

Nongovernmental organizations as interest groups and their roles in policy processes: Insights from Indonesian forest and environmental governance

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ABSTRACT

The traditional conceptions and claims of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have profiled NGOs as civil society representatives and as benevolent philanthropic actors of development in the Global South. However, recent phenomena indicate NGOs often acting in opposition to their benevolent claims. This study attempts to move away from the normative concepts of NGOs and develop an analytical framework fitted with the current empirics in environmental governance. Using theories of organized interest groups in a democratic political system, we analyze the extent of NGOs fulfilling their roles as organized interest groups (OIGs), where they should take roles representing the interests of particular groups within societies and exerting political influence on governments on the basis of these common interests. We use empirics from Indonesian forest and environment-related governance, and our framework is called “Representation–Influence Framework,” which assists in establishing more systematic coherent typologies of OIGs. Analyzed from the perspective that NGOs claim to serve as representatives of specific groups within societies, we establish three overarching categories of OIGs, that is, 1) en route to fulfilling the claim, 2) breaking the claim, and 3) opposing the claim. We further detail our framework into a subset of nine OIG typologies. In this way, we provide pathways to begin deconstructing the common simplifications and misunderstandings about NGOs. For empirics, we identified 38 OIGs in the cases of social forestry and timber legality policies and populated them according to the typologies. We found that most of them are en route to fulfilling the claim of representing the groups’ interests, although their political influence on the government is, in most cases, limited.

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1. INTRODUCTION

We are living in an age where increasingly pressing and complex forest and environmental challenges are moving beyond the purview of government-led solutions. Instead, the shift from governments to governance (Palumbo & Bellamy, 2016), where diverse actors participate in policy processes, is increasingly envisioned as a new normative model (Bevir, 2013; Giessen & Buttoud, 2014). Participation of diverse actors has become a common norm and is being promoted as an essential mode to improve the legitimacy and accountability of policymaking processes (Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007). As such, governments increasingly see the importance of involving diverse actors (see Lundberg, 2013; Maryudi et al., 2020).

Specifically, the past three decades have witnessed the emergence of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as new policy actors in forest and environmental governance (Brass et al., 2018). NGOs are considered to have

increasingly played pivotal roles in policy processes (Ariti et al., 2018; Ayana et al., 2018; Foo, 2018; Gupta & Koontz, 2019). They were initially characterized with a clear organizational and behavioral distinction from governments reflected in the use of the “non”-prefix. In both academic, policy, and praxis realms, NGOs were normatively profiled according to two main features. First, the early/traditional conceptions of NGOs often considered them as organizations that were “voluntary,” “not-for-profit,” “independent,” “nonpartisan,” and “apolitical” (Martens, 2002) although some characterized them as a counterbalance to governments (see Slavíková et al., 2017). Secondly, NGOs have garnered special distinction, profiled as the sweethearts of development (Mitlin et al., 2007; Arvidson, 2008), philanthropist agents serving “public goals” that governments are unable to deliver (Edwards & Hulme, 1995; Banks et al., 2015).

Some NGOs remain focused in their role working at the grassroots levels (Wulandari & Kurniasih 2019; Rahayu et al. 2018; Budi et al., 2021), but recent years have seen the evolution and transformation of NGOs. Many NGOs are cooperating more closely with governments in policy development and implementation (Rahayu et al., 2020; Maryudi et al., 2020). The symptoms of this are evident in that NGOs are increasingly critiqued as operating in opposition to their benevolent claims. For example, several NGOs:

- promote specific conservation discourses and norms that lead to community exclusion (see Fatem et al., 2018; Myers & Muhadjir, 2015),
- act as political vehicles of their beneficiaries (see Harrison, 2017; Nurrochmat et al., 2016),
- increasingly become quasi-government rather than as counterbalancing institutions (see Ma, 2002),
- manipulate and misuse aid for internal benefit (see Smith, 2012),
- operate as business entities in global supply chains (see Meyer, 1995), and
- act as international agents to influence domestic policies (see Hearn, 2007)

Bryant (2002) goes as far as describing some NGOs as “false prophets” or “mutant” NGOs, which describe organizations that shift from altruistic motives into profit-seeking actors.

In this study, we aim to capture the unfolding praxis of the diverse roles that NGOs play in policymaking processes, as we argue that such roles no longer systematically map onto earlier conceptualizations (Laraswati et al., 2020b). We shift away from the pitfall of normative concepts of NGOs and do not take their claims for granted. Instead, we argue that NGOs have evolved into various shapes and forms with different interests and consider them as interest groups. We thus aim to advance a more comprehensive view that corresponds with the aforementioned transformation of NGOs, which in praxis also pursue and act beyond common interests that the traditional concepts of NGOs do not fully embrace. Schoenefeld (2021) argues that a better theoretical framing is needed for understanding the diverse profiles, activities, interests, and strategies of NGOs in influencing policy processes. Herein, we provide a systematic theoretical conceptualization on the roles of NGOs and identify empirical evidence to test its relevance.

This research uses NGOs in Indonesian forest and environmental governance as an illustration of analysis. Indonesia is the third largest democratic country in the world. Referring to Brass et al. (2018), Indonesia is experiencing a rapid proliferation in the number of NGOs and has featured as one of the most studied countries relative to NGO activity in recent decades. In addition, the space for NGO engagement and maneuvering in democratic governance in Indonesia continues to be reshaped, in some cases opening up opportunities for NGOs to directly engage in activities traditionally limited

to government bodies (Antlöv et al., 2010). In analyzing the diverse roles of NGOs, we borrow from theories of organized interest groups (OIGs) in a democratic political system from the western tradition, where NGOs are included as OIGs and adjust them to suit the context of the Global South, below.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: NGOs AND THEIR ROLES AS OIGS

OIGs are one of the essential elements in democratic political life in terms of citizens' representation. They serve as a key instrument for participation in political processes. NGOs are commonly defined as groups/organizations that articulate the interests of specific groups within societies and seek to influence governments based on the groups' interests to achieve common goals (Salisbury, 1969; Knoke, 1986; Krott, 2005; Berry & Wilcox, 2018; Beyers & Braun, 2014; Cook et al., 2017). This idea departs from the basic assumption that the less citizen engagement (political and social), the greater the pathology of the democratic system; the greater the engagement, the healthier the practice of the democratic system (Jordan & Maloney, 2007). OIGs are avenues to express citizens' preferences, provide a check on governments becoming overly powerful, provide multiple perspectives on solving issues of public concern, and empower marginalized citizens within political processes (Dahl, 1982; Williamson, 1989).

Derived from the aforementioned definition, the roles of OIGs within a democratic political system can be divided into two elements: i) representing the interests of a particular societal group or as "a valuable route to participation" and ii) exerting influence on government actions/decisions to actualize common interests. Regarding the first role, Pitkin (1967) argues that representation cannot be separated from how to represent those that are intimately connected; a representative stands for them. Ideally, representation also links to democratic accountability. In our context, it shapes how OIGs relate to their constituents. In praxis, however, some OIGs have been criticized for failing to make themselves sufficiently accountable to their members. In general, organizations that are formed to represent specific interests commonly have membership schemes (Williamson, 1989). In the context of the Global South, not all OIGs are membership-based organizations, instead they have target groups that they claim to advocate for.

Interests here are defined as action orientations adhered to by actors (Krott, 2005) in terms of economic, political, social, moral, and cultural aspects (Wesolowski, 1962). Common interests are those democratically collected from the groups that OIGs represent. The assumption of OIGs' classical theories is that individuals with mutual interests, which can be better achieved through collective action, form a group that serves as a vehicle for the transmission of their common interests (Salisbury, 1984; Moe, 1981; Jordan & Maloney, 2007). Nonetheless, by acting in this way, OIGs may not always represent common interests but possibly represent themselves or other party interests. Self-interests are those owned by certain or selected individual(s) within an OIG or also called "selective interests." "The logic of collective action" (Olson, 1971) points out that individuals within a group are rational (particularly in an economical sense) and logically tend to pursue self-interests. They may not act only to achieve common interests; otherwise, they sometimes influence others to achieve their self-goals.

The second role OIGs play is to influence government actions to realize their common interests (Krott, 2005). This role basically advances the first role, but some OIGs exert influence on governments beyond their common interests (Williamson, 1989). Klüver (2013) views the "influences" of OIGs as "the ability to shape political decisions in line with their policy preferences." These influences are often exerted

through an action called “lobbying” in formal and informal ways. The former includes participating in policymaking processes and in government works, whereas the latter covers mechanisms to build personal relationships and communications with top government officials (Krott, 2005).

Krott (2005) argues that influences refer to cases linked with power, which is a dependent variable that relies on resources (e.g., intellectual, membership, political, and financial) (Gulbrandsen & Andresen, 2004). Intellectual-based resources include knowledge and information used by OIGs to provide advisory and consultancy services to governments, whereas financial resources connect to budgets to sustain themselves and to support government work (Krott et al., 2014). Membership is also a potentially crucial resource for OIGs to influence governments, as OIG members can be used as the basis of political legitimacy (Gherghina et al., 2014; Gauja, 2015), whereas political resources can link to access and networks with other actors (Compston, 2009; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2014). When OIGs manifest resources to other actors and can alter their behaviors or actions in accordance with their preferences (Krott et al., 2014), OIGs can be considered powerful, and thus “influences” exist (Michalowitz, 2007).

To understand the influences of OIGs, it is important to examine the nature of their relationships with governments that often contrast into pluralist and corporatist systems. “Pluralism” is often synonymized with “diversity” (Dahl, 1978) and characterized by a wide range of actors competing for political access and influence (Binderkrantz & Pedersen, 2019), with governments maintaining a great aloofness to OIGs and limiting the space for negotiations (Krott, 2005). In the pluralist system, OIGs’ architecture is less structured, and they may compete to represent the same particular societal groups. In this system, the number of OIGs can be high, but not all of them can expect to be involved in policy processes. Thus, the influences of OIGs are not only based on representativeness but also shape how their viewpoints matter in achieving public goals. In this context, OIGs are more likely to promote broad societal benefits than the narrow interests of their members (Binderkrantz & Pedersen, 2019).

In a corporatist system, by contrast, governments generally provide further access for OIGs to cooperate and become their partners in public decision-making processes (Krott, 2005; Williamson, 1989). Here OIGs can be viewed as representatives of particular societal groups. They advance the views of these groups with the logic that the representatives of different interests are incorporated in public policymaking and political decisions made by the concentration of interests (Binderkrantz & Pedersen, 2019). However, the corporatist system is prone to the risk of OIGs’ autonomy reduction. Governments with power may “manage” OIGs and implement tacit sanctioning behaviors. In the corporatist system, selected OIGs may be granted the privilege to organize interests on behalf of their constituents relative to governments but must adhere to the rules and regulations established by governments (Hsu & Hasmath, 2014).

3. METHODS

3.1 Representation–Influence Framework (RIF)

We used the analytical RIF developed by Laraswati et al. (2021) (see Laraswati et al., 2021 provided in Supplementary Information for the detailed operational indicators and manuals/protocols). The RIF was specifically developed to identify the potential typologies of OIGs based on their two basic roles, **Representation made as Dimension X** and **Influence as Dimension Y**. Each dimension is further defined into three scales:

[1] Representation as Dimension X:

- En route to fulfilling the claim/X (+)
- Breaking the claim/X (+)

- Opposing the claim/X (-)

[2] Influence as Dimension Y:

- successful in influencing the government/Y (+)
- unsuccessful in influencing the government/Y (+)
- (on the contrary) driven by the government/Y (-)

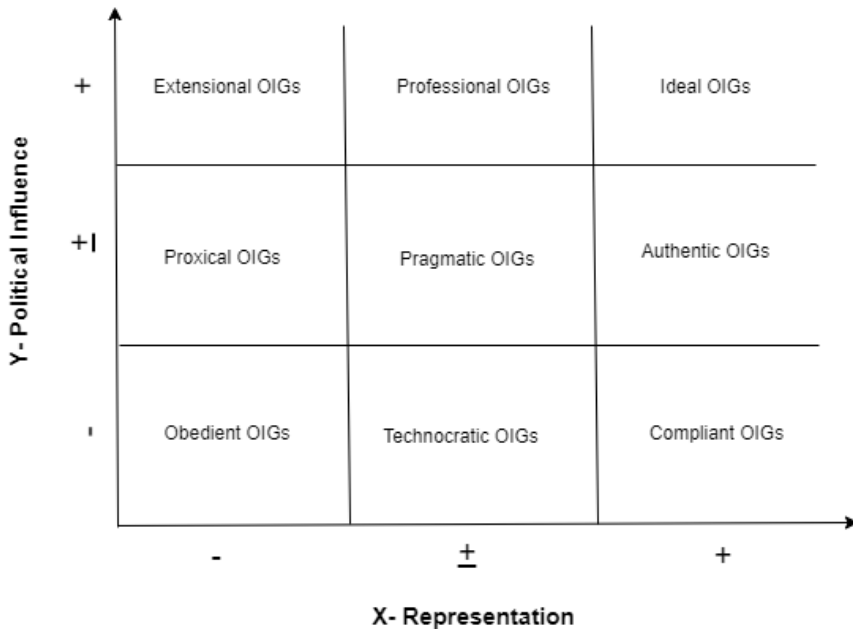


Figure 1. Typologies of OIGs

[Source: Adapted from Laraswati et al. (2021: 5)]

We first classified the studied OIGs according to Dimension X (Representation) and further plotted their relative positions along Dimension Y (Influence). Based on the three scales along the two analytical dimensions, the RIF identifies nine different types of OIGs, ranging from two extremes: **1) Ideal OIGs**, which fully represent the groups' interests and succeed in exerting political influences on governments. **2) Obedient OIGs**, which manipulate the groups' interests and are controlled by governments (details in Laraswati et al., 2021). In between, there are:

- Authentic OIGs: represent the interests of particular groups within societies, although they do not necessarily succeed in advocating them to the government.
- Compliant OIGs: attempt to represent the interests of particular groups within societies but are more concerned with accommodating the interests of the government more.
- Professional OIGs: have high resources and capacities that can influence the government, but the exerted influences are not based on the interests of any particular groups within societies.
- Pragmatic OIGs: ignore representing the interests of particular groups within societies and exerting political influence on the government.
- Technocratic OIGs: enjoy their actions by themselves and at the same time implement government interests.

- Extensional OIGs: are affiliated or are a part of international organization networks that have high capacities and resources to influence domestic policies.
- Proximal OIGs: are established by their international affiliations but do not succeed in influencing domestic policies.

3.2 Selection of OIGs

We selected OIGs that were engaged in timber legality and social forestry policies, which have been two prominent forest policy issues in Indonesia over the past few years (Maryudi & Myers, 2018; Galudra, 2019; Wulandari & Kurniasih, 2019; Ragandhi et al., 2021). Based on personal knowledge and secondary sources, we identified 60 OIGs that are predominantly engaged in either or both focal issues. Five OIGs, which have not been registered as Indonesian legal entities, were excluded from the initial list. After consultations with several senior activists who have been prominently active in timber legality and social forestry policies, some OIGs in the initial list were excluded, whereas several new ones were added to the list. In total, we compiled 50 OIGs, which we contacted for confirmation if they were engaged in the focal issues and available for further interviews. Twelve OIGs further confirmed that they were no longer working on the studied topics; thus, we had the final list of 38 for in-depth interviews. During the interviews, we cross-checked the final list and no changes were advised by the interviewees. We found that 10 OIGs specifically worked on timber legality, 17 other OIGs focused on social forestry, and 11 worked on both issues. The complete list of OIGs is provided in **Annex 1**.

3.3 Data collection

We conducted semi-structured interviews, with questions developed based on the analytical framework and operational indicators. Due to the potentially politically sensitive nature of this research, we began the interviews by using several stimulating questions, revolving around general views on forest policy and governance, social and environmental activism in Indonesia before further probing with the core questions. This approach was employed to facilitate ease of communication and to encourage interviewees to provide more details in comfortable settings (Maryudi & Fisher, 2020). We used face-to-face meetings, phone/WhatsApp calls, and other online platforms for meetings (e.g., Skype and Zoom, according to the interviewees' preferences). Only four OIGs were unavailable with the interview modes and requested to use questionnaires instead (See **Annex 2**).

Interviewees from the listed OIGs were selected based on initial consultations with the aforementioned activists and snowball (chain) referrals. Most of our interviewees were in high-level positions of the OIGs (directors/chairpersons, advisory board members or program managers). In some cases, we interviewed more than one source depending on the level of information richness/completeness (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). To ensure the validity and reliability of data/information gathered from the OIGs, triangulation (Denzin, 2009) was conducted by interviewing government officials, individual activists, business associations, and academia who are engaged in the policy processes of the focal issues; we also corroborated information collected through multiple sources, as shown below (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The complete list of interviewees is provided in **Annex 3**.

To further triangulate the data and information from the interviews, we used personal experiences and direct observations (Patton, 2005). The first author worked in one of the selected OIGs from February 2016 to July 2017. The third and the last author have close relationships with some OIGs that include personal relationships, advisory and consultancy, and project implementation. The fifth author has conducted research

on the roles of CSOs in the policy processes of social forestry since 2017. In addition, the first author conducted observations by attending seminars and meetings that involved select OIGs. We first checked the official websites of the OIGs. We then conducted a content analysis of their profiles (e.g., historical backgrounds, vision and missions, values, annual reports, and other relevant information). We also analyzed national regulations and other documents related to timber legality and social forestry issues, which was strengthened by literature analysis (Rahayu et al., 2019; Laraswati et al., 2020a).

4. RESULTS

Our analysis shows that in terms of representation, the majority of the studied OIGs are en route to fulfilling their claims as “civil society representatives,” although several others are in the “neutral position.” Only a few of them manipulate (oppose) representation claims. In terms of influence, only a few OIGs are in the two extremes, that is, successfully influencing the government in both focal issues and are driven by the government to influence members/civil societies. Our research also finds that the categorizations/typologies of certain OIGs, which work in both focal issues (timber legality and social forestry), are not static, but rather dynamically move along the two dimensions. We provide the detailed categorizations/typologies of the studied OIGs and their relative positions along the representation and influence dimensions below (Figures 2a and 2b). Due to length considerations of this article format, discussing all OIGs is not possible. Instead, we explain some OIGs that strongly represent existing categorizations.

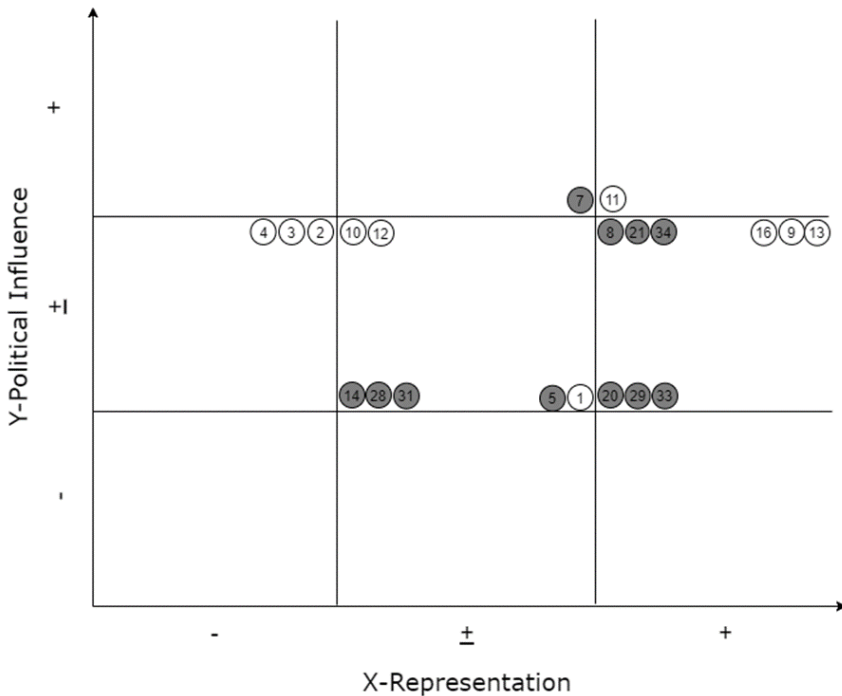


Figure 2a. Illustration of OIGs in achieving their roles in timber legality issues in Indonesia. Gray circles are OIGs that engage in both focal issues. White circles are OIGs that work on timber legality issues.

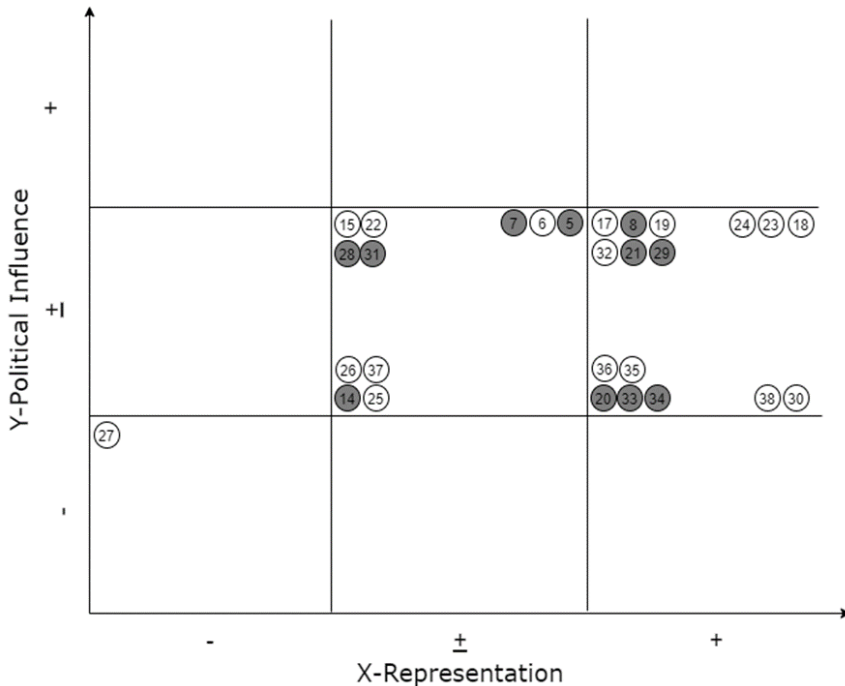


Figure 2b. Illustration of OIGs in achieving their roles in the case of social forestry policy in Indonesia. Gray circles are OIGs that engage in both focal issues. White circles are OIGs that work on social forestry issues.

4.1 First group: En route to fulfilling the claim (X+)

As previously mentioned, OIGs in this grouping have direct links to particular groups within societies and are en route to represent them in policymaking processes. In both focal issues, the majority (20 of 38) of the analyzed OIGs falls within this typology. More specifically are the purely membership-based OIGs (the right end of X dimension). Their engagements with their members are based on mutual and common interests from their early establishment. An example comes from the social forestry issue (Figure 2b). For example, OIG #30 represents an association of forest farmer groups that attempt to ensure representation and accountability by regularly providing financial reports, circulating activity/ performance reports, and convening evaluation forums to their members via regular meetings.

Several other OIGs expand their representation claims to also include target groups in addition to formal members. We found that compared with purely membership-based OIGs, they make themselves accountable, to a lesser degree, to formal members only. For example, in the timber legality case, despite claiming to advocate the interests of farmers, fishers, and Indigenous People, the public and membership-based OIG#11 (Figure 2a) does not report its organizational activities to them. Similarly, OIG #29 on the social forestry issue (Figure 2b), despite claiming to fight for forest user groups, neither have democratic participation from them nor provide them with necessary reports.

Most OIGs, which fall within the category of playing the positive roles in representing their members or target groups, are rarely able to influence the government in policy processes. They are in the middle of the influence continuum [Y (+)], meaning that most of them are autonomous from the government but not powerful

enough/interested in influencing them. Instead, these OIGs are more interested in “working on the ground,” such as assisting small craft industries in preparing the application processes of a timber legal certificate (OIG#29) and a social forestry permit (OIG#38).

We found few OIGs that successfully influenced the government through sustained and intensive lobbying that resulted in either policy changes or policy creation. For example, in the timber legality case, we found OIG#11 (Figure 2a) formed a coalition and built political networks with an international organization and some business associations that successfully pushed for the re-installment of a legality certificate as an export requirement (see Maryudi et al., 2021). In the social forestry case (Figure 2b), OIG#8 provides financial support for the implementation of government programs and serves as an influential figure within government circles, providing strong advisory support in developing the different types of social forestry schemes.

4.2 Second group: Breaking the claim (X+)

Included in this group are non membership OIGs claiming to represent particular target groups without providing mechanisms for them to assess their accountability. We found 14 OIGs that fall within this group; three timber legality OIGs, six social forestry OIGs, and five that engage in both focal issues. Many OIGs in Indonesia do not have membership schemes (formal recruitment processes) and are instead formally established as a foundation. The good accountability of nonmembership OIGs in Indonesia is mirrored from the relationship between OIGs and donors; most Indonesian OIGs are financially dependent on donors. This type of OIG may report their activities to the public, make themselves accessible to their claimed target groups, even if only for satisfying or fulfilling the requirements made by their donors. Their activities may only coincide with, instead of genuinely represent, public interests.

An example of this type is well-represented by OIG#7, which works on biodiversity conservation. Some programs executed by this OIG relate to the social forest user groups of social forestry. Its financial audits, which are made to the public, rarely make attempts to make themselves accountable to their target groups and are instead obligated only through government regulations. Another example is OIG#14 that works on both focal issues. This OIG only displays information related to an overview of organization establishment, projects/programs, and publications of the programs.

Regarding their relative position along the influence (Y) dimension, only one OIG (#7) in the timber legality policy context can be placed at the top end of the continuum (i.e., influential to the government). This OIG has facilitated the policy development of Indonesian timber legality, including the establishment of the timber legality system (namely SVLK) and the bilateral negotiation between the government of Indonesia and the European Union on the FLEGT-VPA. OIG#7 also organizes funding processes. The emergence of the Indonesian timber legality policy cannot be separated from the roles of some powerful individuals within this organization.

Most OIGs (13) in this group neither have a strong influence on, nor are influenced by the government in policy processes (in the middle of the Y continuum), albeit at varying degrees. Some OIGs may have lobbied the government, but the outcomes are limited in terms of new policies or policy changes. An example is provided by OIG#22 (social forestry case - Figure 2b), working on the mapping and registration of customary territories, with which it lobbied the government to expand the customary forest areas. However, only a small fraction of its customary territories was accommodated by the government, making us consider it as having limited influence. In the lower section of this group are OIGs that keep themselves autonomous from the government but are rarely involved/interested in direct lobbies. For example, OIG#1 works as a professional (paid-service) consultant institution, helping timber manufacturers and industries to

achieve legality and sustainability certification. In Figure 2b, we present a similar OIG (#26) that accepts consultancy services for the implementation of the government's (permit-based) social forestry models, although its advocacy activities focus on land ownership by local communities.

4.3 Third Group: Opposing the claim (X-)

This group consists of OIGs that oppose their claim as civil society representatives. These OIGs may have members, but the recruitment processes are only used as avenues to camouflage their self-interested goals. In practice, they rarely make them accountable to their claimed members. Activities and finances may also be made public, but no evaluation mechanisms are available.

Of the studied OIGs, we identified four organizations, three of which are internationally based that have transformed themselves into national-based OIGs working on biodiversity and wildlife conservation (OIG#2), conduct environmental investigations (OIG#3), and undertake forest and ocean protection (OIG#4). These OIGs perform crowdfunding to accumulate money to support their programs. Financial contributions and donations are generated from intensive public campaigns on environmental problems without sufficient reports to their public members on how the money is used. A local network of forest farmer groups (OIG#27) also falls within this category, as it fails to sufficiently make itself accountable to their members.

In terms of their relative position along the influence dimension (Y), we identified two main groups. The three internationally based OIGs are endowed with financial and human resources and are autonomous from the government. They regularly attempt to influence government institutions through lobbying efforts but have limited outcomes. For example, in the timber legality context, with financial support from its international coalition, OIG#2 seeks ways to bring its investigation on forest crimes and abuse to the attention of the national government. Similarly, OIG#3 uses media campaigns to raise their concern over the violations of national legality verification by companies. While their efforts are relatively intensive, the direct outcomes in terms of policy changes by the government remain unclear. We further found that an OIG (#27) is used by the government to support its policy (at the low part of Y [influence] continuum). This OIG was heavily dependent on a high ranking government official at the Ministry of Environment and Forestry who designed a specific social forestry program. The position of the government official as the senior adviser at the OIG was useful in obtaining support for the implementation of the program.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our research aimed to assess the diverse roles NGOs play in forest/environmental policymaking processes. Studies on NGOs continue to characterize them as “voluntary,” “not-for-profit,” “independent,” “nonpartisan,” “apolitical,” and “bridge-builders” (Mitlin et al. 2007; Banks et al. 2015; Slavíková et al., 2017). Recent scientific inquiries began to shift from normative characterizations to considering them as interest groups that influence policy processes (Orach et al., 2017; Ayana et al., 2018; Bindman et al., 2019; Hofmann 2019; Heiss, 2019; Schoenefeld, 2021; Bossuyt, 2021). Recent research also focuses on how NGOs represent specific interests (Oppong, 2018; Nuesiri, 2018; Foo, 2018). Nonetheless, a more systematic theoretical framing to capture the diverse profiles, activities, interests, and strategies to influence policy processes is still lacking. Schoenefeld (2021) argues that the conceptual debates on the roles of NGOs are limited and mentions that a better theoretical framing is needed for understanding them.

Borrowing on theories of interest groups, we thus home in on this issue and provide a more comprehensive reflection of the roles of NGOs. Built upon the heuristic

typologies of the RIF (Laraswati et al. 2021), this study specifically aimed to provide the theoretical relevance and empirical evidence of the diverse roles NGOs play as OIGs. The RIF specifically uses two basic roles of OIGs within a democratic political system, that is, 1) the extent to which they represent their constituents and 2) the extent they can exert political influence on the government, as the basis of the typologies (Williamson, 1989; Krott, 2005; Cook et al., 2017). In the RIF, behaviors of OIGs are in between two extreme categories. In terms of representation, there has been growing evidence on the diverse roles of NGOs in representing their members or target groups., Many of them make themselves accountable to their members (Edward & Hulme, 1995; Piewitt et al., 2010) while others may claim to represent specific groups in order to pursue their self-interests (Steffek & Hahn, 2010; Smith, 2012). This highlights the influence dimension, as some NGOs might be influential in governmental policy processes (Orach et al., 2017; Hofmann, 2019) while others may instead serve as a government tool to pursue its interests (Bryant, 2002; Rahayu et al., 2020). Combining these two dimensions, we further differentiate diverse types of NGOs by mapping them onto our RIF model.

Analyzing their group arrangement models and accountability (Laraswati et al., 2021), we found that most of the OIGs engaged in timber legality and social forestry policies, are en route to fulfilling the representation claim. In part, this might be explained by the growing legal requirements put in place by the government in the wake of democratization and governance reforms over the past few decades regarding transparency and accountability in Indonesia (Antlöv et al., 2010). Governments of several countries have also stipulated stricter regulations to monitor activities of OIGs (Amagoh, 2015; Nanthagopan et al., 2018). The increasing accountability of OIGs in Indonesia may have also been driven by donors that require accounting for sustainability in their activities (Kamstra & Schulpen, 2015; Dewi et al., 2021). This is also true elsewhere around the world (Banks et al., 2015; Suárez & Gugerty, 2016; Uddin & Belal, 2019). Nonetheless, accountability mechanisms as required by governments and donors might not necessarily result in the perceived positive representation role as we also found in a few the OIGs examined in our research. NGOs often claim to represent local communities in order to pursue self-interests, e.g., improving political credentials and securing funding (see Bryant, 2002; Nurrochmat et al., 2016; Baroi & Panday, 2015).

Our study also found that despite their relatively positive representation role, the NGOs' political influence on the government is, in most cases, hardly seen. Only a few of the studied OIGs are able to push certain policy actions by the government, while others are even used to pursue government interests. Influence is only exerted by a few OIGs through their influential members/ boards are closely connected to the government (for example, see Afiff & Rachman, 2019). This finding is remarkable given the boom in social and environmental movements in Indonesia in the wake of democratization reforms over the past two decades. The increasing body of knowledge has also pointed out how the government remains as a powerful actor in forest and environment-related policy processes in Indonesia (Schusser et al., 2015; Sahide et al., 2016; Nurrochmat et al., 2017; Di Gregorio et al., 2017; Larson et al., 2021).

Overall, only a few NGOs are at the extremes of the RIF typologies: 1) Ideal OIGs (X+ and Y+), 2) Obedient OIGs (X- and Y-). The NGOs in the focal issues populate the diverse typologies of the RIF. Based on this empirical evidence, we are confident that the RIF can provide an analytical frame for better understanding and explaining the roles of OIGs in other forest and environmental issues. There are some caveats for the application of the RIF, however. Considering the large number of cases used, the way this study plots the positions of specific OIGs along the Representation-Influence (R-I)

dimensions may be rather mechanistic. A quantitative approach with more comprehensive criteria and indicators of R-I dimensions may offer better visualizations and more randomized positions of OIGs with specific typologies. The distribution/plotting of specific OIGs may also fail to capture the complexity of political situations unfolding at different governing scales, specifically when they are interconnected across a complex network of actors, institutions, and processes. Therefore, further triangulation with other actors will offer clearer reflections on the roles of OIGs in policy processes.

Annex 1. Complete coding of OIGs and their engagement in timber legality and social forestry issues

Code of OIG	Focal issues	
	Timber legality	Social forestry
1	✓	
2	✓	
3	✓	
4	✓	
5	✓	✓
6		✓
7	✓	✓
8	✓	✓
9	✓	
10	✓	
11	✓	
12	✓	
13	✓	
14	✓	✓
15		✓
16	✓	
17		✓
18		✓
19		✓
20	✓	✓
21	✓	✓
22		✓
23		✓
24		✓
25		✓
26		✓
27		✓
28	✓	✓
29	✓	✓
30		✓
31	✓	✓
32		✓
33	✓	✓
34	✓	✓
35		✓
36		✓
37		✓
38		✓

Annex 2. Complete coding of OIG interviewees

Code of OIG	Interviewee's position	Time	Platform
1	Staff	2-Oct-20	Questionnaires
2	· Director of policy and advocacy · Program coordinator · Ex-chief executive officer · Coordinator of the fundraising program	· June 9, 2020 · May 20, 2020 · June 11, 2020 · January 16, 2020	· WhatsApp call · WhatsApp call · Face to face · WhatsApp call
3	· Public engagement and action manager · Action team leader	· May 19, 2020 · May 22, 2020	· Skype · Skype
4	Senior advisor	January 16 & May 21, 2020	Zoom
5	Forest legality analyst	May 19, 2020	Zoom
6	· Director · Program manager of Landscapes and Commodities	· June 17, 2020 · January 15, 2020	· Zoom · Zoom
7	· Program director on sustainable palm oil · Program coordinator on social forestry	· May 5, 2020 · May 7, 2020	· Skype · Zoom
8	· Program director on sustainable governance · Specialist consultant on the social forestry issue	· June 2, 2020 · May 12, 2020	· Skype · Zoom
9	Chairman of the governing body	January 15 & May 15, 2020	WhatsApp call
10	Researcher	May 26, 2020	Questionnaires
11	Chairman	May 17, 2020	Skype
12	Chairman	May 13 & 16, 2020	Skype
13	· Chairman · Advisory board	· May 11, 2020 · January 15, 2020	· Zoom · WhatsApp call
14	Program director	· May 7, 2020	Skype
15	Executive director	May 21, 2020	Skype
16	· Executive director · Staff (engaged in the SVLK policy processes)	· May 19, 2020 · June 10, 2020	· Zoom & Questionnaires · Zoom
17	Chairman	February 11, 2020	WhatsApp call
18	Secretary general in political affairs	January 18 & June 19, 2020	WhatsApp call
19	Executive director	May 14, 2020	Skype
20	Chairman of knowledge management	May 18, 2020	Zoom
21	Two expert staff members in the social forestry issue	June 3, 2020	Zoom (both together)
22	Chairman	June 8, 2020	Zoom
23	Director	May 9, 2020	Zoom
24	National coordinator	May 12, 2020	Skype
25	· Executive director · Ex-expert staff in the social forestry	· May 13, 2020 · May 13, 2020	· Questionnaires · Questionnaires

	issue		
26	Secretary of the foundation	May 7, 2020	Zoom
27	Executive director	May 15, 2020	WhatsApp call
28	Advisory board	June 12, 2020	Zoom
29	Chairman	· December 3, 2018 · April 11, 2019 · February 21, 2020 · April 9, 2020	· Face to face · Face to face · Face to face · Skype
30	Advisory board	June 22, 2020	Zoom
31	Executive director	February 21, 2020	Face to face
32	Advisory board	May 13 & 16, 2020	Zoom
33	Advisory board (ex-director)	May 14, 2020	Zoom
34	Coordinator	May 18, 2020	Zoom
35	Director	June 27, 2020	Zoom
36	Executive director	June 30, 2020	Zoom
37	Secretary	May 6, 2020	Zoom
38	Executive director	May 21, 2020	Zoom

Annex 3. Complete list of non-OIG interviewees

No.	Interviewee	Time	Platform
1	Ex-director general of social forestry and environmental partnerships (the issuance of the national social forestry policy)	June 8, 2020	Zoom
2	Academia who led the process of the timber legality policy development	June 3, 2020	Phone call
3	Ex-director general of forestry and environmental planning (the issuance of social forestry policy in Java) who is also a lecturer in the first author's faculty	February 2020 (also regularly attended his courses during the 2017-2018 period)	Face to face
4	Advisory board of APHI	June 16, 2020	Zoom
5	Assistant for the raw materials, production, and marketing of APKINDO	June 9, 2020	Zoom
6	Chairman of ISWA	May 22, 2020	WhatsApp call
7	Chairman of ASMINDO	May 20, 2020	Zoom
8	Chairman of organization division of HIMKI	June 4, 2020	WhatsApp call
9	Senior activist for social-related forest issues	April 7, 2020	Skype
10	Scholar activist for the social forestry issue	June 19, 2020	Zoom and phone call
11	Scholar activist for the environmental movement	June 6, 2020	Zoom
12	Activist for legality and forest governance issues	May 27, 2020	Zoom
13	Senior activist for social-related environmental issues	June 26, 2020	WhatsApp call

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