Beyond the Usual Suspects: Interest Groups in the Global South

Patrycja Rozbicka (*Aston University, UK*)[1] and Laura C. Mahrenbach (*Technical University of Munich, Germany*)[2]

Understanding interest group systems is crucial to understanding the functioning of advanced democracies, but less is known about its relevance in developing and nascent democracies. While advocacy studies in the Global North have exploded since the late 1990s, exploration of organized interest activities in the Global South remains a niche topic, impeding comparative analysis. In this introductory essay – and in this special issue – we make a case for why investigating lobbying in the Global South can improve theoretical and empirical understandings of advocacy processes and make our work more relevant for contemporary policy questions. We also provide tips for how to best engage with the unique challenges of lobbying in Southern policymaking settings and processes. Drawing on the findings from the special issue, the essay concludes by presenting a contemporary research agenda for interest group scholars which identifies where synergies already exist and where South-South and North-South comparative case studies can be built. In so doing, we promote a mutually beneficial dialogue which tables existing research contributions and gaps in each region as opportunities for communal discussion and learning.

[1] Contact address: Aston University, College of Business and Social Sciences, Dep. Politics, History and International Relations, Aston Triangle, B4 7ET Birmingham, UK; p.rozbicka@aston.ac.uk

[2] Contact address: Technical University of Munich, Germany; TUM School of Social Sciences and Technology, Dept. of Governance, Richard-Wagner-Str. 1, 80333, Munich; laura.mahrenbach@hfp.tum.de

INTRODUCTION

Existing knowledge and current research on interest groups is highly developed when it comes to countries of the Global North. The largest concentration of studies analyses advocacy in the United States (Nownes 2015; Walker and McCarthy 2010; Brulle et al. 2007), in West European countries (Van Waarden 1992; Naurin and Boräng 2012; Mohan 2012; Klüver 2015; Fisker 2013, and Christiansen 2012; Mahrenbach 2020) and lobbying vis-à-vis the EU (Berkhout 2015; Berkhout and Lowery 2010; Coen and Katsaitis 2013). More recently, scholars have begun to explore Central and Eastern European countries (Rozbicka et al 2021; Dobbins and Riedel 2021), as well as some settings further afield, like Australia (Fraussen and Halpin 2016). The vast accomplishments of that literature demonstrate that understanding interest group systems remains crucial to understanding the functioning of advanced democracies (Putnam 2000; Beyers et al. 2008; Bartolini 2005; Mair 2006). Interest organizations are perceived as partners in the policy process, enhancing its open, transparent and participatory character. In fact, the emergence and sustainability of interest groups is often treated as one of the prerequisites of successful democratization.

Yet, in spite of the importance of interest groups for the democratization process, studies of interest groups' activities in the Global South are still a rarity (with some notable exceptions, including the publications by authors in this special issue, e.g., Irwin and Kyande 2022 or Alba Vega 2012). While Western democracies link the emergence of modern civil society and democratization with a century-long process, different patterns emerge when examining interest group activity in the Global South. For instance, rapid and unexpected regime changes may create opportunities for interest communities to emerge (as in Rozbicka et al. 2021) or prevent the same from happening (Dendere and Taodzera, *this issue*). Similarly, neoliberal market reforms may shift the balance of domestic economic power enough to create a new lobbying structure (Mancuso et al. 2016; Hopewell 2014; Mancuso et al., *this issue*). Comparing interest representation in underexplored countries with similar processes in Western counterparts can elucidate how neglecting interest representation in much of the world has hindered our understanding of advocacy in general.

Our main topics of enquiry are interest groups' mobilization and the strategies that they deploy. From a theoretical perspective, we examine how supply (resources, legitimacy) and demand (institutional variation, size of government, corruption) factors identified in existing theories are relevant to lobbying mobilization and strategies in the Global South. Pragmatically, we profile the state of the art of interest group studies in selected Southern countries and empirical and methodological challenges which scholars may face in studying Southern lobbying more broadly. Empirically, our authors explore advocacy in five countries on four continents. As is evident in Table 1, the contributions address crucial questions in the literature. These include which factors affect interest group influence, where and how interest groups gain access to politicians and decision-making, how representation has changed over time, the interdependence of government and business for economic reform and opening, and the presence of civil society organizations in different political systems. By bringing together the work of scholars working on countries '*beyond the usual suspects*', we seek to showcase the field of inquiry on interest groups' activity, demonstrate and promote methodological innovation and pluralism in interest group research, and help build a foundation for a study of interest groups which reflects the diversity of advocacy in today's world. We also highlight the necessity of comparative research, both among countries of the Global South and vis-à-vis countries of the Global North.

[Table 1 about here]

The remainder of this introductory essay proceeds as follows. The next section focuses on the role of interest groups within democratization processes and why we need to know more. In particular, we ask 'how much we study' and 'how little we know' regarding interest representation in the Global South. This is followed by two sections detailing the main findings from the special issue.

We conclude by presenting an agenda for advocacy research which is geographically, empirically, and methodologically more inclusive - and thus likely to generate new insights which are more relevant for policymaking in today's globally interconnected world.

HOW MUCH WE STUDY, HOW LITTLE WE REALLY KNOW?

The literature on the Global North demonstrates that understanding interest group systems and advocacy remains crucial to understanding the functioning of advanced democracies. Pluralist arguments that without interest groups there would be no democracy retain plausibility and find resonance in social capital research (Putnam 2000; Beyers et al. 2008). Simultaneously, the transformation of the European national state and the declining importance of electoral and party politics in Western democracies (Bartolini 2005; Mair 2006) have directed more and more attention to the prominent position of interest groups within policy networks and policy negotiation. The neo-Tocquevillian approach emphasizes the importance of internal aspects of associational life for the proper functioning of democracy and democratization (Kaufman 1999). From that perspective, interest organizations are either central democratic partners in the policy process, enhancing its open, transparent, and participatory character, or a means of distorting democracy, crowding out more traditional forms of direct representation. Thus, the emergence and sustainability of interest groups is treated as one of the prerequisites of successful democratization.

Following that understanding, in 2008, Beyers et al. published an influential article taking the stock of interest groups research in European and American politics. The authors started from the conundrum: '*Much We Study, Little We Know?*' They focused on the definitions of interest groups and pointed to the plethora of neologisms framing the concept, ranging from 'political interests' and 'political advocacy' to 'social movements' and 'civil society'. They also indicated the importance of interest groups as replacements for eroding party systems, the broader and more direct nature of interest representation, as well as the cross-border impact of national groups, especially within the EU multilevel system. In that context, they promoted a future research agenda centred on (1) the reasons for and implications of skewed political representation delivered by the interest groups system, (2) the relationship(s) between interest groups and political elites, and (3) the link between how interest groups maintain their own cohesion and influence strategies.

In this context, our special issue draws inspiration from theoretical literature on lobbying in the Global North to examine interest group mobilization and strategies in the Global South. We are particularly interested in general theories about supply factors (i.e., resources and legitimacy) that impact groups' activities. Resource dependence theory (e.g., Binderkrantz et al., 2015; Bouwen, 2002; Rasmussen and Gross, 2015) states that organizational 'success' – in our case, lobbying success – is affected by a combination of interest groups' resources and how these resources fit into the context in which groups operate. Several contextual factors have been considered in the literature to date, but predominant is the density of interest group populations in a given system. Organizational ecology scholars underline that the level of competition groups face has a detrimental impact on maintaining lobbying activities (Gray and Lowery 1996). In dense systems, interest groups face more competition for access to policymakers. Consequently, groups operating in denser systems are less likely to become established players in the policy process, whereas groups operating in less dense communities develop a steadier presence in such processes. Scholars have found that developing democracies are characterized by fewer interest groups than more established ones (Halpin and Thomas 2012). Hence, we should expect a large rotation of different interest groups involved in advocacy in the Global North and more advanced democracies like Brazil and India and a smaller number of reoccurring players in new and/or nascent democracies like Zimbabwe and Vietnam.

Another factor important for groups' mobilization is the availability of resources, including monetary resources and constituency support (Hanegraaff et al. 2019). Resources are necessary to sustain lobbying activities. Hence, securing a continuing resource supply is a crucial activity for interest groups. Funding can come from a variety of sources at the national level, including from supportive

constituenc(ies), potential membership fees, and from national funding and grants. Constituency support, in turn, may comprise general public support of a group's initiative, support from sub-groups of the public (e.g., farmers) or even policymaker support. Empirically, we expect that the resource base will be larger in developed countries of the Global North compared to the developing countries of the Global South (Hanegraaff et al., 2015; Smith & Wiest, 2005). Constituency support may be more complicated in less established democracies as well. For instance, Carbone (2020) finds that, in Peru, a history of corruption makes people skeptical of lobbying activities, and government efforts to ameliorate people's fears (e.g., by creating a registry of meetings among lobbyists and public officials) are often unsuccessful. As a result, these theories would predict Southern interest groups should find it harder to mobilize constituencies, find donors, and attract sponsors than is true for their Northern counterparts. Understanding how Southern groups acquire resources and which types of resources they rely on can consequently shed light on interest group strategies.

The texts in the special issue also consider the impact of demand factors, such as institutional variation, size of government, or corruption, on influence groups' mobilization and strategies. Different variants of non-state stakeholder theory are unified by the assumption that strengthened opportunities for involvement of self-organized stakeholders in political procedures hold significant promise for making procedures more democratic (Agné et al. 2015). Yet existing literature argues that mobilization levels and variation in the strategies deployed are higher in developed countries than in developing ones. This points to a normative concern: if patterns of political exclusion due to socio-economic factors play an important role in lobbying processes in the Global South, this may effectively hinder greater stakeholder involvement from advancing democratization processes in those settings (Hanegraaff et al. 2015). Put differently, while increasing the input legitimacy is not sufficient to ensure that domestic governance becomes more responsive, there can hardly be greater output legitimacy if relevant constituencies are systematically excluded or underrepresented. Hence understanding the impact of the political system on mobilization and strategies in the Global South can provide insights both into democratization processes as well as yield new insights for how lobbying occurs.

We argue that more systematic engagement with advocacy in the Global South is crucial if we are to understand how lobbying occurs and its implications for democratic decision-making in today's world. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the shared vulnerability of governments around the world not just to cross-border threats (like the pandemic), but also to changing global rules (such as how vaccines should be distributed internationally) and to the interruption of global supply chains (as in the current microchip crisis). Simultaneously, governments face internal strife as, for instance, when fears about the availability of COVID-19 vaccines led societal groups to lobby for priority access (Cohen 2020). The plethora of ways in which governments have responded to the pandemic (see Cheng, Barceló et al. 2020) highlight the need for a comparative and nuanced understanding of how different national governments with different national resources and interests make decisions which affect fundamental issues of economic and physical security. In neglecting how advocacy occurs in most of the world by continuing to focus on countries of the Global North, we consequently forgo the opportunity to comment on questions which will be crucial to future policymaking.

To that end, this special issue asks how much we really know about the state of the art of interest representation in the Global South. Admittedly, we are not the first scholars to pose this question. Two previous works in particular bear mentioning due to their similar commitment to addressing lobbying in a global, comparative context. In 2008, Clive S. Thomas and Ronald J. Hrebenar edited a special issue of the *Journal of Public Affairs* entitled "Interest Groups, Lobbying and Lobbyists in Developing Democracies." Their contributors use lobbyists and lobbying as an analytical lens through which to view democratic consolidation. They do so in Southern and Northern countries, including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, China, India, Lithuania, Argentina, Tanzania and South Africa (Thomas and Hrebenar 2008). Two years later, José Carlos Marques and Peter Utting published an edited volume in Palgrave Macmillan's International Political Economy series entitled *Business, Politics and Public Policy: Implications for Inclusive Development* (2010a). Lobbying and lobbyists are the independent variable in this collection, as authors examine how advocacy affects governments'

capacity to achieve inclusive development (Marques and Utting 2010b). This collection focuses on South-South comparisons, with case studies from India, Brazil, Chile, Nicaragua, Peru, Russia, South Africa and Latin America.

One takeaway from these contributions is the ***need for reflection and flexibility when seeking to apply analytical concepts*** developed in the traditional lobbying literature to countries of the Global South. In fact, this was one of the key findings of an event organized within the framework of ECPR Standing Group on Interest Groups that took place on 5th November 2020 entitled: 'Beyond the Usual Suspects: Interest Groups in India, Zimbabwe and Brazil'. Scholars participating in that event noted that the term 'interest group' is rarely used when referring to advocacy activities in their countries. This is apparent in the contributions to this special issue as well. Dendere and Taodzera write about 'organized civil society' as well as interest groups in Zimbabwe. Rozbicka and Patel focus on 'environmental advocacy' and include agricultural 'circles' as the actors most active at the regional level in the form of 'community' groups and initiatives. Mancuso et al. focus on the relationships between the Brazilian 'business community' and 'parliamentary fronts,' while Alba Vega devotes his research to Mexican 'businessmen' and how they maintain their contacts with ruling parties - - with both contributions going far beyond what we commonly recognise as the revolving door tactic (Blanes et al. 2012). Lastly, and using nomenclature a bit more familiar from lobbying studies in the Global North, Irwin writes about 'business membership associations'. However, he does so in the Communist system, where the independence of associations from the government structure can – and should – be questioned.

Clearly, this problematic is distinct from the plethora of interest group definitions in the Global North identified by Beyers et al. (2008). The issue here is not too many definitions, but, rather, too many terms. However, the results are similarly worrying. For one, as different actors and activities are captured by diverse terminology, studies and research projects run the risk of talking past each other when analysing how Southern citizens (aim to) affect policymaking and how similar or different these processes are from what is described in the literature about the Global North. Moreover, the proliferation of terms raises the risk that, in not knowing which terms matter where, we may be unable to get a true overview of how advocacy occurs and which actors are involved in different areas of the Global South. This, in turn, hinders our capacity to facilitate dialogue with lobbying scholars focused on Southern countries and undermines the quality of comparative conclusions drawn. Please note that, in identifying this challenge, we are not advocating a single, closed set of terminology (or definitions), nor are we questioning the value of comparative work and/or studies based on field work around the world. Rather, we are promoting more detailed work on advocacy in Southern countries, enhanced dialogues between scholars in the Global North and South on this topic, and more critical thinking about how the words we use may mask commonalities and differences in how lobbying occurs around the world.

Moreover, our special issue complements existing contributions, such as those profiled above, by adopting an alternative empirical focus. The comparative contributions discussed above examine how lobbying affects something else (e.g., democratization or development). In contrast, we ***focus on lobbying itself***, that is to say, on interest groups mobilisation and strategies, in a Southern context. Who exerts influence? How do they do so? What challenges do they face? Are these unique to the Global South? Or do they mirror findings from literature on the Global North? To that end, our special issue brings together multilingual experts from around the world to provide a cohesive introduction to advocacy activities in Brazil, India, and Mexico, that is, three large federal democracies exhibiting different degrees of populism and de-democratization, and two of which have experienced (semi)authoritarian decades; Vietnam, which is a Communist one-party state and Zimbabwe, which continues to be an autocracy. In many respects these countries have much in common with some countries in the Global North. For instance, post-communist countries experienced decades of authoritarian rule, democratized only recently and are subject to varying degrees of democratic backsliding, including examples of poor institutionalisation of interest groups systems (Rozbicka et al.

2021). Scholars have consequently begun to compare Northern and Southern countries across a variety of research questions (e.g., related to evolving economic models, see Madariaga 2020). From our perspective, the crucial commonality is that in these countries – and unlike the more stable democracies of the Global North – institutional and organizational contexts fluctuate. Hence, complementing previous work on organizational level characteristics (Fraussen, 2014; Eising, 2007) the analyses in this special issue attend to the impact of evolving structural and institutional contexts on interest group activities.[3] As will be discussed later, the contributions additionally detail a variety of methods useful for understanding lobbying in the Global South. These include historical analysis (Mexico and Zimbabwe), multivariate modelling and statistical research (Brazil), interviews (Vietnam) and case study and textual analysis (India).

Our hope is that, in profiling the analytical value of pluralism, we can stimulate creative thinking about lobbying's role in creating and addressing contemporary policy challenges. We additionally expand the empirical research base on Southern lobbying for scholars working in the English language, in particular via our authors' use of scholarly literature written in other languages. The next two sections discuss the major findings of our special issue.

FINDING 1: SUPPLY FACTORS MATTER, BUT DEMAND FACTORS ARE KEY

The contributions to this special issue provide empirical evidence and reflection on advocacy politics in various countries of the Global South. Theoretically, we have positioned our special issue among theories examining the influence of supply factors, such as resources, and demand factors, such as institutional variation, on interest group activities. The existing literature on lobbying in the Global North offered several expectations regarding how interest groups mobilize in the Global South. These included that we should see a more limited number of actors involved in advocacy in less advanced democracies than we would expect in Northern lobbying activities; that interest groups in Southern countries should find it harder to mobilize people and resources than is true for their Northern counterparts; and that we should see high hurdles to participation in Southern countries which, in turn, negatively impact the democratization process.

Clearly, examining all of these hypotheses falls beyond the scope of this special issue. We do not empirically juxtapose Northern and Southern countries. Nor did we ask our authors to test these specific hypotheses in their analyses. Rather, given the exploratory nature of these studies and given our guiding intention to raise awareness about the state of the art of lobbying strategies in the Global South, we simply asked authors to consider how supply factors, such as resources and legitimacy, and demand factors, such as corruption and institutional variation, affect interest group activities. They have done so using a variety of theoretical frameworks and methods. So what did we learn?

Regarding supply factors, we conclude that a lack of and/or limited resource availability may encourage interest groups to alter lobbying activities. Alba Vega describes how the negative financial impact of energy reform in Mexico – which businesses had largely supported – prompted advocates to seek a rapprochement with conventional political opponents. Rozbicka and Patel, in turn, suggest that a reliance on diaspora contributions for financing encourages Indian environmental NGOs to prioritize offline/in-person activity over the online advocacy strategies favoured in Northern countries. The supply factor of legitimacy seems comparatively less relevant. Civil society organizations in Zimbabwe have little input legitimacy (e.g., due to fears of physical violence) and little output legitimacy (e.g., due to the government's resistance to political change). Yet lobbying continues nonetheless, with organizations focussing their work on activities which align with government prerogatives, including educational or health-related objectives, and which can be sold as being apolitical.

[3] Many thanks to the reviewer for drawing attention to this commonality.

Examples such as these illustrate the predominant role of demand factors in influencing lobbying activities in the Global South. Characteristics of the system in which groups operate appear crucial. In Brazil, the existence of formal and informal pathways to access the federal government encourages advocates to try to influence policymaking at that level. In contrast, in India, discordant relationships between NGOs and the government at the national level encourage NGOs to focus their activities on local officials – with some success. These findings suggest domestic institutional variation may be a crucial demand characteristic to explore in the future. System characteristics matter within cases too. In Vietnam and Mexico, respectively, interest groups derived new opportunities as governments' profit motives altered and electoral change occurred. This points to the relevance of ideological and political economy factors when considering how interest group activities evolve in individual states. Corruption deserves attention as well. In Zimbabwe, state capture complicates both the process of lobbying (as civil society actions may be interpreted as threatening to cultures of cronyism or patronage) and the outcomes of lobbying (as institutions of the state prioritize the government's political priorities over those of advocates). To a lesser degree, the emphasis on operationalizing personal relationships in the Vietnamese context raises questions about where advocacy ends and corruption begins.

Combined, these findings suggest the evolving nature of democratic systems is a key factor influencing variation in groups' activities. This contrasts with the traditional understandings of lobbying's role in democratization processes, that is, as a prerequisite of functioning democracy and therefore also as simply an indicator of how advanced democracy is (see Thomas and Hrebenar 2008 discussed above). Instead, our authors underline the dynamism of the relationship between interest groups and democratization processes. Governments and private actors are *simultaneously* affected by factors internal and external to the state and react simultaneously – and often independently – to these factors. This has implications for how they engage with one another, how they determine own priorities as well as the range of available institutional and political development. As a result, interest group strategies may not only indicate the solidity of democratic government. They may also shape its institutions, procedures, norms and policy priorities. Future research should test the robustness of these hypotheses in different areas of the Global South and consider the ramifications for how we understand advocacy in general.

FINDING 2: HOW TO STUDY INTEREST GROUP ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE GLOBAL NORTH

In addition to our theoretical contribution, our special issue makes a practical contribution to the literature. Specifically, we raise awareness of how interest group activities can and should be studied beyond the Global North. This includes addressing which data is relevant and available, which methods will be most fruitful and how to identify what is unique about Southern advocacy activities. Doing so will build a richer comparative framework and ensure we can continue to contribute to understanding contemporary policy challenges.

In this context, two main themes are apparent in the papers. First, there is a clear need to embrace methodological or pluralism when examining lobbying beyond the Global North. Second, the papers in this special issue encourage scholars to pay more attention to the unique challenges faced by Southern advocates as well as how actors adapt lobbying strategies to meet these challenges. Each theme is addressed below.

EMBRACE METHODOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Statistical models are currently most frequently deployed to collect national population ecologies and analyze interest groups' activities in the Global North (see for example the CIGs Project: https://www.cigsurvey.eu/). Our authors illustrate that quantitative methods can provide similarly

valuable insights into lobbying processes and effectiveness in the Global South. For instance, drawing on a variety of sources, Mancuso performs a multivariate negative binomial regression to determine how six different factors affect Brazilian parliamentarians' introduction of bills favorable to the agriculture, commerce and industry sectors. He finds that membership in a legislative committee handling issues relevant to a given sector, centrist and right-wing political ideology and longer terms in office all are strongly related to deputies presenting more favorable bills.

However, these methods may not always be feasible for investigating advocacy in the Global South. For one thing, even when large datasets are available, these may not be reliable. Rozbicka and Patel highlight numerous challenges in analyzing datasets collating environmental interest groups in India. These include idiosyncratic categorizations across databases, significant variation in which interest groups appear in a given database, and the influence of political and economic incentives on interest groups' willingness to be included in any database. Moreover, they find that environmental interest groups in India have only a limited internet presence. This raises questions about reliance on online information when gathering data on advocacy activities.

The contributions included in this special issue underline the particular value of employing diverse qualitative methods. Dendere and Taodzera profile the usefulness of theoretically-guided, historical analysis for understanding why Zimbabwean interest groups continue to operate in a hostile environment despite expectations that advocacy would become easier following the removal of long-term president Robert Mugabe in 2017. Their article highlights the complex interaction of historical factors, political institutions, power sources and evolving actor identities and interests as the crucial explanatory factor for this puzzling outcome. Similarly, Alba Vega examines the changing relationship between the Mexican state and business actors through a historical lens. He profiles the profound impact both internal (e.g., the Mexican government's changing strategies) and external factors (e.g., pressure to liberalize the economy) have had on this relationship. He also discusses the implications of this for achieving economic and social development goals in the future. Finally, Irwin's contribution illuminates the usefulness of interviewing as a means of understanding the formal and informal constraints placed on actors seeking to exert influence in one-party states. His research highlights the need for proactive mobilization and resourcefulness amongst private actors seeking to exert influence on Vietnamese policies.

In other words, the special issue makes clear that relying on purely quantitative methodologies, existing datasets and traditional types of data may pose risks for understanding how advocacy occurs beyond the Global North. By embracing methodological pluralism, in contrast, we can not only gain insights into new empirical situations (i.e., different countries, different types of advocates, etc.). Rather, we can also develop a more encompassing and globally relevant research agenda vis-à-vis interest group advocacy.

Be aware of unique challenges and strategic innovation

The contributions in this special issue highlight the sophistication of Southern actors' lobbying strategies. Some of this sophistication reflects what we know from studies of Western democracies, such as adapting lobbying strategies to bureaucratic structures (e.g., Binderkrantz 2003). For example, Rozbicka and Patel find that Indian environmental interest groups are active across multiple issue areas, and that how they are active – that is, online or not – differs across states, suggesting the importance of political economic context for advocacy strategies. Similarly, the factors which Mancuso finds most relevant to the presentation of favorable bills – committee membership, ideology and time in office – are focused on interest group targets rather than on the characteristics of interest groups themselves. This strategic targeting of open-minded politicians when seeking to advance lobbyists' political agenda resembles the findings from Hall and Deardorff's (2006) analysis of lobbying in the US. Lastly, Irwin demonstrates how societal actors in Vietnam use a variety of strategies to overcome institutional barriers to participation, including partnering with the media to control how businesses' demands are communicated and cultivating think tanks as conduits to government officials. This too

is common in the literature on the Global North. For instance, Beyers and Kerremans (2012) describe such "multivenue shopping" as taking place in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany.

However, the papers also make clear that Southern interest groups face additional challenges beyond those common to Northern democracies. Some of these challenges are political in nature. Dendere and Taodzera, and Irwin, respectively, discover self-censorship among civil society actors in Zimbabwe and Vietnam. In Vietnam this constituted only making recommendations which policymakers were likely to act on to ensure that interest group activities were seen as successful and that doors to the government remained open. In Zimbabwe, in contrast, self-censorship – and anonymity – appear to be forms of protection vis-à-vis the government, which has frequently resorted to violence against civil society actors despite claims of tolerance. Other Southern challenges arise from economic developments at home and abroad. For instance, Alba Vega shows how both the government's desire to liberalize the economy and the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in huge shifts in business representation in Mexico. All of our contributors highlight the complexity and cost-intensiveness of advocacy in these situations, as economic conditions and the political responsiveness of government officials shift in line with changing foreign and domestic policy priorities.

As discussed in the previous section, these different challenges – many of which relate to demand factors – may necessitate different lobbying strategies than those with which we are familiar from the literature on the Global North. In particular, the special issue highlights that interest group strategies must reflect the transitory nature of state-society relations in these countries. For example, in Zimbabwe, Dendere and Taodzera interpret interviewees' insistence on anonymity, even when praising the government, as evidence that the incentives built into the existing political system – both in terms of which actors exert influence and how institutions operate – will continue to limit space for civil society representation. In contrast, Irwin and Alba Vega demonstrate a sort of co-dependence arising among government and civil society actors in Vietnam and Mexico, respectively. This is because incentive structures encourage the government to engage with, rather than sideline, business actors. But does such co-dependence really lead to engagement, that is, to responding to business preferences? Or does it just lead to governments engaging with industries whose interests align with the government's at any given time? As the Mexican and Brazilian articles demonstrate, such systems of pseudo-representation can provoke civil society actors to innovate their lobbying strategies further, as actors seek more autonomy over public policy.

ANALYZING THE NORTH *AND* THE SOUTH: A CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH AGENDA

In preparing this special issue, we have demonstrated that there is an existing academic debate on interest groups '*beyond the usual suspects*' and have additionally argued that we should pay more attention to it. This last section makes a few suggestions, derived from our special issue, which could help shape a contemporary future research agenda. The aim is not to show how unique the countries in the Global South are. Rather, we identify where synergies already exist and where South-South and North-South comparative case studies can be built. We hope that it will encourage scholars working on both groups of countries to engage in mutually beneficial dialogue which tables existing research contributions and gaps in each region as opportunities for communal discussion and learning. In that vein, we explicitly oppose an approach which sets existing research on the Global North as a starting point for identifying "flaws" in research on and in the Global South.

Four avenues of research appear particularly fruitful. One starting point is the finding in Mancuso et al. that coupling campaign funding with personal experience in business is relevant in the industrial sector but not the agricultural sector. This implies that which sector a group represents might be a crucial factor explaining lobbying influence. Specifically, groups representing sectors which hold more economic weight may be more likely to achieve preferential legislative outcomes.[4] To our

[4] Yadav (2008) comes to similar conclusions regarding Indian lobbying.

knowledge, the impact of how different sectors fare vis-à-vis a given set of legislation in Western style democracies is still unexplored in the traditional lobbying scholarship.[5] Instead, scholars have focused on comparisons of how a single sector fares vis-à-vis different legislative proposals (for example, within financial market regulation, see: Eising et al 2014a,b). The argument has been made, for example, that the most successful groups are those that deliver the most relevant 'access good', such as reliable information about an economic sector's general interest (Bouwen, 2002, within the EU multilevel system). Others have argued that groups' actions are most effective when they provide legislators with information relevant to constituency needs and thus appeal to politicians' electoral self-interest (Hansen, 1991, in the US). We argue that integrating this new hypothesis, namely, the effect of sectoral identity and economic importance, into studies of Northern lobbying – and simultaneously testing it in more countries of the Global South – could yield new insights about how these mechanisms function and whether they can be generalized across different sectors.

A second suggestion stems from the finding in Rozbicka and Patel that Indian environmental interest groups (broadly defined) are active across multiple issue areas (e.g., animal husbandry, agriculture, and coal industry regulation). Multiple publications in the INTEREURO project, which span diverse European countries and EU directives, have come to the same conclusion (e.g., Eising et al. 2018), but pinpoint business associations as more likely to do so. Why this is the case should be examined more thoroughly in both regions. To that end, the literature from the Global North offers a few hypotheses. Perhaps the spread is likely to be more common in business groups with substantial resources (Berkhout et al. 2015). The implication is that having more resources enables these groups to engage more broadly in policymaking processes. Relatedly, it could be specific to the type of interest group considered, for instance, to groups representing public vs private interests. Here the perception is that groups representing public interests have less resources (Lowery and Gray, 2005; Baroni et al. 2014).

This finding additionally poses questions unique to studies of lobbying in the Global South. For instance, India is widely accepted as an emerging power state whose material wealth sets it apart from the rest of the developing world, and research has shown that Indian lobbyists affect both domestic and international policy decisions (see Mahrenbach 2016; or Mahrenbach 2019). Are interest groups in resource poor developing countries similarly capable of diverse activism? And what other factors may affect Southern lobbyists' decisions to focus or diversify their activities? Dendere and Taodzera, for instance, find that political manipulation of both policy and the court system may lead advocates to squander resources, as civil society seeks to keep up with rapidly changing political developments. This offers an alternative perspective to that adopted by Thomas and Hrebenar in their 2008 special issue. Specifically, it implies that viewing lobbying as an indicator of democratic consolidation is only half the story. We must also understand how incomplete democratic consolidation affects advocacy efforts.

A third suggestion focuses on the role of informal interactions in lobbying activities. Irwin argues that, in Vietnam, personal networks between lobbyists and legislators do not replace formal interactions but rather complement them. He finds that informal bilateral meetings within chambers of commerce, where party politicians meet representatives of foreign businesses, are particularly important. Scholarship discussing advocacy in other parts of the world confirm the success of informal interactions. For example, Hanley (2015) shows how a trust producing mechanism between investors and financiers used in Brazil in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries fully omitted formal consultation procedures. And Rozbicka et al (2021) find that formal interactions are purposefully avoided in Central and Eastern European countries so groups will not be interpreted as engaging in negatively perceived 'legislative' lobbying. Clearly, we must acknowledge that informal interactions are a form of advocacy and study them in more detail. Doing so will require a shift away from relying

[5] There are hints at this in the trade scholarship. For instance, Rogowski's (1987) classical text argues that different economic sectors' stability vis-à-vis external economic developments results in societal cleavages which affect policy.

on quantitative methodologies in favour of qualitative interviews, field research and perhaps archival research, all of which seem better suited to understanding how and why informal interactions occur.

Finally, all the articles in this special issue touch upon how open governments are towards interest groups and their activities. Alba Vega indicates that the Mexican government engages with business only to a minimal degree. The Brazilian government seems to be more directly impacted by advocacy due to a comparatively stronger institutional framework. The Vietnamese government appears to support advocacy initiatives when these align with government's own agenda, but limits interest groups' expansion of that agenda. And co-optation of interest groups in Zimbabwe is transparent, with opposition perceived as dangerous by civil society organizations despite previous examples of successful mobilization. This raises several questions. Does strategic cooperation and/or subordination to governments' limits on advocacy, for instance in Zimbabwe or Vietnam, imply support of an existing system? Is it evidence of an unwillingness to politically challenge that system due to the high costs of doing so? Or does it simply reflect that, given the limited room for manoeuvre that a system offers, advocacy groups are motivated to take whatever form of influence is available? To what extent do these differences mirror the strategic adaptations of interest groups in the Global North, for example, to the peculiarities of a given institutional context or political situation? Answering these questions will provide new insights into central questions of the advocacy literature. This includes when, how and under what conditions interest group representation is institutionalized, as well as how and if advocacy activities are legitimized in a given system. It consequently represents a pre-made opportunity for scholars already working on lobbying in the Global North and Global South to engage with one another.

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