

COPin COPout COP17

A review of civil society participation in the UN conference on climate change, Durban 2011

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GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

C17: The committee of 17 individuals from South African civil society organisations, elected by SA civil society to coordinate broad civil society interaction with COP17.

CAN: Climate Action Network, global civil society network concerned with climate change. Supports the concept of carbon trading. CAN generally calls for change within capitalism and focuses on technical change and particularly on replacing fossil with renewable energy.

CJN!: Climate Justice Now!, another global civil society network concerned with climate change. Does not support carbon trading. CJN! argues that capitalism is incompatible with addressing climate change.

CRC: Climate Refugee Camp, a mock refugee camp in Durban, used to house and feed 2,000 activists during COP17.

GDA: Global Day of Action, traditionally a large civil society march, held on the first Saturday of each COP.

The People's Space: An alternative space to the official COP17 venue. Used by civil society, labour and the general public. Located at University of KwaZulu-Natal, 7km from the official space.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

South Africa is becoming a top destination for mega-events. As a middle-income country it is keen to prove to the world that it is able to host first class international events, such as the recent 2010 soccer World Cup. So, when the Conference of Parties seventeenth session (COP17) rolled into Durban in late November 2011, the emphasis was on showcasing the city's superb logistical skills, the government's ability to conduct a masterful balancing act between the interests of the 194 nations within the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and on being seen as an inclusive 'People's COP'. In the eyes of South African civil society, it was an opportunity to meet the challenge of being good hosts to some 6,000 international and local CSOs and to gain visibility for their cause. Civil society formed a united body to facilitate processes (the Committee of 17 or C17) and drew up ambitious plans for activities at the COP including those around the Global Day of Action, the People's Space, and a Climate Refugee Camp to house guests.

But COP17 was no ordinary event. The responsibility of hosting it was inextricably tied in with the precarious fate of the planet. With global emissions rising higher than ever before in history, the world is set for a four to five degree global temperature rise in the next couple of decades, a prospect which could annihilate large sections of the world's population, particularly those most vulnerable in Africa. The ultimate challenge of the COP was to deliver outcomes that meet with the required-by-science prescriptions and to promote urgent and profound changes to the way in which we live. For civil society this could have meant using the opportunity of the COP to build and strengthen movements to achieve these ends and to push often reluctant governments to treat climate change as a priority. Their role, thus considered, was by no means a minor one.

The South African government has declared their job at COP17 an unqualified success. But given the weighty context described, can civil society say the same for their efforts? Also, do they share the same perspectives as government about the outcomes and their role? Earthlife Africa Johannesburg commissioned a study to evaluate the impact of civil society at COP17. The ultimate aim of this exercise was to enable greater civil society impact on climate change in general, at the COP18, and at crossover events like Rio+20.

Civil society's analysis of its involvement at previous COPs has been done to some extent, but has not been systematically or coherently put together and analysed. Therefore, organisational mistakes and successes where recorded have not been understood clearly or shared effectively. This report seeks to address this shortfall by understanding what mistakes and successes SA and international civil society made in the run up to and particularly during COP17. It is planned to take these findings to an international audience for civil society to draw on the lessons and to aid interactions at other mega events (such as Rio+20 and COP18). The intention is not to "bash" national or foreign governments but to identify what civil society actions work in achieving the desired impact.

The study was commissioned out to three independent researchers to avoid the bias and influence of Earthlife Africa Johannesburg, which was a central player in civil society preparations for COP17. Researchers conducted structured and semi-structured interviews with 36 people from across SA civil society, labour, the SA donor community, the SA government and international civil society. A small amount of desktop analysis complemented the research. The findings are not representative of all stakeholder opinions and the emphasis is on depth rather than range of responses. We also recognise that this is a partial exercise and acknowledge, with respect and thanks, the other processes to evaluate civil society's impact at the COP, including those of the C17 and regional meetings. Going forward, it is important to conduct a collective assessment. Thanks is due to the British Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Hendrich Böll Foundation (HBF) for funding support and for sharing belief in the value of this process.

The key findings and messages of the research are listed here per section:



Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC Christiana Figueres and Minister of International Relations and COP17 President Maite Nkoana-Mashabane close the Day of Action against climate change. Virginia Setshedi looks sceptically on while Vavi waits his turn behind the Minister. PIC: yesilekonomi.com

South African civil society and labour

1. The decision for a common process was informed by two events. First, as host to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the ruling African National Congress (ANC) split civil society by dividing its labour allies from the social movements that were then emerging to contest government policy and the ruling party's claim to the mantle of emancipation. Second, divisions within Mexican civil society in the run up to Cancún were held to limit the effectiveness of civil society at COP16. These divisions were then compounded by restricted accommodation in Cancún and the dispersal of different camps. The C17 created a front composed of environmental organisations, labour, social movements and faith based organisations.
2. Views on the outcome of the Durban COP range from 'failure' to 'disaster'. Some regarded it as a less bad failure than expected, citing a waggish response: "They snatched delay from the jaws of defeat." Delay nevertheless leads to disaster in the context where critical ecological limits may already be breached and threaten run-away climate change. Delay also implies the expectation that the Durban Platform will eventually produce an effective agreement. Most respondents don't believe it.
3. The South African government initially said this would be a 'People's COP' but this rhetoric was quickly abandoned. The government handled the multilateral process quite well but neglected the process with civil society. The common view is that it did little to inform civil society about the preparatory process, about the negotiating positions of other countries or about its own positions. For most respondents, the South African government revealed itself at the COP as strangely schizoid and paranoid. Throughout the preparatory process, it did little to engage with civil society. Its last minute funding for C17 nevertheless suggested that it wanted a visible citizen's presence. Further, the City government was very cooperative in supporting arrangements for the Climate

Refugee Camp housing activists. At the same time, state security agencies and the City appeared to want civil society and the Global Day of Action march to be as invisible as possible.

4. For many, the 'inside strategy' has failed. It is believed that positive change cannot be expected from the official process and civil society organisations need to communicate that so that people at the local level understand what is happening.
5. A politics based in popular movements is necessary to build the counter-power needed to turn governments from the path of destruction.
6. Simply put, the C17 did not have the resources either to carry out or to facilitate a political process. This was not just about money and hands. From the beginning, the organisations leading the process badly underestimated what it would take, were late off the mark and did not give it sufficient priority.
7. The positive result of being cash-strapped was that the people (and organisations) who remained to do the work did so from a commitment to holding the process and to working with and supporting each other. Ideological alignment became secondary to this. Given that the core group were all from the generally fractious environmental sector, several respondents commented that this shows 'we can actually work together'.
8. Late and limited funding, however, put an under-resourced team under enormous pressure and created tensions with and within participating groups as plans were constantly under revision. Plans to transport 6,000 people to Durban were cut to 2,000 and their time in Durban was also cut to focus on the Global Day of Action.
9. This success (GDA, People's Space, Climate Refugee Camp) was largely confined to the logistics level. 'Pulling it off' was particularly demanding on the organisations at the core of the climate justice movement. "Our organisations were left to do the work and we put our strength into what turned out to be a logistics process," says Tristen Taylor of Earthlife Africa Johannesburg. "So CJNISA was largely absent from the COP."
10. The COP17 experience demonstrates that the logistics are political. If movements and communities are to carry through on democratic organisation, they may find it useful to develop the capacity for self-organising for such events; from organising transport, creating their own kitchens, organising their own sanitation and rubbish management, to the more 'political' issues of developing programmes and deciding positions. Developing the skills base for self-organised camps, and ensuring that roles are not allocated on the basis of gender, would serve to build autonomy. It should be emphasised that such camps would need to be for all – including the leadership. South Africans are not strangers to this. Formations such as Abahlali baseMjondolo have been doing it for their meetings for years now.
11. Donor NGOs did not help by switching their requirements on financial administration, by being picky about what bits they would fund or by making promises which they would not keep. The donors need to decide for themselves their commitment to local civil society and risk sticking with it. Following from this, they would do well to contribute resources for the initial project planning but without giving the impression that they want to shape the agenda. The funding situation prevented the employment of a dedicated secretariat. C17 demonstrated the alternative of a secretariat being formed by the participating organisations. In this case, the burden fell on the environmental organisations. Again the response was too little too late. Had they been ready for it, they might have responded sooner and more decisively. With a mega-event on the way, time is unforgiving. Somebody needs to be responsible for sounding the alarms when things fall behind.
12. Civil society organisations need to respond very quickly to the announcement of such mega-events. They need to give the preparation adequate priority, implying that it must be the focus of top-tier leadership and that organisations must be prepared to give it adequate time. Funding must be nailed down early and this implies clarifying objectives and putting in the resources for planning as well as for negotiation with donors. Early expectations of funding around mega-events are invariably inflated. It would be a salutary discipline for civil society organisations to first define the bare minimum and then work for the cherries.

Donors: South African-based donors and government

13. The interests of 'hybrid' donors (organisations that are both civil society organisations and donors) appear to converge more easily with that of civil society organisations (CSOs). They share a lot of the same experiences with civil society organisations and can therefore more easily sympathise with their concerns. Their values and goals also tend to be more closely aligned. But hybrids also tend to be organisations with an international status, typically with head offices in Northern countries, who then set up satellite offices in Southern countries. This trend can inadvertently undermine the capacity building of local organisations and the building of movements.
14. The Durban outcomes elicit a nuanced picture with responses ranging from unqualified approval to acceptance of meeting minimal expectations. In general, government donors are more likely to be positive and optimistic about the outcomes whilst non-governmental donors share qualified perspectives. Ultimately it wasn't an African COP as the outcome sets in motion a four degrees (or even higher) temperature rise for Africa, which will have catastrophic effects for the continent's people.
15. The official diplomatic balancing act was done well. In this regard, trust building is an important factor in facilitating processes that achieve beneficial outcomes. However, the fraught processes within the multilateral system shows that trust building should not be seen as an end in itself; otherwise valuable time can be lost in dealing with the climate crisis. We need to 'save today for tomorrow' rather than 'saving today tomorrow'.
16. Given the challenges of funding in the context of the financial recession and a rapidly shrinking pool of funding for environmental organisations, particularly progressive ones, it becomes necessary for CSOs and funders to get together and develop a new, clear strategy and common policy for funding.
17. Donors also need to consider how to build longer-term relationships with civil society partners if they want to see real impact and get value for money. Short-term high impact projects and programmes are thus unrealistic in tackling the mammoth challenges that climate change poses to society.
18. It is necessary to recognise the significant underfunding of Southern groups and to then bolster that support. Southern groups could benefit from support to aid their meaningful participation at multilateral talks and within their home countries to build movements. These groups often represent the most vulnerable people in terms of climate change and it is imperative that they are able to voice their concerns and assist in effecting change.
19. Although movement building is necessary, it does not come without difficulties. The challenge is to find cohesiveness based on common principles rather than forcing an unnatural union of divergent interests. Forcing unity could also result in an apolitical or watered down message, or even a hijacking of civil society actions by the official process.
20. It is important to support ideals based on climate science but also to know the limits of the multilateral system to achieving these ideals. In terms of ambition, civil society is far ahead of the multilateral system and this is set to continue into the near future. In this context it must be questioned whether it is more essential to be building movements on the ground and to defocus from the multilateral process that is failing to deliver than to continue on in the present mode. Finding commonality in national actions across the 194 countries within the UNFCCC has a greater chance of leading to change than trying to forge a compromise within a UNFCCC process in which national (and corporate) self-interest predominates.
21. There exists a disconnection between the outside and inside spaces within the multilateral process. The outside space is often a jamboree but is also a good space to build solidarity and to forge a common political agenda. The inside is seen as a space for a 'select' group of mostly Northern or rich CSOs who focus less on direct actions and more on influencing the technical aspects of negotiating texts and of country or regional positions. Some suggest that there should be more interaction between the inside and outside, particularly so that a people's mandate from the outside is used to bring about change on the inside. But there are also mandate issues on both sides that need to be resolved or at least recognised. Others suggest simply understanding each other's strategy so that there is a more or less common effort to influence the negotiations, or even to stand together and respect each other's opinion.



PIC: Caroline Tagny

International civil society

18. Expectations were low going into Durban, and these modest expectations were not exceeded by the conference outcome. The Durban Platform for Enhanced Action delivered an agreement that all observers agreed was out of kilter with the assessment of climate scientists. While there was some sense of the outcome being politically realistic – particularly amongst CAN groups – climate justice-oriented groups felt that it was merely an agreement to further delay action by industrialised countries. Civil society was divided between groups who framed their demands in terms of climate ‘ambition’, and those who feel that this is only achievable if principles of equity and ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ are respected. The Durban outcome formally excludes this language, but these principles remain within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, under whose remit the COP17 agreements fall.
19. COP17 was billed as the last chance to save the Kyoto Protocol, currently the only legally-binding international treaty on greenhouse gas emissions. This outcome was achieved in the letter, but arguably not in spirit. The heavily qualified nature of the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, and the refusal of many industrialised countries to participate, has reinforced a lack of trust in the industrialised countries’ willingness to make efforts to address climate change. On a more positive note, a multilateral rules-based system (rather than the voluntary ‘pledge and review’ approach favoured by some industrialised countries) remains in place.
20. Hopes that an ‘African COP’ would advance the interests of the majority of the continent’s population were not met, according to most interviewees. There was considerable criticism of the South African COP Presidency, and while some observers welcome the participatory packaging of the ‘Indaba’ process, others felt that the practice did not match up to the rhetoric, resulting in unfair pressures being placed on negotiators from the global South.
21. The UNFCCC process compares unfavourably with other UN-processes on the grounds of accountability and transparency. This contributes to unfair outcomes by allowing space for backroom deals and behind-the-scenes bullying.

22. Divisions within civil society weakened its effectiveness, according to some observers. Others suggest that this is to be expected, finding the idea of a unifiable civil society unhelpful in explaining the fundamental strategic and political differences captured by that term. That said, a lack of coordination between like-minded groups was sometimes an impediment to their effectiveness. Greater use of inter-sessional meetings and strategy sessions could help groups to become more focused, and avoid duplicating efforts.

23. Civil society is often dominated by activists from Northern countries, but they should not presume to speak for the whole globe. One key role that civil society actors could play is to provide technical assistance to overstretched Southern country negotiators. Here, too, greater participation of civil society from the global South would help to ensure political sensitivity to the needs of non-Annex I parties.

24. More broadly, the procedural complexity and abstract discourse that marks the COP process renders it inaccessible to community and peoples' organisations – meaning that vital perspectives on how to address climate change go unrecognised. On the other hand, in certain instances it can be easier for community activists to reach decision-makers at the COP than in a domestic context, not least because their presence at the talks affords the process greater legitimacy.

25. In terms of accessing decision-makers, there is a considerable imbalance between not-for-profit civil society and business and industry organisations. Concerns were raised about the ability of the latter to buy preferential access.

26. There was little enthusiasm amongst our respondents for 'inside actions' (symbolic protests within the official conference venue). The positioning of these actions away from the negotiations, as well as considerable control exerted by the Secretariat, rendered them ineffective. By contrast, the unsanctioned 'occupation' of the COP on the penultimate day met with a more enthusiastic response, and drew connections with events and movements outside of the rarefied world of international climate policy-making.

27. Some respondents felt that too much organisational emphasis has been placed on the UNFCCC process by environmental and development organisations, hoping to win quick victories through advocacy. But advocacy in the absence of greater civil



To add to the shame of tar sands in Alberta, Canada withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol during the COP. PIC: nixpix

society pressure domestically is a losing game. More work should therefore be done to connect up with domestic environmental justice and climate movements. Some organisations are already shifting their focus of activities away from the UNFCCC. Some development organisations, sensing a lack of any quick win in the climate debate, are scaling back their climate work altogether.

28. International media organisations also noticeably scaled back their presence at COP17, and appear to be reducing their climate change coverage. With the climate talks shifting out of the spotlight, further opportunities may present themselves for abuse of the process. Those organisations hoping to gain a higher profile through their presence at the COP are also rethinking this strategy.

29. The geographical distance between the People's Space and the ICC prevented significant and regular flows of people and

information between the two. However, the gap between outside and inside spaces had as much to do with politics and discourse as geography. The COP discussions are not framed in ways that are accessible to communities or receptive of grassroots groups. A handful of delegates were interested in engaging with social movements, but lacked the capacity to really do so effectively. These impediments to an 'inside-outside' strategy mean that those looking to civil society outside the talks as a means to pressure hostile negotiators or encourage sympathetic ones to hold fast inside the talks are likely to be persistently disappointed. It is extremely difficult to make the inside relevant and meaningful to the outside space, and vice versa.

30. The outside spaces have value in their own right, however, as an occasion to foster social movement networks, share information and plan for campaigns whose success or failure is unaffected by the international climate talks. With forward planning and the establishment of strong local connections, the presence of international civil society groups can also serve to bolster domestic organising in the host country.

31. Significant progress in the climate talks may require a more fundamental reframing of the terms of the debate. The financial crisis threatens to be used to weaken agreements while reinforcing a reliance on market mechanisms. However, there is also a growing sense that the global elites (or '1%') held responsible by the Occupy movements for the financial crisis have also played a key role in causing the climate crisis, and in delaying effective action to address it. Many activists are seeking to draw connections between these movements and the international climate debate.

Conclusion

From all three sections, the majority of respondents seem to indicate strongly that the intense focus on the UNFCCC itself isn't justified in terms of effort and resources when compared to the outcomes of COP15 to 17. Part of the problem is that a fragmented civil society is making demands on the content of the talks, while the diplomats themselves are involved in formal discussions. Several respondents pointed out that civil society and scientific discussions on climate change are far ahead of the official

negotiations; there is a large, dangerous, and growing disconnection between what is required and what makes it into texts.

The solution offered in most of the interviews was for greater civil society emphasis on growing domestic pressure across the globe; in effect, civil society has tried the short-cut of advocacy at UN, largely skipping the traditional step of mass-based activism, which has meant that many countries arrive at the UN with little in the way of political pressure to make a deal. While it is easy to state that growing national pressure on climate change is required, making such a statement does run the danger of glossing over the very real difficulties of building that pressure. Building mass-based movements is time-consuming, messy, fraught with serious danger in repressive countries, and expensive.

And herein lies a paradox largely ignored by the respondents; building national pressure is a long-term operation (it will not happen overnight) yet a solution to global emissions and rising impacts has to be found in an incredibly short timeframe. We were supposed to have this solution in 2009, and will be extremely lucky to have an agreement signed in 2015 and active in 2020.

Lastly, this research holds some practical suggestions for civil society in host countries. It is unlikely that a host civil society will be able to ignore the COP juggernaut. From the South African experience, it seems that the closer the alternative space is to the official space the better. Also, getting financial support nailed down as soon as possible is vital, as is early planning. South African civil society was forced to organise largely on its own resources for most of 2011; this added negatively to the pressure cooker of COP. The other main issue was unity. South African civil society, through the C17, adopted an almost unity-at-any-cost approach, based on a history of disunity locally (at the World Summit for Sustainable Development, for example) and globally (COP16). While an impressive achievement in its own right, it did come at the high price of an apolitical approach to what is, fundamentally, a political problem of getting nations to agree on global emission reductions and adaptation measures.

LEARNING FROM COP17: SOUTH AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY

David Hallowes

Introduction

In late 2009, it was announced that the seventeenth Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) would be held in South Africa. South African civil society organisations then started planning for the event. In November 2010, a range of organisations met in Booyens, Johannesburg, and agreed to cooperate on a common and inclusive process towards COP17. The meeting mandated an interim committee to prepare a second meeting with a wider representation of civil society in the host city on 26-28th January 2011. This meeting, in Durban, with representatives from 80 organisations participating, nominated the C17 committee with a mandate to organise a common civil society process.

The common process was to coordinate civil society preparations and intended to encourage solidarity by linking people's struggles while accommodating differences between organisations. It was to build movements, coordinate liaison with government and the UN, and facilitate communications. For the fortnight of the COP, the C17 was to organise an autonomous People's Space as a single precinct in which civil society organisations could organise events; a refugee camp to house activists and symbolise the impact of climate change, particularly on Africa; and the Global Day of Action in which all organisations could join.

The decision for a common process was informed by two events. First, as host to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the ruling African National Congress (ANC)

split civil society by dividing its labour allies from the social movements that were then emerging to contest government policy and the ruling party's claim to the mantle of emancipation. Second, divisions within Mexican civil society in the run up to Cancún were held to limit the effectiveness of civil society at COP16. These divisions were then compounded by restricted accommodation in Cancún and the dispersal of different camps.

The C17 created a front composed of environmental organisations, labour, social movements and faith-based organisations.

Environmental civil society is composed of non-government organisations (NGOs) and community organisations. Broadly speaking, they are divided between the Climate Action Network (CAN) and Climate Justice Now! (CJN!). This is not an absolute division and some organisations belong to both. Organisations in both traditions also share several positions relating to the 'common vision', e.g. for the temperature target of 1.5 degrees or lower, the need for binding global carbon emission reductions compatible with that target, the necessity for Northern countries to cut first and hardest in recognition of their historical responsibility and disproportionate per capita emissions, and the necessity for major Southern countries with large emissions to commit to reductions.

The meeting in Booyens also agreed on the need for change in the system of production and consumption. Major differences emerge between the groups on what is exactly meant by change:

First, CJN! identifies the system as capitalist and argues that capitalism is incompatible with addressing climate change, whereas CAN generally calls for change within capitalism and focuses on technical change and particularly on replacing fossil with renewable energy. CJN! therefore sees the corporate influence at the COPs as inherently illegitimate whereas CAN generally accepts the stakeholder model which gives business legitimacy.

Second, and a related point, CJN! opposes carbon trading which it sees as a specifically neo-liberal policy, a symptom of financialised capitalism's need for bubbles and the expression of an increasingly aggressive commodification of nature as a way of compensating for declining profits from production. CAN organisations, by contrast, may criticise particular modalities of trading but not the concept itself. Moreover, some of the large conservation organisations within CAN International, although not necessarily their local affiliates, have developed financial interests associated with trading.



PIC: Caroline Tagny

Several unions participated in the process from the outset and were represented by the Congress of South Africa Trade Unions (Cosatu) on the C17. Labour generally shares the common vision targets and gives particular emphasis to a just transition. All participating organisations subscribe to a just transition but there is considerable divergence in what this entails: accepting that dirty industries must be closed, manage the fair treatment of the workers made redundant or organise a broader process in which labour – or the working class – takes the central role in re-ordering the economy and hence society. Again, the core issue is whether to work within existing relations of power or to change power relations. Civil society organisations, including the unions, are distributed along the spectrum from saving jobs to transforming the meaning of work.

In Cosatu's view:

A 'just transition' means changes that do not disadvantage the working class worldwide, that do not disadvantage developing countries, and where the industrialized countries pay for the damage their development has done to the earth's atmosphere. A just transition provides the opportunity for deeper transformation that includes the redistribution of power and resources towards a more just and equitable social order.¹

Various movements, including informal workers, shack dwellers and rural movements participated in the open meetings. Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) was nominated onto the C17 committee. It could not of course represent other movements but was positioned to bring the perspective of the Poor People's Alliance, which includes the Rural Network, Landless People's Movement, Western Cape Anti-Eviction League as well as AbM. Poor people are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change because they already live in crisis. AbM points out that both the climate crisis and the crisis in the lives of the poor are produced by the capitalist system.² Their response takes the form of a radical democracy where everyone is accorded equal value both as a practice of the movement and as a demand on the wider society that excludes them.

Religious groups were also present and the Southern African Faith Communities Environmental Institute (SAFCEI) was nominated to the C17 committee. SAFCEI sees the response to climate change primarily as a moral issue requiring that people look after God's creation and that they seek justice for all. The climate crisis is rooted in the present economic model, in the "pursuit of endless growth and material wealth", and an alternative model must be founded on love for people and for the Earth.³

Durban outcome

Views on the outcome of the Durban COP range from 'failure' to 'disaster'. Some regarded it as a less bad failure than expected, citing a waggish response: 'They snatched delay from the jaws of defeat'. Delay nevertheless leads to disaster in the context where critical ecological limits may already be breached and threaten run-away climate change. Delay also implies the expectation that the Durban Platform will eventually produce an effective agreement. Most respondents don't believe it. There is nothing in the record of successive COPs to suggest it, according to Tristen Taylor of Earthlife Africa Jhb, and no evident intent, either from the developed countries or from the BASIC group (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) to get serious about the climate, according to Siziwe Khanyile of groundWork.

Saving Kyoto was a benchmark for several international organisations. For WWF, the future of Kyoto was critical to the future of the multilateral process and Durban did just enough to avoid a breakdown of that process. Nevertheless, it delivered even less than the little expected of it, producing empty shells that await

content, in the view of WWF's Tasneem Essop.

Sibusiso Gumede of Cosatu expected more but came to a similar conclusion: the Durban Platform is empty; the Kyoto commitments are still to be specified and unlikely to be different from the pledges; the 'Cancún Adaptation Framework' remains blank; the Global Climate Fund (GCF) is without funds and even the fast track funding promised for 2010-2012 is yet to appear; technology transfer is void because of its subordination to the WTO regime of intellectual property rights; and, critically, there is no adequate articulation of a 'just transition'.

The victory spin put on the Durban COP by the South African government and the UN is regarded as misleading and reflecting a greater concern with image than with substance, says Melita Steele of Greenpeace Africa. Ahead of the event, South Africa's anxiety at the prospect of Durban being remembered for the "death of Kyoto" was explicit and this PR disaster was turned around with the Durban Platform, a triumph of branding according to Desmond D'Sa of South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA).

CSO relation to COP process

The South African government initially said this would be a People's COP but this rhetoric was quickly abandoned. Tasneem Essop believes it handled the multilateral process quite well but neglected the process with civil society. The common view is that it did little to inform civil society about the preparatory process, about the negotiating positions of other countries or about its own positions.

Since Bali (2007), says Sibusiso Gumede, the negotiations process has been increasingly removed from civil society. Cosatu hoped to see this trend reversed in South Africa given that the ruling party came from a history of struggle. This hope was disappointed. With the next COP in Qatar, a country which does not respect workers' rights, the exclusion of civil society is likely to be entrenched. Bandile Mdlalose of AbM notes that the poor who are most immediately affected by climate change did not get through the door at Durban. The negotiations are sealed off from the world of the poor even as negotiators speak about them.

In contrast, privileged corporate access and influence is widely remarked. That this is the focus of renewed civil society attention is also attested to by three new publications from Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and the Polaris Institute. Corporate capture of public institutions

PIC: Caroline Tagny



is not just about their lobbying access or inclusion on country delegations but about the market logic becoming the common sense of the governmental parties to the convention. As Siziwe Khanyile puts it, the global political and economic system determines the UN process.

Taylor argues that support for civil society participation should be a pre-condition for hosting the COP. Material support for the C17 was forthcoming at the last moment. He believes this was the result of pressure from African governments who wanted a strong citizen presence. There was indeed civil society support for the strong African position agreed at Bamako⁴ on the targets for temperature stabilisation and Annex 1 [developed] country emission reductions and on financial transfers, says groundWork's Bobby Peek. Whether coming from Africa or civil society – inside or outside – these views made little impression on the negotiations. This created the perception that the South African chair was biased in favour of Europe and against Africa. David Le Page of the SAFCEI remarks that Africa did not stand by its own positions in the end and its acquiescence contrasted with the willingness of ALBA countries to contest outcomes.

The Durban COP, or rather Copenhagen-Cancún-Durban, has shifted civil society views on participation. Organisations that based their climate strategies on 'inside' lobbying through the multilateral process are recognising the limits. After Copenhagen, WWF adopted an 80-20 split of effort between the national (in big emitting countries) and multilateral levels. It is also looking more to building movement but accepts that this is not in its DNA and it must therefore seek alliances with other organisations: Oxfam and ITUC at the international level [Essop].

Climate justice organisations did not necessarily share optimism going into Copenhagen. Many thought that no agreement would be better than a bad agreement – although they did not anticipate that the derided Copenhagen Accord would become the basis for agreement in Cancún. For many, the 'inside strategy' has failed. Peek argues that positive change cannot be expected from the official process and civil society organisations need to communicate that so that people at the local level understand what is happening.

For Taylor, Copenhagen-Cancún-Durban clarifies that the response to climate change is not about rational argument but about power relations. He too motivates for a focus on making climate a hot political issue at the national scale. Most respondents share this view. Taylor warns that the scope of the change needed includes but goes

well beyond technology systems as advocated by several organisations, environmental issues being political issues at base. This implies unseating vested interests and Brian Ashley of the Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC) argues that this is why the ruling elites, particularly in the North but also in the South, are unwilling to address climate change.

CJN!SA's November 2011 position paper puts the point like this:

The logic of saving capital and not the climate will prevail unless people's movements force governments to change the logic of their participation in the UNFCCC. Clearly this is a long-term project with Durban just one of the staging posts. It gives the climate justice movement in South Africa an opportunity for mobilisation but the challenge is to sustain that beyond Durban.

This is not about a withdrawal from the international scale. Peek argues that organising needs to take place across the local, national and global scales, that a people's multilateralism rooted in local struggles must be developed to confront and contest the multilateralism of states. The state system led by the US is itself in crisis. The strategy of making people pay for it has given rise to the Arab rebellion, the Indignados, the Occupy movement etc. and this suggests more expansive but less predictable possibilities.

The need to build popular movements is agreed by all. It is not clear that everyone means the same thing by it or makes a distinction between the politics of movement and the politics of civil society. For Brian Ashley, the notion of civil society is in itself tied to the stakeholder democracy agenda put into play at Rio (1992) to produce ritualised participation for NGOs while corporate capital consolidated its power. A politics based in popular movements is necessary to build the counter-power needed to turn governments from the path of destruction.

The national level

South Africa ran its domestic climate policy process during 2011, starting with a Green Paper in January followed by a White Paper in November. The documents show a keen awareness of the consequences of climate change but civil society organisations were unanimous that the mitigation targets, taking account of common but differentiated responsibilities, are entirely inadequate. Taken alongside energy policy, it is clear that the corporate interests at

the heart of South Africa's coal based economy are not to be disturbed.

For most respondents, the South African government revealed itself at the COP as strangely schizoid and paranoid. Throughout the preparatory process, it did little to engage with civil society. Its last minute funding for C17 nevertheless suggested that it wanted a visible citizen's presence. Further, the City government was very cooperative in supporting arrangements for the refugee camp housing activists.

At the same time, state security agencies and the City appeared to want civil society and the GDA march to be as invisible as possible. Notification for the march was given early in the year. Thereafter, protracted negotiations several times appeared to produce agreement on the route only for the authorities to reopen the question. These tactics were sustained right to the end and the C17 eventually had to go to court to get a ruling in its favour. The impression was given that the issue was less about the route and more about asserting dominance.

It is of particular concern that the state enabled and then justified the use of informal violence against legitimate protest. Having made a big issue of the route, the City sent about 200 'Durban City volunteers' – members of the ANC Youth League who were in fact paid to be there – to join the march. They responded with violence to protesters who denounced the record of Jacob Zuma's presidency. The City did not inform the C17 organisers that their volunteers would be marching and the police refused to respond to the organisers' requests that they should usher them out of the march [Peek]. Five days later, at an open meeting with President Zuma in the Durban City Hall, the City volunteers attacked people holding posters which called on South Africa to stand firm with the African Bamako position. President Zuma did nothing to intervene and city officials later justified their volunteers' actions. The state's use of informal violence is not novel but it is not usually so brazen. Several respondents think this is what an emerging fascism looks like.

A focus on the national state is thus scarcely less daunting than a focus on the multilateral process. Ashley summarises the overall context thus:

- An authoritarian regime wedded to a process of accumulation based on fossil fuels;
- A crisis in the multilateral negotiations; and
- Weak popular movements who are ill-prepared to confront the powers of state and capital.

C17: A political process?

The civil society initiative was originally conceived as political but was reduced to a logistical cooperation, says Taylor. However, the idea and purpose of a political process was never really articulated and the C17 did not get a clear mandate for that from the January meeting. It subsequently decided that it should create the platform for civil society participation but not attempt to lead it. Laura Tyrer of WWF notes that this issue was re-opened and argued at the second open meeting in July but the decision stood.

Ashley sees this as a symptom of the weakness of the climate justice movement and more broadly of the popular movements that might otherwise have set an agenda for opening out debate between organisations and perspectives, both to expose working class people to the issues and to establish a meaningful base for engaging with government. The agenda for this, he believes, could and should have been set by the climate justice group who had the leadership and the numbers. Instead, real politics was subordinated to a comfortable and somewhat cliquish unity.

Others felt the C17 should produce an open space in which participating movements and organisations should articulate their politics. This reflected a concern that C17 would end up imposing positions or with watered down positions. Successive attempts to come to positions confirmed that they would indeed be watered down. These attempts also bogged down the process, consuming the limited time at the open civil society meetings to little effect. So the politics never got beyond positions and 'messaging'.

In particular, it was evident from the first meeting in Booyens that the common process could not agree an anti-systemic position and would therefore not agree to what CJN!SA believes is the fundamental requirement for addressing climate change. As noted above, there was agreement on the necessity of 'changing the system of production and consumption' but different groups meant different things by it. While this was named as the C17's overall objective, it was not in fact used during the mobilisation. The front banner on the GDA march was 'united against climate change'. This reflected a strongly held value for unity but was pretty much the lowest common denominator imaginable.



PIC: Caroline Tagny

South African social movements that have emerged since WSSD, notably AbM and its allies in the Poor People's Alliance, have been insistent that they should speak for themselves. This is in reaction to the commonly articulated experience that social movements are no sooner formed than NGOs and middle class activists seek to hijack them to their own political agendas. Given this, Mdlalose considers it a strength of the C17 process that it did not take decisions for participating movements and organisations.

Taking this view, the failure of politics was not so much about the C17 as about the participating organisations, particularly the justice camp and including the unions, movements and faith organisations. On the one hand, these organisations never brought their politics into the C17 process. Ashley says of his own organisation, AIDC, that it never integrated the Million Climate Jobs campaign with its participation in the C17 process. This could also be said of groundWork's Dirty Energy Week. Union preparations and the faith organisations' rally were similarly disconnected while the movements were not very visible in the preparatory process. Nerisha Baldevu of Earthlife Africa Jhb comments that the C17 process was largely seen as the environmental organisations' gig. Other formations did not bring the same commitment to it.

On the other hand, the C17 common process was cut to the bone. The January open civil society meeting was to be the first of a series of such meetings aimed at broadening participation and enabling direct accountability. For want of funding, however, just one more meeting (in July) was held before the COP and there was no spare capacity to organise a meeting during the COP itself. Similarly, when there was still no money in the pot in September, C17 also had to abandon plans to support mobilisation and awareness campaigning. This was left to participating organisations but little or no mobilising was possible in areas where there were no strong organisations.

Simply put, the C17 did not have the resources either to carry out or to facilitate a political process. This was not just about money and hands (discussed below). From the beginning (and even before) the organisations leading the process badly underestimated what it would take, were late off the mark and did not give it sufficient priority. Thembeke Majali of AIDC comments that the C17 was effectively delegated to second tier leadership. Further, the process was initiated without a clear purpose beyond the desire for unity – or to avoid division – and this is what resurfaced on the GDA banner. Baldevu believes the objective of building movement did not get the commitment needed for it. Even

where people were mobilised, she questions whether there was much depth to it – people did not make climate change their own issue.

Desmond D'Sa of the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance takes a more positive view; without the civil society organising, people would not have known about climate change, the COP or government's own climate policy process. Gumede makes a similar point and notes that union debates on climate change have been given a new cogency although it is still not well articulated on the shop floor. To build on that, the unions will need to put more resources into it. At present Cosatu does not have anyone working on it full time. Similarly, Le Page says the faith groups have developed a clear moral response to climate change but not yet got it down to the congregations. This is the next phase and can build on what he believes is a new level of awareness within the faith community.

Both the unions and faith groups were disappointed in how many members turned out. The faith rally at Kings Park stadium aimed for 35,000 to 40,000 and got only 5,000. The venue made a modest turnout look poor. For the GDA, both groups also came out below expectations. A particular surprise was that the National Union of Mineworkers, with comparatively conservative views on climate change, was by far the biggest

worker's block and more prominent than the Metalworkers who have the strongest positions.

There was also surprise at the apparently small turnout of local community groups, particularly from south Durban. Peek thinks this is about activist 'fatigue' rather than any lack of awareness on climate change. South Durban people, for example, have campaigned for many years and have substantially influenced the air quality regime. But this has not made much difference in their lives – respiratory ailments and cancers are still rife. Desmond D'Sa and Lushendrie Naidu of SDCEA, to the contrary, say that the local turnout was much larger than thought. Going on bussing figures, D'Sa estimates up to 7,000 from across KZN. However, they did not make themselves visible as a block but were dispersed through the march. They also report that local youth who arrived at the march went home to avoid conflict when they saw the Durban City volunteers.

Tord Björk of Friends of the Earth Sweden remarks that the climate justice movement initiated the people's assembly process at Copenhagen. This process was then taken up at Cochabamba but it was not developed at Cancún or Durban.⁵ Had such a process been identified as the purpose in the beginning, it might have suggested a different starting place.

Earthlife Africa's Climate Justice March on 26th Nov 2011 in Johannesburg. PIC: ELAJhb



The coordination

The original 17 committee members were nominated at the January meeting. There were no criteria for nominations and the idea that a committee of nine would be elected from the nominees was dropped as it became clear that there was no viable election process. It seemed that nominations were made partly on the basis of organisations and partly on the basis of individuals but it became an accepted rule that there should not be more than one person per organisation.

In time the committee shrank to 10 although organisations were invited to replace their members who resigned. The early period was particularly difficult as the mandate was not clear and 17 people from very different organisations had to find ways of working together. Teething difficulties were topped by the shortage of funding and time pressures.

The committee used various means of meeting and coming to decisions, including phone conferences and an email list serve. Real meetings in a single room were most important however, both for creating a team and for getting things done. Critical meetings were facilitated by an external professional and committee members say that they would not otherwise have made it. They add that they should have been quicker to call on people within the movement with particular skills or expertise.

Funding

The C17 had next to no money right up to the first week of the COP. Opening negotiations with major NGO donors started some 18 months before the COP. These donors provided funding for initial civil society meetings – one meeting at a time – and minimal core funding for coordination. Early on in the process, two NGO donors promised R14-million between them. In the end, they mustered just R270,000 while total NGO funding added up to R1.4-million.

Taylor argues that these donors are part of global civil society and have a responsibility to it. State donors likewise have a responsibility to ensure civil society participation. “South African civil society was abandoned by the international community,” he says.

C17 members note that work required for fund-raising, as for everything else, was badly underestimated. Following the formation of the C17

committee, it was left to one person, part-time and unpaid, who subsequently resigned from the committee. The initial budgets were hugely ambitious and, in the view of several committee members, this deterred donor support.

By mid-year it became clear that the C17 would face a crisis of resources. It then devoted serious attention to the planning and budgeting that are integral to fund-raising. While this clarified the common project, funding was still not forthcoming. In September, the committee cut its ambitions to the bone and also relaxed the funding criteria developed at the outset. While holding to the principle of not taking money from business, it decided that it would approach governments provided there were no strings attached. This, it was argued, would remain within the mandate given at the open civil society meetings that the civil society agenda and space must be autonomous of government.

It then approached the South African government and several embassies. Possibly in reaction to African pressure, or perhaps because the visibility of civil society is seen as a criterion for a successful COP, the South African government funded a modest R3.4-million (compared to around R400-million for the official COP). To its credit, government did not attach conditions to the funding. This money, however, was not assured till the last minute, some of it coming in the week before COP and some of it coming in only during the COP itself. Having worked without money for so long, the committee was suddenly faced with the problem of spending it fast enough.

The positive result of being cash-strapped was that the people (and organisations) who remained to do the work did so from a commitment to holding the process and to working with and supporting each other. Ideological alignment became secondary to this. Given that the core group were all from the generally fractious environmental sector, several commented that this shows ‘we can actually work together’.

Late and limited funding, however, put an under-resourced team under enormous pressure and created tensions with and within participating groups as plans were constantly under revision. Plans to support 6,000 people to Durban were cut to 2,000 and their time in Durban was also cut to focus on the Global Day of Action. This contributed to tensions between NGOs and community groups and to many participants feeling that they were shepherded to the march in Durban and then bussed home without time to engage with the issues [Ashley].

The venue for 'The People's Space' was changed at the last minute from the Durban University of Technology (DUT), which was too expensive, to the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN). This meant first, that The Space was further removed from the Climate Refugee Camp where many participants were accommodated and from the site of the official COP and second, that organisations lining up to stage events at The Space could not get timely confirmation of venues and the programme as a whole was put together at the last moment.

Hands

C17 planned to establish a secretariat with nine people employed for periods of between nine and one month under the direction of the C17 committee. In the event, money was available for just one salary. Members of the C17 committee therefore had to carry out all administrative and logistics work themselves on top of their normal organisational work – 'part-time and after hours', as one remarked. When the COP arrived in town, there were just six of them.

The work fell to the coordinators of the various sub-committees which had notionally been set up to oversee the secretariat. These sub-committees did not function as committees but ended up being just coordinating forums. The coordinators met in the coordination sub-committee and this is the body that in fact organised everything. They remained responsible for leading their own portfolios but everyone worked on whatever was most urgent. All key decisions were nevertheless taken by the full C17 committee throughout the process with teleconferences held weekly.

As the demands increased, some members of the coordination team were effectively seconded by their organisations – although decisions to second were really taken by default after the fact. As the COP drew near, three organisations – Earthlife Africa, groundWork and SDCEA – gave additional support to the coordination. Other members of the group were ordered back for work in their own organisations – or torn between the two.

Core members of the committee note that nothing was even close to perfect but, in the circumstances, they are justified in their satisfaction that 'we pulled it off': The Space hosted some 200 events, from mass meetings to small seminars, organised by local and international civil society groups; the website was exceptionally well used; 2,000 people were brought to Durban and accommodated; and between 10,000 and 15,000 people joined the

GDA march.

This success was largely confined to the logistics level [Baldevu]. 'Pulling it off' was particularly demanding on the organisations at the core of the climate justice movement. "Our organisations were left to do the work and we put our strength into what turned out to be a logistics process," says Taylor, "So CJNISA was largely absent from the COP."

Things that did not work according to committee members included liaison with government at the policy level as opposed to liaison on practicalities [Steele]. Communications were intended to create a platform for the civil society voice as well as for the exchange of information. This was not developed beyond the website [Tyrer]. The C17 also intended to create spaces for those working on the inside to connect with those on the outside. This did not survive the move from DUT to UKZN, according to Bryan Ashe of Geosphere.

C17 hoped to manage a zero waste strategy – something that Earthlife managed well at WSSD. Zero waste planning needs a reasonable lead-time. This was prevented both because there was no funding and because of the venue change for The Space. C17 also had no capacity to engage with the activist contingents before they arrived in Durban. The idea of zero waste was therefore abandoned and even recycling did not hold up [Ashe]. Requests to avoid polystyrene and bottled water were ignored, at least in part because food became an issue and organisations resorted to buying take-aways. Activists also treated recycling bins as ordinary bins or ignored them altogether.

Alienated movement

While it is hoped that a good base for building the movement was created through the COP mobilisations, this may not be the case. Following the COP, those who were organised to come to Durban roundly criticised those who did the organising. The criticisms have been aired in two articles and also at a meeting in Cape Town held to reflect on the COP. According to Jared Sacks:

Issues relating to food, accommodation and transport were raised but the core of the matter was the gap between organisers and organised, or better, the absence of democratic organising that resulted in such categories. People noted that the leadership were not on the buses for the long trip to Durban and did not sleep in the Refugee Camp but apparently enjoyed more comfortable accommodation.

What became clear ... was that we ... were a crowd whose primary purpose was to provide legitimacy to the C17 NGOs's claims that their agendas had popular support.⁶



Women of the Rural Women's Assembly join Occupy COP17 at Speaker's Corner. PIC: nixpix

The Democratic Left Front (DLF) leadership was similarly castigated for the failure of democratic participation in the practical logistics, in the development of the programme and in statements made in their name. According to the DLF's Jonathan Payn:

The gap between the DLF leadership and the grassroots comrades is the result of a particular approach to viewing and organising movements. ... despite finding a lot of support from below, planning and mobilising for COP17 was largely done in a centralised and top-down manner by a relatively small group of intellectuals and academics.⁷

People were particularly angered by the fact that they had no say in the line-up of speakers for the GDA, where the voices of community were not heard, or in the decision to hand the stage to COP President Maite Nkoana-Mashabane and UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres. Commenting on feedback from the Cape Town meeting, Ashley says that the experience created mistrust between resourced NGOs and unresourced movements. Instrumentalising people does not create a base for a lasting movement.

Clearly a different manner of organising is necessary. In my view, this is likely to be as much of a challenge for the organised as for the organisers. Payn observes that the sense of alienation resulted in DLF militants assuming "relatively little responsibility over driving the entire process."⁸ Organisers for The Space and the Refugee Camp observe that activists did not take responsibility even for putting their litter in readily available bins.

The experience demonstrates that the logistics are political. If movements and communities are to carry through on democratic organisation, they may find it useful to develop the capacity for self-organising for such events: from organising transport, creating their own kitchens, organising their own sanitation and rubbish management, to the more 'political' issues of developing programmes and deciding positions. Developing the skills base for self-organised camps, and ensuring that roles are not allocated on the basis of gender, would serve to build autonomy. It should be emphasised that such camps would need to be for all – including the leadership. South Africans are not strangers to this. Formations such as AbM have been doing it for their meetings for years now.

Were objectives met?

Most organisations, particularly those who have been following the climate negotiations longest, did not expect to influence the outcome just because it was in South Africa. Those who did expect to do so were disappointed. However, all organisations also had domestic objectives.

Gumede notes that the unions have only recently started to look seriously at climate change. While disappointed in the outcome, Cosatu has developed policy on the issue for the first time and it used the COP to start deepening its work with shop floor members. The unions also hoped for a positive interaction with government but were disappointed in this.

Faith-based organisations, in Le Page's view, were reasonably successful in making climate change a moral issue and the negotiated outcome must be measured in moral and ethical terms. This contests how we make decisions in society, which has been about the cheapest way of getting economic growth. He believes that people are now more aware even if there are no immediate results: "Since we are working for social change, we have to work in the faith that people will respond in the future."

Greenpeace Africa wanted to make linkages with other organisations to strengthen local campaigns aimed at shifting South Africa from coal to renewables. They saw the COP as an opportunity to put pressure on South Africa's domestic policies. WWF in South Africa likewise wanted to link with other organisations. It acknowledges that it is not adapted to building movements and hopes to cooperate with those who are. The C17 representatives for both organisations are encouraged that 'we can work together'.

Organisations in the climate justice tradition all hoped to contribute to building movement. groundWork worked to make connections between people's struggles (locally and globally) and climate change, to confront false solutions, and to build demand for democratic energy alternatives. SDCEA also worked to connect local struggles in Durban and KZN and was pleased with the international connections made at the COP.

AIDC similarly aimed to build movement by connecting the crisis in people's lives – notably unemployment – with the crisis of climate change and showing that the origins of both lie in a predatory capitalism. It hoped to build an anti-capitalist eco-socialist block. Ashley believes "we did alright at level of propaganda" but did not



PIC: Caroline Tagny

have the capacity to orchestrate a deeper debate and were further hampered by the logistical issues. The COP exposed weakness in the climate justice movement at all levels, from people's grasp of the implications of climate change to the capacity to think strategy and tactics.

Earthlife Africa took the weakness of civil society as its starting point. In its view, civil society organisations needed to demonstrate societal support at the COP or risk losing the credibility needed to carry on the fight at the local level. Without a good showing, the fights against coal and nuclear power and against the big corporations at the centre of South Africa's minerals-energy complex would weaken. Taylor believes "we did just enough" with a reasonable turnout for the GDA, some capacity to challenge government, the release of good research and a fair bit of media attention.

Conclusion

There was no coherent discussion of purpose prior to the decision for a united front. Unity was rather its own objective and that was met. This may have the positive result of better working relations and coordination between organisations. D'Sa also believes that, through working together,

organisations got a better sense of the struggles that inform the climate justice position.

Having agreed to work together, organisations seriously underestimated what it would take in time and in resources. First, civil society organisations need to respond very quickly to the announcement of such mega-events. Second, they need to give the preparation adequate priority, implying that it must be the focus of top-tier leadership and that organisations must be prepared to give it adequate time. Funding must be nailed down early and this implies clarifying objectives and putting in the resources for planning as well as for negotiation with donors. Early expectations of funding around mega-events are invariably inflated. It would be a salutary discipline for civil society organisations to first define the bare minimum and then work for the cherries.

Donor NGOs did not help by switching their requirements on financial administration, by being picky about what bits they would fund or by making promises which they would not keep. The donors need to decide for themselves their commitment to local civil society and risk sticking with it. Following from this, they would do well to contribute resources for the initial project planning but without giving the impression that they want to shape the agenda.

The funding situation prevented the employment of a dedicated secretariat. C17 demonstrated the alternative of a secretariat being formed by the participating organisations. In this case, the burden fell on the environmental organisations. Again the response was too little too late. Had they been ready for it, they might have responded sooner and more decisively. With a mega-event on the way, time is unforgiving. Somebody needs to be responsible for sounding the alarms when things fall behind.

Any newly established group takes time to learn how to work together as well as to establish what the tasks are. Having an experienced facilitator to do so was critical for the C17 committee. Having their backs to the wall also helped build the team and served to highlight where the organisational commitment was to be found.

For movement building, says Ashley, it is back to basics. There are no shortcuts such as organising through the Internet. The process must be about listening to people. Payn emphasises that the base organisations and movements are responsible for representing the will of their members – i.e. for their own politics. The COP experience indicates that ‘logistics’ are political too.

Jackie Cock observes that the climate movement does not have “a clear and singular identity” but is rather “the fragmented sum of multiple, diverse struggles and organisations.”⁹ She argues that the idea of justice must be at the core of bringing coherence to a movement capable of drawing in labour and movements and sufficient to challenge the “expansionist logic of the capitalist system.”

It does not follow that a centralised organisation is called for. But something is needed to give form to the movement. The South African organisations and movements may find it useful to consider initiating a people’s assembly process to take the movement forward. Such a process need not presume unity but would enable debate. At the same time, it would encourage the climate justice movement to think of itself as such – to think of the movement beyond the organisations.

Finally, I hope that this research is useful to everyone who participated in the civil society process. It remains nevertheless a partial exercise. Ashley suggests there should be a collective analysis of the lessons from the COP. I agree.

Endnotes

- ¹ COSATU Policy Framework on Climate Change. Adopted by the COSATU Central Executive Committee, August 2011
- ² Bandile Mdlalose, *Climate Change and Poor People’s Struggles*, posted at www.abahlali.org on October 8, 2011
- ³ Statement issued by the Regional Climate Change Meeting for Faith-based Organisations in Southern Africa gathered in Lusaka, Zambia, from 5-6 May 2011
- ⁴ Bamako Declaration on Consolidating the African Common Position on Climate Change and Preparation for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), September 2011
- ⁵ Tord Björk, *Part I: The climate justice movement after Durban towards Rio+20 and beyond: Another global campaign is possible!* Circulated by Friends of the Earth Sweden, January 2012
- ⁶ Jared Sacks, *The Climate Change Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, posted at www.independent.org/2011/12/09/the-climate-change-revolution-will-not-be-funded/, December 9, 2011
- ⁷ Jonathan Payn, *Towards a Truly Democratic Left: An Anarchist Assessment of the DLF at COP17*. posted at www.anarkismo.net, December 27 2011
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Jacklyn Cock, *‘Ask for a camel when you expect to get a goat’: Contentious politics and the climate justice movement*, forthcoming

DONORS: SOUTH AFRICAN BASED DONOR COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT

Trusha Reddy

Introduction

Shortly after it was announced that the COP17 would be held in South Africa, the Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBF) sent out an email, dated 20th of April 2010,¹ to a handful of individuals in local civil society requesting a “brainstorming session to develop ideas and plans for civil society engagement in COP17.”² They listed a set of guiding questions for the discussion, which included the following:

What role should civil society play in the run up to and during COP17? How can we, if at all, ensure that a just and effective deal is reached by COP17? How can we create momentum for this event? How do we ensure that civil society is not shut out of the deliberations as happened in Copenhagen?³

After requests were made to broaden the discussion to others active in the environmental sector, HBF extended the invite out further and then hosted a meeting on the 21st of July 2010 at its office in Cape Town with over 40 participants from across the country. The meeting recommended the setting up of an umbrella group of activities to ensure the inclusion and impact of civil society at the COP17. Ultimately it helped to galvanise local civil society into a process that would lead to the formation of the Committee of 17 (C17). Meanwhile environmental organisation Earthlife Africa Johannesburg (ELA Jhb)⁴ was coordinating its own events in Gauteng to help organise civil society towards the COP17. The confluence of, and parallel, agendas led to a more unified, common approach towards the latter part of the year.

This report has returned to those formative questions posed by HBF. This research asked donors and the South African government to provide their reflections on those questions post-COP17. Structured interviews were conducted with six donor organisations based in South Africa⁵ and one SA government department,⁶ the Directorate of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), and the City of Durban.⁷ One anonymous interview was used to fill in minor gaps in understanding of the broader

processes and to provide some background information. The sample was taken from the C17’s list of funders and, as such, the assessment does not represent all opinions or covers the range of donors that supported other organisations and activities at the COP. The emphasis is also on depth rather than breadth of interviewee perspectives.

Enter the hybrids

As C17 began its work, a group of ‘hybrids’, who are both civil society organisations and donors at the same time, also started taking shape. The hybrids describe their objectives and roles in similar ways.

Tigere Chagutah and Kulthoum Omari of HBF state that their support was based on wanting:

... a stronger, coordinated approach to C17. We wanted to be partners and not to influence their agenda. C17 got its mandate from the broader SA civil society body and we felt that the committee would essentially be accountable to it. So our process was just to facilitate, to enhance that which the broader SA civil society wants to put together for COP17.

Similarly, Jos Martens says that RLF is a “solidarity organisation so we were not there to promote our own message.” Bertha Chiroro of the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) says that her organisation “is a network used to mobilise in times of climate change events.” They “coordinate donors... bringing together everyone including the most radical and extreme and then facilitate those meetings... So GCCA’s task was to mobilise civil society and support key messages from civil society.” In this way it also sees itself as a neutral organisation. Samantha Hargreaves of Action Aid South Africa says similarly, “We’re like a bit of a hybrid. We don’t just direct work, we work very closely in particular geographies, so even the work in areas here, the funding that we have in those areas would be used to support and participate in a lot of the activities around COP.” Kevin Roussel of Oxfam AU explains likewise:



Rural Women Assemble@ Speaker's Corner. PIC: nixpix

We are an organisation that has been working on climate change for many years and has developed various positions through its research... But we didn't go into COP saying to the world give us this. We supported those organisations who were working on that broader objective of achieving gender balance, and an African and pro-poor COP. In that regard, we didn't speak on their behalf but we gave them support, particularly financially to do their projects. In terms of South African partners, we're working within a broader programme in South Africa.

But he also feels that the support adds value rather than just providing funding:

Groups of people saw us as partners in the development of projects, but also in serving on working committees, and even in some cases helping with media support. So that's the broader line of support that we provide; it is not the traditional 'we're a donor and let's support you'.

The interests of hybrids thus appear to converge more easily with that of civil society organisations

(CSOs). They share a lot of the same experiences being CSOs (or quasi-CSOs) and can therefore more easily sympathise with their concerns. Their values and goals also tend to be more closely aligned. But there are other dynamics to consider. The hybrids also tend to be organisations with an international status, typically with head offices in Northern countries, who then set up satellite offices in Southern countries. This trend has important ramifications for local civil society. A participant, who wished to remain anonymous, stated:

More traditional donors now want to be seen as implementers much like local civil society which they typically fund. This practice follows business organisational trends that have gone multinational in a globalised world. So they also need to go multinational. When they come to South Africa they pay much higher wages than local CSOs and offer more job security etc. which has the effect of taking the brightest people away. So instead of supporting organisations that have similar aims they come and set up shop and then when you want to build national movements there is no money to do this ...⁸

In terms of the process, it is unclear whether C17 was inspired into its single umbrella formation as a way to activate funding from the hybrids. Initially civil society had the impression that the funder group – initially comprised of the HBF, GCCA and Oxfam AU – would support the secretariat of the C17. But when a budget was finally drafted and presented to the donors, they came back saying they would only support project activities. The budget then had to be redrafted and the amount considerably reduced. Each donor ended up supporting different activities like the Global Day of Action, the refugee camp, activities within the People's Space etc. But the axis of support was more of a loosely coordinated operation that evolved in tandem with the C17. Outliers like the British Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Rosa Luxemborg Foundation (RLF)⁹ came in at a later stage.

The experience of a central or coordinated 'pot' of funding speaks to how money can be used to catalyse action. It is also easy to see how a big event like the COP, externally imposed, can spur activity as compared to a societal, need driven action. In comparison, the formation of the Climate Justice Now! South Africa (CJN!SA) network emerged entirely from an impetus within civil society to fill a vacuum in the political and environmental landscape locally and without any initial directed funding. The formation was typified by a natural coherence of like-minded organisations and networks coming together to address common issues. It therefore becomes necessary to interrogate further whether a dependency arose through the flipside relationship described above and what the resulting implications were.

Declining funds

Funding for CSOs has, in general, decreased over the last decade or so with American funders being the first to leave. But South African CSOs were still getting a lot of funding until 2002, with the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) representing a watershed moment for major funds coming in for global events. From 2009, there was another marked decline with European funders saying they had been hit hard by the financial crisis.¹⁰

An external evaluation of the ELA Jhb's Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Programme (SECCP)¹¹ reveals that:

There are a number of donors who have left South Africa, cutting back or contemplating

leaving. This has created uncertainty especially in organisations that have a smaller base to raise funds from because of their critical political orientation. It is understood that there is increased pressure on resources available to some funding partners/donors and there may be a need to cut down on the number of countries they work in.

The assessment concludes:

It is important that social justice orientated funders withstand the pressure exerted by back donors and governments for funders to pull out because they categorise South Africa as a middle income country or it is part of austerity packages. The challenge for funders is to not buy into 'austerity' measures at home or such calls for 'managing public funds better' or a flawed political analysis or even 'looking out for the poorest people' or 'disaster relief'. Instead, funders who have a social justice orientation should be looking for ways to build networks and alliances of solidarity which can strengthen the hand of national, regional and global civil society for social justice.

Martens supports this view. He also feels that a conservative creep in funding has led to a rapidly shrinking pool of more radical organisations:

In general, my experience of the past years, it has become more difficult to get financing and one reason is that we are absolutely left-sided while society has become more conservative. In my own experience, it is always difficult to prove your achievements; these kinds of political activities are the first ones to fall out of the finance gap.

The chequered history in funding also relates to environmental justice being seen as a new issue and therefore slow to receive funding whilst conservation, a neutral issue politically, has always been well funded.¹²

Furthermore, Roussel thinks that hosting mega events like the Soccer World Cup did not do the country any favours:

For all the attention that it brought to South Africa, the COP in itself probably had a negative effect. If you look at the World Cup, it was a great thing and brought attention to South Africa but it also taught the world that we are a rich country. I think COP does the same thing. COP gives you an opportunity to host a big conference. It gives you an opportunity to put South African climate

change-type needs [out there] and then you have all these images out of Durban and the ICC and people think: "And they need money from us?" We knew immediately that donations were not going to reach our aspiration levels.

Meanwhile the donor environment is in constant flux. Staff relocate, have shorter-term contracts, or quit easily because of internal pressures. It is difficult in this context for CSOs to build relationships and ensure longer term funding. Chiroro argues that "Donors want short term, high impact (projects) without building long-term relationships.... Climate change work and effecting change is a long haul. So really people need to build long-term relationships."

As far as the financial crisis and resulting austerity measures go, donors are not all on the same page. Some like Chiroro are of the view that it has had a "terrible impact. While we tried to help other groups to raise funds we couldn't meet that budget. GCCA tried to mobilise other funds, to support local civil society to meet that budget.... It was a total disappointment."

Catherine Pye of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office thinks that it's about being "smarter about spending". The City of Durban's Sue Bannister agrees that funding has got less but "the main issue is that people are more careful about expenditure than a few years ago." Samantha Hargreaves of Action Aid South Africa said that Action Aid relies to a large degree on child sponsorship:

... and obviously, at this stage, because of the financial crisis child sponsorship is terrible. There's just no market....Unless, you can start looking beyond Europe and the UK which is where our child sponsorship comes from, that market is completely zapped. As the financial crisis continues to grow it's going to have an impact.

But Roussel argues that in effect the financial crisis left everyone underfunded for the COP:

What we can add is the big agreement in the beginning of the year that finance would be flown into South Africa because people really cared about climate change as an international development issue. And I



PIC SAFCEI

think what we found is that it hasn't actually happened and many organisations struggled along the way... At the end of the day, everyone was underfunded quite significantly in terms of what their ambition was in the beginning of the year and what they were able to raise at the end of the year. Civil society thought that donors would be putting up money but found that it didn't happen. International donors were wholly unable to provide support to civil society organisations to engage in the COP, because of the financial crisis within the sector last year. Ultimately the money didn't come.

He also considers that the impact of the financial crisis manifests clearly in the implementation of climate change commitments from previous COPs:

If you look at what countries can do to meet these pledges, it becomes pretty obvious that the financial crisis had an impact on it. When you look at developed country government commitments they aren't able to meet humanitarian aid etc. It's very unlikely that they will bequeath huge amounts elsewhere. It ends up being a lot of excuses about corruption (in Southern countries) or we don't have the technical capacity to fast track finance specifically within the UNFCCC process and that came to an end or is coming to an end now. There are a whole lot of issues with donor countries as to why they don't want to make the money available even though they pledged to raise 30 billion dollars (for fast start finance).

So there are a few issues in the COP itself. It was raised by the European Union at COP that the financial crisis limits their ability to transform their economies into green economies. They don't have money to upgrade their industries to be more efficient. Then again do they have the money to provide donor aid to civil society to engage with the process? This is why we need to provide a more institutional dialogue and multilateral processes in key areas.

With a smaller pool of funding available, donors also face pressures in balancing their budgets. Hybrids usually have a large international staff complement that participates at the COPs, leaving less funding for supporting local civil society. Similarly, government donors have to bring down their own delegations to participate in the negotiations and for important events like the COP they tend to bring more people down to bolster their delegations. Pye says, "We had to get a certain number of negotiators out to get an



'2015 EMISSIONS PEAK OR RUN AWAY CLIMATE'
PIC: nixpix

ambitious and legally binding [deal] and those costs were unavoidable."

Martens has become sceptical of this approach. After seeing the C17's budget shortfall he tried to get funding from certain embassies without any real success:

... embassies had got extra staff to prepare for COP17, but they had no funds in their budget for civil society. So, for the ICC [official space] COP17 it is so important to send people from the embassies to make sure all is recognised, that it so important, and then despite all the rhetoric about democracy and input from civil society etc they don't put one dime aside for the civil society for the COP programme... A lot of rhetoric for democracy and for an open discussion but it doesn't translate into funding. It is repressive tolerance so when it comes to it there is nothing. So, I think it is partly the crisis, but partly conservative and maybe also deliberate sabotage. I don't know.

Whilst the hybrids appeared to be neutral on civil society messaging, rather seeing civil society building as an end in itself, it made sense for government donors to want civil society to align with their negotiating positions and interests. For example, the FCO thought that in its work:

... with the National Planning Commission (NPC) it is far easier to work through civil society organisations like SEA (Sustainable Energy Africa) as their messages are the same as ours. Government is more open to their thinking than having UK government directly trying to lead them in a certain way ... [we] hired civil society to promote our messaging... With others it was advocacy like WWF and NDI a series of seminars at the COP and start up money for a large display for SA business. We made sure that civil society that shared our approach got airtime in our stand...promot[ing] our messages through leaflets etc.

Civil society was perhaps innately hesitant to get money and support from the South African government for fear that it would cause undue influence on their agenda and sacrifice their independence. But the government placed high emphasis initially on it being a 'People's COP' which suggested that it would support a plurality of voices and active civil society participation. In fact, the symbiotic result is praised by Chagutah and Omari:

[It] was the formal recognition of civil society as a partner with government; government actually supported COP17 financially. They saw the C17 as a body through which government and other actors could engage with civil society. So, they gained more credibility as an institution, they were supported financially, they were recognised in meetings, they were recognised during the formal consultation process, as opposed to 100 or so NGOs working independently. So it provided that coordination where government can come and engage with civil society ...

Durban Outcome: 'Saving tomorrow today' or 'saving today tomorrow'?

The Durban outcomes elicit a nuanced picture with responses ranging from unqualified approval to acceptance of meeting minimal expectations. In general, government donors are more likely to be positive and optimistic about the outcomes whilst donors outside like the hybrids share qualified perspectives. Donors like Rosa Luxemborg and GCCA limited their focus to just supporting civil society activities rather than pushing for their own outcomes.

A COP for Africa?

African interests needed to be articulated in the outcome as they were the most vulnerable community as well as the host of the COP. Chagutah and Omari argue that "Climate change is also not just an economic and environmental challenge but also an ethical and moral challenge...climate equity should be acknowledged and the needs of the most vulnerable should always be addressed."

But Roussel believes that ultimately the outcome was not good for Africa:

When we look at the mitigation targets and gigatonne gaps, and these sorts of issues, we are heading for a higher than two degree pathway. And what the COP was dealing with is what we were going to do in 2020 which is quite ironic because the tagline was 'saving tomorrow today'. And in many ways it seemed to work the other way and what discussions and agreements we will reach in 2020. We were dealing with 2020 'saving today tomorrow' but it be should be 'saving today for tomorrow'. And we are leaving a huge pathway for major climate change to happen and I think that is a major problem.

Martens also didn't believe we saw "a radical outcome for climate change" which is what was needed.

Matching outcomes with the multilateral process

Some see the outcomes as being tied up with the multilateral process, given all its limitations and constraints, and trying to rescue and keep on track a process that is often fraught with danger. When viewed from this perspective, Durban is regarded as a success. DIRCO's Lydia Greyling explains:



At the gates of the UNFCCC, 2 March 2011. PIC: nixpix

It was definitely that we have to look at what we need to do now and in the future – for now it’s the second commitment of the Kyoto Protocol and implementation of the Bali agreements... And then for the future we need to put something in place to look at the way that the multilateral system is secured for the future... [What was] secured in Bonn and Panama led to a long-term process that led to the Durban Platform... The European Union categorically said they can commit to a second commitment period and this culminated in the Durban Platform.

To add to that is the issue of where they said that we want to keep transparency, inclusiveness, multilateralism, which was achieved through the Durban Platform ... We moved into smaller groups. We said ok, we have 195 parties, we have same proportion, G77 has 8 representatives. We ordered them to get back to groups. The whole issue of transparency and inclusiveness was now sorted.

Fadel Nacerodien of DIRCO thought that their aim of achieving a balanced outcome through this difficult process was something they did well. He says “The diplomatic balancing act was done exceptionally well. SA did well at getting consensus.”

The FCO also declared Durban to be an unqualified success. Pye said that they had “one overriding goal: an ambitious goal that leads to an agreement which encompasses all parties” and to operationalise the Cancún, Copenhagen and Bali agreements. They were “really pleased with the outcome” and felt it “met the high end of expectations”.

Chagutah and Omari are satisfied with the low expectations and the fact that they got “some sort of the spirit of that multilateralism still in the game... There is some commitment of how countries can work together for a global problem; the Durban Package allows for that ... at least it didn’t reach a collapse.” The Durban decisions also saw the extension of the Kyoto Protocol, which they supported.

Nuts and bolts

In terms of the substantive elements, Roussel thought that the outcome was a “mixed bag”. Oxfam specifically focused on the gender, pro-poor and the balance between adaptation and mitigation dimensions. Whilst the gender dimension was reflected quite clearly in various pieces of the outcome, the pro-poor issues were addressed in part “but definitely not for all or for an African COP.” And the pro-poor balance between adaptation and mitigation was “not good”. Chagutah and Omari thought the African voice was heard in some way in adaptation and to some extent gender, but was not captured in mitigation or finance. Roussel also says that “in terms of adaptation finance we had some success in setting a foundation for the next COP.”

Oxfam’s mandate was also to look at climate financing, in particular long-term and innovative sources of finance. Roussel states:

So we continued our work from Cancún on gender but we also started to build the foundations for future work around bunker fuels and taxing emissions in the shipping industry and quite a lot of our work was getting that discussion on the table and we were quite successful in terms of putting it on the agenda and putting it on the pre-text. Various parties starting to agree with this idea but in the final text itself the long-term sources of finance were different.

Chagutah and Omari had an expectation that the Green Climate Fund (GCF) would be made operational. However, they say of the final outcomes that:

The GCF leaves more questions than answers in terms of direct access, which I think we were hoping for. I think what came out of the talks itself was partly that the Fund is now under the guidance and accountable to the COP... I feel it is still not defined enough. One of our expectations was that in as much as the private sector should play a role, there is a need for more innovative financing solutions. Public finance should remain the bedrock of the sources of finance to ensure continuity and predictability. Unfortunately, I think out of the Durban package, that is still not the case. It is encouraging that the GCF will have continued discussions on this.

Hargreaves says that Action Aid’s focus was on:

... critiquing the green alternative being pushed by FAO, the World Bank, the IMF, and we very specifically focused on biofuels and soil carbon sequestration, and carbon

trading through soil sequestration. So, our crux was to expose, basically to keep agriculture out of soil negotiations and to expose the methodology and the false solutions that were been proposed as a solution for climate change and their impact on poor communities, specifically women small holders, which is actually a big thrust globally. Financing was also a focus but not for the South African chapter.

CSO relations to the COP Process

Being heard

Pye feels that civil society has an important role to play because “ultimately governments need to listen to people that are affected by climate change and it is important to be shown to be listening.” However, Chiroro argues that the space given to civil society in UNFCCC meetings “to respond to issues is very little ... only two minutes”. Furthermore, Chiroro states that:

Most of the time they do actions and the media does not cover them. And I wonder if negotiators are looking at the actions. I think we carried out a lot of actions but you wonder who saw those actions. How many people, how many negotiators, although we managed to lobby different negotiators but how many saw the actions?

Bannister agrees that because “civil society wasn’t part of the negotiations, their ability to interact with negotiators was limited.” Chagutah and Omari feel that the problem lies with the fact that although the official space:

... allows or embraces or recognises civil society as a group that should contribute to the process... only certain constituencies within civil society can participate. However, that space was not always so open and inclusive for other civil society organisations because you had to go through this process which leaves some civil society organisations out...So, there is certainly room for improvement...it is not meaningful enough.

Roussel adds that there was an “accreditation problem for civil society and people on the inside just stay on the inside.” He reflects on the COP in Bali (COP13) where the official complex of Nusa Dua “was big enough to accommodate a big civil society presence and protests were allowed too. There was also a big outside space. The Danish government sponsored space (during the COP15

in Copenhagen) but it was very far away from the official space. In Cancún the civil society space was very far away ... that made it like two separate events.”

Roussel contends that the problem is that there is:

... very little commitment from the Secretariat to actually get civil society to actively participate ... what you have instead is the civil society official space and a lot of exhibition space ... yes it was very nicely done. But realistically discussions and engaging were not done there. People who wanted to discuss and engage and influence the COP were 10 to 12km away. And similarly at Cancún.

Bannister is somewhat conflicted:

From our (City of Durban) side we would have liked to have them closer but I don't know. I'm not convinced closer would have got more supporters to rally around. But I don't think it would have made a huge difference.

Chiroro expresses a fear that:

Most civil society action is just creating a loud noise but nothing comes out of it. And basically there is just monitoring of the process but without making a real impact on the issues. And most people don't understand the text, I for myself don't understand it, and it is a very technical exercise ... There is a gap between what people want and what's in the text. The gap is very disappointing. The text does not reflect what people are saying ... We should have two-pronged strategy with more actions outside and inside.

In fact, the disconnect between the 'outside' and 'inside' is identified as a big issue. It manifests not only in the gaps in how issues are understood and processed, but also in deeper ideological and engendered ways, between international and local civil society, and between the civil society space and negotiations, 'official' space.

Roussel argues that the ideological and engendered space is where the biggest disconnect exists:

... what you have is a multilateral system where people are building trust between parties and NGOs saying, 'look we don't care how much you don't trust each other, this is the problem and this is what we need to do to solve the problem' ... I think developmental activists, NGOs and civil society are far more advanced in their demands for what is needed for climate change than the

multilateral system will allow and I think that disconnect is getting a lot wider. It might get to the point we had before in Bali where you had this situation where what civil society was asking for and the negotiations were moving in parallel streams. After Copenhagen, the multilateral system is basically rebuilding itself and civil society is still continuing down the path of asking for more things. So there is that disconnect.

For Roussel, there are “two very distinct mandates and distinct models of trying to get into the process.” For example, the inside Oxfam team works on policy and campaigning and the outside team on African and pro-poor issues and demands. He states:

Although work on both doesn't mean they speak to each other – what you do on the outside has very little impact on the inside ... One is the more creative getting to hearts and minds and then doing the technical work, which is what INGOs were doing. But they don't always have a mandate from people. The outside is about reaching consensus by having significant debates; largely running their own conferences, memorandums, protests in official protest space [Speaker's Corner] to bring messages to people in the ICC.

Chiroro adds that:

During the COP I saw especially groups that were acting outside... there were a lot of SA civil society actions and knowing exactly what we wanted and demanding what we wanted. [On the inside] there was a core group of people doing some really wonderful stuff like leaflets, delegate lobbying and going through texts.

But in terms of the connection, Roussel wanted to “see messages from outside shaping the inside but that didn't really happen.” Whilst the outside has a better mandate “both have a mandate issue. There is no way that a group of 500 people can decide on behalf of Africa that this COP affects all women, or whatever the case is.”

But Hargreaves feels that there was and can be some “really good solidarity cooperation. If you look at a couple of key organisations' networking, they could really hold together the inside and outside.” AASA (Action Aid SA) also had an inside and outside strategy with the negotiations process being about keeping agriculture out and pushing back on Carbon Trading and green alternatives like biofuels. There were isolated instances where the connections worked to create some impact. For example, a crossover

strategy on how to make the AA talk to the outside. Hargreaves states:

The one crossover was where we organised rural women to engage with the chair of the Africa block, Tossi [Mpanu-Mpanu] and to identify the key negotiators of the Africa bloc. So using our inside contacts, through Action Aid and Friends of the Earth, we managed to drag him out to meet with us, to endorse and encourage the Africa Position through the negotiations.

There was an advocacy and communication strategy inside and then one outside for AA's objectives. Hargreaves is more circumspect about this:

We marched, so many times every day, every day we had some sort of demonstration. I think it was good for people to start acting on issues. I just felt that where we did put bodies on the street whether the actions were politically informed, we didn't build enough connections on the inside. I felt like a lot of the people on the inside were completely disconnected with the outside.

The problem with voices being heard also lies at a national level. To this end, Roussel argues that there was a lack of a national debate on South Africa's negotiating position ahead of the COP:

The negotiating position was presented to Cabinet two weeks before COP. But a lot of people who were engaging with COP came saying that this is what the people would like to happen at COP and getting a broad consensus. We should be having this multilateral institution but instead there is a small group of people with a very secret document that went through to Cabinet and even having been at COP I still don't know what had gone in the negotiating position. So that tells me you don't have that sustained influence on issues ... Multilateral organisations can be quite useful in terms of what they set in motion and how it determines policy in the long term but the real problem is the disconnect between people engaging with their country representatives and what happens domestically. So you have this thing where it becomes very undemocratic with a whole bunch of people fairly secretly coming up with a mandate, a text and then there is the impact of a whole bunch of people that don't have anything to do with the discussions ... What I am suggesting is that the negotiators who go there and the mandate that they receive from the government needs to be

informed by a huge process of the public engaging with the state and saying this is what we would like our position to be. Because ultimately it starts with the mandate they give and who gives the mandate. The focus is on who represents and to what extent they do it.

Defocusing from the multilateral process?

There is a fair amount of disappointment with the multilateral process to date. But Chagutah and Omari still hold out some hope:

... One of the messages from our side, from our view, was that at least in the near term, it was imperative that the UN coordinated multilateral system remains the site for negotiations. I think this was also with the realisation that there was almost a near collapse of talks at Copenhagen [COP15].

Chiroro explains that COPs from COP15 have become increasing disillusioning, and suggests an alternative approach:

In 2009 we had high expectations and then people cried. For COP17 we didn't have high expectations, we thought it was useful as a building block. It was a kind of balanced position. At every COP you get disappointed because civil society has high expectations but in terms of international organisations you know you get very little at the end. Civil society should lobby leaders within their own countries rather than at the UNFCCC.

Roussel agrees, and goes into more detail:

I would think the way to have an influence is to have sustained long discussions with your negotiating team to reach the point where those messages come out within the COP but we have all these intersessionals and a whole lot of work happens within a ten-day period. And overall, the money spent didn't contribute in any way to reducing the gigatonne gap or stopping runaway climate change. Hence, this doesn't justify that kind of money. If, on the other hand, you were looking at huge moves in the adaptation fund or real changes to local level agriculture they could actually justify it but it would take a lot I think. If one takes 17 years of that kind of investment it would take another 50 years of action just to undo the investment in talking.

Roussel says flatly, "I don't think it's [the UNFCCC] the best money spent, not on climate change. I

think it's flogging a dead horse."

... If we take at face value a conference like this, what the process of UNFCCC costs: \$6-million in conferencing fees and \$12-million for the COP. So in a year you are looking at \$30-million spent simply on holding meetings. Then you are having all these NGOs who are making similar kinds of investments just to engage in a process where they don't actually have power to make the change [anyway].

Bannister questions whether the COP process is worth it for civil society. She says, "If I was an NGO and concerned about climate change I would be concerned about the COP process – the benefits are not there. It is just a talk shop ... as a side player. It is a waste of time and money."

Another challenge is that COP tends to divert attention away from important national processes on climate change. Roussel provides some further insight:

I think that last year was completely neglected. If you look at many organisations that were focused on COP and the processes around COP. They didn't make submissions on the National Climate Change Response Paper. People didn't respond and that wasn't just their fault because government closed down the process. And there was a kind of public consultation on the Green Paper. The White Paper went through with very small consultation with select NGOs or select partners that government had chosen. It was surprising that a lot of these all of these climate change-aware organisations didn't raise a fuss about the lack of participation on the significant white paper. And what you had instead was Parliament at the end of the year [saying] that the policy had gone through.

He continues to bemoan the sustainability of continued interventions:

I think that if we're looking at local South African civil society people on the inside – [they] are not entirely sure whether engagement with the UNFCCC itself is going to continue. It is very unlikely that it will



**The nude protest, Global Day of Action
PIC: Petermann/GJEP-GFC**

continue. I would be surprised if ten of the South Africans that engaged in COP17 will be in Qatar. I'd be surprised also if ten engaged with DIRCO this year on its role as president. This was something that was missing. They weren't necessarily engaging with what SA as COP President can bring to the process. There are less financial resources or will to continue a longer-term process with the UNFCCC especially if the outside space is no longer influential as compared to the inside space.

For Martens the issue is about the futility of following what he considers to be the wrong agenda:

Following the agenda of the polluters is a waste of time; these big summits and meetings are a waste ... So I do question

letting our agenda being set by these meetings because I think we don't see the point of them being justified by others/us. We spent too much time and too much money following that agenda. We could use that as an opportunity, that's another thing, same with World Social Forums. We used too much time in there, how many scarce human resources, how much money, how much time that we put into these formal meetings? ... and then following the big agenda of the polluters.

Hargreaves agrees. She thinks AASA's emphasis was, however, not on the official talks but rather on building rural women farmer movements:

Our analysis was that COP would be another talk shop, and it wouldn't have a positive impact for rural women and we were much more interested in putting money to target capacity, building political analysis and building the organisation of rural women around these issues in the long term ... Lets focus on the real solutions at the COP, and the real solutions are to work with farmers, especially women farmers. The best way to help farmers to adapt to climate change is through sustainable forms of agriculture, like [providing] support with adaptation through agro-ecology, and through technology and innovation. Those were basically our main proposals.

In the context of these significant arguments, it is important to gauge at what point civil society both acknowledges the diminishing returns on investment in the UNFCCC process and then disinvests in it. Roussel weighs in:

If we are looking at multilateral talks NGOs and civil society have engaged with them long enough now to have taken up some key lessons. Some people have been working with the WTO [World Trade Organisation] Doha Rounds for example would know there is no point ... would say we shouldn't spend any more money on this if we know this is going in one direction? The Small Arms Treaty is very successful in the multilateral avenue; if you look at the Montreal Protocol dealing with the ozone: again very good civil society that led to an outcome and I think the real question is, do NGOs or civil society have that benchmark to that point when they realise that the multilateral institution is not going to achieve in the short-term what they expect. And if we are looking at the COP process now, we go to COP17 and some of the delegates said that at COP36 we will have a legally binding deal. Can anyone sustain that level



Protests in Johannesburg: Climate Justice March on Rosebank the day before. PIC: ELA Jhb

of investment for eighteen years and justify that against significant changes in climate? I think people engaging will have to make that decision at some point.

One alternative is to devote more emphasis on national and regional work on climate change. Roussel offers:

The pace is very slow and there is no agreement on anything. So if you're looking at the multilateral process and that in its current state it can't deliver on aspirations of civil society and a lot of people need to focus on domestic level issues as well. And I think there is more success in working individually in 194 countries and changing domestic policies than getting 194 countries to agree at this point in time... What they can do is very limited. Putting gender in a document seems like a





on 26th Nov 2011 and (below) outside Sasol's offices in



simple thing but it took four years of work. If one looks at the process and the time, the tactics that are used won't achieve the goals.

You can develop national level change in 194 countries and I think that that is already happening to a certain degree. The fact that developing countries are cutting more than developed countries is actually largely due to the fact that some strong civil society actors are working to bring about really important policy change ... Putting a tax on aviation for example has happened in the European Union without an international agreement. One can look at that and say, well if you sustain civil society pressure on climate change issues at the national level you can bring about enough commonality in those countries. But having said that, there are certainly countries where civil

society is not strong enough to engage with government. China is a case in point.

Hargreaves agrees:

I am sickened by the amount of money and people that are populating that negotiating space. If people could invest more energy into making their own countries and their corporations accountable by building strong movements in their own countries we would be a bit better off ... Even people's demands are so minimal. They are so excited if they get one line changed in a text. I know I'm just very cynical but I just would be very keen to talk about how you organise civil society organisations on the inside and outside, giving them the opportunity to raise money, to strengthen organisational impact/output, to profile their activities outside. To convince all organisations on the inside and to profile alternatives outside ... We can get a sense about what activities and actions happening around the world where civil society is busy organising numbers in other countries around these issues. So yes, I am really frustrated. I am sure the other people are feeling frustrated.

Another alternative is to radicalise the movement. Martens says:

I missed the radical voice, except for a few NGOs at the COP who tried to be heard other than having a march. I think the parallel programme gets ignored by the mainstream. I think there is a very big need for radicalising while still trying to get the broad public with us. I think that is the big task.... because it is difficult out there. We are organising for ourselves as RLF in Zimbabwe a conference on the solidarity economy and climate change because the agriculture change due to climate change will turn out a big disaster for the majority of people in Africa that are still living in rural areas. So, we need radicalisation. There is no way out. Because, the people there in the ICC, [set against] the multinationals and national governments, won't achieve anything. That is the only conclusion. I am also getting clearer in that direction because we have to think of completely different things because there is no way to follow the mainstream. Climate change is so urgent. We don't have time. We have to think of radical and more effective ways. And then again following these big meetings, solving these big things - Cop18 and Rio20+ - personally I think is a waste of our time. We must set the agenda ourselves. And we can do that.



Tripping on the Tipping Point: a theatrical interlude in discussions on the million jobs campaign by the Democratic Left Front. PIC: nixpix

Were expectations met?

The People's Space

Many of the donors placed their emphasis on and support for the 'People's Space' as the precinct outside of the official COP dedicated to civil society activities. According to Chagutah and Omari:

The outside strategy was on providing an alternative space. We wanted to focus a lot more on that. It may not have turned out the way we wanted it to be but the idea was to have an alternative space for approaches and engagements with the COP. We wanted to have a platform. We wanted to have an area where it was not just a physical space but just space where NGOs, not only South African NGOs but also outside NGOs, can engage with.

Martens says that as a solidarity organisation, the RLF wanted a "good and relevant people's space" and to "support a number of more progressive initiatives in the civil society space." For Hargreaves it was about "building the climate

justice angle". Many of the donors, including Oxfam, supported the C17 as the facilitative group for the People's Space to ensure that "people could get here and that there was a very good civil society alternative space to work in." GCCA wanted to mobilise and support key messages from civil society, playing a more neutral role.

At the end, the Space fulfilled some of the expectations but failed to deliver on others. Chagutah and Omari said they feel the HBF's work through civil society "was partially achieved ... I think from our side, it was worth the money and time."

Hargreaves believes that although it was a "big jamboree" it did have a "lot of positive impact" for the work she was involved in through the women's caucus and women's rural assembly:

It was an opportunity to talk to each other. We had a lot of exchange of experiences. We had an exchange of seeds and methodologies for different forms of sustainable agricultural production. It would have been ideal to have practice in the field shared and that would build good solidarity that would have

been a good thing... I think our hope was to see a strengthened organisation of women, nationally and regionally. I'm not sure it helped. It probably has. I think the rural women's evaluation might have helped us understand a little bit differently the impact. But, I don't know if women will go back to their villages and inform other women.

Roussel agrees that the women's caucus was effective. It "was a very strong player ... They had a meeting in the outside space of the COP. When they handed their memorandum to the COP President they actually got mentioned at the opening ministerial preliminary right at the beginning; their memorandum was taken quite seriously." Oxfam AU also "supported the climate jobs campaign, again another grouping on the outside but they've done significant work with government to get to a point where government, and business and workers are talking about this new green economy. Jobs worked with government and workers ..."

Donors complained about the physical distance of the Space from the official space. Chagutah and Omari said that it "was a bit far and inaccessible". They attributed part of the problem to the weak engagement in the beginning with government and other actors that provided the space: "It could have been close, it could have been more accessible but it wasn't. And that had impact obviously ..."

The distance also played a part in the smaller than expected number of people participating. Hargreaves says that it was a "big jamboree of civil society" though it "wasn't that big anyway, I don't know how many people actually made it down to the civil society space."

Problems with accessing information, according to Chagutah and Omari, was blamed on the website which "should have been a place where anyone can access information around the activities that are going, just to make it easier to access the information and events so that people could participate but that was not running at the time we went to COP."

There were conflicting opinions about media coverage. Hargreaves says there was "a lot of media coverage around the rural women's assembly and profiling of a lot of stories in the region and in South Africa about how climate change is impacting their lives. That was a good thing and it wasn't just domestic media, it was beyond that."

Martens doesn't share her opinion, feeling rather that the Space was "ignored by the formal

process and the media ... It happened in isolation. The mainstream media ignore civil society and focus on the formal process."

The content of the Space was also questioned. Hargreaves argues, "I think we could have designed it to have had much better content and had much stronger political emphasis."

Bannister thought that the messages were good but she levelled a sharp attack on C17's lack of organisation:

We felt like we had to help a huge amount because of the general lack of organisation. The sentiments of the NGOs were very solid but the ability to get into action and gain positive and real results was not good. Possibly [the money coming in late was an issue] it is hard to say, no. It played a role, I have no doubt, but I think generally there was just a lack of organisation, not knowing what they wanted, never coming back to us on things, changing their minds and not knowing what they wanted and never coming back on issues.

Roussel thinks that funding provided by government and others played a major role in the poor organisation, "The fund that was created was wholly inadequate and came too late." Hargreaves agrees that the "funding came in too late". She adds, "I think generally civil society organising was weakened by the absence of adequate funding and support for C17 as an organising structure." Chagutah and Omari feel that poor organisation can be explained by the fact that the C17 members were all volunteering and on top of that had jobs with their own organisations to attend to on a daily basis. So they did not have enough time to devote to all of their many responsibilities. Roussel suggests that ultimately it was really "the non-financial aspect of the relationship that allowed for things to happen".

Towards latter stages, FCO contributed to C17 funds by getting people to the COP and enabling participation and funding the refugee camp. The RLF also jumped to the rescue towards the end. Martens says, "I've been pulling extra hard because I witnessed how little support was coming. I saw the first R20-million budget of C17. Because I knew the people I saw the problems. So, we started trying to pull extra hard and that is how I got the extra funds from Germany and that translated into the R450,000." Hargreaves took personal responsibility. "I think the problem was the funding for C17, and I must take part responsibility for that. We made commitments and then there was a breakdown of



Durban City manager, Michael Sutcliffe, weighing up the security detail at Speaker's Corner, 2nd December 2011. PIC: nixpix

communication between international [donors] and South Africa so the money came in late.”

Chagutah and Omari believe that the poor funding was a real stumbling block for local groups because people couldn't participate. There is a “domination of western organisations because they can afford that and be supported by themselves, and also by their governments, as compared to us down South where they don't have that great a relationship with government sometimes and they can actually form part of the delegation.”

This was an issue for the inside as well. Chiroro said that the GCCA provided a space for groups to meet, to support campaigns of any of the network partners, and to function as a “neutral space for civil society to make plans of action ... for the cross fertilisation of ideas.” But Chiroro “didn't see a lot of the local groups and this was because of the finance issues. It was more the northern groups taking the space.”

Bannister said that the money the City spent on supporting the infrastructure for civil society, amounting to R1-million, included the hire of the university venue, the buses, and providing the Internet connections. But it was not worth it and she was disappointed that civil society did not share their appreciation or gratitude for the support given:

We worked quite hard on that. The City Manager went out of his way to do that. We got no feedback or thanks that it was helpful. All that came out was that thing around the volunteers and that kind of issue.¹³ The money that the City of Durban spent on COP for the City was worth it but not for the spending on civil society. We motivated and it came from the Department of Environment [DEA] and DIRCO.

We spent a huge amount on the refugee camp. We could have done it a lot cheaper; in essence it was not worth the money. I'm not sure we got the best value for money in terms of accommodating people for a period of about three days.

By comparison, they “got a huge amount of value and benefit” from the expenditure for the City. Bannister states:

If you compare the budgets for the World Cup and the COP – the return on investments were far higher, the city was better showcased, local businesses benefited etc. The benefits were on a similar basis as the World Cup but not the same amount of infrastructure build.

Global Day of Action

The GDA was a success for HBF. Omari and Chagutah state:

If you look at it against the background of mistrust lingering from the WSSD and failure from civil society in Cancún to arrange a single common march, if you compare that with the Global Day of Action, which was a success, you have to realise that this was a very difficult process [for] the South African NGOs really coming to it. In that way it was a huge success that they actually managed to arrange such things like a common Global Day of Action ... if not a technical base to work from, [at least] a trust and just some social capital in the process of NGOs working together.

Chiroro shares the enthusiasm, “[The] Global Day of Action was also a success for civil society being mobilised and putting forward their demands.”

Despite these positive reflections, many of the comments were negative. These include the small size of the march, the apolitical or ‘watered down’ message, the hijacking of it by the official process, the chaotic or disorganised nature, and the poor international media coverage.

Both Pye and Bannister feel that the march was a lot smaller than they expected. Bannister said that the City of Durban tried to accommodate civil society on the basis that the “natural vibrancy added to the city experience. It made the conference more interesting and vibrant. [However] I expected more protests and placards but it’s difficult to gauge. I would have imagined a lot more. It wasn’t a huge shock to the system. I was slightly disappointed. In general, I think the Global Day of Action – that was also a lot smaller than we imagined. And I think we were given a sense that they were planning for more people.”

Pye also wondered if the general public was reached:

There was a big Global Day of Action and there wasn’t a lot of media hype around it. Wasn’t quite the impact that it should have had. I wonder whether by trying to involve everyone in civil society they maybe couldn’t get agreement and couldn’t mobilise as effectively because there were too many organisations pushing and pulling.

Hargreaves is dismissive of government’s rhetoric about the participation of civil society:

Civil society is generally equated with critique so they wanted to keep us quiet.

PIC: Caroline Tagny



Look at what happened on the street, the civil society meeting in the city hall. Those green bombers. They did not look to me like those were the same people on the street but ... they were contracted by government, those green bombers and they created havoc... they were very involved in the attempt to silence voices at the civil society meeting.

On the other hand, Bannister feels that they were betrayed and back-stabbed by civil society which led to her feeling considerable mistrust:

I think we had quite a good working relationship which went quite pear shaped towards the event. We have been far more accommodating here than we have ever been before I think. I would hope it made a difference in our relationship with them. In the end we feel they double-crossed us a little bit it was really around the route for the civil society Global Day of Action. We wanted the route taken that was least disruptive to the City as possible and it was quite clear that civil society wanted the greatest disruption as possible. They launched a court interdict against us to go with their route and at last minute we said we would allow it if they would drop the court case... We worked hugely hard to accommodate civil society and it showed huge lack of ethics and unwillingness on their part to work together.

The unexpected speeches that were delivered by the UNFCCC president Christina Figueres and International Relations Minister Maite *Nkoana-Mashabane* at the close of the march drew stinging criticism from Martens who believes that such acts “emasculated the movements”:

It was purely because it was being incorporated into the whole formal thing and so it became an excuse, a support of the formal ICC thing. I had great pain on a couple of things, I almost, now I am very personal, I almost had to vomit at the moment when the memorandum was handed over and then, what's her name, our minister started talking about brother Zuma and when I started shouting “Hypocrites, hypocrites!” others shushed me. I thought good heavens. It was shocking.

And apart from those appearances there isn't any indication that the inside space was reached at all through the march.

Both Pye and Martens also complained that there was no international media coverage of the march which could have hindered broader public awareness of the issues.

The march was also meant to be seen as more than just bodies on the street. Although both Martens and Hargreaves were impressed by the creativity and colour of the march they felt that the real and urgent message about the impact of climate change was lost. Martens says:

Everyone can have their own place, and their own slogans whatever but then the urgency of the message gets lost. When I walked in the march it was so nice to actually have this incredible creativity to look at but at the same time the messages were either saying nothing, or they were naïve or even conservative. You could hardly find tiny progressive pockets who were there ... but the apolitical thing is always the winner.

Hargreaves adds:

There was no inspired activism. I'm thinking about the presence on the street, there was a vibrant collaboration, a coming together of progressive civil society organisations, that was really a completely unplanned march. There were different organisations and blocs coming together and seriously acting in cooperation and meeting in the street but the problem was that there was no clear strategy. It was completely chaotic and disorganised. Some want to get inside and some marching in the wrong direction. So there is definitely something about it that is quite organic and vibrant ... But, I am not sure. I mean is it just about putting a message to the outside world that we care, that we are disgruntled at the world because the negotiators are negotiating away our lives? Is that what made them march? Is that the message?

Martens also wonders whether the message would have been far more powerful and effective had political programmes been supported instead of facilitating group like the C17:

It always remains theory but I wondered if, for example, we had ZAR450,000 which we supported C17 with, what more effect could we have achieved if we had put up very specific funds for some more radical programs like Climate Justice Now! As, I said before, that's the question because of our support into a broad coalition it also made the political message a compromise. See, for example, the banner at the beginning of the march: 'Unite for climate change'. Anybody can support that.

Movement building

It was thought that COP17 would be used as a moment to launch a movement on climate change. Roussel says that he thought that the event of the COP would be seen as “an opportunity to leverage money that ordinarily wouldn’t be available” so “there would be a point to launch a movement.” Martens concurs that the event is really about movement building. Chiroro also “wanted to leave a legacy of building the climate change movement.” Chagutah and Omari said they wanted “... to involve ourselves in the mobilisation and building of strong movements for climate justice very much so within South Africa but as well as that movement being linked to the international movement and engagement with COP17.”

Movement building relates to a fundamental point about grassroots involvement. “If we are not building on the ground, if we are not building movements, none of this is going to shift,” says Hargreaves. Fundamentally movement building requires the activation and participation of the grassroots. But again, funding posed a challenge.

“The major problem was raising enough finance to make sure that people from CBOs etc. are able to attend the COP,” Chiroro states. Roussel also expected that there would be a “lot more transfer of skills, because we do have NGOs and others engaging in the multilateral process and we have some small NGOs and others coming in for the first time or people affected by climate change”.

Commonality

Chagutah and Omari expressed “the need to rebuild coalitions amongst the various persuasions within civil society” and to engender a “common strategy building process”. However, there were stumbling blocks to achieving this commonality and cohesiveness. Many looked to the C17 to provide the space to put forward common political demands and develop cohesiveness. But Chagutah and Omari feel that the C17 was unable to do this:

There was an inability of the committee to coordinate the process whereby the broader civil society could actually make common political demands on the process. Understandably, the committee was comprised of people, or rather different organisations that are very different in the way they work and also in capacities and also in the manner in which they actually wish to engage with the UN process. So it ended up being more of a logistics, facilitating body and less of a platform in which the global environmental movement could come

together to put common political demands on the COP. I think that was a major weakness of the South African civil society committee, that it couldn’t manage to facilitate a political engagement by civil society. We didn’t expect that, and we were not pushing for a consensus, we didn’t think it was possible but we thought we could sort of come up with some sort of common understanding. There are definitely certain things that we could push for as African NGOs. Even though there are ideological differences, we can find some commonality amongst the NGOs which we didn’t get. We tried the process but it didn’t work out.

Hargreaves also levels some criticisms against the C17 for this:

It was such a different forum, pulling in a thousand different directions. They were getting as broad a political agenda worked out as possible. They were voting for issues on the agenda with a couple of votes. I don’t know. I might be incorrect. How do you pull together something like this? You have blocs that are interested in energy and emissions and others interested in rural farmers and others that are only interested in another agenda, [and] others that are very close to government in the negotiations and want to project government in positive light and others that are completely opposed to internal engagement. Others that are only working on the inside. So I think there are so many different political currents and people pushing in different directions and I think that’s fine. But, did we want to develop a basic political platform? I don’t know. I don’t think we did. I don’t know what that political platform would be across all these diversities. I think it is better to say that civil society is divided and do we have to prevent any position?

The main cleavage is perhaps expressed by the difference between the two main networks, CJN! and the Climate Action Network (CAN). Hargreaves emphasises this point:

Civil society, as usual, was so divided. I am not surprised. I mean, the big networks, Climate Justice Now! and CAN ... I am not a climate justice guru so I don’t really understand the history of all these different networks. But, CAN is close to the EU [European Union] position. Civil society is trying to influence positions of the Africa bloc and specific blocs. And then you got CAN on the inside. But there are big differences of opinion around agriculture and carbon trading. So people



The COP17 volunteers, or the 'Green Bombers' for their professed support for the Zuma government, traded missiles and insults with the Democratic Left Front on the march. The DLF held Michael Sutcliffe responsible. PIC: nixpix

are saying that the CAN is the stronger network. The Climate Justice one, which is closer to Action Aid, is a bit weaker and more disorganised. CAN is more organised ... If civil society is divided, we need to support the block of marginal people. Which block will save the planet?

This disaggregated voice owes in part to the issues being quite new and still developing for many local CSOs. Roussel explains:

What we had in South Africa – different from other countries and different in the case of Mexico – is we didn't have broad political or strategy type alliances of people coming together with regards to what they were going to ask for. But what we did have instead was a C17 which facilitated many points coming to COP. And I think that is an indication of fact that the climate change grouping as a developmental issue was not a developed formation in South Africa. All of a sudden we had quite a big interest with people who were not traditionally in the environmental field who started coming

aboard. So there wasn't really a possibility of having a strong civil society with one message. We had people talking about jobs and economy and rural women. And we had totally different groupings. So we had a disaggregated South African voice which managed to put its way forward ... There was a conflict of mandate for people to have a voice. It didn't quite exist here as you would if you had a broad strategic and political alliance. Most people went for their own particular windows within the COP.

Pye also didn't want civil society to be 'too fractured'. She thinks this might have to do with groups being too radical and antagonistic:

Perhaps that civil society was a little bit less cohesive than it could have been.... I also think some groups can maybe be too extreme – everyone obviously should be heard but I don't know if it is always so helpful to be down on the process and outcomes. We always encourage them to support the system and that would work with the process.

Roussel agrees with others that the divisions worked against movement building and is skeptical about the future:

I did expect that we wouldn't get a common alliance but I also expected that we would have reached a point at COP where people would have started to plan this massive climate change kind of movement in South Africa and COP would be moment where it launches, and it would be sustained in the new year. I think it is still early in the new year to tell – we are in the beginning of February – but it seems very unlikely that this will happen. It is a shame because the South African presidency kicks in particularly now. Very few people are talking about COP18 in Qatar now and many others are going back to other developmental issues or working with other multilateral systems so we had a couple of partners very interested in the UNFCCC which are now interested in G20 and taking experience into G20. And the lack of finance is also a big issue now.

Conclusion

The reflection of donors provides some important findings and messages on the interaction of and impact of civil society at the COP17 and other UNFCCC-related processes. These observations can be used by civil society, donors and government to more deeply interrogate and assess the nature of their interactions with one another in order to drastically reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and put the planet on a safer path.

The interests of hybrid donors appear to converge more easily with that of civil society organisations (CSOs). They share a lot of the same experiences being CSOs (or quasi-CSOs) and can therefore more easily sympathise with their concerns. Their values and goals also tend to be more closely aligned. But hybrids also tend to be organisations with an international status, typically with head offices in Northern countries, which then set up satellite offices in Southern countries. This can inadvertently undermine the capacity building of local organisations and the building of movements.

The Durban outcomes elicit a nuanced picture with responses ranging from unqualified approval to acceptance of meeting minimal expectations. In general, government donors are more likely to be positive and optimistic about the outcomes whilst donors outside like the hybrids share qualified perspectives. Ultimately it wasn't an

African COP as the outcome sets in motion a four degrees Celsius rise for Africa, which will have catastrophic effects for the continent's people.

The diplomatic balancing act was however done well. In this regard, trust building is an important factor in facilitating processes that achieve beneficial outcomes. However, the fraught processes within the multilateral system shows that trust building should not be seen as an end in itself otherwise valuable time can be lost in dealing with the climate crisis. We need to 'save today for tomorrow' rather than 'saving today tomorrow'.

Given the challenges of funding in the context of the financial recession and a rapidly shrinking pool of funding for environmental organisations, particularly progressive ones, it becomes necessary for CSOs and funders to get together and develop a new, clear strategy and common policy for funding. Donors also need to consider how to build longer-term relationships with civil society partners if they want to see real impact on the climate and get value for money. Short-term, high impact projects and programmes are thus unrealistic in tackling the mammoth challenges that climate change poses to society.

It is also necessary to recognise the significant underfunding of Southern groups and to then bolster that support. Southern groups could benefit from support to aid their meaningful participation at multilateral talks and within their home countries to build movements. These groups often represent the most vulnerable people to the impacts of climate change and it is imperative that they are able to voice their concerns and to assist in effecting change. However, movement building is not without its difficulties. The challenge is to find cohesiveness based on common principles rather than forcing an unnatural union of divergent interests. Forcing unity could also result in an apolitical or watered down message or even a hijacking of civil society actions by the official process.

It is important to support ideals based on climate science but also to know the limits of the multilateral system to achieving these ideals. Civil society is far ahead of the multilateral system and this is set to continue into the near future. In this context it must be questioned whether it is more essential to be building movements on the ground and to defocus from the multilateral process that is failing to deliver. There is more chance for commonality in national actions across the 194 countries within the UNFCCC leading to change than trying to forge a compromise within a UNFCCC process in which national (and corporate) self-interest predominates.

There exists a disconnection between the outside and inside spaces within the multilateral process. The outside space has been a jamboree but also a good space to build solidarity and to forge a common political agenda. The inside is seen as a space for a 'select' group of mostly Northern or rich CSOs who focus less on direct actions than on influencing the technical aspects of negotiating texts and of country or regional positions. Some suggest that there should be more interaction between the inside and outside particularly so that a people's mandate from the outside is used to bring about change on the inside. But there are also mandate issues on both sides that need to be resolved or at least recognised. Others suggest simply understanding each other's strategy so that there is a more or less common effort to influence the negotiations, or even to stand together and respect each other's opinion.

Endnotes

- ¹ Koketso, S. 2010. Heinrich Böll Foundation email, *COP17 Preparatory Meeting*, 20 April 2010
- ² *ibid.*
- ³ *ibid.*
- ⁴ Earthlife Africa Johannesburg (ELA Jhb) got funding support from Oxfam Novib & Oxfam GB for this meeting. HBF is also a long-term funder of ELA Jhb and they got funding to host similar meetings subsequent to this one
- ⁵ The researcher contacted 11 donor organisations based in SA but only received a positive response for the six referred to in this chapter
- ⁶ The Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) also provided some financial support to civil society at the COP. The researcher tried to contact the DEA several times with a request for an interview but received no response.
- ⁷ The full list of interviews is provided as an appendix at the end of the report.
- ⁸ Anonymous interview. 26th Feb. 2012
- ⁹ Also Foundation for Human Rights (FHR), Africa Group of Sweden, and FNTG to name a few.
- ¹⁰ *op cit.* Anonymous interview
- ¹¹ Anthony, A (facilitator). 2011. *External Evaluation Report (for the period 2009 to 2010)*, Earthlife Africa's Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Programme (SECCP), June 2011. Donors withdrawing from South Africa – are they missing a point? p 52.
- ¹² *op cit.* Anonymous interview.
- ¹³ See Section 3 for a discussion on these issues.

INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY AND COP17

Oscar Reyes

Introduction

The United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP17) saw almost 6,000 registered civil society participants, representing over a third of all delegates in Durban.¹ But what did this influx of visitors actually hope to achieve? How successful were they in achieving these goals? What are their views on the key outcomes from the summit? And what are the next steps for the UNFCCC process?

This section seeks to address this question through a focus on the participation of international civil society at COP17. It makes no pretence at representing all opinions, and emphasises depth rather than breadth – compiling the interview responses of a variety of civil society actors working within the UNFCCC process as well as organising outside of it.²

Durban outcome: expectation vs. reality

COP17 in Durban has been derided by some civil society actors as “a dismantling of the existing climate regime and one further milestone in a long history of rich countries backtracking on their promises,”³ and praised by others as a “*realpolitik* victory” that puts the climate train back on track.⁴

There is one piece of common ground between these perspectives, however: they both affirm the inadequacy of the conclusion relative to the seriousness of the climate change problem. As an editorial in *Nature* magazine put it, COP17 clearly demonstrated that “The science of climate change and the politics of climate change, which claims to represent it, now inhabit parallel worlds.”⁵

Expectations were “pretty modest” going into Durban according to Sivan Kartha, a Boston-based Senior Scientist with the Stockholm Environment Institute. Mariel Vilella, climate policy campaigner at the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), had similarly low policy expectations, which she saw as symptomatic of “a political process losing relevancy and strength.”



PIC: Oxfam International

Some of our interviewees nevertheless found cause for optimism. Wael Hmaidan, Executive Director of IndyACT stresses several positives from Durban, where he expected progress on the legal outcome, the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol, and the establishment of the Green Climate Fund. “I am satisfied with the progress,” he says, stressing that “It’s not the outcome we want, but the outcome we expected. This expectation came out of the understanding of the political reality that exists.”

Sivan Kartha sees the outcome as more of a continuity from the previous COPs: “There were no huge advances, but there was to a large degree a consolidation of the steps that had been taken in Copenhagen and Cancún.”

Most of our interviewees felt that the Durban outcome was as bad, or worse than the one they had initially feared, however.

Nathan Thanki, a member of the College of the Atlantic/Earth in Brackets youth delegation, recalls that they “made predictions in the first week,

which we felt at the time were overly pessimistic,” but that the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action confirmed these fears. “I thought that they would have more of an emphasis on the Green Climate Fund as the price that the developed world would have to pay to get everything it wanted passed, but it seems they don’t even have to pay that price.”

Most respondents’ attention focussed on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action, the main package agreed at the very end of the conference. For Ilana Solomon, a policy analyst with ActionAid USA, the Durban Platform was “an agreement to put off a decision.”

Meena Raman, who was at the COP on behalf of Third World Network and Friends of the Earth Malaysia, expressed some surprise at the extent to which the Platform cemented a new process “that would actually remove the firewall between developed and developing countries and go towards undermining equity, common but differentiated responsibilities and historical responsibility,” moves that she firmly opposed. But the possibility of such an outcome was already clear on the eve of the COP, she explains. “We knew that we were really facing an uphill struggle because the EU was already in alliance with the small-island states and LDCs, so the G77+ China was already broken.”

Anabella Rosemberg of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) explains that their lobbying and advocacy work was focused on three main issues – seeking “assurances that a future regime would be based on the Kyoto Protocol,” that the Green Climate Fund would “be created and be filled,” and to ensure that a “just transition” platform is incorporated in any deal.⁶ Set against this benchmark, “we were fairly disappointed. Durban didn’t deliver on these three issues.

Durban does not provide any conclusions to the discussions on which we are focussed. There is indeed a little progress, but we were expecting something much more ambitious.”

Elizabeth Mpofo, Chairperson of the Eastern and Southern Small Scale Farmers (ESAFF) coalition in Zimbabwe, and a spokesperson for the international peasant farmers’ movement Via Campesina, felt that COP17 processes lacked credibility from the start, because observers “already know that what they are doing [inside the COP] is not good for the people.”

Ambition vs. equity

A key dynamic in Durban was the wedge driven between demands for a more ambitious climate agreement and demands for an equitable outcome. This was reflected and, to a great extent, reinforced by divisions within civil society.

For many Climate Action Network (CAN) groups, ambition remains the key focus. Wael Hmaidan, who will shortly take over as Director of CAN International, argues that:

The only outcome that has not advanced so well is the discussion on the level of ambition to cover the gigatonne gap – this is the key issue that needs to be resolved. But that is clearly part of the programme for this year, it is *the* issue that we want to focus on at COP18.

According to Meena Raman, however:

What we saw in Durban was a split between those who wanted to see equity; ‘common but differentiated responsibility’ and historical responsibility maintained, versus those wanting to wipe that out, but behaving as though to do so was ambitious.

Civil society as a whole – particularly in the Climate Action Network – most of the NGOs there were all about reducing the mitigation gap.⁷ You always heard the message ‘close the gap, close the gap’. What you did not hear was how the gap is supposed to be closed. That’s where the discord was allowed to happen, in a sense that when you had countries like China and India speaking about equity and common but differentiated responsibilities, this was not appreciated enough. Some of us in Climate Justice Now! [CJN!], in Friends of the Earth and our usual allies, have been more strident in bringing the equity principles more upfront.

In the years preceding the Durban outcome, there was a strong fight by many developing countries to have a paradigm for equitable distribution of atmospheric space, and many of us were strong advocates of the notion of carbon budgets, rooted in the premise that you need to take stock of developed countries’ historical emissions, and the future emissions of China, India also seen in the context of per capita and equity.

This is not simply a CAN-CJN! split within civil society, however. Supporters for the indivisibility of climate ambition and equity can be found across that divide. For example, Sivan Kartha explains how, in his view, an ambitious climate

deal must be an equitable one:

My contention has long been that we can't get adequacy without equity, we can't ramp up ambition if it's not on equitable terms. I don't make that claim as a moral statement of what should happen, but more as an argument of the political reality of what can happen. Developing countries in particular won't engage if the basis on which they're offered engagement isn't an equitable basis. Although in a legal sense Durban saw an expansion of the climate regime that many people feel very positive about, I worry that while we have that without any major steps forward in terms of trust-building, many countries ... will not be able to take major steps forward.

In this respect, Kartha feels that Durban saw some worrying developments: "There was a huge battle over even having a mention of equity in the Durban Platform decision. Equity, common but differentiated responsibilities... these were apparently an absolute red line for the USA."

Some reassurance may be sought in the fact that "legally, this is still all under the Convention," he adds, a point that is also taken up by Meena Raman.

Just because the words equity and 'common but differentiated responsibilities' are not referred to in the decision document does not mean these principles are no longer there. The language that India insisted on stresses an outcome with a 'Protocol or other instrument or agreed outcome with legal force *under the Convention*.' Under the Convention means everything under it, including the principles and the provisions. Equity and common but differentiated responsibilities still apply, and there is a fighting chance of bringing them back to the centre of the mitigation fight.

Kartha is less optimistic, however, on the grounds that the battle to exclude this language from a Durban decision "shifts the frame of the debate and makes it harder to under-gird the system going forward on the basis of equity." He nevertheless finds some hope in the fact that the evolving BASIC position moves beyond a strict division between Annex 1 and non-Annex 1 countries,⁸

What the Durban Platform has given us is a new phase moving past to some degree moving past the Annex 1/non-Annex 1 distinction and thinking about all countries. To my mind it is possible to do that and

still do it on an equitable basis. If we are to modernise our view of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities to mean something beyond the Annex 1 / non-Annex 1 firewall, there are definitely ways of doing so – looking at the capacity and responsibility of every given country. A huge, diplomatically progressive overture was made by the BASIC countries in Durban with their release of the BASIC Expert groups' report on *Equitable access to sustainable development*.⁹ That report is like an arm extended waiting for a handshake. They said let's really talk about what equity, responsibility and capability means, not putting all the blame on the North, but looking at each country on its own merits – let's actually put together data. That's a huge step forward. Civil society should engage with that and say we've got folks from the South who are willing to talk in incredibly concrete terms about equity and so far they've met with silence from the North. Let's put some pressure on the Northern parties to respond to that and receive that handshake.

Kyoto Protocol

The Durban conference was billed as make or break time for the Kyoto Protocol, currently the only legally-binding international treaty on greenhouse gas emissions. The Kyoto treaty sets emissions targets for industrialised countries, while at the same time creating carbon markets to allow these countries to outsource action rather than making reductions domestically.

Most of the civil society groups working inside the COP (although by no means all of civil society) were in favour of an agreement that confirmed the continuation of the Protocol, as a means to securing a legally binding outcome.¹⁰ This resulted in a whole "I heart Kyoto" paraphernalia, including posters, stickers and T-shirts worn by many civil society delegates (principally, those associated with the Climate Action Network). However, there is no agreement amongst them over what role if any carbon markets should play in this, and what this meant for a new treaty.

Many of those arguing in defence of the Kyoto Protocol inside the COP were engaged in a debate on whether or not the results of the two tracks of the UNFCCC negotiations¹¹ would be unified into a single, post-Kyoto treaty.

This is an arcane framing for a dispute that is ultimately about power and equity: Who should



Pablo Solón, former Bolivian Ambassador to the United Nations. PIC: Caroline Tagny

take on responsibility for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and can states be held to account if they backtrack on their commitments?

But as the talks drew to a close, the “save Kyoto” messaging morphed – in some instances – into a defence of a unified new treaty. Anjali Appadurai, a member of the College of the Atlantic delegation, explained on their “Earth in Brackets” blog how:

... in the final feverish days of high-level segments and urgent negotiations, the ‘new treaty now’ messaging came out as the final blow to civil society’s united message [that never was]. Earth in Brackets walked into a YOUNGO [youth constituency] meeting one morning to find the old “I Heart KP” T-shirt being handed out. Fine, great, we love the KP. But wait – what is that sticker that is being firmly pasted onto each T-shirt before it gets handed out? TREATY NOW, it reads. We ask someone – why are you putting on

those stickers? “Well, because the messaging isn’t complete without them”. Oh dear, the youth have been duped as well. Treaty now? We have a treaty now. We have a treaty and a plan of action! If we put our energies and ambitions into properly implementing the KP and the BAP [Bali Action Plan], we’d be on the right track!¹²

In the end, a second commitment period was agreed, but critics of the agreement felt that that was “a zombie called Kyoto, a soulless undead,” in the words of Pablo Solon, formerly chief climate change negotiator for Bolivia.¹³

Meena Raman was less scathing in tone, but equally unconvinced by the agreement on Kyoto: “On the KP side, we wanted to see a much stronger outcome. What’s there is not clear if there will be any concrete commitments, as the pledges that are there are very low.”

However, Raman still managed to find some cause for optimism:

We wanted to avoid the locking-in of Pledge and Review, and to that extent we succeeded. Even if you look at the Durban Platform, it talks about a multilateral rules-based system – rather than unilateral pledge-and-review. That’s the one flicker of hope.

Sivan Kartha drew a similar conclusion, and felt that the hard-ball negotiating tactics adopted by industrialised countries when negotiating a second commitment period of the KP reinforced a broader lack of trust within the climate negotiations:

[T]he industrialised countries have been evasive, perhaps even obstructionist when it comes to trying to get a second KP commitment period. Even the Durban decisions, which nominally mean that we have a second commitment period of the KP, contain ... multiple layers of legalistic hedging. Given how important that is for developing countries, who see KP as a marker of industrialised country intentions to actually do something ambitious about climate change, with that much resistance to a second KP commitment period it gives the developing countries the [impression] that industrialised countries are still avoiding putting any real effort into climate. That impression is reinforced by Canada, Russia and Japan refusing to join the KP, even though all it would mean would be putting their Copenhagen pledges into an amendment to annex B.

An African COP?

There was considerable optimism (and no small degree of positive spin) at the start of the Durban process that this would be 'the African COP,' placing the needs of the continent at the forefront of the global agenda. This was reflected in a considerable degree of support from civil society for the Africa Group position in advance of the negotiations. However, the outcome did not reflect this initial enthusiasm.

George Awudi of Friends of the Earth Ghana and the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) explains:

I thought that at the end of the day developed countries would come up with some concrete results and agreements on how the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol should be carried out in a binding manner. I was expecting more than an agreement postponing the process, as we have now. I was also expecting that you would be able to hear the African negotiators' voices. I expected COP17 was going to [emphasise] the situation in Africa, and listen more. But in that respect, it was even worse than Copenhagen and Cancún.

Awudi held the South African COP Presidency responsible for this:

At the beginning of conference, we thought the South Africans were going to ensure that the right thing was done, but along the line they were actually listening to the voices of the powers that be. They didn't want to be seen as a spoiler, they didn't appear to have gone along with the African continental challenges that we face from climate change. ... We were expecting South Africa as an African government would at least push ... but they just went down – the Presidency was a flop and it could be seen why Africa's voice was even weaker than in Copenhagen. It was a shameful Presidency for South Africa.

Elizabeth Mpofu of Via Campesina agreed, and left Durban with the impression that "South Africa is accommodating all the investors, transnational corporations." This bias is "affecting not just Africa alone but other Southern countries," she added.

Although this was a widely held criticism, it was not a universal one. Harold Winkler, a member of the South African delegation – defended the Presidency's "transparent process" as a return to "best UN practice", and saw that as being embodied in the use of the Indaba process:



In 'solidarity with Africa', climate change activists occupied the Durban convention centre. PIC: priceofoil.org

[T]he Durban Indabas skilfully avoided the Copenhagen small rooms, and [mostly] Ministerial drafting of text as in Cancún. The Indaba produced a big picture from early, that all could see, and created the conditions for a huddle in the final plenary. The huddle changed the momentum away from imminent collapse to taking what was possible – an imperfect package. In the good tradition of Indabas, negotiators simply kept talking until it came together.¹⁴

This perspective received qualified support from Lili Fuhr, Liane Schalatek and Kulthoum Omari of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung:

If it had not been for the determination of the presidency, the international community might not have seen any outcome in the end. Quite aware that process does matter and drawing from lessons learned both at Copenhagen and Cancún, where especially developing parties lamented a negotiation policy of a selected few behind closed doors, an innovative inclusive informal negotiation process [the Indaba] was introduced at COP17 that resorts to traditional African decision making ...

The Durban Indaba took some time to take off ... [but] indeed allowed for a more open and transparent process with the involvement of all parties and observers. The presidency also convened for the first time ever a joint informal session of the parties of the UN framework convention and the Kyoto Protocol members in the early hours of Sunday morning to demonstrate as much transparency as possible and to give parties a possibility to vent their disagreements – thus, preventing a possible blocking stance of a few countries in the formal concluding sessions of the COP and the CMP respectively.¹⁵

The same last-minute informal session, as recounted by Kate Horner of Friends of the Earth USA, had a rather less democratic-looking complexion:

If I looked up the accepted UN policies and procedure, I am pretty sure I wouldn't find a "huddle" anywhere in there as a usual means to craft international law, but sure enough, in the wee hours of the Durban climate talks that had run late by nearly 36 hours, perhaps the most important negotiation shaping the future of the UN climate talks happened in a large scrum in the middle of the main plenary hall.¹⁶

Fuhr, Schalatek and Omari concur with aspects of this judgement too:

... high ambition to secure a deal no matter what the costs in combination with a hesitation to firmly steer the process and time pressures [some delegations were already leaving] resulted in a certain level of panic on the side of the host government. Working to beat the clock, decision texts were not finished and presented to delegations without enough lead time to consider and discuss, which led to some resentment and bad will growing amongst delegates in the last and decisive hours of the COP.¹⁷

In their final analysis, the Heinrich Böll Stiftung team contend that the Indaba process is of limited applicability to the COP process and that, in any case, it cannot stop a worrying trend

towards bypassing the UN altogether:

Climate change is indeed a problem that affects everyone and can only be solved in a joint effort. An Indaba can be successful in such a case if the process manages to actually gather those men and women wise

enough to perceive it as a global problem and with a clear mandate and the political power to find a solution. The UNFCCC process – and bringing an Indaba approach to the COP -- has by necessity very clear limitations because it has turned into an increasingly complex technical negotiations forum in which not even the most involved are able to deal with all the political and technical interlinkages effectively any more. Meanwhile, the real political decision-making has evaded the climate negotiations and power switches are worked elsewhere, such as in the G20 process.¹⁸

Transparency and accountability in the UNFCCC process

Criticisms of the UNFCCC process were not reserved solely for COP17, but reflect general disappointment towards a lack of transparency and accountability in the UNFCCC negotiations. Meena Raman spoke at length on this topic, emphasising its importance for civil society:

Civil society has a huge responsibility to learn from the lessons of what happened from Cancún to Durban, to look at the processes and expose the lack of a fair process. We have not done this enough. That is actually perhaps as important as the outcome itself. The outcome is determined by the process, and no matter how informed and just a particular demand may be, if you have a process that is unfair then you have an unjust outcome.

There is also a discord, a division here – the Copenhagen process was so clearly illegitimate, yet there were some groups of civil society that actually thought that was not the case. They said you cannot expect negotiations to take place with all countries negotiating at the table, surely you must have a smaller group process. We have to be more clever than that. It's not about being against small groups, the issue is who is in that small room, how are they selected, how is it that texts are developed – because still today no one can tell us how the Cancún decision came about.

We were not happy with what happened in Copenhagen and Cancún, especially the actions of the Mexican Presidency, but no one expected the process to be the way it was in South Africa with texts placed on

the table last minute, without any effort at allowing opposition or feedback from the floor. For the first time in the history of the negotiations, you had reports of the working groups which were transmitted to the COP plenary under the responsibility of the Chair without the approval of the members. That was really unprecedented. The way in which they extended the negotiations by two days, leading to huge fatigue, exhaustion, non-transparent small-room Indaba processes, the huddle on the last night ... created great difficulties.

This state of affairs is not the norm for other UN-level and multilateral negotiations, says Raman. She finds the lack of transparency as:

One thing that is very distinct with the UNFCCC as opposed to the New York processes under the UN, such as the conference two years ago on the economic crisis.¹⁹... It is very transparent in the UN in New York. For instance, if you have a text, and different countries have different responses to the text, you know exactly who is saying what, and advancing what, and it's all up on the screen and you know where it goes. That is not the case with the UNFCCC process. When we came into the UNFCCC process a few years ago we were just horrified as to how the text develops, where you have the chair, the facilitators, and something else totally made by the COP Presidency. That is really unfortunate. Transparency is really lacking.

When asked for other positive examples, Raman continues:

Many people cite the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, where you had a fishbowl kind of process. In fact, you have many processes that allow for a small group of negotiators to negotiate in a larger room through a transparent process where everybody watches and knows, without any backroom dealings. That is what you need, because when you go to small rooms and allow for bullying that is not visible to civil society, that is what we need to expose. Bullying is mainly done behind closed doors – so the more we make it open, the better it is for us.²⁰

But the formal inclusion of NGOs is not enough, Raman continues:

The Nagoya Protocol for the Convention on Biological Diversity [CBD] is another example. One of the good things about the CBD process is that you have many of the

stakeholders – the Indigenous Peoples, the NGOs, really evident and playing an inside role. They sit and are allowed to negotiate, they are allowed to be “friends of the Chair”... and the process is far more transparent than the UNFCCC process. Despite that, in the access and benefit sharing Protocol discussions in Nagoya the outcome was really very problematic. We had very close contacts with negotiators from a well-coordinated like-minded group of countries, which made fair, solid demands that were ... very advanced in terms of the outcomes. Civil society and Indigenous Peoples supported that. But at the last minute, some developing countries and the EU got together behind closed doors and scuppered that. So the process did not help, in the sense that the outcome was not able to stop the back-door deals, which we are seeing increasingly in multilateral processes.

Ultimately, Raman sees this as part of a broader trend, in which negotiators are learning many of the wrong lessons from the stalled world trade negotiations:

This seems the new and emerging trend in multilateral negotiations, and it is a lesson that is being learnt from the way in which the trade negotiations developed. The WTO was noted for its green rooms, its non-transparent processes, where even though each country had a say and consensus was the rule, the WTO collapsed primarily because there was no effort at an inclusive process. Those lessons were not learnt in the UNFCCC process. ... These are very complex talks about the future of the planet, they are about transforming our economies and production systems ... given that, the process has to be fair and just.

But the message that we have to save the multilateral process at any costs, that's also a problem. Multilateralism must mean that the process is open, transparent and inclusive and just. It cannot mean a particular outcome that is manufactured through a so-called small group process that is supposed to cook up an outcome which at the end of the day will not be legitimate. Even if we produce it we will find that it will unravel. An outcome that is not owned by everyone will be unravelled.

Civil society lobbying and divisions

Turning now to the role that civil society groups can play in influencing the outcome, there would at first glance appear to be little that unites civil society, except perhaps a perception that civil society is divided. Fuhr, Schalatek and Omari suggest that this has weakened the effectiveness of NGOs:

If there is one thing that NGOs could have learned from the failure of Copenhagen it is that they can collectively make a difference – but they can also remain without major impact if they are not cooperating, coordinating and coalescing enough among themselves, with a clear understanding of the respective roles and strengths different groups bring to the negotiations and a strategy that plays on these differentiated contributions in a clear division of labour ...

But Durban, unfortunately, also saw a renaissance of conflicts between different spectrums of civil society that in the end – due to uncoordinated and contradictory lobbying efforts – contributed to the weak outcome of the conference. Once again, much effort and time was wasted on diverging views on the self-perceived role of NGOs in this process.²¹

These conflicts are the result of political divisions rather than a lack of coordination, according to Nathan Thanki:

Civil society seemed really disorganised if you try to consider it a whole unit, with a lot of different messages being thrown around. The fundamental beliefs of different sectors in civil society and different NGOs came to the fore. It's problematic because they were so fundamentally opposing in some ways. That didn't help. In a way, they helped create the eventual outcome in the disappointing form that it exists in.

George Awudi also commented on these divisions, stating that “As far as civil society themselves were concerned, it appeared like they were not speaking with one voice.” He criticised CAN International for taking a “weak” stance, while at the same time acknowledging the limitations of Climate Justice Now!, the umbrella network in which Friends of the Earth and PACJA (amongst others) participated, for a lack of preparation and coordination: “The pieces were not tied up regarding when they should work together and when they should work as individual networks, so there was a missing link.”

This was partly due to other arrangements running too close to the COP itself. PACJA's Caravan of Hope, a 4,000 mile campaign crossing



PIC: Afrikagruppe

10 countries which proved a great success in its own right, nevertheless had the unfortunate side-effect of limiting the organisation's capacity immediately in advance of the COP:

Three weeks to Durban's official opening there was a Caravan of Hope organised by PACJA, and three weeks was enough to do background work on last minute issues,

because negotiating issues were evolving and changing. In that three weeks the leaders of PACJA pulled themselves out, and travelled from one country to another, which may not have given space for final preparations – that may have been looked at in our evaluations.

More broadly, Awudi felt that greater coordination could encourage different groups to focus more tightly, avoiding duplication of effort and stretching their capacity.

PACJA, Friends of the Earth International, Jubilee South, Via Campesina have their own structures, but these groups also need to meet before or after inter-sessionals, to plan together, to share roles, to identify our targets together ... That's when we can reach a goal of specialised areas to focus on, and form real caucuses to meet people on our behalf.

We could also be using spaces like inter-sessionals better ... we have to plan before we go to the war, otherwise we are wasting time and resources and become more disorganised.

Awudi nevertheless praised the commitment of these groups and networks "to the cause of Africa," which he felt was not always the case for other NGOs:

The African voice was not being represented in CAN International debates ... for example, some European NGOs were seeking an opportunity to meet with the Africa group, but did not consider African participation. So some of us from Friends of the Earth Africa sought an opportunity to join the meeting and explain that the issues that they were going to take up there were at variance with the ones we stress. European NGOs should not assume they are speaking for African people, but should meet and exchange information. We have to work for a balance.

The imbalances in the negotiations also offer clues as to a further key role that civil society can play within the climate talks, according to Sivan Kartha:

One of the absolutely fundamental equity dimensions to the negotiations is procedural equity, and the disparities in capacity to engage in the negotiations and to support technically, legally and in whatever ways possible the development in developing countries of good positions on climate change that are scientifically founded and ethically grounded. That also has to be done to a large degree by developing country civil society, who are more sensitive to the political, cultural and societal concerns of developing country parties.

The impediments to greater equity do not stop at the door of technical assistance, however. The procedural complexity and framing of debates within the COP process is highly abstract, making it impermeable to community groups, says Mariel

Vilella:

The COP is not thought in terms of participation of peoples' [organisations] or communities - it's very opaque, obscure ... a labyrinth of decision making that's not designed to be accessible to communities.

It also requires a considerable commitment of time and resources, she says:

To be inside and fully effective you have to be inside completely because you don't know when you have the chance to talk to the delegates. ... You need to be very clear and strategic about what it is you want to intervene on, and to be very persistent to actually make a change ... and that's not guaranteed because it is very inaccessible.

Without adequate information, groups operating on the inside can easily misdirect their emphasis, according to Nathan Thanki:

The climate finance workshops for youth put their main focus and concern on a Financial Transaction Tax they were obsessed with it ... great, but that's not realistically an outcome for this COP, or politically realistic. Putting all your effort into this would lead you down a path and at the end there'll not be anything there, and in the meantime you'd have missed out on a lot of other important discussions.

There were also some criticisms levelled at the types of activity emphasised. With numerous organisations launching reports at the COP, George Awudi noted that, "We have so many publications you cannot deal with them." The

relative lack of international media interest also suggests that COPs represent a poor location for publication launches.

Elizabeth Mpofu also spoke of a need to move beyond the preparation and presentation of written statements, stating that in the future activists should be “trying our best to get space so we can also raise our issues within [the conference], not necessarily just writing on papers.”

Civil society access

As one might expect, the ability to access and influence the negotiations varies considerably according to the political and organisational profiles of different groups. As Director of IndyAct, Wael Hmaidan was able to gain a position as a negotiator for the Lebanese government, which gave him considerable access. He explains that this position had to be earned by first pressurising governments through the media, in particular, and then building relationships of trust with them:

Over the past two years, I've been negotiating the agreement with the rest of the governments as part of the Lebanese government delegation. Also, IndyAct in general does a lot of work through media, through communicating policy options with the governments – proposing ideas, texts, and suggestions on how to move forward, coordinating with other NGOs, getting NGO voices to unify civil society demands; a lot of policy and media work

to add pressure and be the voice to the people outside, on what is happening – to hold the governments accountable.

In Lebanon what worked was doing a lot of policy work and talking to governments, showing that we know our subject and being very visible in the media which made many government need to listen to us, because they started to worry. We had a strong ‘shame and blame’ campaign on Saudi Arabia, exposing how they use obstructionist strategies in the negotiations, and we exposed them very strongly and got very good media coverage for it.

Countries other than Saudi Arabia also got worried that they would face a shame and blame campaign. This gave us access, and when we got access we proved that we are knowledgeable, we are professional and that we have good, practical pragmatic suggestions - so they let us in. For example,

in Lebanon, they allowed us to be on the delegation, and not only to be on the delegation but also to negotiate on the delegation.

He cautions that this should not be taken as a blueprint or formula that might work everywhere, however, because of the very different conditions that civil society groups face.

Realities differ from one country to another. In some countries it is very complicated. For example, in the United States you have huge opposition and a lot of money for opposing [action on climate change]. In some countries there isn't media access: for example in China civil society is very weak, and you cannot expect it to have the same impact.

For those not participating as part of government delegations, however, there remains little ability to intervene directly in the UNFCCC debates, and the channels that do exist remain weak and ineffective. Although the plenaries, as well as the opening and closing informal negotiations on agenda items were open in Durban, a majority of sessions were closed to civil society observers. The formal opportunities to speak are smaller still, being mainly limited to plenary interventions, as George Awudi points out:

When we come to the COP itself, civil society is sometimes given only two minutes to make a remark or put their point across, but how can you use only two minutes to talk about these big issues, of shared vision, of finance, of Kyoto Protocol. The time was too short. The UNFCCC does not organise itself to take on civil society voices, as we have seen from year to year.

In Durban, these plenary interventions were often cancelled, delayed and shuffled in the agenda due to time over-runs.

However, the lack of access to decision-making spaces did not necessarily translate into a lack of access to decision-makers. The COP process is “very inaccessible,” according to Mariel Vilella, but she went on to note that in some cases “it is easier to talk to delegates in these conferences” than to access them in national contexts. For example, Senegalese waste-pickers were able to meet with their country's ambassador, while a delegation of India waste-pickers held meetings with Ministry of Environment officials. Such meetings are far more difficult to arrange domestically: “Being in this UN conference raises your profile; delegates have more difficulties to avoid you, its easier to access delegates directly in the COP than nationally” says Vilella.

In terms of access, there is a widespread feeling amongst activists that corporate “NGOs” achieve far better access than not-for-profit civil society organisations - in large part, because they can afford to pay for access to spaces.²²

For example, Vilella recounted how GAIA attended a private, off-programme meeting hosted by the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA) - the civil society face of the waste incineration industry, which was hosted by the Dutch delegation in the basement of the ICC, in close proximity to all of the country delegations’ offices.

Elizabeth Mpofo also felt that decision makers inside the COP were getting their information from the “wrong side” - by which she was referring to “transnational corporations”:

The people making all of the decisions don’t think of the people who are really suffering. But they benefit from the climate change, they put their suggestions of carbon markets - but we don’t really understand what they talk about with this, like many things that are to their benefit, also the case of GMO seeds and new technologies presented as “solutions”. These are not in the long-term interests of the people.

Civil society actions

A final part of the picture inside the COP space are the ‘inside actions,’ symbolic protests that required prior approval by the UNFCCC Secretariat, for which our respondents had little enthusiasm.

In part, this was a critical reflection on the role of the Secretariat itself, as Joe Perullo from the College of the Atlantic delegation explains:

It’s absolutely important for civil society to be there, but their presence is only as strong as the Secretariat wants it to be - so many small things that prevent access - for example, where the civil society space is - how close it is to the main conference centre really makes a difference.

The problem was not simply external restrictions, however, but the fear and self-censorship that this engendered. In one of the most well publicised youth interventions, Anjali Appadurai drew from the repertoire of the Occupy movement and gave a mic-check on the floor of the plenary session.²³

But, as fellow student Nathan Thaniki explains, “Even when we were trying to get the mic check part of Anjali’s intervention agreed upon in the YOUNGO meeting, there was heavy opposition

from even doing that ... and it’s really not that radical to do a mic check.”

More generally, he concludes that the inside actions showed a “lack of imagination,” while stating that this is to some extent “understandable because people are worn down and frustrated at this stage.”

By contrast, there was greater enthusiasm for the unauthorised “occupation” of the COP on the last Friday of the negotiations. For Thanki:

The Occupy the COP action worked because of all the media attention it got, and because during that action a lot of different views were shown by civil society. During the actual chants it was a forum where we could discuss in some ways.

A lot of the more prominent chants were “Save Africa”, “Stand with Africa” - we were shouting that too, “2020 is too late”, “We need cuts now.” On the other end, there were not directly opposing but more qualifying statements. Yes, 2020 is too late, yes we want a treaty, but no we don’t want the treaty that the EU are going to bring forward. Yes, stand with Africa, but not at the price of the rest of the developing world.

Kevin Buckland, art ambassador for 350.org, which was one of organisers of that protest, claims that “The idea behind the final action on the last day was to pollinate the youth climate movement with the skills and the structure of Occupation, general assemblies, the human mic.”

He feels that it was successful and, after the straight-jacket of the COP process, even “cathartic” for some of the youth delegates, affording them the opportunity to vent their frustration at the process.

A domestic turn?

One final, and oft-repeated, analysis of the COP was that too much organisational emphasis was placed upon winning battles through lobbying, with too little work done to connect this up to domestic and local environmental struggles.

Ilana Solomon of ActionAid felt that advocacy at the UNFCCC in the absence of far greater civil society pressure domestically was a “losing game”:

In a sense, you can’t blame the US [negotiators] for protecting the interests of the corporations, financiers, and their own political interests, because the only public



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that the US [government] is hearing from on a large scale is saying we don't want the US to act.

In retrospect, says Solomon, the relative lack of emphasis on domestic movement building by US NGOs was a mistake:

We never put the investment into campaigning and organising domestically in the US to campaign on international climate issues. ... We saw the UNFCCC as the quick fix, because the climate crisis is so urgent, so we [took the approach] let's skip over that piece, or invest really minimally in it, and go all out for advocacy, policy papers and a media campaign, and maybe that will be a quicker way to get policy-makers to listen to us. That was a really failed strategy. More of the work has to happen domestically before the UNFCCC process to build the national pressure to send off the US [delegates] with some clear demands.

Anabella Rosemberg of the ITUC shares much of this analysis, concluding that the UNFCCC process is unlikely to pull ahead of and catalyse national debates, as some in civil society had hoped:

Our feeling is that the change is not going to come from within the convention as a miracle. Only a substantial change in the balance of power at different national levels in different key players is going to determine the level of ambition. For a long time we thought that the UN process was going to lead in ambition. What we have realised now is

that this is not going to happen unless some countries or governments are committed to that ambition and pull the process up. This is not happening, and that's what we are going to be working on for the next few years, to identify which are the countries where the labour movement can make an impact and push them to raise the level of ambition in the negotiations. We assess that this is not going to happen from the formal process alone, not even from environmental ministries. From the moment that the climate agenda is not part of a higher political level, nothing is going to happen, because we are talking an incredible transformation of the economy over which environmental ministers have no power. Unless we manage to convince some other ministers or Heads of State of the importance of changing our economies in a way that fulfils equity and workers' concerns as much as environmental concerns we are not going to be able to push this just from an artificially led UN process. Which doesn't mean that we need to abandon it, but it only has sense if we are putting pressure at a national level.

Sivan Kartha also stopped short of arguing that the UNFCCC process should be downgraded in organisational priorities, but drew a similar conclusion regarding the limited scope for lobbying at the moment of the talks themselves:

The delegations that are negotiating there have relatively little latitude. They're basically working within the constraints that their governments have set, and to a large degree the governments are working within the constraints that their constituencies have

set. Hopefully constituencies means citizens, voters ... in fact maybe it means corporations more so than it should.

What that all suggests to me is that probably the biggest role for civil society is in building domestic support and enthusiasm for climate action.

Emphasising domestic support need not mean stepping back from the international negotiations, however. Anabella Rosemberg explains how international engagement is a vital element in shaping and refining trade union demands on climate change, which are mainly advanced domestically:

Our members are national-centred. They are always engaged in an inside and outside strategy. On the one side they are part of social movements, on the other side they also seek to negotiate with governments. For us, the reason why the official COP process is important, is to get unions to speak to their governments back home about the conference. If they understand what's going on when they come to the international level, it's much easier for them to understand what they need to ask at home.

The COP is useful in terms of a longer-term engagement of unions on the climate agenda. From the moment we abandon that formal space, we'd be missing our capacity to engage also at the national level. Of course what you do at the national level has a critical impact on the international one, but my feeling is that only when you are present at both sides, both international and national, both inside and outside, when it's possible, then your impact is much bigger. Demands that are completely disconnected from the reality of the negotiations are demands that are not going to prosper.

For environmental NGOs, however, placing greater emphasis on domestic-level engagements may imply tactical shifts. Ilana Solomon of Action Aid is concerned that stronger links need to be made between local climate and environmental justice campaigns and international advocacy. To do so may require detaching campaign objectives and planning time frames from the UNFCCC process to some extent:

Last year we focussed on the international solidarity lineage and a short-term "stand with Africa" campaign focussed on the UNFCCC process. One of our problems is building our campaigns too much around the UN

negotiations, because that's a big political moment we have, but the rest of the world doesn't know or care about that. So one challenge is how to think about the political moments much more broadly. We need to broaden our time-line considerably, and have a 2020 strategy and not be as focussed on the UNFCCC.

Solomon finds the gap between local level climate justice movement campaigning in the USA and international NGO advocacy "astonishing," although she notes that some organisations are now starting to draw out these connections. In part, this gap arises from the broader division between community and movement organising in the USA and a Washington-based NGO sector that focuses nearly exclusively on advocacy.

Funding priorities and resources may also play a part in reinforcing this divide. Local-level work is a 'resource intensive' and time consuming activity of building public education campaigns, engaging in sustained media work and employing local organisers, whereas many funding foundations "don't want to put money into something without immediate results," according to Solomon.

It is worth noting that funders themselves are beginning to have this debate, however. A recent report commissioned by the US-based National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy raised serious questions about the efficacy of concentrating funding on "large, national, top-down environmental organizations," arguing that "we can secure more environmental wins by decreasing reliance on top-down funding strategies and increasing funding for grassroots communities that are directly impacted by environmental harms and have the passion and perseverance to mobilize and demand change."²⁴

Outside the US context, various global networks are also rethinking their strategies towards toe COP. For Mariel Vilella, "The lesson from South Africa is that it doesn't make sense to bring a whole delegation to put all the time and resources into this if it is not going to have international repercussions."

Although GAIA has yet to agree its approach to COP18, Vilella suggests that it is:

... likely we'll be there with a few people, but not a whole delegation. The COP is possibly not the most important space to follow up on climate policies. For us, our main aims are to stop climate finance going to incinerators and promoting zero waste policies and projects. It may make sense to identify specific countries

and policies that are making a difference and try to mobilise nationally and approach it at that level.

At the end of the day, the countries have very different strategies within the UNFCCC. You try to follow up a global policy but there's not such a strong possibility to make a change – so you have to go for some countries doing very well and support them, or target the bad ones, if you want to impact upon the policies. For that, the UNFCCC is not a good bet, not a good investment anymore.

Kevin Buckland notes that 350.org has also been discussing whether “this process is worth us putting our time into,” and has drawn the conclusion that “in terms of getting stuff done to stop climate change that has to happen nationally.”

There are also signs that some of the large development NGOs are pulling back from focussing on climate change altogether: “Climate change is being demoted in a lot of organisational structures,” says Ilana Solomon. “It's not just ‘do we engage in the UNFCCC’, but ‘how do we talk about climate change’... There's a fear of talking about climate change, scaling up resources on climate change, when it's going to be a long term proposition without immediate results.”

Media strategies

It is not just the development NGOs that are pulling back from climate change – the international media had also significantly downgraded its presence at the COP compared to previous years. For example, George Awudi noted that civil society press conferences were “mainly attended by others from civil society.”

By contrast, Kevin Buckland recalls that the Occupy COP17 space was a media success, despite its modest ambitions and limited organisational capacity on the ground: “At our first general assembly, it was half press. It was such a testament to the power of the Occupy meme. We are getting together and having a meeting about nothing and the press are hugely interested – interested in the structure of the conversation.”

While Occupy protests remain on the media radar, climate change itself is seemingly being downgraded. Nathan Thanki sees this shift as having negative consequences for the conduct of the negotiations themselves:

The climate will not be as much in the media spotlight. There's been a big descent from Copenhagen, then Cancún and Durban. Climate change is slowly getting less attention. The consequence of less attention is that you can get away with doing more improper procedures in how things are decided, and you can also get away with worse decisions.

It also impacts upon civil society strategies towards the talks. Mariel Vilella notes that “a presence in the international media agenda, or if not then in national media, is an important point for the wastepickers' movement, because they are normally stigmatised.”

At previous COPs and inter-sessional meetings, GAIA had been highly successful in placing stories with “international journalists and news agencies.” This success continued in Durban in terms of national coverage of the wastepickers' concerns:

... but in the international media, we all suffered from the lack of relevance that Durban had. For example, in Europe the focus on the financial crisis sidelined reporting on Durban. Durban was not high on the agenda internationally.

Anabella Rosemberg of the ITUC also reported some media success, in terms of shifting the framework of reporting so that trade unions were “seen as part of the movement” alongside other civil society groups.

The People's Space

The People's Space at the University of KwaZulu-Natal was an important site for the trade unions, enabling “networking with other social movements and alliances,” according to Rosemberg. A key part of this was the fact that it played host to the World of Work pavilion, “a dedicated space for trade unions and allies to share different experiences on climate change from around the world.” This enabled both international networking and engagement with local unionists, explains Rosemberg:

We had more than 40 separate events within the World of Work, plus a series of locally-focussed events. The structure ... was not just a training course, but a series of autonomous events organised by different unions from all over the world. ... That meant more ownership for different unions, inviting colleagues from around the world that they might not have had if they would have run this activity at

home. Every morning we were also running education actions for workers in the KwaZulu-Natal region so they could also understand from an easier and less policy-focused analysis what climate change would mean for their jobs and for the region. That was also a success in that it allowed international people to meet South African workers.

To some extent, it was also possible for many of the 400 international trade unionists registered at the COP to participate in both the World of Work and to attend the official negotiations at the ICC. Most trade union delegates had COP accreditation, and:

... every morning all of them came to the UN before the start of the World of Work activities for a general briefing on what was happening inside and outside. So we were treating our actions in both places equally, which gave at least our people a sense that these two were coming together.

This experience was more of an exception than a rule, however. Many of our interviewees focussed most or all of their attention inside the COP. For some, this was a deliberate strategic choice, although others bemoaned the lack of a closer connection between inside and outside spaces.

One of the main drawbacks was the physical distance between the People's Space at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the main conference venue. Rosemberg acknowledges that "the distance between the two locations made it very difficult to participate in both spaces at the same time, which ended up with some people frustrated at missing activities happening in one place because they were in the other."

George Awudi shared this sense of frustration, "The KwaZulu Natal University turned out to be too far from the main centre, and it was not clear the extent to which voices raised there were influencing and reaching inside the ICC."

Fuhr, Schalatek and Omari develop a similar point:

One of the key elements that prevented a more forceful joint and therefore louder voice from civil society groups both inside and outside the Durban conference centre was – just like in Cancún – the geographic distance between the formal negotiation space and the C17 NGO space organised by South African civil society. The location of C17 at a university campus approximately 7 km away from the conference centre prevented a sufficient mass of back-and-forth exchange

and thus once again a failure to strengthen advocacy attempts in the conference corridors with the moral force of social mobilisation on the streets.²⁵

According to our interviewees, however, the distance between outside and inside spaces had as much to do with politics and how the debates were framed as geography. Mariel Vilella explains:

It is very hard to be inside and outside at the same time as a matter of capacity. Beyond that, it is very difficult to make the connections. The format of the COP is not thought with the expectation that grassroots groups and people outside will come in.

On the outside we're always talking from the communities' point of view, they are the most impacted and we need to find community-level solutions to climate change, a discussion that is absolutely not on the agenda inside.

We did attend a meeting between ALBA countries and social movements ... but there was very little follow-up from this. In general, the delegates that show sympathy for social movements and communities at the same time have little capacity and its very difficult to follow them, so you end up having to trust in those in the networks that can commit completely to being inside to transmit messages from the outside.

This can result in an information gap, as Elizabeth Mpofu noted. Although her focus was on the outside of the COP, one of her objectives "was to also get to understand what was going on in the ICC." Although she noted that few of the people focusing on the negotiations spent time in outside spaces, she notes that updates were possible on an ad hoc basis: "Some who had been mostly inside managed to meet with us during the march, giving us information of what was [being discussed]. And we managed to march to the ICC where we gathered and met with some officials there."

A further problem with disconnections between the outside and inside spaces is that it can limit the channels of communications between local and international civil society.

Nathan Thanki reports that most of his and the College of the Atlantic delegation's contacts prior to the COP came via the YOUNGO email forum, which he says was insufficient to adequately prepare them for engaging fully with local activists:

We were not well linked up to Durban civil

society, that was something that if we go to another COP we should keep in mind. It seemed that our efforts were isolated and there were a lot of missed opportunities through not making the right connections, and not making them early enough.

Why do these connections matter? In theory, an “inside-outside” strategy (as adopted at WTO talks) would gather social movement pressure and demands outside the talks, which could then coalesce into demands levelled by sympathetic negotiators on the inside – or simply embolden them to block proposals that outside movements also felt were damaging. However, as Ilana Solomon acknowledges, “We have never done very well at [addressing the question of] how to link the inside and outside piece. It’s difficult to make the inside relevant and meaningful to the outside space.”

George Awudi had considerable praise for the “civil society groups in South Africa – Earthlife, groundWork and other connected groups” – who had organised an outside space in difficult circumstances. But he also felt:

... some disappointment at the extent to which South African civil society people were represented inside the conference. We needed more South African communities and NGOs inside. Host committees should actually prepare for both outside and inside spaces, because we need them inside, we need the local languages, we need the local media connections, that is a gap.

Mariel Vilella noted that GAIA and its allies had an explicit plan to engage in both the inside and outside processes: “We were staying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and had lots of events there, as the Global Alliance of Wastepickers and Allies, but also had an inside strategy engaging with the delegates as well as attending side events ... that was a lobby strategy, but we also had actions, trying to catch media attention.”

Vilella describes the outside space as one in which “you are participating in lots of events, preparing interviews, preparing protests.” She also expresses some commonly held criticisms of the set up, “There wasn’t a clear overall programme and it wasn’t very visible from inside the COP. Being inside the COP you didn’t feel there was much happening outside.”

For Kevin Buckland, one of the disappointments of the People’s Space was that it was “still mainly run in traditional conference ways, instead of having a more horizontal engagement structure.”

He emphasises that “the good stuff happens at conference when you’re just talking to people [informally],” and says that the lessons from the Occupy movement include the capacity of participants to shape the agenda and see that reflected in self-organised assemblies, although he also notes that the People’s Space was able to foster some of the sense of community that comes from such activities, since it also accommodated many of the participants.

From a different perspective, Fuhr, Schalatek and Omari also offer a generally negative assessment:

The People’s Space, with its fair share of logistical challenges was availed to NGOs by South African civil society. However, events at the Space tended to present a fragmented, uncoordinated message and no political engagement with the COP due to the fact that organisations mostly worked in isolation and with individual mandates.²⁶

But Elizabeth Mpfu is more positive about the networks that were forged there:

We were connected, networking and adapting ... for example, from South Africa we had the Landless Peoples’ Movement, who are struggling to get pieces of land from their government, while other peoples’ organisations were talking about joblessness. So we were from all civil society, urban and rural, coming together.

Mariel Vilella also affirmed the usefulness of the People’s Space: “Many things happened there, and a lot of things we didn’t plan – collaborations with other organisations, spontaneous interviews.”

GAIA’s ability to make the most of the People’s Space came down to four main factors. First, strong local contacts, with a long-standing history, played an important role in cementing the bond between members of the Global Alliance of Wastepickers and Allies’ delegation. Its key partners included groundWork (Friends of the Earth South Africa), which is a member of the GAIA network, and WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing), which also has staff based in South Africa.

Secondly, local engagements in South Africa well in advance of the COP helped to build organisational capacity:

Preparing for the COP, Groundwork, GAIA and WIEGO held a workshop on climate change with wastepickers in Johannesburg in September. That was attended by 30 to 40 people already getting ready for the COP, the



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vast majority of whom were local.

Thirdly, a presence on the ground in advance of the COP:

...helped to make deeper networks with other groups. I think it helped a lot to be at the Dirty Energy Week [a conference hosted by groundWork] the week before the whole madness of the COP. At that conference, we were able to have workshops the whole day, to establish the first contacts and know who's working on what. So from the start we got to know the climate justice allies who were present in Durban, and that was important throughout the COP.

Finally, the Global Alliance of Wastepickers and Allies had a clear strategy for how it would use the People's Space, using it as a framework within which to organise a national gathering of wastepickers. "We had three days with lots of space for wastepickers to organise and hold discussions, and that reinforced a lot of their internal decision making structures and a lot of people got together for the first time," says Vilella, who reports that this was significant in strengthening the local organisations.

The protest march midway through the COP also proved a successful occasion upon which to gain publicity for the wastepickers' struggles and messages:

Some of the wastepickers reported that the march had been very important ... They

are very passionate about protesting, and they gained lots of media attention, with the wastepickers who work with us receiving calls from people who'd seen them on TV talking about reducing consumption and waste, and of why to recycle rather than to incinerate ... they had a good opportunity to put those messages across to the media.

In short, COP17 provided an opportunity "to empower the SA wastepickers' movement. The COP created a political occasion to bring the wastepickers' wishes higher up the political agenda."

Occupy COP17

The People's Space was not the only activity outside the COP. Occupy COP17 established a small alternative space close to the main UNFCCC venue (Speaker's Corner), which was planned informally by "a bunch of international and a few local people who turned up with the same idea" shortly before the COP. Kevin Buckland, who was one of the organisers, explains that "The goal was to bring the Occupy dynamic and space into the conversation."

Although they considered setting up a camp similar to those that had sprung up across the world, no permanent occupation was established: "All the international people came with their own agenda and hotel rooms, and weren't going to throw that out to join the occupation, and many of the locals didn't really know that much about

it.”

Despite this, Buckland says that Occupy COP17 found a role in “creating a public space that still carried the buzz of Occupy ... to show that alternative voices were present. We also ended up being the stage for outside press conferences.”

In addition to the media focus, the space managed to reach out to many of the youth delegates. Buckland observed a sharp age dynamic in terms of the interest in this space, compared to the official processes:

In all the meetings about Rio+20 and UN process, it was virtually all old people; in all the meetings about Occupy and Indignados, it's all young people – with just a few hardcore climate movement people who were in both conversations, who know CJN! and know Occupy.

Towards COP18

While the Occupy space was allowed to continue, it did not fully escape interference from COP security. George Awudi draws attention to the level of control exerted on the Occupy space:

We have to also accept that there are a lot of challenges within this Convention itself, because it's so political. Governments see activists moving together, travelling in numbers, as a threat.

Even in [Speaker's] corner they would tell you to put away placards because that's not the space they should be. This also posed some challenges to how civil society freely worked.

Considerable fears have been voiced that the level of control facing civil society in Qatar could be even greater.

“What are the chances that a Qatari COP-Presidency keeps the process open to all?” asks Nathan Thanki, who finds himself “worried about the next COP already.”²⁷

Such views have been widely expressed, although Wael Hmaidan has a more positive take on the question:

There needs to be civil society outside. We feel that Qatar needs to allow civil society to mobilise as freely as in other countries, if not more. This is part of the leadership role. Qatar should not only lead with governments on the inside but also show leadership on the outside to allow civil society to do whatever

they want. That would give Qatar a very strong positive image. If [civil society groups] want to do a protest in Doha they should allow them to do it, if they want to talk to the media, they should allow them to have space inside the conference to talk to delegates. ... We are already communicating with civil society, and so far we are satisfied by the way that Qatar is doing it, and we want this process to continue with transparency, and for Qatar to take our recommendations into their planning. If they give NGOs the space inside and outside that would definitely be in their favour because then NGOs will stand with Qatar. We are looking forward to do so.

Hmaidan also emphasises the prospects for encouraging greater ambition in reaching emissions reductions targets at the Doha talks:

For COP 18, we want to address the gigatonne gap, the level of ambition. We want Qatar to become a leader on this subject, to become a very progressive country, because we believe it has all the reasons to do so. They have always been progressive on many issues in the region, so they have the potential to lead. They have this political ambition and we want them to show the same kind of leadership in the climate change debate. Qatar is a peninsula, it's almost an island, it's low lying, all of its cities are on the coast so they are very vulnerable to climate change. The main fossil fuel is natural gas, not oil or coal, that's less CO₂ intensive so they have economic interests too to fight climate change. No matter how you look at it, Qatar should be a progressive leader in the climate change debate and we hope that they will try to an agreement to address the mitigation ambition gap, the gigatonne gap.

Anabella Rosemberg of the ITUC does not agree, however: “Will governments that have not managed to agree on anything ambitious in Durban be more ambitious by December? ... I'm not very optimistic about what Qatar can deliver.” She also notes that the country, which is the world's highest per capita emitter, has been a focus of trade union campaigning regarding its woeful labour rights record:

For us it starts badly, because Qatar is a country that we are campaigning against for a number of reasons. The fact that 80% of the workforce are immigrants with very little or no rights, and that most of them are working in terrible conditions, that provides a very bad context for our engagement with a country and a government that is not democratic. To be honest, engaging in that

context is not easy.

On the question of ambition, too, she sounds a note of caution:

If you add to that it's not just Qatar hosting, but Algeria chairing the G77, Saudi Arabia being the Chair of the AWG-LCA. You have there three countries that have been systematically blocking any progress on climate change leading the talks. Some may argue that that is going to somehow silence them, because as Chair they will not be able to push for their agenda. But in general we have seen that the Chairs have had an impact on the kind of documents that go out. So I have to be a little bit, if not pessimistic then at least agnostic on the capacity of Doha to deliver something truly substantial.

Re-framing the climate debate

In fact, most of our interviewees exhibited a lack of optimism as the UNFCCC process rolls forward towards COP18.

According to Mariel Vilella, activists working outside the COP are:

...very frustrated at having tried for so long, because in the end no one is saying anything new – the science is there, the demands are there, the points about climate change have been settled long ago. What else do we have to do? We've said everything, so if there's no progress it's for other reasons, because it is very clear what needs to be done about climate change. On the outside the UN process is also a bit discredited.

One of the main aims of activists outside the process is to re-frame the international climate policy debate. For example, 350.org has started to pursue a "greater focus on corporations, and fossil fuel subsidies, questioning why we are giving money to the richest companies in the world," says Kevin Buckland. He suggests that the activities of groups (such as the Oilwatch coalition) that were focused on leaving fossil fuels in the ground point the way to important campaigning goals. This marks an "important conceptual shift," he says, so that "instead of targeting emissions, we're targeting extraction."

Campaigners are not the only ones seeking to re-frame the climate debate, however, and civil society does not speak with one voice on these issues. Sivan Kartha notes that:

A dominant framing amongst civil society in the run up to Copenhagen and probably since has been this framing of the climate response, the climate transition as being a race to the future, and whoever can make those investments in innovation and new energy technologies will win that race, and winning that race means winning market share, being on top of the world as far as being the owners of that intellectual property, reaping the benefits of being first movers, etc.

That race to the future metaphor is sort of helpful when you are trying to entice the private sector to get excited about doing something about climate change, but it is maybe useless and more likely dangerous when trying to do anything more than trying to just entice the private sector into near-term support for climate policy measures, such as when trying to build public support.

Climate change has to be seen as a global challenge that we can only successfully respond to in a way that is based on global cooperation. It all comes down to the fact that actual mitigation action has to happen in poor countries, they're the majority of the world and more rapidly growing part of the economy, and that's where people are striving for the type of standard of living that we have in the North. So the vast majority of the mitigation has to happen in the South, but the vast majority of the responsibility for the problem and capacity to deal with the problem resides in the North. That simple dichotomy makes it clear that a huge part of the solution has to be the mechanisms for cooperation between North and South that enables the mitigation to happen in the South but based on a huge financial and technological investment from the North. And as long as we have this framing of the race to the future, that undermines the very notion of doing this cooperatively

Meena Raman is similarly critical of the "vulnerability" framing adopted by some NGOs and governments:

The quick rush by many groups to say that the LDCs and AOSIS are the vulnerable countries is another problem. The vulnerability issue breaks the developing countries. Because what is not seen is that in terms of climate impacts, India is just as vulnerable as the islands and LDCs. The population on the coastal areas of India is more than all the islands or the whole of the LDCs put together, so this needs more understanding.



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She is also concerned that:

The financial crisis is being used as an excuse for the further expansion of the markets. The solutions that are being proposed at this moment through the carbon markets, financialisation of forests and biodiversity, soil carbon and everything else is really going the wrong way.

But the financial crisis in industrialised countries presents opportunities as well as challenges, says Ilana Solomon:

The financial crisis has certainly spun this rhetoric around the economic impacts of reducing emissions, around making the idea of giving money to an issue that they don't even believe exists virtually impossible to talk about right now. Any action on climate change comes down to a conversation about jobs and the economy that we continue to lose, because the Right put more resources into the narrative that action on climate change hurts the economy.

On the other hand, most recently the Occupy movement has [started] to change the discourse in the US ... to put more focus on the power of corporations and big banks. We can build on that narrative, that it's the same 1% who crashed our economic that also

created the climate crisis, and who are taking the resources that should be for all of us to share.

Anabella Rosemberg points out that the financial crisis remains mainly an issue in developed countries:

When it comes to emerging economies or unions in the poorest countries, there has never been more interest in the climate agenda because they are seeing the impacts right now, particularly in the poorest countries. We were lucky enough to have a huge delegation from African unions and they are witnessing the impacts of climate change. The need for a united labour movement on this issue has become clear, and this is also helping to put some pressure on the unions from the North. We all know you have a crisis, but we adapt. So in the end the solidarity is playing out within the movement.

For Sivan Kartha:

It is easy to point to the financial crisis as making it even harder to think about things like financial transfers, but the industrialised countries remain the seat of most of the world's economic power and financial wealth, and the crisis has to do with a failure of our own governance and a mis-setting of our



priorities, and a privileging of consumption over investment, and private goods over public goods. So the financial crisis has to be seen not as some exogenous problem that has suddenly struck us and made it harder to deal with other problems like climate change but as a self-inflicted wound.

There was early on a lot of talk about how recovering from the financial crisis could be done in a way that advances sustainability solutions, the green recovery or green Keynesian view of the world. That included a tremendous amount of rigorous economic thinking about how that would work.

More broadly, we should be building a better understanding of climate change and what countries should be doing – not just what we are used to and are comfortable talking about like renewables and efficiency, but also lifestyle behaviour and consumption; finance and technology and international mechanisms for transfers; equity and what a “fair share” would really mean. These are things that a lot of civil society shies away from.

For Nathan Thanki, recent global events could also add some much needed perspective to a civil society scene in international climate politics that “seems a bit isolated” at present:

There are opportunities like Occupy. I think more and more people are realising in a more general way that the same people who are exploiting them as people and their economy are exploiting their climate, their environment and natural resources.

I am also hopeful that people can take events in the real world outside the COP and be inspired by them. I don't think that happened enough at this COP. The youth did not fully appreciate what was happening with the Occupy movements, in Egypt, in Syria, all of these insurrections. I don't think we harnessed that energy, but that energy is still there and it could still find its way in.

Conclusion

From the perspective of the international civil society actors we interviewed, there is a considerable rethink about the UNFCCC process going on. This needs to be crystallised in terms of action and advocacy strategies.

Overall, there was little enthusiasm amongst our respondents for ‘inside actions’, symbolic protests within the UNFCCC conference venue. The positioning of these actions away from the negotiations, as well as considerable control exerted by the Secretariat, has rendered them ineffective. By contrast, the unsanctioned ‘occupation’ of the COP on the penultimate day met with a more enthusiastic response, and drew connections with events and movements outside of the rarefied world of international climate policy-making.

This occupy action reflects the worry of some respondents that too much organisational emphasis has been placed on the UNFCCC process by environmental and development organisations, hoping to win ‘quick’ victories through advocacy. However, advocacy in the absence of greater civil society pressure domestically is a “losing game,” and more work is needed to connect with domestic environmental justice and climate movements.

The shifting of emphasis is already under way: Some organisations are already moving their focus away from the UNFCCC, and some development organisations – sensing a lack of any “quick win” in the climate debate – are scaling back their climate work altogether. However, this does not necessarily mean that organisations are withdrawing from the COP process entirely. Participation in the international process confirms participants’ visible presence in the climate debate and helps to frame political demands of local and national campaigns outside of the context of the UNFCCC.

Endnotes

- ¹ 5,884 out of 14,570 registered participants. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Conference of the Parties, Seventeenth session, Durban, 28 November to 9 December, 2011. Provisional list of participants online at unfccc.int/resource/docs/2011/cop17/eng/misc02p01.pdf (accessed 1 March 2012)
- ² The views expressed in the interviews that form the basis of this chapter are those of the named individuals, but should not necessarily be considered representative positions of the organisation they are associated with.
- ³ K Horner, *The Durban Deal - An initial analysis of the outcomes*, 12 December 2011, www.foe.org/news/blog/2011-12-the-durban-deal-an-initial-analysis-of-the-outcome (accessed 2 March 2012)
- ⁴ W Sterk, C Arens, F Mersmann et al, *On the Road Again: Progressive Countries Score a Realpolitik Victory in Durban While the Real Climate Continues to Heat Up*, Wuppertal: Wuppertal Institute, 2011, 31
- ⁵ *Nature*, The mask slips, 15 December 2011, www.nature.com/nature/journal/v480/n7377/full/480292a.html (accessed 2 March 2012)
- ⁶ ITUC, What is a just transition? www.ituc-csi.org/what-s-just-transition.html (accessed 2 March 2012)
- ⁷ This refers to the “gigatonne gap”, a phrase popularised by a United Nations Environment Programme report, in which a group of 50 climate scientists analysed the pledges associated with the Copenhagen Accord of 2009, and found that a gap of 6 to 11 Gt of CO₂ between these figures and what is needed to keep global warming below 2 degrees, a temperature target which itself is now widely considered to be insufficient. See United Nations Environment Programme *The Emissions Gap Report: Are the Copenhagen Accord Pledges Sufficient to Limit Global Warming to 2°C or 1.5°C?* Nairobi: UNEP, 2010.
- ⁸ The Annex 1/ non-Annex 1 split is a jargon used in climate talks to refer to ‘developed’ countries in the global North versus ‘developing’ countries in the global South. The Annex referred to is part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- ⁹ BASIC experts, *Equitable access to sustainable development: Contribution to the body of scientific knowledge*. Beijing, Brasilia, Cape Town and Mumbai: BASIC Expert Group, 2011
- ¹⁰ For a summary of climate justice positions critical of the Kyoto Protocol, see Jeff Conant, “We’re Not Very Excited About Kyoto,” *the US Says. Neither Are People’s Movements in the South – But for Different Reasons*, 6 December 2011, climate-connections.org/2011/12/07/were-not-very-excited-about-kyoto-the-us-says/ (accessed 2 March 2011)
- ¹¹ The Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex 1 Countries under the Kyoto Protocol, or AWG-KP, and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long Term Cooperative Action, or AWG-LCA.
- ¹² A Appadurai, *Media Messaging: The silent, subtle art of loudmouthing the innocent*, 22 December 2011, www.earthinbrackets.org/2011/12/22/media-messaging-the-silent-subtle-art-of-loudmouthing-the-innocent/ (accessed 2 March 2012)
- ¹³ P Solón, *The Durban Package: ‘Laisser faire, laisser passer’*, 16 December 2011, pablosolon.wordpress.com/2011/12/16/the-durban-package-laisser-faire-laisser-passer/ (accessed 2 March 2012)
- ¹⁴ H Winkler, *Bending the curve back to multilateral agreement on climate change*, 15 December 2011, www.odandbrown.co.uk/wp_e2c2cop/archives/author/haraldw/ (accessed 2 March 2012)
- ¹⁵ L Fuhr, L Schalatek and K Omari, *COP17 in Durban: A Largely Empty Package*, 19 December 2011, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, www.boell.org/downloads/Schalatek_COP17_in_Durban.pdf (accessed 2 March 2012), vii.
- ¹⁶ op cit. K Horner.
- ¹⁷ L Fuhr et al, *Durban: A Largely Empty Package*, vii.
- ¹⁸ *ibid*, x.
- ¹⁹ United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development, 24-26 June 2009, www.un.org/ga/econcrisissummit/ (accessed 2 March 2012)
- ²⁰ Raman is not alone in this criticism. In advance of the COP, the UK-based World Development Movement issued a report cataloguing what it referred to as “bullying and bribery” within the climate negotiations. See R Hall, *The end game in Durban? How developed countries bullied and bribed to try to kill Kyoto*, World Development Movement, November 2011, www.wdm.org/sites/default/files/Bullying%20%26%20bribery.pdf (accessed 2 March 2012)
- ²¹ op cit. L Fuhr et al., viii-ix.
- ²² See Polaris Institute, *Corporations, Climate and the UN*, November 2011, www.polarisinstitute.org/corporations_climate_and_the_un (accessed 2 March 2012)
- ²³ Democracy Now, “Get It Done”: *Urging Climate Justice, Youth Delegate Anjali Appadurai Mic Checks U.N. Summit*, 9 December 2011, www.democracynow.org/2011/12/9/get_it_done_urguing_climate_justice (accessed 2 March 2012)
- ²⁴ S Hansen, *Cultivating the Grassroots: A Winning Approach for Environment and Climate Funders*, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, February 2012, ncrp.org/files/publications/Cultivating_the_grassroots_final_lowres.pdf (accessed 1 March 2012), 5-8.
- ²⁵ op cit, L Fuhr et al. viii-ix.
- ²⁶ *ibid*, x. The authors are, however, careful to qualify this in relation to various explanatory factors, such as local politics and logistics.
- ²⁷ N Thanki, *Worried about the next COP already*, Earth in Brackets, 29 November 2011, www.earthinbrackets.org/2011/11/29/worried-about-the-next-cop-already/ (accessed 2 March 2012)

APPENDIX: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Section 3: Learning from COP17: South African civil society

Name	Organisation	Date
Tristen Taylor	Earthlife Africa	16 January 2012
Melita Steele	C17 coord / Greenpeace	17 January 2012
Bryan Ashe	C17 coord / Geosphere	17 January 2012
S'bu Gumede	Cosat	19 January 2012
Bobby Peek	groundWork	19 January 2012
Des D'Sa & Lushendrie Naidu	C17 coord / SDCEA	19 January 2012
Brian Ashley	AIDC	20 January 2012
David La Page	SAFCEI	20 January 2012
Laura Tyrer	C17 coord / WWF	20 January 2012
Thembeke Majali	C17 coord / AIDC	20 January 2012
Siziwe Khanyile	C17 coord / groundWork	23 January 2012
Nerisha Baldevu	C17 coord / Earthlife	24 January 2012
Tasneem Essop	WWF	25 January 2012
Bandile Mdlalose	AbM	26 January 2012

Section 4: Donors: South African based donor community and Government

Kevin Roussel	Oxfam	1 February 2012
Jos Martens	Rosa Luxemborg Foundation (RLF)	3 February 2012
Tigere Chagutah and Kulthoum Omari	<i>Heinrich Böll Foundation</i> (HBF)	2 February 2012
Bertha Chiroro	Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA)	15 February 2012
Samantha Hargreaves	Action Aid South Africa (AASA)	2 February 2012
Catherine Pye	British Foreign Commonwealth Commission (FCO)	1 February 2012
Lydia Greyling and Fadel Nacerodien	DIRCO	3 February and 29 February 2012
Sue Bannister	City of Durban	9 February and 14 February 2012

Section 5: International civil society and COP17

Meena Raman	Third World Network / Friends of the Earth Malaysia	30 January 2012
Ilana Solomon	ActionAid USA	30 January 2012
Sivan Kartha	Stockholm Environment Institute USA	31 January 2012
Nathan Thanki and Joe Perullo	College of the Atlantic/Earth in Brackets USA	1 February 2012
Kevin Buckland	350.org / Occupy COP17 USA/Spain	1 February 2012
George Awudi	Friends of the Earth Ghana / Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance Ghana	2 February 2012
Elizabeth Mpfu	Via Campesina / Eastern and Southern Small Scale Farmers Zimbabwe	3 February 2012
Mariel Vilella	Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) Spain	7 February 2012
Wael Hmaidan	IndyACT Lebanon	22 February 2012
Anabella Rosemberg	International Trade Union Confederation France	29 February 2012