

NGOs, Civil Society, and the Public Sphere

Professor Sabine Lang

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Professor Sabine Lang : NGOs, Civil Society, and the Public Sphere before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised NGOs, Civil Society, and the Public Sphere:

Nongovernmental organizations act on behalf of citizens in politics and society. Yet many question their legitimacy and ask who they speak for. This book investigates how NGOs can become stronger advocates for citizens and better

representatives of their interests. Sabine Lang analyzes the choices that NGOs face in their work for policy change between working in institutional settings and practicing public advocacy that incorporates constituents' voices. Whereas most books on NGOs focus on policy effectiveness, using approaches that treat accountability largely as a matter of internal performance measurements, Lang instead argues that it is ultimately several public accountabilities that inform NGO legitimacy. The case studies in this book use empirical research from the European Union, the United States, and Germany to point to governments' role in redefining the conditions for NGOs' public advocacy.

'Sabine Lang has done a fantastic service to both researchers and policy advocates concerned with civil society and civic participation. Clearly distinguishing between group policy advantages bargained in backrooms and democratic gains made by giving citizens real opportunities for public voice, Lang shows how NGOs navigate the trade-offs and synergies between these two outcomes.' Myra Marx Ferree, Alice H. Cook Professor of Sociology, University of Wisconsin, Madison and author of *Varieties of Feminism: German Gender Politics in Global Perspective*' A tour de force. What is impressive is Lang's ability to navigate at so many levels - theory, research, and practice; the local to the transnational; past and present; description and critique - all while weaving a consistent and compelling argument supported by both aggregate and field-based research. The result is a major contribution to our understanding of NGOs, both in terms of their past development and role and for how they are (and should be) situated in twenty-first-century governance.' Michael X. Delli Carpini, Dean, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania' Sabine Lang's research has long provided clarity to the relation between NGOs, social movements, and the state. This book continues that project by giving us a theoretical basis for understanding emerging collaborations between states and NGOs, and it argues that public engagement with these new collaborations produces a strong civil society. Finally, an insightful, smart, and valuable contribution to a political theory for our times.' Inderpal Grewal, Yale University' An impressive critical study of NGOs that offers a novel solution to their growing separation from the public advocacy for which they were designed. Lang brings critical theoretical insight to bear on issues of democratic participation, using many different kinds of empirical evidence to argue her case. A masterful and original piece of scholarship by a critical thinker who spans the worlds of academia and policy in ways that, one hopes, can make a difference.' Joan W. Scott, Harold F. Linder Professor of Social Science, Institute for Advanced Study About the Author Sabine Lang is Associate Professor of International Studies in the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle, USA.