

## CONCEPTUALIZING TRANSNATIONAL CAMPAIGN OUTCOMES

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Our knowledge of transnational advocacy networks (TANs) has greatly expanded over the past ten years, as studies documenting and analyzing TAN campaigns have yielded many new insights and findings. Few of these studies, however, have explicitly considered the nature of the political outcomes of TAN campaigns or discussed how these outcomes can be conceptualized in a way that allows us to observe and distinguish between different degrees of political impact. This paper draws on the theoretical social movement literature to address this issue. It borrows one of the conceptualizations of political outcomes proposed by this literature and applies it to one of the most prominent TANs that mobilized in the 1990s, the Jubilee movement for debt relief, to illustrate (1) that it is important and useful to reflect on the nature and significance of political outcomes and on how they can be conceptualized in order to facilitate comparative research, and (2) that conceptualizing the political outcomes of TAN campaigns in terms of new collective goods can help us move toward this goal.

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### INTRODUCTION

An important current social phenomenon is the growing role of transnational forms of activism in the international policy process.<sup>1</sup> Transnational advocacy networks (TANs), whose members are “actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services,”<sup>2</sup> have formed around a number of critical global issues and have become vocal and visible actors in the global public policy process.

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Since the publication of *Activists Beyond Borders*, the seminal work on TANs, social scientists have explored a number of different questions pertaining to TANs and their campaigns, such as the emergence of TANs, their distinctive features as transnational actors, their mobilization strategies, and the effectiveness of their campaigns. This research has provided compelling and theoretically informed accounts of transnational actors and has begun to cumulate insights into the nature and the dynamics of TANs and of transnational activism more generally.<sup>3</sup>

Although we now know much about TANs, there has been little discussion of the ways in which we can conceptualize, observe, measure, and compare the political outcomes of their campaigns. Given that most TANs launch their campaigns to bring about policy change, it is important to examine the nature of the political outcomes of particular campaigns and attempt to conceptualize these outcomes in a way that allows us to distinguish between degrees of campaign success.

This paper addresses some of these issues. It consists of two main sections and a conclusion. The first section reviews the theoretical social movement literature on political outcomes, introduces one of the ways that political outcomes can be conceptualized, and explains the advantages of this method. The second section applies this theoretical discussion to the Jubilee 2000 movement, one of the most visible TANs campaigning for global justice in the 1990s, which was formed to advocate for the cancellation of the debts of heavily indebted poor countries (HIPCs). This example illustrates how we can conceptualize political outcomes in a way that mitigates some of the challenges of studying campaign outcomes and distinguishes between different levels of success; this allows us to do comparative studies of outcomes. A comprehensive case study of Jubilee 2000 is beyond the scope of this article; rather, Jubilee 2000 serves as an example that illustrates the arguments reviewed in the first section. While the Jubilee movement's "long-term impact is still open, as is true for most campaigns of the 1990s," the data and information currently available can help us assess what has been accomplished thus far and what the prospects are for HIPCs.<sup>4</sup>

I focus on the Jubilee movement for several reasons. The Jubilee movement can be seen as a representative of the larger global justice movement of the 1990s and 2000s in terms of its structure and the nature of its claims as well as the values and beliefs underlying those claims. The global justice movement's size and its continued mobilizations around issues such as fair

trade, AIDS, sweatshops, and child labour, as well as emerging issues such as climate and food justice, make it significant among transnational social movements, and it is important to study. In addition, the Jubilee movement is generally considered to be successful; while this is certainly true in many ways, I argue below that it is not always so. As the approach I use can help us move beyond viewing a movement's outcomes as either a success or a failure<sup>5</sup> and assess the *ways in which* a movement has been successful, the Jubilee movement is a useful case to study.

My general argument is that understanding the political outcomes of TANs' global justice campaigns in terms of the creation of new collective goods can help us avoid some of the problems that arise when studying political outcomes. This can also help us distinguish between major, moderate, and minor outcomes and successes, thereby making comparative studies more feasible. This paper thus contributes to the literature on transnational activism by reviewing the theoretical literature on political outcomes, drawing on one of the approaches developed within this body of literature, and applying it to the study of transnational activism in order to illustrate how we can (1) distinguish between different levels of TAN success in influencing political outcomes, and (2) conceptualize political outcomes in ways that allow us to abstract from the goals and agendas of specific TANs and compare the outcomes of different TAN campaigns.

## SOCIAL MOVEMENTS OUTCOMES

I draw on social movement theory to study TAN campaign outcomes because it provides us with conceptual tools that can help us understand transnational activism. Although social movement theory was developed to study social movements in national (as opposed to transnational) contexts, it is still applicable to TANs. As two leading transnational social movements theorists note, "although . . . transnational contention has some distinct properties not found prominently in domestic social movements, . . . findings from social movement research—albeit coming from the local and national levels—offer a battery of insights and variables that will prove useful in understanding transnational contention."<sup>6</sup> Another leading scholar argues that "the movement forms and dynamics we see in the international arena resemble their national and local predecessors, even as they are adapted to fit a transnational political context."<sup>7</sup>

In studying social movement outcomes, researchers have distinguished between intra-movement and extra-movement outcomes. Intra-movement outcomes are the impacts that mobilization has on the individual movement participants, on the movement itself, and on other social movements. Extra-movement outcomes are the impacts of social movements on politics and on culture and thus encompass both political and cultural outcomes.<sup>8</sup> My interest lies in understanding the role of TANs in global governance and the nature of political change that TANs pursue and can achieve. The focus of this paper is thus limited to the political outcomes of transnational activism.<sup>9</sup>

Much of the research on social movements has focused on social movement mobilization (as opposed to outcomes), and there is comparatively little scholarship and literature on political outcomes.<sup>10</sup> This is in part due to the difficulties that researchers face when studying political outcomes. One such difficulty is the challenge of establishing a causal connection between mobilization and outcomes.<sup>11</sup> In other words, how can specific policy changes be causally linked to social movement activity, as opposed to other factors that impact policy formulation? Another difficulty pertains to the conceptualization of political outcomes. To what does the concept of political outcomes refer? How can political outcomes be empirically observed? And how can we distinguish between different degrees of political impact?

The present paper focuses on the last question. This is a key issue in studying social movement outcomes because without a cogent conceptualization of outcomes, it is difficult systematically to observe and compare the political outcomes of TAN campaigns.

### *Conceptualizing Political Outcomes*

One of the most straightforward ways of measuring political outcomes is to examine whether or not a social movement has been successful in reaching its stated goals;<sup>12</sup> however, this approach to studying social movement outcomes has a number of drawbacks, some of which are particularly problematic.<sup>13</sup> We know, for example, that social movement mobilization can have significant unintended consequences and outcomes.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, social movements can be quite diverse and often include groups that adopt different perspectives and pursue somewhat different political goals. David Meyer and Marco Giugni both remind us that social movements are not homogenous entities with a coherent set of goals and tactics.<sup>15</sup> In other words,

“groups enter social movements with a range of goals,” and it is therefore not “surprising that they would view acceptable outcomes differently.”<sup>16</sup> Conceptualizing outcomes in terms of a movement’s intended goals may thus not be very helpful in understanding the full impact of the movement.

Studies of political outcomes tend to focus on policy outcomes. This follows logically from the general view of social movements as groups mobilizing to challenge political elites and to bring about social and policy change. There are two problems with this approach.<sup>17</sup> First, policy change does not always translate into actual advantages and benefits for the groups that a social movement represents. Some policies are not implemented in the ways intended by policymakers, and some can have unforeseen consequences that affect the benefits that accrue from them. Second, positive political outcomes do not always take the form of substantive policy change; they can also be procedural changes. Substantive change entails a change in the content of public policy, whereas procedural change signifies a change in the policy process itself. Public policy can change in favour of a movement’s beneficiary group, but even in the absence of such change, procedural gains can provide movement representatives with better access to the policy-making process and with more opportunities to participate in that process and eventually influence outcomes.<sup>18</sup>

Two other issues further complicate the conceptualization of political outcomes. First, in comparative studies of social movement outcomes, researchers face the difficult task of using “categories that are broad enough to cover substantively different movements and yet meaningful enough to inform a single study.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, we need conceptualizations that capture the diversity of social movement goals, while at the same time allowing us to design comparative studies. Second, since many important outcomes cannot be observed easily, researchers must identify them in terms of both “changes in degree” and “changes in form.”<sup>20</sup> Changes in degree refer to outcomes that are quantifiable (such as political outcomes), while changes in form are more difficult to quantify (such as cultural outcomes). Even when studying quantifiable political outcomes, however, it is helpful to use categories that allow researchers to interpret and assess the broader significance of changes in degree. For example, if a social movement secures new monetary benefits for its constituency, this is a quantifiable outcome. The *significance* of these benefits, however, are less quantifiable. Do they

represent a minor outcome, or do they represent a more substantial impact of mobilization? What criteria can be used to answer these questions?

There have been suggestions about how to address some of these issues. Jennifer Earl proposes that researchers use theory-based definitions of successful political outcomes. She argues that researchers “should begin to use theory to define sets and types of outcomes that they would expect to be associated with a movement.”<sup>21</sup> These types and sets of outcomes would also be independent of social movements’ demands and stated goals, and facilitate comparative studies.

In an early and widely cited study on political outcomes entitled *Strategy of Social Protest*, William Gamson made a helpful attempt to conceptualize and study political outcomes systematically. He argued,

It is useful to think of success as a set of outcomes, recognizing that a given challenging group may receive different scores on equally valid, different measures of outcome. These outcomes fall into two basic clusters: one concerned with the fate of the challenging group as an organization and one with the distribution of new advantages to the group’s beneficiary. The central issue in the first cluster focuses on the *acceptance* of a challenging group by its antagonists as a valid spokesman for a legitimate set of interests. The central issue in the second cluster focuses on whether the group’s beneficiary gains *new advantages* during the challenge and its aftermath.<sup>22</sup> (emphasis in the original)

Subsequent studies have drawn on, modified, and expanded Gamson’s approach,<sup>23</sup> including the conceptualizations of political outcomes proposed by both Giugni and Kenneth Andrews.<sup>24</sup> They define political outcomes in terms of (1) accessing the political process, (2) influencing the political agenda, (3) achieving the adoption of policies consistent with movement goals, (4) achieving the implementation of these policies, (5) securing new benefits for the movement’s constituency, and (6) creating a fundamental, structural change in the policy process itself.

Another such effort is the work of Edwin Amenta, Kathleen Dunleavy, and Mary Bernstein, which informs this paper. Amenta, Dunleavy, and Bernstein argue that Gamson relies too heavily on movements’ stated goals as a measure of new advantages that accrue from social movement activities. Pointing out that new advantages for a movement’s beneficiaries are more significant as a measure of political impact than the acceptance of the group

itself,<sup>25</sup> they propose conceptualizing political outcomes in terms of the creation of new collective goods. Collective goods are defined as “advantages or disadvantages from which non-participants cannot be easily excluded”<sup>26</sup> and they can be material or non-material in nature. Since most social movements campaign on behalf of a constituency or a group not actively involved with the movement, measuring the political impact of a movement in terms of the creation of collective goods is consistent with the nature of the movement’s demands.<sup>27</sup>

This conceptualization captures both the intended outcomes of social movements as well as the unintended outcomes, which are quite common to social movements.<sup>28</sup> It also allows us to distinguish between different types of collective goods and thereby between different degrees of political impact:

The greatest sort of impact is the one that provides a group, not necessarily organizations representing that group, continuing leverage over political processes. . . . Most collective action, however, is aimed at a more medium level—benefits that will continue to flow to a group unless some countering action is taken. . . . The most minor impact is to win a specific state decision or legislation with no long-term implications for the flows of benefits to the group.<sup>29</sup>

Although the authors emphasize advantages, this conceptualization of outcomes dovetails well with Gamson’s definition of outcomes as it includes both the acceptance of a group as a legitimate and equal player in the policy process and advantages to beneficiaries.

The greatest type of impact is the creation of public goods at the structural or systemic level. Amenta and Neal Caren explain that this type of political outcome entails fundamental changes in the way the political process works.<sup>30</sup> In applying their approach to TANs, I argue that political outcomes that involve endowing groups with new human rights are major outcomes, as this empowers these groups, which can then use these rights to press their claims in their interactions with governments and other actors; this represents a fundamental change in the policy process. In addition, substantial change in the political process can open opportunities for equal participation in that process to new groups and actors. Medium impact refers to the creation of collective goods by means of long-term changes in policy; these changes become institutionalized through state bureaucracies. Minor political impact refers to collective goods that are created to

benefit a specific group at a specific time. These limited policy changes are aimed at providing a one-time benefit to certain groups with no long-term consequences.<sup>31</sup> Amenta, Dunleavy, and Bernstein's conceptualization of outcomes is appropriate for TANs, which campaign primarily for global collective goods. Whether it is global justice and a more equitable international distribution of resources, or global peace and a greater concern for human rights, TANs have framed their causes in terms of creating new global collective goods that benefit an international community. I use examples below to illustrate the distinctions between different levels of impact.

### *Major Outcomes*

Amenta, Dunleavy, and Bernstein explain that major outcomes involve fundamental changes in the policy process.<sup>32</sup> They cite a number of examples, including changes in the political system that give autonomy to certain regions or minorities, and democratic reforms such as granting the right to vote to previously disenfranchised groups. Amenta and Caren view the women's movement and the civil rights movement as two prominent examples of social movements that achieved this type of outcome. I consider the anti-apartheid movement and the pro-democracy movements of Eastern Europe to be other instances of highly successful mobilizations that achieved major political outcomes.

### *Moderate Outcomes*

Amenta, Dunleavy, and Bernstein explain that moderate outcomes involve the creation of new public goods that are institutionalized in the bureaucracy and continue to flow to the beneficiaries, barring any challenges to these benefits. The provision of these goods becomes a matter of routine bureaucratic practice, and this institutionalization makes the gains created by this distribution of collective goods relatively secure and difficult to reverse. Amenta and Michael Young explain that the Townsend movement, which mobilized to press for government benefits for senior citizens, campaigned for precisely this moderate type of collective goods. They also claim that the Social Security Act represents this type of moderate impact.<sup>33</sup> I would argue that the partial success of gay and lesbian groups in securing domestic partner benefits for employees of many city and state governments and many private sector employees in the US falls under the category of moderate gains.

*Minor Outcomes*

According to Amenta, Dunleavy, and Bernstein, minor outcomes are collective goods that provide a one-time benefit to individuals meeting certain eligibility criteria. These minor collective goods thus have no long-term implications. Amenta and Young cite as an example the success of American veterans' groups in securing the early payment of bonuses to WWI veterans, which benefited those veterans who qualified for them but did not benefit any other veterans then or later.<sup>34</sup> I believe the success of the Japanese American Citizens League in securing the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which compensated surviving WWII internees and provided a formal apology, also represents a minor outcome. It provided compensation to a specific group of people whose civil liberties had been violated, but it has no implications for other individuals who suffer(ed) similar or comparable injustices.

## THE OUTCOMES OF THE JUBILEE 2000 CAMPAIGN

*A Brief Background*

Jubilee 2000 is a transnational advocacy network that formed in the mid 1990s to campaign for the cancellation of the debt of heavily indebted developing countries by the year 2000.<sup>35</sup> Activists involved in the faith-based Jubilee 2000 movement were concerned about the many resources used to service debt as well as the implications of high debt service payments for social spending and poverty reduction. Jubilee 2000 activists were very critical of the economic reforms required of governments to be eligible for debt rescheduling and for new loans; they believed that the reforms undermined poverty reduction and were imposed through a process in which creditors held disproportionate power.<sup>36</sup>

One of the main concerns raised by Jubilee activists is the effect of debt on the well-being of individuals in heavily indebted countries. Activists have argued that the required debt service payments are so high that they exceed the resources governments allocate to social services, and thus represent an impediment to development. In addition, since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted in 2000, Jubilee activists have maintained that heavily indebted poor countries will need debt cancellation to help them allocate more resources to economic and social development and make progress towards the MDGs.<sup>37</sup>

Another Jubilee 2000 concern pertains to the unequal power relationships between debtors and creditors, in which creditors shape and control

the institutions and processes of debt rescheduling and debt cancellation, and require economic reforms of which Jubilee activists are very critical.<sup>38</sup> The Jubilee 2000 movement has addressed poverty relief, but has also focused on reforming the unequal power structures that manifest themselves in conditionality and on giving developing countries voice in setting the policies that affect their economies and their development opportunities.

### *The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative*

The main international debt cancellation mechanism implemented by the international community is the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC Initiative),<sup>39</sup> which is an initiative designed to eliminate the unsustainable debts of the world's poorest countries. The HIPC Initiative was launched by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1996 (original HIPC or O-HIPC) and revised in 1999 (enhanced HIPC or E-HIPC) to reflect a stronger link between debt cancellation and poverty reduction.<sup>40</sup> The HIPC Initiative has three main objectives. First, it is designed to help HIPCs achieve debt sustainability and find a way out of debt rescheduling. Second, it seeks to spark long-term economic growth by reducing the debt burden of HIPCs. Third, it aims to facilitate poverty reduction measures by making more resources available for social spending.<sup>41</sup> In addition to the HIPC Initiative, the G8 countries adopted a new initiative, the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI), at their July 2005 summit. The MDRI is designed to facilitate progress towards the MDGs by providing additional debt stock cancellation to many of the countries eligible for irrevocable debt relief under the HIPC Initiative.<sup>42</sup>

### *HIPC Initiative Eligibility Criteria*

To qualify for debt cancellation under the HIPC Initiative process, countries must meet four main criteria.<sup>43</sup> First, their debt-to-export ratio must fall above a specific value set by international financial institutions. This is the ratio of the net present value of the debt stock to the average value of exports during the preceding three years. The debt-to-export ratio is used as a measure of debt sustainability; if it falls above a certain level, a country's debt is considered unsustainable. For very open economies that are highly dependent on export revenues, another measure is used, namely, the ratio of debt to government revenue. When the HIPC Initiative was first launched in 1996, the minimum debt-to-export ratio required for eligibility

was 200 to 250 percent. In 1999, when the enhanced HIPC Initiative was introduced, the debt-to-export ratio required for eligibility was reduced to 150 percent.<sup>44</sup> The minimum value of the ratio of the net present value of debt to government revenue required for HIPC Initiative eligibility was also reduced, from 280 percent to 250 percent. This loosened the eligibility criteria to allow more countries to qualify for debt cancellation.

Second, countries seeking debt cancellation under the HIPC Initiative are required to establish a track record of implementing economic reforms over time. Debt cancellation is thus contingent on the implementation of economic reforms determined by international financial institutions with some input from HIPCs. The time frame for implementing these reforms was initially fixed, but in 1999, E-HIPC introduced some flexibility to allow countries to become eligible for debt cancellation more quickly.

Third, countries seeking to be considered for the HIPC Initiative are required to develop and implement Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in cooperation with the World Bank and the IMF in an open and participatory process that also includes civil society groups. This requirement was introduced in 1999 and is designed to tighten the link between debt cancellation and poverty reduction.

Fourth, countries participating in the HIPC Initiative must be eligible to borrow from the International Development Association, a unit within the World Bank that provides the poorest countries of the world with interest-free loans and grants, or from the Extended Credit Facility, an IMF program that provides subsidized loans to low-income countries.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, in addition to the economic reforms, countries are required to reduce corruption and develop mechanisms to ensure that the additional resources made available through debt cancellation are used for poverty reduction policies and programs.

### *Phases in the HIPC Process*

The HIPC Initiative process has two phases. During the first phase, countries are required to design and implement economic reforms and an interim PRSP. After approximately three years of reforms, a country reaches what is referred to as the decision point: if at this point a country's debt is still unsustainable despite debt relief through other already existing mechanisms of debt cancellation, the country becomes eligible for debt cancellation under the HIPC Initiative.<sup>46</sup> The amount of debt cancellation is determined at this

point; it is the level of necessary debt relief that an HIPC Initiative-eligible country needs to reduce its debt to a sustainable level.<sup>47</sup>

For eligible countries, the decision point marks the beginning of the second phase of the HIPC Initiative process, during which they are required to implement a set of structural and social reforms designed by international financial institutions.<sup>48</sup> This phase ends at the completion point: if the progress of economic reforms is satisfactory at completion point, a country irrevocably receives the full amount of debt relief agreed to at decision point. Between the decision point and the completion point, countries participating in the HIPC Initiative receive a substantial rebate on their debt service payments, which is referred to as interim debt relief.<sup>49</sup> The time that elapses between the decision point and the completion point was initially fixed at three years; under the new “floating completion point” approach, this time period may vary. At completion point, some countries may also be eligible for debt cancellation beyond what was agreed to at the decision point; this is referred to as “topping-up.”<sup>50</sup>

### *The Political Outcomes of the Jubilee 2000 Campaign*

While the Jubilee campaign has not been the only influence on international debt policy, it has had significant influence on the policy process surrounding debt. The outcomes of the Jubilee campaign have been documented in a variety of sources and publications, including those cited throughout this paper. These outcomes include substantial debt cancellation and a change in the approach to debt relief to emphasize poverty reduction more strongly. But do these outcomes meet Amenta, Dunleavy, and Bernstein’s criteria for major outcomes? Have they resulted in a fundamental change in the international policy process surrounding debt and development that redefines the relationships among stakeholders in that process? Do they have a continuing and long-term impact on poor countries as a whole? These are the questions that I address below.

Despite the very significant cancelled debts, I argue that the outcomes of the Jubilee movement have been moderate and that a number of problems remain that undermine the purpose for which the HIPC Initiative was designed. The debt relief provided by the HIPC Initiative is substantial, but it does not affect the terms of new borrowing and does not guarantee that HIPC Initiative participants will not develop new unsustainable debt. Also, the process currently in place neither gives heavily indebted poor countries

more voice, influence, or policy autonomy nor redefines their role in international policy processes surrounding debt and development. For these reasons, which will be discussed further below, I view the outcomes of the Jubilee movement as moderate. This conclusion is not a negation of the very important successes of the Jubilee movement, as the campaign has achieved a great deal and can be considered one of the most effective and successful TAN campaigns. If, however, we use Amenta, Dunleavy, and Bernstein's criteria to evaluate the Jubilee campaign's impressive outcomes, we must conclude that they still fall short of being major outcomes.

### *Delivered Debt Cancellation*

As of March 2010, the HIPC Initiative and the MDRI had delivered some level of debt relief to thirty-five out of forty eligible countries. Of these thirty-five countries, twenty-eight have already reached the completion point and seven have reached the decision point. On average, these thirty-five countries have reduced their debt service payments relative to their GDP by more than half between 2001 and 2009, from an average of 3.2 percent of their GDP to an average of 1 percent of their GDP. They have also increased their average social and anti-poverty expenditure as a percentage of GDP from 6.3 percent in 2001 to 8.9 percent.<sup>51</sup> The total amount of debt relief provided through E-HIPC exceeds the amount of debt cancellation ever provided before E-HIPC was introduced, and analysts have commented that "for those countries qualifying for the initiative and meeting the conditions . . . , debt burdens have been reduced substantially."<sup>52</sup> The total amount of delivered HIPC Initiative and MDRI debt relief as of the spring of 2010 is 106.5 billion US dollars, and the average debt service-to-revenue ratio for the thirty-five countries declined from 22 percent in 1999 to 6 percent in 2009, while the average debt-to-exports ratio declined from 457 percent in 1999 to 110 percent in 2009, and the debt-to-revenue ratio declined from 552 percent to 181 percent in the same time period.<sup>53</sup> As of February 2010, the HIPC Initiative and MDRI were expected to reduce the debt burdens of the thirty-five countries by 90 percent once all debt relief under both of these initiatives has been delivered.<sup>54</sup> In short, debt reduction has been substantial for post-completion point HIPCs,<sup>55</sup> and this is a very significant and important political outcome. For reasons discussed below, however, there is currently no strong evidence that the delivered debt relief will have

a significant long-term impact, which would be a key indication of major outcomes.

### *Linking Debt Cancellation and Poverty Reduction*

The enhanced HIPC Initiative of 1999 was in large part a result of the Jubilee 2000 campaign. A major outcome of the Jubilee 2000 movement was to pressure the G8 and international institutions to establish an explicit link between debt cancellation and poverty reduction under E-HIPC. The influence of this TAN campaign was reflected in a stronger emphasis on the use of the resources freed up by debt cancellation to promote social development and other poverty reduction strategies. As a World Bank review of the HIPC Initiative indicated, “the major evolution of the treatment of sovereign debt was the move from debt collection, to debt rescheduling, to aid and structural adjustment, to debt ‘sustainability,’ to forgiveness and poverty reduction.”<sup>56</sup> This evolution is in no small part the result of intensive campaigning by the Jubilee 2000 movement. As the HIPC Initiative review argued, “While the original design was essentially developed by the staffs of the World Bank and the IMF, the broad participatory process adopted to review and then enhance the HIPC framework in 1999 was critical to the evolution of the initiative, given the key role played by the international NGO community.”<sup>57</sup> For example, the connection between debt cancellation and poverty reduction was in large part the result of intensive campaigning by the Jubilee 2000 movement,<sup>58</sup> and the added flexibility to the timing of the completion point under E-HIPC, which allows countries to receive debt cancellation faster, was also a key demand of Jubilee activists. Jubilee 2000 also succeeded in inducing financial institutions to relax the eligibility criteria for the HIPC Initiative, allowing more countries to benefit from debt relief.

Has this link between debt cancellation and poverty reduction proved valuable in the efforts to raise living standards in the developing world? As it is difficult to link debt relief and poverty reduction empirically, most studies have focused on examining the link between debt relief and public spending geared towards poverty reduction.<sup>59</sup> There is some evidence that social spending has increased in the countries that have benefited from debt relief.<sup>60</sup> The thirty-five post-decision point countries increased their poverty-reducing spending by an average of 2 percent of their GDP,<sup>61</sup> and recent IMF data indicate that social spending in HIPCs today is on average six

times higher than their debt service payments, whereas before the HIPC Initiative was introduced, social spending was slightly lower than debt service payments.<sup>62</sup> The poverty-reducing effects of increased social spending are somewhat mixed, however, with social indicators showing improvements in some but not all areas of poverty reduction and social development.<sup>63</sup> In addition, progress towards the MDGs has been mixed and patchy, and a significant number of post-completion point HIPCs are not on track to meet some of the MDGs.<sup>64</sup>

### *(Future) Debt Sustainability and HIPC Eligibility*

As noted above, reducing debt to sustainable levels is a core objective of debt cancellation initiatives. However, debt cancellation under the HIPC Initiative will not necessarily or automatically result in debt sustainability. Most of the participating countries will very likely need new loans to fund development projects; the sustainability of their new debt will depend in part on the level and the terms of their new loans since the HIPC Initiative does not address the terms of new borrowing. Debt sustainability also depends to a large extent on economic growth, export growth and diversification, and sound economic policies and economic management, especially debt and fiscal management. The HIPC Initiative was not initially designed to build debt management capacity and there remains a need for more efforts in this area, even though the World Bank and IMF do currently have mechanisms in place that address the issue of debt sustainability.<sup>65</sup> We cannot simply assume that debt cancellation under the HIPC Initiative will automatically result in debt sustainability, and so it is important to evaluate the record of the HIPC Initiative regarding this issue.

In a 2006 evaluation of the HIPC Initiative by the World Bank Independent Evaluation Group, some concerns were raised about debt sustainability. At that time, data from post-completion point countries showed that debt sustainability remained tenuous for many countries, whereas debt sustainability analyses for eight post-completion point countries evaluating long-term debt sustainability indicated that the risk of debt distress is moderate in six of these countries and high in only two of them. All countries that were past the completion point at that time remained vulnerable to export shocks and required highly concessional loans and capacity building in the area of debt management.<sup>66</sup>

A study published in 2008 concludes that “debt sustainability has only been achieved in a small number of countries.”<sup>67</sup> Another recent assessment of the implementation of the HIPC Initiative and the MDRI finds that even though the debt situation of post-completion point HIPCs is better than the debt situation of pre-completion point HIPCs or non-HIPC low-income countries, “long-term debt sustainability remains a challenge in many post-completion-point countries,”<sup>68</sup> and some post-completion countries have experienced setbacks in terms of their prospects for debt sustainability.<sup>69</sup> This is in part the result of new loans, to whose terms HIPCs remain sensitive.<sup>70</sup> The implementation assessment also shows that post-completion point countries remain vulnerable to export shocks<sup>71</sup> and will require new aid flows to meet their development needs, the terms of which will have an important effect on their future debt sustainability.<sup>72</sup> The most recent implementation assessment notes that although there are no signs of a significant debt crisis and although post-completion point HIPCs have low risk ratings compared to pre-completion point HIPCs and non-HIPCs, some of them still remain vulnerable, especially given the impact of the global economic recession on their economies. The assessment concludes that HIPCs will need highly concessional resources and technical assistance, and notes that the World Bank and IMF are working to secure such resources and to help HIPCs monitor and manage their debt.<sup>73</sup> A civil society assessment of debt sustainability also raises concerns about debt sustainability.<sup>74</sup>

Disagreement between international financial institutions and Jubilee 2000 about the nature and meaning of debt sustainability indicates that sustainability is not defined by creditors in ways that establish a strong link between debt relief and poverty alleviation, or that create broad-based and long-lasting benefits for the citizens of indebted countries. In other words, sustainability is not being defined in ways we could use to conceptualize major outcomes.

As mentioned above, the HIPC Initiative defines debt sustainability and HIPC Initiative eligibility in terms of the debt-to-export ratio. From the Jubilee movement’s perspective, this definition of debt sustainability is flawed because it focuses too much on the technical and financial aspects of sustainability while disregarding the social dimensions of the debt crisis.<sup>75</sup> Debt cancellation campaigners maintain that some countries with debt levels that are sustainable under this definition are not able to meet the basic needs of their population, raise standards of living, and meet the MDGs by the

target date. The campaigners only consider sovereign debt sustainable if a country is able to service it and still remain on track in terms of attaining the MDGs. Under such a definition of sustainability, at least sixty-two countries would be, by one estimate, eligible for debt cancellation.<sup>76</sup> In fact, there is a current Jubilee USA Campaign working to pass The Jubilee Act for Responsible Lending and Expanded Debt Cancellation, which would, among other measures, require that the US government work with international leaders to expand the number of countries that can benefit from international debt relief to sixty-two countries. This would include twenty-two additional countries that are currently not eligible for the HIPC Initiative.<sup>77</sup>

The debate over the meaning of sustainability mirrors the controversy over eligibility for debt relief. The eligibility criteria are central to debt relief initiatives because they determine the scope of the total debt relief delivered and the number of countries and people that will potentially benefit from this relief. Debt relief campaigners have been highly critical of the eligibility criteria, arguing that the debt sustainability thresholds are arbitrary because (1) the debt-to-exports and debt-to-revenue ratios are not true indicators of a government's ability to meet basic needs, invest in social development, and make progress towards the MDGs, and (2) the thresholds used to determine sustainability are too high and are based on unrealistically optimistic assumptions about the future economic performance of HIPCs.

The issue of sustainability is relevant here; if progress towards the MDGs is considered when assessing debt sustainability, that would signal a stronger commitment to broad-based poverty reduction as the ultimate goal of debt relief and increase the likelihood that debt cancellation initiatives will have major outcomes that will provide continued and lasting benefits to individuals and societies. This, in turn, would be an indication of a higher degree of Jubilee movement impact, since poverty reduction has been the focal point of the campaign.

### *Conditionality*

The IMF defines conditionality as “economic policies that members intend to follow as a condition for the use of IMF resources.”<sup>78</sup> In the context of debt, conditionality refers to “the principle that access to new loans, rescheduling, debt reduction, etc., should be conditional on certain criteria being met.”<sup>79</sup> Jubilee activists have long demanded that conditionality be reconsidered and the international debt framework overhauled to carve out a new role

for HIPCs as equal partners in international debt and development policy. If implemented, these reforms would help create the kind of fundamental change in the policy process that Amenta, Dunleavy, and Bernstein argue is key for securing major political outcomes.

How and to what extent were the HIPCs involved in the design and implementation of the HIPC Initiative and the MDRI? One of the main goals of the Jubilee 2000 movement was to give indebted countries more voice and a larger role in debt negotiations. Some activists even argue that this was the main goal of the campaign.<sup>80</sup> The campaign has always maintained that the creditors hold too much power as they can determine the extent and the conditions of debt rescheduling and debt cancellation, allowing debtors no opportunity to influence the design of debt initiatives. Most of the reforms HIPCs have been required to implement are not conducive to poverty reduction. Jubilee 2000 has therefore repeatedly called for an independent, fair, and more transparent debt arbitration mechanism that is designed to safeguard the interests of both creditors and debtors in determining the terms of debt cancellation and new borrowing.<sup>81</sup> Activists remain strongly opposed to conditionality and continue to campaign for unconditional debt cancellation, except for very limited conditions pertaining to the allocation of the resources made available through debt relief and to ensure the accountability and transparency of their use.<sup>82</sup>

The requirement that HIPCs develop PRSPs, which was introduced by E-HIPC in 1999, was initially designed as an attempt to give HIPCs more influence and “ownership” over the HIPC Initiative process.<sup>83</sup> This was an attempt to shift the focus of conditionality from content to process. In practice, however, this new form of conditionality never worked in the way it was intended, partly because it did not replace traditional conditionality. In addition, for a variety of reasons, the process of developing a PRSP has not always been participatory and inclusive, and has not always included a strong commitment to poverty reduction.<sup>84</sup> Finally, creditors have continued to have strong influence over the process, and analysts have maintained that “traditional conditionality prevails.”<sup>85</sup> In short, the HIPC Initiative has not really empowered debtors or given them a greater voice and role in the debt relief process, and the terms of debt cancellation have not changed in significant ways. HIPCs do not have more leverage over the process, their autonomy in economic policy remains constrained, and Jubilee campaigners continue to advocate for an overhaul of conditionality.

For example, in addition to expanding the number of countries eligible for the HIPC Initiative, the Jubilee Act mentioned above would also require the US government to work with other stakeholders to eliminate the debt relief conditions that many Jubilee activists strongly believe are harmful to the poorest HIPCs.<sup>86</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This paper has reviewed the social movement literature on political outcomes and applied it to the study of transnational advocacy networks to illustrate why and how it is important and helpful to specify the nature of political outcomes in research pertaining to transnational activism. I have used the example of Jubilee 2000 to show that conceptualizing outcomes in terms of global collective goods can be helpful in gaining a deeper understanding of the extent and significance of TAN campaign outcomes.

Comparative studies of two or more TAN campaigns are beyond the scope of this paper but are an important and promising avenue for further research.<sup>87</sup> Most research on movement outcomes has been designed as single case studies. The comparative method can give researchers more analytical leverage and allow them to study causal processes that link movement activities with political outcomes.<sup>88</sup> Cross-case comparisons allow researchers to study cases that differ in terms of the variables of theoretical interest; this should include both unsuccessful and successful TAN campaigns.<sup>89</sup> The variation makes it possible to assess the effect of the independent variables on the outcome variable while controlling for other variables, which in turn allows scholars to attribute outcomes to specific explanatory variables and to formulate conclusions that can be generalized to a category or class of social phenomena. Finally, comparative studies will be especially helpful if the research design is geared toward exploring the processes and dynamics that underlie TAN campaigns and explaining when and how they can have an impact on political outcomes.<sup>90</sup> As Hanspeter Kriesi and his coauthors explain, “we cannot directly determine whether a change is the result of a movement’s action or of reform undertaken by the political authorities. We have to make the link between the movement’s action and the observed change indirectly, by specifying the mechanisms through which the former produces the latter.”<sup>91</sup> This strategy can help researchers understand and explain the ways in which TAN campaigns unfold and how this process is connected to the political outcomes of these campaigns.

The conceptualization of outcomes I have applied to the Jubilee movement can help students of social movements conduct this kind of research as it lends itself particularly well to comparative studies. Avenues for future research include studies comparing the Jubilee movement with other movements within the larger global justice movement, such as the campaigns surrounding HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases prevalent in developing countries. Both campaigns call for providing additional resources to the countries of the Global South to help them fund economic and social development; conceptualizing their outcomes in terms of collective goods can help us compare them even though the campaigns focus on substantively different issues. Similarly, one could compare the Jubilee movement to campaigns calling for better development aid or for trade justice using Amenta and his coauthors' conceptual framework of collective goods to transcend the specific issues and describe the outcomes of these campaigns in ways that allow us to compare them. In addition to revealing the causal mechanisms connecting mobilization and outcomes, such comparisons can help us move beyond focusing on a campaign's stated goals as a measure of its success, and provide us with the tools to think not only about how much debt relief and how many new resources are made available to developing countries, that is, about the numbers, but about the *significance* of these numbers and the *kind of political change* they represent.

#### ENDNOTES

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