

Dear Politics and Protest workshop participants,

First all, my apologies for the delay, especially to my discussants... I was harder than I thought to write in English.

This paper stems from my PhD research I am currently conducting on the Jubilee 2000 campaign. This is the first draft of a paper in which I am trying to (re)think the question of a social movement's success. I haven't been really working on this question before but I do have the feeling that there might be something interesting there, by taking into account the "strategic dimension" of success. I would be glad to have your comments on how to rework this. I know it is an early draft but eventually I would like to submit it to a social movement journal.

Many thanks, in advance, for the time you will spend reading it, and for your comments!!

I am looking forward to see you all next Thursday,

**Assessing a transnational mobilization's success. Insights from the Jubilee 2000 campaign**

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1<sup>st</sup> DRAFT

In June 1999, 40,000 activists gathered in Cologne, Germany, to advocate that the G7 countries agree on debt cancellation for poor countries. Demonstrators joined hands and formed a human chain around the city center to symbolize the bondage of debt which was seen as a new form of slavery. Those activists were part of a transnational campaign, Jubilee 2000, which aimed to cancel the debt of poor countries by the year 2000. In Cologne, a petition in favor of debt relief became the largest petition in history with 17 million signatures and was presented to the heads of state of the most industrialized countries. These actions resulted in concrete outcomes: G-7 countries announced an overhaul of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) - called HIPC-2 - and promised about \$27 billion in new debt reduction for eligible countries.

While debt relief policies were usually negotiated by elite actors from the state, financial institutions, or market, HIPC-2 was considered largely influenced by Jubilee 2000. Thanks to their participation in this campaign, ordinary citizens and activists took part in reshaping international development policies.

Jubilee 2000 is thus often cited as the exemplar of a social movement success story. Under Birdsall and Williamson's pen, Jubilee becomes "by far the most successful industrial-country movement aimed at combating world poverty for many years, perhaps in all recorded history"<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Birdsall and John Williamson, *Delivering on Debt Relief*, Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2002, p. 1

Not surprisingly, the “success” of Jubilee 2000 lies at the heart of the scholarship on the campaign: scholars became interested in Jubilee because of its accomplishments. Coming from different disciplines –political economy, political science, and anthropology- they produced, as we shall see, a rich corpus that shed light on different facets of this large mobilization for poor countries’ debt cancellation.

Nevertheless, certain dimensions of Jubilee 2000 remain overlooked. While HIPC 2 tends to be considered the embodiment of the movement’s success, the more diverse reactions of Jubilee 2000 activists at the time is less frequently acknowledged. If some protesters celebrated victory, others, especially from the global south, considered HIPC 2 to be a “cruel hoax”. Two months later, southern activists in Cologne split from the Jubilee 2000 campaign and decided to continue the mobilization on their own under the banner of Jubilee South. But these events, when not totally absent from the various studies on Jubilee, remain marginalized.

Of course, the fact that conflicting interpretation of the movement’s success emerged within the movement itself is not very surprising. Social movement scholars have long showed that movement participants may have different perceptions of what counts as success: “the same action may be judged as successful by some participants and as failed by others.”<sup>2</sup> But the split that hit the Jubilee 2000 movement made it a paradigmatic case of a conflicted campaign.

Two related questions can be raised from this brief presentation: How can we account for the relative silence on this matter in Jubilee 2000 literature? What are the analytical consequences of taking these different opinions seriously in terms of the way we define success?

In this paper I argue that the relative silence regarding the conflicted perceptions of the Jubilee 2000 campaign is directly linked to the way scholars have framed the issue of success. While they are looking for the factors which brought about success, which is an important approach, the notion of success itself remained little investigated.

This paper aims at revisiting the literature on Jubilee 2000’s success by taking into account the conflicts among its participant. I argue that rethinking the success in its strategic dimension, i.e. as a tool in the hands of activists, constitutes a complementary approach to the literature that considers the strategies leading to the success.

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<sup>2</sup> Giugni, Marco. G. 1998, “Was it Worth the Effort? The Outcomes and Consequences of Social Movements” in *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 24: 371

The piece is divided into two main parts. Part I consists of a literature review of the Jubilee 2000 campaign. After providing a brief background on the campaign (1), it presents the main approaches and argues that they are driven by the same incentive, i.e. underlying factors leading to success (2). It then argues that these approaches, although rich, induce a bias in the analysis: a tendency to overestimate the success (3) and underestimate the conflicted dimension of the campaign (4). It then calls for reframing the issue of success by taking into account its strategic use (5). Part II draws on a case study: the analysis of Jubilee USA and more precisely its legislative group, which had an important role in the design of HIPC 2. It shows that the perception of the importance of being successful led to a division of labor between Jubilee USA activists and to the creation of the legislative group (1). By analyzing the strategies and tactics of the members of this group, i.e the drafting of a piece of legislation in favor of debt relief, and its “sale”, this case study aims at showing that these actors purposefully used success as a tool (2). It then aims at linking the attitudes toward success to the actors’ position within the sphere of social movement players (3).

## **I. Jubilee 2000: literature review**

### **1/ Background on Jubilee 2000**

In a historical context, mobilizations in favor of debt cancellation are fairly recent. The first anti-debt organizations were created about 30 years ago, in the wake of the Latin American debt crisis. Mexico defaulted in 1982, followed by Brazil and Argentina. However, this crisis cannot be considered the main factor that triggered global awareness of the debt of the poorest countries; for the debt to become an issue debated in international arenas, actors needed to get mobilized and advocate for it.

Jubilee 2000 was the first international campaign in favor of debt cancellation. The notion of Jubilee comes from the Bible and describes an event that occurred every 50 years where slaves were freed, land was restored, and debts were cancelled. The idea of linking debt relief to the new Millennium and the religious idea of Jubilee was proposed in the early 1990s by Martin Dent, a British professor at Keele University. Together with Bill Peters, a former British ambassador to Uruguay and High Commissioner to Malawi, Dent started promoting the Jubilee

principle that he considered a “Theological Help in an Urgent Crisis” (Dent, 1994). They soon attracted faith-based organizations in the UK like Christian Aid and the Catholic Agencies for Overseas Development (CAFOD). In 1996, Jubilee 2000 was officially launched and soon expanded into 65 countries in the North and South. In this process, religious transnational networks served as conveyor belts. In November 1998, the first Jubilee international conference was held in Rome and gathered a national coalition with representatives from 38 countries. The Jubilee campaign, however, cannot be confined as a religious mobilization. The will to act in favor of debt relief and help southern countries meet the basic needs of their population was also grounded in a secular ethical principle of North-South solidarity.

The goal of the Jubilee 2000 campaign was to achieve “cancellation of the backlog of unpayable debt for the world’s poorest countries-which either cannot be paid, or can be paid only with enormous human suffering.” Three major themes were put forward by the actors involved. First, to demonstrate that the reimbursement of the debts impeded southern countries’ development. Indeed many poor countries spent more money to pay back their debt than on health and education. The campaign also aimed to question the unequal power balance between North and South in the global economic system. The movement also demanded that debt cancellation take place “under a fair and transparent process” and that it not be tied to conditionalities. To achieve their goals, Jubilee 2000 activists engaged in advocacy and intense lobbying of the international financial institutions and the heads of states of the most industrialized nations. Along the way, the campaign gained the endorsement of several celebrities. Bono, Bob Geldof, Youssou N’Dour, Giorgio Armani, and Pavorotti took active part in the campaign, by attending the mobilization, by creating and selling T-shirt in favor of debt relief, or by organizing concerts.

In May of 1998, a large protest was organized in Birmingham and was attended by about 70,000 activists. In June 1999, 40,000 demonstrators formed a human chain around Cologne, Germany, and the aforementioned largest petition in history with 17 million signatures in favor of debt relief was presented to the heads of states of the most industrialized countries. Those actions resulted in concrete outcomes such as the G7 agreeing on the enhanced HIPC (HIPC 2) debt relief initiative<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The Cologne agreement was an overhaul of the first HIPC initiative, launched 3 years earlier by the same institutions. The goal of HIPC 2 was to provide “broader, deeper, and faster” debt relief with a focus on poverty reduction. The specifics included an increase in the number of eligible countries, a shortening of the qualifying period from 6 to 3 years, and the sale of IMF gold to fund multilateral debt relief.

While debt relief policies were usually a top-down affair negotiated in private circles of decision makers, HIPC 2 was largely influenced by anti-debt activist networks. Jubilee 2000 is thus being often cited as the exemplar of a civil society success story.

## **2/ Jubilee 2000 in the literature: looking for the key of a social movement success**

This is a fact: scholars tend to focus on successful social movements. One of the reasons is that their research aims at determining the factors of success (Amenta et al 1992, Banaszak 1996, Brill 1971, Burstein et al 1995, Frey et al 1992, Gamson 1990, Goldstone 1980, Mirowsky & Ross 1987, Nichols 1987, Perrot 1987, Piven & Cloward 1979, Shorter & Tilly 1971, Steedly & Foley 1979). Scholarship on Jubilee 2000 is no exception to the rule. While anti-debt movements have not been investigated by French scholars, a few studies have been conducted by American and English researchers. Although they come from different disciplines- political economy, political science, and anthropology-, scholars who became interested in this campaign were mainly drawn to it because of its success. To my knowledge, four authors conducted in-depth studies of the Jubilee campaign: Noha Shawki, André Broom, Joshua Busby, and Paula Goldman. Coming from different disciplines –political economy, political science, and anthropology-, their research helped constitute a rich corpus on Jubilee 2000.

In her study, « Issue Frames and the Political Outcomes of Transnational Campaigns: A Comparison of the Jubilee 2000 Movement and the Currency Transaction Tax Campaign»<sup>4</sup>, Noha Shawki raises the following question: How can we explain that the Jubilee 2000 campaign “succeeded” while the Currency Tax Campaign (CTT) failed? Both campaigns shared some common goals and values. Drawing on Snow’s analysis, the author argued that Jubilee 2000 was able to provide compelling diagnostic frames and to support policy proposals that resonated with international norms and values. On the contrary, the CTT campaign failed to develop coherent and compelling policy frames, as the introduction of a currency transaction tax would have constituted a complete rethink of core principles of the prevailing neoliberal ideology.

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Concerning the bilateral portion of the debts, the G8 agreed that 90% of Paris Club debt should be written off.

<sup>4</sup> Noha Shawki, “Issue Frames and the Political Outcomes of Transnational Campaigns: A Comparison of the Jubilee 2000 Movement and the Currency Transaction Tax Campaign”, *Global Society*, vol. 24, n° 2, avril 2010, pp. 203-230

Drawing on Jubilee 2000, André Broome's research seeks to enhance our understanding of when, why, and how NGOs can potentially act as an important source of change in international economic regimes<sup>5</sup>. He argues that NGOs succeeded in reframing the debt issue by incorporating a strong moral dimension to an issue that tended to be discussed only in economic and strategic terms. He also suggests that anti-debt NGOs benefited from a set of contingent opportunities (new leadership of the World Bank, changes in the US and UK government, the election of Gerard Schröder in Germany).

Joshua Busby, in his PhD dissertation "New Troubles for the West: Debt Relief, Climate Change, and Comparative Foreign Policy in the Post Cold War Area"<sup>6</sup>, addresses the following questions: Why do movements succeed in some places but not others? Why do some states accept commitments championed by principle advocacy movements while other do not? His research constitutes a commendable attempt to escape the binary opposition between the two traditional enemies of the realist and constructivist approaches. While not entirely rejecting them, Joshua Busby points out the limits of interest based theories and shows that states may act against their own material self-interest when activists succeed in framing an issue in a way that resonates with the country's values and with policy gatekeepers' preferences. Six conditions are potentially significant for framing success: 1/ a permissive international context 2/ focusing events, 3/ credible information, 4/ low costs, 5/ cultural match, and 6/ supportive policy gatekeepers. The religious frame of the debt, for example, was especially powerful in the United States where it often matched the cultural values of the policy-makers: the Jubilee message was even compelling to several conservative Republican representatives who were key nodes in the legislative process.

Jubilee 2000 was also the main focus of Paula Goldman's doctoral dissertation: "From Margin to Mainstream: the Jubilee 2000 Campaign and the Rising Profile of Global Poverty Issues in the United Kingdom and the United States."<sup>7</sup> Criticizing social innovation theories for being too individualist, and social movement studies for being too collectivist, she draws on theoretical perspectives of performance (Bauman 1978; Butler, 1999; Fernandez, 1991) and social poetic

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<sup>5</sup> André Broome, "When do NGOs Matter? Activist Organisations as a Source of Change in the International Debt Regime", *Global Society*, vol. 23, n° 1, January 2009, pp. 59-78.

<sup>6</sup> Joshua Busby, *New troubles for the West: Debt relief, climate change, and comparative foreign policy in the post-Cold War era*, PhD, Georgetown University, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Paula Goldman, *From Margin to Mainstream: Jubilee 2000 and the Rising Profile of Global Poverty Issues in the United Kingdom and United States*, PhD, Harvard University, 2010.

(Herzfeld 2005) and considers the success of a social cause to be the result “of small acts of experimentation and risk taken by a large number of people”. To become “mainstream”, the debt issue moved from groups of lower status and capital to groups with higher status and capital until it eventually worked its way to the center of power.

All these studies, in their own way, unveil some facets of the global mobilization against poor country debt. In order to understand why Jubilee 2000 was “successful”, they look at two series of factor: the strategies of the movement and the broader political context in facilitating or constraining both the mobilization and the potential outcomes of movements. Regarding strategies, they pointed out the following determinants: the way activists framed the debt issue in moral and religious terms, their ability to produce reliable data which challenged the expertise of the IMF and WB, and their capacity to gain the endorsement of various celebrities from Bono to Pope Jean-Paul II. Regarding the broader context, scholars demonstrated that Jubilee 2000 activists were able to benefit from a series of opportunities such as the election of Gerhard Schröder and Gordon Brown, the nomination of James Wolfensohn as President of the World Bank, and the Asian Debt Crisis.

But those studies, although rich, have certain limits inherent in their approach. While “success” is the main driver behind the analysis –as scholars are looking for the keys of success- it seems that the notion itself remain relatively little examined. While all those studies consider the HIPC 2 initiative as the “proof of success”, few of them acknowledged that this initiative was highly contested by many activists in the movement, especially those coming from the South.

### 3/ **Measuring success: an “elusive” quest**

Scholarship on Jubilee 2000 enables us to better understand various aspects of the Jubilee 2000 campaign. But while the success is the point of departure for the analysis as well as its main driver, the notion of success is ambiguous. This is not to say that no attempts have been made to make more explicit this “elusive”<sup>8</sup> notion. There were. In the same way that they shed lights on the strategies of the activists and the opportunities they encountered, they investigated different dimension and areas of Jubilee 2000 success: the concrete benefits it provided for southern countries, the evolution of the international debt regime, the norms that Jubilee 2000 helped to

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<sup>8</sup> William A. Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest*, Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1975



diffuse, the legacy of the movement or its impact on cultural values and attitudes within society at large. And to varying degree, scholars who studied Jubilee 2000 were aware of the difficulties inherent in the task.

Noha Shawki in her 2009 article tried to assess the concrete outcomes of Jubilee 2000 for poor countries. At the time she writes, the number of countries that benefited from some debt reduction amounted to thirty-five. She explains that for this group of countries, the average debt service payments relative to GDP had been reduced by half. At the same time, their social spending as a percentage of GDP increased from 6.7% to 8.8%. But to what extent can it be considered a success? There is, of course, no direct answer. Success is inherently subjective. But even aside from the subjective dimension, Noha Shawki was facing a very common challenge for those who try to analyze the concrete effects of any policy: To what extent can we consider this improvement as the direct result as the HIPC initiative? Such causal relationship is very hard to establish. The launch of the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative in 2005 makes it even harder.

Not willing to make overreaching pronouncements on the concrete outcomes of the implementation of the debt relief policies – “It is too soon to write a definitive judgment of whether or not the problem has been ameliorated”<sup>9</sup>-, Busby distinguishes between the political success and the policy success: a political success is achieved when “countries important for implementation have accepted the policy that advocates are pursuing through some domestic decision making process”. Such political success was achieved by Jubilee 2000: in response to their activism, a policy was drafted: “The norm activists were supporting i.e., ‘the unpayable debts of the poorest countries ought to be forgiven’”, becomes embodied in a policy, the Highly Indebted Poor Country initiative<sup>10</sup>. Such initiative constitutes a direct response to social movements’ pledges in favor of “broader, deeper, and faster debt relief”.

Like Busby, Broome is very aware of the difficulties of assessing a social movement’s impact: “Evaluating the extent of NGOs’ influence and the mechanisms through which this is exercised is often difficult owing to the range of potential causal factors involved in the process of change in international regimes, as well as the problems inherent in any attempt to establish an

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<sup>9</sup> Joshua Busby, *New troubles for the West: Debt relief, climate change, and comparative foreign policy in the post-Cold War era*, *op.cit.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

unambiguous link between the intentional actions of NGOs and policy outcomes”<sup>11</sup>. The distinction between political and policy success, although not made as explicitly, is also present in Broome’s work when he explains that he decides to focus on major changes “in the principles”<sup>12</sup> underpinning the international sovereign debt regime. For him, the success of the debt campaign can be seen in the “gradual shift in terminology”<sup>13</sup> from discussions in terms of the moral hazard problem to a greater emphasis on the issue of moral fairness in the international political economy. Those “moral victories”<sup>14</sup>, do not always bring substantive political and economic change in practice. In the case of Jubilee “significant gaps” remain between the “headline grabbing initiatives” that have been announced by G8 and IFIs and the full implementation of the benefits of debt relief. But moral victories nevertheless remain important “in their own right.”

Although overlooked, the cultural dimension of the campaign is not totally absent from the scholarship on Jubilee 2000. Goldman for example is interested in how Jubilee took part in reshaping the values and attitudes of society at large, in understanding how “ideas once considered as undesirable and unimportant become accepted as norms”<sup>15</sup>. She also acknowledges that the direct success of the campaign “helped to set the stage for a variety of successor initiatives”<sup>16</sup>. Four years later, in 2005, many of the initial supporters of Jubilee 2000 rallied behind a UK campaign called “Make Poverty History” which successfully helped push leaders of G8 countries to commit to additional reforms on global poverty issues. These reforms included a commitment to an additional fifty billion dollars in debt cancellation through the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative which was meant to write off all of the remaining debts owed by HIPC countries to the World Bank, IMF, and the African Development Bank.

#### **4/ The conflicted dimension of the Jubilee 2000: a blind spot**

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<sup>11</sup> BROOME, André, « When do NGOs Matter? Activist Organisations as a Source of Change in the International Debt Regime », *op.cit.*, p. 59-78.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Paula Goldman, "From Margin to Mainstream: Jubilee 2000 and the Rising Profile of Global Poverty Issues in the United Kingdom and United States", *op.cit.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

Academic works on Jubilee 2000 that we presented above have shed light on different facets of the global campaign. By investigating the direct impact in terms of outcomes for beneficiaries, the change that occurred at the level of international policies, and the norms or cultural changes the campaign helped bring in our societies, they managed to assess the Jubilee 2000 success in different areas and offered rich and diverse analytical frames to understand why Jubilee achieved what it did. By doing so, those studies contributed to our knowledge of the Jubilee 2000 campaign but also, more broadly, to our understanding of transnational social movements.

Although diverse, this body of literature presents some common assumptions and thus some common shortcomings that I will now try to present and address. Even though their answers are different, the studies presented above share a common question: what accounts for the success of a mobilization?

I argue here that this question induces a bias in the analysis which has some problematic side effects. Because the goal of those studies is to highlight the determinants of success, success is taken for granted. While justifying their interest in this specific campaign, they tend to overestimate its impact.

As a consequence, those studies tend to underestimate the conflicted dimension of the campaign. Because they fall out of the scope of the analysis or because they do not fit in the “success” model, conflicts are, voluntarily or not, set aside. Those studies thus presented a detailed but slightly distorted image of the campaign. Although effective, Jubilee unearthed strong divergences within and among the associations fighting against the debt. The year 1999 was marked by an increase of tensions among Jubilee activists which reached a zenith at the time of the Cologne summit and its direct aftermath. While the launch of HIPC 2 was considered by some participants in Jubilee as “a success”, the initiative was also deeply criticized by others.

As we will see in our case study below, Jubilee USA activists, by drafting a piece of legislation, played a huge role in designing the HIPC 2 initiative. As a result, activists dissatisfied with the agreement reached in Cologne, directly addressed their criticism to the US organization. If some angry emails and letters came from other northern national campaigns, the harshest criticisms came from activists in southern countries. Some of the African organizations even published a short report called “Why Jubilee 2000 failed in its campaign”. It argued as follows:

“As often happens in history, good intentions are often marred by harsh realities on the ground. The movement failed to live up to the expectations of those who made the sacrifices. Charity is not always bad. But in this context, it provided the lenders with a high moral ground, and the borrowers a humiliating stance[...]The problem with the Jubilee 2000 Campaign was that its mainstream campaigners more unwittingly than intentionally, legitimized the debt and also by default legitimized the system that creates and perpetuates debt. Instead of challenging the debt and its underlying causes, the Jubilee 2000 campaigners focused on the numbers game, pushing for bigger and bigger amounts of “relief” thus, effectively, endorsing the notion that the debt was legitimate in the first place”<sup>17</sup>

We found the same criticism in an email from the Jubilee Zambia coordinator:

“It is unthinkable for any campaign using the banner “Jubilee” and/or debt cancellation to propose to those who claim to be our creditors that they should continue on with policies and conditionalities such as Structural Adjustment Programs and HIPC which oppress us and literally cost us millions of lives each year. Likewise, it is unthinkable that any organization would propose legislation which reinforces and validates our oppression without first consulting with us and giving us the opportunity to oppose such legislation first, not after the fact”.

Those tensions resulted in concrete outcomes. Five months after the Cologne meeting, several southern activists gathered in Johannesburg. Considering that the Jubilee 2000 international campaign was dominated by northern campaigners, they decided to split from the official coalition and created Jubilee South, a transnational southern activist network that still exists today – although not very actively.

Those events suggest that Jubilee 2000 was far more conflicted than is usually acknowledged and invite us to rethink the question of the campaign’s success. While HIPC 2 was an important event in the course of the campaign, and certainly an achievement for many activists, it was also a revealer of underlying tensions and conflicts that divided (and continue to divide) the transnational anti-debt movement.

## **5/ Darkening the picture or reframing it: for a strategic approach of success**

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<sup>17</sup> International South Group Network, « Why Jubilee Failed in its campaign ». Archives de Jubilé USA.

Jubilee 2000 was far more conflicted than has usually been acknowledged. I think the examples provided above have shown it. That being said, some clarifications are necessary. By uncovering those tensions and calling for a more nuanced and darker description, my goal is not –primarily- to curb the enthusiasm shown by some scholars. Try as we might, we will never be able to find the right tone to provide an objectively “fair” representation of the reality. And if you will permit me to continue a little longer with this bad metaphor of a painting, instead of darkening the picture, it might be more interesting to reframe it.

The difficulties encountered by Jubilee 2000 scholars in assessing the campaign’s success are not new, nor are they specific to scholars interested in transnational campaigns. Because social movements are not homogeneous, because success will always be subjective, and because movements have many unintended effects and moving parts, scholars have been far more likely to analyze outcomes rather than notions of success and failure<sup>18</sup>.

Taking into account different dimensions, concrete outcomes, political success, cultural impact, legacy, will certainly allow us to depict a more nuanced picture. But, in any event, the approach would always be guided by the same principle: trying to measure the success, to objectivize it. It seems to me that talking about outcomes remains a way of assessing success without admitting that this what you are doing.

The notion of success and failure will always be subjective. But this never ending subjectivity should not lead researchers to give up on making success a subject of scientific analysis. It should rather incite us to find a new perspective, another angle through which to look at success. The case study that I will now briefly present suggests that instead of looking at the strategies that can account for the success of the campaign, it would be interesting to consider success itself, and more precisely the ability to claim success, as a strategic tool in the hands of activists.

## **II Case study: the legislative group of Jubilee USA and the strategy of success**

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<sup>18</sup> Marco G Giugni, "Was It Worth the Effort? The Outcomes and Consequences of Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, 1998, pp.371-93.

This case study focuses on Jubilee USA and more precisely on the members of its legislative group, whose role was instrumental in designing the controversial HIPC 2 initiative. By analyzing their strategies and tactics, i.e the drafting of a piece of legislation in favor of debt relief, and its “sale”, we aim at showing that these actors purposefully used success as a tool. As a result, their outcomes (indirectly HIPC 2) became the by-product of strategies for success.

After Jubilee 2000 was launched in 1996 in London, it quickly expanded in many other countries, leading to the creation of national Jubilee 2000 coalitions. Jubilee USA was one of them. It was officially launched during the G8 Summit in Denver, 1997. Despite the involvement of a few secular organizations (such as some environmental NGOs and social justice organizations like Friends of the Earth, 50 Years is Enough, Africa Policy Information Center, or APIC) Jubilee USA was mainly a religious coalition. Among the 40 member organizations were many of the larger US national churches: the Episcopal Church, the Methodist church, the National Catholic Conference of Bishops and the Presbyterian Church. The coalition also included some Christian relief agencies like Catholic relief Services and Lutheran World Relief as well as faith based NGOs like Bread for the World, an ecumenical Christian advocacy NGO, and the Center of Concern, a Jesuit think tank.

To make a long story short, Jubilee USA was not exclusively, but mostly, comprised of well educated, white, Christian, DC based activists. They shared a common goal that was inscribed in one of the presentation plackets of the network: “Convert a biblical command into effective international policy”. But then, the Bible says little specifically about concrete terms of debt cancellation for southern countries by the year 2000.

### **1/ Of the importance of being successful: from tense debates to a division of labor between activists**

Jubilee 2000 was a very a loosely affiliated coalition; each national campaign was autonomous with no instructions from above. Jubilee USA activists had to face the question common to any participants in a social movement: what are our concrete objectives? And how do we achieve them? While there was consensus that there was an urgent need for at least some debt cancellation, the exact purpose of debt cancellation and the process by which it should take place were highly controversial. J-M G, former executive director of Jubilee USA, remembers:

“We had a terrible fight inside the group as to how to go about it. Especially when it looked like we were becoming to make progress and that it was really becoming an issue with legs, going to make a difference... how to articulate that. Should we go for broke and just say cancel it, no conditions and cancel the debt now? Or say that’s not possible so we have to recognize that there will be some conditions on debt reduction, and it will be debt reduction not.. complete cancellation..”

Conflicts didn’t concern only the goals of the campaign, they also concerned the strategies:

“How do you accomplish that change? Do you do it by being inside the meeting rooms of the Congress and negotiating ... the Jubilee bill? Or do you do it by being outside... in the streets, generating noise and political will?” (M.D., member of Jubilee USA)

For weeks, fundamental aims and purposes of the Jubilee campaign were the subject of intense debates. In the course of the controversies, positions became refined and stronger. Little by little, a network of actors stabilized. Schematically, we can summarize the evolution of the coalition by the emergence of two poles:

“On a sort of the left hand were people who saw the problem as a very deep systemic problem that went to the heart of the global economy and most of those groups had a lot of experience of partnering with people in the global South and lot of presence in the global South. And then... sort of all the other way around, to the other hand, there were serious concerns about poverty but there was a much more... hum... of a... of a commitment to try to accomplish what we could accomplish without raising impossible expectations. That we were somehow gonna change the global economy... much more step by step... They were much more politically pragmatic” (M.D., member of Jubilee USA)

This tension became formally embodied within the organization’s structure. The ones on the “left hand” took lead of the Education and Grassroots committees while the “more politically pragmatic” joined together in what became known as “the legislative group” which aimed at conducting advocacy activities.

In the absence of better denominations, we will refer to them as the organizers and the advocates. Among the organizers were the small secular NGOs involved with Jubilee such as 50 years is enough, and APIC, as well as the United Church of Christ, and the Maryknoll sisters. They called for total and immediate cancellation of the debts of all southern countries. They essentially rejected entirely the first HIPC initiative because under HIPC, debt relief was subject to the

IMF's Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility which required the implementation of structural adjustment policies. Their positions were close to those of many southern activists. Among the advocates were representatives of the larger US churches and NGOs such as Bread for the World and Oxfam USA. There were more willing to compromise and if they didn't support structural adjustment programs, many of them accepted that debt relief remained attached to conditionalities.

## **2/ Choosing success: when outcomes became a side-effect of the strategy for success**

### ***Drafting a bill calling for “realistic and feasible policy”***

The members of the legislative group were bound together by a common objective: getting something substantial by the end of 2000. While they acknowledged that multilateral institutions were very powerful bureaucracies, the legislative group regarded them as “soft targets”, used by the G7 to deflect attention from their own foreign and economic policy goals. For them, the US Congress was the real target: any international policies on debt relief would need US approval. And US approval meant that US Congress had both to vote in favor of debt relief and to appropriate the funding. For a few months, legislative groups met on average once a week to draft the bill. Because their main objective was to see their Bill passed in the US Congress, their main preoccupation was “acceptability”. What would Congress find acceptable? The drafts of the bills and the emails exchanged within the legislative group show that the advocates were so afraid that their Bill might be rejected – which would equate to failure for them – that they drafted every dimension of the Bill in relation to the Congress. This excerpt from an email sent by a legislative group member to his colleague is significant:

“Is the legislation something that is going to be sold to potential sponsors at cost free because it will never get to a vote? [If yes] What do we get from the exercise other than to fool the Jubilee 2000 members who may think that this is a serious proposition?”

According to legislative group members, a bill on debt relief, if it is meant to be something “serious”, would have to provide the answers to three main questions: 1/ What should be the terms of debt relief?, 2/ What conditionalities, if any, should be attached to debt relief?, 3/ Who should pay and how much?



Because they wanted to win, advocates didn't try to respond directly to those questions. Instead, they substituted those questions with another one: how would Congress respond? As we will see, it is their consideration of what Congress might approve that guided their writing at every stage.

### 1/ The terms of debt relief

Concerning the terms of debt relief, the legislative group felt that getting the Congress to agree to scratch the first HIPC initiative and start afresh would be impossible.

“We felt that realistically, getting the Congress, the Administration, the G7, the IMF and the World Bank to agree to scrap the initiative and start afresh would be an impossible task. The only feasible alternative was to amend the existing framework”<sup>19</sup>

The legislative group thus decided to focus on improving the HIPC initiative by: 1) shortening the waiting period for countries to receive debt relief, 2) redefining debt sustainability, 3) broadening the eligibility criteria.

### 2/ The issue of conditionalities

Conditionalities were one of the most important and controversial issue in the Jubilee campaign. Under the first HIPC initiative, debt relief was conditioned on the implementation of sound macro-economic reforms, considered by many Jubilee 2000 activists to be disastrous. They thus called for delinking debt reduction from economic conditionalities. The legislative group saw it as unrealistic given the solid consensus among the IMF, WB, the G7 and especially the US government in support of economic reforms. So rather to try to delink the two, they spoke in broad terms on changing the nature of conditionality to have a greater focus on poverty reduction.

### 3/ The question of cost

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<sup>19</sup> K.S., “presentation to the joint meeting CIDSE Caritas internationalist Task Group on Debt and Structural Adjustment and Catholic Alliance for Justice and Peace in Southern Africa”, février 2000. Jubilee USA archives.

The question of the costs was a very tiny issue for the legislative group, not surprising if you consider that the legislation was aimed to pass a Republican Congress. In an email addressed to the other legislative group's member, Jerry Flood was wondering:

“If a major aim is to get Congressional sponsors, shouldn't we expect one of their first questions to be how much will all of this cost the budget? –particularly as we have both parties now bragging about being budget balancers”.<sup>20</sup>

Concretely, the legislative group had three choices: 1) make no reference to amounts, 2) put in criteria for determining the amounts, or 3) put specific figures. As Jerry Flood exposed, to leave amount blanks might invite very low numbers especially from Republican. They thus decided to put specific figures in the proposal that would add up to something “within the realm of feasibility”. They of course didn't know exactly what it would be but they felt it would have to be “pretty modest”, “maybe a few hundred million dollars”.

As shown here, the “winning strategy” led to a complete inversion of reasoning. Instead of defining the level of debt sustainability according the financial situation of poor countries, debt sustainability was defined according to the financial views of the United States Congress as perceived by the legislative group.

### ***The Leach Bill: a co-production between advocates and decision makers***

As G.F. from the legislative group told me, drafting the bill was “only sort of the beginning”. The second phase was to “sell it”. In order to get introduced, the Bill needed a sponsor. At first, advocates tried to find a Democrat representative for the job. In February 1998, they meet with Maxine Waters (D-CA) and Barney Frank (D- MA). Maxine Waters agreed to support the Bill and Barney Frank agreed on being the primary sponsor.

But, in December 1998, although the draft of the Bill had just been completed, members of the legislative group decided to modify their approach. Advocates strategically agreed on the fact that the Bill in favor of debt relief should be introduced or at least co-sponsored by a Republican, if possible someone who chaired one of the key committees through which the legislation on debt relief would be sent. In the key committees in the house were the Banking Committee for the bilateral portion of the Bill and the International Relation Committee for the multilateral part.

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<sup>20</sup> Email from G. F., March 10, 1998. Jubilee USA archives.

In the Senate, the Bill would certainly be sent to the Foreign Operation Committee, which was chaired by Senator Jesse Helms (R- NC). It was Representative Jim Leach (R-Iowa), chair of the Banking Committee, who first accepted to sponsor their Bill which and it was introduced to the US Congress on March 11, 1999 under the title « Debt Relief for Poverty Reduction Act ». The identity of the co-sponsors of the Bill bears witness to the successful bipartisan strategy promoted by advocates. The seven co-sponsors consisted of three Republicans and four Democrats.

In reality, this “promotion” phase constituted a prolongation of the writing phase. While the bipartisan strategy was efficient, it also had impacted the content of the draft. The bill transformed throughout the meetings and alliances forged with decision makers. Between December 1998 and March 1999, the bill was redrafted and amended before reaching its final form. Some articles were modified, while other were suppressed or added. The amount of bilateral debt reduction was reduced and the eligibility criteria were hardened. In order to benefit from debt relief, countries needed to prove their willingness to cooperate in the war against drugs, that they didn’t support terrorist groups, and did not have excessive military expenditures. Those policy changes show that what is presented as the legislative group’s proposals are in reality a co-production between advocates and decision makers. Far from being the simple “receptor” of the Jubilee message, members of Congress took part in Jubilee’s message “emission”<sup>21</sup>.

Although the Bill didn’t pass as such in the US Congress, it was very close to what was agreed on in Cologne in June 1999, i.e. HIPC 2.

### **3/Linking attitudes toward success to the actors’ positions in the sphere of social movement players**

Not surprisingly, legislative group’s members claimed victory when HIPC 2 was launched. Does it mean that they were less “progressive” than the other actors involved in the movement? That their values were different than the ones of the organizers? Maybe, but not necessarily. The legislative proposals should not be considered as the expression of the deep preferences of the members of the legislative group but rather as their projection of what “feasibility” would mean

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<sup>21</sup> Although it is not the subject of this paper, this invites us to think differently about the question of influence of social movement by decision makers

in Congress. As success became their main goal, strategies of the legislative group members aligned to what would enable them to claim success. As a consequence, strategies were not chosen in order to get some specific outcomes but outcomes became the by-product of strategies for success.

To understand actors' attitudes toward success (i.e. what would success look like and how important it is to proclaim success), one should take into account their socialization and dispositions. Activists do not arrive at the table with empty hands. To understand the debates over goals and strategies that opposed the legislative group's members and the organizers, one has to take into account the activists' positions within the sphere of social movement players: "It is not only that individuals' and groups' goals are often multiple and sometimes unacknowledged. It is also that the choices that are on the table in a dispute are viewed through the lens of preexisting frameworks of meaning."<sup>22</sup> We better understand their perception of "What would success mean" and "how important it is to be successful" while looking at the legislative group's members' careers (Fillieule 2001, and 2010).

Although small, the legislative group was very resourceful. When it was formed, eight out of nine members belonged to Christian organizations; four on the Catholic side, four on the Protestant side<sup>23</sup>. This religious membership played an important role in two ways: first, it enhanced the legitimacy of the legislative group amongst decision makers. Secondly, churches provided financial and material resources. The legislative group had all its meeting in a building on Maryland Avenue which belonged to several churches. This building was ideally located for those wishing to lobby the Hill--you just cross the street and enter the Capitol building. All of them, without exception, had a college education. They all had degrees in political science, economics, development studies, or theology. Some had held academic positions. J.M., for example, had been a professor of political science and international relation at Georges Washington University. J.B. began his carrier as a lecturer in University of Nebraska. B.K. had been a research assistant at Duke university. Although the others hadn't held formal positions in

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<sup>22</sup> Francesca Poletta quoted by Jan Willem Duyvendak & Olivier Fillieule in "Patterned Fluidity. An Interactionist Perspective as a Tool for Exploring Contentious Politics"

<sup>23</sup> The group was comprised of: J.S. from the Episcopal Church, J.B. from Lutheran World Relief, W.O. from the Presbyterian Church of the USA, et J.M., de Bread for the World, B.K. et G.F. from the US National Catholic Conference of Bishops, K.S. et D.R., from Catholic Relief Services, and L.W., from Oxfam America.

academia, they had contributed to research projects, by joining think tanks, for instance. This was the case of W.O., for example, who was a member of the bureau for the think tank International Relation Center, along with Noam Chomsky, Jonathan Fox, or John Cavanagh.

Legislative group members possess a solid expertise in the fields of economics, finance, and development. G.F, before he joined the Catholic Bishop Conference, had worked for the World Bank for 25 years. He thus combined a strong economic expertise with an in-depth knowledge of the functioning of multilateral institutions.

Last but not least, most of its members held position of responsibility within their organizations, working as policy analysts or heads of policy departments. They can thus be considered “professional advocates”. Their professions explain, at least partially, their attitude toward success – being successful for advocates lies also in their ability of being perceived as “credible” interlocutors of decision makers:

« And those folks that were really excited about the Leach Bill, they wouldn't have possibly accepted, anything, you know, that would make it stronger... They often would say in their language of defending their position... You know... We would be laughed at if we push forward a Leach bill with no SAP (structural adjustment program) at all... We would be laughed at... Right? »<sup>24</sup>

AT the end of the campaign, as HIPC 2 was launched, advocates claimed to have been successful. Claiming success at this moment was a rhetorical position intrinsically linked to their professions, and had nothing or little to do with what had been concretely achieved –and whether or not they approved it.

### **Concluding remarks**

Coming from different disciplines, scholars who investigated the Jubilee campaign have all, in their own way, unveiled some facets of the global mobilization against the debt. In order to understand why Jubilee 2000 was “successful”, they looked at two series of factors: the strategies of the movement and the broader political context in facilitating or constraining both the mobilization and the potential outcomes of the movement. Regarding strategies, they pointed

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with M.B., member of Jubilee USA (organizer)

out the following determinants: the way activists framed the debt issue in moral and religious terms, their ability to produce reliable data which challenged the expertise of the IMF and WB, their capacity to gain the endorsement of various celebrities from Bono to Pope Jean-Paul II. Regarding the broader context, scholars demonstrated that Jubilee 2000 activists were able to benefit from a series of opportunities such as the elections of Gerhard Schröder and Gordon Brown, the nomination of James Wolfensohn as President of the World Bank, and the Asian Debt Crisis.

Nevertheless, these studies presented some structural limits that we try to highlight and partially address. While they were looking for the determinants of Jubilee 2000 success, the success itself remained taken for granted. This had two main consequences: an overestimation of the success and an underestimation of the conflicts that divided the movement. When they didn't fit in the model or fell out of the scope of the analysis, conflicts and power imbalances within the movements remained overlooked.

This paper thus aimed at revisiting the literature on Jubilee 2000 by taking seriously the conflicts among its participants. We have argued that rethinking the success in its strategic dimension might constitute a complementary approach to the literature that considers the strategies leading to the success. In the Jubilee USA case study, we have seen that activists have different interpretations not mainly of success itself but also of the importance of the ability of claiming success. The case of the legislative group has shown that for some actors, this ability to claim success became strategically more important than the concrete outcomes a social movement achieves.

Reframing the question of success seems important not just analytically, but also "ethically". What scholars have to say about a movement -although the audience might be small!- becomes part of its legacy. By conferring success to a mobilization, scholars, whether they aim to or not, take sides and participate in legitimizing its outcome.

In the case of Jubilee 2000, conferring success means neglecting the views of many southern activists. In her dissertation, Paula Goldman tells the following story: "In the middle of a presentation about the debt campaign I gave at an academic conference in 2008, I began to hear murmuring loudly at the back of the room. At the end of my talk, L.N. (a Filipino activist, member of Jubilee South) publicly lambasted me for several minutes, in a Filipina accent that

had been muted from years of world travel, for not including enough of the global southern perspective in my history”<sup>25</sup>.

Jubilee 2000 studies are not an exception, and the position of southern actors in international activism remains the blind spot of the analysis. An overwhelming majority of transnational studies have been undertaken in the North, or have focused on northern activists (Agrikoliansky and Sommier 2005; della Porta and Tarrow 2005). And few scholars have addressed the question of participation of the South in contentious international political issues (with some commendable exceptions, such as Wood 2005; Rothman and Oliver 2002; Siméant, Pommerolle 2010; Conway, 2012).

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<sup>25</sup> Paula Goldman, *From Margin to Mainstream*, op.cit., p. 182