

Book Reviews

***Beyond The Boomerang: From Transnational Advocacy Networks to Transcalar Advocacy in International Politics.* By Christopher L. Palas and Elizabeth A. Bloodgood. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2022. ISBN: 0817321144**

The book makes a significant contribution to the study of transnational collective action by challenging the continued use of the term “transnational.” However, contemporary advocacy phenomena in international politics are seen as inadequate to capture the growing complexity of modern collective action. In response, the authors introduce an innovative concept: *transcalar*. The transcalar approach examines activism and mobilization across multiple overlapping scales, rather than merely across national borders.

Furthermore, the book illuminates how experiences of social advocacy movements—from the World Social Forum to Brazil, Mexico, and Vietnam, can be analyzed more effectively through a transcalar lens. This perspective highlights that activism relevant to global politics often takes place within domestic or local arenas and does not necessarily depend on cross-border networks. The authors build their arguments upon several key theoretical foundations, including Donatella della Porta and Manuela Caiani (2009) demonstrated that many European social movements operate within national frameworks even when addressing issues at the EU level, while von Bülow (2010) showed how civil society organizations pursue multiple pathways to transnationality, some acting

locally, others maintaining long-term international engagement.

This book seeks to challenge the long-standing status quo of transnational advocacy studies, which have been heavily shaped by the seminal work *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy in International Politics* by Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1994). Keck and Sikkink illustrated how transnational activism opposed Brazil’s Polonoroeste and Planoflora development projects by forming international advocacy networks between Brazilian activists and environmental NGOs in the United States.

However, the book argues that local advocacy behavior has since evolved. Brazilian activists remain involved in transnational action, yet their current partners are no longer Northern-based INGOs but rather Brazilian government officials and NGOs from India, Brazil, and South Africa. The “revolving door” between activist organizations and government institutions has, at times, strengthened activist agendas. Meanwhile, local NGO staff often experience tensions with their former environmental allies from the United States as they seek to develop locally grounded strategies amid international pressure. Activism today may begin at the local level but extends internationally to amplify local power rather than bypass domestic obstacles.

The book is divided into two main sections: “*New Challenges: The Changing Architecture of Global Governance*” and “*Changing Agency and Advocates.*” The first section highlights fundamental shifts in the architecture of global governance, which is no longer hierarchical or state-centric but increasingly polycentric, fragmented, and network-based. In this new order, non-state



actors such as civil society organizations, corporations, local communities, and digital networks play crucial roles in shaping global agendas and policies. This changing structure sets the stage for the subsequent discussion on the evolution of advocacy.

The evolution of advocacy presented in this book demonstrates that advocacy practices are no longer entirely dependent on cross-national networks. Instead, advocacy now operates *transscalarly*, across interrelated levels of action (local, national, regional, and global). This shift reflects the very transformation of global governance itself: the once-dominant North–South relationship is being replaced by South–South collaboration, while national regulations and international political complexity push organizations to adapt through strategies such as operational nationalization and hybrid partnerships.

The second section focuses on how advocacy actors are adapting to these structural changes. Advocacy strategies are now far more diverse than the traditional *boomerang* model. Farmers, local business actors, and NGOs no longer rely solely on international pressure to change domestic policies; instead, they may work together to defend national interests from global pressures. Phenomena such as the *inverse boomerang*, where Northern NGOs seek legitimacy through partnerships with Southern actors, and the growing trend of South–South collaboration signal a shift in agency from Northern dominance toward Southern empowerment.

Beyond the redistribution of power, the text shows that advocacy agency has become increasingly reflexive, strategic, and adaptive to fragmented political contexts.

Activists now operate across scales in local, national, regional, and global, by engaging with the most relevant arenas to influence policy. This development is captured in the concept of *transcalar activism*, a form of advocacy that transcends traditional political and geographic boundaries, emphasizing cross-scalar mobility and the ability of actors to connect local issues with global implications.

Overall, the book offers an important renewal in the study of social movements and global advocacy by introducing the transcalar perspective as an alternative to the classical transnational framework. Across its two parts, the book demonstrates that the increasingly polycentric and networked architecture of global governance demands new forms of agency and advocacy strategy. Whereas earlier movements relied on the *boomerang* pattern—Southern activists seeking support from the North—advocacy today operates across multiple scales, where local actors possess the strategic capacity to act autonomously, collaborate South–South, and influence global policy from the ground up. By combining conceptual analysis with empirical cases from different regions, this book broadens our understanding of power dynamics, networks, and advocacy strategies in contemporary global governance, affirming that global politics today is shaped not only by states but also by non-state actors moving simultaneously across multiple scales.

Muhammad Iqbal Yunazwardi

Department of International Relations
Universitas Sriwijaya, Indonesia

muhammadiqbal_unazwardi@fisip.unsri.ac.id

