

Nonprofits and Environmental Policy Networks in Northeast Asia

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Abstract:

This paper focuses on the role of nonprofit organizations in overcoming institutional collective action problems in Northeast Asia. Focusing on the issue area of the environment, it argues that nonprofit organizations play important roles in developing the coordinating networks that facilitate policymaking among diverse policy actors and fragmented governmental authority structures. The paper begins by discussing three specific types of networks commonly created by nonprofits in Northeast Asia to improve environmental policy: hub-and-spoke, horizontal, and vertical. The paper then discusses three ways that these networks influence policy: 1) facilitating peer-to-peer information sharing, 2) piloting new projects and disseminating best practices, and 3) empowering allies within the government. It concludes by discussing how the Institutional Collective Action Framework can be modified to incorporate the role that non-state actors play in creating and nurturing solutions to public policy collective action problems.

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Environmental policymaking is plagued by institutional collective action problems. Most environmental problems are simultaneously local, regional, national and global, and numerous governmental actors at all levels—municipal, state, national, even international—shape policy. Thus far, scholars utilizing the Institutional Collective Action Framework Feiock 2013 have generally focused on how a variety of governmental entities have solved (or not solved) these problems in the United States and Europe (Andrew 2008, Tavares and Feiock 2014, Feiock, et al. 2015). Furthermore, even when the ICA Framework is used to analyze networks, it is government-created networks, often with subcontractors providing public services, that are discussed (Andrew 2008, Shrestha, et al. 2014).

This paper takes a different approach. Its starting place is nonprofit organizations in East Asia. Growing out of a research project focused on effective environmental advocacy in East Asia, this paper examines the role that policy-relevant networks created by nonprofit organizations serve in overcoming institutional collective action problems. Through a description of the types of networks that these organizations form and the functions that they serve in promoting the creation of better environmental policy and outcomes, this paper hopes to contribute to the development of Institutional Collective Action Framework literature by offering some suggestions about how networks created by non-governmental actors can help governmental actors at all levels overcome institutional barriers to developing better environmental policy.

Methodology

This paper emerges from an inductive examination of network creation on the part of nonprofit organizations in East Asia working in the environmental policy realm. It draws uses the behavior of environmental organizations and the networks that they create in order to generate insights into the patterns of network formation and the effects of those networks on policymaking and outcomes.

The research presented here is based on two primary sources: five months of fieldwork in East Asia and an original database of environmental organizations in the region. I conducted research trips to Beijing, Seoul, and Taipei in 2010, with trips to Tokyo and Beijing in 2011 and 2015. The bulk of the research presented here was gathered from interviews conducted with nearly one hundred advocates, journalists, government officials, business people, grassroots volunteers, and academics.

Data from interviews was then supplemented with a database of environmental organizations in the region. With the assistance of native speaking research assistants, I gathered approximately 100 environmental organizations in each of the four countries¹ (China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan), and then added organizations from the United States for comparative purposes. The goal was to capture in the database: (1) the most influential environmental organizations in the country, and (2) a semi-representative sampling of the remaining environmental organizations in the country. In all cases I worked with capable native-speaking research assistants to help with the collection and coding of organizations for the five countries.

For three of the five countries in the database I was able to begin with a handful of influential organizations and then populate the bulk of the dataset with a random sample of organizations. The United States, Japan, and South Korea all had official lists

of environmental organizations that I could use to build my database. For the U.S. groups, I began with the oldest and most influential groups as identified by Christopher Bosso in *Environment Inc.* (Kansas, 2005), and then supplemented by random sampling of organizations registered with the IRS that list environment as a core mission, for a total of 105 US environmental organizations.²

For Japan, the first five organizations were included based on the author's knowledge, and an additional 100 groups were added using the NPO Hiroba (Non-profit Organization Forum), a list of all the registered non-profit organizations in Japan.³ There were 3,597 organizations in the database that included 'environmental protection' as one of their focal areas. In order to create a dataset of approximately one hundred groups, I sampled every 36th organization listed in the output, which was organized according to the prefecture in which the organizations were registered. This methodology helped ensure geographically proportionate sampling (because of the disproportionately large number of organizations in Tokyo a purely random sampling methodology could have further overrepresented that geographic region). Two of the randomly sampled groups were already in the database, resulting in 103 groups total.

For South Korea, the database began with seven organizations that the author knew to be highly influential. The South Korean Ministry of Environment publishes an online list of non-profit organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and social cooperatives related to the environment.⁴ The list contained 373 organizations. We randomly selected 100 groups to include in the dataset. For about thirty of the organizations we could find no additional information, so additional groups were randomly selected until we had a total of 100 environmental groups about which we could code information.

For organizations in the United States, Japan, and South Korea, organizational websites (especially annual reports when available), government reports, and media coverage were used to gather information about the organizations, their membership, and their activities, which were coded and added to the database. Please note that for all three of these countries, this search methodology biased the dataset against all-volunteer groups that may be actively engaged in environmental activities but are not officially registered as non-profit organizations. This bias is less of an issue in the United States, where the requirements to file for and maintain 501c3 status are relatively simple, and the tax benefits are significant, creating strong incentives for all organizations, even small ones with no paid staff, to register. However, for Japan and South Korea, the barriers to becoming registered as a non-profit organization are high, resulting in fewer registered organizations, and biasing the dataset against the all-volunteer, non-registered groups that constitute the majority of civil society in these two countries. Although the dataset has this limitation, it still is able to offer a portrait of registered environmental groups and their activities, even if it cannot claim to be as representative of all environmental groups.

I could not find comparable official lists of environmental groups for either China or Taiwan. For those two countries, I did my best to follow the spirit of the data collection for the previous countries. I began with a short list of the environmental groups that I knew to be influential. Native research assistants combed the Internet to find the names of and information about as many environmental groups as they could find.⁵ Once the lists were compiled, I circulated the lists to several prominent scholars and national environmental leaders who were familiar with the environmental groups

active in their countries to see if I was missing any important groups and if the list I had developed appeared to these local experts to be fairly representative of environmental groups in their countries. In the end, I was able to include 108 groups from China and 32 groups from Taiwan. As was the case for the sampling method in Japan and South Korea, this search methodology required that the groups be sufficiently well resourced to afford a website in order for us to find them, again biasing the results against local all-volunteer groups. However, the local experts that were consulted assured me that the list we generated included all of the most important groups and was fairly representative sample of the others.

In order to discover whether there were systematic differences in the boards of directors, we coded information about the background of board of director members for the organizations in the dataset. We were able to obtain board of director information for about half of the organizations in the dataset, usually from annual reports or links on organizational websites. This information was not evenly distributed. All of the Japanese organizations had this information publically available while information was harder to find for Chinese, Korea, Taiwanese, and U.S. organizations. For all groups, we coded a wide range of information including their founding dates, the types of issue areas in which they were active, the advocacy strategies they employed, their budget and staff, and characteristics of their board of director members.

The typology of networks was conceptualized by the author after talking with the various actors who were working together (and in opposition) to craft environmental policy in their own localities and countries. The typology of the ways that these networks influenced environmental policy was conceptualized by the author through a combination of the interviews and through close examination of the behaviour of each of the organizations in the database.

The examples given below are chosen because they offer good illustrations of the typologies conceptualized. Because all of these data were collected as part of an inductive research process, none of the evidence presented here is intended to test any particular hypothesis or theory. Rather, it is intended to enable us to refine the theoretical underpinnings of the Institutional Collective Action Framework in ways that can better incorporate the role of nonprofit-generated networks in solving institutional collective action problems related to policy creation and enforcement. Further research should be designed using a different set of cases to test the hypotheses generated from a refined version of the ICA Framework.

Typology of Environmental Networks in East Asia

This section will describe three types of networks that environmental advocates create in order to promote pro-environmental policy and behavior change: 1) Hub-and-spoke networks, in which a nonprofit creates a “hub” that connects smaller organizations to one another around a policy area. 2) Horizontal networks in which the nonprofits facilitate the connection of a wide variety of actors—governmental, nonprofit, and private—to one another. 3) Vertical networks in which the nonprofits connect local and central government officials in ways designed to enhance the political power of pro-environmental officials in their negotiations with other parts of their own government.

The key features of all three types of networks is that they bring diverse sets of people together in ways that help promote the development of long-term personal relationships that can facilitate formal and informal collaboration related to policy making and implementation. All three types of networks can be found across all the places in East Asia and, I suspect, across the world. The examples are drawn from different countries rather than a single country in order to help the reader understand that the types of networks are found all over. The types of networks as conceptualized are neither country nor region specific.

Hub-and-Spoke Network: Nonprofit Organization as Funder/Coordinator

A hub-and-spoke type of network is one where a single organization forms the “hub” through which other individual and organizational “spokes” connect. The “spokes” often have very little way to connect to the other “spokes” except through the hub. A key characteristic of the hub-and-spoke networks in East Asia (and likely elsewhere) is that they hub organizations are often GONGOs (Government-organized Nongovernmental Organizations).¹ GONGOs were usually founded using governmental funds, frequently receive most of their funding from the government, and are often led by former government officials. It also means that core to their mission is to facilitate government-NGO coordination and collaboration (in contrast to advocacy NGOs that have a mission that does not presume collaboration). Thus, one of their most important roles is to help serve as a channel from the NGO community to governmental policy makers.

A hub-and-spoke network can be created in a number of different ways, and I will discuss two distinct variations here. The first is one is hub-as-funder, where the network is formally institutionalized with a funding organization located at the center of the network and member/recipient organizations joining that network. The power of the groups is very hierarchical in this arrangement—the funder has the money and the recipient organizations are the ones implementing the environmental agendas, but they are dependent on the funding organization. Finally, in this model the hub organization (frequently a GONGO) usually is set up to be the primary means through which the member organizations can access policy makers.

A second model is hub-as-organizer. In this model, the hub organization creates opportunities for members to come together. Similar to the first type, there would often be little opportunity for members to connect without the assistance of the hub. However, in this model the hub organization rarely funds the members but merely introduces them to one another. Similarly, the member organizations are usually highly diverse in their power/resources, so it is a highly heterogeneous and relatively un-hierarchical type of network, in contrast to the hub-as-funder model. In this model, governmental organizations and funders are often members themselves, so the hub organization serves more a role of match-maker to help the funders and relevant governmental organizations/people meet their NGO counterparts rather than creating an arrangement where the NGO groups have to go through the hub-organization in order to access policy makers.

¹ Hasmath, et al. 2016

Hub-As-Funder

Perhaps the most archetypical hub-as-funder network that I found in my research were the networks created by the China Association for NGO Cooperation (CANGO), which is a GONGO operating in Beijing whose main mission is to promote the development and support of NGOs in China. CANGO has a strong focus on environment and sustainable development, and like its counterparts elsewhere in the region, one of its primary missions is to help to form and sustain networks that will build the capacity for environmental organizations in China.

One of the main ways it promotes environmental agendas is by funneling money that is collected from foreign organizations to local NGOs. Indeed, CANGO was originally the China International Technology and Cooperation Exchange Organization, which was the branch of the Chinese government that helped implement official development assistance (ODA) that was given to China by foreign governments. When the pattern of international aid shifted such that (a) aid was often given directly to organizations rather than going through the government, and (b) donations often came from international NGOs rather than foreign governments, CANGO broke off from the official implementing agency to form its own NGO in 1992, but it retains very strong ties to the government.

Most nonprofit organizations in China (and most places in the world) tend to be very small, with very few if any professional staff. As a result, their capacity to design and implement projects as well as to find funding for those projects is extremely limited. CANGO helps increase the capacity of these groups through a variety of capacity-building initiatives, including workshops on fundraising, budgeting, etc. It works with multiple organizations by helping them with project development, implementation, and assessment.

For example, the Green Commuting Network was formed in 2007 to connect Chinese NGOs that were working to develop more environmentally sustainable commuting behavior, and by 2009 the network included twenty NGOs from across the country. Members of the network promote green commuting campaigns, participate in annual conferences, and take part in volunteer management workshops. The Green Commuting Network also engaged in research, gathering commuting data in seven cities in 2011. Separate but concurrent with the Green Commuting Network, CANGO established a Green Commuting Fund in 2009. The fund helps support green commuting initiatives around the country and also enabled the first voluntary domestic carbon credit trading in China.²

It should be noted that international organizations can also form these types of hub-as-funder networks around a local branch office or a particular project. In these networks the international organization acts as the hub-as-funder, and the participating local NGOs participate in co-development and project implementation. Examples include the Yangtze Wetland Conservation Network (hub was WWF-China, and local NGOs form the spokes).

² For more about these initiatives, see CANGO's annual reports <http://www.cango.org/upload/files/Annual%20Report%202013.pdf> (accessed 3/22/16).

Hub-as-Coordinator

The organization that perhaps best exemplifies how to create networks where the hub organization performs a coordinator role is the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), which based in Kanagawa with branch/affiliated units in Tokyo, Kansai, and Kitakyushu within Japan as well as in Beijing, Bangkok, and New Delhi. It was formed in 1998 as part of an initiative of the Japanese government. Its mission is to conduct “practical and innovative research for realizing sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region.”³ To this end it has seven different research themes ranging from climate and energy to sustainable cities. Each of the focal themes has a team of in-house and external researchers working on particular projects, and they publish policy reports and working papers with titles such as “Designing Adaptation Finance for the Green Climate Fund: Challenges and Opportunities Drawn from Existing Multilateral Funds for Adaptation.”⁴

In addition to their research and policy participation, IGES is very active in facilitating peer-to-peer learning and dissemination of best practices across the region. Through regional centers in Kansai, Kitakyushu, Beijing, Bangkok, and New Delhi, it hosts events that bring together a wide range of different types of participants that are all concerned with particular issues. For example, the annual High Level Seminar on Environmentally Sustainable Cities brings together local municipal leaders with direct experience developing and implementing environmental policy at a local level, (e.g., sanitation district heads, transportation office directors, and mayors), NGO activists working on these issues in the region, academics, and also funding agencies (e.g. JICA, the organization that disburses most of Japan’s development aid).

There are several important characteristics to notice about the networks that IGES helps to form and maintain:

- Members of the network come from all sectors of the economy: nonprofit, for-profit, government, academic, etc.
- The connections formed with one another are generally informal. Some of the networks are membership-based and have requirements for participation, but most do not.
- The power structure of the network is horizontal—despite the very different levels of power and resources among the participants in the network, each has relatively equal membership status and participates on an equal basis for the most part.
- The coordinating organization—IGES—is not a primary funder of the organizations in the network. For the most part, IGES finances the network itself, helps maintain communication, hosts conferences, etc., but

³ See IGES “about us” website: <http://www.iges.or.jp/en/outline/index.html> (accessed 3/13/2013).

⁴ Full text of the working paper can be found here: http://enviroscope.iges.or.jp/modules/envirolib/upload/4171/attach/IGES_Working_Paper_CC-2012-04.pdf (accessed 3/13/13).

it does not generally give funding to member organizations to carry on their missions.

This last point is a very important one. Funding organizations, e.g., Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), frequently participate in the networks that involved international groups, and the events create the opportunity for organizations and governments seeking funding to solicit funds and pitch proposals. However, IGES does not itself offer members funding, so it is able to serve as an impartial coordinator and facilitator, significantly reducing the power asymmetry that would exist if it were serving as both coordinator and funder of its members.

Horizontal Network: Fluid, web-like networks with no center

Because environmental organizations in East Asia are frequently all-volunteer or have very few professional staff, they form networks in order to increase their capacity to carry out projects and also to advocate for policy change. These types of networks are usually characterized by their high level of flexibility—it is easy to join and easy to leave. It is easy to remain connected but not active, or to shift from being not particularly active to highly active and then back to not very active again. Networks are a method to connect with like-minded individuals and organizations. Networks can also provide political cover for individual organizations that may be engaged in work that is controversial or challenges the status quo, since it is the network that is taking the action, not any particular organization.

Horizontal networks can be as informal as an email list set up after a conference or as formal as an organization with annual dues. They are highly diverse in form, but, as with the above, I will highlight two distinct types below: event-focused networks, and issue-focused networks. The key characteristic of the first type is that they are short-term, focused on creating a network of individuals and organizations to ease coordination around a particular event. After the event, it may be that the network re-forms with a different purpose and continues to expand. More frequently, the network disbands after the event, although once it has formed, it is relatively easy to reactive or re-engage the participants in order to support other events in the future. The key characteristic of the second type of network is that the members are drawn together because of interest in a particular issue.

Event-Focused Networks

Perhaps one of the best known environmental NGOs in Japan is now called the Kiko Network (Climate Network if the name is translated into English). It began as a horizontal event-focused network, Kiko (climate) Forum that grew and eventually institutionalized into an issue-focused network organization. Since 1995, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has annual Conferences of the Parties (COP) meetings. The third of these (COP3) was held in December 1997, and was the conference that first adopted the Kyoto Protocol. In the late 1990s, it was not yet standard practice to hold a “shadow” conference that gathered the NGO community together at the same time as governmental leaders were also meeting. Kiko Forum’s

efforts to mobilize the NGO community prior to the COP3 meetings in Kyoto contributed to the creation of the “meetings in conjunction” that has now become standard practice with all of the major inter-governmental conferences (e.g. COP, G8, WTO etc.).

Starting in early 1997, began mobilizing the NGO community both within Japan and around the world to connect the organizations working on environmental issues to share information, arrange meetings, and raise public awareness prior to and during the COP3 meetings in Kyoto. It was very successful, not only enabling the NGO community to participate actively in the COP3 meetings, but also by establishing a model that other groups could follow. Following the meeting, the Kiko Forum disbanded and formed a more permanent NGO, called Kiko Network, or Kiko-Net.⁵ Although they are now a registered nonprofit, they remain very small by international standards. Although they have a membership of about 700 organizations, they have only about ten staff members—six in Kyoto and four in Tokyo (kikonet.org) Reimann 2003.

More typical than event-based networks that institutionalize into their own organizations are networks that form around particular events and then disband when the event is over. One example from China is the group of NGOs that networked together to promote the 26 Degree campaign, which began in Beijing in 2004. This campaign aimed to get everyone, but particularly large hotels and businesses, to keep their air conditioners set to 26 (as opposed to 22 or 20) degrees in the summer. Partnering with a number of international NGOs with offices in Beijing (e.g. WWF) a group of local Chinese environmental groups such as Global Village of Beijing, Green Earth Volunteers, and Friends of Nature, got together to run a very successful campaign that not only raised public awareness in Beijing, but resulted in significant carbon emissions savings, and ultimately a shift in public policy that required government offices to keep their air conditioners set above 26 degrees, and set that temperature as the standard for hotels, restaurants, and office buildings. The network that they formed was significantly based on the personal network already existing among the leaders of these groups, and it remained ad-hoc, dissolving once the campaign finished.

Issue-Focused Network

Issue-focused networks bring together loose associations of organizations who have similar interests. The issue might be air pollution, garbage, fisheries management, etc. Many of the most enduring of these networks are organized around rivers. Rivers are themselves network systems, so perhaps it is only natural that organizations located in different towns and cities along the same river, even if they are in different countries, frequently form networks among their organizations.

Sometimes these networks seek to join together multiple organizations and local governments to mobilize support for changes in national policy, (see Waley 2005 study of Japan). More frequently, they are focused on local environmental issues, and use their network connections to gain support to fight their local NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) battle Litzinger 2007.

⁵ Koko Network Homepage (in Japanese, English page also available, accessed 5.23, 2017) <http://www.kikonet.org/>.

A successful example of an issue-focused network that transformed into a national nonprofit organization is Wetlands Taiwan. The organization originated in the mid-1990s from a grassroots NIMBY battle against expansion of the Tainan Industrial Park on Taiwan's southeastern coast. As similar NIMBY battles were fought across the country against the expansion of industrial parks and the degradation of the surrounding environment, similar efforts in other localities joined together. Now Wetlands Taiwan is a network of five regional associations which each focus on protecting particular wetlands. While the Tainan association remains the strongest (the organization's headquarters is there), each of the five associations and the national network work closely with local residents, local organizations, local and national governments on conservation issues. They disseminate relevant local and international news pertaining to wetland conservation, host lectures, organize activities such as bird watching tours inside the protected areas, and work with local and national policymakers on issues related to wetlands conservation.

Vertical Networks

When NGOs form vertical networks, they are frequently acting as a matchmaker or policy broker, introducing lower-level bureaucrats to higher-level bureaucrats, connecting local governments to corporate investors, or enabling civil servants to encounter international actors that the lower-level policy makers would otherwise have no way to meet. In some ways the relationship is somewhat similar to the hub-and-spoke model above, but in these models (a) the "spokes" have very different status and power, and (b) the NGO/GONGO does not remain the hub, but rather to uses its network to facilitate new, relationships among actors that might not have been previously connected. Once the new links are made, the NGO will remain connected to all parties, but it will usually step back, enabling the "spokes" to create the architecture and purpose of the new, policy-relevant network.

The largest environmental organization in East Asia is the Korea Federation for Environmental Movements (KFEM). It has 80,000 members and 52 regional organizations. It was intimately involved with Korea's democratization movement,⁶ and has been active in the global environmental movement since its inception. It is active in a wide range of environmental issues, and its federated organizational structure, combined with its five specialized institutions (including a research institute and a legal assistance center) enable it to connect local concerns directly with allies in the national government and international environmental organizations. Sometimes this is done with a specific purpose in mind—such as blocking the Saemangeum project component of the Four Major River Project. In other cases, the organizations works to connect relevant actors together around issues of concern, such as food safety. The goal in these cases is not necessarily to influence policy directly, but rather to facilitate favorable change by connecting policy actors that might have difficulty finding one another together.⁷

⁶ Lee, et al. 1999, Kim 2010, Ku 2011

⁷ Lee 2000, Ku 2011; interview with KFEM leader in Seoul 2011.

Modes of Network Advocacy

The three types of networks described above—hub-and-spoke, horizontal, and vertical—are the formal and informal institutional structure that facilitate network advocacy. Each of the actors within the network engage in their own advocacy efforts independently—e.g., lobbying legislators, engaging in public protests, legal advocacy, writing policy papers, grassroots education, cultivating connections with policy makers, etc.

However, the policy-relevant networks that the NGOs have created are not merely the sum of these individual actors' efforts. I am arguing here that the networks themselves exert a somewhat independent, or more precisely, interdependent effect on the policymaking process. In particular, these networks help interested policymakers work around institutional collective action problems. As a result, the networks can have a catalytic effect on other forms of advocacy. This section attempts to describe three effects that the networks exert on policy: information exchange, ally empowerment, and citizen engagement. In all cases, the central feature of the network's effectiveness in influencing policy is the ways that they are able to reduce the institutional collective action problems found in environmental policymaking.

Information Catalyst—easing coordination problems and lowering transaction costs

The networks described above act as a catalyst for policy-relevant knowledge creation and dissemination. As described above, the environmental organizations in East Asia are miniscule compared to their counterparts in North America and Europe, so they do not have the resources individually to (a) figure out which knowledge is the most policy-relevant, (b) generate that knowledge, and (c) disseminate the new knowledge. Similarly, bureaucratic structures often put up barriers between different ministries and between central government and local government officials. Finally, all actors—governmental, NGO, and private—have limited resources. Without these networks, all of the policy actors are forced to work rather independently—trying to identify relevant problems, generating policy solutions, testing those solutions, and then disseminating best practices. Without the networks, these actors cannot be very efficient. Limited resources mean that no single actor can do everything. Limited coordination results in both redundancies in efforts and holes in coverage. Limited exchange slows the adoption of policies and practices that work, even once they are developed.

NGO-generated networks can help policy-relevant actors work around institutional barriers to be significantly more efficient in the way that they deploy resources to generate new policy-relevant knowledge and then disseminate that knowledge once it has been created. There are numerous areas of environmental policymaking where this can be seen, but perhaps the most obvious is the ability to find relevant sites to conduct local pilot projects and then enable the results of those pilot projects to be disseminated to others—national government policy makers within the same country, local governments in foreign countries, and to international NGOs that can spread the information to governments and environmental organizations around the

world. These networks enable peer-to-peer knowledge generation and sharing in ways that would be impossible, or at least significantly more difficult without the networks.

The KitaQ Composting system⁸ is an excellent example of how one environmental GONGO worked with a variety of actors governments to (a) identify a good pilot site, (b) carry out the pilot project, (c) facilitate peer-to-peer learning about the pilot, (d) replicate the pilot project elsewhere, and (e) disseminate information about the successful project for widespread adaptation—currently eleven cities in five countries.

The composting project began in Kitakyushu City in Japan as part of the city's efforts to reduce household solid waste. Working with experts from the local university, city residents, and funded by the local and national governments, activists and city officials developed an urban-friendly composting system that they thought was replicable. The Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, a Japanese GONGO with a branch office in Kitakyushu, with funding and assistance from the Japan International Cooperation Agency, facilitated a connection between the officials in Kitakyushu and Pusdakota, a local environmental NGO located in Surabaya, Indonesia. The project was piloted from 2005-2007. Over the course of the two years, the city, with a population of three million, saw a reduction of 350 tons (23%) in the solid waste collected annually over the two years. There was also a dramatic improvement in the hygiene and aesthetic of the city streets as abandoned lots were transformed from informal garbage dumps to public greenspace that utilized the compost generated for gardening. Through the activities of the city, IGES, local NGOs, and additional corporate sponsors, the composting methodology has now spread to 19 additional communities.⁹ IGES in collaboration with others continues to develop policy tools for easy implementation by other municipalities as well as hosting conferences that are specifically designed to bring together communities with experience in the KitaQ composting system and those that are thinking about implementing it.¹⁰

It would be tempting to ascribe the success of the KitaQ composting program to IGES exclusively. There are ways that the experience of developing, refining, and disseminating the composting methodology could be discussed in the same way that any World Bank, Asian Development Bank, development program could be described. I would like to argue here, though, that while IGES and the Kitakyushu city government were important actors, utilizing the advocacy strategies commonly used for policy advocacy—e.g., pilot projects, policy papers, public information sessions, press coverage, engagement with local leaders, etc.—the network created by IGES exerted a somewhat independent catalytic effect on the outcome. The network dramatically expanded number of communities that consider adoption of this policy solution; communities that could never have been reached by IGES or Kitakyushu City without the network that they had created. Furthermore, the network created a comprehensive policy feedback loop that

⁸ KitaQ homepage: <http://kitaq-compost.net/> (accessed May 15, 2017)

⁹ Surabaya Case Study
http://kitakyushu.iges.or.jp/publication/Takakura/Surabaya_Experience_Full.pdf
(accessed May 15, 2017).

¹⁰ IGES Composting page: <http://www.iges.or.jp/en/archive/kuc/compost.html>
(accessed May 15, 2017)

enabled the piloted compost methodology to be refined, tested in new areas, further refined, etc. by multiple communities at the same time.

The network acted as a catalyst for information exchange by increasing (a) the number of actors involved, (b) the quantity and quality of feedback about the methodology and policy implementation, and (c) the scope of further dissemination. The network was not just an add-on or a communication method, it took on a life of its own and acted in ways that was more than the sum of its component parts.

A key feature of the networks created by these NGOs is the way that they continue to grow in unexpected ways, which are often complementary to the original policy goal. In October 2015 the cities of Kitakyushu Japan and Haiphong, Vietnam became one of three pioneering twinning cities to collaborate in a City-to-City Cooperation (C3) program sponsored by the international NGO Clean Air Asia to reduce air pollution.¹¹ Where did this seemingly odd partnership originate? Perhaps at the “Networking Meeting for Local Governments: Creating Low-Carbon and Sustainable Cities” meeting sponsored by IGES and held in Siem Reap, Cambodia in March 2012. At that meeting IGES staff presented information about the Surabaya composting pilot, where both the NGO Clean Air Asia and representatives from Haiphong were participants. In 2014 Nippon Steel, Sumikin Engineering, Amita, and NTT Data Institute Management Consulting presented a Low-Carbon Development plan for Hai Phong City, which was modeled on the Surabaya example.¹² That same year Kitakyushu and Haiphong formalized a sister city relationship.¹³ One year later the two cities are collaborating on clean air initiatives, branching out into and expanding an entirely different NGO-facilitated network. They went from composting to clean air in the space of three years. Allies expanded from a couple of NGOs and two local governments to more international NGOs, national funding agencies, and numerous corporations from both countries.

Empower Allies—overcome bureaucratic barriers and furnish allies with resources

One of an advocate’s most powerful advocacy strategies is to cultivate influential policymakers. One of the best ways that NGO’s can do this is to form personal connections with early and mid-career bureaucrats and support those individuals as they gain experience and power. Connecting these officials to others in the NGO’s network can be one of the most important methods through which these sympathetic insiders can be empowered. The NGO-created network enables these lower and mid-level public servants to bypass the layers of bureaucracy that inhibit communication with central government officials. The networks also connect these policymakers to individuals and organizations they would never otherwise be able to encounter through their regular day-to-day operations. In the end, the new relationships that are formed through the network

¹¹ Clean Air Partnership page of Clean Air Asia, <http://cleanairasia.org/cities-clean-air-partnership/> (accessed May 15, 2017).

¹² Report <http://asiangreencamp.net/eng/pdf/68.pdf> (accessed May 15, 2017).

¹³ Kitakyushi city information about sister city agreement http://www.city.kitakyushu.lg.jp/english/file_0049.html (accessed May 15, 2017)

can significantly enhance the capacity of these policymakers to enact effective and far-reaching policies.

Here is a description of how the process worked in one case in China, as described to me in a 2015 interview with Barbara Finamore, Senior Attorney and Asia Director, China Program of the Natural Resource Defense Council.

The first really big project that we did was energy efficiency in Jiangsu. We went to a conference in Chong Qing hosted by the Demand-side Management Center set up by the Asian Development Bank. The head of the Jiangsu power company was the head of that, and I kept up with him for years. First we did the demand-side management project. For that project the Utility Companies pay customers to be more efficient. It was very successful and got the attention of the central government. It took ten years, but eventually the central government made the rules nationwide.

So, we kept in touch. We brought people down to Jiangsu. We brought people from California. We brought California officials to China. We brought Jiangsu officials to California. We brought central government officials to California. We brought Governor Schwarzenegger to China because California was a leader in demand-side management because of their energy crisis. There can be a gap in the connection, but it is still there, and now he [my Chinese contact] is very important.

There are people who sat through all those meetings, who were very quiet, but who sat in all the meetings who move up the administrative ladder, and now those people are running the regulation companies. They're not quiet anymore.

[It seems like you're not just empowering allies by giving them information, but you're also empowering them by helping them to make political connections. Can you expand on that?]

We brokered a memorandum of understanding between the California public utility commission and the Jiangsu Utility to cooperate on energy efficiency. We brought the California officials over to Jiangsu—they're sister provinces or something. The MOU had two parts—the first was government to government, and the second included the NRDC as implementers. I helped found the China-US Energy Efficiency Alliance 10 yrs ago—that alliance is now helping other communities form these kinds of agreements.

NGOs can serve a critically important role in improving and promoting policy development by building networks across bureaucratic divides that impede policy making through purely governmental procedures. Governmental bureaucracies can often be rigid, making it difficult for like-minded policy makers to find each other and work together. NGO-generated networks can help connect these dots by bringing these officials together. Since officials (and sometimes NGO professionals) move around, these personal networks remain dynamic, sometimes being activated, sometimes going dormant, waiting for the time when the connection can be usefully employed.

Sometimes, as was the case for the China-US Energy Efficiency Alliance, the network itself can become institutionalized enough to become an independent organization.

Engage Citizens—raise awareness, motivate volunteers, spur engagement

The final and most obvious way that NGO-created networks act as a policy catalyst is the ways that they can engage citizens. When organizations are connected through a network, they can dramatically expand their reach. They can spread the word about particular issues. They can coordinate volunteer activities. They can motivate the public to become more politically engaged.

The 26 Degree Campaign is a highly successful example of how environmental organizations with near zero resources can network together for a huge policy impact. In 2004 Sheri Liao, founder of Global Village, floated the idea for the campaign to her NGO colleagues in the city. She described the origin of the idea to me during an interview in Beijing in 2015, “I think I got the idea when I was in the US. I would go into a supermarket in the summer time, and I would have to wear a sweater. I’d think, ‘This is ridiculous!’ At the time I hoped that China would not do this kind of thing. But then I found that China was following the same path. So, I discussed it with some NGO people, and we came up with the idea of 26 in Summer and 20 in Winter.”

The small group met several times to discuss their plan of action. They collaborated to put together a report that documented how much energy would be saved if people set their air conditioners higher. Hotels and large businesses, especially, were setting the thermostats very low—17 or 19 degrees (62 or 66 degrees Fahrenheit)—because businessmen were expected to wear jackets, even in the summer, so the room temperature needed to be cool for them to be comfortable. The NGO leaders used their good relationships with the press to gain a lot of coverage of their findings. An energy shortage that summer only helped fuel interest in the issue. Beijing factories experienced power rationing during peak hours, and Beijing was the last of the major cities to face power cuts, which had spread across most of the electricity markets in the country.¹⁴ Journalists began to spot-check hotels and publish what they found in their newspapers. Friends of Nature mobilized volunteers to go into public spaces such as shopping malls, hotels, and businesses and record the temperature, and violators would be written up by the organization and also by the press.¹⁵

In 2005, the campaign gained momentum—more organizations joined the campaign, they gained greater press coverage, and the Beijing mayor, always concerned about local pollution, also got involved. By this time the idea had caught the attention of the central government, and Premier Wen Jiabao announced that government offices and meeting rooms would not have temperatures set below 26 degrees, and in July the Beijing

¹⁴ Financial Times article about the power cuts:

http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/7d831806-d144-11d8-99cf-00000e2511c8.html?ft_site=falcon&desktop=true#axzz4hF54XH8E (accessed May 16, 2017)

¹⁵ Interview with: Yong He, Green Earth Volunteers 2015 in Beijing, Sheri Liao of Global Village in 2015 Beijing, Yuan Wang of Friends of Nature in Beijing 2015, Fuqiang Yang of Natural Resource Defense Council, 2011 Beijing.

municipal government sent a directive to all corporations in Beijing urging them to save energy by adopting the 26 degree standard in all restaurants, hotels, offices, banks, and other public areas.¹⁶

Although the excitement around the campaign has waned, the network has expanded. By 2015 Friends of Nature was coordinating more than fifty volunteers in Beijing and collaborating with NGOs in thirty other Chinese cities to crowdsource temperature readings on a variety of buildings and share the data on WeChat. Their efforts were not just a collaboration with other NGOs and the press but also business—HSBC was helping to fund their efforts.¹⁷ The campaign's success was a direct result of the event-based network created by the NGOs. That network enabled the organizers to coordinate their use of resources to develop high quality research. They were able raise public awareness through their collaboration with the press. Residents of Beijing knew that their air was bad, but most had not made the connection between the temperature of their homes and offices and the quality of the air they were breathing. The network created a framework whereby citizens could be motivated to action and then engage in a productive way to help solve the problem. The network enabled profitable and productive collaborations with business to reduce emissions. It framed its grassroots activities in ways that were digestible for policymakers and convince high level officials to change government policy. The network enabled all of these actions—it had an independent catalytic effect on citizen engagement.

Conclusion

This paper has described three types of networks that NGOs in East Asia commonly build as part of their advocacy strategies: hub-and-spoke networks, horizontal networks, and vertical networks. These networks in turn enable policy actors within and outside of governments at local, regional, and national levels to overcome institutional collective action problems. In particular: They enable diverse actors to work together for the creation and dissemination of policy-relevant knowledge. They create a mechanism whereby NGOs can empower allies in government by helping them to overcome bureaucratic barriers and by connecting them to new resources. Finally, networks dramatically expand citizen engagement related to the policy area—spreading awareness of issues that matter, inspiring individuals to volunteer their time, and facilitating citizen engagement in politics.

These examples, while they originate in Northeast Asia, are likely found in other parts of the world. The existence of these networks and the way that they enable policymakers to overcome institutional collective action problems suggest that modifying the Institutional Collective Action Framework in two ways could significantly enhance the relevance and applicability of that framework towards solving policy problems around the globe.

¹⁶ See the Friends of Nature report about the campaign <http://www.fon.org.cn/uploads/attachment/47111361524307.pdf> (accessed May 16, 2017)

¹⁷ Interview with Yuan Wang, Friends of Nature, in Beijing 2015.

First, the ICA Framework should more systematically include nonprofit actors. These actors are not merely subcontractors for government agents (as they are usually treated in the ICA Framework now)(Feiock 2013). These actors have their own policy agendas, and they are actively working to influence policy development and implementation.

Second, the networks that nonprofits create can alter the fundamental structure of policymaking in the places where they exist. They can create new patterns that change the flow of policy ideas, experimentation, feedback, and implementation not only between the governmental actors and the objects of the policy (e.g., citizens, corporations) but even among the governmental policy makers themselves. These externally created networks can fundamentally reshape policy subsystems—how they operate at any given point in time and how they evolve over time.

Thus, in order for the Institutional Collective Action Framework to gain greater capacity to generate policy solutions as well as expand its applicability outside the democratic capitalist systems of North America and Europe, it needs to do a better job incorporating nonprofit organizations and their policy networks into its analyses.

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¹ I use the word 'country' for heuristic ease. It is not intended to be a statement about the status of Taiwan as independent or not from mainland.

² The US groups were created by searching the IRS's cumulative list of environmental organizations found here: <http://www.irs.gov/taxstats/charitablestats/article/0,,id=97186,00.html> (search conducted between July 1-7, 2012; link is no longer active). We first selected 501c3 organizations that had missions related to the environment (all the C codes, and then D20, D30-34, and K25), which generated 29,498 organizations. We then randomly selected 100 organizations and added them to the database. Organizations for which we could find no information were eliminated, resulting in a total of 105 organizations.

³ NPO Hiroba <http://www.npo-hiroba.or.jp/search/> (accessed Jan. 1-12, 2012).

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http://www.me.go.kr/home/web/policy_data/read.do?pagerOffset=0&maxPageItems=10&maxIndexPages=10&searchKey=&searchValue=&menuId=10260&orgCd=&condition.code=A1&seq=6330 (Accessed October 4-25 2014).

⁵ An important resource for China was the China Development Brief's NGO Directory, which allows for searching by sector. <http://chinadevelopmentbrief.cn/directory/> (accessed July 2011).