Many things have changed since Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink published their seminal book *Activists Beyond Borders* in 1998. Many activists and later “pracademics,” such as myself, used it as a main reference. Their insight about the “boomerang” effects in the struggle for human rights were well appreciated in Latin America and in particular in Argentina where human rights violations reached an unbelievable scale. Their definition of Transnational Advocacy Networks describing their scope and reach was quite visionary of what was happening on a global scale:

“In spite of the differences between domestic and international realms, the network concept travels well because it stresses fluid and open relations among committed and knowledgeable actors working in specialized issue areas. We call them advocacy networks because advocates plead the causes of others or defend a cause or proposition” (Keck and Sikkink 1998, p. 8).

Plenty political and economic conditions have changed over so many years. Furthermore, the technological revolution has enormous influence on how Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) develop their activities. Nevertheless the opportunity to ask ourselves about changes in the methods of advocacy and the struggle for rights is very welcome in the interesting research coordinated by Elizabeth Bloodgood and Christopher Pallas.

Exploring and describing the new models of advocacy activities in different parts of the world is an asset the book provides in a kind of circular “Deja-vu” where authoritarian regimes are again menacing non-profit organizations in what some colleagues have named as the “shrinking space” for civil society (Anheier, Lang and Toepler 2019). In particular, the book identifies the drivers that have changed and those that remain similar; and how these changes – in the global North and the global South – impact advocacy activities. The volume also introduces new methodologies that provide the pillars of the new model proposed by the authors. They identify the need for a new empirically grounded theory arising from the new practices in the advocacy field. The authors have found many different examples of activism that does not fit in the *Boomerang model* and propose a new, more
sophisticated model, *a transcalar model*, where although some tools of the “old model” are used, new methods including local actors, local governments and another circuit for advocacy arises.

Rather than conceiving of key aspects of NGO advocacy as *transnational*, that is, occurring across state boundaries, we argue it is importantly becoming *transcalar*, that is, occurring across the various scales or levels of local, national, regional, and global. (emphasis added). From Introduction – Bloodgood and Pallas (p. 16).

In contrast, Keck and Sikkink described that the *old Boomerang model* was useful when local conditions were blocked for local actors: “When channels between the state and its domestic actors are blocked, the boomerang pattern of influence characteristic of transnational networks may occur: domestic NGOs bypass their state and directly search out international allies to try to bring pressure on their states from outside.” – Keck and Sikkink (p. 12).

**1 The Book’s Structure**

Besides the introduction where the Editors explain the objectives of the research, several chapters from researchers in different parts of the world describe these new situations with specific examples which illustrate the need for this new model. What is more, in so doing they also describe fascinating processes where civil society – in alliance with other actors – has waged fierce battles advocating for citizens’ rights and necessities. Therefore the reader and practitioner can analyze and learn from new examples and forms of resistance in different areas worldwide.

In Chapter 1, Suparna Chaudhry and Andrew Heiss describe the crackdown in many countries on civil society. With some harsh examples ranging from arrests of activists, such as in the Arab Spring, to other methods like legislative restrictions, they show how this impacts the flow of funds from both private donors’ and official assistance towards CSOs and sometimes influences the issues to support. They therefore describe the search for new actors and that are beyond the framework of the *Boomerang model*.

In Chapter 2, Anders Uhlin analyzes the opening up of International Organizations (IOs) since 1990s and how this provided opportunities for CSOs and other non-state actors. However although many non-state organizations have been included, the author points out that there are “hierarchies of access” that discriminate against organizations who are radical critics of dominant IOs. He also describes the different kinds of openings at IOs and how CSOs can take advantage of them.

Susan Appe analyzes the development of SOUTH-SOUTH networks and their impact on international organizations as the OECD in Chapter 3. She also describes
conditions in the “post-aid world” and how the South-South networks provide adaptive strategies to these new conditions. After describing how South-South networks share information and values she explains how the North-South scheme is outdated and why a model for transcalar advocacy is needed. In Chapter 4, Elizabeth Bloodgood analyzes a meeting of the World Social Forum during 2016 sponsored by the National Council of Unions in Montreal, Quebec. The architecture of the event provides examples of participation of small and big NGOs. She observes a greater diversity of networking behavior than traditionally expected in theory. The author signals conclusions from that event that supports the need for another model although she recognizes that “there might be some residual impact of northern NGOs networks, as these tend to be older and more established than southern NGOs.”

Jackie Smith’s Chapter 5 analyzes the globalization of corporate power in parallel with the globalization of civil society. She vindicates the concept of “transnational capitalist class” described by other authors and shows the growth and concentration of transnational corporations and their influence in global politics. She also asserts that advocacy groups are less oriented around national identities and are more interested in the global nature of issues. The author calls our attention to what Tsutsui and Smith call the “sandwich effect:” “whereby advocates use both the traditional boomerang to bring pressure on states from above while simultaneously working to mobilize local constituencies to press local governments and institutions to conform to global human rights norms” (Tsutsui and Smith 2018).

In Chapter 6 – Shana Starobin brings to us research on a Mexican example of the Subnational Level challenging transnational actors. The experience of a huge opposition struggle against the multinational Monsanto GM corporation led by a unique coalition of “campesinos”, beekeepers, peasant social movements, and their allies, including the Greenpeace chapter in Mexico is a great example of local conditions that add to the proposed model of a transcalar action beyond the boomerang model. There were many actions by local actors, including local Mexican institutions such as local authorities and even judicial statements. As the author would say, these exceptions that break the rule would lead us to the need of new theories.

Maria Guadalupe Moog Rodrigues, brings us another example of local actors acting against an oil industry giant as Petrobras in Brazil in Chapter 7. Again there was an alliance between local actors, led by fishing communities, local civil society organizations as The Association of Men and Women of the Sea (AHOMAR) and an international NGOs, like Friends of the Earth. The damage was a great oil spill at the Rio de Janeiro Guanabara Bay in January 2000, one of the best tourist places in the region. To have an idea of the damage, the spill generated a 40 square kilometer oil stain covering beaches and damaging the fishing activities of many communities. In 2005 Petrobras was found guilty by judicial authorities but initially they did not
accept. Years later they accepted to pay compensation of US$ 2,000 for each of 12,000 affected families. The damage received much attention during the 2012 Olympic Games that were done in Rio de Janeiro and a great shock was the assassination of two activists of AHOMAR who had explained the tremendous oil spill damage to tourists participating in the Olympics. Transcalar activism was spurred because of this crime where human rights come together with ecosystems struggles.

The author also describes that as a consequence of Brazilian CSOs obtaining national and international recognition and the growth of the Brazilian economy, many international NGOs opened local chapters there. She also asserts that the “boomerang pattern is no longer the main tool in activists toolbox”. As an added value in this chapter for readers, the author points out that although funding has been more available for local organizations because of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by funders, the project-funding model has generated competition between CSOs and fragmented their missions avoiding unifying their efforts towards common goals.

In Chapter 8, Christopher Pallas and Lan Phuong Nguyen, provide an interesting example of local actors connecting directly with international actors in the HIV/AIDS Sector in Vietnam. They collected much evidence through interviews with representatives of local NGOs which explained how after getting acquainted with international NGOs they became able to contact international health authorities directly and did not have to depend on international NGOs for building their advocacy strategies towards international organizations or in their contact with health authorities.

In Chapter 9 Karisa Cloward provides an analysis of Transcalar Activism against Gender-Based Violence providing examples of campaigns where the role of local actors and even local states can develop norms as a step forward. She notes that conditions may change much at each country and transcalar advocacy “should reevaluate the conventional understanding of who initiates and who participates in transcalar advocacy, and how the targets of advocacy respond”. The author asserts that advocacy strategies should analyze carefully conditions as sometimes citizens are not at the vanguard and one has to find alliances through other institutions. In Chapter 10 Laura Henry and Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom, develop insights on different conditions for NGO Transcalar Climate Advocacy in Authoritarian States as Russia and China. The authors show that the old Boomerang model does not necessarily produce positive results anymore. In the example of Russia, the Russian State did not change its reluctant position towards climate issues although local NGOs at that time were linked to international organizations. On the opposite end, China, another authoritarian regime, had a positive attitude towards climate change issues and this helped local Chinese NGOs to participate actively in different international forums. The authors made a careful distinction calling Russian organizations NGOs and
Chinese organizations CSOs, in their words: “due to the frequently blurred lines between state-organized [Organizations?] and NGOs in China and following scholarly convention” (p. 160). Therefore some non-profit organizations tolerated or promoted by the regime in China that sometimes referred to as GONGOS (NGOs controlled by Governments). This chapter is particularly revealing of Russian and Chinese regime strategies towards civil society organizations, as we seldom receive precise information of conditions there.

In their conclusion, Elizabeth Bloodgood and Christopher Pallas develop their whole theory for this new model of *Transcalar Advocacy*. Supported by plenty of the experiences described by the authors of the chapters in the book plus other international examples they deliver the new theory model with figures and graphics in contrast to the previous Boomerang model design. Undoubtedly this conclusive chapter wraps up all the many examples provided by the previous research and gives plenty of reasons for scholars to share and discuss.

### 2 Conclusions

The book clearly provides the vision of the new model being necessary to understand and act in the new world context that differs markedly from the one 25 years ago, when Keck and Sikkink discussed the *Boomerang model*. Even international NGOs have changed their organizational structure responding to the new context as recognized by other scholars:

The traditional intermediary role played by TNGOs (transnational NGOs) seems increasingly untenable. Local communities are more likely today to question motives of transnational actors and express their own perspectives without the mediating role of TNGOs. Both donors and local communities are no longer as dependent on TNGOs, requiring fundamentally new identities and legitimacy practices (Mitchell, Schmitz and Vijfeijken 2020: p. 6).

Nevertheless, I would argue that this new attractive model “absorbs” the old *Boomerang model*, and includes the *sandwich effect*, as some of the tools and methods are still necessary in the context of rising menaces against democracy with flourishing authoritarian governments that attack civil society organizations in many countries. So it might be too early to set aside completely the old model.

In fact as there is broad agreement that the space for civil society is shrinking in many countries where authoritarian governments, being right or leftwing, have developed different kinds of norms to cut down the activities of civil society organizations, and in some extreme cases even closing down organizations and putting their leaders in jail. We also have cases of governments that have reached power through democratic processes with civil society support but afterwards they restrain
the action of CSOs. Now, if this is the *scenario*, this new model that apparently is arising, is it showing the increase of efficiency of CSO *or otherwise is it a defensive method to protect civil society while retreating from attacks? That is a question to ask ourselves. In any case, this book is absolutely indispensable for all scholars and practitioners interested in the evolution of the field and those who enjoy first class research.

**References**


