
F L O O R

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, LAND POLICY, AND GLOBAL SOCIAL RIGHTS

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HelpAge's Involvement in Spreading Social Pensions in the Global South: Slow and Steady Wins the Race?

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Abstract

Within the last decade the spread of non-contributory (social) pensions in the global South indicates a “globalization of social policy” as envisaged by Bob Deacon. According to World Society Theory global actors can be “agents of transmission” influencing national policy-making. Whereas usually the approach to proof this thesis is done in a quantitative way, this study takes a fresh and qualitative look at HelpAge International as the most influential INGO advocating social pensions in order to reveal its instruments and strategies. The study found that due to its interesting network structure HelpAge is able to influence the global as well as the local level. A slow and steady involvement at national level helps HelpAge to pursue long-term goals and be influential even if the INGO is operating with knowledge instead of money. However, the window of opportunity as the main prerequisite to become influential, still depends on national political factors.

Keywords: global social policy; World Society theory; global governance; social pensions; non-governmental organizations

Die Verbreitung von beitragsfreien (sozialen) Renten im globalen Süden innerhalb der letzten zehn Jahren weist auf die von Bob Deacon vorhergesehene „Globalisierung der Sozialpolitik“ hin. Nach der Weltgesellschaftstheorie können globale Akteure als „Transmissionsagenten“ nationale Politikgestaltung beeinflussen. Während diese These für gewöhnlich quantitativ überprüft wird, nimmt diese Studie eine frische und qualitative Perspektive ein, um HelpAge International, als einflußreichste INRO für soziale Renten, auf ihre Steuerungsinstrumenten und Strategien hin zu untersuchen. Diese Studie fand heraus, daß HelpAge durch eine interessante Netzwerkstruktur sowohl die globale als auch die lokale Ebene beeinflussen kann. Ein langsames aber beständiges Engagement auf nationaler Ebene hilft dabei Langzeitziele zu verwirklichen und einflußreich zu sein, auch wenn die INRO mit Wissen anstatt mit Geldern operiert. Jedoch ist Einfluß von nationalen Gelegenheitsstrukturen abhängig die von politischen Faktoren abhängig sind.

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Abbreviations

ADA	Age Demands Action (Campaign)
AU	African Union
CSocD	Commission for Social Development
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (Germany)
GSP	Global Social Policy
HAI	HelpAge International
HtA	Help the Aged
IFI	International Financial Institutions
ILO	International Labour Office
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IO	International (Governmental) Organization
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MIPAA	Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing
NDA	National Development Agency
NGO	(National) Non-Governmental Organization
OPA	Older People Association
SCT	Social Cash Transfer
SPF-I	Social Protection Floor - Initiative
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UN	United Nations
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNFPA	United Nations Populations Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children Emergency Fund
USP	Universal Social Pension

Introduction

Global Social Policy (Deacon et al. 1997) is a new field of research taking into account that social policies expand globally. From the start, the discipline focused on global actors as entities that influence national policies. I take this perspective to analyze the proliferation of *social cash transfer* (SCT) programs in the global South. SCTs are a new field expanding at national and global level within the last decade with multiple actors engaging in it. From the perspective of *world society theory* (Meyer et al. 1997; Meyer 2010) those organizations have been describes as world society actors. However, the types of organizations have not been differentiated with regard to their capacities to influence national policy-making. Instead every world society actor is considered to be a link between the national and the global level, without clarifying what makes up the modes of influencing. The question is if world society actors engaging in policy diffusion with *knowledge* as their main resource can have an impact on national policy-making. Whereas realists strongly emphasize the power of money regarding international governmental organizations (IOs) with large funding as most influential, institutionalists might consider hard standards as set by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as influential. Some might be skeptical about international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) operating foremost with knowledge, which is characterized as soft power. With world society theory emphasizing the influence of knowledge and norms I argue that INGOs can be influential. I chose HelpAge International (HAI) for analysis because it is an actor with a clear mission for the advocacy of older people's needs that is active with projects directly within countries. As a result of this case study I argue that HAI is using cognitive and normative knowledge utilizing three modes for influencing which are able to have impact when used in a long and steady manner.

The background of the analysis is that in the last decade the global development community has almost unanimously taken SCTs on board as policy prescriptions for the global South (Hanlon et al. 2010). The Office of the ILO has been a major driver of this paradigmatic turn (ILO 2001; ILO 2010) praising the approach to achieve social security with cash transfers including the informal sector which is unable to participate in contributory systems and, thus, needs non-contributory programs. This thought is captured with the Social Protection Floor – Initiative (SPF-I) of the United Nations (SPF-AG 2011) led by ILO and WHO. The approach of the SPF-I is to achieve the extension of social security coverage by reaching different target groups (children, working age poor, and the elderly). That allows the multitude of specialized global actors to pick up this approach pushing for its realization in terms of their own perspective, methods and capabilities.

HAI is such an INGO with a clear focus on one particular target group considering older people as eligible for SCTs. In the first part of this article I argue that HAI with its large network of national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has the structure appropriate to be influential at national level. Furthermore, with universal non-contributory pensions HAI is advocating a clear policy model in the

global South. Non-contributory pensions have spread enormously in the last decade, from Latin America to parts of Africa and Asia.

I describe this global spread in the decade of the 2000s as the second wave of pension reform, which is following the first wave of pension privatizations in the decade of the 1990s led by an advocacy coalition of international financial institutions (IFIs) (Orenstein 2005). The World Bank was very influential in this wave by spreading the reform process in Latin America to former Soviet Union countries in Europe.

Three factors gave IFIs an advantageous position for advocacy: a privileged access to the Ministries of Finance, a neo-liberal paradigm favoring privatization as a method for economic growth generation, and conditioned loans to the highly indebted countries in Latin America and East Europe (Müller 2003). All these factors are not applicable to INGOs except for one factor: IFIs and especially the World Bank in the pension privatization wave have been analyzed for their usage of knowledge, which has been described as being able to modify the 'cognitive availability' of certain models to national policy-makers (Weyland 2005). Thus, Müller (2003) has described IFIs as *agents of transmission* transferring one policy model from one world region to another by changing national agendas. The second wave of pension reform in the 2000s is characterized by the introduction of non-contributory pensions which HAI calls *social* pensions. This time an INGO is the leading actor in this process. Is it possible that INGOs can be such an *agent of transmission* as well? Do INGOs actually want to take a role which would consume much more resources than project based activities? How can INGOs play a crucial role in policy diffusion? Can they compensate the privileged access of IFIs to the Ministries of Finance and the supportive neo-liberal agenda with resources available to INGOs?

The approach to analyze HAI's involvement in policy diffusion is based on the assumption that HAI can be an influential *agent of transmission*. That means that HAI is an actor which has the appropriate structure and capacities to have an effect at national level, that HAI has cognitive and normative material incorporated it can be an agent of, and that HAI has a strategy which can put HAI's agency into effect. Therefore, in the three chapters of this article I analyze three aspects: structure, policy model, and strategy.

I examine the structure of HAI's organizational set-up (chapter 1) to clarify how HAI is constructed as an actor. I argue that HAI is an interesting combination of a *decentralized network structure* with an additional and *loosely coupled center*. This set-up is effective to address the global and the national level in parallel.

Subsequently, I analyze HAI's policies in the area of SCTs (chapter 2) to find out if HAI is agent of a clear policy model. Here, I argue that HAI advocates a *clear policy model* of universal social pensions (USPs) which, nevertheless, includes flexible parameters which can be adapted according to national preferences.

Finally, I investigated in the strategizing of HAI (chapter 3) to discover HAI's modes of influencing. I argue that HAI is using three modes which are directed to

different levels: the global (subchapter 3.1), the local (subchapter 3.2), and the national (subchapter 3.3). At each level HAI is operating with knowledge as the most important resource.

Subchapter 3.1 argues for a top-down mode of influencing at global level in order to establish global norms on social protection securing a cooperative environment and producing norms HAI can draw on at national level like the IFIs can draw on a neo-liberal agenda. Subchapter 3.2 argues for a bottom-up mode of influencing in order to establish a network structure enabling grassroots movements making claims at national level. Subchapter 3.3 argues for a networked mode of influencing in order to be directly involved at national level with policy makers by building long lasting informal relationships.

All three arguments of HAI's strategy have in common that they are built on activities planned and conducted in a long and steady manner in order to be influential at the national level of policy-making. Though I point out that a necessary prerequisite is a non-competitive environment with other global actors and a *window of opportunity* in the national process of policy-making.

1 The structure of HelpAge International

The analysis of agency starts with a description of HAI's structural capacities. How can HAI be an actor at national level? I illustrate that a large network structure enables HAI to be an actor at national level. Moreover, HAI seems to be active in global forums, too. How is this possible with a decentralized network structure? I argue that this network is an interesting combination of decentralized and centralized parts managed by a secretariat in London. The next sections show the complexity of HAI's structural capacities including some background information of the historical development.

HAI describes itself as a "global network striving for the rights of disadvantaged older people to economic and physical security" (Walker Bourne et al. 2011). As much as it is true that it is a broad-based network, it has to be recognized that it grew to an independent organization in the early 1990s out of a highly centralized national organization with the purpose of organizing fundraising charities within the United Kingdom for the needs and interests of older people, called 'Help the Aged' (HtA, now called 'Age UK'). This is why HAI has a top-down structure centralized in London and a bottom-up structure via its large network. Both characteristics are crucial for HAI's strategic influencing modes explained in chapter 3. HtA has set up HAI as a branch organization for international projects, which means that networking has been from the beginning on a major part of HAI's activities. The organization was founded as a network connecting five organizations around the globe: Help the Aged UK, Help the Aged Canada, HelpAge India, HelpAge Kenya, and Pro Vida Colombia. In the following decade the network increased to a total number of 34 organizations in 2011 with an outreach to 41 countries. Most country offices and affiliates are located in the Asian region (47%), followed by the African region (35%) and Latin America (18%). It shows that HAI's

activities are directed towards the global South dealing with Low and Middle Income Countries, because of the high level of poverty especially among older people (HelpAge 2004). The network expansion of HAI offices and affiliates is influenced by the allocation of preexisting national NGOs which later on joined the HAI network and by countries asking for support and providing funding for HAI to open a small presence. The creation of HAI offices is strictly dependent on project-based funding. To secure their existence the HAI offices continuously have to set up successor programs in order to acquire new funding. Thus, I argue that the offices continuously have to show a high performance.

The outline of spheres (global, world regional, national and local) where the influencing takes place is complex. The complexity has to do with HAI's activities being directed at different levels. HAI is active at the global level trying to influence global UN conventions for older people rights, at world regional level initiating and organizing conferences and workshops, at national level establishing personal contacts to policy-makers, and at local level founding associations for older people or helping them to build up such structures on their own. Decentralization is key for most of HAI's activities in order to relieve HAI's secretariat and correspond better to national contexts. The HAI's 'Head of Policy, Influencing and Learning' wrote: "Wherever possible and appropriate these tasks and technical support areas are located in regional and country offices" (Walker Bourne et al. 2011: 410).

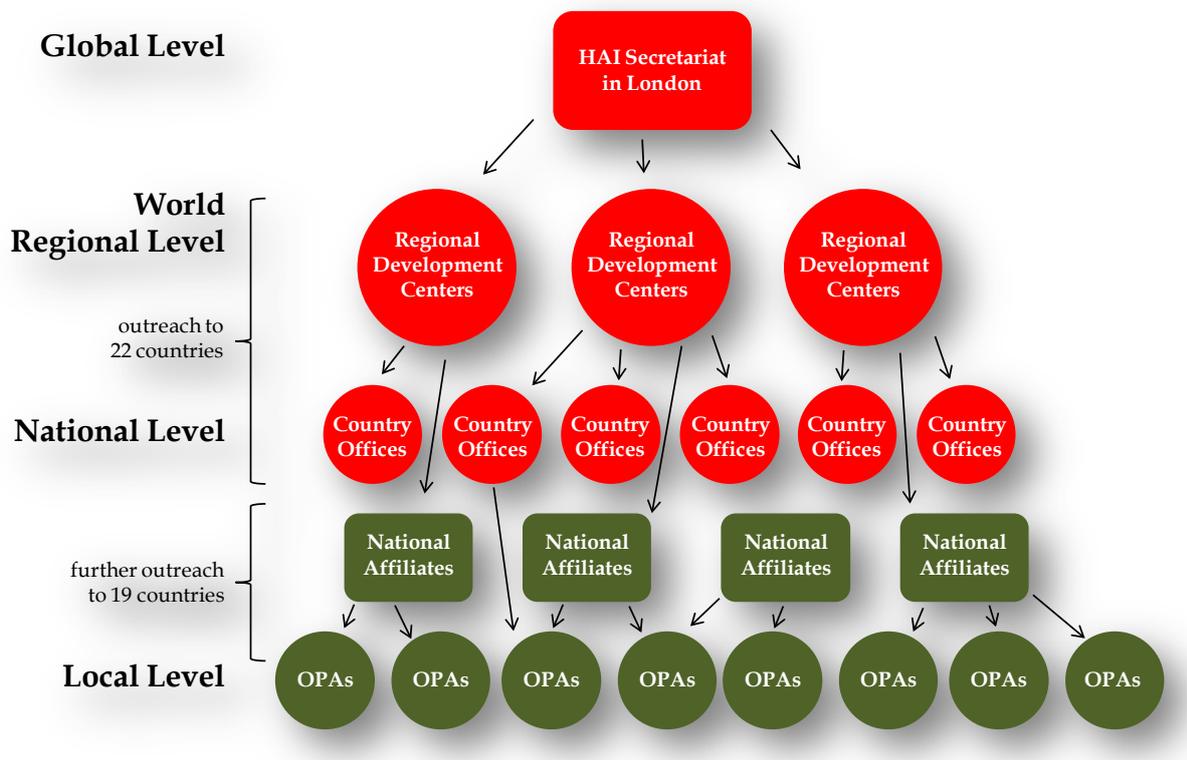


Figure 1: The Structural Set-up of HelpAge International's Network
(Source: author's visualization)

Figure 1 (→ p. 7) gives an overview of HAI's structure including entities at all levels. The regional development centers are the main contacts for HAI's secretariat and coordination efforts. The secretariat provides expertise and funding, whereas the regional development centers are responsible for the activities carried out in this region, and can tell the secretariat about problems encountered in the region and about concrete needs and opportunities for successful advocacy. Moreover, it is the regional development centre that is in a close working relationship with other country offices and can report back to the secretariat about country experiences which in turn fuel HAI's sources of expertise. Involved in active policy advocacy are HAI's own country offices or HAI's network affiliates. The affiliates are national NGOs that have been working for a long time for the well-being of older people or a broader set of issues including old age. Those organizations are endogenous legal national entities that can look back on their own history of development. They cooperate with HAI, acknowledge its values, and support its mission for older persons. Yet, HAI tries to ensure a relatively large degree of autonomy for its affiliates and respects national peculiarities. For example, in the Asian context national NGOs prefer the name 'senior' instead of 'elderly' or 'older person', and if national NGOs wish to keep their own name and appearance, they are free to do so.

At local level HAI is represented with a unique type of organization that has been developed as a monitoring mechanism after the second UN convention for older people in 2002. It is unusual for an INGO to be anchored at local level with grassroots structures that directly include the target group. Since 2002 HAI is spreading a new and informal type of organization which establishes older people in local regions, city districts or villages as groups, called older people's associations (OPAs). In most of the regions older people are brought together and back into public for the first time; in Latin America however such movements are older and not caused by HAI, even though HAI's involvement also meant a boost for OPA development in this region. The advantage in Latin America is that those OPAs are already more than informal entities. Some of them have a legal status and are connected with each other being able to represent OPAs at regional or even at national level (HelpAge Interview No. 2). In most cases the national government actively supports the process of creating OPAs with national action plans and funding (HelpAge Interview No. 6). For governments this is a cost effective way of bringing poverty relief to the countries' poorest enhancing self-help capabilities. For HAI it is an important structure to give older people a voice and tell them about rights and entitlements they formally have. The exact number of OPAs is hard to get because they are so small scale that even HAI's secretariat in London has no definite number. According to estimations several thousand OPAs exist globally.

Being a global agent for particular policies implies to have capacity to do so. This is a critical point in the case of HAI, because it is chronically under-resourced (HelpAge Interview No. 5). Though HAI became independent of HtA and widened its global outreach, either with its own country offices or by incorporating

national NGOs as affiliates, it is still connected with Age UK in the sense that these organizations are located in the same building in London as well as HAI's activities in its central office are financially dependent on Age UK's budget support. This point is directly leading to HAI's difficult financial situation, where a small amount of money is securing the coordination activities conducted by some 60 staff members in the London secretariat directly supporting international offices and the network in managerial, accountability and technical areas. Further financial resources come from national development agencies (NDAs) like the British 'Department for International Development' (DFID) or the German '*Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit*' (GIZ) which donate money for country projects. A budget for HAI's advocacy work at global, national and local level does not exist, although this work has become more important to HAI with the years. Since 2000 HAI is extending its advocacy work to new issue areas ('HIV/AIDS' since 2001, 'Rights' since 2006/6, 'Social Protection' since 2007, 'Health' since 2010, and 'Livelihoods and Work' since 2012). Money for this advocacy is taken as a minimal share from the general budget and the funding by NDAs. This makes clear that HAI cannot set up campaigns and projects in order to influence like it wishes it could. Instead influencing and advocacy has to come in small doses over a longer period of time. Therefore, HAI has set up an appropriately large structure that is build to last.

2 The SCT policies of HelpAge International

Having described the structural set-up of HelpAge International (HAI) I want to come back to the question of agency my analysis of effective influencing is based on. Actors can become agentic with regard to certain entities, interests or principles they represent (Meyer and Jepperson 2000). This chapter describes that HAI is not just an agentic actor for older people needs but is agent of a concrete policy model in the field of social cash transfers (SCTs). Many actors have their particular set policy models in this field. The ILO and the World Bank have a very broad agenda for SCTs (cf. ILO 2010; Fiszbein and Schady 2009) whereas organizations like UNICEF are specialized to particular target groups (cf. Jaspars and Harvey 2007). HAI is active in this field with its own emphases of policy prescriptions (HelpAge 2004).

The complicated funding structure of HAI suggests that HAI has to work project-based. It would imply that it might be difficult for HAI to follow a policy aim for longer than a project period. Long term goals might not be salient at first glance. Hence, the question arises: Does HAI have a clear policy model of cash transfers it is consequently following? Yes, there is a clear model, called universal social pension (USP) to be identified, which is advocated since 2004. The origin of this model is unclear. It rather has been ascertained that particular individuals inside of HAI already have considered USPs at the end of the 1990s. A study of Barrientos and Lloyd-Sherlock (2003) created a higher acceptance of this model within the organization leading to the publication 'Age and Security' in 2004 (HelpAge Interview No. 9). The model's importance grew with the years (HelpAge 2006a) culminating in becoming a major focus within HAI in 2007 (HelpAge

Interview No. 1). The budget's spending reports of HAI for the years from 2009 to 2011 show that the section that includes HAI's activities for social pensions is the largest in HAI's spending, next to emergency assistance which is around one third of the annual budget (HelpAge 2009a, 2010a, 2011a).

Furthermore, the USP model is part of a normative agenda, called 'social protection', and is linked with further policy side streams next to USPs (like 'HIV and AIDS', 'Older People Rights', 'Health', and 'Livelihoods and Work'). HAI is pushing for social protection to be higher on the global development agenda since the beginning of the 2000s. Social protection is a key term at global level connected with the idea to address poverty reduction in realization of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Social protection includes SCTs, either in form of social assistance or tax-financed and, thus, non-contributory pensions or family allowances and benefits for orphans and vulnerable children. USP are non-contributory pensions with a universal component. The universal component means that everyone above a particular age (preferably for older people over 60) gets a minimal pension without any kind of means-test. HAI decided to call the pension 'social' instead of 'non-contributory' in order to connect the concept USP with the human right approach and leave the discussion in the global development community with was discussing mechanism of how to target the poor in the informal economy (HelpAge Interview No. 1). 'Social' pensions have the notion of being the appropriate response in order to reach the MDGs with poverty alleviating programs, and to realize the human "right to social security" for an "adequate standard of living" (United Nations Declaration of 1948, art. 22 and art. 25).

What is HAI winning with regard to agency by making a connection to human rights? Foremost, such framing is important for the global development community in which the human rights play an important role. It helps to win other international actors as partners for cooperation and to avoid a competitive situation at national level. The ILO and the World Bank have approaches compatible with the UN systems' values and adapt to the aim of poverty reduction with regard to the MDGs. As I said, HAI is an INGO with small financial resources and wouldn't be able to compete in terms of money. From the Asian context a HAI policy officer reported that the influence at national level stopped at the moment when the World Bank decided to get involved in the discussion about social protection programs (HelpAge Interview No. 6). Thus, the embedding of USPs in the human rights approach is a possibility to interact with other actors in a cooperative environment.

For HAI two aspects are of importance with regard to a rights-based approach: first, USP programs should be connected with entitlements based on citizenship and, second, national governments should have the responsibility for these programs (in contrast to programs in hand of the private sector). Non-contributory programs are predestined to be governmental, because private institutions lack the ability to finance pensions out of general taxation. However, to advocate such an approach at national level is much more complicated because the realization of a rights-based approach takes much longer as the *ad hoc* creation of programs.

Again, a long and steady involvement is advantageous for achieving this aim.

Interestingly, HAI is not using the human rights approach as a primary argument at national level. Human rights might come in as an argument when it is about a rights-based implementation of USPs, but such argumentation is not at in the foreground when it is about the advocacy. Experiences of HAI's regional and country officers have shown that practical arguments are important which explain impacts in terms of poverty alleviation as well as concrete aspects of the implementation process and financial affordability (HelpAge Interview No. 6). HAI supposes that USPs are connected with some major advantage like being equipped with a less complicated bureaucratic process because targeting is solely based on age as the criteria for eligibility, and the avoidance of exclusion errors which remain high even in very well-know examples like Mexico's 'Oportunidades' excluding 70% of the eligibly population (HelpAge 2004, AusAID 2011).

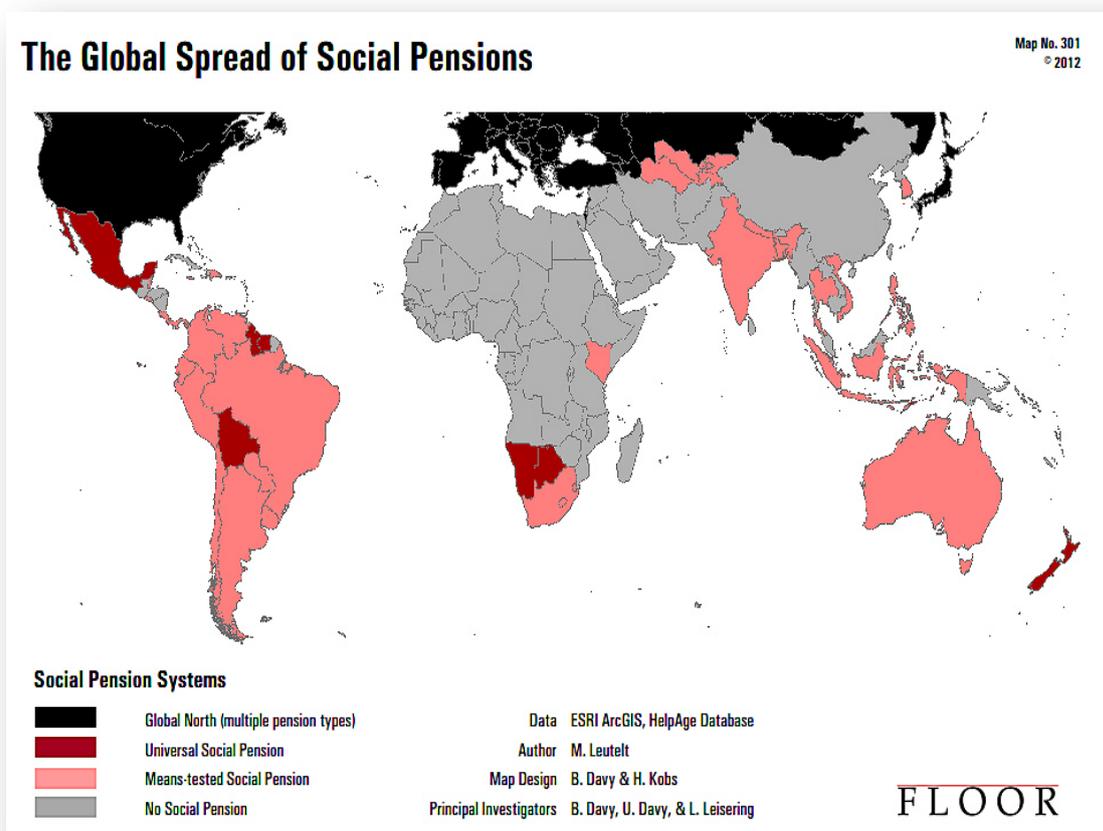


Figure 2: The global spread of social pensions (FLOOR Map No. 301)

Figure 2 shows how widespread means-tested and universal pensions are in the global South. Except for a few countries most of the programs are means-tested. For a considerable share of this spread HAI claims to have been influential on the policy-making process. Does that mean that in practice HAI has given up its USP

approach and is instead rather supporting means-tested pensions? First of all, it is understandable that means-tested or proxy means-tested programs¹ spread globally, even though they have the disadvantage of excluding many poor people and have relatively high administrative costs. Yet, those programs are much cheaper than USPs due to the much smaller number of people to be covered and the small size of benefits. Whereas HAI in its beginning hoped that USP are a tool for poverty reduction it now realizes that mere poverty alleviation is the achievable goal (HelpAge Interview No. 6).² Even though the outcomes differ from HAI's policy prescription, it does not mean that HAI has given up on USPs. In all interviews with policy officers of HAI I heard that the advocated policy model is USP and the resulting programs in the countries are an outcome of what is politically doable in a given moment of time. HAI's *strategy of gradual expansion* allows making such compromises and striving for a gradual modification of the parameters. Yet, the transition from means-tested pensions to universal ones is a major shift and depends on political will which is generally connected with elections and a change in government because USP is a popular model among older people representing a continuously growing share of voters (HelpAge Interview No. 2). HAI is working on bringing about such a policy transition by the *strategy of gathering momentum*. It is a strategy based on a long term involvement which is used in the advocacy for the introduction of non-contributory pensions (either means-tested or universal).

Making compromises in the advocacy of USP is common for HAI. However, HAI prefers to make compromises within their model of USPs without giving up on the universal component. The main parameters advocated for modification support the affordability argument of HAI. In order to make USP more attractive by lowering the introductory costs HAI suggests starting the program with a higher age for eligibility and benefit levels below the 1.25 dollar poverty line (HelpAge 2011b). Those parameters allow responding to individual requests of countries to adapt programs to their financial situation.

A final aspect to be mentioned when discussing HAI's policy model is how HAI's activities for emergencies are introduced at different years marking when the particular topic became subject of systematic advocacy. The fields of activities include HIV and AIDS (2001/2), Rights (2006/7), Social Protection (2007) - incl. Social Pensions / Secure Income -, Health (2010), and Livelihoods and Work (2012). These topics allow contacting national ministries beyond the ministry of social welfare, like the ministries of health, labour, and human rights committees, and, hence, allow linking from various angles to social pensions. A short example (cf. HelpAge 2008a) shows how these issues build an interconnected web: HAI is portraying older people in Africa as the main caregivers for orphans because the

¹ Often (especially in a low income context) means tests lack accurate data about the population, which makes the set up of programs complicated for any kind of program. Targeting, thus, is based on estimations based on proxies like the focussing on certain regions.

² Instead of being able to reduce the number of people living in poverty the small amounts of the SCTs merely make people a little less poor. It means that concepts of poverty reduction are replaced by concepts like the closing of the poverty gap.

middle-aged mostly died (HIV/AIDS). The HIV/AIDS section is arguing for a social pension to support older people buying medication and enabling them to access health services (Health), and to allow buying food in order to maintain their livelihoods (Livelihoods). Social pensions should be part of a social protection package (Social Protection) including free basic healthcare and education, further social-assistance funds and credit schemes, and child and disability grants. The argumentation ends with a call to African governments to promote the rights of older carers (Rights). The example of the HIV/AIDS document shows that all of HAI's fields of activities are included into each particular field.

The side stream agendas enable HAI to collaborate with multiple other actors and, because of the interconnectedness, to stimulate cooperation among them. The cooperation with UNICEF became important since around the 2000s and, as indicated above, stimulated HAI to pay more attention to the links between older people and children. One incidence of cooperation is the 'Living Together project' financed by UNICEF and carried out by HAI since 2002 (HelpAge 2007). UNICEF is speaking of supporting HAI because of findings HAI generated in 1994 in Mozambique, which shed light on older people as caregivers (UNICEF 2012). This has made continuous cooperation possible (e.g. HelpAge 2008b). Children have become an important issue for cooperation with multiple actors of the global development community (DFID et al. 2009). Cooperation at national level comes spontaneously into play during the concrete project work. Projects are seldom clear-cut and, hence, involve many contacts and partners. However, in most cases HAI is directly active within the countries through affiliates whereas cooperating partners foremost provide the funding. To acquire more funding the conceptual links are crucial.

3 Strategies of diffusion

HelpAge International (HAI) is a global actor with a large network for continuous advocacy for Universal Social Pensions (USPs) as a clear model which is advocated from various angles with certain flexible parameters that can be adapted to national preferences. The main strategy for the introduction of USPs is *gradual extension*, which means that HAI is engaging in pushing for extensions of existing non-contributory pensions at national level in order to add a rights status, to revoke means-tests and introduce the principle of universality, to raise the benefit levels, and to lower the age for eligibility.

From the perspective of world culture I was interested in the question of how HAI understands the role of itself in the process of policy diffusion. Is HAI a direct advocate of its policy model explicitly being an agentic actor for it or are USPs a cognitive frame that is shaping HAI's activities implicitly by influencing policy makers rather as a side-effect when conducting its projects at national level? The answer was quickly found at the introductory statement at HAI's social protection section on its website which tellingly says: "Find out how we're influencing policy makers to ensure a secure income for older people" (HelpAge 2012b). It clearly

says HAI is an actor that directly takes the global spread of USPs as its mission. That is why I characterize HAI as an *advocacy organization*.

Dependent on the type of organizations, its set-up and its capabilities I assume that organizations have different strategies of how to get impact and influence national policy-making successfully. In this case I analyze which strategies are used by global INGO using knowledge as their medium to influence, in contrast to organizations operating with the medium money (e.g. World Bank) or law and standards (e.g. ILO).

I argue that HAI is a clear advocacy organization with the peculiarity that it is using a *multilevel approach* to *build a momentum*. HAI utilizes a top-down mode of influencing the global level translating agreements to world regions and the national level (section 3.1), a bottom-up mode of influencing the local level founding older people organizations (OPAs) to induce political pressure (section 3.2), and a network mode of influencing national policy makers directly via informal personal relationships, in which HAI's policy officers use public demand and global commitments to put their provided policy prescriptions into effect (section 3.3). For all three modes I found that HAI continuously is engaging a *slow and steady* manner waiting for suddenly emerging *windows of opportunity*.

3.1 Strategic influencing I: the top-down mode

HAI as a network of national NGOs is both: global and national. As a global actor, HAI puts a considerable extent of its advocacy efforts in activities at international level trying agenda-setting by initiating political forums and stimulating international calls for action and national action plans. The strategic usage of the global and international level is what I consider a top-down mode of influencing. HAI considers international conventions and agreements as influential to have legitimacy for national and local advocacy and to influence the international debate and, therewith, other actors as well.

“The international debate and global actors have a significant influence on policy developments at a national level. We therefore work to influence and share experience of social protection schemes with key players such as the World Bank, academic institutions, donor agencies and UN agencies” (HelpAge 2012a:3).

The exemplifications of conventions for the African region (Table 1, → p. 15) give me the opportunity to show the particular value the agreements had for HAI, and the role HAI played in this process. As a main argument I argue that HAI is *translating* abstract global agreements to world regions by reconfirming them with regional conventions and raising awareness at national level with a combination of regional conventions and workshops as follow-ups.

I start with a description of the ‘Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing’ (MIPAA) of the United Nations adopted in 2002 by 159 countries in consensus³. It

³ In 2002 the ‘UN Second World Assembly on Ageing’ was held in Madrid. It was a follow-up of the

makes sense to start in this way because of the central relevance of this document. It sets a common problem definition that HAI can refer to in a common way around the globe, it appoints government to be responsible for the provision of social security, it is suggesting a rights-based approach, and, most importantly, is providing HAI with a mandate for advocacy for the implementation of programs for older people by directly mentioning and emphasizing the importance of civil society and NGO involvement in this regard (UN 2002).

Year	Policy Frameworks for the African Continent	Agenda
2002	Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (short: MIPAA)	<i>International Agenda on Ageing</i>
2002	AU Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing (short: AU Plan on Ageing)	<i>Regional Agenda on Ageing (AU)</i>
2006	Livingstone - Call for Action / Yaoundé - Call for Action	<i>Regional Agenda on Social Protection</i>
2008	AU Social Policy Framework for Africa	<i>Regional Agenda on Social Protection (AU)</i>

Table 1: Policy Frameworks for the African Continent

HAI was massively involved in MIPAA ensuring that this time it is an agenda explicitly for the developing world⁴ and made it a central reference for activities on social protection related to ageing in the global South. MIPAA's importance grew with every regional summit taking place in Asia, Latin America, and Africa and referring to MIPAA as a background framework. HAI itself is drawing heavily on this document in regional conferences. The consensual adoption suggests that the plan on action is (though not legally binding) valid for all countries and has a high degree of legitimacy.

In the following, I briefly explain some core content of MIPAA in detail. First of all, this framework "represents the first time governments agreed to link questions of ageing to other frameworks for social and economic development and human rights" (Kofi A. Annan, foreword of MIPAA [UN 2002]). Having the topic of ageing as an integrated component of social and economic development gives it a solid basis and helps to include ageing into other policies more easily. Furthermore, the document sets a common problem definition that is ageing is a severe issue with the proportion of older people in society going to quadruple within the next

First World Assembly on Ageing of the United Nations in 1982 in Vienna. 20 years after the first assembly a new Plan of Action should be passed to adapt to the social, cultural, economic and demographic realities of the new century (UN 2002).

⁴ First UN plan of 1982 was never really recognized by the global South because it was felt as an agenda that was designed *by* the global North and *for* the global North (HelpAge Interview No.8).

50 years. This demographic change will hit developing countries the hardest and, thus, ageing has to be included into national action plans for poverty eradication. I also noticed that the convention reestablishes governmental responsibility as a value, which has been questioned by the World Bank in the former global wave of pension privatizations by praising the strength of the market and warning to shift “more responsibility to government than it can handle” (World Bank 1994:3). According to MIPAA governments are invited to implement non-contributory pension programs (UN 2002). That is no claim for universal systems and this document also weakly connects with the social protection paradigm, but it is explicitly mentioned as a policy prescription. In the implementation guide of 2008 universal pensions and means-tested ones are picked up as the two models available (UN 2008). In sum MIPAA is a very important frame for HAI’s work; not because it is particularly far reaching but because it can be understood as a mandate for HAI legitimized by the UN to advocate social pensions, which are rights-based and situated at national government.

Moreover, MIPAA can be understood as giving HAI the mandate to get actively involved in the evaluation process as well. MIPAA itself just mentions the ‘Commission for Social Development’ (CSocD) as in charge of monitoring which is done by collecting governmental reports periodically. However, the expert group meeting on modalities for review and appraisal of MIPAA emphasizes a *bottom-up approach* (UN DESA 2003). It is a very unusual approach to include the target group of older people directly in the evaluation process.

“The bottom-up approach to review and appraisal should be seen as an ongoing process rather than a product delivered at a certain time. In this sense, the bottom-up review and appraisal should be seen as an innovative tool for social analysis, as it promotes the inclusion of views from groups that may have been previously excluded from traditional sources of information” (UN DESA 2003:6).

From interviews I know that HAI was among the group in charge of writing the UN evaluation approach of MIPAA. HAI included the bottom-up approach based on a common understanding that something new and innovative might be more effective for evaluation than merely relying on governmental reports every five years (HelpAge Interview No. 9). However, the bottom-up approach is not prescribing only one way to include stakeholders but argues to be open to new approaches to incorporate information coming from other IOs, INGOs, or older people themselves. HAI followed this approach and has been pushing for ‘Older People Association’ (OPAs). In section 3.2, I explain the strategic component of policy influencing based on OPAs. Furthermore, HAI organized with the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) an evaluation including group discussions and case studies around the globe (UNFPA/HAI 2011). The results will be brought into an upcoming publication of the ‘State of the World’s Older Persons 2012’, which could be a fundamental document for taking stock and generating comparability in the context of aging.

As well in 2002 the African Union (AU) approved the ‘African Union Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing in Africa’. Again ageing was the main

focus whereas in the following years ‘social protection’ has been the dominant frame. HAI was also in this process influential starting to draft the framework on ageing in 1999 in cooperation with the Labour and Social Affairs Commission of the ‘Organization of African Unity’, now ‘African Union’ (AU/HAI 2003). The AU Policy Framework on Ageing and MIPAA mark 2002 as a turning point giving the topic of ageing an emphasis at the global level and the African region at the same time. The in 2008 adopted ‘Social Policy Framework for Africa’ shows that both documents described above are still the foundation for policies on ageing (AU 2008:33).

“MIPAA and the AU Plan, together with ensuing NGO and UN advocacy work, have clearly heightened an awareness of issues of ageing among national governments and have prompted a readiness, at least rhetorically, to develop national policy responses” (Aboderin and Ferreira 2008: 56).

HAI is aware of the fact that global agreements not automatically come into effect at national level, and thus organized a further conference at world regional level reconfirming MIPAA and making a strong call for social cash transfers (SCTs) in the African region. In March 2006 in Livingstone (Zambia) the ‘Intergovernmental Regional Conference on Basic Social Protection in Africa’ took place and resulted in the ‘Livingstone Call for Action’. The event was initiated, organized and managed by HAI and funded by DFID. HAI invited the African Union and the Zambian government to held the conference, which seems to me as an important turn to yield ownership for the national realization of SCT programs to the African governments and institutions. As one of HAI’s policy officers said:

“We had massively negotiations with the Zambian government. We didn’t wanted it to be HelpAge’s conference. [...] So the president of Zambia opened the conference; not HelpAge International. HelpAge International was at the conference fairly invisible though we organized the conference” (HelpAge Interview No. 1).

I understand Livingstone as an event bringing an abstract agreement like MIPAA closer to a region’s consciousness, yielding ownership to the African Union and national level in a more concrete manner. What else has been transported by the Livingstone conference? First of all it was not about social pensions but SCTs in a more abstract way. I argue that this conference aimed at to set the stage for universal pensions and to create learning effects. The conference built up on a concrete regional example: the ‘Pilot Social Cash Transfer Scheme’ in Kalomo District (Zambia) of the German GTZ (now GIZ). Based on this pilot program HAI set up the conference in order to argue the case for social cash programs in low-income countries, which was a rather contested assumption at this time.

“The fascinating thing about Kalomo was that a lot of the people that the community identified with cash transfer ended up being older people. 70% to 80% of the beneficiaries in Kalomo were older people. [...] It had such a stimulating and thought provoking impact on us as an organization, because there were different opinions in HelpAge around whether we can or should argue for universal pension, or not. [...] We thought: ‘wouldn’t it be great if

we could bring together government and other key stakeholders to have a similar learning process?! Let's expose them to the project. Let's bring them to Kalomo, let's bring them together, and let's talk about it'" (HelpAge Interview No. 1)

Indeed the cash transfer project in Kalomo had two main objectives: to test a targeted social cash transfer to the poorest 10% of people in the Kalomo region to "reduce extreme poverty, hunger and starvation", and to "generate information on the feasibility" in a low income context (GTZ 2006). To enhance the learning effect HAI organized field explorations for the governmental participants meeting the poor people benefiting from the SCT pilot program (HelpAge 2006a). This might become an intense experience for policy makers which in their everyday life they are not confronted with poverty (Interview No. 10). Another learning effect, besides to show practical impact of SCT programs, were set by country-examples presented at the conference (HelpAge 2006a). It shows that a lot of countries from the African context already have some social programs in place. Some countries appear as pioneers whereas others show some space for improvements. Regional examples are important for regional comparability stimulating competition, mutual learning and making certain country examples prominent for policy-making elsewhere in Africa.

HAI's capabilities to organize events at world regional level seem to be due to informal contacts HAI has made to African government officials during the negotiations in 2002 (HelpAge Interview No. 1). To give particular emphasis to the policy model of USPs HAI organized a workshop just half a year after Livingstone. It was a follow-up workshop in Yaoundé (Cameroon). Again, HelpAge made sure to involve the Government of Cameroon and the AU. The workshop had 103 participants from eleven African countries and resulted in the Yaoundé Call for Action, which called for USP within "comprehensive social protection schemes" in a "national coordination framework" (HelpAge et al. 2006).

Finally, HAI was also involved in the adoption of the AU Social Policy Framework: "The AU Commission, in close collaboration with HelpAge International, is organizing three Regional Experts Group Meetings on Social Protection on the theme: 'Investing in Social Protection in Africa', to cover the five regions of the Continent" (AU 2008b:1). It resulted in the 'AU Social Policy Framework for Africa' in 2008. Now the AU is in charge of pushing social protection including advocacy to spread the innovative monitoring mechanism based on a bottom-up approach. The section on 'Monitoring and Evaluation' in the AU Policy Framework calls to "create a network of civil society organizations to support the dissemination, implementation and monitoring of the SPF [Social Policy Framework]" (AU 2008:44). That Policy Framework reconfirms HAI's mandate for advocacy and evaluation.

The main argument presented in this section is that HAI is using regional conferences and workshops *translating abstract agreements from global level to regional contexts*. That helps to shape a mutual understanding of the issues in need of action and to make regional country examples cognitive available to policy makers.

Even though my examples were stemming from the African region I argue that the findings are valid for other world regions as well. In particular in Asia where HAI's activities focus on the strategy of translation has been used as well. HAI made income security a topic on its leading regional conference with all affiliates, partners and sympathizer of Asia and the Pacific in 2006, and agreed to take "further steps to advocate for income security in old age" (HelpAge 2006b: 21). In the following year of 2007 HAI organized the 'Asian Meeting on Income Security' (UNESCAP 2007) as a ground breaking event at regional level organized together with UNESCAP (UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) which was calling for national follow-ups of MIPAA. Subsequently to this event HAI organized a workshop with patronage of government officials of the Asian region where social pensions were presented. "From there on there were more specific workshops, trainings, and events in Indonesia, in Thailand, in Vietnam, and other countries" (HelpAge Interview No. 6).

At first HAI tries to *get a mandate* by referring to contents and principles of conventions it can be an agentic actor of. With this mandate HAI is using the strategy of *translation to context* in order to push certain issues higher on national agendas. Furthermore, I made clear that involvement at international level is a matter of years. To reach the outcomes described above HAI had to actively lobby for a decade. Long and steady involvement is a slow but effective way an INGO can become influential.

3.2 *Strategic influencing II: the bottom-up mode*

In this section I argue HAI builds up structures at local level as a mode of influencing. This structure put political pressure on policy-maker. HAI appears to be the INGO that is merely facilitating the dialogue between older people and government officials. Moreover, OPAs are a bottom-up mechanism for evaluation creating valuable facts and expertise for HAI.

As described above the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) of 2002 was a mile-stone for policy-making and reconfirmed as such a milestone through further international and regional conferences. While HAI was quite satisfied with the development of national action plans, they were not with the implementation process within the countries.

"Governments where beginning to put in national action plans on aging. Many countries have indeed national action plans on aging which relate to implementing what's being agreed upon. [...] The problem is that they are not being implemented, because aging is a side issue in national debates and hasn't got a seat at the table. Like I was saying, the ministries of social welfare are weak ministries" (HelpAge Interview No. 1).

Because MIPAA was rather a declaration of intent than a legally binding standard, the instrument to enforce this plan of action is soft pressure stemming from monitoring and evaluation. As mentioned above, besides the usual monitoring processes based on govern-mental reports, MIPAA is equipped with a new and innova-

tive approach based on the inclusion of the civil society. I do not think that the UN was sure how such an approach should look like in practice and if it would turn out as a vital instrument. Yet, due to great action of HAI bringing this approach in form of 'Older People Organizations' (OPAs) to life, the UN retained its bottom-up approach and compiled encompassing guidelines for this approach (UN 2006). The guidelines describe the things HAI is doing with its 'Older Citizens Monitoring' developed after MIPAA. OPAs are the structural entities for this mechanism and DFID provided the funding for a four year period. Before being able to explain what functions OPAs fulfill for HAI, I briefly give details about the process of initiating and spreading OPAs.

HAI is going to cities and villages organizing meetings for older people which often come together for the first time in their lives building OPAs as micro-units of people meeting on a regular basis. The strength and activity level of those groups depends on the individual motivations of the older people within the groups. Therefore, the status and the quality of OPAs are very different within a country and especially among world regions. Whereas in most countries OPAs are informal small-size groups of older people, in some countries OPAs begin to become legal associations with the right to have an own bank account. In Latin America the formalization process continues in a tremendous way. The OPAs organize and align with other OPAs to form larger representational bodies (HelpAge Interview No. 2). That has to do with the fact that the civil society in Latin America has been organized for a longer time being able to look back at a longer history than most OPAs in other world regions.

Usually HAI has to initiate OPAs out of nothing. In order to do that HAI has a standardized process of how to set up OPAs. HAI makes the know-how of how to do that as well available to national governments because the formation of OPAs is nothing that is solely organized by HAI. Once this format had been established it spread globally at enormous pace, driven by older people themselves copying this idea by learning from neighbor cities and villages. National governments support this process by including OPAs in national action plans and devoting funding to it. The motivation for the governments to support this idea is that OPAs appear as a cost effective way to directly support people in poverty. OPAs represent self-organized service communities including healthcare, homecare, HIV and AIDS treatment, social activities, disaster risk reduction, livelihoods and women's participation, in order to improve the well-being of older people which should benefit the community as a whole (HAI 2009b). However, HAI always makes very clear that OPA formation is about two aspects: to enable older people directly to establish community-based self-help, and to enable them to get involved in advocacy for their rights and service provision. The latter aspect leads my description to the functions of OPAs. Next to the service and self-help function OPAs were set up to generate valuable information for the evaluation of the MIPAA implementation process. Moreover, HAI is benefiting greatly from OPAs to enhance its capacity for advocacy in two ways: the generation of information and the formation of a grassroots movement campaigning for the implementation

of social pensions. The information gained by the evaluations via OPAs is useful to make arguments and to gain credibility for advocacy in favor of social protection and social pensions. Those are important resources for the dialogues with national ministries of welfare and ministries of finance which usually are of technical nature and evidence-based on facts and figures (HelpAge Interview No. 1).

The other aspect of how OPAs enhance HAI's capacities for advocacy is campaigning which was introduced by HAI as the 'Age Demands Action' (ADA) campaign in 2007 so that the people can directly get involved in advocacy and protest. It was the first time ever that HAI set up a campaign. ADA was evolving and quickly becoming a large movement which organizes huge protest marches in developing countries and dialogues with local and/or national policy-makers in October each year. Whereas at the beginning older people were protesting in 26 countries, in 2011 HAI already was able to organize protests in a 59 countries. The protests are held once a year at 'UN international day of older persons' at the first of October. Often a larger process is connected with ADA including negotiations with the government long before October and including local debates about the issues older people want to campaign about (HelpAge Interview No. 1).

A core element of OPAs is to enable the people to claim the realization of existing rights through programs or better access to those already existing. The strategy for that is to show older people what an entitlement concretely means, by telling them what kind of governmental services exist and how to make use of those. If HAI can ensure that this kind of knowledge can be distributed to the thousands of OPAs in form of workshops, trainings and brochures, it means that there is a massive infrastructure for advocacy via campaigning around the international day of older persons.

The formulated goal of ADA is "to support governments to extend existing or put in place new social pensions schemes in developing countries and to enable civil society to campaign for pensions and hold governments to account" (HelpAge 2012a:1). That is a twofold aim where the first aspect is about information needed for advocacy and expertise delivery, and the second aspect is about the organization of protests. The first aspect is not about bottom-up activities but HAI's policy officers directly interacting with national governments. This aspect is discussed with HAI's networked approach in section 3.3.

The bottom-up aspect of the OPA movement is not to underestimate. In most cases, older people organize the protests themselves and in some cases HAI is supporting this with further material and know-how. "This campaign is driven from the bottom-up. We are not telling them what to campaign about. It depends on what is hot on the national agenda. We are not telling them what to do and how to do it, but facilitate them in the process" (HelpAge Interview No. 1). Looking at the HAI's ADA campaigns list of 59 countries (HelpAge 2011d) it is remarkable that the campaigns are monitored and evaluated strictly in terms of policy influencing. The list records the issues of older people in the particular country and the interaction and impact it had on politics. HAI does categorize the issues according to six predefined themes. This is a process of restructuring the diversity

on the ground. A closer examination reveals that HAI is getting their issues on the agenda even though this process of campaigning is led bottom-up by OPAs. Campaigning mostly is about the introduction of social pensions or even a call for universal social pensions. ‘Social protection’ is next to ‘age and development’ the topic OPAs protest the most for. To another large share the protests are about the extension of already existing programs by lowering the age for eligibility, for example, or increasing the amount of money, broadening the coverage base (towards universal coverage), or improving access. This is the strategy of *gradual expansion* allowing HAI to make compromises when negotiating with the government by pushing via OPAs for the extension in the following years. Often people willingly join this protests because the benefit levels are way too small and age eligibility can be up to 85 years where most people die much earlier without ever being able to get a pension (HelpAge Interview No. 6).

Sometimes people even have to protest for the fulfillment of existing programs because promised benefits simply have not been paid out. This is a *monitoring function* able to point out shortcomings. In Ghana for example the government withholds the money from the (LEAP) cash transfer program. The beneficiaries had not received money for months. Due to OPA protests the government release GHC 2.7 million (US Dollar 1.6 million). Monitoring is as well important for the time directly after policy-makers have pledged to introduce some policy innovations, but might not take action. Then, new campaigning in the following year can point out the shortcomings of policy-making. So, main issues for campaigning mostly have a follow-up campaign in the next year.

“The campaign does not end once a call for change has been made. It is essential to develop a clear follow-up process to ensure that commitments become reality and politicians are held to account. ADA partners for example in Bangladesh and Ethiopia are requesting for the campaign to continue throughout the year to ensure that commitments by governments are implemented” (HelpAge 2011c).

I have argued that HAI strategically uses OPAs to have a large-scale movement for advocacy enabling HAI to better argue for the introduction of social pensions, and to make compromises because the OPA movement for advocacy can also pressure for the gradual expansion of existing programs. This strategy recognizes that a slow policy process demands to get involved in a long and steady manner over years.

3.3 Strategic influencing III: the network mode

In the first part of this section, I argue that HAI is as well working *directly at the national level* with governments. Therefore, I first describe how HAI is trying to get access to the national policy arena and how important a *long and steady involvement* is in order to make use of a *window of opportunity* which is hardly possible to predict. HAI ensures its influence in this slow process by building informal personal networks with policy makers and relevant organizations.

In the second part of this section, I argue that HAI uses an indirect strategy to influence which is similar to the ‘disinterested other’ described in world society theory (Meyer et al. 1997). Instead of putting its own interests in the foreground, HAI is *creating learning effects* by inviting policy makers to workshops. HAI appears to be either a facilitator of dialogue or is offering support for the fulfillment of globally made commitments (section 3.1) and help of how to respond to local demands (section 3.2). Facilitation and the offer of support are indirect strategies to influence policy making. However, my argumentation of this section points out that such involvement gives HAI a rather active role, which constantly grows by the credibility earned and by becoming a *hub of knowledge* for policy makers.

The network aspect of this section refers to the national level where HAI establishes personal relationships to policy makers over the years (HelpAge Interview No. 6). Trust and credibility are main resources here which may grow over time. To get a first contact to a ministry is crucial. The example of Peru shows how HAI has managed to gain access. In this case HAI successfully was able to turn the leading opinion against social pensions around, so that within three years Peru got a means-tested pension, which can now be matter of gradual expansion.

A HAI policy officer for the Latin American region described the process in Peru as consisting of five phases (HelpAge Interview No. 2). The first phase is about finding opinion leaders. Those are people which are popular academic writers for columns in newspapers, for example. In this way the topic receives public attention and is already discussed. A second phase is to find allies among organizations working in that country. International partners like UNFPA, UNDP and the ILO have helped a lot in the case of Peru. Especially with the ILO the collaboration was tight because of the ‘Social Protection Floor-Initiative’. The ILO was a door-opener to work in a third phase with the parliament. After convincing the parliament it was possible for HAI to start working with the senators in a fourth step. A final step to carry out discussion on social pensions was to hold public meetings in different parts of the country. Especially for the first phases the important methodology of HAI was to identify *champions*, as HAI calls it (HelpAge Interview No. 1). Champions are people that are more open to the new policy prescriptions than others and have the potential to convince others. Those persons are *crucial for alliance-building* and, if the contact can be stabilized over time, they are valuable bits of an informal network for advocacy.

I do understand policy formulation from the perspective of *influencing in stages* as described above as a dialectic process between policy suggestions made by the INGO and the reactions of different stakeholders. The outcome of a dialectic process in one arena is then carried on to the next one. That does not mean that HAI is partly giving up its vision of introducing a universal social pension, it is more acknowledging that *compromises* have to be made *to open the door* for further suggestions to be made in the coming years and opportunities. This is gradual expansion that is like the introduction of a program dependent on an appropriate *window of opportunity*.

The factors for the window of opportunity are summarized by HAI as follows:

“Debates about and the decision to introduce social pensions is mediated by the political economy of a country and often dependent on historical moments” (HelpAge 2012a:6). In the case of Peru it was the opposition introducing a social pension after an election. Social pensions are in general attractive for the opposition of a country to win votes, because cash transfers are a popular mechanism among the older people representing a growing share of voters.

Examples, where program introduction and extension are based on historical moments opening the window of opportunity, stem in the Asian context from Thailand, Vietnam and Nepal (HelpAge Interview No. 6). As a reaction to the Asian financial crisis, Thailand introduced a social pension covering the majority of older people that have not been covered by contributory systems before. Vietnam extended its universal social pension for those over 90 years old by lowering the age of eligibility to 85 and then to 80. Likewise, Nepal as an example of a poor country with very limited resources and, yet, an almost universal social pension, reduced the age accordingly from 75 years to 70 years.

I argue that because such historical moments that open a window of opportunity either in form of election and advantageous constellations in the national political economy or in form of historical moments like global crises or national peculiarities are always to a certain extent *unpredictable*. Thus,, HAI has to get involved in a *constant advocacy processes* feeding the political process with knowledge in order to change cognitive patterns for program introductions or for gradual extensions of existing social pension programs.

When access to the policy arena is ensured, the question of how HAI is injecting relevant knowledge arises. In the following I exemplify two challenges HAI is confronted with, that is the question of how to contact the ministries of finance, and how to put social pensions higher on the governmental agenda. I show that in each situation HAI is using an indirect strategy of knowledge provision.

The ministries of finance do not necessarily need to be approached directly. To enable the ministries of social welfare to argue the case for social pensions at the ministries of finance might as well be a successful strategy. To establish contact to the ministry of social welfare is usually rather simple, because those ministries are among the weakest in the set-up of national ministries and keen to get support of a big INGO like HAI, which is offering support (HelpAge Interview No. 1). The most important resource for this support is knowledge about the feasibility of social pensions: “Key to our work on social protection is convincing government players of the feasibility of social pensions, and supporting allies within government to make the case within the political system” (HelpAge 2012a:2). This is why HAI is paying particular attention to this aspect (HelpAge 2004) and is referring to other studies arguing for affordability (DFID 2005).

To show feasibility is important because convincing ministries of finance is a challenging task. Every introduction of a new cash transfer system means a heavy shift in resource allocations, even if just 10% of the government budget is needed. It is not likely that other resorts voluntarily would accept cuts in their budgets easily. Thus, HAI has to provide convincing arguments. In Latin America, HAI chose

to invite the ministries of finance of several countries directly. HAI set up a micro-simulations training in 2009 with support and funding of DFID and UNFPA and invited government officials from Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay and Peru to enable them to calculate the costs of social pensions (HelpAge 2010b). HAI describes it as a very costly, intensive, but also very successful way to influence government officials (HelpAge Interview No. 2). It turned out that in the following two years the participants of the micro-simulations course became key figures in the policy-making process for social pensions.

The second exemplification concerns the process to win the support of the national government in pushing social pensions higher in the agenda. This is a challenging task because governments are always subject to multiple demands and multiple priorities. Raising awareness and continuously engaging in advocacy is important to get topics higher on the agenda. HAI is active at national level in a variety of ways:

“Our engagement with government includes *training* on issues of social protection and social pensions, undertaking *studies* answering key questions on the feasibility of social pensions, *supporting* government players to strategize on building broad governmental support, and *contributing* to frameworks, policies and strategies on social protection” (HelpAge 2012a:2, emphasis added).

The main strategy of those activities is to stimulate learning effects. It is not self-evident that learning is an effective strategy for advocacy. Many issue areas are ideologically charged in a way that policy prescriptions are dismissed even though it might be rational to introduce them. However, making policies for older people is less problematic because the topic of ageing is widely seen as a *non-confrontational issue* based on the broad consensus that age-ing is an issue everybody will be confronted with at a certain time (HelpAge Interview No. 6). Practical experiences of HAI’s staff have shown that regarding the topic of ageing governments are well intentioned: “Even Myanmar in its worst times of dictatorship was willing to do something for their population” (ibid.). That allows for influencing based on good arguments. The necessity to create such learning effects is high with respect to the challenge influencing national policies of whole countries. Policy implementation cannot be realized by IOs or INGOs but national governments have to take responsibility and ownership.

“We understand that in a country like China or Indonesia you can implement one, ten, or hundred projects and that is like a drop in the ocean, but what you can do is gather lessons from those implementations that can be expressed in policies that are supported and funded” (HelpAge Interview No. 6).

Practical knowledge and technical aspects for policy formulation become important resources to create learning effects. Interestingly, HAI policy officers made the experience that it seems to be that government officials accept knowledge better if it is stemming from empirical examples from the region able to demonstrate impact (ibid.). Thus, it makes sense for HAI to take (like HAI does at global level)

the approach to invite governments to workshops and meetings where countries from the region can share their experiences. An example of such process can be found in Myanmar:

“We had an event in the capital of Myanmar, where we brought some NGO from Thailand, we brought some governmental official from the Philippines, somebody from Vietnam also and one of us, and we met with the government to share how they had developed policies on aging in different contexts, because Myanmar was starting to develop their policy on aging and they weren’t clear how to do it” (HelpAge Interview No. 6).

The strategy used here is again the role of a facilitator. HelpAge rarely delivers know-how directly, but is setting-up strategic workshops, meetings and events to led selected knowledge diffuse.

“It was a learning process. In that way you do two things, you build a legitimacy of HelpAge, because we are not giving any bible, we are providing experiences, and at the same time you provide knowledge, you provide more understanding of issues that can be used for developing a better policy” (HelpAge Interview No. 6).

This interaction is described as an exchange process where capacity is build at governmental ministries and HAI in return gains trust and credibility usable for prospective advocacy. Being known for its capacity to provide practical knowledge makes HAI a credible player government officials turn to when being in need of advice.

“HelpAge can become sort of a hub of knowledge, hub of understanding, hub of advice, hub of exchanges, hub of promoting best practices and I think that will be more and more our work.” (HelpAge Interview No. 6).

The function of being a *hub of knowledge* for government officials emphasizes HAI dual role of being, on the one hand, merely a facilitator, and, on the other hand, an active player itself because of its outstanding role. Furthermore, this role is emphasized by the fact that HAI is by far the biggest and almost the only global actor working on ageing globally as well as nationally and local. Thus, it has a strong standing in the national area where ageing is a niche with few actors involved (HelpAge Interview No. 1).

The final point in this section is the introduction of HAI’s strategy which combines its advocacy work at global and at local level with HAI’s work at national level when interacting with governments. Even if information rather is delivered indirectly and knowledge foremost is of technical nature based on good arguments, HAI has as well the opportunity to add a normative emphasis stemming from international agreements where governments have pledged to take action (section 3.1) and from local demands though protests of older people campaigning for policy innovations (section 3.2). HAI is actively using these two levels to add a normative emphasize and calls this the ‘twin-track-approach’ (HelpAge Interview No. 1).

Summed up, HAI is not just conducting some project work within countries but

is actively engaging in influencing national policy-making. Therefore, HAI needs to find allies in order to gain access to the policy arena. 'Champions' within the government and among IOs, INGOs and NGOs working in this field are integrated in informal personal networks. This is why I called this perspective of influencing the national level the 'network mode of influencing'. HAI uses these networks to invite policy makers to workshops and meetings to create learning effect and influence national ministries implicitly. The implicit mode of influencing has similarities with the 'disinterested others' described in World Society Theory. HAI appears to be a mere facilitator for policy-learning by providing technical expertise and support and by facilitating experience exchange between governments. Even with such an implicit strategy HAI is raising its profile, gaining credibility and becoming a *hub of knowledge*. It can add normative value to its rather technocratic suggestions by referring to globally made commitments (MIPAA) and/ or to local demand (ADA), what HAI calls the *twin-track approach*.

Conclusion

HelpAge International (HAI) is an international organization which is known for its project-based work at local level for the needs of older people. This article argues that HAI has become a *global actor* in the field of global social policy (GSP) supporting the idea to use social cash transfers (SCTs) for poverty reduction by advocating SCT-based social protection in general, and by being an agent for the policy model of *universal social pensions* (USPs).

HAI is an actor which is not using large amounts of money to influence national policy-making, like international financial institutions (IFIs), or which sets binding standards, like the International Labour Organization (ILO), but it is an actor that operates foremost with *knowledge* that HAI is able to charge normatively with its *twin-track approach*, which is an interesting strategy of referring to globally made agreements and to local demand and protests by older people itself.

HAI is defining itself as an actor for advocacy and is evaluating its success in terms of impacts on national policy-making. The agency for that is constituted by its network structure, which *mixes bottom-up and top-down* elements by incorporating national NGOs, at the one hand, and by maintaining a global secretariat in London which provides direct guidance its regional and country offices, at the other hand. Thus, this network has an enormous global outreach to different world regions in the global South, and a depth ranging from the global to the national, and further to the local level. HAI is active at all levels with different strategies, which I have conceptualization as three modes of influencing national policy-making.

At first, I found that to a remarkably high extent HAI is making use of a *top-down mode of influencing* policy-making at global level. HAI is working behind the scenes to prepare global conventions. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) has set the fundamental principles for social protection based on social cash transfers, which provide the *legitimacy* for HAI to engage in the advo-

cacy for USP. Moreover, MIPAA provides a *mandate* for INGOs to get involved in monitoring and evaluation. HAI is making use of that and calls for USP at national level and sets up *Older People Organizations (OPAs)* for monitoring and evaluation. With the strategy of organizing regional conventions and workshops HAI is *translating globally made commitments* to world regions by reemphasize the values and policy models of particular interest for HAI.

At second, I analyzed that HAI's key asset as an agent is a *large network structure* with affiliated NGOs which are deeply rooted at national and local level. Drawing on the network, HAI can make use of a *bottom-up mode of influencing* national and local government officials. This mode is based on *campaign-led protests* by older people. Therefore, local OPAs and national NGO affiliates are critical. HAI's 'Age Demands Action' campaign is focusing on the introduction of USPs or the *gradual expansion* of existing ones. Often OPAs have to continue pushing for improvements because of the compromises that have been made in the negotiations before, where the age of eligibility has been set too high, the benefit levels as too low, and pensions often result in means-tested ones instead of universal ones.

At third, I discovered that HAI is active directly at national level as well by using a *network mode of influencing* national policy-making by establishing informal relationships to government officials. HAI is using an *indirect strategy* to feed the ministries with expertise which is supportive for argumentation in favor of USPs. Therefore, HAI is inviting government officials to workshops providing know-how on feasibility of USPs as a service or facilitates experience sharing between government officials of a world region. By constantly providing cognitive knowledge to the government HAI is becoming a *hub of knowledge* that is valuable for policy-makers. The *stimulation of learning effects* is a preferred approach of HAI because national governments taking responsibility relief HAI of being forced to introduce one pilot project after another which HAI does not consider as being an effective way to cover whole national societies.

At national level, HAI is able to reinforce provided cognitive knowledge with normative arguments. Referring to globally made commitments (top-down), on the one hand, and to local demand and protests (bottom-up), on the other hand, is the strategy HAI calls the *twin-track approach*.

Overall, I showed that strategic thinking within HAI is long-term based. In most cases HAI is advocating USPs for many years before it has any impact on policies. HAI's *slow and steady* involvement is able to influence the outcome of global conventions, to build up a large infrastructure of affiliates and OPAs, and to establish useful informal relationships to policy makers. In the end, to be influential on national policy-making spreading social pensions globally, HAI has to wait for appropriate *windows of opportunity* like favorable historical moments or political constellations. A long and steady involvement is necessary in order to *build a momentum* or to be prepared when windows of opportunity to open.

As a result, the diffusion of global social policy is not just driven by global actors equipped with large funding but also by world society actors operating foremost with knowledge.

Looking ahead, I emphasize that the research on INGOs' modes of influencing can help us to get a better sense for the diversity among organizations with regard to the modes of influencing national policy-making which establishing links between national governments and world society. Science has recognized that national policy-making is no longer taking place isolated of global influences. Yet, the exact modes and mechanism rarely have been analyzed. I plea for context-sensitive studies, like I have chosen social cash transfers, in order to figure out particularities of each policy field, on the one hand, and modes that can be generalized, on the other hand. An analysis of the interactions between different types of actors in one policy field can reveal synergetic effects of world society actors.

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Interviews

INTERVIEWS WITH HELPAGE INTERNATIONAL

- No. 1 – Head of Policy, Influencing and Learning (21 January 2012)
- No. 2 – Social Protection Officer for the Latin American Region (21 January 2012)
- No. 3 – Campaigns Coordinator, and Campaigns Assistant (22 January 2012)
- No. 5 – former Director of Policy Development (22 January 2012)
- No. 6 – Regional Representative for East Asia and the Pacific (22 January 2012)
- No. 8 – Head of Strategic Alliances (22 January 2012)
- No. 9 – Head of Policy, Influencing and Learning (15 June 2012)

FURTHER INTERVIEW

- No. 10 – Major Policy Consultant for Development Policies (4 June 2012)