientific knowledge (Kvale, 1997) will not be ignored but treated below.

**Validity and generalizability**

Validity refers to the quality control authenticity; of how trustworthy the thesis is in terms of how well it mirrors reality and provides a better understanding of the field (Kvale, 1997; Bryman, 2011). In social constructionism, comparing results with reality is problematic since the elements are exactly that: social [re]constructions. Here, emphasis is instead placed in the coherence between our observations and the ideas developed from them; that is, the internal logic of interpretations and argumentation (Kvale, 1997). This coherence in observations was constantly tested during the ongoing process of collection of our primary data. Introducing each subject with semi-structured and open questions, we noted recurring themes, and their choice of vocabulary consistent with what we had selected in our theory chapter. Noting these reoccurrences suggested that the theories we had chosen to present were relevant to what was being observed in practice.

When assessing the validity in terms of generalizability of the results to other social environments, Bryman (2011) talks about external validity. Qualitative research tends to have a reduced vulnerability to accusations of generality if respondents are consciously selected in terms of their representativity and from what context they are fetched (Bryman, 1988). Bryman furthermore argues that the study of more than one case and by more than one researcher both aid in reinforcing the generalizability - two criteria that are both fulfilled in this study.

In the interest of working with integrity, it was a given that the individuals and organizations that had contributed to our research would be able to review the transcripts and provide side note comments, clarifications, modifications or complements. In other words, we deemed important that the first step towards working with valid observations would be to include our contacts in the process of understanding the collected data. Following this logic for every theory we had selected to include in our paper, we were able to test the validity of not only the theories we had chosen, but also test their relevance in the context of our research.

**Reliability**

The reliability of this thesis does not solely rest on internal factors, meaning on us as authors and how we as colleagues agree to interpret information. It is essential when considering how
reliable various findings are to assess if other researchers would obtain the same results and draw the same conclusions. Would it then be possible for another researcher to replicate our study and deduct the same findings? The extent to which this study is replicable determines what Bryman (2011) calls the external reliability; and the answer to our question here is that that possibility is relatively limited. The process during which the data was collected was ongoing and the importance of context in the case of transnational advocacy networks is one that cannot be ignored due to their natural dynamic structure and reactivity to a changing environment they aim to impact.

Choosing another path – Alternative methods, philosophies and their limitations

The choice of a methodology, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, understands rejecting certain methods and limits authors to work in a way that is, from an academic standpoint, viewed as cohesive as a whole and compatible with the other chosen methods. What would it then have meant to select a method such as Grounded Theory given the contextual and dynamic nature itself of our research? The coding process one engages in when following the process of such a method would have meant lifting words illustrating recurring themes that would have served the analysis. This study would have lost its meaning in terms of context. Instead of picking the most meaningful words in order to categorize, keeping the ideas themselves and categorize them as purposes made more sense for such an analysis.

The choice of leaving GT behind was however not only motivated by the strict delimitations caused by the method’s structured and rigorous classification processes. Leaving Grounded Theory behind was perhaps one of the decisions that were hardest to come to terms with, but was unequivocally motivated by our dedication to our purpose. When choosing to reject Constructive Grounded Theory, a method that could have perfectly worked with our study, the decision was based on what the actual purpose of this research was. Debating and discussing why in fact CGT would have worked, which we are convinced of, would have required a discussion taking us far from the purpose of our research and what we, as students and authors that are very invested in what we are researching, viewed as important to prioritize.

Grounded Theory would have provided us with a well-documented structure and extensive discussions surrounding that method that we were not able to benefit from by deselecting that path.

What other alternatives could we then have selected? What if we had chosen a deductive method of reasoning? The field in which this research is grounded is one where applying a general principle and deducing that it applies to specific cases would have gone against our
purpose, which is to discover the existing, changing and complex mechanisms transnational advocacy networks create and are subjected to. The fact that our study consisted in researching a fairly new type of organizational form where all meaning was embedded within the field, ready to be discovered, analyzed and studied, made the choice of an inductive reasoning a logical outcome of the choice of methodology. The advantages that a deductive analysis would have offered regarded the element of having a pre-understanding of the data collected. The comfort of such a method was appealing, but the sacrifice of meaning was one we could not concede. An alternative to that being an abductive inspiration to our induction was an option that facilitated the process of making sure the material collected was given its truthful meaning.
4. Findings

Having laid out the theoretical background and methodological characteristics of this study, we now move on to the empirical findings. As mentioned above, the data is presented following a design inspired by the thick description format. The chapter is divided into the presentations of each four cases respectively the BIAC, the TUAC, CIVICUS and GAMIAN, each structured after the themes described in chapter 3 (internal structure, position, members and stakeholders, and advocacy).

In accordance with our inductive approach and contained sensitivity to context, we took a stance of allowing the data to ‘speak’ as much as possible. This means that we have intentionally presented the data with extensive quotation instead of describing it through our own paraphrasing. We see this as the suitable way of keeping the authenticity of the findings and minimizing the influence of biased interpretation.

All quotes are unless stated otherwise sourced from the interviews with the representative of each TAN. The interviewees are however not mentioned by name or alias due to confidentiality concerns; the text has instead been tailored to make it clear what the source is, without having to reference each statement to a person.
Case TAN 1: BIAC

Background

The dive into the process of collecting information on Transnational Advocacy Networks started when a permanent deputy at the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, commonly called the OECD, introduced us first hand to an active organization of that type: the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD, or the BIAC. The results of our study through different ongoing methods of research are presented with this first piece of empirical material.

Developed for the purpose of working with the OECD that was founded in 1962, the BIAC has been in practice since that same year and is essentially an international business network. The primary purpose of the committee being to support the OECD in developing policies, they are a trusted partner to the organization who, wanting to collaborate and be provided with the input and expertise of the private sector representatives, officialized and formalized their partnership. As the voice of the private sector representatives in OECD countries, they advocate for what their stakeholders and members prioritize in business.

Internal structure

An Executive Board of twelve members, all ‘senior business leaders from OECD countries’, governs the BIAC itself. Additionally, nine individuals make up the BIAC Secretariat from various backgrounds, each with complementary areas of expertise (BIAC URL). This is the organizational head of their ‘international network of 2800+ businesses experts’, applying and sharing their expertise with ‘more than 30 policy groups’ (ibid.) These policy groups then work with the corresponding OECD policy department, in different constellations as "the structure of [their] engagement with the relevant OECD policy group may vary depending on the issue".

Position

The BIAC’s relation to the policy-making organization is tight and consistent, as they are a ‘partnered’ entity with the OECD. This position is explicitly both described and explained:

"BIAC and TUAC have been recognized and chosen as privileged interlocutors by the OECD. This decision left an opening for the possibility of recognizing other organizations as formal collaborators if they were deemed representative. The BIAC and TUAC have remained the only advisory committees to the OECD."

42
BIAC and the corresponding labor organization TUAC (to be treated separately further below) are currently the only participants established as 'formal collaborators', even though the possibility for other organizations to achieve the same status is mentioned. The use of ‘advisory committee’ - a name descriptive of their position - occurs in multiple instances: in the interview, on the official websites of both BIAC and the OECD, and in BIAC's full name.

The reason for this integrated relationship was in their words because:

“We have been in practice since 1962, since the foundation of the OECD. The OECD recognized the interest of collaborating with the private sector, which lead to structuring this collaboration very formally.”

“Our purpose was clear and our development justified by the need for our expertise in discussions held at the OECD.”

Recognizing the interest and need for their input, the BIAC adapted accordingly.

“BIAC simply focused on the questions that were the most relevant for the private sector throughout the OECD’s development.”

The BIAC’s position with the OECD is one of mutual benefit. The BIAC started out with the goal of supporting the OECD in development of policies, meaning that the OECD regards the BIAC as an input of expertise helpful to the development of accurate and economically favorable policies. The BIAC, on the other hand, is in a position where their members have an established opportunity to get their will through to the policy-makers affecting them. The OECD does however not rely entirely on BIAC for private sector input.

“The OECD also works less formally with direct representatives of companies, industries et cetera. Most of the time they do however work primarily with us.”

Whether these ‘direct representatives’ are from companies included in the BIAC's span of the private sector, or independent companies and/or industry organizations, is not revealed. Neither is it clarified if these companies have different interests or agendas than the BIAC. It does however make clear that the BIAC is not the only voice of the private sector at the OECD, even though they are the 'formal', primary partner.
Members and stakeholders

The committee’s stakeholders are all private sector actors within the OECD countries since the BIAC is their representative organization in influencing policies in favor of the private sector. Membership criteria are not specified, but

“In theory we include leading business and employers’ organizations that are members of the OECD countries.”

No explanation or further clarifications were provided as to what was considered a leading organization and what the criteria and characteristics for that assessment is.

The BIAC represents the OECD nations as the aggregate interests of each member country’s private sector. This representativity is exemplified:

“In Turkey, for example, we have three members. Each of them taken independently wouldn’t necessarily be representative of the private sector there as a whole.”

Here, having three members is a choice to ensure that the local private sector representativity is unbiased. On the question of whether or not the BIAC reports to anyone, the answer is initially no. They do however add that

“BIAC’s strategic orientations are defined by the Executive Board and ultimately by the BIAC General Assembly.”

BIAC is in other words accountable to their stakeholders in the sense that the General Assembly dictates what they should do.

Advocacy

Officially stated are their goals to generally ‘generate growth and prosperity’ (BIAC URL). Just how they advocate was illustrated by this example:

“This can be compared to what we see in Brussels, so called ‘dialogue with civil society’. But it is even more formal”

No further details were expressed on the topic.

Chosen as the voice of representatives of the private sector in OECD countries, their focus is on what is most relevant for their stakeholders. Actively following around 37 areas in politics, the
degree to which they engage with the political forum where they are established (OECD meetings for example) vary depending on whether the issue of concern affects the private sector. The specifics of the areas they prioritized were not expressly stated but a viable assumption is that they concern the seven they list on their homepage, namely Economic policy and taxation; Innovation and technology; Trade and investment; Public and corporate governance; Employment, skills and society; Sustainable development and green growth; and Emerging economies (BIAC URL).

The BIAC act as experts on subjects brought to their attention by their stakeholders and it is partly by stating their positions on various policies that they engage in international advocacy. Annual consultations with OECD Delegation Ambassadors allow for the committee to advocate on a different level where they set the agenda and bring it to the attention of governmental officials. An example of the closeness of priorities between the OECD and the BIAC is the fact that when the OECD formulated and released their guidelines for multinational enterprises, BIAC both participated in formulating them and further encouraged their members to comply to them (BIAC 2001). Another example of this advocacy relationship in practice is found in their document on policy priorities where it is described how the OECD wanted to strengthen entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), so they called the BIAC to come up with a response. The BIAC organized a sizeable workshop on the subject, jointly with the OECD (BIAC 2014a). This is the only practical example of their advocacy that we could find, and it is primarily a response to the requests of the OECD.

In retrospect, the BIAC’s statements on generally advocating for change were limited. During our research we did however only make note of this observation when we had collected all the empirical material. The BIAC did not further develop on the matter but brought some clarifications to a few points regarding their internal structure. This slight variation in statements by this TAN was however duly noted and further analyzed in the following chapter.
Case TAN 2: TUAC

Background

The Trade Union Advisory Committee, or TUAC, has historically been a part of the OECD since its official creation, but has been a part of the organization’s cosmos for even longer. In 1948, after a devastating war, the Organization for European Economic Cooperation or OEEC was founded to run the 'US-financed Marshall Plan' to rebuild the European continent. The TUAC worked alongside with the OECD’s predecessor and with the current organization since.

Having a recognized status as an advisory committee, they differ from other Civil Society actors. Working on ensuring the balance on global markets, their “affiliates consist of 58 national trade union centers in the 30 OECD industrialized countries” and together advocate for the interests of over 60 million workers. Through working groups, policy statements, Plenary Sessions, consultations and a number of other initiatives, the TUAC is the biggest TAN studied in this thesis. The complexity of their structure, the tremendous number of areas in which they work in, somehow results in a work output that coordinates each member and stakeholders’ interest. The case of the TUAC was the one to decrypt. The opportunity to analyze such a well-oiled piece of machinery that is this advisory committee leads us to wonder... Had we gotten the first best practice example of a Transnational Advocacy Network?

Internal structure

In their view, the TUAC's structure is one that is in essence one of a trade union. However, the scale at which the TUAC works – both geographically and in terms of how many organizations they collaborate with – hinted at a complex internal structure to coordinate and harmonize the multitude of activities the committee was engaged in.

As a network that had grown in parallel with the OECD, much like their younger sister the BIAC, the TUAC’s internal structure developed with an institutionalized backbone, making the procedures linked to their activities official and often formalized.

A high number of stakeholders – roughly ‘60 million workers in OECD countries’, not including their ‘partnerships since 2008 with the BRICS’ makes the TUAC a global advocacy network. We were introduced to the internal structure of the TUAC and started its decryption with the following statement:
“I am for instance part of the TUAC secretariat, which basically means we are the ones who operationalize the issues or the priorities that our affiliates set for us for the policy cycle of our policy year”

Our starting point was on an operational level at the TUAC secretariat, and continuing from there, the itinerary pursued:

“The political decisions, so to say, the formal decision-making takes place in the TUAC Plenary, which is convened twice a year, and that has representatives of all of our affiliates pretty much there. We then discuss our work plans, our priorities, etc. and the TUAC secretariat reports back on what has been achieved, what are the new issues emerging at the OECD, but also in other advocacy areas that we are covering such as the G20 or the IFIs”

Every step of the ongoing procedures were schedules at specific events where those activities were monitored, organized, discussed. The emphasis was always on just how many layers to each answer there were and would be every time we were provided with a piece of information that would give a description of an operation’s procedure. The truth of the matter can be illustrated with one of many issue-specific examples:

“We also issue [...] official TUAC statements, for instance for the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting which is the organization’s main event. But we also issue [...] TUAC submissions on OECD working groups and directorates work, on different processes, etc. where this is either requested by the OECD secretariat or where we feel the need to push for certain things or [...] flag where some things need to be adjusted or changed in relation to our priorities. We also work with the ITUC – the International Trade Union Confederation – rather closely on certain global issues, and on the G20 in particular as the L20, on which we also issue joint statements. So this is broadly it, but it has more layers to it and it really depends on the policy area that we are covering.”

This example on how the TUAC secretariat operationalizes illustrates just how many layers there are to every procedure. On top of that, each one of those activities, depending on which area of concern they are focused on, will vary considerably in processes.

The internal structure of the TUAC is one alike that of a well-oiled machine. There are so many layers to each one of their activities that the structure coordinating their work is at the image of the institution they were (on paper) ‘created for’, and primarily aim to advise.
Position

The position of TUAC resembles the one of BIAC (previously detailed in Case 1) in the sense that they emerged as a response to the development of the OECD, following the same process of integration:

“The TUAC has been within the OECD cosmos and as the OECD was initiated as an organization in the 60’s, the OECD was there since the beginning and had an institutionalized [...] role.”

This position, however, comes with few conditions and does not guarantee participation or influence as a given:

“[...] We don’t necessarily have access to every OECD working group or to every OECD meeting. We need to be invited to [them], and there are several procedures that are linked to it. So it is not as if we have a free pass at the OECD. But we certainly have a recognized status at the organization together with the BIAC. So that differentiates us from Civil Society actors in this respect, I would say. Although there is some progress within the OECD on their access.”

Being invited, the TUAC can have either a ‘seat’ (meaning active participation), an ‘observer status’, or they attend major OECD events and forums. The degree of participation furthermore varies depending on the policy area in question. (See also TUAC 2008.)

“There are certain institutionalized consultations that we are having [...] each year with certain working groups of the OECD for instance, whereas with other working groups we are not automatically invited [...] I must say that with the majority of the working groups, we do.”

“[...] Unless they’re closed meetings that only are between OECD member governments.”

Being integrated and working in parallel with the OECD does not, according to the interviewed person, change the independence of the TUAC as an organization:

“We can’t just walk into the OECD and participate in anything that the OECD is doing because we obviously are independent from the OECD and so is the OECD from us. We have a consultative status, which means that we have access to information, we can request
information, we can request to be at meetings or to hold ad hoc consultations also when an issue emerges that is new or that is urgent.”

This consultative status is in writing stated to ‘enable TUAC to be in ‘on the ground floor’ of policy discussions’ (TUAC 2008).

The position of the TUAC is throughout the interview mainly concerning their position in relation to the OECD. On the topic of other areas, of their position in relation to other policy-making arenas, it is mentioned that the TUAC plays a role at the G20 level as well. Affiliated with L20, the representation of labor interests at the G20 level, the TUAC has a position similar in function but different in nature:

“The OECD is very much the forefront of G20 governance right now. So automatically TUAC is very involved in monitoring this process and on commenting on the different steps involved.”

“[At the G20] the TUAC is very active as well, given that this is an OECD instrument but at the same time it goes much more beyond [...] It is a completely different operational structure and there are other actors involved. It is yet another work field for the TUAC, because there we take on more of the monitoring [...].”

Members and stakeholders

The TUAC stakeholders are primarily their own members, but it is soon revealed that their efforts reach and affect stakeholders beyond their own affiliates. The 58 national trade union centers – or sixty-something million workers – are not the only countries and labor forces affiliated with the TUAC.

“As the OECD has strategic partnerships since 2008 with the BRICS, we now also have associate members from these countries from Brazil, Indonesia, Russia and South Africa. So these [countries] do not count in the 60 million workers that are with the national trade center union that are affiliated to us – this is on top of that.”

“We wanted to make sure that trade unions representation and workers interests from those countries are reflected in our efforts within the OECD working groups, consultations, or wherever we have access to participate, when they are concerned.”
Regarding membership criteria and the evaluation of members, no differentiation is made between more and less successful organizations:

“I wouldn’t say that there are leading or non-leading trade unions.”

Not only do the TUAC expand in terms of nations included. Their official website mentions the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as organizations that TUAC affiliates are also affiliated with; many TUAC members are also members of other labor organizations. These will not be treated at length here; the point is to illustrate how the TUAC is embedded in relationships with other similar organizations representing the same interests, to extend their reach. TUAC is moreover itself a member of the Council of Global Unions. This relationship structure is, according to the interview, for strategic reasons:

“We’re cooperating with the other trade union structures on the global or European level, or regional levels. So we don’t need to cover everything by ourselves, we just need to make sure that there is an exchange with other trade union partners and organizations, and keep that communication flowing, keep consulting each other on policy areas that are now so intertwined and linked in global governance or in global value chains, for instance.”

In the very broad sense, all workers covered by either the TUAC or their cooperative partners are their indirect stakeholders affected by their advocacy.

Advocacy

The activities of the TUAC regarding what they advocate are as simple as their internal structure – simple in theory, complex in reality and in practice. Fortunately, they were candidly explained:

“[...] there are classic trade union priorities that are pretty much obvious and that are relevant in times of the economic crisis and our recovery, which is pretty much expected from us to be pushed for, such as job growth, job creation, addressing vulnerable groups and labor markets, ensuring sustainable economic growth, fair growth, inclusive growth, fair wages, progressive taxation, [...] So this is something that we are automatically pushing for, where I would also say we have great expertise in. And we can also build on studies or statements that we have already released in the past and, so to say, have an extended historical memory about certain economic approaches and policy concepts that we are advocating for that are updated throughout the years – and especially now with the crisis. And so we are looking for updates, we are looking for innovation of these concepts.
But we are looking for the same goals in the end – to create jobs, to create decent quality jobs, quality work and fair distribution of wealth.”

This is what the TUAC advocate for, what they work towards achieving, the reason why every stakeholder and members’ needs seem to be coordinated – they all have these goals in common.

A last noteworthy fact is that John Sweeney, former president of the TUAC, during his time a president personally participated and debated with OECD ministers, businessmen and leading academics on a wide range of issues including globalization and climate change (TUAC 2008).
Case TAN 3: CIVICUS

Background

In the interest of mapping out the different actors that impact TANs’ strategic mechanisms, it was naturally that we turned our attention to a slightly different type of organization. These advocate networks are present in different forms, as we will see with the case of CIVICUS.

This World Alliance for Citizen Participation was founded in 1991 by CSOs that identified a need to reinforce and promote citizens’ participation in our global governance. Advocating for this particular cause, they also have the particularity of supporting civil society and citizen action through different projects where they actively participate in planning strategies for other smaller transnational advocacy networks that account as members of CIVICUS. As a ‘unique international civil society organization in the sense that it is one of the few that are international and based in the global south’, they work in roughly ‘145 countries, typically smaller NGOs’ and most commonly with ‘national organizations’.

Our interest in CIVICUS grew as our collection of empirical material showed a steady pattern for types of TANs that had developed in parallel with – but also within governmental organizations. When mapping out what the strategic mechanisms for TANs are, it is important to choose organizations that encompass as many elements that characterize this broad organizational type and, in that same logic, identify the different factors that influence their decisions. CIVICUS is ‘representative of civil society as a whole’ which provided us with the strategic implications for smaller transnational advocates but also, the perspective of an organization with a strengthening function working continuously with strategies to gain influence.

Internal structure

In the first chapter we introduced the idea of transnational advocacy networks that were also civil society organizations. This category of TANs characterizes CIVICUS, which also reminds us to reiterate that most TANs are CSOs but not all CSOs are TANs. Induced by decentralizations, CIVICUS has adopted a way of working that consists of spreading out their representatives across the 145 countries they work in, giving them the opportunity to consistently have an overview of situations and contexts to not only do their own advocacy but also protect the so-called ‘civic space’.

This multi-lateral repartition of responsibilities within the organization allows for each actor to become an expert at local, national, regional and international levels. Coordinated by ‘the founding Board of Directors composed of distinguished figures in civil society drawn from 18
countries on six continents’, CIVICUS’s internal structure is predominantly one of delegation, that consists of enabling others to become advocates for their cause, trying to avoid the implications of hierarchical practices. The importance of context in the operationalization processes of this organization is most obvious when taking into account the following statement:

“We have different ways of operating in the sense we always try to make sure that all of our partners and members lay at the heart of whatever we do.”

This statement is further supported in writing as ‘organizational values are the shared values that underpin your work as an organization and your relationships [...]’ (CIVICUS 2011c), emphasizing the importance of shared values and unity.

The inherent distrust in international organizations was a new factor we were introduced to and an important perspective when reflecting upon which way is the best way. Without this perspective, analyzing the strategic implications would lead to the presentation of 'best-case practices' that simply would not apply to all the organizational types that TANs encompass.

**Position**

Contrary to the previous cases of the BIAC and TUAC, CIVICUS is independent in the sense that they developed from 'scratch', on their own. From the 1991 initiative, CIVICUS built the organization they are today independently of governance institutions (compare with the development of the BIAC and TUAC in parallel with the OECD).

One clear aspect of the position of CIVICUS is their span; their direct or indirect presence in the world:

“We have networks all over the world, so we can ask people who knows about a particular region or a particular context, so to know about the global context we just double check there.”

Through building and maintaining a strong and wide network, CIVICUS does not only pursue their purpose of strengthening global civil society but also enhances their own machinery with the benefits of this global exchange of information.

Explaining the driving factors behind their position, the interviewed person refers to both history/age and uniqueness in purpose:
“CIVICUS has been in circulation for a while now, and because we are seen as one of the unique [...] civil society [organizations] that intend to strengthen the civil society sector. In that sense, we have a UN representative in Geneva at the Council; we have a UN representative in New York. At the UN general assembly they are very much plugged in to the debates that are happening...”

CIVICUS’s position as a supporting and coordinating function for global civil society is moreover reflected in their efforts in connecting local CSOs to the global policy-making arenas where possible.

“The UN Human Rights Council is a political arena where we help get local organizations on the ground. The Council is very unique in the sense that civil society has a very important role at the universal periodic review process, [...] there is a government report; there is a report by national institutions, and a civil society report so that is very important.”

“It is difficult for national NGOs to go to many of these multilateral forums in New York and Geneva because of cost and visa, so we offer a number of recommendations.”

From these statements we find that CIVICUS tends to use their position to help the position of global civil society, rather than grabbing the opportunities and keeping them to themselves.

**Members and stakeholders**

The interrelation between CIVICUS and their members and stakeholders is one that is at the heart of this international civil society organization. Essentially consisting of ‘smaller NGOs, typically national organizations’, this TAN even expands their horizons through the consultation of their ‘trusted partners’, not only to stay informed about citizen-action on the ground and to verify their information, but also to reach to other groups who could benefit from a partnership and their support. Membership criteria is in fact seen as a legitimizing factor, as it provides an ‘objective filter for selecting appropriate members’ and thereby constitutes a form of quality control which is beneficial for legitimacy, but also for credibility and independence (CIVICUS 2007).
CIVICUS is an organization that carries out their advocacy and strengthens civil society and citizen-action worldwide. Their criterion for including other activists, and civil society actors and organizations follows this directory:

“We have a membership policy, but of course the first and foremost is that the organization must subscribe to the values enshrined in the UN declaration of human rights, they must have a track record of human rights protections, you know, that they are in civil society, [...] it’s oftentimes word of mouth. They are introduced to us by a credible partner, sometimes there are cases where we are not sure sometimes, so what we do is we’ll ask someone else in the country. We check with them. But a lot of our members and partners are actually umbrella organizations, civil society umbrella bodies. So in that sense they are representative of civil society as a whole. [...] Many times they are old and trusted partners, sometimes they are new partners and we would ask a trusted partner about [them].”

Members of this TAN rely on CIVICUS as much as CIVICUS relies on them. The strengthening and capacity building function that CIVICUS has for these national organizations and smaller NGO’s is as meaningful as the pursuit of CIVICUS’s goal. After all, what meaning would their advocacy have if they were not actively supporting citizen-action? These members ‘have their own expertise and experiences.’ They work in different ways and ‘some of them are more dedicated towards assertive analysis, whereas some are concerned with doing on-the-ground mobilization with local communities’.

Accountability is treated more extensively in their written material, where CSOs are strongly advised to ‘always report back to the community’ (CIVICUS 2011a). CIVICUS identifies four levels of accountability for CSOs: ‘upward to donors and regulators, downward to beneficiaries, outward to peers, members and partners, and inward accountability to staff, board and volunteers’ (CIVICUS 2014).

Advocacy

On the topic of their advocacy, CIVICUS can here be functionally divided into two main areas – their activities as a strengthening and promoting organization, and their own advocacy efforts. CIVICUS’s advocacy is derived from the general slogan proclaimed on their website: "We exist to strengthen civil society and citizen action around the world" (CIVICUS URL).
In practice, this is done in different ways:

“We use a variety of strategies, I mean one of the things we do is we organize meetings where people can exchange best practices, I think we’re trying to move away from using the term “capacity building” which I think is more of a top-down approach, it’s like that organizations on the ground don’t have capacity and need to be empowered – in fact, they may have a lot of capacity, so we try and organize exchanges and workshops where people can interact with other people from similar organizations as equals and learn from each other.”

These activities are characterized by a close connection to the grassroots; CIVICUS has the approach of facilitating existing initiatives and connecting people to it, rather than starting new networks. Having this approach can help bypass or ease some of the challenges CSOs face. Some CSOs share the same objectives, but employ different strategies. Another problem mentioned is the one of CSOs being capable of advocating, but are lacking access to the right international forums.

“We have organizations on the ground to identify opportunities to engage with the [UN Human Rights Council], but we also work with them closely on these issues. I think the greatest [way] we really support our partners is by connecting them to other organizations, to other activists, that are facing similar issues and to learn and to exchange experiences.”

These activities make up a large part of CIVICUS’s work. However, they are nonetheless a TAN themselves:

“We help others, but we also do our own advocacy. For example, protecting civic space – that is the freedom of expressions, association and assembly – lie [...] at the heart of what we do. And also promote civil society participation in the decision making process.”

Apart from promotional advocacy, and from connecting and coordinating, CIVICUS puts effort into spreading information and building knowledge. Electronic newsletters are continuously sent out; the magazine e-CIVICUS comes out weekly, their Civil Society Watch bulletin every two months, and finally they produce their annual report called The State of Civil Society. Together they cover news on global debates, threats to civil society, general updates, and a global overview of the development of civil society. Adding to this, a rich database of online resources is available on their website, among which we found the documents we examined.
When conducting advocacy as a CSO, we asked what the most important thing is. The answer is very illustrative and explanatory, so we chose to quote it at length:

“I think that it’s very important to enable people to speak for themselves. It’s very important if you’re doing advocacy in Ethiopia, you should provide space for people from that country to be able to speak. As a strategy [it is] good for you to be able to speak too, so you can do that, but it is important to enable people to speak for themselves. So that’s the first thing. The second is to connect, across different civil society organizations and many different types – each one of them play a role. Some use more of an insider approach; that is to work through the system. Some play outside, they protest, they pressure governments from the outside. Some of them are inside as well as outside, as we are oftentimes at CIVICUS. And it is important for all of these organizations – whether you are a community based organization, whether you are a think tank – to actually connect with each other. [...] It is important to connect, and not to duplicate the things that we are doing, but multiply what we are doing.”

An example of how advocacy can be facilitated is the alignment with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set up by the UN in 2000. In short, the MDGs are eight major goals for development in human rights, governance and democracy, which should be fulfilled by 2015. CIVICUS points out that governments are the ones responsible for achieving them, and that this fact can provide CSOs with leverage in their advocacy; especially if transnational collaboration can be coordinated to promote this change in each country as one (CIVICUS 2011a). The governments’ accountability for reaching the MDGs is beneficial because they are goals that ‘thousands of civil society organisations have advocated for decades’ (ibid.).
Case TAN 4: GAMIAN

Background

In most of the cases studied, the networks had been established for years. Half of the organizations we collected data from had established themselves and developed in parallel with the governmental institutions they aimed to influence. In order to get a full picture of what being a Transnational Advocacy Network is like, we needed to gather information on organizations of that type with visible differences from the other studied cases. Advocating for mental health awareness and initiatives, GAMIAN was founded in 1997 by 12 advocacy groups and associations.

This international non-governmental organization and transnational advocacy network works on many projects within their area of expertise ranging from making the stakeholders – patients – meet with policy-makers, or through seminars and conventions where the patient becomes a spokesman. In the case of this particular TAN, the stakeholder is very clearly at the center of their activities.

The prospect of analyzing the strategic implications for a TAN that was founded more recently and that advocates for a cause that is met by considerably less awareness than fair trade or human rights, was highly anticipated. First, however, a presentation of the dominant themes and characteristics of this organization was needed.

Internal structure

The internal structure of this TAN overlaps with the nature of their member and stakeholder relationships. Their members are at heart of this organization and their whole internal structure is based on putting those patients forward, with a board consisting essentially of those members. Those patients are in government bodies, the board itself and the general assembly. GAMIAN then ‘enrolls patients and patient participation activities’, meaning they ‘don’t have members of caregivers or professionals, it has to be a patient organization’.

The members of the network elect a Board where each one of those board members have to be from different countries. The executive director explained:

“12 different countries have a board, and then the board elects an executive committee, which means president, a vice president and a general secretary”.

58
Position

Within this thesis, GAMIAN differs from the other studied TANs in the sense that they are not integrated and/or partnered like the BIAC and TUAC, nor are they integrated in a global ‘supporting’ network like CIVICUS. Certainly, GAMIAN collaborates with other organizations as well as maintains as much presence and dialogue with their targeted policy-making institutions as possible; yet they are the most ‘detached’ example here. With GAMIAN, the position theme is more future-oriented; what is emphasized is their ambition, rather than explaining the position already reached. On this topic, the aspiration is stated on the website:

“GAMIAN-Europe, as an informed and effective advocate, is seeking to become a powerful and trusted point of reference for the main EU institutions and other organizations and stakeholders seeking the views of patients” (GAMIAN URL)

Please note that becoming an advisory entity with the ‘main EU institution’ is a goal declared by GAMIAN-Europe, the European subsector of the global GAMIAN, and is used here as one example of their position-related ambitions.

Members and stakeholders

As mentioned earlier, the members of GAMIAN are very much the heart of this organization. They are their advocacy tool, at the center of their strategy, and believed to be their most important resource to impact those who can bring changes to society. They are therefore sent to the front of those discussions.

"We especially try to organize face-to-face meetings between policy makers and patients, people who are experts by experience. So we try it by having representatives of our members at the meetings of the parliament. For instance, people who have been suffering from bipolar disease or schizophrenia, give testimony and are the spokesmen of the patients, and that we try to organize by inviting people to seminars or to conventions, to give them the chance to exchange with patients."

As an Associate member any organization can bring their support to GAMIAN. Engaging in their activities would mean becoming a full member of this organization and requires subscribing to their declaration of honor stating amongst other things that “in the board of [their] associations patients are represented and in [their] activities patient involvement is guaranteed.” This document can be filled on their homepage and states:
“The organization must be patient-driven. This means that the needs and views of patients drive the organization’s strategy, policies and activities in a significant way and that the organization is capable of representing the needs and views of these patients.”

**Advocacy**

GAMIAN is single-handedly devoted to advocacy for their cause, differentiating them from CIVICUS but familiarizes them with both BIAC and TUAC. The top priority issue within GAMIAN’s span of concern is the general combating of stigma and exclusion. From this, the advocacy is adapted and put into practice in more than one way:

“Our activities can be divided into two parts. The first one can be called top-down. We try to give information and education to our members. So therefore our strategy is to bring together local members at least once a year, maybe twice a year, in a face-to-face context in a general convention or at the regional seminar where the people can learn from each other and exchange experiences, and that gives them kind of affirmation and motivation to go on. We also try to find out what our members’ view is by organizing, on a yearly basis, some Internet questionnaires [where] people can give their opinion of different topics. We’ve done it on stigma, on physical and mental health, on mental health in the workplace and so on. And then we have, on the other hand the bottom-up action. We try to translate what we learn from our members into actions; to the European governmentship, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the WHO, […] and meeting of interest groups of members of European parliament who are interested in mental help issues. We discuss specific items and try to translate what our members are saying to those people in the Parliament or the Commission.”

The face-to-face method is regarded the single most efficient way to advocate (see the second quote on the previous page). These personal encounters constitute a cornerstone in the advocacy strategy, but it cannot stand alone and must be completed with for instance the production and distribution of information:

“But it’s not the only one, you have to support it with booklets; we are producing for instance a booklet on bipolar disease […] and we have our reports of the conventions, and so on. But face-to-face seems to be the most effective.”

One of the external parties that GAMIAN seeks to influence is the media, both written (e.g. newspapers) and broadcasted (radio and television), because of their large public audience. Big
events facilitated through mass media coverage can help raise awareness of mental illness, and here the recent Germanwings crash was mentioned as an example. The interviewed person also mentions that politicians are very dependent on their relation with the media, and hence media influence can be a step in influencing politicians.

Measuring influence is deemed ‘very difficult’ with reference to the nature of the issues GAMIAN is concerned with. Measuring the decrease of stigma against mental illness, as an example, it is hard to see short-term results:

“We have tried to organize some questionnaires with our members – in 2006, and we repeated it in 2010, and we will repeat it now in the coming year. To see if there has been some changes in the attitude of neighbors, [...] of colleagues or employers [...] But the results has not been very positive, because it has not been getting better five years later.”

“I have [been] engaged in mental health now since 25 years and in 25 years I can see that there has been a lot of change. In a five or ten years period it’s not so obvious”

The way GAMIAN carries out their advocacy is very different from the methods chosen by the other studied TANs. These vast disparities in many characteristics further reinforced the argument that we had indeed selected TANs that were very different and representative of this the complex organizational form that is a TAN.
5. Analysis

This chapter will connect all four cases to each other, with the purpose of comparing them and thereby highlighting their differences and similarities. The structure from the case presentations is further kept here in the sense that the themes (internal structure, position, members and stakeholders, and advocacy) are preserved, providing a convenient overview. The theory presented in chapter 2 is brought in here to examine the findings in the light of legitimacy. The analysis will then be summed up with a narrative of each case TAN, telling their story in a new way.

Connecting the empirical findings to what has been said on the topic in theory will be the foundation for the upcoming formulation of conclusions.

Internal structure

This theme is centered around the organization in structural terms, and consequentially the legitimizing mechanisms will be mainly organizational. Legitimacy, here, is mainly sourced from institutionalist processes such as isomorphism and other consequences derived from the organizational attributes.

Within the scope of this study, structuring the organization is the first strategic choice the TANs make once allies are found and a common purpose is settled. Seeing as TANs are networks by default, much of the organizational structure is determined already which delimits the organizational customization to questions of governance and operations.

Institutional isomorphism is therefore limited to these areas – the TAN can have operational units isomorphic with the institution’s, but the overall organizational form will remain a network.

Governance

Observing and comparing patterns in governance structure, it appears that what is most common is to elect a representative board that coordinate the TAN’s activities. Here, theory on network organizations (see chapter 2.1) becomes the relevant tool to frame and provide meaning to the findings. Network management is present in all four cases and the governance is similar among them. The BIAC and TUAC however represent larger numbers of members in comparison with the other two, but the basic mechanisms seem to be the same; the board is the coordinator responsible for who qualifies to join and sets the agenda for their advocacy operation. Buono’s (1997) managerial skills include identifying allies, an awareness shown by
all four TANs studied. The belief system as the ‘glue’ holding the organization together, treated by Matti and Sandström (2013) and emphasized by Kiel (2011), is a principle we find central to effective TAN management. This centrality is reinforced when adding that networking is a part of the advocacy conduct as discussed by Johansen and LeRoux (2012). The legitimacy of relevance here, then, is primarily associated with the functionality of the organization. Cognitive legitimacy is revealed here through the comprehensible structure, through the eased cooperation between the TAN and both their partners as well as with the targeted institutions. Networking, connecting through networks, we regard as a practical action and it is treated under the advocacy theme below.

**Operations**

Within this theme, *operations* refer to the organizational structuring and division of activities. That is, who does what and when; *what* is actually done will be treated under the fourth theme which is advocacy.

Let us first look at the cases of the BIAC and TUAC. From the strict organizational point of view of their operations, the structure in which they carry out their advocacy operations was developed to optimize their collaboration with the institution they were intended to advise – the OECD. Their working groups were therefore set up in correspondence with the OECD’s, enabling their collaboration subject by subject, pairing working OECD task forces with the experts to bring the perspective on the issue from both the TUAC and the BIAC. This mirroring is another example where cognitive legitimacy is present (see for instance Suchman, 1995) - the adaption to the OECD should increase legitimacy through being perceived as similar and easy to work with.

Assuming that a certain degree of institutional isomorphism is taking place, is it *coercive* or more of a mimetic or normative nature? DiMaggio and Powell (1983) differentiate between these as they occur for different reasons. They describe the coercive isomorphism as rooted in a pressure from the external environment, but is that exclusively the only possible source of coercive isomorphic pressure? Assuming that the environment is the pressuring force on an organization because of the way it determines the organization’s ‘fate’, we may borrow and apply this logic to this discourse. If a TAN is trying to adapt itself to a policy-making institution, then that institution has a power leverage in the sense that its approval or disapproval will determine the TAN’s degree of influence. Whether this adaption is coercive or voluntary is a question one might ask – are the BIAC and TUAC structured the way they are because they find that it increases their influence, or is it because their influence is critically reliant on adapting to
the OECD? This question leads us into the next topic – can a position analysis reveal mechanisms that help explaining this phenomenon?

Position

Who holds an influential position and who does not so far remains unanswered. The BIAC and the TUAC benefit from an established relationship with the OECD, which within this study is the most successful position, seemingly preferable if not even desirable. To which degree their position is beneficial can be deducted by looking at the number of political forums in which the TUAC has subsequently been granted access and where their input is needed. One can only assume that the position the OECD has given them by ensuring a privileged dialogue with their TAN serves as a legitimizing tool to further ‘justify’ their presence and input on other policy-making forums. GAMIAN faces a similar situation as they aspire to establish themselves as an advisory entity with major EU institutions, much like the OECD–BIAC/TUAC relationship. Assuming that they share the same ambition, a comparison between GAMIAN and the BIAC and the TUAC on this matter might shed light on factors determining their success.

Position analysis would include partly an assessment of each TAN’s current situation, and partly what position is being aimed at, if such an ambition exists. The aspiration to change one’s position will put the time dimension of legitimacy into the picture: the need of gaining, maintaining or defending it (see for example Suchman, 1995; Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). Generally speaking, merely keeping a position should lead to a focus on maintaining legitimacy, whereas moving forward and increase participation and influence would instead put focus on gaining legitimacy. Here, the BIAC and TUAC can be categorized as examples of TANs that are mainly occupied with maintaining their position and, in effect, their legitimacy. The TUAC does indeed enjoys a privileged position, they do not however benefit from any ‘free passes’ and rely on invitations to participate in those discussions. Following Suchman (1995) and authors Ashforth and Gibbs’ (1990) logic, the TUAC would be aiming at keeping their current status and position. GAMIAN on the other hand has a stronger need and ambition to win more ground, and so their focus should be on gaining legitimacy as a means to achieve this goal.
**Origins**

We figure that the position of a TAN should have at least some connection to its original foundation. The BIAC was, in simple terms, created to fulfill a need of the OECD and tailored accordingly. The TUAC was an organization that existed before the OECD but whose input had been established to be of value to governmental institutions. Both TANs have historical bonds to the institution they aim to influence. CIVICUS and GAMIAN were both created from scratch, and both by a group of CSOs coming together around a common issue. Gaining legitimacy – any kind of legitimacy – is something all four had to work on at some point, but the difference seems to lie in the degree of legitimacy needed to be gained. Here, the four TANs differ in the nature of their initial establishment period. The BIAC being ‘needed’ and developed with the OECD, and the value of the TUAC’s input being already established, the TANs were ‘requested’ to be present from the creation of the OECD. GAMIAN was created without those attached strings, an attribute they share with CIVICUS. The difference between these two is perhaps that GAMIAN has a more explicit ambition to gain influence on EU institutions, whereas CIVICUS’ operations are less institution-focused and have a wider, all-round aim of strengthening civil society. These differences between the four makes it unnecessary to detail which types of legitimacy were gained – on this topic we choose to leave the discussion with the statement that they all had different preconditions. Moreover, not only the preconditions regarding developing with an institution versus developing outside it is differentiating them. They also have different aspirations, as has already been introduced. CIVICUS is the distinct example here, as they conduct advocacy but it is not their entire purpose. This leads us into the question of what a TAN might actually want in terms of positioning.

Zooming out from this discussion of getting the ‘free pass’, the higher-level question we found ourselves asking is whether or not a free pass is even possible to obtain. Temporarily assuming that such a position is possible, is it undoubtedly the most favorable end goal for all TANs? Put differently, what is a preferable position for each purpose? There is furthermore a difference between being given space and taking it. Is it necessary to be ‘selected’, or can one aggressively take space through pressure? Influence should be achievable regardless of what an institution thinks of you, only by different means and with different amounts of effort. Hypothetically, if an institution will not grant you their acceptance, you could still influence them from the outside if you mobilize enough public pressure. Depending on the situation and which road is ultimately chosen, this choice of working from the ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ will lead to different ways of viewing legitimacy. This point is the first potential embryo of a strategic framework, and we will return to this argument in the upcoming conclusions chapter.
If a free pass means full participation and guaranteed influence to a maximum degree, it might at the same time mean that the pass-granting institution exercises control, coercion or manipulation over one’s advocacy. Complying too much to the targeted institution risks leading to a disconnection from the TAN's members or interest group. Moreover, any perceived cooperation between a TAN and a particular institution might have negative repercussions as we have seen in the case CIVICUS who must remain aware of the fundamental distrust in governing institutions many of their stakeholders and supporters live with. The association of their organization with any sort of political agenda might lead to the loss of members. Such a 'locked' position could, based on our previous discourse on member representativity, backfire and harm the TAN's legitimacy as perceived by their members and stakeholders. This connects our analysis to the third theme.

**Members and stakeholders**

*Members and Stakeholders* was the category presenting and covering the information regarding the nature of the relationships those network organizations have. As we examine those members, their relationship to the Boards, the interactions between associates, and the perceived values from being part of a TAN, we embarked on a journey uncovering more and more dimensions revealing the very central role that stakeholders and members play.

**The members**

Two initial questions on the topic of membership is if the TAN is expanding it – bringing in new members – or if the members are a static set of affiliates. This will differ depending on who the members are. In the case of the BIAC, the members are national employer’s associations represented through their BIAC membership. As the BIAC includes members from countries that are members of the OECD countries, and regulates to some extent to assure the representativity of each nation’s private sector (three members from Turkey, as having only one would make generalizabilities impossible to confirm).

Expanding by having more members join the TAN raises the issue of membership criteria. This makes relevant the concept of *linkage legitimacy* mentioned by Bitektine (2011). Relationships and associations with actors perceived as highly legitimate would enhance one’s own legitimacy – are rotten apples avoided?

Apart from their ‘OECD countries’ and ‘country representativity’ criteria, the BIAC only has one more criterion, which is briefly mentioned as ‘leading business and employer organizations’. The word ‘leading’ is highlighted here because it hints at some type of evaluation or ranking of potential member organizations. The TUAC, which is the TAN that has the most similarity both
in structure and position, does not express this type of assessment. On the contrary, our respondent from the TUAC actually said that they ‘wouldn’t say that there are leading or non-leading trade unions’. CIVICUS expresses membership criteria based on evaluation. Apart from confirming that the organization’s values and activities are aligned with the UN declaration of human rights, the potential member is often introduced through ‘credible partners’, that is, that a trusted partner verifies a member as appropriate. Being ‘leading’ or not is not really necessary, instead a third party is used in evaluating if the ally is a fit or not.

The criteria for joining GAMIAN are less focused on success or reputation and more on what the member attributes are. A crucial point is that they are either patients or representatives of patients. Though not completely defined, being a ‘patient’ is being a stakeholder, which is the attribute GAMIAN regards as most significant in their membership philosophy.

**Support and pressure from members and stakeholders**

According to Berg and Jonsson (1991), a strong sense of unity in internal values for the cause advocated is what makes a TAN exist. To get an idea of the impact of supporting and pressuring members, let’s use the examples of our case studies and see if we can divide them into two categories. Taking the example of our third and fourth case study, CIVICUS and GAMIAN, would the most essential constituent of their legitimacy not be provided by the support of their members? And for organizations such as the TUAC and the BIAC that established themselves formally as advisory committees to governmental institutions, is the subjective judgment of the righteousness of the organization’s existence and its activities truly the primary reason of their existence and continued development? Would the absence of member support to CIVICUS and GAMIAN affect organizations such as the BIAC and the TUAC the same way?

Those answers are in reality rhetoric – of course the degree of support and pressure on a TAN will not have the same impact on those organizations as their associates, partners, stakeholders and members occupy different places and play different roles. However, it is precisely what will provide us with the tools for drawing conclusions based on members’ perceived values of the TANs activities.

The primary reason for joining either of the BIAC and the TUAC as a member is the will to be represented and have a say in the governance of areas that affect you. The employers’ organization want to join the BIAC so that business policies can be influenced to favor business interests, and the national union sees membership of the TUAC as a way to get labor interests on the agenda. This driving force is the same in the case of GAMIAN, but differs with CIVICUS as they also provide members with support and developmental capabilities. Events and activities
directly beneficial to the members (eg. workshops, seminars, etc.) are also present in the cases of the BIAC and the TUAC, but they do not have it as a core principle of their organization like CIVICUS.

We identify two general streams of interaction; that is, all relational activity between the TAN and its members such as pressure, support, information, influence, and so on. For convenience we choose to call interactions from the members to the governance upwards activity, and conversely, downwards activity if the direction is the other way around. This way we can speak about upward pressure from the trade unions on the TUAC to perform, or the downwards support from CIVICUS in their ‘strengthening’ of their members. Please note that this phrasing is detached from any notion of hierarchy; the governing board and the members of the TAN are continuously assumed as equal and this up/down-logic is merely illustrative.

In all four cases we identified that both pressure and support are happening in both directions as the mutual nature of TANs lead to mutual support but also mutual demands.

From the findings we note that not only the direction of pressure or support is a factor of relevance, but also the more passive dimension of the role of the members, and their space. The space of the members here refers to their centrality and representativity in the TAN.

In comparison, the TUAC represent a relatively large number of members while at the same time covering a broad range of issues. CIVICUS is on the other hand not present on as many fronts as the TUAC but carries a large portfolio of members. The BIAC has an inverted set-up, as they have a relatively smaller member base but cover as many areas of interest as the TUAC, and as the OECD requires them to provide their input on. GAMIAN in this context has the lower amount of members and is also the most issue-specific TAN studied. If we temporarily use relative member volume and span of areas as two perimeters, our case examples can be divided into a matrix:
Please note that this classification serves to provide an overview of the differences between the TANs to acknowledge their different situations. We want to emphasize that the division is general and only aspire to be a comprehensive illustration; no correlation between size and topics have been confirmed or attempted. Recognizing that different circumstances in membership and areas will lead to different strategic preconditions is the point we want to arrive at here. What here are the implications if we look at the empirical data?

**Legitimacy**

Pressure towards the TAN from both members and stakeholders is allegedly higher if they claim to serve a moral purpose (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). This connects to the concept of moral legitimacy, which is based on the judgment of the TAN’s actions and reason to exist (see Suchman, 1995 and Brown & Jagadananda, 2007 among others).

Constituents’ ability of influencing the TAN representing them is a determinate of what Suchman (1995) calls influence legitimacy, directly linked to how much of the decision-making the members and stakeholders can control. Representativity seems to be the central factor to legitimize a TAN in this sense, meaning that advocacy and promoted values that are close to what the constituent base wants will lead to higher influence legitimacy. This is a valid mechanism for all cases but we find that CIVICUS and GAMIAN have a higher claim of serving a moral good than union organizations or private sector promoting groups, leading to an increased pressure to do good in the eyes of their constituents (with reference to Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). GAMIAN has an appropriate response to this with their intentional inclusion of persons suffering from mental illness, allowing them to speak for themselves and to policy-
makers as much as possible. CIVICUS too shows awareness of this as they claim to always connect to the local community in the place where an issue arises.

The TUAC, as described above, has a larger number of constituents and covers more issues; they carry a broader portfolio of topics to address. We will not attempt a ranking of whose purpose is more valuable, but we do want to mention that any such claim will have an effect on legitimacy as perceived by the members, with reference to the centrality of shared values as a reason for joining a TAN (see Matti & Sandström, 2013). In addition, Kiel (2011) states that member support is increased if the members feel a strong sense of belonging to a common entity.

The important choice on this topic seems to be the division between representing and supporting individual members or the membership base as a whole. In other words, to have a member relationship where the TAN pushes individual questions and requests or generalizes and advocates for the good of them as a whole. This choice will carry different legitimacy implications.

**Larger audience**

This study has to a large extent been making a categorization between members and stakeholders and looked at them separately, while in reality most actions and situations affect them both. Sometimes the beneficiaries of the TAN’s success extend to more people than their direct stakeholders. The point here is that there is always an audience, and it will vary in size and geographical spread from issue to issue. An imaginary example would be if, say, the OECD under influence of the TUAC passes a policy that affects the lives of such a huge number of workers that their families and households are affected and the consequences rumble into macro-economical proportions. This is naturally outside the scope of our thesis, but we want to hint at the potential of societal benefit from the enterprise of TANs – not only the members and direct stakeholders are affected. To keep this thesis closely connected to its purpose we will now leave the relational, internal and structural matters in their current state, with the vital assumption that the actions of a TAN matter to *someone*. Digging deep in each scenario and their possible impact on society is both irrelevant and implausible within this thesis. Each TAN does however have a conduct of value to someone, which leads the discussion into the final theme: what is actually done to serve the purpose?
Advocacy

Advocacy is the last theme and is special in the sense that it is near exclusively action-based; that is, advocacy is mostly active choices and actions in contrast to the other three themes which all have at least some organizational aspect. Analyzing patterns and differences in advocacy in terms of legitimacy becomes an analysis of the behavior of the TANs.

On behavior, it is worth recalling the three sets of organizational behavior proposed by Dowling and Pfeffer (1975), namely legitimate, economically viable and legal behavior. The latter two adhere to fields outside the frame of this thesis, and we will leave them at the assumption that all TANs studied behave in accordance with the law and with financial reasonableness. This leaves us with the question to which extent their behaviors are legitimate, which is the type of behavior that will be in focus here. It is worth mentioning that most theory on legitimacy applies to the previous three themes and less on this fourth, which we suspect is due to the connection between legitimacy and organization. We will however include the theme of advocacy and analyze it in legitimacy terms where possible.

One primal form of advocacy that is shared by all four TANs is the basic concept of networking. Recalling that the efficiency of advocacy can be enhanced through political networking (Johansen & LeRoux, 2012), this mechanism for legitimate advocacy seems to be in place in all cases. We assume that the organizational form of TANs includes networking by default with reference to its characteristics. What is unique to each TAN is the activities in which the advocacy mission manifests itself; that is, the actual advocacy. As advocacy is ultimately action, the topic brings back pragmatic legitimacy as the predominant type; are the actions desirable, relevant and valuable? Further, cognitive legitimacy is equally relevant as the judgment of whether the organization makes sense or not is connected to the advocacy. Pragmatic and cognitive legitimacy are both best determined by looking at how aligned each TAN’s advocacy is with the proclaimed cause.

Starting out with the BIAC, their goal is to ‘generate growth and prosperity’ (BIAC URL) through the advocacy for policies favorable from a business perspective. Their advocacy is structured around issues where they through their consultancy try to guide the policy-making in their direction. Their influence is to some extent assured furthermore as they get to weigh in on the agenda-setting with the OECD, influencing not only the discussions but also what is being discussed.

The mission of the TUAC can be described as a bundle of labor-related topics, generally summarized as fair and sustainable job creation, growth, and conditions. The tactics of both the
BIAC and the TUAC resemble each others’, giving advice and voicing member concerns at an already existing institution are the main tools. They are in some cases required to collaborate, work on specific issues together – most often not questions on which the differences between the union and private sector perspective are too disparate. Their advocacy is then carried out by issuing joint statements to the OECD.

CIVICUS stands out as the most diverse advocacy network in the sense that they encompass the largest scope of activities. Their operations can for convenience be divided into two main areas: directed advocacy and member reinforcing. With a purpose to ‘exist to strengthen civil society and citizen action around the world’ (CIVICUS URL), any advocacy that contributes to this strengthening can be regarded as aligned with the purpose. Our findings did not leave us with too much information on what the details of their advocacy operations are; the larger proportion was focused on the strengthening part. An interesting note, however, is that CIVICUS does not target an institution – at least not explicitly – and does not have plans of becoming formal partners with a specific governing institution.

GAMIAN is our single purpose, single issue case TAN. Their advocacy is for this reason relatively easy to map in terms of activities. They do target institutions and they do have a wish to establish themselves with them. Practically, the advocacy is of informative/educational nature where raising awareness is the general goal. Legitimacy mechanisms at hand, then, are the ones that contribute to being invited to participate and to increase the impact of their participation. The former were not detailed that much in the interview, so we will have to stop ourselves at the notion that they make sure their advocacy is somewhat tailored to fit the institutions. That is, tactics that are legal and democratic. The second part is exemplified by the face-to-face philosophy, where member patients are granted participation through GAMIAN and get to speak out of first-hand experience.

**Narrative summaries**

From the thematic scrutiny above, we now have enough understanding of each TAN to explain their story in terms of legitimacy and strategy. The initial intent of this study was basically to look at the strategic behavior of TANs in legitimizing themselves to achieve influence, and before we move on to forming conclusions we found it useful to briefly tell their story. To give the stories a common structure we chose to follow the elements of dramatism as proposed by Burke (1945). In his classic pentad, Burke provided a framework for mapping out human behavior through the five elements of the agent, act, scene, agency and purpose (ibid.). Respectively, they describe who is doing what, in which situation, with which means, and why.
We found this useful as strategy can be understood as a pattern of decisions in pursuit of a goal. So, what is going on?

**The BIAC**

The BIAC is a formally structured TAN where the board coordinates working groups that are more or less a direct response to issues raised by the OECD, or by the OECD in cooperation with the BIAC. They are active on a stable arena where they as a recognized partner channel their advocacy through advisory to, and joint cooperation with, the OECD. Operationally mirroring the OECD, the BIAC has eased the interactions with the institution they are targeting. Adding to this, the BIAC was itself created as a response to a need of business perspective by the OECD and has developed on this in their focus on business expertise as their primal strength. They furthermore enjoy opportunities of agenda setting and in that sense they are much able to work towards their purpose, which is private sector-led growth and prosperity.

**The TUAC**

The TUAC resembles the BIAC on many points, but primarily in their status with the OECD as a partnered advisory committee. Representing labor interests in the OECD countries, the TUAC operates similarly to the BIAC but with a bit more distance to the OECD. There is traces of mutual benefit but it does not seem to be just as integrated as the OECD/BIAC relation; the TUAC relies on invitations to participate and does not get to set the agenda. They do however represent an interest group that is deemed relevant by the OECD and is generally stable in their positioning. Some expansion ambitions aside, they mainly target and work with the OECD.

**CIVICUS**

CIVICUS is the product by the initiative of separate CSOs to form an alliance for citizen participation, which ended up one of the most considerable TANs in service of global civil society. They do not explicitly target any policy-making arena that their impact is aimed at, but directs their operations to civil society as a whole. The enhancement of civil society is the core principle, which is evident as a constant guiding mechanism in both their overall strategy and in practice. They do not target a particular institution, though they do have representatives participating in UN council debates because of civil society input being deemed important there. But mainly they are outwards-facing in that they develop strategies for CSOs, typically smaller and/or national associations, in combination with an information exchange where the local actors provide authentic ground-level knowledge. Important aspects of CIVICUS’ enterprise that are connected to legitimacy are about building their network and giving their expertise credibility. They do this by selecting ‘appropriate’ members rooted in civil society and keeping
them at the center of everything they do, while staying informed, authentic and pragmatic. Their size and basis in the ‘global south’ are other contributors to their vast geographical and cultural reach.

**GAMIAN**

Formed by a dozen advocacy groups in 1997, GAMIAN exists to raise awareness of mental illness and to combat stigmatization of persons suffering from it. This is both their core value the TAN is formed around and the scope of their advocacy.

Being a relatively young single-issue TAN, they aspire to achieve an advisory position with the main EU institutions, which can be understood as a position close to the ones held by the BIAC and the TUAC. The institutions aimed at are not named, but it is mentioned that GAMIAN is willing to approach any such institution that is ‘seeking the view of patients’; that is, where a need for their advocacy can be identified.

The centrality and singularity of their issue has enabled them to focus on the persons they represent and include them in the advocacy, mainly by simply inviting them and letting policy-makers and patients speak face-to-face. The use of ‘patient organization’ as a way of describing themselves, the stakeholder is much integrated in their work.
6. Conclusions

Having presented the empirical findings and analyzed them in detail, this chapter will move on to present the conclusions we were able to draw. The purpose of this study is to inductively map and explain the strategy of TANs regarding legitimacy, and this chapter will through the formulation of patterns sketch a framework of such a strategy. It is however important to consider the limitations of this thesis, and we will keep them in mind by stating the premises for our conclusions as they appear.

Before embarking on the conclusions we want to state that they are reached within the limitations of this thesis and in accordance with our purpose (see chapter 1). These conclusions are applicable primarily to transnational advocacy networks, not all organizations, and the aspects that follows has an effect on what conclusions are plausible. We phrased this into a first initial premise:

**Premise 1:** The strategies suggested here are done so with legitimacy and its connection to influence as the central principle; other factors of relevance to a complete strategy such as competition or financial aspects are not covered.

The Fundamentals

In formulating the patterns derived from the analysis, we chose to focus on instances we saw as strategically important choices. In working with this thesis, some areas where more gray than others and had more or less space for strategic freedom. That is, when studying TANs and their legitimacy, some aspects of the matter were revealed to be in place by default – for instance, legitimacy rooted in organizational form – and some could be traced back to strategic choices. In the light of strategy, a natural delimitation here is to focus on what can be controlled.

One of the first options for legitimacy-altering strategy we identified is the balance between serving and representing the interests and values of members and stakeholders, and compliance with the institution the TAN is trying to influence. The pressure from constituents to serve the purpose and the demands of conformity by an institution are not necessarily in conflict; nor should focusing on either mean a complete abandonment of the other. We do however want to point out this trade-off as an initial, overall approach that a TAN can control. The balance is illustrated in Figure 6:1, with ‘TAN X’ as the fictional and variable name representing any TAN.
This situation is within this study something we saw as present in each case, and for this reason we included it as an underlying mechanism. We found that it was a fundamental assumption for the conclusions following, and therefore formulated it as our second premise:

**Premise 2:** A TAN is from their value-driven and influence-seeking nature in a trade-off between satisfying their members and stakeholders, and complying with a targeted institution.

Stabilizing between two major and potentially conflicting interests might not be a preferable situation. Recalling Berg and Jonsson’s (1991) three bases of CSO legitimacy, support from one’s own members (marked as box (a) in Figure 6:1) is the more important one before support from public opinion and compliance with regulating institutions. We do however not find it wise to use this statement as an excuse to conveniently conclude that all TANs should place most effort in achieving only this type of support. Institutions regulating the organization’s activity can be extended to mean any institution that bases support or acceptance on legitimacy, and through this extension an institution that can ‘allow’ influence follows the same logic.

**Wanting the Pass**

The subjective creation of legitimacy in the eye of the beholder consequentially traces back strategic choices to the entities that will either grant or deny a TAN legitimacy. The assessment of which strategy is preferable in which situation does in this context always lead back to what effects it will have on other actors’ perception. In simpler words, what should be done in order to be seen as legitimate is determined by whom they aim to be seen in this light, and what these targeted actors value most.

**Influence with or without the policy maker**

In this thesis we have followed the logic that advocacy leads to influence and influence leads to change, and that legitimacy is a facilitating factor for this influentiality. Inverting this causality, to change an institution one must influence that institution through advocacy towards it. This is
however based on the assumption that change in favor of the cause a TAN represents is only possible through an institution, an assumption we have not yet challenged in this thesis. Change for the better in any area, whether it is labor rights, mental illness awareness, the environment and so on, may be possible independently of policy-making institutions. Given the limits of this study, and the inductive approach, we did however choose to look at TAN strategy where such an institution is present. The findings from our cases suggested high relevance of institutions on the topic of legitimacy and therefore we came to the conclusion that influencing a policy-making institution is not the only possibility for a TAN – but a choice has to be made. Either the aim should be to reach an influential position with a targeted institution, or to work from the outside as an independent pressure force. This constitutes the third premise we will assume:

**Premise 3:** A TAN is faced by the choice of either aiming for a ‘free pass’ as a permanent influential partner of an institution, or rejecting such a position and advocating from the ‘outside’.

The ‘free pass’ here is a continuation from the analysis chapter, meaning the position as a permanent collaborator with optimal participation and influence by default. Advocating from the outside, on the other hand, would mean the mobilization of popular awareness and support which with enough effort should lead to influence through external pressure. Advocating from the inside or outside will lead to different tactics, but are both related to an institution as the target for the advocacy.

Continuing this argument, that influencing an institution is possible both through participation and outside pressure, the choice again falls back on how the TAN wants to be perceived. Being accepted and granted participation versus a mobilizing popular movement have different implications for in ‘whose eyes’ they are then seen as legitimate.

We argue that the trade-off as stated in Premise 2 and illustrated in Figure 6:1 is viable as a simplified foundation for this argument. Using legitimacy to achieve influence with an institution should shift the focus of this balance to box (b), as compliance, isomorphism and all the other previously mentioned attributes of it would increase legitimacy with that institution.

We will return to the role of Figure 6:1 further below. Before we move on to the two separate strategies, a treatise on whether or not formal participation is preferable is in place.

**Who wants a free pass?**

To simplify this logic, let us temporarily abandon the theoretical jargon and the details of this study and contemplate what it means to be perceived as legitimate. If we allow legitimacy to be a metaphor for what another thinks of you, we can progress the discussion by imagining a one-
dimensional line (Figure 6:2). This line represents a scale ranging from being liked to disliked, with their respective extremities of being favored versus actively opposed. These informal terms are used solely as comprehensible tagnames to illustrate the logic. In Figure 6:2 we have divided this scale into two halves separated by the point where one is *accepted*, represented by the dotted line.

![Figure 6.2](image)

*Figure 6.2: Illustration of relative difficulty of influence based on perceived status.*

Assuming that it is easier to influence someone who likes you than someone who dislikes you, the graph (a) represents the relative difficulty of influence given your stance on the scale. This difficulty could also be understood as the relative amount of effort needed to succeed, depicting that influence is remarkably harder when one is being disliked.

This illustration may seem bland or haphazardly invented, but we chose to include it as it describes a premise we will assume. Lifting this logic back up to the discussion of legitimacy, we argue that any measure that is above being accepted, or to the left of the dotted ‘acceptance line’ in the Figure, is a prerequisite for achieving an ‘insider’ position. Starting out on a negative note, to the right of the same line, would represent damaged, insufficient or complete lack of legitimacy. We regard this situation as one where collaborative status is so far away that the effort to gain legitimacy with that institution would be big enough to make other options more desirable. On the topic of the ‘free pass’ as the ultimate form of an insider position, we applied this logic and formulated our fourth premise:

**Premise 4:** The opportunity of getting the ‘free pass’ is plausible to a TAN that is at the very least accepted by the institution in question.

At this point it is important to recall that a formal influential position is only relevant within the here-called ‘insider strategy’, which is not the only approach. Creating pressure as an ‘outsider’ actor still remains as the other viable strategic path. In order to become a pressure force strong enough to be impossible to ignore, the TAN needs to shift their legitimacy efforts towards their
constituents and potential allies. In that case the process of gaining, maintaining and defending legitimacy are all mainly directed towards the members, stakeholders and the general public. The actual tactics will vary from TAN to TAN, but we find it assumable that this approach as a whole would be at the expense of legitimation with an institution. Hence, we declare a fifth and last premise as:

**Premise 5**: The ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ strategies are mutually exclusive; a TAN risks losing focus on which actors they wish to be deemed legitimate by if they choose to advocate through both strategies at once.

Admittedly, we recognize that some behaviors and attributes could serve to increase legitimacy with both the targeted institution and with the stakeholders. Further, this will depend on each case. The BIAC is for instance seemingly appreciated by both the OECD and their own stakeholders. It is worth a reminder that we are now in the generalizing state of the study, and the arguments will therefore carry a weak spot for exceptions. This will be discussed below.

From the conclusions and premises presented here, we have formulated a blueprint of two different strategies of legitimizing for increased influence: the Insider and the Outsider.

**Insider**

Each of the two proposed strategies share much of the basic attributes: both start from the mission of advocacy and share the end goal of change through influence. What differentiates them from each other are the steps towards that goal. For easy comprehension we chose to illustrate these steps for them respectively. Note again that we refrain from detailing or evaluating how the actual advocacy is conducted, this framework is constructed to point out where legitimacy comes in and how. Starting with the Insider approach, the steps are illustrated in Figure 6:3.

![Identify decision-making institution](a) Get access (b) Participate (c) Advocate → **Influence**

*Figure 6:3: Illustration of the general steps of the Insider strategy.*

The first step is to identify the institution or institutions where the TAN sees possibility of influencing from within. From this, the next step is to enable access to that institution (box a).
Here, gaining legitimacy that favors the access to participation is the vital effort (or, if legitimacy is obtained but access has not yet been attempted, the action becomes one of utilizing it).

Having reached a level of legitimacy that grants acceptance and participation, the process becomes one of gathering the means to participate and through that participation conduct advocacy (box b). At this point, legitimacy remains and is either maintained or further gained, but it changes in the sense that it shifts focus to the effectiveness of the advocacy – now, the TAN is being heard, and the question becomes how influential this participation is.

**Outsider**

The other proposed strategy follows the same fundamental principle as the former in the sense that being an Outsider is ultimately a part of the overall strategy of the TAN. Differences between them do exist, and are most clearly depicted by modeling the Outsider steps in the same fashion as with the Insider, see Figure 6:4.

![Figure 6:4: Illustration of the general steps of the Outsider strategy.](image)

The initial step remains the same, as the identification of an institution as a target is vital regardless of how it should be influenced. The difference here is that the first step is directed towards the environment to build pressure through support. Box (a) in the above Figure has been named ‘mobilize’, simply because these efforts of outwards relations are diverse in nature and the options are numerous. The name is intended to include all such tactics, whether they are focused on creating a popular movement or building alliances with other organizations – we regard all these as part of the same category. This is because in the light of legitimacy, the differences in tactics fall back on the same types of legitimacy – the strive to be perceived as legitimate as an entity, instead of directed towards a particular set of eyes.

After this has been achieved, the next step is simply to advocate from this position (box b). The tactics may and will vary again, but the legitimacy mechanism remains. Same as with the Insider strategy, legitimacy in this step is determined by the actions. This means that gaining or maintaining legitimacy will be focused on the effectiveness of the advocacy, if it is found that influence could be facilitated by increased legitimacy.
Towards A Strategic Framework

As a final conclusive part, the two 'legitimacy strategies' are here assembled into Figure 6:5 for overview. The differences and similarities between the two now become apparent and we are arriving at the last stage of our conclusions.

The merging of the two strategies – so far treated separately – shows that they are in essence two alternative paths of the same road. This makes sense as all TANs are functionally the same: a transnational network of actors advocating for change. We are in this thesis acting within the narrow realm of the legitimacy aspect of strategy and for this reason the above framework should be seen as a strategic framework of legitimacy. We are well aware that other factors than just the legitimacy of a TAN can determine success in each of these steps. Getting access versus mobilizing (boxes a and d) can be done through other means; same as with the effectiveness of the advocacy conducted.

Another vital point worth recalling is that the framework should be treated as an illustration of our identified strategic tendencies rather than a normative instruction for how things should be done.

A Final Word

In the introductory chapter we declared the purpose of our study to be the search for strategic legitimacy mechanisms and possible managerial implications. This has been done through a process of first identifying the connections between legitimacy and the organizational attributes
of a transnational advocacy network. Our case examples revealed a set of choices primarily unknown to us, and in the light of our inductive approach we described and illustrated them as understood from our data. The blueprint of a strategic framework is the product of this induction, completing the treatment of where legitimacy plays a role for a TAN with a focus on where it can be addressed strategically.

We have already announced that this study as a whole has its limitations. The first delimitating factor is found in the specified field of transnational advocacy networks and strategy. Adding the premises and assumptions used to draw conclusions further impacts their applicability. Further, the empirical base is limited due to the time and resource dimensions of this thesis. Finally, the methodological perspective of social constructivism and sensitivity to context has an impact on our results as the cases studied could not be completely detached from their contexts; consequentially, we cannot eliminate context as influential on our results. We are however confident that given the circumstances, this study has made full use of the possibilities within these limits.

The study of cases in which different types of transnational advocacy networks have relatively successfully managed to clearly identify or reach their objectives provides us with this understanding: decisions regarding legitimacy are crucial in the development of a strategy for the organization. In which way a TAN wishes to be legitimate will not only determine which forums have the potential to maximize the effectiveness of their advocacy. It also provides with a complementing study enabling a further analysis of where their resources and efforts are to be spent.

Moving away from the strictly academic perspective, this thesis proposes a new way of looking strategically at legitimacy. We believe that the results can be used in their present form, either as guidelines for TANs, perhaps other organizations, or analogously by anyone who finds it helpful. The embryonic state of our findings is something we regard as a possibility and an indication for the continued development of this type of strategy. We have produced these results given the aforementioned delimitations, and we do believe that a repeated study with more research abilities could progress the field further. More case TANs could provide more nuance to the patterns we have observed and described; or the time dimension of a longitudinal study could explain the evolution of these strategies. An example of what has not been treated is how success in influentiality can be further used – can, for instance, an influential position with one institution be utilized to achieve even more participation with another institution? Is there a stop to the reinforcing spiral of legitimacy leading to more legitimacy on the topic of these organizations? Other points that are still subjects of our curiosity are the connection between
legitimacy and advocacy effectiveness, and if this framework has siblings in other concepts than just legitimacy that can be strategized around in a similar way. At the very least, we hope our results are useful to others to base their own thoughts and stances on.

As students and citizens it is hard for us to express how important this subject is in our perspective. The ongoing construction and development of our society is relevant to all interacting agents and complementing studies are crucial in this field given the constant changes our environment understands. The impact of governing and policy-making institutions is undisputable and the consistent study of the organizations that influence them is therefore essential to the understanding of what creates and changes our reality. Since we were not writing a book, the restrictions of a thesis of this type was beneficial to our work as authors and a challenge to us as researchers. Our curiosity was difficult to contain given the centrality of numerous other influencing factors in the studied field. Regarding the treated subject in this paper, further exploring and diving into the subject of the factors influencing our governing system is one that we deem essential for academics, economic agents, and all of us as citizens of our world.
References

Literature


Web


**Policy groups**: http://biac.org/policy-groups/


**International Civil Society Centre** | retrieved 2015-02-17 from http://icscentre.org/pages/about-us

**OECD** | About the OECD. Retrieved 2015-02-20 from http://www.oecd.org/about/


Appendix 1: Documents analyzed

BIAC (2014a) Current Policy Priorities. Available at:

BIAC (2014b) Annual Report 2014. Available at:

BIAC (2001) Guide to the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. Available at:

CIVICUS (2014) Accountability for civil society by civil society: a guide to self-regulation initiatives. Available at:

CIVICUS (2013) Annual Report 2013/2014. Available at:

CIVICUS (2011a) Campaigning toolkit for civil society organisations engaged in the millenium development goals. Available at:

CIVICUS (2011b) Handling the Media. Available at:

CIVICUS (2011c) Strategic Planning. Available at:


TUAC (2008) Policy Brief. Available at:
Appendix 2: Interview guide

This document is the structural backbone of all of the interviews conducted. They did however vary in order as the semi-structured nature allowed the interview to take spontaneous turns, but the general content was kept through these questions. The script contains the abbreviations IP for ‘interview person’, and ORG for ‘organization’ as in the TAN our interviewee represented. In addition to these questions, follow-up questions on statements were asked though not stated here.

Introduction

1. Presentation of ourselves
2. Structure of the interview, how long is IP available, and confidentiality: is IP speaking for ORG as a whole or is the interview based on IPs perception?
3. Purpose of the interview, introduce the study
4. Questions before start?

Part I

1. Short presentation. What is your name? Could you tell us about yourself?
2. What is IP’s title/ brief description of IP’s position at ORG? How long has IP been a part of ORG?
3. How would IP describe the structure of ORG? Can external actors apply for membership in IP’s ORG?
4. How would IP formulate the purpose of ORG?

Part II

1. Does IP have examples of what ORG’s typical concerns are?
2. If IP thinks about ORG’s overall concerns, what is the focus on? What is emphasized, prioritized, deemed important?
3. ORG is composed of different actors with different interests. How are those handled, coordinated, managed?
4. Is ORG held accountable for its activities? To whom?
5. Is part of ORG’s success measured in terms of how influential they are? Does ORG have other goals? What are ORG’s aspirations in general?
6. Does IP know of any similar organizations that have the same purpose? Does IP know how they work? How does IP judge ORG’s position in comparison to the other ones?

Part III

1. Now that IP knows what we are studying – is there anything we might want to know?
2. Does IP have any further questions?
3. Can we contact IP back?