

5 Make Friends on the Inside: Cultivate and Empower Allies

Again and again when I talked with environmental advocates, whether they were located in grassroots organizations, international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, or government, one strategy was consistently discussed as the most important: make and empower allies with decision-making power. This is not surprising. For advocacy to be effective, advocates must convince people with power to change policies for the better. Accessing and cultivating allies with power is perhaps the most important of all advocacy strategies presented in this book.

Public policy shapes the rules that govern the decision-making processes for citizens, governments, businesses, and nonprofit organizations. If policy makes antienvironmental behavior illegal (and that policy is enforced), then there will be less of the targeted antienvironmental behavior. If policy helps proenvironmental behavior become more profitable and easier, then more businesses and consumers will engage in the promoted proenvironmental behavior. Policy is a powerful tool to shape the behavior of everyone within its jurisdiction¹ and sometimes even those beyond it.² Therefore, to the extent that advocates are able to convince policymakers to craft policies that promote the behavior that they wish to see—in this case proenvironmental behavior—their advocacy will be successful.

At the core of the “make friends on the inside” strategy is the recognition that policymakers need friends on the “outside” because they cannot know or do everything themselves. Across the world, and especially in East Asia, governments are short-staffed. Here are some very basic numbers about the four countries at the heart of this study to illustrate that fact: China nearly doubled the number of its core environmental policymakers when it transitioned the Ministry of Environmental Protection into the Ministry of Environment and Ecology in 2018, but the new ministry is still estimated

to have only 500 full-time staff in Beijing and just over 1,000 distributed across seven provincial offices to conduct inspections.³ Japan's Ministry of the Environment has about 2,000 staff,⁴ South Korea's Ministry of the Environment has about 3,500 staff,⁵ and Taiwan's Environmental Protection Agency has about 1,600 staff.⁶ In contrast, the Environmental Protection Agency in the US has more than 14,000 employees.⁷ While that may seem like a lot of people compared with the other countries, in fiscal year 2017 the agency was responsible for cleaning up more than four hundred million cubic yards of water, 245 million pounds of hazardous waste, and eight billion gallons of untreated discharge, as well as handling its nonenforcement responsibilities, such as research and education.⁸

East Asia's staff numbers are not so small when compared with other governments—for example, Germany's Ministry of the Environment has about 1,500 staff,⁹ the UK's Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs has 3,500,¹⁰ and the European Commission's Directorate-General for the Environment has 500 staff.¹¹ These small numbers worldwide mean that no matter where you are, there are not very many government policymakers to oversee a very large and diverse set of policy issues. These policymakers need friends outside government to help them identify upcoming policy issues, discover policy options, and assist in formulating policy that will not only be acceptable to stakeholders but also be effective in achieving the outcomes that they are seeking.¹² If an advocate can become one of the people whom policymakers turn to for consultation and advice, it makes it much more likely that the advocate's perspective will be reflected in final policy outcomes.

The Connected Stakeholder Model introduced in chapter 3 illustrates how advocates are connected to the policymaking process through multiple personal and professional networks. The model also discusses the importance of network “nodes,” those people who are linked to multiple networks simultaneously and therefore have particularly powerful effects on the whole matrix. These network node individuals are in particularly good positions to have a disproportionate effect on the shaping of policy. “Making friends on the inside” is an advocacy strategy that involves targeting these network nodes in particular, cultivating them as allies, and seeking to enhance their power and influence within their various networks.

This chapter will begin with a discussion of which people are most likely to serve these network node functions, whom advocates should be cultivating.

It emphasizes the importance of bureaucrats, politicians, policy-connected academics, and other policy professionals. It will then describe several ways that advocates can gain access to target individuals, such as by utilizing personal connections, attending conferences and other events frequented by policymakers, and serving together on policy-relevant committees. The chapter will focus on specific examples to highlight four particularly effective methods that advocates use to cultivate allies: be useful, hire retired bureaucrats, keep in touch, and share the credit.

Finally, the chapter will use the example of the China-US Energy Efficiency Alliance to illustrate how advocates can scale the “make friends on the inside” strategy by empowering their “friends on the inside” and expanding the network of friends involved in policymaking. The chapter will conclude by linking back to the core questions of this book, explaining why making friends on the inside is such an effective advocacy strategy.

Which Friends on the Inside Should Advocates Cultivate?

Who are the most important policymakers and policy influencers that advocates should target? My findings support other research suggesting that there are four types of policymakers who are particularly useful for advocates to target when they are seeking to influence policy: bureaucrats, politicians, academics, and other policy professionals. All of these people are likely to be consulted as part of the policymaking process and are also likely to be connected to multiple stakeholder networks at once. In other words, these individuals will frequently occupy the role of network node according to the Connected Stakeholder Model and be disproportionately influential in the policymaking process.

Bureaucrats working in the relevant ministries are frequently primarily responsible for drafting government policy. Generally, they do this in close consultation with some form of a policy advisory committee.¹³ Therefore, the most influential policymakers for most forms of policy are the bureaucrats who are responsible for designing the policy.¹⁴

Politicians can also be important friends for advocates. In countries with green parties, green party politicians can help raise environmental issues on the political agenda, increasing the pressure on bureaucrats and other policymakers to develop proenvironmental policies.¹⁵ Similarly, politicians from nongreen political parties can serve as important allies for advocates,

especially if they seek to change not just policy but also legislation.¹⁶ While national-level politicians can have broader influence if they change law, they also always have many other policy issues competing for their attention, and environmental issues regularly fall down in their list of priorities.¹⁷ In contrast, environmental issues are frequently quite pressing at the local level, so local-level politicians, especially mayors and governors, are often more willing to prioritize environmental policy. Frequently, these local-level politicians can be more important allies than national-government politicians, since cultivating a local-level political ally can enable advocates to combine a “make friends on the inside” strategy with a “make it work locally” strategy, a particularly effective combination, as demonstrated in chapter 2.

As the next chapter will discuss in greater detail, mayors and governors can be vital allies for advocates seeking to demonstrate the effectiveness of specific policy prescriptions and promote the dissemination of successful policy models.¹⁸ Furthermore, local government leaders can sometimes go on to become national-level leaders, and they bring their local-level experience and focus on environment with them. South Korea’s president Lee Myung-bak served as mayor of Seoul before becoming president. While mayor, he restored the Cheonggyecheon River, which flows through the center of Seoul, and as president he reoriented South Korea’s economic strategy to focus on “green growth.” Similarly, Xi Jinping introduced an “ecological province” strategy to Fujian Province while he was governor, and then when he became president of China he initiated policies intended to turn China into an “ecological civilization.”

Occasionally, the process works in reverse, with national-level politicians bringing their national-level environmental policy experience to the local level. For example, Koike Yuriko served as Japan’s minister of the environment before being elected governor of Tokyo in 2016, and Hau Lung-pin led Taiwan’s Environmental Protection Administration before serving as mayor of Taipei from 2006 to 2014. The environmental focus of these leaders remains evident in both cities, which have extensive environmental action plans and are frequently ranked among Asia’s greenest cities.¹⁹ In all of these cases, political actors grow more powerful over time as they become connected to more networks. To the extent that advocates were helpful early in the politicians’ careers, the advocates have increasingly powerful allies in important policymaking roles.

Academics are another set of policy influencers that advocates can target. Academics are generally considered to be apolitical participants in the policy process, merely offering technical advice to policymakers.²⁰ However, in contrast to the conventional view of the apolitical academic, this and subsequent chapters will argue that academics commonly act as network nodes, are often important allies for advocates, and are political actors in their own right. They are frequently instrumental in shaping policy, sometimes becoming influential voices in national environmental movements and even cabinet ministers. Academics are able to use their technical expertise and perceived nonpartisanship to shore up the legitimacy of their proposals among both policymakers and the public, sometimes even becoming elected political leaders or heads of NGOs.²¹ Because of their perceived neutral status, they are able to belong to diverse networks in the nonprofit, for-profit, and governmental sectors, giving them access to many different people and perspectives. Furthermore, in contrast to civil servants and politicians, who are often very difficult to reach without a prior personal connection, academics tend to be more accessible, since they are more likely to answer email, attend conferences, and host open office hours.

A final group of “friends on the inside” that advocates should cultivate is policy professionals. This is a catch-all term that I use to refer to individuals who are neither members of the government nor academics but who are active in the policy area of concern and are frequently involved in policy-making. Most commonly, policy professionals are full-time employees of nonprofit organizations who are active in the policy area and are connected to multiple networks of stakeholders. In policy advisory committees, these individuals are often asked to represent the “nonprofit stakeholder” position in policy dialogues, bringing not just their technical expertise to bear on the subject but also their political perspective on the policy.²² Because of their acknowledged policy expertise, these individuals also often serve as network nodes, connected to multiple, diverse networks of stakeholders with an interest in the policy area.

Also included in the policy professional category are those who work in for-profit organizations who have developed an expertise in the relevant policy area. Similar to their counterparts in the nonprofit sector, these policy professionals have multiple years of experience working on relevant policy issues, have developed a professional expertise, are active in

related policy communities, and are considered by their peers to have relevant knowledge for policy development. Like their nonprofit counterparts, these professionals are commonly asked to represent the for-profit, business stakeholder perspective on policy, reflecting the economic and other interests of the business community while seeking better environmental outcomes.²³

While policy professionals may be asked to participate in policy advisory committees because of their technical expertise and their insights into the substantive policy issue of concern, experts who are highly sought after as advisers are generally the people who are connected to the most networks and have the most diverse set of connections. Often individual people will build their own capacity to serve as network nodes by moving among the nonprofit world, the for-profit world, and the government over the course of their careers. The career trajectory of these people serves to enhance their capacity to connect to more networks and gives them greater insight into the perspectives of diverse stakeholders.

Since there are usually thousands of people who might fall into any one of these categories, how can advocates tell if they are targeting the network nodes, the people who have the most influence over policy? The easiest way to determine who is most influential is if the relevant policy advisory committee has a public listing of its members—advocates should try to make friends with the people who regularly serve on those committees. Frequently, however, committee membership is not public. In those cases, advocates should seek out the people who regularly appear at policy-related events—not just in the audience but also as keynote speakers and on panels.

Advocates can target individuals from their own countries and communities who appear on the programs for large international conferences related to environmental policy (e.g., the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Conference of Parties [COP], the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, ICLEI), as well as local gatherings—events and panels on climate change, sustainability, waste management, transportation, clean energy, and other such topics held in capital cities and local communities. It is usually the case that for any given national or local community, there will be a relatively small, identifiable set of individuals who regularly appear at these events. People who are frequently asked to serve as panelists and discussants at policy-related conferences and other events are also likely to be asked by government to serve on policy advisory committees.

These are the influential people who are connected to multiple networks with whom advocates should seek to build relationships.

When seeking to identify individuals to cultivate, advocates should not just gravitate toward those with whom they have a natural affinity; they should try to get to know any and all people who may be in a position to influence policy. As was discussed in chapter 3, the more policy-connected people that you know, the better. Cultivating allies does not just mean finding policymakers who already agree with you; it is best accomplished when you can persuade those who thought they were your enemies that you are in fact on the same side—that your policy preferences are something they should support as well.²⁴

Relatedly, the people who exert the most influence over policy are not always the same; they change over time. During one administration, one group of individuals may have a lot of influence, but when another administration takes power, a whole new set of people will be placed in decision-making roles. A few years later, some of the first folks might be back again. Or people who you thought were your friends might turn away once they have power. As one activist from the Taiwan Environmental Action Network put it to me during a 2010 interview, “We no longer have any friends on the inside. In the previous DPP [Democratic Progressive Party] administration, there were some friends in the Executive Yuan, but now [after the Kuomintang won power in 2008] there aren’t any.” Another activist, from the Taiwan Environmental Protection Union, expressed a frustration common to many activists around the world—their political allies were very friendly and supportive when running for office and in their early days of governing, but that changed after they were in power for a while. “The DPP changed when it took power. Once they were in power, they didn’t like the environment anymore.”²⁵ Who makes policy shifts over time, so advocates should seek to cultivate allies from among all potential policymakers.

How to Access Policymakers

Although people are able to gain access to policymakers in a multitude of ways, three avenues appear to be the most common: forming personal connections, attending the same events, and serving together on committees. Personal connections are usually the easiest, and often the most powerful, way to connect with a policymaker—alumni of the same school, people

who grew up in the same town, family members, and members of the same church or social club all make it possible to form a personal connection with a policymaker. Furthermore, relationships that begin with a social connection are inherently less instrumental, so they make it easier for the advocate to build trust with the policymaker. As the extensive literature on the role of *guanxi* can attest for the case of Asia, these personal connections can be vital in gaining access to policymakers and facilitating communication between advocate and policymaker.²⁶

Usually, however, advocates do not have a personal connection with any of the policymakers they wish to target, so they must seek other ways to meet them. Perhaps the most common and productive way to do this is to attend a policy-related conference, forum, workshop, roundtable, lecture, or other event that policymakers will likely be attending. Smaller conferences with fewer people and more focused conversations will often make it easier to meet and get to know the policymakers and potential policymakers whom you want to access. Conferences with titles like “Workshop on the Joint Crediting Mechanism and Low-Carbon Technologies in the Philippines”²⁷ will allow for greater interactions with people who are more directly involved in your target policy area. Larger conferences, such as the COP meetings or ICLEI’s World Congress, may offer an opportunity to meet high-profile policymakers, but longer conversations during such events are often impossible, and finding someone who is directly linked to your policy area of interest can be difficult. Nonetheless, as was discussed in chapter 3, these venues serve as important gathering points for interested parties to connect with one another, helping to strengthen and expand advocates’ policy networks both within and beyond their own national setting.²⁸

Finally, perhaps the best way to gain access to policymakers is to be directly involved with them through common service on some kind of policy-related committee or working group. When advocates are able to work alongside policymakers directly in a policymaking context, a personal connection, as well as the development of professional respect, is a natural outgrowth. Gaining a reputation as a productive committee member will commonly result in more invitations to participate in policymaking opportunities, either because policymakers who are participating seek to work with productive advocates again or because they recommend those advocates to their colleagues when the latter seek members for other groups.²⁹

How to Make and Empower Friends on the Inside

Once an advocate has gained access to a policy influencer, how can the advocate cultivate that person to become his or her ally? While there are several ways to encourage policymakers to become allies, this section will highlight four that were discussed as particularly effective by interlocutors in all the countries where I conducted research: be useful, hire retired bureaucrats, stay in touch, and give credit to allies.

Be Useful

As the last chapter indicated, East Asian governments historically have been highly suspicious of environmental advocates, viewing them as hostile, disruptive actors akin to terrorists.³⁰ However, as their societies developed and diversified, and as global civil society grew around the world, East Asian governments came to recognize that it was impossible for them to meet all of society's needs and that civil society and the nonprofit sector could be leveraged to provide services that the government found it difficult to offer. Fundamental to this attitudinal transformation has been the ability of NGOs and other community organizations to demonstrate to local and national governments that they can be useful. Whether it was helping out in times of disaster³¹ or providing necessary social services,³² East Asian governments reluctantly recognized that an active civil society was a necessary and desired component of advanced, developed societies.

The challenge for advocates has been to shift their relationship with the government from one where their organizations passively executed and supported government policy to one where advocates are able to influence the development and setting of policy priorities, as well as the construction of policy measures to address those priorities. This transformation in the relationship between policymakers and advocates can take decades.³³ One of the best ways for advocates to increase their influence over the policy-making process is to become useful partners.

Being useful requires that the advocate and the advocate's organization provide the policymakers with things that they need—for example, technical expertise, new data, volunteers, political access, publicity, or innovative policy ideas. As advocates demonstrate to policymakers that they can offer something useful, the advocates become more respected as partners in

policymaking and can then gain greater access to policymakers during the policymaking process, not just after the policy has already been developed.

The story of Greenpeace in China is instructive on how advocates can dramatically improve government attitudes toward their advocacy efforts. In this case, the Chinese government went from being suspicious that Greenpeace was trying to cause political trouble for the government to valuing its participation in environmental policymaking. In 1995, as part of its global action in support of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, Greenpeace activists went into Tiananmen Square and held up an anti-nuclear banner. Following their common protocols for this kind of event, they contacted the press beforehand.³⁴ Although they were successful in obtaining significant international press coverage of their event, they were quickly removed from the square, and the incident had devastating consequences for their activities in China. Greenpeace's activists were kicked out of the country, and it was nearly a decade before the organization was able to open an office to the mainland, well after counterparts like World Wildlife Fund and the Nature Conservancy had established offices in Beijing.

Greenpeace's publicity stunt gained the organization a reputation as a troublemaker from the perspective of the Chinese government. As one Beijing-based journalist who covered the event at the time put it to me in a 2010 interview, "That [incident] made them [Greenpeace] a pretty dirty word around here for a while. The sad thing is that they had been working very effectively behind the scenes with one of the Ministries about how to get the Chinese to use refrigerators with lower/no CFCs [chlorofluorocarbons] to cut greenhouse gas emissions. That was a really important issue, but suddenly, after that incident, everything stopped."

Greenpeace was still interested in working in China, so it changed its approach, deciding to be less confrontational and more strategic. In early 1997, it established an office in Hong Kong while it was still under British rule, and for the next five years, all of its activities in China were coordinated out of that office. Its first action was to offer Kelon (a large Chinese manufacturing company) free transfer of Greenfreeze, a new technology that enabled refrigeration without the use of CFCs, allowing Kelon to become the first Chinese company to produce ozone-friendly refrigerators. In the following years Greenpeace actively supported local and governmental efforts to curb toxic waste dumping and improve water quality.³⁵

In 2004 Greenpeace East Asia started a renewable energy program, and the following year it released a policy brief highlighting the benefits of renewable energy, focusing on the potential for China to harness more than one thousand gigawatts of wind energy.³⁶ The report was shared with industry partners (European and Chinese wind power associations), as well as the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the National Development and Reform Committee. The report provided new data that helped support existing government efforts to develop the wind power industry. China became the world's largest producer of wind energy less than a decade later and has positioned itself to become a "renewable energy superpower."³⁷

In 2005 Greenpeace East Asia partnered with local scientists to conduct a detailed assessment of the Yellow River, Asia's second-longest river. Although the river is one of China's most polluted,³⁸ Greenpeace focused its report, *Yellow River at Risk*,³⁹ on the negative effects of climate change on the river rather than pollution. The focus on climate change enabled Greenpeace to call attention to many of the most pressing problems related to the river—flooding, threats to fresh water supplies, desertification, soil deterioration, and biodiversity reduction—without pointing fingers at the government or polluting companies. The detailed data, graphs, images, and local stories offered compelling evidence that government officials at the local and national levels could use to support policies and programs designed to improve the water quality of the river. The report also prompted additional media coverage of problems related to the river, and the media was not as circumspect as Greenpeace in limiting itself to climate issues. Although it is a state-run company, CCTV's coverage of the Yellow River that year focused not only on climate-related challenges but also on pollution.⁴⁰

Simultaneous with their work at the local level, Greenpeace and other similarly situated international environmental organizations, such as World Wildlife Fund and the Nature Conservancy, assisted national-level Chinese officials as they began to enter the world of global politics in a more significant way. At the time of the 1997 COP meeting in Kyoto, which generated the Kyoto Protocol, China's gross domestic product (GDP) was not quite \$1 trillion, placing it at number seven in the world, below Italy and slightly higher than Brazil.⁴¹ In 2001 China joined the World Trade Organization, and by the 2005 COP meeting in Montreal, its GDP had more than doubled, to \$2.2 trillion, putting it in the number four slot ahead of the UK and just

behind Germany. By 2010 China had become the second-largest economy in the world after the US, with an annual GDP of nearly \$6 trillion.⁴²

China's meteoric economic growth resulted in a corresponding expansion in its role in international diplomacy, including climate and other environment-related negotiations. Previously content to attend these meetings and remain largely in the background, Chinese diplomats started to find themselves both in great demand and with more at stake in international forums.⁴³ As explained in chapter 3, Chinese civil servants, like those in much of East Asia, are generally rotated to new positions every two or three years in order to give them broad exposure inside their ministries. This means that the people attending these high-profile global conferences were generally new at their jobs, making it difficult for them to know whom they should contact and whom they should avoid. Building off their growing track record of helpful collaboration at the local and national level, international conferences offered Greenpeace and similar organizations an invaluable opportunity to be helpful to Chinese officials. International climate conferences are a core part of the mission of these global NGOs, so they were exceptionally well placed to offer useful advice about protocol and sessions and could help set up desired meetings for Chinese officials who were attending for the first time.⁴⁴

By 2010 Greenpeace's office in Beijing had been open for several years, and it had begun to rebuild its reputation with Chinese officials by providing useful data related to local environmental issues and acting as a helpful ally in international forums. Furthermore, the Chinese government had now recognized that it was facing an environmental crisis and had embarked on a number of ambitious policy initiatives, including Hu Jintao's Green GDP project announced in 2007 and the elevation of the State Environmental Protection Agency to ministry status with the establishment of the Ministry of Environmental Protection in 2008. As a result of these developments, Greenpeace was able to be a bit more direct with its advocacy efforts. Taking on the issue of pollution in China's largest river, *Swimming in Poison* (2010)⁴⁵ documented the harm caused by toxic chemicals in the Yangtze and recommended that China increase the range of chemicals that it regulated.

Like Greenpeace's earlier report about the Yellow River, the Yangtze report relied on original research collected in collaboration with local scientists and was filled with compelling new data, charts, pictures, and stories of local communities. While the report documented hazardous levels of

specific pollutants found at locations along the river, as well as the toxicity of different fish species, it was careful not to blame any specific industry, government, or company for the problem. It is impossible to draw a direct link to the publication of Greenpeace's report, but soon after *Swimming in Poison* was released, the Ministry of Environmental Protection set up a committee to investigate toxins, and by the end of the year it had issued MEP Order 7, which updated and augmented the regulation of the use and release of chemical substances in China.⁴⁶

Greenpeace's experience illustrates how advocates can shift from being enemies of governmental policymakers to becoming valuable friends by being useful, providing new data, conducting practical analyses, and facilitating political access for potential allies in government. While some advocates may argue that working in this collaborative way with policymakers and making strategic decisions against confrontation is a form of "selling out" or being "co-opted," the Greenpeace story illustrates how an organization can remain true to its mission and still cultivate allies within the government. Once allies have been nurtured among influential policymakers, they are more likely to read the advocates' reports and be persuaded by the evidence and arguments presented. Sometimes, they may even respond by changing policies in the desired direction because they have been persuaded by the advocates' arguments.

Finally, it must be noted that in the Chinese context in particular, being useful is not just a strategy to gain access and influence; it is a strategy for survival. For advocates in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, being useful to policymakers can be a helpful way to build trust and gain influence with policymakers, but those who are not useful are still able to pursue their own agendas and activities. In China, however, the situation is much more cut-and-dried. As one advocate put it succinctly to me in a 2011 interview, "People write about the paradox of the government's handling of NGOs, but it isn't really a paradox—those that are useful are allowed to exist, and those that cause trouble are shut down."

Hire Retired Bureaucrats

One of the most effective ways to gain access to policymakers is to invite one to be on your board of directors or hire one to work at the senior levels of your organization. Retired bureaucrats not only have a wealth of information about the decision-making processes of their ministry, they have

direct personal contacts among the current decision makers. Their contacts inside and outside the government mean that they are connected to multiple networks, enabling them to access diverse perspectives and reach out to many stakeholders, as well as policymakers. The combination of their insider knowledge about the decision-making process of the relevant bureaucracy and their personal connections to decision makers, as well as stakeholders, means that these retired bureaucrats can be powerful allies for advocates.

This practice of bringing retired bureaucrats into an organization is found around the world and is particularly common in East Asia. In his 1982 book, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle*, Chalmers Johnson explains how this practice, called *amakudari* (descent from heaven) in Japanese, helped contribute to the close coordination of Japan's industrial policy as the country recovered from the war, facilitating rapid economic development, especially in its large manufacturing sector. Margarita Estévez-Abe's *Welfare and Capitalism in Postwar Japan* (2008) illustrates how the same phenomenon operates in the social welfare policy area.

Although much smaller in terms of scale when compared with for-profit industrial entities, a similar practice occurs in the nonprofit sector, where bureaucrats who are forced to retire early by government policy (e.g., by age fifty-five or sixty) seek to remain active in their fields of expertise. They retire from a ministry to work for a government-organized NGO (GONGO) or NGO, or sometimes start a new NGO, relishing the opportunity to remain active in policymaking without the constraints of being a government employee. Their decades-long careers in public service mean that they are often able to help their new organizations find issue areas that are in line with the government's preexisting priorities. They also have numerous personal connections inside and outside the government that may enable them to bring their organization's priorities to the attention of policymakers who are more likely to be sympathetic, or even reshape the policy ideas of those who have remained in government such that they are more in line with the preferences of the NGO or GONGO.⁴⁷ Their network connections make it possible for the retirees, and the organizations with which they are affiliated, to be highly attuned to the needs and interests of policymakers. This enables them to be particularly savvy at seizing political opportunities, framing their issues and policies in ways attractive to policymakers, and engaging in all parts of the policymaking process, from problem definition to policy formation and through the politics of decision-making.⁴⁸

This kind of close connection with the government does not come without a cost. The closer the connection with the government in terms of people or funding, the more cautious and less controversial the NGO will be in its activities. GONGOs, which generally receive most of their funding directly from the government and often have their top leadership dominated by former bureaucrats, will find it very difficult to stray much beyond the priorities articulated by the government. They cannot risk their funding by engaging in controversial activities. Even NGOs that do not receive significant funding from the government will frequently avoid controversy in order to preserve a good relationship with the policy actors whom they seek to influence.⁴⁹

In the Chinese context, Peter Ho and Richard Edmonds have called this kind of highly government-connected advocacy “embedded activism.”⁵⁰ In China and other authoritarian contexts, it is often difficult for activists to engage in any form of advocacy outside some kind of embedded framework. By embedding themselves in the state’s policy and implementation structure, advocates are frequently able to engage in activities that improve the environment and society in line with their mission, sometimes even using the very agents and agencies that are seeking to constrain them as channels for policy change.⁵¹ Unfortunately, even embedded activists can find the space in which they are able to act squeezed as state priorities shift.⁵²

One example of an organization that has been exceptionally adept at affecting both policy and outcomes by utilizing its friends on the inside has been the Japan-based Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES). Of all of the organizations that I visited in researching this book, IGES was one of the most effective. Established in 1998 as part of Japan’s commitment to environmental leadership at the COP 3 meetings in Kyoto, IGES has been working for more than twenty years as a resource for local and national governments in the Asia-Pacific region as they grapple with increasingly intense environmental challenges.⁵³

IGES has a classic GONGO structure: its founding was a governmental initiative, its top leaders are former government officials, and its funding comes largely from government sources. Since its inception, IGES has engaged effectively in “embedded activism,”⁵⁴ utilizing its close connections with government to develop and promote proenvironmental policies at the local, national, and international levels across the Asia-Pacific region and the world.

By incorporating retired bureaucrats into its organization, it has been able to ensure that its policy proposals are framed in ways that are appealing to policymakers, making it more likely that they will be implemented. For example, immediately after the 3/11 disaster, IGES was able to rapidly expand its activities related to energy conservation, renewable energy, smart cities, green finance and markets, and other issues to take advantage of—and promote—national government initiatives in those policy areas. By organizing events such as the “IGES-YCU Joint Seminar on Low-Carbon and Smart Cities: Seeking Local Energy Solutions after the Nuclear Crisis,”⁵⁵ held just four months after the Fukushima disaster, IGES helped policymakers learn what they needed to know and connect decision makers with people they needed to meet during policy-critical time periods. IGES could then present its independent research to policymakers, who had already been primed to be receptive to IGES’s recommendations related to smart city and green market development.⁵⁶

Over the past twenty years, IGES has been developing high-level connections through its international partners as well. For example, its 2017 annual report claimed that the previous year had “25 cases of high level influence.” Three examples discussed in the report were a pilot project in participatory watershed management in the Philippines that won the Dubai International Award, local and national waste management plans that were official adopted by Myanmar’s Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation and the Mandalay City Development Committee, and the development of an online Sustainable Development Goals analysis and visualization tool that has been accessed by users from 115 countries.⁵⁷

Hiring former bureaucrats can be an effective way of gaining policy access for advocates. Perhaps even more importantly, it enables advocates to judge correctly what is of interest to policymakers at the moment and frame their proposals in ways that will be more attractive. In response to a question about how advocates can make themselves heard by policymakers, one of my interview subjects put it clearly in an interview with me in Beijing in 2010: “You need to understand where there are openings, what the internal dynamics of the government are. How can you come in and create a win-win cycle? You do this by aligning your ideas with what the government is trying to do anyway.” Former bureaucrats have direct lines of communication with current policymakers, making it easier for them both to discover what the current interests

of policymakers are and facilitate access that might shift those interests to be more in line with those of the advocates.

Keep in Touch

Time and time again in my interviews with advocates of all kinds—such as NGO professionals, local and national officials, business people, and academics—they talked about how important personal relationships were in making policy. When individuals get to know each other as people with families, hobbies, and personality quirks, it becomes easier to trust and work with them in a professional way. When working relationships become iterated over time and proliferate across diverse contexts, trust develops. Once a relationship is formed, reconnection and collaboration become much easier, even if years pass without any close collaborations. Because it is impossible to know what issues will arise in the future, and which of your acquaintances and friends might be in a position of influence for any given policy issue, keeping in touch is a vital component of cultivating friends on the inside. Indeed, as time goes by, advocates who were once on the outside may find that they become the friend on the inside whom others seek to cultivate.

A good example of this comes from South Korea. Myung Rae Cho was a professor of urban planning at Dankook University when I first met him in 2010. Like many faculty members whom I met during my research, he wore many hats—scholar, teacher, technical expert, environmental advocate, local volunteer, government consultant, and others. He mingled freely with many different types of people, from neighbors who were engaging with local pollution at the grassroots level to global intellectual elites who were wrestling with how to address the world's looming environmental crisis and its social ramifications.

One of his earliest engagements with the advocacy field was through the Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ), which was formed as a social movement in the late 1980s to question the high-growth model of development that was generating significant pollution, as well as economic and social inequality. CCEJ claims to be South Korea's oldest NGO,⁵⁸ and it played an important role in South Korea's democratization process.⁵⁹ Cho's work with this organization led him to become involved with other groups, including the Citizen Movement for Environmental Justice, which broke off from CCEJ in order to focus its efforts on the environmental components

of economic justice. Through his involvement with these grassroots organizations, Cho was able to understand how environmental issues related to pollution and overdevelopment were negatively affecting people's everyday lives, even as his professional training in environmental planning and urban studies helped him develop solutions to those problems.

While researching the history of South Korea's environmental movement, Seoul's urbanization, and South Korea's green growth strategies,⁶⁰ Cho worked as an adviser to local governments to help them navigate the complex environmental and social issues they were facing as a result of rapid industrialization and urbanization. He served as Suwon City's international adviser, as well as chairing Seoul City's environmental impact assessment commission for several years. He was also an expert adviser for the Presidential Committee for Balanced National Development under President Kim Dae-jung. All of these committees offered opportunities to broaden his connections to people on all sides of diverse local and national environmental issues.

As a member of the Citizens' Green Seoul Committee (an organization discussed in greater length in the next chapter), he headed up a subcommittee to study the restoration of the Cheonggyecheon River. The large river runs through the center of Seoul but was covered as part of the city's urbanization process in the 1960s, with a large section being covered by a major highway in the 1970s. By the late 1990s the cement was starting to crumble and significant maintenance was needed. Rather than repair the highway, newly elected mayor Lee Myung-bak wanted the project to be an example of "green growth" that would create a large green space in the center of Seoul while being supportive of the construction, leisure, and service industries. They broke ground in 2003, demolition and landscaping took two years, and the park opened to the public in fall 2005.⁶¹

The project was wildly heralded as a success, and it was claimed that it increased pedestrian activity by 76 percent, reduced vehicle volume by 45 percent, reduced air pollution by 10 percent, and decreased the urban heat island effect by 4.5 percent.⁶² It is frequently used as a case study of success to demonstrate green urban design and redevelopment.⁶³ The popularity of the project is also commonly credited with helping Mayor Lee become President Lee in 2008.⁶⁴

However, the political process was not as smooth as many of the laudatory case studies suggest, as Cho documents in his own study, which reveals the competing understandings of nature held by the city government and

the local NGO community.⁶⁵ As part of the Citizens' Green Seoul Committee, Cho was responsible for bringing the NGO's concerns to the attention of the city government and negotiating solutions. As he explained it in a 2010 interview with me, the committee was very active in collaborating with the city government to improve Seoul's environment, but as he began to reveal problems with the restoration plans, relations turned sour. "For a while there I was public enemy number 1 of the former mayor, now president." Expressing sentiments similar to those of his counterparts in Taiwan when the administration switched from a liberal party back to a conservative one, he said, "Now, we're completely excluded [from policymaking]."

Although Cho may have felt excluded from policymaking while the conservatives controlled the government, he kept in touch with his colleagues both inside and outside the government. As an example of how he managed, he described to me his interactions with Professor Shim Myung Pil, who was an old activist friend and professional colleague who had been asked to head up Lee's Four Rivers Restoration Project.⁶⁶ Intended as a way to scale the success of the Cheonggyecheon River restoration, the new, very large-scale project targeted South Korea's four largest rivers (Han, Geum, Nakdong, and Yeongsan) for development, and it was almost universally criticized by environmentalists.⁶⁷ Cho also opposed the project, but he still reached out to Shim. Over dinner they were able to share memories of past collaborations, as well as airing disagreements over the current project. They were able to reinforce a personal connection even as their politics no longer aligned.

A key component of the "cultivate friends on the inside" strategy is that you stay in touch with your friend, even though you might not feel so friendly when he or she is in charge of a policy that you do not like. Furthermore, in politics things often shift—people who are in power move out and vice versa. Indeed, this is what happened with Cho. While the conservatives were occupying the Blue House, Cho remained active, serving as copresident of Environmental Justice (an NGO) and chairman of the Sustainable Development Committee of the Seoul Metropolitan Government. Eventually, the liberals gained power again, and he moved from outside to inside, heading up the Korean Environment Institute and the Council of the Heads of Environmental Research Institutes. In 2018 Cho was appointed by President Moon Jae-in to be South Korea's environmental minister, making the final shift from being an advocate seeking to cultivate

friends on the inside to becoming the ultimate friend on the inside whom other advocates sought to cultivate.

Give Credit to Allies

A final method that is highly effective in cultivating and empowering friends on the inside is to publicize success and give credit to allies. As mentioned earlier and will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, policy-makers frequently encounter enormous internal bureaucratic hurdles to developing and disseminating effective policies. Advocates can be of great assistance to allies when they are able to mobilize media attention to policy successes, drawing central governmental attention to good policy enacted locally and raising the reputation and profile of allies and their departments with the public.⁶⁸

I will use the example of Hong Kong's Fair Winds Charter to illustrate how advocates can give credit to allies as part of a successful advocacy strategy. The Fair Winds Charter was developed through a collaboration between Civic Exchange, a Hong Kong-based think tank, and the shipping industry, which resulted in changes in local and, eventually, national regulations. As a clear indication of credit sharing, although it was the brainchild of Civic Exchange, the charter is described on Civic Exchange's website as "the first voluntary scheme initiated by Hong Kong's shipping industry to reduce ship emissions by requiring ocean-going vessels to switch to a low-sulphur fuel while at berth."⁶⁹ Ultimately, the charter influenced the development of new shipping regulations not just for Hong Kong's ports but also for the Pearl River Delta, Yangtze River Delta, and Bai Bohai Rim regions as well.⁷⁰

The process began in the early 2000s when researchers from Civic Exchange collaborated with scholars from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology to investigate the contribution that the shipping industry made to Hong Kong's air pollution problems; they found that it was significant and growing.⁷¹ They shared their report with Hong Kong's Environmental Protection Department, which commissioned its own study of marine emissions in 2008. That same year and for the next several years, Civic Exchange held a series of workshops designed to engage a wide variety of stakeholders in the issue, including port and local craft operators, the trucking sector, and fuel suppliers, as well as government officials and academics, in order to inform everyone about their findings on the importance of the shipping industry's contribution to Hong Kong's air quality and to hear from stakeholders about

concerns and potential opportunities related to emissions control. Civic Exchange ensured that the relevant government officials from both the Environmental Protection Department and the Marine Department were invited to the workshops and kept in the loop as discussions progressed.

Having support from key business leaders was critically important to gaining access and trust from industry. Arthur Bowring of the Hong Kong Shipowners Association; Peter Ng, Tim Smith, and Roberto Giannetta of the Hong Kong Liner Shipping Association; and other key industry leaders were interested in the reports' findings about the development of green ports in Los Angeles and Long Beach in the US, and saw the opportunity for Hong Kong, one of the world's largest ports, to become an industry leader. These business leaders helped connect Civic Exchange researchers to the technical and operational people in the industry. As Civic Exchange's chief research officer at the time, Simon Ng, explained to me in a 2019 interview, "If an NGO had just come in and talked about the environment, they [the shipping industry people] would have been hostile. When they could see that we were coming in with a different angle, that we were trying to help the industry become greener, which would benefit the whole industry, they became more receptive. [Introductions from their own leaders] really helped them to be more receptive to listening to us."

By 2010, although government officials remained reluctant, the industry was ready to move forward. At a workshop hosted by Civic Exchange, industry leaders began to develop a voluntary agreement in which Hong Kong's major shipping lines would agree to require their ships to switch from highly polluting marine bunker fuel to low-sulfur distillate fuel while at berth in Hong Kong. In October 2010 a total of seventeen companies signed the Fair Winds Charter, which was the world's first voluntary at-berth fuel-switching scheme. After making this strong public commitment, the industry then requested government regulation to level the playing field and retain Hong Kong's position as a leading international port.⁷²

Simon Ng talked about how the signing of the charter was a turning point for Civic Exchange's relationship in the policymaking process. In the beginning, when no one is talking about the problem, the NGO sector can be out front to bring attention to the issue, but once business is engaged, the advocates do their best to support their allies in business and government:

We want to give them the face, give them the credit in our public relations and promotion of the initiative. We don't mind giving them more credit. The same is true

for government. Once they [the industry participants] sign the charter, we know the effort will move forward, so we invite the government to step in and take over, and we [Civic Exchange] can step way back to help work out the details.

[Can you elaborate on how these credit-giving and public relations efforts work to empower your allies?]

The shipping industry to a large extent deserved the credit, as they embraced the idea, paid for the cleaner fuel, and stuck with their commitment. With public endorsement, the industry could no longer turn back, but they were also pleased to carry on with their reputation enhanced.

It is not just giving credit but also sharing what is going on elsewhere. We have a sharing culture. By sharing, you offer technical and policy design and support to others. ... I'm still close with those people today. That trust is important. They also empower us. They bring their new information to us too. Sharing and learning at the same time.

[You said you are still close with these people. In what way are you close?]

We are still friends today and will get together from time to time.

[Why does your personal relationship matter?]

Because of these connections and our success working together on that project, we think we can do more. ... You gain experience with one project, and then we can do it with another project. The process of NGO-business collaboration first and then handing over to the government. We can do that same process in other cases too.

Christine Loh, the founder and CEO of Civic Exchange, also emphasized the importance of collaboration when she talked with me in 2019 about the Fair Winds Charter and its ultimate influence on China's maritime policy.

You need to engage the stakeholders very early and start to talk with them, so you can understand their concerns and perspectives. [If] you bring people together to do something productive, the thinking shifts, and people begin to understand each other. ... It is a co-learning experience. You have to ask the shipping sector how ships work and really understand that before you can start to talk about how that links to air pollution. ... It is the power of evidence to convince people, not just passion. That is why we partnered with HKUST [Hong Kong University of Science and Technology] to commission research on both the policy side [what other large ports around the world are doing] and on science side [how shipping emissions affect public health].

In this case, Loh's collaborative process and trust-building led her not just to make friends on the inside but also to become a friend on the inside. She was appointed as undersecretary of the environment for Hong Kong in

September 2012 and served until 2017. From her position in the government, she was able first to encourage the Hong Kong government to issue new regulations and then to bring Hong Kong's experience to the attention of national-level policymakers.

Loh could bring the success of the industry's charter and the local government's new regulations and their scientifically demonstrable positive effect on air quality and health in Hong Kong to the attention of regional and national policymakers.⁷³ In December 2015 China's Ministry of Transport announced new domestic emissions control areas that would require all ships entering China's main ports to use low-sulfur fuel by 2019.

Making friends on the inside is one of the most effective strategies for achieving positive policy change. Publicizing your success to others and giving allies credit for making the success possible not only builds trust with current allies, it can enhance the career prospects of those allies, which may put them in more powerful positions in the future. Raising the profile of allies is also a method to draw the attention of national policymakers to local successes—national-level policymakers are much more likely to listen to their own local government officials and industry leaders than they are to a local NGO. By amplifying the voice of allies in government and industry, advocates are also able to enhance the impact of their message. Ultimately, this improves not only the chances of success of one particular advocacy effort but also the capacity for advocates and their allies to be effective in the future.

How to Scale: Empower and Support Your Friends

Once an advocate has identified potential allies among influential policymakers and cultivated those individuals so they become friends on the inside, how can the advocate scale his or her influence such that it grows beyond access to one person or influence on one policy? Advocates should not just make friends on the inside; they should also empower and support those friends. Friends on the inside who are successful are able to advance their careers, allowing them to become more influential and expand the scope of their networks and their activities. To the extent that advocates can support policymakers to be successful, advocates and policymakers will be able to work together to find innovative ways to diversify and expand collaborative activities.⁷⁴

This section will use the case of the China-US Energy Efficiency Alliance to illustrate how advocates can scale local success to become nationally and even internationally effective. The case highlights the process of how advocates can make new policymaking friends by being useful, staying in touch, and giving credit to allies. They can support those allies by offering technical assistance, political connections, and positive public relations to make small projects successful and noticed by top officials. By supporting a lower-level policymaker in his efforts, advocates were able to support his career advancement. As his career advanced, he gained greater scope and authority for collaborative projects, and the advocates' good track record in working with him made them valuable partners in those larger and more ambitious projects, while at the same time enabling both advocates and officials to diversify and increase the number of allies they had with policymaking authority. In this way, cultivating a single friend on the inside by working on a single, local project can be scaled to include multiple projects over a much larger geographic area. This is the process through which an advocate can expand his or her network, create more nodes in the policy-relevant network matrix, and germinate the formation of new networks that reach new stakeholders and new policymakers.

I first learned about the China-US Energy Efficiency Alliance during a 2015 interview with Barbara Finamore, senior attorney and Asia director of the China Program of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). Her narrative of how early energy efficiency collaborations between the NRDC and local officials in Jiangsu Province grew into the creation of the China-US Energy Efficiency Alliance⁷⁵ highlights the importance of personal connections, sustained long-term commitment to allies, and the numerous ways that advocates can support and empower their allies in government, resulting in better policy that benefits everyone.⁷⁶

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

So, we kept in touch. We [NRDC] brought people down to Jiangsu. We brought people from California. We brought California officials to China. We brought Jiangsu officials

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

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

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

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

What started as a small collaboration to assist a local utility company in a single province in China generated not only better energy efficiency outcomes in the province but better energy policy for the entire country and a framework for developing international public-private collaborations on energy efficiency and innovation. At the core of the entire enterprise were a small number of individuals who supported each other, kept in touch, and were able to work collaboratively in more diverse and influential ways over the course of many years. Over time, small, local collaborations grew into a larger network of individuals, organizations, corporations, and governments that were ultimately able to institutionalize productive relationships that facilitated proenvironmental changes at the local, regional, and national levels through technology transfer and policy innovations.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed what is perhaps the most important advocacy strategy—make friends on the inside by cultivating and empowering allies who are or will be in positions to influence policymaking. Once advocates have identified which individuals they wish to get to know, they can gain access to these policymakers and potential policy influencers by utilizing personal connections, attending events, and serving together on committees

with them. Finally, once advocates have gained some access to policymakers, they can cultivate their friends on the inside by being useful, hiring retired bureaucrats, keeping in touch, and giving credit for success, all of which help empower their allies.

Why is making friends on the inside such an effective advocacy strategy? Ultimately, advocates are seeking to convince governments, corporations, and individuals to change their practices. Advocates gain access to policy decision makers and diverse stakeholders through their personal and professional networks. Their network connections enable them to discover how best to frame their policy initiatives so they will be well received by policymakers. Advocates do not do this alone—they work with and through other people and organizations to generate policy change. Making friends with the people in charge of crafting the policies advocates seek to change is an effective way of gaining access to and, perhaps, influence over those policies.

As the foregoing examples have illustrated, advocates gain influence by finding ways to work with policymakers productively over a long period of time, starting with small projects and working toward larger ones. At its core, utilizing a “make friends on the inside” strategy is ultimately about creating win-win policy innovations—policies that are wins for the advocate because they move policy in the direction sought by the advocate, and policies that are wins for the government (or corporations) because they advance their goals as well. When it works well, it creates a win-win cycle where advocacy success leads to policy success, which leads to career advancement and greater prestige for government and business allies, which leads to more policy innovation and collaboration with the advocates, which generates more policy success, and so on.

When I asked one savvy advocate in Beijing in a 2011 interview how advocates can create these win-win cycles, she emphasized that advocates need to work for many years in the background, keeping an issue alive, helping to shape how policymakers are thinking about the issue and policy solutions, waiting until the political opportunity arises to put it forward. In the end, “[advocates] can create a win-win cycle by helping align [NGO goals] with what the government is trying to do anyway.” This idea of keeping in close contact with policymakers and cultivating them so you can be part of all stages of policymaking illustrates John W. Kingdon’s classic theory of policymaking “streams”—problems, policies, and politics. Effective

advocates should be engaging with all three streams simultaneously, so they can help shape the problems that policymakers are examining, offer concrete policy solutions to those problems, and influence the politics around the process by supporting their allies in the process.⁷⁷

This chapter has shown how making friends with those in a position to influence policy, and those who are likely to be able to influence it in the future, is an effective way of generating win-win policy outcomes for advocates. By cultivating friends on the inside and participating in productive collaborations, even if they start small, advocates build a network of allies who can be activated when opportunities arise to make progress on issues of interest.

As these networks become stronger, larger, and more diverse, advocates increase their capacity to influence more policymakers. Indeed, as was the case for two of the individuals highlighted in this chapter, Myung Rae Cho and Christine Loh, if an advocate is particularly adept at making friends on the inside, he or she might wake up one day no longer an advocate but rather a policymaker, appointed to a position of authority by one of those same friends who had been cultivated.

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