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THE VOICE OF WHICH PEOPLE?

TRANSNATIONAL ADVOCACY NETWORKS AND GOVERNANCE NETWORKS AT THE UNITED NATIONS

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This is a work in progress. Feedback welcome.

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Abstract

We can expand our understanding of the politics of global networks and how they relate to the United Nations, by closely examining the concept of a network. There is a long-established International Relations literature focusing on the more institutionalised, international non-governmental organisations. Keck and Sikkink have drawn on the Sociology literature covering social movements in global politics to discuss transnational advocacy networks. It is also necessary to distinguish a third major category: governance networks. They operate to enhance the participation rights of NGOs in intergovernmental organisations. Differences in membership and functions of the two types of networks can be clearly specified analytically, but real-world networks may have some features from each ideal-type. However, if the distinction between them is not understood and respected by those participating in a network, there can be major political conflicts that threaten the legitimacy of the network. Three case-studies – on the NGO Steering Committee at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, on the World Conference Against Racism and on the World Summit on Sustainable Development – are used to demonstrate how crises can arise when the fundamental contradictions between engaging in collective advocacy and adopting a governance role are not recognised.

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Introduction: What is a Non-Governmental Organisation?

This paper will use the following definition.

A non-governmental organisation is any organisation that has, or is eligible to have, consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Thus, the question, what is an NGO, becomes what are the requirements for a group to be recognised by the UN. Because consultative status is granted almost automatically to the overwhelming majority of groups that apply to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), this is a broad definition. The groups may vary in size from mass organisations that mobilise large segments of civil society to small numbers of people. They may speak on behalf of the poor and the oppressed or they may represent privileged élites. They may engage in advocacy; run operational programmes; provide a great variety of public services; promote and sustain many types of social, economic and political co-operation; or raise funds for other organisations to spend. They may perform these activities for part of society or for society as a whole. They are not limited to groups concerned with women's rights, general human rights, the environment, development, peace or other progressive causes. Their values may be of any type: whether progressive, conventional or reactionary; religious or secular; nationalist or cosmopolitan. They may be in favour of globalisation or part of the anti-globalisation movement. They are not different from, but part of, social movements.¹ If they seek change, their strategies may be radical or reformist. They can act as insider or outsider groups. They may be wholly or partially government funded or refuse to accept government funds. They may be established by governments, collaborate to varying degrees with governments or be in conflict with some or all governments. Similarly, they may be established by commercial interests, collaborate with business or totally reject the capitalist system. Most groups are seen, by most others, as being legitimate social and political actors. However, even when we exclude criminal groups, such as the mafia or terrorists, some of the NGOs at the UN are not regarded as legitimate by other NGOs. They may be from the North, from transition societies or from the South. Their geographical scope may be global, regional, national or local. They establish the relationships that give concrete reality to civil

¹ This point is implicitly recognised by some sociologists, when they refer to "transnational social movement organisations" as a sub-set of international NGOs. See Jackie Smith, "Building Bridges or Building Walls? Explaining Regionalization Among Transnational Social Movement Organizations", *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, Vol. 10, 2005, pp. 251-69, or J. Smith, R. Pagnucco, and W. Romeril, "Transnational Social Movement Organisations in the Global Political Arena", *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 1994, Volume 5, pp. 121-54.

society. Some analysts may wish to define certain civil society groups, notably faith communities and trade unions, as being separate from the world of NGOs, but, for the purposes of studying global politics and diplomacy, there is no logical basis for making such distinctions. There can be no generally agreed definition of a “true” NGO that excludes other groups. There is no such thing as a typical NGO. The only exclusions are those that distinguish the three sectors: governments, markets and civil society. NGOs are any organised groups of people that are not direct agents of individual governments, not pursuing criminal activities, not engaged in violent activities and not primarily established for profit-making purposes.²

Types of Global NGO Networks

The concept of a network is popular now in the study of global politics among both academics and NGO activists, but it is rarely defined by those who use it. One strand of thought about the concept has been rather formal scientific work in sociology on social network analysis, which is comparable to its use in business studies, communications theory and computing. Using this approach, a network is defined as a set of channels along which there are flows of materials, people, energy, finance or data between nodes that receive, process or further transmit the flows.³ A social network is then a network in which the nodes are people or organisations and the flows are predominantly information, including arguments about values. A social network may also transmit finance or even on occasions energy, materials or people. This formal scientific approach lies behind the foremost current sociological work on networks, by Manuel Castells, which covers the “information age”, the “networked society” and the power of new identities mobilised by the networks of social change that are the new social movements.⁴ Castells tends to be over-impressed by contemporary technology, exaggerating the significance of the speed of communications and elaborating nebulous concepts, such as “timeless time”.⁵ A much richer, more sophisticated, well researched body of sociological work on social movements started in the 1960s with questions concerning the processes by which individuals come to join movements. From the

² Both this definition and the paragraph discussing it are taken from the conclusion to Chapter 1 of P. Willetts, *Non-Governmental Organizations in World Politics*, (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2011).

³ This is the current author's own definition, derived from a background in Systems Science. The definition implies a network is synonymous with a system.

⁴ See the three-volume work, by M. Castells, *The Information Age. Economy, Society and Culture*, particularly Volume I, *The Rise of the Network Society*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, second ed., 2000), and Volume II, *The Power of Identity*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997). For the influence of the scientific language, note Castells' definition, “A network is a set of interconnected nodes”, in Vol. I, p. 501.

⁵ Castells, Vol. I, Chp. 7.

1980s, the concept of networks became an important component of social movement theory, to explain why specific individuals were recruited into collective action and how movements mobilise resources.⁶ However, this literature seems to take the concept of a network for granted and not discuss how it might be defined. The obvious response is to consider whether a definition from the formal scientific approach can be used in conjunction with the social movements literature.

The two approaches may be treated as being compatible, provided two related caveats are noted. Firstly, the abstract definition of a network is of such generality that it could cover a linear chain or a hierarchy. On the other hand, the concept of a network is attractive, particularly to anarchists, feminists and many on the left, each for their own rather different reasons, precisely because it is seen as offering an alternative, non-hierarchical model for organising collective action. This distinction between hierarchies and networks is artificial and of no practical value. While there are some relatively hierarchical organisations, such as prisons, armies and businesses that emphasise line-management, the hierarchy only applies to formal decision-making authority. Interactions in the prison canteen, in the army officers' mess or around the company photocopier cut across the formal hierarchy. Equally, no unstructured network will function without some organisational focus, providing leadership, even if the leadership is unacknowledged. As an important feminist, Jo Freeman, has argued, there is no such thing as a structureless group.⁷ Organisations and networks have varying degrees of hierarchy. All have some mixture of vertical and horizontal communications. Similarly in the scientific work on networks, there is little interest in pure hierarchies. The emphasis is on analysing the systemic properties of networks through identification of feedback processes that generate complexity and unpredictability in how flows move or what their impact might be. As feedback, by definition cannot arise without the possibility of flows returning to the point where change has been initiated and usually occurring through multiple paths, a hierarchy is not an example of a complex network.⁸ Thus, despite the hypothetical possibility of pure hierarchies being contrasted with unstructured networks, neither pure form exists in the real-world of global civil

⁶ For a thorough review of networks in social movement theory, see D. della Porta and M. Diani, *Social Movements. An Introduction*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999). Nominally, Castells draws on the social movements literature, but it is not very evident in his work.

⁷ The author is grateful to Kevin Gillan for pointing me to Jo Freeman, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness", *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, - Vol. 17, 1972-73, pp. 151-165. There is an interesting note on the history of this article and an amended version of the text, at www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm.

⁸ A formal definition of a non-hierarchical network is of a network containing at least three nodes, with an average of two or more channels connecting to each node and at least one set of connections generating a feedback process.

society. The concept of a network applies to systems of relationships that have both some top-down structure and some paths for feedback.

Secondly, a definition of a social network based on flows of information can be used to cover an institution. For Castells that seems to be acceptable, when he cites the European Union as a political network.⁹ For other writers on social movements, a network clearly is taken as being a non-institutionalised set of relationships. Again, attempting concrete application of the concepts shows it is difficult to draw a clear line between them. Chetley characterised the International Baby Foods Action Network, when it was formed in October 1979, “as an ‘illusion’, in the sense that it had no fundamental organisation, no officials, no formal membership. It both existed and did not exist at the same time.”¹⁰ Did it cease to be a network and become an institution when a few years later it had raised a small budget, organised training seminars, published a regular *IBFAN News* and established a formal listed of affiliates, who elected a Co-ordinating Council and employed a General Administrator?¹¹ There is a spectrum from a diffuse network to an established institution. A diffuse network is more subject to change in its active participants over periods of a few years, more informal in the exercise of leadership, more liable to modify its structure, more variable in the level of its activities and more diverse in its range of activities at different times than is an established institution. From this perspective, we can define networks in global politics as consisting of individuals and NGOs who engage in transnational communication about global issues, in diffuse structures with limited hierarchy and low institutionalisation.

Networks have evoked great interest in the study of non-governmental organisations in global politics, but it is not so often acknowledged there are some fundamental differences between different networks. In particular, not all networks are engaged in joint political action. Five types may be distinguished. Historically, there have been the relatively institutionalised *international non-governmental organisations* (INGOs), many of which have registered to obtain consultative status at the UN. Most INGOs are highly politically active, but some are solely concerned with co-operation between their members and choose not to apply for consultative status. Some, but not all, of the older INGOs are sufficiently hierarchical,

⁹ Castells, Vol. I, p. 501.

¹⁰ A. Chetley, *The Politics of Baby Foods. Successful Challenges to an International Marketing Strategy*, (London: Frances Pinter, 1986), p. 71.

¹¹ Chetley, pp. 101-5.

bureaucratic and institutionalised for the term, network, to be inappropriate. In the past, the costs of communications were high enough that INGOs were not formed unless the need was felt for several areas of co-operation. Now that communications are so much cheaper, much looser networks without any institutional structure can be created. The simplest form is an *information network*, using an e-mail list server and/or a website to enable its participants to communicate about social, cultural, professional, scientific, economic or political issues. Administration of such networks may be undertaken by a separate, independent NGO, created solely for the purpose of information-sharing, or it may be located within a specific, national NGO or an INGO. Usually, it maintains its reputation for reliability by not being politically active and not applying for consultative status. The focus of the literature in Sociology overwhelmingly has been on *transnational advocacy networks* that are defined in terms of the commitment of the members to campaigning, as a diverse coalition, sharing and promoting some common values. *Issue caucuses* are similar, except each of them operates solely within a specific global intergovernmental organisation (IGO) and they exist temporarily, for the duration of the relevant meetings. The NGO participants usually do not maintain any network between sessions and the composition of each caucus varies from one session to the next.¹² Finally, there are *governance networks* that are designed to facilitate and expand NGO participation in policy-making processes. They will be defined, below, as networks that do not attempt to influence political decision-making, except on the narrow question of participation rights for all NGOs. Although they share with issue caucuses the characteristic of being linked to a specific IGO, governance networks differ in having some continuity and in not having any common political goals.¹³

The first term, INGO, is in general use and may be applied to any form of transnational network that has institutional continuity. The other four types of networks have been defined as ideal-types. In practice, within each real-world network, transnational NGOs will engage in some mixture of internal co-operation to support their members, information-sharing, political advocacy, caucusing and governance activities. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that the categories are fundamentally different from each other. Indeed, to some extent they may be incompatible with each other. In particular, activists engaging with the UN system have severely damaged their advocacy capabilities by failing to

¹² The term, *issue caucus*, is rarely used in academic work, but is common among transnational activists.

¹³ These distinctions were first made in Willetts, 2011, pp. 120-23.

recognise the difference between advocacy and governance activities. The fundamental contradiction is that advocacy involves competition with opponents whereas asserting governance rights involves co-operation with opponents. This paper will examine the differing roles of INGOs, advocacy networks and governance networks in global intergovernmental organisations. Information networks will not be considered further, because they are not the basis for political action. Issue caucuses will not be discussed, because their temporary nature, their lack of formal membership and their ability to mutate prevents them being a serious cause of conflict. In as much as caucuses do gain any continuity, they can be considered as advocacy networks.¹⁴ Neither information networks nor caucuses seek to gain consultative status at the UN.

International Non-Governmental Organisations

When does an NGO become an international NGO? The Union of International Associations, who publish the authoritative reference work, *The Yearbook of International Organisations*, use a tight definition. For them, an international NGO (INGO) must aim to operate, have members and receive substantial contributions to its budget from at least three countries. In practice, the majority of INGOs have a distinct presence in many more than three countries. On this basis, there are nearly 8,400 INGOs, with some 1,800 being global INGOs and 6,600 being “regionally oriented”.¹⁵ From the list of NGOs in consultative status with the UN, it would appear that just over half of these global INGOs are registered with the UN.¹⁶ The INGOs are all, by definition, established institutions. They work through a variety of different structures. Some are simply groupings of NGOs from different countries that co-operate globally. Where there is a strong collective identity, as with the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), the members are a single national section from each country. Where there is a broader common purpose, as with International Council on Social Welfare, there can be more than one NGO joining from the same country. Some INGOs are themselves formed by INGOs, such as the International Social Science Council, which brings together 15 different INGOs for the various

¹⁴ We will see that in practice the term caucus may involve confusion between advocacy and governance roles.

¹⁵ See for example, Union of International Associations, *Yearbook of International Organisations, Edition 49, 2012-2013*, (Leiden: Brill, 2012) Vol. 5, Figure 2.1.

¹⁶ In 2011, there were 2,562 NGOs in General or Special Status. Deleting national and regional NGOs leaves some 500 NGOs. Those on the Roster are mainly regional, but nevertheless there are still some 450 additional specialist global NGOs on the Roster. Thus, the rough total of 950 non-regional INGOs at the UN is about half the number in the UIA *Yearbook*. (The data is imprecise because of the ambiguities in the nature of many of the NGOs.)

social science disciplines. Others may be based on more-local groups. For example, Rotary International encompasses some 34,000 local Rotary Clubs, which have a total of 1.2 million individual members.¹⁷ International professional NGOs can have two types of members: the International Bar Association has over 200 national legal associations and more than 45,000 individual lawyers as members.¹⁸ A significant number of INGOs are composed of commercial companies, such as the International Air Transport Association (IATA), or other private bodies, such as the International Association of Universities. While there is great diversity in the types of members and the purposes of these organisations, they all have a clear structure, with a permanent global headquarters and formal membership, employing professional staff to run their activities. They are established institutions.

From 1945 to 1996, there was a clear distinction between international NGOs and “national” NGOs that predominantly worked in a single country. Since then two processes have blurred this distinction. In 1996, the UN amended its Statute for NGOs, to allow national NGOs, including national sections of INGOs, to obtain consultative status.¹⁹ As a result, several hundred national NGOs have become participants in UN policy-making processes. In addition, from the mid-1990s, the Internet developed substantially, making e-mail communications and the world-wide web available to any person or organisation in a large city and increasingly to those based in smaller towns as well.²⁰ In particular, the UN has suddenly become a highly transparent political system, enabling anyone with access to the Internet to follow most of its proceedings and the related documentation, from his or her own desk. This has meant that local or national NGOs can now engage in transnational activities without having to have substantial resources at their disposal and without having to use an INGO as an intermediary. These changes have weakened INGOs, to the extent that they are no longer gatekeepers to the lobbying process nor the sole source of expertise on the working of the UN system nor the sole participants in the system.

¹⁷ Rotary International, “About Us”, www.rotary.org/en/AboutUs, November 2012.

¹⁸ International Bar Association, “About the IBA”, www.ibanet.org/About_the_IBA/About_the_IBA.aspx, November 2012.

¹⁹ Compare paras. 7 and 9 of ECOSOC Resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968 with paras. 4-8 of ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996. Prior to 1996, a handful of national NGOs did gain consultative status, but this was explicitly considered to be an exceptional privilege and any requests from national NGOs normally were not considered.

²⁰ The introduction of Android-based smartphones in 2003 and iPhones in 2007 has now extended Internet access to virtually all areas of the world. In developing countries users do not need to own such phones, as they can be hired for short periods of time.

It would be wrong to deduce there has been an overall decline in INGOs relative to national NGOs. Some, such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), accept some of their affiliates gaining UN consultative status independently. However, others, such as Amnesty International, regard their global organisation, including all the national sections, as a single coherent organisation, with the result that none of their national sections are registered. By their nature, the national sections of most INGOs are more locally focused and have little reason to allocate resources to work independently at the UN on a regular basis. In practice, few of the affiliates of INGOs have opted to have their own consultative status. The great majority of national NGOs that are members of an international NGO still expect to relate to the UN via this organisation. National NGOs that are not members of an INGO are even less likely to have an interest in the UN, unless they have a specific transnational focus in their work. The numbers of national NGOs that took up the opportunity to gain consultative status grew slowly initially. After a decade, by the end of 2005, most countries still had no NGOs at all registered for consultative status and the majority of NGOs at the UN were INGOs. However, by 2011, over half of all the countries have at least one NGO. There are 156 national NGOs from the United States, 44 from Canada, 38 from China, 34 from the UK, 30 from India, 26 from Italy, 24 from Australia, 20 each from Russia and Tunisia and just twelve other countries have ten or more. Most countries have just one or two NGOs at the UN.²¹ Thus the registration of national NGOs that could theoretically totally overload the working of the consultative arrangements has not remotely approached its maximum potential.

All INGOs are institutions and most are relatively hierarchical, but even those with commercial members are not as hierarchical as individual companies or government bureaucracies. Members of most INGOs are free to resign their membership, with no threat to their own continued existence as a political actor, if they feel there are insufficient benefits from continued membership. The exceptions to both these points are the global bodies, with a collective identity that have a single national organisation in each country where they work. This applies to campaigning INGOs. A national section of Amnesty International or of WWF would lose a great deal in terms of public recognition, status and the ability to mobilise

²¹ The index page, www.city.ac.uk/p.willetts/NGOS/NGO-HOME.HTM, provides access to the UN lists of NGOs with consultative status in various years since 2001, (while the UN website only has the current list). The data quoted is for 2011. The figures must be taken as being approximate, as they were solely derived from the name of the organisation.

resources if they were to resign and lose the right to operate under the collective name. Similarly, it applies to professional bodies. In 1983 the Soviet Society of Psychiatrists and Neuropathologists were forced to leave the World Psychiatric Association (because they had collaborated with the detention of dissidents in psychiatric hospitals), with the result that they lost their ability to command professional respect. It is interesting to note that, for some INGOs, their strength with respect to their members, can lie in their status rather than control over resources or the provision of services.

While the environment for INGOs has changed, the INGOs have also themselves changed. They have taken part in the communications revolution. Their activities are known to a wider audience of members and non-members than previously through their own websites and their publications have a wider distribution through Internet sales and Internet downloads. INGOs still provide the services that led to them being formed at various points in the last hundred years and generally they do so using modern technology with greater efficiency and at less cost than in the past. They facilitate communication between their members. They collect, analyse, publish and distribute information. They are repositories of experience and hence sources for learning and training. They assist and subsidise their weaker members. They provide common services, but at a cheaper rate through use of their collective bargaining power and the economies of scale. They undertake joint projects that, in most cases, the members would not be capable of undertaking on their own. They enhance the status of their members through association with the wider organisation. They lobby governments and intergovernmental organisations to promote the interests of their members. Of course, no INGO undertakes all these activities and some do only a few. IATA shares information, provides common services to the airlines and is a lobby for their commercial interests. IPPF is more focused on sharing experience among its members, particularly on a regional basis, and providing resources for their members in developing countries. However, like IATA, it is an important commercial actor: it pools the buying power of its members, to obtain contraceptive supplies. Similarly, it is a major lobby, in promoting family planning programmes, both of its members and of governments.

In as much as INGOs are hierarchical and are institutionalised, they differ from loosely structured networks. In as much as INGOs promote flows of information, they are a type of network. When INGOs are solely concerned with providing

services for their members and promoting communication between their members, they are very different from transnational advocacy networks. However, when they are campaigning, running websites, seeking and gaining media coverage, mobilising support from their ultimate members (individual people) and organising collective action, they are acting in the same manner as transnational advocacy networks. A few INGOs identify their primary purpose as being to act in this way, with the result that they are both INGOs and transnational advocacy networks. We might call bodies such as Amnesty, WFUNA and WWF transnational advocacy institutions. They do differ from looser networks, in being more centralised and having a formal collective policy, defined statements of their values and a process for deciding their political strategy.

Transnational Advocacy Networks

The brief period of heightened activism of the anti-globalisation movement from 1999 to 2001 caught the imagination of the news media, inspired activists, intimidated politicians and made the existence of transnational networks evident to the general public.²² This stimulated academic work on transnational activism, as did pioneering work by Keck and Sikkink.²³ They emphasise the mobilisation of support for values through targeted campaigns, to influence both policy outcomes and the terms and nature of political debate. Keck and Sikkink define a transnational advocacy network as “those relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse and dense exchanges of information and services”. “They are organised to promote causes, principled ideas and norms.”²⁴ This definition is compatible with the more general definition of a network offered above. By restricting themselves to

²² If it seems to be exaggerated to suggest politicians were intimidated, consider the extreme security measures at the G8 summit in Genoa in June 2001 and the decision to hold the WTO Fourth Ministerial Conference in November 2001 in Doha, a place that would be inaccessible to protesters.

²³ M. E. Keck and K. Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998). For other work on social movements in global politics, see J. Bandy and J. Smith (eds.), *Coalitions Across Borders. Transnational Protest and the Neo-Liberal Order*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005); S. Batliwala and L. D. Brown (eds.), *Transnational Civil Society*, (Bloomfield CT: Kumarian Press, 2006); M. Edwards and J. Gaventa (eds.), *Global Citizen Action*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2001); A. M. Florini (ed.), *The Third Force. The Rise of Transnational Civil Society*, (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment, 2000); S. Khagram, J. V. Riker and K. Sikkink (eds.), *Restructuring World Politics. Transnational Social Movements, Networks and Norms*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); D. della Porta and S. Tarrow (eds.), *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005); J. Smith, C. Chatfield and R. Pagnucco (eds.), *Transnational Movements in Global Politics*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997); J. Smith and H. Johnston (eds.), *Globalization and Resistance. Transnational Dimensions of Social Movements*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002); S. Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and P. Willetts, “From Stockholm to Rio and beyond: the impact of the environmental movement on the United Nations consultative arrangements for NGOs”, *Review of International Studies*, 1996, Vol. 22, pp. 57-80.

²⁴ Keck and Sikkink, p. 1 and p. 8, respectively.

advocacy networks, Keck and Sikkink also add “shared values” and their promotion, as an essential qualification of the type of network they are analysing. Their work on advocacy networks is important because it brings together a variety of propositions that challenge orthodox theorising about international relations. It gives theoretical importance to individual activists and to NGOs. It rejects the separation between domestic and transnational politics. It stresses the centrality of values, norms and social relations. What is also implied in the empirical work on advocacy networks, but is not expressed in theoretical terms, is that intergovernmental organisations, such as the UN and the World Bank, are significant political systems, generating policy outcomes that have some impact throughout the world.

The prototype for global advocacy networks was formed two decades prior to the rise of anti-globalisation and achieved campaigning successes prior to “the information age”. The International Baby Food Action Network was able to mobilise healthcare professionals, nutritionists, development activists, women’s groups, anti-corporate activists, religious groups and community organisations without any e-mails or websites. Individuals could not easily have direct engagement with the network, but millions of people were engaged indirectly via the various types of NGOs that chose to publicise the question. The significance of the network was in making the death of babies, due to bottle-feeding, salient to very different types of people for very different reasons via linkages to the values that were most salient to each particular NGO. A nurse could take a technical medical view of how to save babies’ lives, while a nationalist could denounce the exploitation of developing countries by Western companies and a feminist could focus on the right of women to be responsible for their bodies and their children’s upbringing. Efficient postal services, the new transnational direct-dialling telephone systems and cheap air travel established good enough communications to allow a campaign directed at the World Health Assembly to achieve the endorsement in May 1981 of an International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes. The code, which banned public advertising of dried milk and other activities that discourage breast-feeding, was adopted against the intense opposition of the transnational corporations and the Reagan administration in the USA.²⁵ This campaign illustrated one of the key theoretical points of the advocacy networks literature. Support for highly salient abstract values, such as a baby’s right to life, could be mobilised by

²⁵ For a full account of the campaign and the text of the Code, see A. Chetley, *op. cit.*

supposedly powerless actors, to counter and overcome the economic interests of major TNCs and the ideological commitment of a “superpower” government.²⁶ The success of IBFAN was followed directly by some of the same actors forming similar networks, such as Health Action International and the Pesticides Action Network.²⁷

The first step towards the creation of the contemporary advocacy networks was learning to use the Internet. However, NGOs were not merely passive adopters of a new technology. Because they understood the benefits of creating networks to mobilise support and because they recognised the potential of electronic communications, NGOs were crucial in the creation of the Internet. Once the first personal computers became available, development, human rights, environmental and peace groups started networking across several countries. Interdoc was formed in 1982 as a private network of 25 development NGOs from around the world. PeaceNet was formed in the USA in 1985 and GreenNet was formed in Britain in the same year. They were the world’s first Internet service providers. By 1990 they had established a global network for e-mail and electronic conferences and the main NGO communication nodes had formed the Association for Progressive Communication (APC). If the key feature of the Internet is its use as a communication system for the public, the NGO pioneers were important in providing access for the public and in actively developing “gateways” to connect the different networks to each other. From 1990 to 1992, during the preparations for the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, the UN used the APC servers to make public the documentation for the Summit. Then, the APC provided the first public demonstration of the Internet as a tool for interactive political mobilisation, by connecting NGOs around the world to the NGOs active in Rio during the Summit. Another major innovation was the production by a Canadian NGO of the first edition of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* and its posting on the APC servers. This enabled daily reporting and commentary on the conference proceedings to be available around the world. After the Summit, NGOs became participants in the Global Environment Facility and the World Bank used the APC to make GEF documentation available. All this was achieved *before* the first web page had been written. NGOs were forming information networks *before* the World Bank, the UN, governments or TNCs had developed any awareness of the potential of the

²⁶ For more on the ability of NGOs to mobilise support for their values, see P. Willetts, “Who cares about the environment?”, in J. Vogler and M. Imber (eds.), *The Environment and International Relations*, (London: Routledge, 1996) and “Understanding the place of NGOs in global politics”, in Willetts, 2011.

²⁷ Neither HAI nor PAN mobilised the same level of support as IBFAN, but they did have important successes. For example, see P. Hough, *The Global Politics of Pesticides*, (London: Earthscan, 1998).

Internet and environmentalists were at the forefront of the learning process. APC was not itself an advocacy network. It provided facilities for the creation of information networks and to enhance the communication capabilities of advocacy networks.²⁸ The desire to form and strengthen advocacy networks was a major contribution to the creation of the Internet.²⁹

During the 1990s, the main impact of advocacy networks was in the environmental policy domain, with the conclusion of eight major multilateral agreements: the Framework Convention on Climate Change in May 1992 and more importantly its Kyoto Protocol in December 1997; the Convention on Biological Diversity in June 1992 and its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in January 2000; the Convention to Combat Desertification in October 1994; the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in August 1995, the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent for trade in pesticides and other dangerous chemicals in September 1998 and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants in May 2001. In addition, there has been a high impact on global policy implementation. For example, the Save Narmada Movement mobilised in India against the Sardar Sarovar Dam and achieved sufficient global support for the World Bank to withdraw its funding of the dam in June 1993. The success of the transnational environmental advocacy networks should not be exaggerated. Against the list of agreements and policy changes achieved must be set the failure to obtain a convention to protect rainforests, due to opposition primarily from the Brazilian and Malaysian governments, and the failure to reduce the extraordinary, excessive and exceptional utilisation of energy within the USA. Furthermore, the new networks were not achieving such successes for the first time. One may note that in pre-Internet times international NGOs had achieved similar successes, with the negotiation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands for the maintenance of waterfowl habitats in February 1971; the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme in December 1972; the negotiation of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species in March 1973; the negotiation of

²⁸ As APC had no role in determining the nature of the information transmitted by its subscribers on its networks, it was itself neither an information network nor an advocacy network. It was a loosely structured INGO offering services to its members and their subscribers.

²⁹ For a detailed discussion of the contribution by NGOs to the creation of the Internet, see "NGOs, networking and the creation of the Internet", in Willetts, 2011. See also R. Bissio, "Occupying New Space for Public Life: Politics and people in a networked society", in J. W. Foster and A. Anand (eds.), *Whose World is it Anyway? Civil Society, the United Nations and the Multilateral Future*, (Ottawa: The United Nations Association in Canada, 1999), pp. 429-58. In 1989, Bissio initiated Chasque, the Uruguayan member of APC. For the point that APC was ahead of the World Bank, UNEP and UNDP in using e-mail and electronic conferences, see Bissio, p. 434 and for the lead taken by Southern NGOs see pp. 438-9.

the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer in March 1985 and its more important Montreal Protocol in September 1987; the transformation of the International Whaling Commission from a commercially oriented organisation to a conservation organisation in 1986; the agreement on the Basle Convention on Hazardous Wastes in March 1989; and the blocking of exploration for minerals in Antarctica in the late 1980s.

In the human rights policy domain, there has been a similar pattern of dramatic change in the 1990s. The impact of NGOs on the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights in June 1993 and subsequently at the Beijing World Conference on Women in September 1995 transformed the global human rights discourse by integrating women's rights into human right debates. In particular, violence against women was firmly established on the global political agenda. Also at Vienna, NGOs overcame the opposition of most governments to the creation of a UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the consequent enhancing of the human rights work of the UN Secretariat. Dissatisfaction of NGOs with the operations of the Commission on Human Rights and a crucial initiative from the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, led to the conversion of the Commission into a higher status Human Rights Council, meeting more frequently, with a wider mandate to monitor the record of *all* governments, under Universal Periodic Reviews. Large scale global advocacy networks have immensely strengthened the ability of NGOs to influence the committees monitoring the human rights conventions, notably the work of the Children's Rights Information Network has become central to the review of government reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. As with environmental advocacy, there have been failures. The record on human rights must be set against continued abuse in many countries and the shocking use or collaboration with torture by the US administration and European governments in the "war on terrorism". In addition, the advent of modern networking is not as significant as the record since 1990 suggests. The major revolution in the global politics of human rights occurred earlier, with the completion of the negotiations of the conventions against genocide in 1948, on refugees in July 1951, on racial discrimination in 1966, on discrimination against women in 1979, on torture in 1984 and on the rights of the child in 1989. The fundamental shift, from a Commission on Human Rights that ignored complaints by individuals and by NGOs, to one that considers the governments with the worst records, was initiated with a new procedure in May 1970 to examine "consistent pattern of gross and reliably

attested violations of human rights”³⁰ and the appointment of the first country-specific Special Rapporteur in March 1979.³¹

There are lessons from the record on environmental and human rights advocacy. Large-scale, effective, global mobilisation does not guarantee success. The new global networks are not necessarily more effective than the older established international NGOs. The failure to limit destruction of the marine environment by Japanese and European industrial fishing, the failure to stop the building of the Narmada dams and the failure to end torture, even in Western countries, show that it is possible to win the global policy debate, without necessarily achieving corresponding policy implementation at the local level. In all situations, the impact of networks is affected by the positions of other political actors at the global, national and local levels.

Global networking on development questions came somewhat later. While environmental and human rights NGOs were formed in the nineteenth century and there were strong INGOs by the 1950s, development NGOs and INGOs did not exist until the 1960s. There was some development-related work by NGOs, in the form of health programmes, technical assistance and humanitarian relief during the colonial era, but none of this was of sufficient breadth for these NGOs to be described as development NGOs.³² In response to decolonisation, some existing NGOs and INGOs started to take up development issues. For example, Oxfam and CARE were both started as relief organisations at the end of the Second World War, but did not become development organisations until the early 1960s. The formation of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies in 1962 was an example of existing INGOs expanding their scope, by three INGOs concerned with migration and refugees merging and taking on development issues.³³ Later on, new networks with a focus on development were created. The International Coalition for Development Action formed in 1976 and the Third World Network in 1984 were examples of new advocacy networks, but neither went on to seize the mobilisation opportunities provided by the Internet. In ICDA’s case, this was surprising, as in 1982 they had initiated Interdoc, the first global electronic NGO

³⁰ UN Economic and Social Council Resolution 1503(XLVIII) of 27 May 1970.

³¹ The appointment of a Special Rapporteur on Chile by Commission on Human Rights Resolution 11 (XXXV) of 6 March 1979, endorsed by ECOSOC Decision 1979/32 of 10 May 1979.

³² See C. Chabbot, “Development INGOs”, in J. Boli and G. M. Thmoas (eds.), *Constructing World Culture. International Nongovernmental Organizations since 1875*, (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

³³ See “A Brief History of ICVA”, www.icva.ch/begin_40.html. Similarly, Oxfam was formed in 1942 as a famine relief and refugee NGO and did not take up development until the 1960s.

network.³⁴ In TWN's case, they have always concentrated primarily on their own research and advocacy from their headquarters in Malaysia, with less extensive operations in a few other developing countries. They have not sought to become an interactive network nor to mobilise a wider coalition with a presence in all developing countries under their own name.

In 1994, the Network for Global Economic Justice, was formed as a coalition of over 200 diverse US organisations. It campaigned under the slogan *Fifty Years is Enough*. Some of its adherents saw this slogan as an appeal to have the World Bank and the IMF closed down. They were shocked to find strong opposition to this radical position from many European and developing-country NGOs, who wanted to maintain these intergovernmental institutions but reform their policies.³⁵ A much simpler, but also a much more powerful challenge to the existing order arose when Christian Aid backed two eccentric Englishmen, who under the slogan Jubilee 2000 called for the cancellation of all developing country official debt. In May 1998 they were able to surround the city of Birmingham with peaceful demonstrators, when the G8 summit occurred. The campaign became the first of the truly global advocacy networks of the Internet era. It not only linked NGOs worldwide as IBFAN had, but was able to engage individuals throughout the world in campaigning, demonstrating and signing petitions. In due course, massive changes were made in the policies of the major aid donors and the IMF and the World Bank, to write off bilateral debt and reduce multilateral debt. Other spectacular successes have resulted in the abandonment of negotiations to create a Multilateral Agreement on Investment and forcing the WTO to address the development impact of its policies.

Global networks have also had extraordinary success on "high politics" questions. The Coalition for an International Criminal Court achieved the negotiation of a Statute in July 1998 and its entry into force in July 2002; the International Campaign to Ban Landmines achieved the Ottawa Treaty in September 1997 and its entry into force in March 1999; and the International Action Network on Small Arms was able in December 2006 to initiate a process of negotiations to regulate the trade in small arms.³⁶ In each case, success was

³⁴ Willetts, 2011, pp. 91-2. ICDA has had a chequered career, sometimes being quite active for a few years and sometimes becoming moribund.

³⁵ K. Danaher (ed.), *50 Years is Enough. The Case Against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund*, (Boston: South End Press, 1994) and S. Cleary, "The World Bank and NGOs", in P. Willetts (ed.), *'The Conscience of the World'. The Influence of Non-Governmental Organisations in the UN System*, (Washington DC: Brookings, 1996), especially pp. 87-9.

³⁶ UN General Assembly Resolution 61/89 of 6 December 2006, passed by a vote of 153 in favour to one against (USA), with 24 abstentions and 14 absent. It is striking that the preamble of the resolution notes "the role played by non-governmental organisations and civil society" in the political process.

obtained against the sustained opposition of both the Clinton and the Bush administrations and their main allies were gradually drawn away, leaving the USA in diplomatic isolation.

Advocacy networks have adherents who identify with the network by endorsing joint statements, but they do not have formal membership. Their image and their ideology might give the impression that they are totally non-hierarchical, but they must have a minimal structure to be able to operate at all. One person or a very small number of people have to raise the funds to keep crucial nodes, such as the Association for Progressive Communication, in operation. Key individuals run e-mail lists or edit newsletters. Vast amorphous global networks still have within them small networks of key individuals who know and trust each other, because they meet face to face perhaps once a year or at times more frequently. Particular NGOs, such as the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development covering issues at the WTO or the Bretton Woods Project covering the IMF and the World Bank or Amnesty International covering human rights issues, are crucial in providing detailed, reliable, technical information on global policy-making processes and thereby they become gatekeepers for much of the debate within the wider networks.

Keck and Sikkink laid emphasis on arguing that transnational advocacy networks are not new. Transnational co-operation of social movements to change government policies goes back at least to the nineteenth century.³⁷ Therefore, advocacy networks are not dependent upon the modern technology of the information age. The case of IBFAN and the policy revolutions on human rights and the environment in the 1970s and 1980s show this point is also valid for movements that seek to achieve change at the level of global policy-making in intergovernmental institutions. Transnational advocacy networks can move faster, gain greater command over information and mobilise a much broader movement through modern techniques using the Internet, but electronic communication is not an essential feature of a global network. However, the late occurrence of global advocacy networks on development questions suggests that the cheap modern information technology may have been essential to the participation on an equal footing of individuals and NGOs from developing countries.

³⁷ Keck and Sikkink, Chapter 2.

Governance Networks

While both INGOs and advocacy networks focus much of their activities on influencing policy-making in intergovernmental organisations, they also have goals and related activities that are independent from and external to intergovernmental organisations. In contrast, there is another different type of network whose operations and indeed their very existence are *solely* the product of the engagement of NGOs with intergovernmental organisations. Their purpose is to enhance the participation of NGOs in global or regional policy-making processes. Because they focus on procedures, on how decisions are made, rather than what the outcomes should be, they are clearly not advocacy networks. For this reason I propose a new term, governance networks, to describe them. They may be defined as *a open group of NGOs acting jointly to claim, assert or maintain their right to participate in a specific intergovernmental policy-making forum and/or co-operating to enhance the effectiveness of their participation.*

While particular individuals may acquire special status and assume a leadership role in a governance network, these networks are solely open to NGOs. Individuals are only members of the network by virtue of their membership of a particular NGO. This is because no IGO has yet given access to individuals and IGOs always have some form of registration of NGOs and their accredited representatives, in order to specify who may and may not be allowed entrance to the buildings and attendance at the meetings. The network is defined as being open, in order to emphasise that it includes and represents all NGOs, whatever their different values may be, if they wish to attend and participate in the IGO. This is crucial to their difference from advocacy networks, whose members have some common identity and shared values that are being pursued. In contrast, members of governance networks do not have any common identity, other than their status as NGOs, nor any shared values, other than belief in their common right to participate in the political process.

A governance network will always be associated with a single IGO or part of an IGO. It may be that there are similar memberships and similar practices in different organisations or, especially, in different parts of the same IGO, but the governance networks will nevertheless be independent of each other. For example, the UN's Commission on Sustainable Development and its Commission on the Status of Women are expected to give access to virtually the same set of NGOs and their basic participation rights are defined in the ECOSOC Statute for NGOs, which

applies to all the ECOSOC commissions.³⁸ However, the CSD NGO Steering Committee and the NGO Committee on the Status of Women in practice attracted different NGOs and the two commissions developed very different practices, within the framework of the Statute, for NGO input to each commission's work. Thus, each of these two NGO committees should be considered as a distinct governance network.

A governance network is only likely to exist when an IGO has already decided to admit NGOs to its proceedings. Even so, NGOs may come together to form a governance network at the same time as the governments are forming the new institution. For example, since the early 1970s, there has been a general presumption that NGOs will participate in a global conferences convened by ECOSOC or by the General Assembly. The only debates have been about which NGOs will be admitted and what their rights will be. Consequently, NGOs have often formed a "Steering Committee" or a "Facilitation Committee" immediately the decision has been taken to convene a conference. Such committees then lobby the conference secretariat and the preparatory committee in order to ensure the early procedural decisions maximise access for NGOs. Similarly, there is a general presumption that NGOs are central to global environmental politics. Consequently, a governance network will be formed during the process of creating any new policy-making body on environmental issues, in order to claim access rights.

In any IGO or at any global conference, the network will need to claim rights, if access is only given to some, but not all, of the organs or some types of meetings. For example, in the UN, the full consultative arrangements only apply in ECOSOC, its subsidiary bodies and the Human Rights Council. There have been persistent attempts by the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Status (CONGO) to claim similar rights in the General Assembly and the Security Council, but these have generally been unsuccessful because governments opposed to NGO participation have been able to point out that the UN Charter in Article 71 solely refers to consultation with ECOSOC. Nevertheless, there has been incremental change, with NGOs first gaining access to conferences called by the Assembly and later to Special Sessions of the Assembly. In March 2006, for the first time, full participation rights were gained in part of the Assembly's work. When the human rights policy-making was transferred from a Commission under ECOSOC to a

³⁸ Both the CSD and the CSW are open to all NGOs granted consultative status by ECOSOC's NGO Committee. However, each in addition is open to a small number of NGOs that attended, respectively, UN environmental or women's conferences, without having obtained consultative status.

Council under the Assembly, NGOs were able to insist that all practices for their participation in the Commission would be continued in the new Council.³⁹ A governance network will need to assert the participation rights of NGOs when they are not able to exercise their agreed rights in an effective manner. Sometimes simple practical problems, like changing the dates of a session at short notice or changing security arrangements for the building, can make it very difficult for NGOs to participate. At other times there can be political problems, when the chair at particular meetings will attempt to exclude NGOs, without having the authority to do so, and protests will be necessary to change the chair's decision. The network will need to lobby hard to maintain rights when events provide an opportunity for hostile governments to attempt to revise the consultative arrangements in a restrictive manner. For some years, this was the situation in the early stages of every new UN conference. The most surprising example occurred in 1990 at the first Preparatory Committee (PrepCom I) for the 1992 Earth Summit, when sustained argument was necessary to obtain confirmation that procedures used at previous conferences would be used again.

An ideal-type governance network, (in the sense of the pure abstract concept, rather than an average type or a perfect type), undertakes five different kinds of activities before the IGO session takes place. Firstly, it initiates the political process for the majority of NGOs, by making them aware that an event is going to happen and giving them the precise information on how to obtain and exercise the right to take part. Since 1946, NGOs that have been granted consultative status by ECOSOC have had the automatic right to participate in the work of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. In the 1970s, it gradually became accepted that they would automatically have similar rights at UN conferences. In the 1980s, it also became practice to allow other NGOs to apply for temporary accreditation for a single conference. As a minimum, there will normally be a deadline some weeks before the event, by which the names of NGOs representatives who wish to attend must be submitted. For a new forum, for one lacking a list of recognised NGOs or for temporary accreditation, there will be a much earlier submission deadline for each NGO to be registered for the event. The network will tell NGOs about the deadlines and circulate any application forms, perhaps along with guidance on how to complete and submit the applications. In some circumstances, the network will also provide information about travel arrangements and about finding accommodation.

³⁹ UN General Assembly Resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006.

Secondly, the governance network provides information about the intergovernmental body equally and publicly to any NGO that is interested. This information might cover the history of the body, including its past policies and its activities, along with an outline of its structure and its place within the wider organisation of which it is part. Such information is essential to any NGO that wishes to maintain, to modify or to change the policy of the body. Usually change in the world of diplomacy is incremental and it is always based upon an appeal to past policies and past practice, as a source of legitimisation, even when radical change is being proposed. Knowledge of the history and the context of the intergovernmental processes will enable an NGO to build on these precedents, in framing its demands, so that support can be maximised.

Thirdly, the network will ensure that NGOs understand the formal and informal rules of procedure of the body. In particular, there are usually very precise rules about when, where and how NGOs may distribute written materials and make oral statements. If attempts are made to participate outside the recognised procedures, this may not only discredit the individual NGO, but also threaten the status of all other NGOs. Fourthly, the network will actively train new representatives not only by providing information about the IGO and its procedures, but also about the tactics for gaining political influence. In general, it is necessary to present the NGOs values and proposals in a language that is appropriate for diplomacy, in a style and format that is expected in the specific body, with an emphasis that appeals to the decision-makers' own perspectives and at a point in the proceedings before the opportunities for introducing new ideas or new text have passed. Perhaps, the most common disappointment for inexperienced NGO representatives is to find that they have engaged with a UN conference or a high-level decision-making body at the end of the political process, when there are few possibilities for influencing outcomes. If they had been involved much earlier, at the start of the process, in the lower-level bodies, they might have succeeded in gaining serious attention for their proposals.

Lastly, it is often the case that NGOs from developing countries do not have sufficient resources to be able to support the costs of participation in intergovernmental policy-making. Even if they have the necessary personnel, the cost of travel to and from the UN, along with accommodation and meals in New York, may be beyond the capacity of the NGO's budget. When an event occurs in a developing country, local and regional NGOs will find it possible to attend, but it

can still be expensive for developing country representatives from other regions. To deal with these problems, a governance network will raise funds to support attendance from developing countries.

When an event is under way, the network will still be providing support to its members. Rooms have to be booked for NGO meetings each morning, before the official sessions start, and often for each lunchtime and each evening. Locations have to be established for the secretariat to provide NGOs with copies of diplomatic documents, if possible as soon as they are issued. Arrangements have to be made to distribute written NGO materials, even if it is only providing large tables in the corridors, where any NGO can display its publications and political statements. Procedures have to be suggested and implemented for deciding how NGO speakers in the diplomatic forum will be chosen. Often “side events” are organised, either under the auspices of the governance network or at the initiative of governments, to enable diplomats and NGO representatives to exchange ideas and argue points in open, formal, but unofficial, meetings.

In addition to the governance functions for formal and informal participation in diplomatic proceedings, there may be comparable functions for unofficial events that are organised elsewhere in conjunction with the official events. These are normally designated as an “NGO Forum”. Facilities are provided for all NGOs to be able to make presentations, hold debates, display publicity, sell publications, show films or engage in any other activities concerned with the issues on the official agenda of the diplomatic conference or the related wider agenda of public debate. The Forum may occur in the week before and/or during the same time as the official meetings. There will not automatically be a Forum at all diplomatic events involving NGOs. Clearly, a Forum will only occur when the issues are salient to a large number of NGOs. It is more likely to occur when new issues are being placed on the global agenda. Hence, it is more likely at *ad hoc* global conferences rather than regular sessions of global institutions. The Forum may be organised by the main governance network. When the events are occurring outside established UN centres, such as New York, Nairobi or Geneva, it is likely that a committee of local NGOs will do much of the administrative work for the Forum. Often, the UN Secretariat and the host government will also provide some assistance. Whatever arrangements are used, the organising committee should be regarded as a governance network, because the facilities are provided for all NGOs, irrespective of their stand on the issues. Indeed, a Forum is open to a wider range of NGOs

than those who participate alongside the official proceeding: the Forum is not limited to those who have been granted permanent or temporary consultative status by the UN.

No actual governance network is likely to undertake all the work of the ideal-type network. Promoting NGO registration will usually be done in conjunction with the IGO secretariat. Much of the background information about the IGO will be on the IGO's own official website and the network will need to do little more than provide a guide to the website, with links to the essential materials. An effective network will often provide information on their own website about procedures. They will also organise training sessions, for a few days before the event starts, covering both procedures and political tactics. Fund-raising for developing country participation, if it occurs, is normally the responsibility of a larger, more wealthy Northern NGO and/or, in the case of UN events, the Non-Governmental Liaison Service, which is an inter-agency programme of the UN system. Facilities for NGO meetings and participation at the event may be provided as a matter of routine by the secretariat.

There is thus a wide variety to the range of activities and the level of resources that a governance network will need at a specific event. In general, regular meetings of a long-established body, coming under the auspices of the UN ECOSOC, may require quite low effort from the network, for the NGOs to feel they have had every opportunity to pursue their political activities. On the other hand, an *ad hoc* UN conference on a new global issue, taking place in a capital city lacking an established conference centre, may require an immense effort for fund-raising; establishing the new network; obtaining and distributing information; negotiating with the UN, the host government and the local NGOs; facilitating participation; and running a complex programme of NGO events during the conference.

The Relationships Between Transnational Advocacy Networks and Governance Networks

For the purpose of academic analysis, there is a clear distinction between transnational advocacy networks and governance networks. Modern transnational advocacy networks do not have a defined membership. They have adherents, who may have formally and publicly identified themselves with the network, but other active adherents are not always known to those at the centre of the network. On the other hand, governance networks each have a specific list of members, whether they are active members taking part in the network or potential members,

who have chosen to be inactive. Advocacy networks can often have thousands of adherents, because they are open to any global, regional, national or local NGO or any individual having access to a personal computer, whereas governance networks only involve those with sufficient motivation and sufficient resources to attend an IGO meeting, which will not often go above a few hundred NGOs. Advocacy networks consist of larger numbers of NGOs, but are more limited in the range of their adherents, because of the need to share the network's values before becoming active. Governance networks cover a smaller number of NGOs, but are open to any recognised NGO that perceives the work of the IGO to be salient to its values.

The question of values is the defining difference between the ideal types. In practice, adherents of advocacy networks may have some diversity in their values, because they approach the same policy question from different perspectives. Environmentalists wanting to conserve ecosystems and biodiversity may be resistant to change from a conservative perspective or hostile to exploitation of resources from a left-wing perspective. Advocates of change in any policy domain are frequently divided between radicals wanting rapid and substantial change and reformers content with slower, incremental change. Also, in practice, members of governance networks may share quite similar values, because the relevant IGO has a limited range of activities, which are only salient to those with particular values. For example, for most of its first decade, the Global Environment Facility NGO Network, encompassing all NGOs accredited to GEF, only attracted activist environmentalists. The majority of them shared a wider range of values on popular participation, equity and poverty reduction in sustainable development. They were somewhat surprised when in 2001 they were joined by representatives from indigenous peoples organisations, who were more focused on the status of their peoples, but the two sides eventually settled down to effective collaboration.⁴⁰ When we move away from the ideal types, advocacy networks containing adherents with relatively diverse values and governance networks with relatively concordant members are not very different in their degree of unity and cohesion.

The central behavioural difference between the ideal-types is that advocacy networks mobilise support for common values, while governance networks mobilise to enhance participation. Advocacy networks campaign, while governance networks administer or debate procedural processes. Again, in practice, the

⁴⁰ Personal observation by the author at the NGO Network, during GEF Council meetings in December 2001 and May 2002.

difference is not necessarily so sharp. When campaigners cannot obtain information from policy-makers or are denied access to decision-making events, where they expect to be able to lobby, they will demand participation rights. Equally, when those promoting participation meet and find they have a commonality of values, they are likely to consider adopting joint statements on substantive questions to submit to the policy-making process. There are not many questions that are *purely* procedural: the choice of speakers may be affected by what they are expected to say and the allocation of limited funds may be decided by substantively-related considerations of who is “most worthy” of support. The GEF NGO Network has clear elements of an advocacy network from the environmental movement and the human rights advocacy networks are very concerned about the consultative arrangements for NGO participation in the Human Rights Council, their access to special mechanisms and their general ability to present information to the UN. All networks working within an intergovernmental organisation or a diplomatic conference are likely to have some desire to campaign collectively and some concern with the governance procedures for doing so.

The blurring of the boundary between the two types of networks in the real world does not mean the distinction between the ideal types is only of academic significance and irrelevant to activists. Fundamental problems can arise and result in significant political crises, under certain circumstances, when the distinction is not respected in practice. On the one hand, an advocacy network could damage the participation rights of its own adherents, if it does not recognise the need to defend the participation rights of its opponents. On the other hand, a governance network risks disintegration if it allows particular NGOs to attempt the advocacy of certain values in the name of the whole network. Advocacy networks can operate independently as caucuses, perhaps in opposition to other NGOs, when the work of both sides is facilitated by a governance network. Conversely, all NGOs need to abandon their independence and work with those whose values they do not share, when a governance network needs personnel, financial resources or political support to overcome any obstacles to the exercise of participation rights. These problems will be illustrated from events in the UN system.

Specific Problems about NGO Participation

There is one category of NGOs whose legitimacy within the UN system is regularly challenged by advocacy networks. When an issue involves whether economic activity should be regulated, advocacy networks may deny the right of business

international non-governmental organisations (BINGOs) to be participants in the policy-making process. On the whole, in the United Nations itself, this does not present a problem for governance networks, because it has been authoritatively decided who may have participation rights. From the very beginning of the consultative arrangements in 1946, non-profit-making commercial associations were treated as NGOs, but individual profit-making bodies could not expect to be accredited. The early precedents set by ECOSOC have carried through to UN conferences.

Radical environmentalists, with varying levels of support from other different networks, have consistently objected to transnational corporations having access to the UN system. The question has arisen on at least three occasions and produced rather different outcomes. The first occasion generated some divisions among NGOs, but was on the periphery of the UN system. In the run-up to the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, a group of 86 NGOs set up an International Facilitating Committee. They were clearly designed as a governance network for the Summit: they refused to adopt joint policy statements.⁴¹ The IFC sought to maximise their networking potential and participation in the summit by bringing together representatives of the “independent sectors”, one of which was “business and industry”, represented by the Business Council for Sustainable Development. Other more radical NGOs formed an alternative International Steering Committee to avoid collaborating with business and also to be able to endorse political positions. The conflict did not cause damage at this point, because each committee concentrated on maximising attendance and activities of their network at the summit. Preventing attendance by the BCSD and other business INGOs was not a plausible goal for the radicals to pursue.

The second occasion arose during the preparations for the next general UN conference on environmental issues, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. At one point, the Secretariat did introduce three individual companies into the list of new, non-ECOSOC NGOs to be accredited to the Summit. However, these companies were removed from the list, due to NGO action, before the main conference opened.⁴² The point was decided without any controversy, because the ECOSOC rules applied and hence there was consensus that, by definition, NGOs at the WSSD could not be profit-making.

⁴¹ F. Dodds, “from the Corridors of Power to the Global Negotiating Table: The NGO Steering Committee of the Commission on Sustainable Development”, pp. 203-13, in Edwards and Gaventa: cited information from p. 204.

⁴² For more details, see Willetts, 2011, p.18.

On the third occasion, some NGOs objected strongly to Kofi Annan's initiative to have a UN Global Compact with major companies. This was intended to produce a forum for the UN, trades unions and other NGOs to collaborate with companies that were willing to commit themselves to the implementation of ten principles of corporate social responsibility, in the areas of human rights, labour standards, the environment and corruption. In response to the first Global Compact Leaders Summit in June 2004, a group of NGOs (mainly environmentalists and women's NGOs) held a counter-summit and signed a joint statement calling for the Compact to be replaced by "a legally binding framework for corporate accountability".⁴³ Their protests had been undermined by the participation in the Compact of a few major NGOs. The Compact has continued and expanded, but it has not caused any damage to the ECOSOC consultative arrangements, because it is totally separate from them. It has not raised any conflicts about networking, because each NGO can decide independently whether or not to sign the Compact and take part in related activities.

The situation is different for each of the UN specialised agencies, because they are legally independent and decide their own participation procedures. There has been great variation in the way in which the agencies handle relations with companies. At one end of the spectrum, there is the International Labour Organisation, with its "tripartite system". Each member state has four representatives: two from the government, one from the employers and one from trades unions.⁴⁴ This means commercial interests and unions from each country each are able to vote in the highest policy-making bodies. In addition to this, consultative arrangements (without voting rights) have been established with a range of INGOs, including some BINGOs, but mainly unions, professional associations, women's groups, religious bodies and development groups. Most specialised agencies consider co-operation with the commercial companies that operate in their sector to be essential to their work, but this is not necessarily done through formal procedures. For example, neither the World Bank nor the International Monetary Fund have official consultative arrangements for the meetings of their boards. Nevertheless, NGOs, commercial banks and banking associations have close relations with both the staff and the members of the

⁴³ The "Joint Civil Society Statement on the Global Compact and Corporate Accountability" of July 2004 is available from www.corporate-accountability.org/news/Global_Compact_Statement-Signed.pdf. It was first drafted in New York on 23 June 2004.

⁴⁴ For a discussion of hybrid international organisations, that are neither IGOs nor INGOs, see Willetts, 2011, particularly pp. 72-80.

boards. For NGOs the relationships are stronger with the World Bank and for the commercial banks the relationships are stronger with the IMF. In both cases, there is relatively easy access to the staff, but access to board members is less frequent. Because most meetings are informal and non-routine, with banks and NGOs not being in the room at the same time, NGOs do not have to decide whether to participate alongside the banks. At the other end of the spectrum from the ILO, the WHO has a strong policy of avoiding engagement with commercial interests. This includes specifying that all the NGOs with which the WHO has official relations “shall be free from concerns which are primarily of a commercial or profit-making nature”.⁴⁵ The policy has not been applied rigorously and a pharmaceutical and a food trade association are on the WHO list of NGOs.⁴⁶ At times there are pressures for WHO to have stronger relations with trade associations.⁴⁷ However, when WHO’s Standing Committee on NGOs recommended admission of the International Council of Grocery Manufacturers Associations and the Confederation of Food and Drink Industries of the EU to official relations with WHO, the Council of NGO Representatives succeeded in blocking endorsement of this recommendation by the WHO Executive Board.⁴⁸

CONGO, which has a role as a governance network at the UN, faced agonising debates in the late 1990s on whether they should support participation rights for NGOs to whom the great majority their members are hostile. They were shocked to find that opening the consultative arrangements to national NGOs in 1996 allowed the National Rifle Association, an influential US gun lobby, to obtain Roster status. While many felt the NRA was not a “true NGO”, no action was taken to expel them. There is equal hostility to the Unification Church, popularly known as the Moonies, which has had at least four front organisations working at the UN headquarters in New York. Again the response has been to refuse to collaborate with these NGOs, but not to challenge their presence within the UN. Thus, this governance network has maintained the principle of accepting participation rights for all NGOs, irrespective of their reputation or the values they endorse.

⁴⁵ Paragraph 3.1 of “Principles Governing Relations between the World Health Organization and Non-Governmental Organisations”, adopted by the Fortieth World Health Assembly in 1987, as Resolution WHA40.25 and available at www.who.int/civilsociety/relations/principles/en/.

⁴⁶ “List of 183 nongovernmental organizations in official relations with WHO reflecting decisions of EB130, January 2012”, available from a link on www.who.int/civilsociety/relations/en/.

⁴⁷ There was a significant policy review in 2003-2004, but no change resulted in the 1987 “Principles Governing Relations” (cited above). Another review was occurring in 2012, but at the time of writing this paper it had not been completed.

⁴⁸ The recommendation was in “Report of the Standing Committee on Nongovernmental Organizations”, WHO document EB113/23 of 23 January 2004.

Table 1 Examples of Networks that have Some Governance Role

Intergovernmental Institution and Date of Its Foundation	Governance Network and Date of Its Foundation	Main Roles Undertaken
UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) – 1946	Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO) – 1948	Defending participation rights and facilitating caucusing
UN Commission on Sustainable Development – 1993	CSD NGO Steering Committee – 1994-2001	Providing event information, inducting new NGOs and facilitating caucusing
UN Commission on the Status of Women – 1946	NGO Committee on the Status of Women (a CONGO committee) – 1973	Providing event information, facilitating caucusing and organising side-events
Global Environment Facility – 1994	GEF NGO Network – 1995	Providing event information, organising participation and facilitating caucusing
World Bank – 1944, 1960	NGO Working Group on the World Bank – 1984 to 1997	Organising relations with staff via a World Bank NGO Committee
World Trade Organisation – 1995	International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) – 1996	Providing information on the issues, on past events and on forthcoming events

Global Conference and its Date	Governance Network and Date of Its Foundation	Main Roles Undertaken
UN Conference on Environment and Development – 1992, (PrepCom I, 1990)	1) International Facilitating Committee – 1990 2) International NGO Steering Committee for UNCED – 1990 3) Brazilian NGOs	1) Defending participation rights and providing event information 1 and 2) facilitating caucusing 3) Organising the Forum
International Conference on Population and Development – 1994	NGO Planning Committee for the ICPD ⁴⁹	Providing event information, facilitating caucusing and organising the Forum
World Conference against Racism – 2001	International Steering Committee South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO) – 1995	Both contributed to organising the Forum
World Summit on Sustainable Development – 2002	1) Sustainable Development Issues Network – 2001 2) South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO) – 1995 3) International Steering Group – March 2002	1) Providing event information, assisting new NGOs, organising Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues at PrepComs II and IV, facilitating caucusing at PrepComs and WSSD 2 and 3) Organising the Global Peoples Forum

⁴⁹ While most documents refer to the “NGO Planning Committee for the ICPD”, a few individuals have described themselves as having been on the International NGO Steering Committee. These two titles clearly refer to the same body.

Globalisation and Anti-Globalisation

So long as the conflict between advocacy networks wanting limited coalitions and governance networks wanting to be all-inclusive does not go to the heart of the issues being debated, the confusion between advocacy and governance may not produce problems. Equally, if there is only a limited range of similar NGOs involved in a network, it may be able to pursue both activities without awareness of the inherent differences between the two types of activities. Alternatively, at times, the structure and the procedures of the intergovernmental organisation will make it impossible for a network to influence who should or should not participate. However, a period of radical mobilisation at the beginning of the century did show how political differences can generate crises for NGO networks that attempt advocacy in the name of the whole community of NGOs participating in global diplomatic processes.

The processes of technical and economic globalisation, which started in the 1970s, were followed by a communications revolution in the 1990s, which enabled NGOs to engage in political globalisation through transnational mobilisation. Much of the focus was on the global economic institutions, particularly the World Trade Organisation. The political hostility to economic globalisation and to the global institutions came to a head in the “Battle of Seattle” in November 1999, when large-scale demonstrations against the Third Ministerial Conference of the WTO taking place in Seattle temporarily closed the streets around the conference building. The breakdown in the WTO negotiations that occurred was then falsely attributed to the pressure from global civil society. The anti-globalisation movement triumphantly continued to mobilise using the Internet and achieved unprecedented large demonstrations at the Spring Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank, in Washington in April 2000, and at the annual meetings of their boards of governors, in Prague in September 2000. The Group of Eight (G-8) meetings of the leaders from the world’s largest economies met in Genoa behind a fence that cut off the public from the town centre in July 2001. While the April 2001 Bank-Fund meeting only faced some 300 demonstrators, a massive confrontation seemed to be inevitable for the September 2001 meetings planned to be in Washington. *Mobilization for Global Justice* had successfully built a network of networks, encompassing a diverse coalition of anti-debt, pro-development, environmental, trade union and anti-capitalist organisations, mainly from the USA, but also including several developing country networks. After the terrorist attacks on New

York and Washington on 11 September, it appeared that the 2001 Bank and Fund annual meetings would be abandoned, but they eventually took place in Ottawa in November 2001. Demonstrations did still occur on the streets of Ottawa, but with just a few thousand people, mainly from Canadian groups.

The following major global conferences adopted a more subtle tactic of being protected by geographical isolation. The Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference, held in Qatar in November 2001, was in Doha, a city surrounded by desert, with all access being via a single airport, and in June 2002 the G-8 met in the remote town of Kananaskis, in Canada. Thereafter, the anti-globalisation movement ceased to be able to mobilise very large numbers on the streets when major global economic institutions met. Nevertheless, the events of 1999 to 2001 radicalised many activists and also produced divisions between them and the reformers. At Washington in 2000 and at Genoa in 2001, the main NGO networks issued public statements dissociating themselves from the violence of some of the demonstrators, causing anger among the radicals.⁵⁰ At times during the April 2001 demonstrations, radicals led chanting of slogans denouncing NGOs as collaborators with the capitalist system. A substantial impact then followed on relations between populist protesters and NGO lobbyists, at the UN in New York and at two major UN conferences held in South Africa, during the period when anti-globalisation activities were at their height.

Crisis in Sustainable Development Networking at the UN

The CSD NGO Steering Committee was a governance network that fell apart in May 2001 because it could not contain conflicts between reformers and radicals and because the radicals wished it to operate as an advocacy network. It had been created in May 1994, to organise NGO participation in the UN's Commission on Sustainable Development. This was a new body established in response to the appeal by the Earth Summit for the UN to have a high-level policy-making forum to ensure follow-up to the summit and monitor progress in implementing the policies adopted in *Agenda 21*. Action by the General Assembly and by ECOSOC led to the creation of the CSD, election of its members and the holding of its first organisational meeting in February 1993. There were several reasons why NGOs would be highly engaged in the work of the CSD. As a subsidiary body of

⁵⁰ In April 2000, during the demonstrations against the Bank and Fund Spring Meetings, a group of 22 US NGOs from the InterAction network wrote a letter to Mr Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, dissociating themselves from those in the streets. In July 2001, Drop the Debt and other British NGOs asked their supporters in Genoa not to take part in the main demonstration outside the G8 summit.

ECOSOC, the NGO Statute would automatically apply to the Commission. There had been a substantial number of NGOs vigorously engaged at Rio and *Agenda 21* appealed for their activities to be carried through to enhanced involvement at the UN. The General Assembly endorsed this appeal, when it specified the role of the Commission, with language that provided NGOs should “contribute ... to its deliberations”, rather than merely be consulted. Most important of all, the Commission’s work was to be totally structured around *Agenda 21*. One of the four sections of *Agenda 21* covered “Strengthening the Role of Major Groups”, which meant nine specific so-called social groups, namely women, children and youth, indigenous people, NGOs, local authorities, workers and their trade unions, business and industry, the scientific and technological community, and farmers.⁵¹ The NGOs accredited to ECOSOC realised by the end of 1993 that the Major Groups would be one of the central concepts used in the CSD’s work and they could maximise their participation by organising Major Group activities.

At the first CSD session in June 1993, a British NGO, the United Nations Environment and Development (UNED-UK) carried out a questionnaire survey of the NGOs present at the session, asking what type of organisational back-up they wanted to have. The responses predominantly expressed the need for governance functions to be met. A separate strand of NGO networking started among the NGOs who met in April-May 1994 at a conference in Barbados recommended by the Earth Summit, to give more attention to Small Island Developing States. At the second CSD session, ten days later, the two strands came together, in what was from the beginning a somewhat uneasy relationship.⁵² It was agreed that a CSD NGO Steering Committee would be structured as a multi-dimensional governance network: “The activity of this committee would in no sense be one of political nor policy representativeness for the NGO community”.⁵³ The Major Groups would each appoint two representatives, one from the North and one from the South, while regional groups would also have one representative, on the Steering Committee. The result was an institutionalised division between a Northern Clearinghouse and a Southern Caucus, which each provided a Co-Chair for the overall Committee. Initially the Committee was felt to be highly successful, as in

⁵¹ The names of the Major Groups are taken from the headings of the chapters of Section III of *Agenda 21*. In UN terms, the list is rather bizarre, because the nine Major Groups, which could only be admitted to the UN as NGOs, included NGOs as one of the nine. In practice, this has been useful, as the NGOs Major Group acts as a residual category for any NGOs not in one of the other eight groups.

⁵² For more details, see Dodds, p. 205.

⁵³ “CSD NGO Steering – Committee Terms of Reference”, 26 May 1994, at www.city.ac.uk/p.willetts/NGOS/CSD/TERMSREF.HTM, quote from point 9.

collaboration with the Commission it developed new modes of participation, notably from 1997 there were Major Group Dialogue Sessions. NGOs were given the floor at the start of the session to make presentations and to answer questions from government delegates on the main agenda topic for each year.

Although the Steering Committee had been defined as having a governance role, during the CSD sessions, the NGOs collectively tried to act as an advocacy network, forming positions by consensus: “political representatives or interventions will remain the domain of the entire NGO and Major Groups community”.⁵⁴ Due to the time taken in trying to reach consensus among all the NGOs, it was decided to operate in more specialised issues caucuses. They also had to have co-chairs, one each from the North and the South, and to be represented on the Steering Committee. Inevitably the caucuses were smaller, which made the problems somewhat more manageable, but it did not resolve the dilemma of what to do when there were value differences preventing a consensus. The problem became explicit when the co-chairs of one caucus put out a position paper, listing organisations that had endorsed it, although they had not seen the paper. This led to the creation of a set of Guidelines for the Steering Committee, emphasising its role as a governance network rather than an advocacy network.⁵⁵ It provides that

“Documents and prepared verbal statements commissioned by caucuses must be submitted to the members of the caucus after each substantive revision, and their views must be incorporated into the final draft. Minority positions if any of caucus members must be represented in the document.”⁵⁶

The text appeared to resolve the tensions – between being all-inclusive, speaking with one voice, and having advocacy caucuses – by saying dissent would be legitimate.

However, the tensions continued to increase at the end of the 1990s. The structure was artificial and implied that the members of the Committee were representatives of different interests rather than sharing a common interest in NGO participation. There was not necessarily equal Northern and Southern engagement in each caucus, yet equal participation was expected. Personal animosities between the Northern Co-Chair, Felix Dodds, and the Southern Co-Chair,

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ The story is told by Dodds on pp. 205-06, but he does not give details or a date for the incident. It would appear that on p. 205 he erroneously suggests that “Guidelines” had been agreed in May 1994, when the document agreed then was the “Terms of Reference”, cited above. On p. 206, he indicates discussions in 1997 (rather than 1994) led to the drafting of the “Guidelines”, cited below, one of which covered “Caucus Membership and Representation”.

⁵⁶ A revised version of the Guidelines, dated December 1999, is given at www.city.ac.uk/p.willetts/NGOS/CSD/GDLNS-99.HTM. The quoted text is given as having been agreed on 30 April 1998, at CSD-6.

Esmeralda Brown, supported by her partner Waldaba Stewart, caused disagreements in Committee meetings. The animosities were not solely personal. The Northern Clearinghouse had a greater ability to raise funds from official donors than did the Southern Caucus. As a result, there were fraught arguments about use of financial resources, with accusations of corruption being thrown around. Dodds was highly committed to a technocratic, multi-stakeholder dialogue approach to environmental policy-making, while Brown and Stewart were committed to a populist rhetorical style. Some of the other NGOs were not sympathetic to either approach, as each side was in its own way making a false claim that an apolitical consensus encompassing the whole network could be developed. Increasing rivalries between the two sides led to each trying to win control of the governance network processes to isolate the other side. What became the fundamental unresolvable problem was that each side wanted to claim to speak for the whole NGO community, when there was no reason to expect they could be united on the complex environmental issues. The very structure of issue caucuses and Major Groups simultaneously implied differences between these components of the governance network, and differences on the cross-cutting North/South dimension. Yet the differences based on agenda questions, social groups and regional areas did not allow space for the fundamentals of politics. There were no caucuses based on advocacy of common values.

By the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development held in New York in May 2001, it had become plain that many NGOs were totally disillusioned with the CSD NGO Steering Committee. A group of four NGOs announced they would operate through a new Sustainable Development Issues Network (SDIN) to organise input to the PrepComs and the Summit. The four were the Northern Alliance for Sustainability (ANPED), the Environment Liaison Centre International, the Third World Network and the Danish 92 Group and they received immediate support from all the NGOs that had a serious commitment to influencing the policy-making process. The previous Steering Committee continued to operate as a hollow shell of a network, under the leadership of the Southern Co-Chair.⁵⁷ They claimed SDIN was a Northern group that could not legitimately work with Southern NGOs. However, the claim did not damage SDIN, because nobody would challenge the credentials of

⁵⁷ Richard Jordan did agree to serve for a while as a Northern Co-Chair, in place of Felix Dodds, but he was not the leader of a major NGO and did not have standing as an activist in the sustainable development NGO community.

TWN as one of the leading authentic voices from the South and it was fully committed to SDIN. One of the defining principles of SDIN was that it would not attempt to speak on behalf of the whole network. In the Johannesburg process SDIN regularly publicised position papers of various NGOs and groups of NGOs, but it never endorsed them itself. By adopting this policy, SDIN was able sustain vigorous and diverse NGO input to the Johannesburg Summit and the old Steering Committee was marginalised.⁵⁸

All the NGOs who chose to participate in the CSD had a commitment to sustainable development, which is defined at the UN as being based on three pillars, economic development, social equity and environmental protection. Consequently, they shared many values and had more in common than civil society as a whole. This enabled the CSD NGO Steering Committee to survive for a significant period of time nominally being a governance network, while containing pressures to become an advocacy network. It lasted seven years. Personal rivalries, funding problems and political styles were the immediate cause of the network ceasing to operate, but such factors would have had much less impact upon a pure governance network. In addition, the differences between a populist rhetorical style and a commitment to multi-stakeholder dialogues did embody substantive political differences. It was because SDIN avoided attempts at collective advocacy and facilitated diverse coalition-making by NGOs that SDIN has been more successful, experiencing less tensions and lasting longer.

Crisis at the World Conference Against Racism

When the anti-globalisation movement was at its height, the UN convened a conference in South Africa that served to link local anti-globalisation passions to the global movement. The result was that the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR), which took place in Durban from 31 August to 8 September 2001, became the most controversial UN conference ever held. Several strong social movements in South Africa felt their hopes for change, with the end of apartheid, had been betrayed by the African National Congress government adopting neo-liberal economic policies. Their main grievances concerned unemployment and poverty, continuing gross inequality between blacks and whites, the rights of landless people and privatisation of public services, particularly water supplies. Although South Africa

⁵⁸ For background information on SDIN, see "The SDIN Vision: A Short Glimpse into History" at <http://sdin-ngo.net/about/sdinhistory.php>.

has not itself been directly subject to IMF structural adjustment programmes, solidarity with the rest of Africa and awareness of the impact of such programmes led the local social movements to see the global economic institutions as agents of “global apartheid”.⁵⁹ These attitudes spilt over into hostility to the UN and to international NGOs, when radical demands – for reparations or at least an apology for slavery; denunciation of colonialism as a crime against humanity; and payment of compensation by transnational corporations for their exploitation of apartheid – were rejected by the WCAR. The hostility of South African civil society to globalisation set the context for the engagement of global civil society with the Durban conference.

An NGO Forum, in the standard format, was organised for the WCAR by the South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO), on behalf of an International Steering Committee (ISC). It met for five days, with three days before the official proceedings and a two-day overlap. Then those registered by the UN could lobby the government delegates. At the Forum, victims groups from around the world engaged in intense debates with national and international NGOs. In addition, some 40 caucuses drafted statements to contribute to an NGO Declaration and Programme of Action, which Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Secretary-General of the conference, had promised she would present to the diplomats and politicians during the official proceedings.

SANGOCO had links to many of those involved in South Africa’s social movements, but it refused to follow them in criticisms of the South African government and the UN conference. The result was the social movements held a set of alternative conferences and workshops at other venues in Durban. They saw themselves as following the precedent of the first World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January 2001, which had been organised as an anti-globalisation event, in opposition to the élite World Economic Forum in Davos. The Landless People’s Movement, the Palestinian Solidarity Committee, the Concerned Citizens Forum, forerunner of the Anti-Privatisation Forum, and the South African branch of the Jubilee South anti-debt movement, all operated under the heading of the Durban Social Forum. These local movements were joined by anti-globalisation activists among the NGOs from other countries. Although individual people could and did involve themselves in both forums, for the first time at a UN conference

⁵⁹ The term “global apartheid” is used frequently in Bond’s book analysing the global links of South African social movements: P. Bond, *Talk Left, Walk Right. South Africa’s Frustrated Global Reforms*, (Pretoria: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2nd ed., 2006).

there was a clear division between insider and outsider activities, with two separate civil society processes.

SANGOCO felt caught in the middle. Munnik and Wilson, two South African activists and analysts, observed that SANGOCO was accused by the radicals of failing to use the opportunity “to create a wider united front ... by linking the front of NGOs against racism to debt and the marginalisation of minorities around the world”. Yet the radical “ ‘social forum’ forces used official [UN and SANGOCO] channels to mobilise – and then challenged the legitimacy of those channels”, and “bitter fighting erupted between South African and international organisers”.⁶⁰ By the end of the NGO Forum, the different approaches were very evident. Reformist insiders were busy lobbying diplomats and working on the NGO Declaration, while the South African social movements organised an anti-government, anti-UN march of some 20,000 people, with some support from the more radical of the foreign NGO visitors. A rival anti-racism demonstration on the next day, organised by the pro-government, ANC Alliance, including the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), had less than 10,000 marchers. There had become a complete overlap between South African domestic politics and the global politics of responses to globalisation.

Although there was a gulf between the SANGOCO NGO Forum and the Social Forum, there were still deep divisions within the NGO Forum. This meant the attempt by the International Steering Committee to act as a governance network was going to be swamped by others who wanted to capture the NGO Forum as an advocacy network. In addition, utter confusion of the thinking by the ISC and SANGOCO could only lead to conflict, as was shown beforehand by briefing materials for potential participants.

“The purpose of this Forum is to provide civil society with a space of its own to present perspectives on the themes of the Conference, establish consensus on proposals, strategies and priorities to convey to the Conference ...

The NGO Forum is a favourable space for civil society organisations seeking to create an impact in the process of the World Conference. It is an opportunity to express the proposals of civil society relating to the needs and visions that the peoples wish to channel to their governments and the international community.

The NGO Forum is not just an event but also a process, oriented to building the participation of civil society, and encouraging national, sub-regional, regional and sectoral processes, that allow for the expression of as many voices as possible. In

⁶⁰ V. Munnik and J. Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country. An Insider History of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, Johannesburg 2002, (Johannesburg: Heinrich Boell Foundation Southern Africa Office, January 2003), p. 29, where comparisons are made between the WCAR and the WSSD.

this way, each organisation, process, movement or entity can participate according to their field of interest.”⁶¹

The explicit goal of trying to “establish consensus on proposals” implied a declaration could be drafted with the agreement of all NGOs. The references to “the proposals of civil society” and “the needs and visions” of “the peoples” implied there would be common values. On the other hand, encouraging “the expression of as many voices as possible” implied a diversity of perspectives and values. There was no possibility such a formula could work with the diverse range of groups present at a global conference involving such contentious issues. In particular, allowing each “victim group” to make its own contribution gave a superficial impression of equality of respect for all NGOs and openness to all ideas. However, this formula assumed that NGOs supporting different parties to a conflict could recognise their opponents as victims. To make matters worse, groups were also encouraged to bring text prepared before the Forum. Such text was thus drafted without influence from most other members of the Forum.

The planned procedure was to have many caucuses and “Thematic Commissions” working two hours each afternoon for four days, from 28 to 31 August, followed by a three-hour morning plenary on 1 September to endorse the drafted texts.⁶² These plans were supposed to provide time for the NGO Declaration to go forward to the WCAR at an early stage of the conference. While eight hours might be enough for some small caucuses to reach agreement, the idea of stitching all the contributions together with many hundreds of participants in a three-hour plenary was totally unrealistic. In practice, a long, tense and angry debate continued over the whole of the last day and into the night. The outcome was a document with an ambiguous status. On the one hand, it appeared to be endorsed by all the NGOs as “the outcome of an international process before and during the NGO Forum of the WCAR”. On the other hand, it did not receive the endorsement by each NGO of each paragraph, because it was “based on the understanding that it reflects the regional processes and that the voices of the

⁶¹ While these quotes were taken from “A Primer on The UN World Conference Against Racism ... NGO Parallel Conference” produced by one regional NGO network, ISIS International-Manila, it is safe to assume they copied these words from SANGOCO materials: see www.hurights.or.jp/wcar/E/doc/other/WCARPrimer.htm.

⁶² Details of the plans were given in the ISIS “Primer”, cited above.

victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance must be heard”.⁶³

At both the diplomatic conference and the NGO Forum, the most divisive issues were how to affirm the rights of the Palestinians, how to describe Israeli policy and whether anti-Semitism should be taken as encompassing both Jews and Arabs as victims. The governmental delegations of the USA and of Israel withdrew in the middle of the WCAR, in protest at some of the suggestions being made, but the European Union subsequently ensured that no description of Israel as a racist or apartheid state was adopted by the official conference. The two paragraphs on Palestine repeated standard diplomatic language on recognising the right of the Palestinians to an independent state and the right to security for Israel. Attempts to change the meaning of anti-Semitism were rejected, but it was bracketed with Islamophobia and there was joint condemnation of “racism and discriminatory ideas against Jewish, Muslim and Arab communities”.⁶⁴

These issues were handled very differently at the NGO Forum. Text drafted by Palestinians and their allies detailed a long list of Israeli repressive practices against Palestinians and calls were made for the delegitimisation of Israel and “full cessation of all links” with Israel. Nevertheless, no explicit position was taken on whether Israel should be absorbed into a Palestinian state or whether there should be a two-state settlement.⁶⁵ The Declaration asserts “a basic ‘root cause’ of Israel’s ... acts of genocide and practices of ethnic cleansing is a racist system, which is Israel’s brand of apartheid”. Overall, there were 28 mentions of apartheid or racism as descriptions of Israel and one paragraph called “for the reinstatement [sic] of UN resolution 3379 determining the practices of Zionism as racist”.⁶⁶ While there was a brief statement that “Anti-Arab racism is another form of anti-Semitism”, a section on anti-Semitism used the conventional meaning and fully condemned all forms of anti-Jewish practices. It expressed alarm at “Holocaust denial and Holocaust revisionism, Holocaust trivialisation, Holocaust minimisation and by the channelling of racist rhetoric and calls to violence on the Internet”. It recognised Jewish people

⁶³ The two quotations are from two sentences placed above the title to the “WCAR NGO Forum Declaration”, dated 3 September 2001, see The Hurights Osaka website of the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center, at www.hurights.or.jp/wcar/E/doc/ngofinal.doc.

⁶⁴ “Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (updated 31 January 2002)” – the official declaration, paras. 63 and 151 on Palestine and paras. 61 and 150 on anti-semitism, from a link on www.un.org/WCAR/coverage.htm.

⁶⁵ Forum Declaration, sections on Palestine, paras. 160-65 and 418-26, with further mentions elsewhere.

⁶⁶ Forum Declaration, paras. 98-99, 160, 162-4, 419-22 and 424-6. The reference to UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, which had determined that “zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination” was in para. 419. The word “reinstatement” refers to the fact that it had been revoked by Resolution 46/86 of 16 December 1991.

are “targets of threats and acts of violence in countries around the world, and documented overt acts of anti-Semitic harassment and vandalism”. The Programme of Action also included two long paragraphs proposing measures to counteract anti-Semitism.⁶⁷ The text alone does not convey why many were so outraged by the results of the NGO Forum. The arguments and behaviour of the anti-Israeli activists were so aggressive and intimidating that the very purpose of an anti-racism conference were being denied and many thought the members of Jewish NGOs were in physical danger.⁶⁸

The day after the Forum closed and the day before the NGO Declaration was released, members of the Eastern and Central Europe NGO Caucus met and produced a statement saying they “do not support the documents allegedly adopted by the NGO Forum”, because

“the process of compilation and adoption ... was neither transparent nor democratic and permeated with procedural violations. The draft documents were not submitted to the delegates in a timely manner; the rules of procedure were unclear and repeatedly changed; the discussion was heavily restricted. Finally, the delegates were not given an opportunity to vote on the draft documents in their entirety. This enables us to affirm that the documents cannot be considered adopted by the NGO Forum and are not consensus documents.”⁶⁹

There was not unanimity, so the statement was not issued in the name of the Caucus, but endorsed separately by “delegates of 36 NGOs from 19 countries”. Other NGOs quickly announced that they agreed with this statement, so it was opened up to NGOs from countries in other regions and after two days it had been endorsed by a total of 77 NGOs from 37 countries. A press conference was held by five major NGOs, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, to say that they could not accept parts of the Declaration and a member of the ISC resigned in protest at the Forum process.⁷⁰ A radical activist from the US, who

⁶⁷ Quotes from Forum Declaration, paras. 46, 77 and 78 and the proposed measures in paras. 248-9.

⁶⁸ There are surprisingly few accounts of NGO activities at the WCAR. Most are primarily focused on Israeli-Palestinian antagonism: see D. Matas, “Civil Society Smashes Up”, September 2001, at www.hri.ca/racism/analyses/matas.htm, and a more detailed account by H. O. Schoenberg, “Demonization in Durban: The World Conference Against Racism”, *American Jewish Yearbook*, Vol. 102, 2002, pp. 85-111. An analysis from the perspective of a US left-wing radical is given in E. Mann, *Dispatches From Durban*, (Los Angeles CA: Frontlines Press, 2002). A wider perspective is taken in G. McDougall, “The World Conference Against Racism: Through a Wider Lens”, *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Vol. 26, Issue 2, 2002, pp. 135-51. There was also a critical ANC report, “Evaluating the WCAR NGO Forum (and preparing for the World Summit for Social Development)”, available at www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pubs/umrabulo/umrabulo13l.html, as of 12 November 2002.

⁶⁹ The text is available from European Roma Rights Center website at www.errc.org/popup-article-view.php?article_id=242 and the Internet Centre Anti-Racism Europe, “Live Reports, Monday September 3rd, sixth day”, www.icare.to/wcar/monday03.html. There was also a report from News24, a South African on-line news service, “NGO declaration divides delegates - 3 September 2001”: a copy is available at www.staff.city.ac.uk/p.willetts/NGOS/WCAR/NEWS0309.DOC. The latter two sources have further details about NGO dissatisfaction with the adoption of the documents.

⁷⁰ For more details, see both McDougall and Schoenberg. McDougall specifies “some NGO participants” resigned from the ISC, but she only names one person: see p. 146 and the corresponding notes.

objected to the positions taken by these established international NGOs, also said the Declaration “was the product of an unrepresentative and flawed process whereby more than 90 percent of the NGO delegates played virtually no role in writing, discussing, or voting on it in any manner”.⁷¹ When the NGO Declaration was made public, Mary Robinson intervened to say “for the first time, I can’t recommend to delegates to pay close attention to the document like I normally do”.⁷² Nevertheless, a representative from the ISG presented the NGO Declaration to a plenary meeting of the WCAR on 5 September and over three days 106 NGO representatives took the floor, including 21 each speaking in the name of a different caucus from the Forum.⁷³

The lesson from these events is that the ISC and SANGOCO caused a major crisis by departing from their governance role, going beyond facilitation of the participation by all the diverse range of NGOs. The attempt to produce an NGO collective statement by consensus was an attempt to turn all the participants into a single advocacy network. It must be assumed that on controversial issues there can never be a consensus across the whole of global civil society: indeed, a moment’s reflection, demonstrates that this judgement is no more than a simple tautology. The problem is more fundamental than is suggested by the criticisms from the dissenting NGOs. Even if there had been a transparent process, with efficient management of documents, rapid translation into the main languages, clear procedural rules and much more time for the debates, the NGO Forum at the WCAR still would not have been able to have produced a legitimate common statement. There can be no legitimate decision-making process among NGOs when consensus does not exist. The claim for “an opportunity to vote on the draft documents” cannot be met by any global civil society forum. It is not possible to answer the questions of who should have a vote, to what extent does every NGO represent a defined constituency, what defines a “true” NGO, how the voting of very large NGOs can be balanced against those of very small NGOs, and how the differential extent of each NGO’s involvement with the issues can be weighted.

⁷¹ Mann, p. 111.

⁷² McDougall, p. 151, note 54, quoting a Durban newspaper report, in the Daily Mail and Guardian, 30 August 2001, from <http://www.mg.co.za/mg/za/racism.html>, which is no longer available. For more details on Robinson’s position, see “Personal report from the meeting of UN HCHR, Ms. Robinson, with the NGO International Steering Committee (ISC), on the 6th September 2001”, available at www.staff.city.ac.uk/p.willetts/NGOS/WCAR/MR-RESPN.HTM.

⁷³ In UN document A/CONF.189/12, *Report of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance*, it says the “Both the Declaration and Plan of Action were presented at the plenary of the World Conference on 4 September 2001” (Annex V, para. 2). However, in the main part of the Report, the NGO presentations are given as having occurred on 5-7 September, starting with a representative from the ISG (Chapter III, paras. 43, 46 and 48-9).

Many such questions would be raised by the simple choice on whether one vote should be given to each NGO representative or to each NGO. All the conflict and the bitterness could only have been avoided by recognising that no consensus could exist. Then various competing statements could have been circulated, with their sponsors only claiming to speak for those who chose to sign each statement.

Table 2 Key Events in the Three Governance Crises

Event	Dates	Location
WSSD PrepCom I CSD NGO Steering Committee collapses	30 April to 2 May 2001	New York
NGO Forum (for WCAR)	28 August to 1 September 2001	Durban
World Conference Against Racism	31 August to 8 September 2001	Durban
WSSD PrepCom II	28 January to 8 February 2002	New York
Southern NGO Summit	16-17 March 2002	Algiers
WSSD PrepCom III	25 March to 5 April 2002	New York
WSSD PrepCom IV	27 May to 7 June 2002	Bali
Global Peoples Forum (for WSSD)	24 August to 3 September 2002	Johannesburg
World Summit on Sustainable Development	26 August to 4 September 2002	Johannesburg

Crisis at the World Summit on Sustainable Development

Exactly one year after the WCAR, another global summit was convened by the UN in South Africa, but this time in Johannesburg rather than Durban. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) occurred from 26 August to 4 September 2002, as a follow-up to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.⁷⁴ The NGOs operating at the Commission on Sustainable Development in New York started their preparations for the WSSD with a roundtable meeting hosted by the Danish 92 Group in Copenhagen in June 2000, six months before the site of the

⁷⁴ For a variety of perspectives on the events covered by this section, see T. Bigg, "The World Summit on Sustainable Development: An assessment", available on the International Institute for Environment and Development website, at <http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/G02353.pdf>; Bond, (cited above), Chapter 7, "The 'WSSD': Pretoria meets its match"; Esmeralda Brown, "The Southern Caucus WSSD Evaluation", at www.southngocaucus.com/goto/WS; C. Death, "Troubles at the top: South African Protests and the 2002 Johannesburg Summit", *African Affairs*, 2010, Vol. 109, Issue 437, pp. 555–574; Mondli Hlatshwayo, "The Genesis of the Social Movements Indaba", Wolpe Lecture at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Civil Society, 22 November 2006, at <http://amadlandawonye.wikispaces.com/Genesis+of+Social+Movements+Indaba,+Hlatshwayo,+Wolpe+Lecture,+UKZN>; Munnik and Wilson, cited above; and A. La Viña et al, *Making Participation Work: Lessons from Civil Society Engagement in the World Summit for Social Development*, (Washington DC: World Resources Institute, October 2003), available at http://pdf.wri.org/wssd_final_paper_wri.pdf.

A wide range of primary sources on both official and civil society WSSD activities is available at a UN website, www.johannesburgsummit.org, and an International Institute for Sustainable Development "Linkages" portal www.iisd.ca/wssd/portal.html, but not all the links on the latter site are still active.

For the Southern NGO Summit, see materials at the www.southngocaucus.com website. In particular, the "Algiers Declaration" is at .../media/Html/ALGIERS_DECLARATION.htm.

conference had been decided by the UN General Assembly. On the presumption that it would be held in South Africa, a variety of South African NGOs, all associated with SANGOCO, started planning in September 2000 to hold a South African Forum for the WSSD – note the title used at this stage.⁷⁵ They established contact with the NGOs in New York and sought to learn from Brazilian NGOs, both those who had organised the forum at the Rio Summit and those behind the World Social Forum.⁷⁶ They also sent representatives to the first PrepCom for the WSSD in New York at the end of April 2001 and made a good impression with those whom they met.⁷⁷

In June 2001, SANGOCO again created a Civil Society Secretariat (CSS), but delegated the responsibility to one of its members, the Rural Development Services Network (RDSN). The Secretariat was seen as having a dual function. Firstly, it was to mobilise South African civil society in a Civil Society Indaba, They established a council consisting of five representatives each from eight social groups, plus one representative each from the nine provinces, with the aim of feeding South African social movement policy positions to the WSSD preparatory processes and the summit. In the period from December 2001 to April 2002, the different sections of South African civil society entered into intense conflict, along basically the same dividing lines as at the WCAR. COSATU and other allies of the government denied the Indaba had any legitimacy. They were able to create a new Management Committee for the CSS, consisting of a coalition of ANC Alliance organisations. The Indaba responded by renaming itself as the Social Movements Indaba in March 2002 and announcing it would not engage with the Forum.⁷⁸ It then took a “dramatic turn to the people” and talked of “the hoax of the W\$\$D”, which was promoting the agenda for privatisation and globalisation.⁷⁹ Some organisations left the Indaba in protest at its break with the government and with the Forum. During the WSSD, matters came to a head in the most public manner possible. As had happened in the previous year at the WCAR, on 31 August 2002, there were two rival marches, from a poor township to the conference centre. Again the numbers supporting the social movements, in the “anti-WSSD march”

⁷⁵ Munnik and Wilson, p. 18.

⁷⁶ In addition, a paper was commissioned from a leading think-tank, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED): Tom Biggs, *How did NGOs organise for UNCED? Reflections on the experience of the Brazilian NGO Forum*, cited by Munnik and Wilson, p. 18, but no longer available.

⁷⁷ Personal assessment by the author, who was present.

⁷⁸ “CS Indaba walks out of WSSD NGO forum”, Civil Society Indaba, press release, 19 March 2002, cited by C. Death, p. 561.

⁷⁹ Munnik and Wilson, p. 31. Note that, as cited above, Bond, a radical, academic and activist, generally converted the initials WSSD to W\$\$D.

organised by the Indaba, were substantially greater than those supporting the ANC Alliance, in the Forum march.⁸⁰ The government attempted to avoid a repetition of the low support for the Alliance march during the WCAR, by having their counter-march organised in the name of the Forum. Ironically, this only served to increase the numbers at the Indaba's "autonomous march". The government's reputation among the visiting NGOs had been severely damaged by heavy forceful policing of peaceful demonstrations, including arrests and use of stun grenades and rubber bullets, with the result that many of the people who might have gone on the Forum march chose to go on the Indaba march. In addition, even SANGOCO itself "pulled out of the Forum march at the last moment, declaring that the ANC was manipulating the gathering".⁸¹

The second function of the of the Civil Society Secretariat was to organise, at the Nasrec exhibition centre, the normal jamboree of non-official events for NGOs from around the world. The NGO forum was soon re-labelled in a non-proprietary and more radical manner, as a Global Peoples Forum. The early work was required at the same time as SANGOCO was being overwhelmed by its responsibilities for the WCAR. It was also permeated with the same confused thinking. Initially, both the Indaba and the Forum were planned by CSS to be all-inclusive advocacy networks and the CSS were expecting, via the Indaba, to determine outcomes at the Global Forum. Even in preparatory meetings of civil society in other parts of Africa, the South Africans came to be resented for seeing it as *their* Summit. They showed insensitivity in the labelling of a document taken to PrepCom IV with the title the *South African Civil Society Declaration for Bali*, and of a document prepared for the WSSD Forum, entitled the *South African Civil Society Nasrec Declaration*.⁸² Even more damaging, the anti-government rhetoric of the social movements led to SANGOCO ousting the head of RDSN from the Secretariat.⁸³ As a result of the early conflicts causing the preparations to be neglected, for a while, there were even doubts whether the Forum could still take place. Just four months before it was due to open, a COSATU leader, Bheki

⁸⁰ The label "anti-WSSD march" was used by Bond, see p. 140.

⁸¹ Bond, p. 138.

⁸² Munnik and Wilson report the discontent of other Africans on p. 36. They also say that the South Africans had been advised, during a trip to Brazil, "to prepare a policy discussion document on South Africa's vision for the Global NGO Forum", p. 18. However, it seems the South Africans misinterpreted the call for an organisational policy as being a call for substantive policy. The Declaration for Bali is available at www.staff.city.ac.uk/p.willetts/NGOS/WSSD/SACSBALI.HTM. The introduction to the Nasrec Declaration is in Munnik and Wilson, p. 44, but the full text no longer appears to be available.

⁸³ A. Stoppard, "Infighting Hampers Forthcoming UN Summit", Inter-Press Services, Johannesburg, 18 March 2002, at <http://ipsnews2.wpengine.com/2002/03/politics-south-africa-infighting-hampers-forthcoming-un-summit/>.

Ntshalintshali, had to convene a meeting at the final UN PrepCom to say preparations were “back on track” and to deny the Forum would be “government-led”.⁸⁴

There was also dissatisfaction with the Forum being held over 20 kilometres from the official WSSD in Sandton (requiring 40 minutes travel time) and the imposition of a high cost fee of \$165 for registration at the Forum.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, some 25,000 people registered and many managed to participate at both Nasrec and Sandton. In addition, the Social Movements Indaba (SMI) and the Landless People’s Movement held their own forum-type events near to Nasrec; a People’s Environment Summit was held in a school; a Summit of Indigenous Peoples took place a week earlier in Kimberley; special cultural events occurred at an Ubuntu Village and on water issues at the Waterdome; the World Conservation Union (IUCN) ran an Environmental Centre at Sandton; there was an International Science Forum; and a symposium of leading writers on globalisation occurred at the University of the Witwatersrand. Finally, there was a vigorous NGO presence at Sandton. However, the main conference centre was not large enough. A fortnight before the WSSD opened, the UN Secretariat reported that 11,000 representatives had already been accredited. As Sandton’s overall capacity was 6,000 people, there had to be daily passes, limiting access.⁸⁶ Transport problems, congestion and security were time-wasting. Afterwards, the World Resources Institute reported “a sense of isolation due to inadequacies in the participation process” and “a certain fragmentation stemming from the very diversity of civil society groups in attendance”.⁸⁷

At Rio an International Steering Committee had been established by the international NGOs at a very early stage and it had collaborated well with the Brazilian NGOs who organised the Forum. For the WSSD, the processes were very different. Due to the level of conflict, both within the CSD NGO Steering Committee and within South African civil society, there was no leadership and preparations at the international level started very late. The International Steering Group (ISG) did not have its first meeting until PrepCom III, in April 2002 and its

⁸⁴ “NGO Forum for Johannesburg Back on Track, Say Organizers”, of 11 April 2002, at www.worldsummit2002.org/texts/SACSPoliticalDeclarationBali.rtf, from the UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Sustainable Development, website, “Johannesburg Summit 2002”.

⁸⁵ Munnik and Wilson, p. 55, quote a registration fee of \$150, but the UN report of 11 April 2002, cited above, had a figure of \$165. Protests led to its waiver for South African participants and presumably to the reduction to \$150 for foreign participants.

⁸⁶ R. Jordan, “Summary of WSSD Briefing, 14 August”, at www.iisd.ca/wssd/news.html#14aug.

⁸⁷ La Viña et al, p. 16.

composition was not finalised until PrepCom IV, in June 2002. It was created mainly by the Civil Society Secretariat co-opting foreign NGO leaders. Munnik and Wilson say it “ended up being dominated by the familiar figures from the Southern caucus”.⁸⁸ As members of the CSD NGO Southern Caucus had made contact with South Africans when they attended the WCAR, four members of the Caucus, including two of their key leaders, Esmeralda Brown and Gordon Bispham, did become members of the ISG. Nevertheless, the ISG also included the “CEO” and another member of the CSS, plus representatives from COSATU and SANGOCO, two of the NGOs organising SDIN and the President of CONGO.⁸⁹ Consequently, it too contained significant divisions.

Much of the normal governance work outside the UN prior to the Summit, expected of such an ISG, was undertaken by Danish 92, the Ford Foundation and the Heinrich Böll Foundation. They supported capacity-building in the South, organised caucuses and workshops, provided information services and funded attendance by hundreds of civil society representatives, mainly from rural and other grassroots communities.⁹⁰ Another group, Eco-Equity, brought together a formidable range of well-known international NGOs, mainly having environmental concerns.⁹¹ This network provided information and promoted discussions, so they made some contributions to governance. However, their prime focus was on lobbying to influence the text of the Summit documents, so they are best regarded as an insider advocacy network. As was noted above, at the UN PrepComs, the governance function of organising NGO participation was undertaken by the UN Secretariat working with the four main NGOs that had created SDIN. They co-ordinated the preparation of Major Group position papers, but they refused to meet the UN’s request to select the representatives to speak at the multi-stakeholder dialogues, held at PrepCom II and PrepCom IV.⁹² In the New York preparatory process and in the activities at the official Summit, SDIN, Danish 92 and the Stakeholder Forum For Our Common Future adopted governance roles. On balance, SDIN did more work on facilitating participation at the UN meetings,

⁸⁸ Munnik and Wilson, p. 55.

⁸⁹ For the ISG membership, see *A Sustainable World is Possible. Outcomes of the Global Peoples Forum at the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, p. 132, (hereafter, *GPF Report*), available at www.southngocaucus.com/Media/EDocs/Sustainable_World_is_Possible.pdf

⁹⁰ La Viña et al, p. 6.

⁹¹ The members of Eco-Equity, as given on their website, were Consumers International, the Danish 92 Group, Earthjustice, Friends of the Earth International, Greenpeace, Northern Alliance for Sustainability, Oxfam International, and Worldwide Fund for Nature. For information about their activities, see http://practicalaction.org/wssd_reports. La Viña et al, p. 18, also included Eurodad as an Eco-Equity member.

⁹² Munnik and Wilson, p. 46.

including organising briefing meetings each morning. The other two did more to ensure information about the WSSD processes was widely distributed and to assist less experienced NGO representatives to understand conference diplomacy.

Unlike at the WCAR, the WSSD Forum did produce a set of political positions, agreed by consensus.⁹³ This outcome might appear to be contrary to the central proposition of this paper that a governance network cannot also be an advocacy network. However, the Global Peoples Forum did not represent a full cross-section of the NGOs involved in the politics surrounding the Summit. At one end of the spectrum, the radical anti-globalisation social movements had largely adopted an outsider strategy and distanced themselves from both the Summit and the Forum. At the other end of the spectrum, the reformers – who were willing to act as insiders – worked within Eco-Equity or SDIN and concentrated on lobbying at the Summit. This left the Forum predominantly consisting of those making the demands of some developing country nationalists. They expressed some opposition to globalisation and the policies of the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO, but did not totally reject the capitalist system nor call for the institutions to be disbanded. In particular, the Forum outcome documents generally accepted the most controversial political development at the WSSD, namely the promotion of partnerships with the private sector for sustainable development projects. The Forum took general positions on the major issues, but had minimal engagement with the crucial debates about specific policy questions. In a judicious analytical report, the World Resources Institute concluded “Given the sheer diversity of civil society organizations active in sustainable development, perhaps a major parallel event during an official meeting is no longer an effective way of organizing stakeholder engagement in global processes”.⁹⁴

Thus the International Steering Group did not adopt the normal governance role associated with such a designation. The ISG used the Global Peoples Forum as a mega advocacy network, but it was not the only advocacy network active in Johannesburg. Eco-Equity and the Social Movements Indaba were rival advocacy networks. These three networks were more in sympathy with each other at the WSSD than they might otherwise have been, because almost all NGOs reacted with anger against the positions taken by the US delegation within the conference and the behaviour of the South African government, especially the police, outside the conference. SDIN remained as a governance network. It survived without any

⁹³ *GPF Report*, cited above.

⁹⁴ La Viña et al, p. 39.

crises around its activities, because it rarely took a collective position other than on NGO and Major Group access to and participation in diplomacy on sustainable development issues. The successful basis for the distinction between governance and advocacy was demonstrated by the Third World Network, which was both a major contributor to the governance activities of SDIN and, acting independently, was an important advocacy network within the Summit.⁹⁵

Conclusion

It has been clearly established that transnational advocacy networks are not the only types of global networks. Analytically we may distinguish three ideal types: INGOs, as formal, structured institutions, providing services for a defined membership; transnational advocacy networks, as diffuse unstructured open networks, with adherents promoting a common set of values; and governance networks, as structures open to a universe of NGOs accredited to an intergovernmental organisation, promoting the global public good of democratisation of global policy-making. In practice, a particular network may combine features of more than one of the ideal types. An INGO only becomes of real significance as a participant in global politics when it moves beyond providing services for its members and undertakes some of the ideal-type activities of advocacy or governance. However, the defining features of transnational advocacy networks and governance networks are in principle contradictory.

Any network that combines both advocacy and governance activities runs the risk of losing its legitimacy if and when it reaches the position that it must choose which activity has priority. Experience suggests straightforward policy recommendations, in order to avoid facing such a legitimacy crisis. Two simple procedural rules must be obeyed by NGO networks.

- 1) No statement advocating particular values or substantive policy positions should be issued in the name of any NGO that has not explicitly endorsed the joint statement. The safest position is that at least one authorised representative of each NGO should endorse the final written version of an agreed text, before it is publicly announced that they support the statement.

⁹⁵ The arguments in this paper could also be modified and extended to criticise the use of Major Groups and stakeholder forums in UN environmental processes. The WRI considered these to have been a failure at the WSSD: see La Viña et al, "Inadequate Mechanisms for Participation", p. 19-20, and "Lessons from the Shortcomings", pp. 35-8.

2) No activities to claim, exercise or maintain general rights of participation in an intergovernmental organisation should be undertaken in a manner that aims to privilege or to disadvantage a sub-group of NGOs, based on the values they advocate. There can be exceptions to this rule where there is near global consensus on a value, such as refusal to accept NGOs that condone violence as a political tactic. Equally, there can be exceptions, by imposing simple objective criteria on what will be accepted as an NGO, such as being in existence for at least two years and being non-profit-making. Otherwise, the activities will aim to promote a generalised, abstract set of long-term participation rights for all NGOs that have applied or might apply for accreditation to the intergovernmental meetings.

These two rules are essential for the maintenance of cohesive networks, obtaining and expanding participation rights and maximising the impact of advocacy, at the United Nations or in other intergovernmental organisations.

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