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**Building Bridges for Refugees:
Toward a Typology of Bridging Organizations**

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Building Bridges for Refugees: Toward a Typology of Bridging Organizations

Abstract

In this paper, we examine the dynamics of bridging organizations in activist domains. The purpose of these organizations is to serve as a link between other organizations and individuals. Drawing on a comparative case study of three national refugee systems, we develop a typology of bridging organizations based on the degree to which they share the values of other organizations in the domain. We argue that activist domains can usefully be conceptualized in spatial terms, with Centers – the corporate and state institutions that dominate contemporary Western societies – and Borders – the low power, low status organizations and individuals that operate on the margins of society. Based on bridging organizations in these national refugee systems, we identify three forms: Center Extension; Border Federation; Pure Bridge. The Center Extension shares the values of Center organizations, transmitting them to the Border. The Border Federation operates much closer to the Border, voicing its values and negotiating on its behalf with the Center. The Pure Bridge is a classic bridging organization: it attempts to incorporate values from both Center and Border, mediating, translating, and negotiating them in an attempt to connect the two sides in a workable relationship.

Introduction

In this paper, we examine the dynamics associated with “bridging organizations” (Brown, 1991) whose primary purpose is the connection of other organizations and individuals in activist domains. The nature of bridging organizations necessitates a theoretical and empirical approach that is sensitive to their context, since bridging organizations are inextricably tied to the organizations and individuals for which they serve as bridges. The major contribution of this paper is the development of a typology of bridging organizations in activist domains, drawing on a study of national refugee systems in three countries. We argue that bridging organizations in activist domains fall into three broad “types” based on their relationships with other organizations in the domain. These types are important for two reasons. First, the development of a typology highlights the heterogeneity of bridging organizations, thus far examined primarily as a homogeneous set of organizations (Brown, 1991; Westley & Vredenburg, 1991). Second, a bridging organization’s position relative to other organizations in its domain affects both its cultural form and its strategic orientation.

This paper is organized in three major sections, followed by some concluding remarks. In the first section, we review the literature on bridging organizations and suggest a theoretical perspective from which to study them, highlighting the tension between the corporate and governmental organizations that dominate contemporary western societies and the activist organizations and individuals that operate at the periphery of these societies. In the second section, we present a comparative case study of three national refugee systems (Canada, Denmark and the United Kingdom), focusing on the relationships between the refugee councils, which act as bridging organizations in each country, and other organizations at the Center and at the Border of each society. The third section presents a typology of bridging organizations, integrating the concept of bridging organization (Brown, 1991) with

the spatial metaphor of activist domains (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982). In our concluding remarks, we examine some of the practical and theoretical implications of this typology.

Activist Domains and Bridging Organizations

Traditionally, activist domains are typified by a diverse set of stakeholders with multiple and conflicting goals, ideologies and values. Figure 1 illustrates our conceptualization of activist domains and the types of organizations that they involve. In each activist domain, domain-specific groups work on behalf of a particular cause (represented by the small circles in Figure 1), such as Greenpeace and EarthFirst in the environmental domain, and ACTUP in the AIDS domain. At the same time, governmental and corporate organizations (represented by the squares in Figure 1) operate in multiple domains simultaneously including, but not restricted to, activist domains. Thus, large international forestry companies (e.g., Macmillan Bloedel, Fletcher Challenge) and pharmaceutical firms (e.g., Glaxo Wellcome) operate in multiple countries and industries, engaging in research, production, and marketing as well as lobbying for public opinion and political support. Similarly, governments and government departments also play key roles in a variety of different domains.

Insert Figure 1 about Here

An individual domain is represented in Figure 1 by an ellipse, one end of which overlaps other ellipses to represent the common membership of governments and corporations in many domains. Representing activist domains in this manner illustrates an important dynamic in society based on the relationship between organizations at the Center of society – the powerful institutions of government and corporations that dominate contemporary western societies – and those at the Border – the low-status, low-power individuals and organizations that operate at the margins of society (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982; also see Wallerstein, xxyy on center and periphery). Note that positioning government

and large corporations at the Center is not to say that they necessarily operate at the center of public attention or even that their various publics perceive their centrality as legitimate. Rather their centrality is based on their activity in a wide variety of domains and on their power within the capitalist system. From this perspective, the Border of society comprises a large number of small organizations and individuals scattered across it, while a relatively small number of powerful organizations are condensed into the Center. Between the Center and Border lie organizations whose role it is to connect Center and Border organizations – bridging organizations.

We define bridging organizations as organizations whose primary role involves the linking of other organizations and individuals without either incorporating those other actors, as in a conglomerate, or existing as a joint product of those actors, as in a joint venture (Brown, 1991; 1993). Bridging organizations are independent organizations that provide a mechanism for other organizations and individuals to work together. They are distinct because of “the presence of a third party, which is historically separate and distinct in terms of resources and personnel from the ‘island’ organizations it seeks to link” (Westley & Vredenburg, 1991: 67). This contrasts with joint ventures, task forces, roundtables, strategic alliances and mediation, where:

[t]he third party represents the arena and is the communal focus for the collaborative negotiations of all identified stakeholders. Bridges provide no such communal focus. Instead, like mediators, they negotiate bilaterally with key stakeholders. Unlike mediators, however, bridging organizations enter collaborative negotiations to forward their own ends as well as to serve as links (i.e., brokers) among domain stakeholders (Westley and Vredenburg, 1991: 68).

Consequently, bridging organizations face a tension in their organization and relationships borne out of their dual nature as both inter-organizational linkage and independent organization.

With respect to the spatial representation of activist domains suggested in Figure 1, some bridging organizations might be located precisely at the metaphorical midpoint between the Center and Border organizations that they bridge. Others are located closer to the Center, in that their ideologies, practices, resources and legitimacy might be more connected to those of Center organizations than to the Border. The reverse might also be true with bridging organizations aligning themselves primarily with the Border, sharing its values, beliefs and strategies. The position, relative to Center and Border, forms the foundation for our typology of bridging organizations.

Bridging Organizations in National Refugee Systems

In this section, we describe the national refugee systems in Canada, Denmark and the United Kingdom (also see Hardy, 1994) in order to examine the relationships between Center and Border organizations and the role played by bridging organizations.

Refugee systems represent activist domains that revolve around issues of human rights. The 1948 United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that individuals have the right to seek asylum from persecution in other countries. The UN defines refugees as people who have left their own country because of a well-founded fear of persecution for such reasons as race, religion, nationality, and political opinion. The refugee system represents the policy domain (Laumann & Knoke, 1987) that determines the status of refugee claimants and assists in the settlement of those individuals granted asylum. It encompasses the formation and implementation of policies and practices that relate to the rights of individuals to claim asylum; the procedures whereby claimants are awarded asylum; and the support provided to claimants and refugees. The terminology used here is as follows:

an asylum-seeker or refugee claimant is an individual seeking asylum; refugee refers to an individual granted asylum whether as a refugee or some other category. Determination refers to the process whereby an individual's status is ascertained. Settlement refers to the services provided to refugees to help them settle in their new country. It includes training, housing and other support services. In addition many nongovernmental organizations also engage in advocacy, lobbying government to defend refugees' rights. Refugee organizations are small, usually ethnic-based, refugee-led organizations that carry out some or all of these activities on behalf of a particular refugee community.

National refugee systems represent an important context for research on bridging organizations for a number of reasons. First, the determination and settlement of refugees implicates a wide variety of local, national and international organizations operating in both governmental and non-governmental sectors. Consequently, refugee systems present an opportunity for examining the relationships between government at the Center and highly disparate, interdependent organizations at the Border. Second, the role of bridging organizations in these domains is critical. The interaction of powerful national and supra-national organizations with small, often unorganized refugee groups often demands the formation of bridging organizations. Third, there are comparable bridging organizations – refugee councils – in each of the refugee systems. They are the only organization to be found in all three systems and yet, as we shall see, they also encompass differences in structure, culture and strategy from which a number of important implications can be drawn. Finally, the determination and settlement of refugees are critically important issues in their own right since the number of persons seeking refuge exceeds 18 million (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1993).

Methods

Data Collection. This study relies on in-depth, semi-structured interviews and archival or secondary data. Research sites were selected on the basis of theoretical replication – the expectation of contrary results that can be explained with reference to theory’s predictions (Yin, 1984). This study is part of a larger research program that compares the refugee systems in Denmark, Canada and the UK. These countries were chosen because of their different approaches to refugee determination and settlement. Eighty-six interviews were carried out with civil servants, politicians, NGO officials, and refugees. Interviews took place between 1990 and 1993: in Canada on a continuing basis; in the UK and Denmark on annual visits. Anonymity was guaranteed to all interviews and no one refused to be interviewed. All interviews were conducted in English (the majority of Danish interviewees were fluent in English; in the two cases where this was not the case, the interview was translated; the Danish Refugee Council also publishes a considerable amount of information in English). The interviews were semi-structured with a number of themes identified for discussion at the beginning of the project based on exploratory discussions and relevant literatures. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Documentary and archival evidence included government statistics; annual reports and minutes from annual meetings of refugee councils and other NGOs; a variety of published documentation; Hansard reports of parliamentary speeches in the UK and Canada; and newspaper articles.

Data Analysis. Data analysis involved an iterative coding process of data based on a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The intent of the analysis was to develop a finely detailed understanding of the domain in order to develop theory, rather than to test existing theories or propositions. Coding revolved primarily around the characteristics of the refugee system, and the structure, strategy and cultures of the refugee councils. Findings were derived from convergence in the patterns of data, examples of which are provided in the form

of illustrative quotations from interview and archival data. The analysis involved an iterative and recursive process with countless comparisons between the emerging model and the data. Initially, a general picture was constructed of each country to ascertain the complex details of how refugee legislation actually worked. Following this stage, a more intensive analysis of the theoretical themes was carried out, as supported or refuted by the existing data. This analysis proceeded in conjunction with extensive reading around related work.

Refugee Systems in Denmark, Canada and the United Kingdom¹

Denmark. In Denmark, requests for asylum are made at the border to the police, following which the claimant is released into the care of the Danish Red Cross which runs the Sandholm registration center on behalf of the Directorate for Aliens (part of the Ministry of Justice). After a brief stay at Sandholm, the asylum seeker is transferred to one of more than sixty Red Cross centers across the country to await completion of the determination process. Asylum seekers are not allowed to work during this period nor are they given access to the regular education system, but they do receive language instruction and free medical treatment.

The determination process is as follows. If the official from the Directorate of Aliens considering the initial claim believes it to be “manifestly unfounded”,² he or she will pass it on to employees of the Danish Refugee Council who conduct a separate, independent interview. If both the Refugee Council and the Directorate agree (as was the case in about 80 percent of the time in 1991, according to figures from the Danish Refugee Council), the individual will be denied asylum. If they fail to agree, the case will be passed on for consideration to the Refugee Board, an independent tribunal. The Directorate also passes credible claims on to the Refugee Board for consideration. The Board is an independent tribunal, chaired by a judge with two members appointed by the Danish Refugee Council and

one each from the Ministries of Justice, Social Affairs and Foreign Affairs. The Refugee Board appoints an independent, private lawyer and conducts a hearing at which the claimant and lawyer normally are present. Once granted refugee status, the individual is transferred from the Red Cross Center to the Danish Refugee Council, which runs the integration program on behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Accommodation, counseling, language lessons, education and job training are provided during the 18-month program, at the end of which, individuals qualify for the same benefits as Danish citizens.

The Danish refugee system is the most centralized of the three countries (Hardy, 1994). While the independent Refugee Board serves to disperse some responsibility concerning determination, reception remains the sole concern of the Directorate for Aliens, while the Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for the settlement program. The NGO sector also is centralized – restricted to two large, unitary “corporations”. The first is the Danish Red Cross, whose refugee division of 1200 employees has been running the reception centers since 1984. The second is the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) mentioned above. The relationship between government and these NGOs is contractual and based on a clear demarcation of responsibilities between the two parties (Warren, 1967; Mulford & Rogers, 1982). Consequently, the Ministry of Social Affairs contracts with the Danish Refugee Council to provide settlement services and the Directorate of Aliens contracts with the Danish Red Cross to administer settlement services.

As a result of this system, refugees in Denmark receive far more systematic and programmed support than elsewhere.

There are always people ... who want more. It is our job to figure that out, to see the reality of their needs. If they really need something, then we can get it for them. But some say “We need this, we need that” when they don’t really. When they ask for something there has to be some background, so I know ... whether it is good for them (Refugee Council employee).

In this way, the role of individual refugees is clear: they are relatively passive “clients” of the system (Steen, 1993). Unlike the other two countries, there are no refugee organizations in Denmark and refugees remain unorganized.

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC), founded in 1956, is an umbrella group of twelve NGOs, including the Danish Red Cross and international aid agencies like Oxfam, which engages in settlement, determination and advocacy work, as well as working with refugees overseas. It is the largest of the three councils: employing over 900 employees: 330 in the language schools, 50 in international work, and 550 in the integration program. Its 1991 exceeded 600,000,000 kroner (over \$(Cdn) 100 million), most of which was provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs (which funds the integration program) and the Directorate for Aliens (which funds the determination process). The Danish Refugee Council is also the most structured of the three councils studied and the only one with a formal organization chart. Thus the Danish Refugee Council is a clearly defined organization whose external boundaries and internal hierarchy are readily apparent.

In summary, the Danish system is characterized by a clear division of labor and well-defined responsibilities between the government and two large NGOs (Kormendi, 1987). This system translates into a highly centralized, hierarchical Center – the government – while the Danish Refugee Council is a large, clearly defined bridging organization. The Border comprises unorganized, individual refugees. Relations between the Center and Border occur through the former’s contractual arrangements with the two NGOs.³

Canada. Individuals apply for refuge to immigration officials, part of Employment and Immigration Canada. The Immigration and Refugee Board, an independent board of individuals appointed by Governor-in-Council (i.e., the Cabinet), hears these claims and determines whether the individual is a refugee. All individuals have the right to an oral hearing before this Board and are entitled to free legal representation. Once settled, refugees also qualify for provincial health, welfare and educational programs and municipal services. A variety of settlement services are provided and/or funded by the federal government. Provincial governments are involved insofar as they provide welfare, legal, education, and medical services to refugees (first as claimants and, later, as residents and immigrants). Most of these federal and provincial government departments deal directly with refugees, refugee organizations and NGOs.

There are a large number and variety of NGOs operating in the Canadian domain. Typically, they are provincially based and deal with one or more of determination, settlement, or broader immigration issues. Over one hundred of these NGOs are members of the national umbrella body, the Canadian Council for Refugees. The refugee community, at this time, was less well organized than the NGO community. Nevertheless, it was growing in influence and was considerably more organized than in Denmark: refugee organizations represented ten percent of the Canadian Council for Refugees' membership and one of the Executive Committee's members was a refugee.

The Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) was created in February 1978 as the Standing Conference of Canadian Organizations Concerned for Refugees. It had eleven member organizations and two specific goals: to be totally independent of the government and organizations like the UNHCR; and to form a "loose" organization that did not "prejudice anybody's individual agenda or any organization that was working in the field" (member).

They gave us this incredible unwieldy name, the “Standing Conference of Canadian Organizations Concerned for Refugees”. Now I don’t care how you do it, you could try and take all the initial letters of all those words and it spells absolutely nothing. It was a nightmare for the press, they really wanted a nice punchy two or three words, or idiom, for the organization. They did not know how to report on it because they could not spell it, there was no way. That was quite deliberate. The organization said: we are prepared to come together, we’re prepared to talk and share amongst ourselves. We’re prepared to interchange, we’re prepared to share some of our common problems. But, we do not want the organization to speak on our behalf. We don’t want the government to be able to say we consulted with the NGO community because we talked to the executive of the Standing Conference (founder member).

Despite growing numbers of members throughout the 1980s and a name change, the organization has remained highly decentralized. 1989-90 was only its first year with a permanent staff. While it appointed an executive director and encompassed 120 member organizations in 1992, it still had only a handful of employees and revenues of only \$ (Cdn) 218,000. The Canadian Council for Refugees emphasizes that it does not receive government funding, although it does engage in cooperative ventures with the government such as a review of the overseas sponsorship of refugees. Similarly, the Council engages only in advocacy.⁴ It does not directly provide protection or settlement services (although its members do) and it deliberately eschews any role in determination.

If you’re in determination it always means saying no to somebody. We would hate to get involved in that way, not that the government has made us an offer. We are in advocacy not determination (CCR President).

In summary, the Canadian system is the most fragmented of the three (Hardy, 1994). Government is decentralized because of the existence of both provincial and federal levels of

government in settlement and the delegation of responsibility for determination to the Immigration and Refugee Board. The NGO sector also is decentralized with many different organizations providing services. In contrast to the hierarchy of the Danish Refugee Council, the Canadian Council for Refugees is best described as a loose alliance (Mulford & Rogers, 1982). In no sense is there any separation between it and its members: the Council is its membership. The CCR is not administered through rules: its management is unstructured and participative, effected through biennial consultations. This flexibility allows it to accommodate varying views of its members and, recently, it has shown itself to be receptive to the inclusion of newly emerging refugee organizations. In Canada, both Center and bridging organization are relatively fragmented and permeable, while an increasingly organized Border is able to interact directly with both.⁵

The UK. Individuals seeking asylum apply to officials of the Immigration and Nationality Department of the Home Office. The determination of individual cases is the responsibility of civil servants in the Asylum Division of this Department. Claimants have no formal right to an oral hearing by the decision-makers, although they often are interviewed in the course of providing information. Two categories of asylum exist in the UK: full refugee status and exceptional leave to remain, which accord different rights. The former confers the right to apply for family reunification immediately and permanent residence after four years; the latter may not apply for family reunification for four years or residence for seven years. While awaiting the determination of their status, claimants have the right to legal representation, medical and educational services, a work permit, and 90 percent of normal welfare payments. There is no formal government reception program for asylum-seekers as in Denmark. Instead, a large number of NGOs provide advice, services, and legal representation. Neither is there a government settlement program in the UK. So, while the government provides some funding for settlement services, the actual provision of services is delegated to NGOs and, typically,

funds are obtained from a wide variety of different national and local government sources, as well as private charities and trusts.

Many NGOs are active in the UK refugee system. The main umbrella body is the British Refugee Council (BRC). Of the three countries, refugee organizations are most organized in the UK. Around 150 refugee organizations are estimated to be operating in London, although the vast majority consist of a handful of employees and subsist on short-term funding (Salinas et al., 1987; Majika, 1991). Some of these refugee organizations work closely with the British Refugee Council; others are directly opposed to it such as many of those affiliated with the Refugee Forum. The Forum is an “alternative” umbrella body of refugee organizations. It advocates self-help, refugee empowerment, and direct funding to refugee organizations. As such, it emphasizes a grassroots approach where refugees take charge of their own destiny, rather than rely on the established (often white-run) agencies. “Gone are the days when we sit with the begging bowl, waiting for institutionalized agencies with their missionary mentalities” (Forum member).

The British Refugee Council (BRC) was formed in December 1981 as a merger of two other agencies to provide a focal point for aid to refugees and to develop its own direct services. It is a charity, 60 per cent of whose budget (£5 million in 1991) comes from the government. It employs nearly 200 people to provide settlement services and advice. It engages in advocacy and settlement, but is not involved in determination; nor does it provide legal representation to refugees. It has a membership of over 100 NGOs, one third of which are refugee organizations. While similar to its Canadian counterpart in terms of a large membership, the British Refugee Council is different in that it is a distinct organization with its own decision making structures. The British Refugee Council is also an active lobby group. It was a founding member of the Asylum Rights Campaign (ARC), set up in 1991 to challenge the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill. This consortium is co-chaired by a

British Refugee Council employee and a member of refugee organization, and comprises NGOs, churches, and refugee organizations. Opposed to the Bill's "deterrent" nature, its remit was "to try to prevent the proposals from becoming law" (Exile Newsletter of the [British] Refugee Council, 1991(51): 1). The British Refugee Council has also actively lobbied for a national settlement policy, in which a centrally coordinated approach to settlement would provide services to refugees, although so far to no avail.

In summary, the UK government is more centralized than even the Danish system as far as determination is concerned, which is the exclusive responsibility of a single government department. It is a very closed organization. For example, until the 1993 Bill, determination procedures were not published, unlike the other two countries. In addition, government officials do not engage in much direct contact with organizations at the Border.

I wouldn't say the [civil servant-NGO] level is well developed.... We're starting to change but it's my perception that those relationships are still antagonistic.

Amnesty are not our number one fan and I know for a fact that Charter 87 [an NGO] hate us... So we don't really have a working relationship with these groups and many people here would probably say we don't need to have a relationship with them: this government has been strong enough to implement policy without talking to pressure groups (civil servant)

The Center is thus clearly defined and demarcated. The Border is well organized consisting of both NGOs and refugee organizations, many of which oppose government policies concerning refugee matters. Consequently, many of the relationships in the UK are adversarial (Hardy, 1994). The British Refugee Council is the key bridging organization between these two extremes and, as a result, is pulled in a number of different directions: between a federated and hierarchical structure; and between government funding and advocacy activities.⁶

A Typology of Bridging Organizations

The three refugee councils correspond to the definition of a bridging organization in that their primary purpose is the connection of other organizations and individuals in an activist domain. They share the common goal of linking refugees and refugee organizations to the government agencies responsible for refugee issues in each country. How they approach this purpose, however, differs markedly in terms of their relationships to Center and Border organizations, their influence strategies, and their organizational structures and cultures. In this section we develop a typology of three types of bridging organization. These theoretical types should be understood as ideal types, which “are not averages or descriptions, but are heuristic tools, helpful in understanding reality but in themselves not a version of real situations” (Gusfield, 1975: 13). Furthermore, they are based on an analysis of cross-sectional data, so that while raising questions regarding the evolution of bridging organizations, this study does not directly address this issue.

The primary basis for differentiating the three types is the relationship between the bridging organization and the Center and Border that it bridges. We show that the British Refugee Council is positioned “midway” between the Center and the Border, and, hence, is termed a Pure Bridge (see [a] in Figure 1). It seeks to incorporate both sets of values and to mediate between a well-organized Center and a well-organized Border. On one hand, it believes that it must work with government officials to influence policy:

Some people might see [our approach] as compromising with the enemy but quite frankly, we have so many issues of concern which we try and influence the government on, we would be much less influential and persuasive if we simply treated them as the enemy (BRC official).

On the other hand, it must also promote the views and values of its refugee constituents:

Our credibility is based on the support and backing of our membership. If we do not voice their concerns we will be dead and so [the government] has to let us have our say. It's a peculiar British compromise (BRC official).

The Danish Refugee Council is positioned closer to the Center, and thus we refer to it as a Center Extension bridging organization (see [b] in Figure 1). It operates within a similar framework of values as the Danish government, which revolves around the delivery of programmed, humanitarian services to refugee clients (Hardy, 1994). It is thus located in a value "space" proximate to the Center, promoting Center values to the Border. The Danish Refugee Council and government stakeholders operate, broadly speaking, within the same humanitarian framework. Within this corporatist system, characteristic of Denmark in general (Johansen & Kristensen, 1982), fundamental values are not in question, nor are the benefits of close cooperation with the government.

We don't care that we are funded by the government. That doesn't influence our work. On legislation and amendments we are heard officially. We have to strike a balance though. Our secretary general is very good at managing that balance. We try not to have major conflicts. We aim for compromise ... We have a relatively productive relationship and it's better than in most countries where NGOs like ours are in conflict with the authorities all the time. There is more negotiating here (Danish Refugee Council employee).

The Canadian Council for Refugees is closer to the Border, sharing its values with those organizations and individuals; hence, we refer to it as a Border Federation (see [c] in Figure 1). Composed of refugee organizations and NGOs, the Canadian Council for Refugees conveys their values to the Center. It believes that refugees are best served by challenging government policy that refugees' rights and access to Canada (Matas, 1989).

We may have had some conversations [with the bureaucrats] but we were at cross-purposes and our agendas were totally at odds. Their agenda was a control agenda and ours was a protection agenda and we didn't even accept the government agenda as a legitimate concern. (CCR member).

So, while each council represents refugee interests, different values underpin their understanding of how those interests might be best served. The stereotypical bridging organization stands between the two, very different, value frameworks of the Border and Center, mediating, translating, and negotiating them in an attempt to connect the two sides in a workable relationship. Some bridging organizations stand closer to the Border, sharing and promoting its values, amplifying and transmitting them in such a way as to force the Center to be more receptive to Border demands. Others adopt the opposite position: sharing the values of Center organizations and promoting and disseminating them through, for example, the provision of services that project and reflect the underlying value position. The position of a bridging organization relative to the Center and Border – its enactment as a Center Extension, Border Federation or Pure Bridge – has, as we will discuss, important implications for the manner in which it operates, in terms of both its internal culture and its external influence strategies.

Implications of the Typology

In this section, we develop a set of propositions linking the three types of bridging organization to specific cultural forms and activist strategies.

Cultures of Bridging Organizations

We argue here that the value orientation of a bridging organization – its relationship to Center and Border values – has significant implications for the manner in which it is organized (see Table 1). The relationship between organizational values and forms of social

organization has been most clearly associated with the work of Mary Douglas (Douglas, 1973; Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982). To analyze the relationship between values and the cultural form, Douglas (1973) linked “characteristics of social organization with features of the beliefs and values of the people who are keeping the organizational form alive” (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982: 138) to produce three organizational forms or cultures – market, hierarchy and sect. This typology has been examined extensively in the management literature, including economic perspectives that focus on the optimally efficient arrangement of organizational boundaries (e.g., Mosakowski, 1991; Williamson, 1991), as well as more culturally oriented literature that has concentrated on issues of organizational control and motivation (Ouchi, 1980; Alvesson & Lindkvist, 1993).

Insert Table 1 about here

Unlike markets, all the refugee councils were associated with strong, enduring boundaries. Consequently, our analysis focuses on hierarchical and sectarian forms of organizing. Hierarchies and sects are similar in that members experience the organization as tightly bounded: they perceive a real, existential difference between themselves and “outsiders” which often takes on a moralistic tone, such that “insiders” are considered superior to “outsiders”. They differ, however, in terms of what Douglas (1973) refers to as the cultural grid, which describes the development and use of individualistic, social categories (Douglas, 1973: 58).

Hierarchical cultures contain many regulations to identify and encircle the group, as well as many ego-centered rules and constraints (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982: 138). Hierarchies emerge in large, extensively differentiated structures with clear, well-defined boundaries. Extensive rules and standard operating procedures emerge, and are used to control behavior. Decision-making is collectivized, serial and dominated by committees and subgroups. Only codified information is examined in decisions, and where possible, standard

operating procedures are used to program decisions. Thus, social control occurs through implementing rules, procedures and sanctions, and rationality involves obeying rules and capitulation to authority.

The Danish Refugee Council is an example of a hierarchy. It is the largest and most structured of the three councils.

The Danish Refugee Council is an umbrella organization but they, themselves, are taking the decisions. The Red Cross attends the board meeting but its influence is limited. The Danish Refugee Council is an organization, they make their own policies (Red Cross Official).

It is headed by a steering committee of the twelve member organizations led by a Secretary General. The organization consists of four policy departments concerned with International work, Asylum, Integration (the settlement program), Information, and two administrative departments, Personnel and Finance. The Integration Division is further divided into seven regional centers, which are responsible for over 30 separate integration centers and language schools.

The values and culture of the Danish Refugee Council support and promote each other in a continuous, recursive fashion. It values the stability and efficiency of the paternalistic system as a whole and thus relies on hierarchy's ability to produce stability and efficiency through its rules, procedures, legitimate authority structures and serial decision making (e.g., Perrow, 1986). This relationship between the values of a bridging organization and its cultural form is one of mutual reinforcement and reproduction, rather than a simple linear causality. As hierarchy serves values of stability and efficiency, it also reproduces them through rituals in which authority, stability and efficiency are central (Collins, 1981; 1988). We suggest that in hierarchies, internal politics and negotiations tend to be dominated by actors who draw on values of stability and efficiency, both strategically and unconsciously.

This helps to reproduce the hierarchical forms that promote those same values as legitimate and worthy. Because of this dynamic, a bridging organization's adoption of a value position congruent with that of Center institutions is likely to lead to its enactment as a hierarchy.

P1a: The more a bridging organization resembles a Center Extension, sharing the values of Center organizations, the more likely it is to enact the cultural form of a hierarchy.

Sectarian cultures emerge in small, bounded groups that place supreme value on individuals and equality (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982). Sects conceive of the inside as pure and the outside as evil. A key goal is individual growth and survival. Sectarians abhor rules, and hence formal authority is blurred; leadership, unless charismatic, is precarious and decision making is participative and unstructured. In repudiating control through rules, sects embrace personal goodness, initiative, envy, mutual criticism and expulsions from the group as primary forms of social control.

The Canadian Council for Refugees is organized as a sect. It retains a very loose, decentralized structure. It emphasizes a grass roots organization. Resolutions typically come from the member agencies operating in the working groups (on protection, sponsorship, overseas protection and, more recently, women), rather than the executive committee.

The Canadian Council for Refugees is always moving according to the positions and orientation of the member NGOs.... It is very difficult to define the Canadian Council for Refugees as an organization with a clear orientation. It changes. There are two meetings a year. It depends who is there, what the issues are (member).

Consequently, it has been described as a "nonorganization". Despite two conferences a year to which all its members are invited, there is very little formal structure.

The Canadian Council for Refugees has always been very dependent on its members. It's very interesting. When there have been conferences, there were no proceedings. There was nothing written down. They have discussions, some positions are taken but very few materials, very few public or political statements (member).

Despite the lack of formal organizational boundaries, sects retain a clear distinction between the outside (bad) and inside (good). As a result, when members of government show up at meetings, they can expect a rough ride.

Every time I go to the Canadian Council for Refugees, I say it's the last time because your skin is only so thick even though they say it's not personal (immigration official).

What the government does is send people who aren't in a position of power. They just send any joeboy to be sacrificed, which is not fair. We end up criticizing and almost killing that person (CCR member).

As with the hierarchy, the relationship between values and cultural form in a sectarian organization is mutually reinforcing. Sects value equality, individuality and choice, which are implicit in their democratic decision making, lack of rules and control through expulsion or personal criticism. Even in sects led by charismatic or authoritarian leaders, a key value typically involves the moral superiority of members where expulsion is a primary form of control leading to high personal costs. Again, the interaction rituals associated with this form of organization produce a setting in which those values are encouraged and rewarded. Consequently, the adoption by a bridging organization of a value position congruent with Border organizations and individuals will lead to its enactment as a sectarian form of organization.

P1b: The more a bridging organization resembles a Border Federation, sharing the values of the Border and challenging those of the Center, the more likely it is to enact the cultural form of a sect.

If Center Extensions are hierarchical and Border Federations are sectarian, then what becomes of the Pure Bridge? It adopts a value position in which it attempts to incorporate and integrate the values of both Center and Border. Values of stability and power for the system as a whole mesh with values of choice and equality for individuals. Clearly, this situation produces a tension as the organization struggles with the conflict and contradictions built into its value position. The same is true for its cultural form. Aspects of hierarchy emerge out of its adoption of the Center's values, while aspects of sectarian organization emerge out of its affinity with Border values. The interaction rituals produced by the different aspects reproduce the conflicting value sets, and the process continues.

The British Refugee Council, as a Pure Bridge position, demonstrates elements of both hierarchy and the sect.

I think on both sides [government and BRC], people are able to operate in a schizophrenic way and talk reasonably and sensibly about the practical issues where we have to cooperate and then get into a slinging match on the political issues. The way I think that happens is that they talk to the civil servants on the operational issues and get that stuff worked out and take up the political issues with the minister (civil servant).

It has a complex organizational structure. At the umbrella level, it appears sectarian: the membership of over 100 organizations resembles its Canadian counterpart. Moreover changes have been made to its constitution to facilitate the wider participation of refugee organizations and to ensure they make up one third of the executive committee. At the same time, most of the British Refugee Council's employees are involved in a more conventional

hierarchical structure, much like the Danish Refugee Council, which is formally divided into four divisions: training; housing; settlement; information. The Council runs an advice center for refugees and asylum-seekers, and provides housing, job training and other settlement services, and helps refugee-led organizations to establish themselves through its community development team.

P1c: The more a bridging organization resembles a Pure Bridge, incorporating the values of both the Border and the Center, the more likely it is to enact a hybrid cultural form that encompasses elements of both a hierarchy and a sect.

Strategies of Bridging Organizations

Although the three refugee councils examined here share a common purpose in the representation of refugee interests, the strategies they use to accomplish this task vary significantly. As with their organizational cultures, we argue here that the variation in strategic approaches is related to the degree of value congruence with the Center and Border organizations that they bridge. Activist strategies can be classified along two dimensions. The first dimension concerns the practices and processes within the domain, such as how the status of applicants for refugee status is determined, which we refer to as standardization strategies. The second dimension involves the legitimacy of particular actors within the domain, in this case to speak on behalf of refugees and represent their interests, which we call membership strategies (Clegg, 1989; Lawrence, forthcoming).

Standardization strategies involve the institutionalization of practices through the assignment of value to those practices beyond their technical value (Selznick, 1957), either through social or cultural mechanisms. They are concerned with the establishment of technical, legal or informal standards which define what is “normal” for a practice, process, or service, perhaps through regulation or legislation (e.g., Montagna, 1990) or through the

enactment of a less formalized norms or standards (e.g., Baron, Dobbin, & Jennings, 1986). An activist organization attempting to influence legislation would typically lobby the government directly to influence the shape and direction of official policy. Success demands the ability to articulate preferences in terms that government can accept and in terms that the public and other actors in the domain will support, thereby ensuring a constituency large enough to influence governmental decision-makers.

Membership strategies aim at defining the rules and meaning of membership for a domain. These strategies rest on the question of “Who belongs?”, which is handcuffed to issues of legitimacy, knowledge, association, and responsibility. Membership strategies delineate the exclusionary boundaries of the domain and the legitimate roles within which actors can operate. They may effect rules that are explicit, as in a professional body, or implicit, as in a historically and culturally circumscribed network of activists. The successful pursuit of a membership strategy requires organizations to have sufficient legitimacy concerning their own membership in order to call into question the legitimacy of other actors in the domain. For example, Greenpeace attacked Pollution Probe when the latter formed an alliance with a Canadian grocery chain, by questioning its legitimacy as a representative of the environmental movement (Westley & Vredenburg, 1991). The ability of Greenpeace to do so was based on its consistently radical posture over a long period of time, and hence its unquestionable identification with the environmental movement.

Our examination of refugee councils shows that a council’s tendency to engage in these two strategies is related to its position as a Center Extension, Border Federation or Pure Bridge. Perceptions of risk are related to the bridging organization’s values and culture. Douglas and Wildavsky argue that:

perception of risk and its acceptable levels are collective constructs, a bit like language and a bit like aesthetic judgment ... the selection of dangers and the choice of social organization run hand in hand. (1982: 186).

Addressing these risks requires particular strategic capabilities which are associated differentially with the different cultural forms. So, for each type of bridging organization, certain strategies will be more attractive and feasible than others will.

Center Extensions, by sharing the values of the organizations at the Center of society, also share their perception of risks. For organizations at the Center of society, the most salient risks are those which threaten the stability of the domain as a whole because they inevitably also threaten their authority and centrality. Center Extensions share these concerns both because their enactment as hierarchies reproduces culturally-based concerns with stability (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982) and because their survival, as Center Extensions, is dependent on their ties to the Center for resources and influence. For the Danish Refugee Council, the most critical risk would come from refugees who, if they were more organized or militant, might threaten the humanitarian but paternalistic consensus of the system as a whole. Such a change would threaten both its hierarchical culture of stability and authority, as well as its control of government-supplied resources since organized refugee groups might demand direct access to resources and channels of influence that are currently the exclusive purview of the Danish Refugee Council.

For Center Extensions, managing the risks associated with system instability is accomplished primarily through use of standardization strategies: the normalization of practices supported and enforced by the dominant hierarchies at the Center. The cultural form associated with Center Extensions is well suited to standardization strategies; its hierarchical form is familiar to the Center, promoting communication and empathy on both sides. Furthermore, developing standards in concert with Center institutions requires compromise

and an affinity toward rules and procedures, both of which are supported by its culture. Membership strategies are more problematic for Center Extensions, however, since their proximity to the Center and their translation of Border demands into the language of the Center challenges any claims they might make to independence. Closeness to the Center often implies complicity, co-optation or corruption to those posted at the Border.

The strategies of the Danish Refugee Council typify the reaction of Center Extensions to risks of instability. Its strategy is to exclude refugees from directly influencing the domain.

When refugees come here, we take away all initiative but afterwards we expect them to use their initiative.... They are in a completely new culture and system and you take everything away from them and tell them they have to obey strict rules and then, at the same time, they are told to do the best they can for themselves (Danish Refugee Council employee).

Consequently, there is none of the involvement of self help organizations found in the UK; ethnic based groups exist only for cultural activities and there is no tradition of political organization; nor are individual refugees employed in any meaningful numbers by the NGOs. Any threat to the Council's legitimacy from the Border is dealt with by keeping it disorganized and by providing services that rate highly on humanitarian criteria. By using standardization strategies and negotiating practices with the Center, which effectively disenfranchise refugees, the Danish Refugee Council capitalizes on the strengths of the hierarchy; circumvents its weaknesses regarding membership strategies; and reduces any threats to the stability of the domain.

P2a: Center Extensions perceive the main risk to their survival in terms of threats to the stability of the domain as a whole.

P2b: Center Extensions will deal with these perceived risks primarily through standardization strategies.

Border Federations share the values of Border organizations: they value equality, individuality and choice. These values and their manifestation in sectarian cultural forms lead Border Federations to perceive fissioning and the breaking away of members as the most critical risks they face (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982). In the case of the Canadian Refugee Council, the risk of refugees breaking away from the Council would damage its legitimacy and right to speak for the refugee community. Two particular scenarios increase this risk. One is increasing bureaucratization that changes the Council from a participative, democratic “nonorganization” into a more hierarchical, elitist and formal organization. The exclusion of the grass roots would likely lead to the formation of alternative organizations (perhaps like the Refugee Forum in the UK) where the refugee community might secure a greater presence and influence. The second scenario is a lack of response by the Center: if the Council is seen to have no impact by Border organizations, they will be tempted to split off to pursue other means to change the domain.

These concerns lead the Border Federation to focus on membership strategies, which work to define the legitimacy of organizations and individuals through the establishment of membership rules and definitions (Clegg, 1989; Lawrence, 1993). The proximity of the Border Federation to the Border eliminates the problems of “independence” associated with Center Extensions and, thus, makes membership strategies more feasible. Standardization strategies, on the other hand, are more problematic because they demand the ability to communicate with the Center in order to implement and monitor standards and norms. The uncompromising nature of sects is likely to result in the promotion of standards that the Center considers unreasonable. Sects “do not necessarily have anything to say about society at large ... When these closed communities speak about the risk ahead, the talk is mostly for each other. Deeply absorbed in their internal politics, they invoke the idea of evil outside as a

theological image, justifying their separation from the established order” (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982: 102).

The Canadian Council for Refugees thus devotes its attention towards negotiating membership by involving the Border in its organization and embodying its values, and directing broad criticism toward Center organizations. In this way, it secures legitimacy and the “right” to speak for refugees and for organizations that work with refugees because they are willing to coalesce under its umbrella. In turn, the Center is more likely to respond to its sustained critique because it has wide support, and may change standards that have been deemed illegitimate or inappropriate by this coalition. In this way, the Council hopes to use membership strategies to force change on the domain and compensate for its inability to change standards directly.

P2c: Border Federations perceive the main risk to their survival in terms of fissioning.

P2d: Border Federations will deal with these perceived risks primarily through membership strategies.

The Pure Bridge has to manage risks stemming from both the Center and the Border. Risks to its survival include both changes to the domain that undermine its position as the Center-appointed bridging organization, as well as fissioning by Border groups that question its right to speak on behalf of the Border. In fact, the British Refugee Council has been attacked from both these sides. The government has proven unwilling to change standards to incorporate a programmed approach to refugee settlement, which would consolidate the British Refugee Council’s prominent position in the domain. In addition, the fissioning of the Refugee Forum has reduced its legitimacy and could, if the Refugee Forum were to have its way, channel funds away from the Council. Thus the British Refugee Council faces both irrelevance by Center and delegitimation by Border. In response, the hierarchy within it continues its attempts to negotiate standards with an albeit unreceptive Center, while the sect

within it negotiates membership with the Border by extending the participation of refugee organizations.

P2e: Pure Bridges perceive the main risks to their survival in terms of both threats to the stability of the domain and fissioning.

P2f: Pure Bridges will deal with these perceived risks by trying to balance both standardization strategies and membership strategies.

Conclusions

We believe that conceptualizing bridging organizations in activist domains in terms of their value convergence with Center and Border organizations is a useful way to explore their cultural forms and activist strategies. The relationship between organizational values, cultural form, and influence strategy is one of mutual reinforcement and reproduction. As the cultural form is attuned to particular values, it also reproduces those values through organizational rituals. Similarly, the relationship between cultural form and the strategy used to influence the domain in the light of those values is also recursive. Particular values influence the risks perceived by members, while the cultural form embodies particular strategic capabilities to address them. Thus the Center Extension, because of the high degree of value convergence with the Center, emphasizes stability and efficiency which are reproduced by and enacted in the hierarchical cultural form which, in turn, renders it best suited to pursue standardization strategies in its attempts to influence the domain. Conversely, the Border Federation, reflecting Border values, is unlikely to enact a hierarchical form that would undermine values of democracy and equality. Instead, these values are enacted in a organization form that also serves to reproduce those values, and which is well-equipped to pursue membership strategies to influence the domain.

This has important implications for research. The first step would be to assess whether the typology developed here applies to bridging organizations in other activist domains and,

if so, to test the propositions we present. Second, since this is a cross-sectional study rather than a longitudinal analysis, future research might examine the process whereby values are enacted and reproduced in cultural forms and influence strategies. In particular, the Pure Bridge offers considerable scope in the form of a “transparent” (Eisenhardt, 1989) example in which contradictory tensions are played out in a relatively visible way. In addition, research on the larger domain might examine whether and how membership strategies can change domains in the face of opposition from the Center; and how standardization strategies can survive attacks on their legitimacy from those at the Border. Third, researchers might also look for “exceptions”, such as sects sharing Center values, hierarchies close to the Border, attempts by Border Federations to set standards for the domain, and Center Extensions that successfully define membership. Finally, there is scope to examine whether the typology of bridging organization and the underpinning dynamic between value convergence, cultural form and influence strategy are relevant to interorganizational relationships in other types of domains, such as the private sector.

This study also has a number of important implications for practice. From the perspective of bridging organizations, it is important to note that they are activist organizations with aims of changing social and legal practices which, in this case, relate to refugees. Consequently, the typology proposed might help bridging organizations to recognize their strengths and weaknesses in effecting political change, as well as the costs associated with the choices, conscious or otherwise, that they make. So, the Danish Refugee Council, for all its humanitarian accomplishments, might consider the role it plays in “pacifying” refugees. The Canadian Council for Refugees might examine the impact of its anti-government rhetoric. The British Refugee Council might explore the contradictory tensions of its schizophrenic self-definition. From the point of view of those at the Border, the study shows different strategies that can be pursued in attempts to change the domain, and

the situations in which those strategies are more likely to be effective. Understanding how different kinds of bridging organizations operate may provide Border organizations with wider choices in selecting partners or setting up umbrella organizations. Finally, from the Center, this typology helps to explain the nature of the challenges they face from bridging organizations and, more to the point, why bridging organizations exist. Undermining, ignoring, or co-opting them may be politically appealing, but it will not obviate the need for organizations to provide a bridge to an often fragmented and divided but, nonetheless, ever-present Border.

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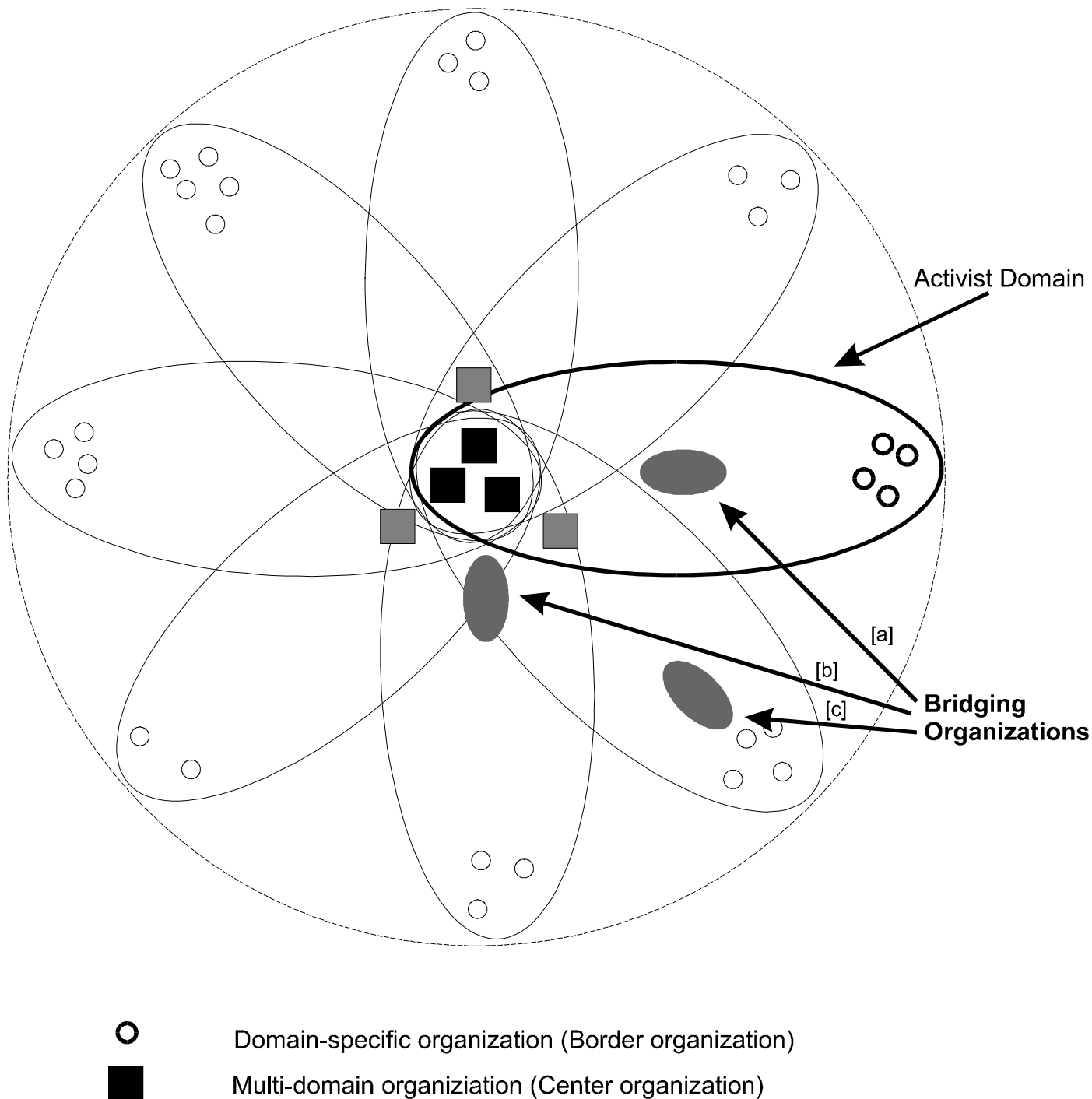
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Table 1

Types of Bridging Organizations

	Type of Bridging Organization		
	<u>Center Extension</u>	<u>Border Federation</u>	<u>Pure Bridge</u>
Values	Stability, power, secrecy	Equality, individual choice	Combination of Center and Border Values
Culture			
Cultural Form	Hierarchy	Sect	Hybrid
Boundary	Rigid, stable	Fissive, small, inside-good, outside-bad	Will display a mix of structural characteristics from the Hierarchy and the Sect.
Rules	Extensive, S.O.P.s	Abhor rules	
Decision making	Remedial, serial, collective	Participative, slow, unstructured	
Social control	Rules, procedures, sanctions	Personal goodness, expulsion, and criticism	
Perceptions of risk	Instability and threats to legitimacy	Institutionalization, fissioning	
Strategies			
Standardization	Well suited to converse with the Center. Will set 'reformist' standards. May become completely co-opted.	Not used to the compromise necessary to set standards. Center unlikely to consult it in setting standards.	Will rely on a mix of standardization and membership strategies.
Membership	Distance from the Border may deny legitimacy in representing the Border	Border 'location' establishes legitimacy in speaking for Border and support may pressure Center to make change.	
Example			
	<u>Danish Refugee Council</u>	<u>Canadian Council for Refugees</u>	<u>British Refugee Council</u>
Founded	1958	1978	1981
Budget (approx. in \$Cdn.)	\$100 million+	\$200,000+	\$10 million+
% government funded	98	0	59
Permanent staff	980	2.5	180
Member organizations	12	100+	100+
% refugee organizations	0	10+	30+
Functions	advocacy settlement determination	advocacy	advocacy settlement

Figure 1
The Structure of Activist Domains



¹ In all three cases, the situation described is the one operating between 1990 and 1993.

² Manifestly unfounded claims are effectively those which are considered to have no legitimate basis, for example, from democratic countries with no perceived practice of political persecution. Credible or substantive claims are considered to have sufficient merit to be investigated.

³ For more information on the Danish refugee system, see Danish Red Cross: Welcome to the Danish Red Cross and Asylum Work of the Danish Red Cross; Danish Refugee Council (1989; 1990)); Kormendi (1988); Steen (1993); Hardy (1994).

⁴ The Canadian Council for Refugees also deals with the sponsorship of overseas refugees, which is not considered in this paper.

⁵ For more details on the determination system see Immigration and Refugee Board (1988), Matas (1989), the Auditor General's Report (1990); Young (1989); and Hardy (1994).

⁶ For more details on the UK refugee system, see Amnesty International (1991); the British Refugee Council, *The Refugee Advisor's Handbook*; Hardy (1994).