TAKING DEMOCRACY TO THE NEXT LEVEL?

Global Civil Society Participation in the Shaping of the
Sustainable Development Goals from Rio to New York
(2012-2015)

Carole-Anne Sénit

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HET VOLGENDE NIVEAU VAN DEMOCRATIE?

Mondiale participatie van burgers bij het opstellen van de
Sustainable Development Goals van Rio tot New York (2012-2015)
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

GLOBALISER LA DÉMOCRATIE ?

La participation de la société civile dans la définition des
Objectifs de développement durable de Rio à New York (2012-2015)
(avec un résumé en français)

Proefschrift

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À mes parents

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List of Abbreviations

CBDR	Common But Differentiated Responsibilities
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ENB	Earth Negotiations Bulletin
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
G77	Group of 77 developing countries
HDI	Human Development Index
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDDRI	Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations
IISD	International Institute of Sustainable Development
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Nongovernmental Organizations
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OWG	Open Working Group
SCP	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNCSD	United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNMC	United Nations Millennium Campaign

INTRODUCTION

Civil Society Participation and Democratic Policymaking at the Global Level

In the last decade, debates about isolationism and deglobalization have pervaded politics at the level of the nation-state and found an important echo among national publics. Donald Trump's slogan "America First" in the United Sates, the success of the Leave arguments abundantly relayed by the United Kingdom Independence Party prior to the Brexit referendum, or the breakthrough of the far-right candidate Marine Le Pen in the French presidential elections, all show that populist, nationalistic ideologies and parties are thriving. A common argument, levelled consistently by the representatives of these parties, is that globalization undercuts their country's sovereignty.

The success of populist-nationalistic ideologies in Europe and the United States relies on a still debated assumption according to which the expressions of globalization, such as the continual transfer of authority from the national to the regional or global level, the free movement of people, services, goods and capital, and the increasing bureaucratic and elitist character of regional and global institutions, would limit the democratic capacities of states to enact policies that maintain social integration (Cerny, 1997). In other words, globalization would produce a displacement of decision-making from the state to global institutions and markets that limits the meaningful choices available to governments and their people. Whether or not we adhere to the argument that globalization dilutes national authority and legitimacy, the fact remains that the partial transfer of power into global forms of governance has created democratic deficits whereby policymaking is increasingly conducted beyond the accountability and oversight of national publics. As a result, citizens partially express their discontent in votes of non-confidence towards political institutions which they deem to be hardly able to represent their interests.

In order to increase the democratic legitimacy of global decision-making, international institutions have created participatory mechanisms for citizens or their representatives to express their views and preferences on policy issues that affect them or for which they hold a stake. These mechanisms include, inter alia, citizens' juries, citizens' panels, consensus conferences, deliberative polling, focus groups, surveys, public hearings, or solicitation of comments.[1] This "participatory turn" in the management of global affairs finds its most accurate expression in the sustainability domain. Compared to other policy fields, the global politics of sustainable development have been a laboratory for experimenting with face-to-face or virtual, direct or representative, consultative or deliberative mechanisms to increase the participation of citizens or their representatives in policymaking. Some even argue that the global sustainability policy field has the most advanced mechanisms for access and inclusion of civil society (Bäckstrand, 2012, 2013; Bernstein, 2012).

In recent years indeed, such mechanisms have proliferated within the framework of intergovernmental policymaking on sustainable development issues, concomitantly

1 See Abelson et al. (2001) for a comprehensive review of public participation methods.

to the increasing normative claim, levelled by scholars and practitioners alike, that the participation of all affected citizens or their representatives in intergovernmental policymaking is essential to the successful implementation and delivery of sustainable development policies (Dodds et al., 2012; Lipschutz, 1996; Wapner, 1996). In 1992, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development institutionalized this claim, enshrining the principle according to which "environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level" (United Nations [UN], 1992a). By providing a vehicle for reconnecting global institutions with the citizens of nation-states, participatory mechanisms that include citizens or their representatives in intergovernmental policymaking could therefore palliate the democratic deficit and legitimacy crisis of global governance (Zürn, 2004).

However, whether or not global participatory mechanisms deliver on this promise is a subject of debate, for two main reasons. The first one questions the democratizing potential of the actors of civil society that represent the interests of all affected citizens in global governance. Specifically, the debate finds its origins in a recurrent but problematic assumption in the literature on global governance that conceives civil society as a force for democratizing the global system. While many scholars acknowledge the constructive role of civil society in bringing expertise and voicing the interests of the affected and marginalized, they also warn against naïve views of civil society organizations as representatives of the public good and as actors free from self-interest (Bäckstrand, 2006; Scholte, 2002). Indeed, civil society is not necessarily more inclusive, accountable and representative than the market or the public sector (for a review of the challenges faced by civil society, see Scholte, 2002: 295-298).

The second reason is skeptical about the democratic legitimacy of participatory mechanisms, in particular regarding their inclusiveness, their influence on intergovernmental policymaking, and, assuming they do have influence, their ability to increase the quality of policy outputs. Participatory processes, for instance, may reflect an unfair representation of civil society actors and may be permeated by the relative power of interest groups over the views of a broader public (Downs, 1957; Olson, 1965; Breyer, 1993; Gastil & Levine, 2005). Moreover, other scholars note that while participatory mechanisms produce recommendations that are passed on to Heads of State and Government, they have in practice very little direct influence on the outcomes of intergovernmental negotiations on sustainable development (Rask et al., 2012). Still others argue that they may even produce undesirable policy results at substantial costs, stressing that inclusiveness eventually hampers the effectiveness of sustainable development policies (National Research Council, 2008).

Does global civil society participation take democracy to the next level? This research seeks to contribute to the academic debate of whether and to what extent the mechanisms for the participation of civil society in intergovernmental policymaking on sustainable development contribute to fostering more democratic policymaking at global

level. Empirically, the research focuses on the intergovernmental policymaking process that led to the definition and adoption of 17 universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015. Although the idea of the SDGs can be traced back to 2011, the international community officially launched their definition at the outcome of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (also known as the 'Rio+20 Conference') in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012. Both the Rio+20 Conference and the subsequent SDG formulation process are especially relevant for this study because they included numerous civil society participatory mechanisms that assessed the options for a new international policy framework for sustainable development. The research takes three participatory mechanisms as an important test case for the emergence of more inclusive and democratic forms of global governance: these include the Rio+20 dialogues, the civil society hearings of the Open Working Group (OWG) on the SDGs, and the MYWorld survey. With innovative yet different designs, these three consultations have allowed to collect the voices of ten million people between the Rio+20 Conference and the adoption of the SDGs in New York three years later.

Four research questions support the overall aim and objectives of this research. First, **to what extent are civil society participatory mechanisms democratically legitimate?** I evaluate the inclusiveness and quality of participation, as well as the transparency and accountability of participatory mechanisms. My expectation is that the legitimacy of civil society participatory mechanisms varies, with some mechanisms being more democratic than others. Second, **what explains variation in the democratic legitimacy of civil society participatory mechanisms?** I explain the observed variation based on a set of variables related to the design of these mechanisms. I assess the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), as well as other participatory methods and resources for participation in explaining the legitimacy of participatory mechanisms. Third, **how much influence has civil society action, through its engagement in diverse participatory mechanisms, on global policymaking?** I evaluate the influence of civil society participation in intergovernmental negotiations and their outputs based on indicators of agenda-setting, issue-framing, position-shifting, goal formulation and influence on procedures. Finally, **to what extent does a discursive approach to representation effectively contribute to the democratization of global policymaking?** Considering that, under current conditions, actor-based representation in global policymaking, within existing participatory mechanisms, hardly achieves to exhaustively democratize global sustainable development governance, I evaluate discursive representation as a potential remedy for advancing democratization.

The research structures its argumentation around seven chapters to critically examine the role of civil society participation in the democratization of global policymaking. **Chapter 1** outlines the theoretical framework within which this research is embedded. First, it defines the most important concepts that structure the research, including democracy, legitimacy, global governance, civil society, and participation.

It then reviews the existing normative approaches to democracy in a global context and highlights their most important limitations. Finally, it describes how the research intends to contribute and complement the existing body of scholarly work on global democracy.

Chapter 2 introduces the empirical and methodological framework of the research. First, it provides a brief historical background on the participation of civil society in global policymaking, specifically within the framework of the UN, in the sustainability policy field. Second, it presents the intergovernmental policymaking process that led to the adoption of the SDGs in September 2015, detailing its most important milestones. Third, it delves into the participatory mechanisms that were carried out within the negotiations on the SDGs and presents the three case-studies selected for this research. Finally, it details the diverse quantitative and qualitative methodologies used in the doctoral research. It takes stock of the data collected to answer to the research questions and reflects on potential data gaps.

Chapter 3 assesses the contribution of ICT to the democratization of global politics. Internet-based participatory mechanisms are increasingly used to engage civil society in intergovernmental negotiations on sustainable development, and they have emerged as a potential remedy to the democratic legitimacy deficit that pervades traditional mechanisms for civil society representation, and ultimately, global policymaking. However, many observers have contested the benefits of ICT for democratization on both theoretical and empirical grounds. Taking the numerous online Dialogues of the Rio+20 Conference as a case study, I argue that despite its promise, ICT reinforce rather than reverse embedded participatory inequalities in a global context, and fail to substantially increase transparency and accountability. This prevents, in turn, a meaningful participation of civil society in intergovernmental negotiations.

Looking comparatively at the Rio Dialogues, the OWG Hearings and the MYWorld Survey, **Chapter 4** assesses the democratic legitimacy of civil society consultations formally commissioned within the framework of the negotiations on the SDGs. While such consultations are often uncritically accepted as a remedy for a deficit of democratic safeguards in intergovernmental policymaking, their lack of inclusiveness and limited capacity to strengthen accountability between citizens, intergovernmental organizations, and governments ultimately hinder their democratizing potential. Additionally, this chapter investigates the causes of this phenomenon by exploring the relationships between the design of consultations and their democratic legitimacy. It unveils that such relationships are sometimes unexpected. Extensive material resources and open access conditions have not systematically enhanced the legitimacy of the studied consultations. Instead, developing clear objectives, allocating sufficient time to participants, and formally binding the consultation to the negotiations hold considerably more promise.

Chapter 5 analyzes the influence of civil society participation on the negotiations on the SDGs. It pictures an overall limited impact of civil society participation, which regularly fails to substantially modify the agenda for the negotiations, alter the behavior or position of governments on sustainable development issues, or the outcome document of the negotiations. This chapter explains influence by focusing on the role of the participatory space. Acknowledging that civil society influence results from a combination of interventions within many participatory spaces, this chapter nonetheless argues that civil society is more likely to influence within informal and exclusive participatory spaces, and when these spaces are provided early in the negotiations, with several iterations throughout the policymaking process. This further questions the democratizing potential of civil society participation in intergovernmental policymaking, as the actors with the capacities to engage repeatedly and informally with the negotiators are seldom those that are most representative of global civil society.

Finally, acknowledging that the participatory mechanisms set up by intergovernmental organizations and governments have fallen short of answering to academic and empirical demands for global democratization, **Chapter 6** examines discursive representation as a way to advance democracy in a global context and overcome the shortcomings of actor-based representation. It reveals that discursive diversity in the negotiations on the SDGs remains low, with some discourses being over-represented compared to others, and further shows that the relationship between discourses and actors remains strong. Eventually, participatory exclusiveness produces discursive exclusiveness, thus indicating the limits of discursive representation for democratization above the nation-state.

While reflecting on the results, the research concludes by considering in **Chapter 7** how the studied empirical developments in civil society participation may contribute to theoretical innovations in the scholarly work on global democracy. The conclusion also advances a set of recommendations that aim to guide the future action of practitioners in strengthening (much needed) global democratic safeguards, now that recent developments in world politics suggest it is fear, rather than cooperation, that dictates political behaviors in the global system. Specifically, it considers methodological and procedural solutions that may help alleviate persisting democratic shortfalls in civil society participatory mechanisms, so as to further bridge the gap between remotely-perceived international institutions and those subject to their decisions: the citizens. Finally, the conclusion considers some of the pathways for future research in global democracy.

CHAPTER 1

Theoretical Framework

1.1. Defining the Terms: Democratic Legitimacy and the Participation of Civil Society in Global Governance

What exactly do I mean when talking about democracy, legitimacy, global governance, civil society, and participation? Providing a definition of these concepts from the start is important as most of the terminology used in this research has contested meanings.

Democracy

Although the meaning of democracy is disputed, the underlying idea that most scholars share is that it entails the political practices through which the people govern themselves (Bray & Slaughter, 2015). Recalling Lincoln's famous Gettysburg address in 1863, **democracy** can thus be defined as a government *of* the people, *by* the people, *for* the people. This meaning finds its origins in the way democracy was conceived and operationalized in ancient city states, where it referred to the direct rule of an assembly of citizens.

Since then, democracy has institutionalized into a representative system which draws its legitimacy from competitive elections and a rule of law which is determined by the public and which "came to be practiced (and only practicable) in a territorial entity with definite borders wrapped around a people who constituted a nation" (Saward, 2006: 402-3). However, as Daniel Bray and Steven Slaughter argue, in democratic theory, **democracy** takes on a broader meaning than just electoral democracy as it encompasses "the various overlapping ways in which citizens interact and influence public decision-making processes" (2015: 4). Similarly, Scholte (2002: 285) defines democracy as a participatory, consultative, transparent, and publicly accountable system of governance.

Legitimacy

Closely associated with democracy is the concept of legitimacy. **Legitimacy** exists when an institution is considered to have the right to govern and has political support from the relevant public constituency (Reus-Smit, 2007: 171). In other terms, it refers to the acceptance and justification of a shared rule by a community (Bernstein, 2005; Biermann, 2014). The process of legitimation involves dialogue and justification between the authority or institution in question and its relevant constituencies which involves judgements about "rightful membership" (are the relevant actors included in the institution?) and "rightful conduct" (does the institution accord with the prevailing normative expectations of procedural and substantive action?) (Clark, 2005: 25).

Legitimacy is important because the authority of an institution, which stems from the degree of support by the relevant community, secures its power, effectiveness, and efficiency (Reus-Smit, 2007: 163-5). Bringing democracy and legitimacy together, democratic legitimacy refers to whether citizens can discuss and decide for themselves the

content of norms and agreements, and – once these are implemented – hold decision-makers accountable (Nanz & Steffek, 2004).

Global Governance

With globalization, new ways of thinking, understanding and operationalizing democracy and legitimacy have emerged. As national governments have become unable by themselves to effectively regulate transborder issues and flows like global ecological problems, global arms trade, or global finance (Scholte, 2002: 287), their authority has partially been transferred to global forms of governance.

Global governance refers to the various forms of international and transnational authority, cooperation, or management, be they public or private, formal or informal, that lead to the coordination, control or regulation of a social activity to achieve shared goals, in the absence of an overarching political authority (Barnett & Duvall, 2005; Rosenau, 1999). Specifically, global governance refers to the system of institutionalized cooperation that emerged in the aftermath of the second world war with the formation of the United Nations, issue-specific institutions established by states, as well as the activity of individuals operating through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), social movements, and private business associations.

In recent decades, global governance arrangements have been created both by the authority of states and the political action of transnational actors. Yet global governance scholars argue that these contemporary arrangements have created democratic deficits because they operate at a distance from the democratic participation and oversight of citizens (Bäckstrand, 2006, 2012; Dryzek, 2000; Haas, 2004; Held & Koenig-Archibugi, 2005; Scholte, 2002; Zürn, 2004). Indeed, while the formal nature of intergovernmental organizations created by states often limits transparency and accountability to the global public, the informal and voluntary nature of transnational forms of governance allow powerful and wealthy actors to avoid being held to account (Bray & Slaughter, 2015). Yet in parallel, recent decades have also witnessed a drastic increase of civil society participation in global governance arrangements.

Civil Society

Civil society participation in the sustainability domain has been a topic of increasing interest among scholars since the 1970s in national policymaking, and since the 1990s in intergovernmental negotiations. Yet both these terms – civil society and participation – encompass various and sometimes contested meanings. In global politics, **civil society** could be described as those organizations, groups and movements who are engaged in a process of negotiation and debate about the character of the rules with governments, companies, and international organizations (Kaldor, 2003). While there is a relative consensus about the roles of civil society in global politics, the definitions of the actors that should be considered to describe it vary substantially. Social movements, NGOs,

not-for-profit organizations, advocacy networks, public policy or epistemic networks, business, knowledge-based institutions, and citizens from all around the world may all be part of civil society.

Within the realm of intergovernmental organizations, it becomes particularly difficult to delineate who is in and who is out of civil society. For the World Bank, the term civil society refers to the "wide array of nongovernmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations."[2] According to this definition, civil society includes community groups, NGOs, labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) expressed the distinctions in these terms:

> "The expansion and diversification of the nongovernmental sector and of its relations with the UN is being accompanied by an evolution in terminology. 'NGO' now tends to be reserved for formally constituted organizations which often do not represent sectors of the population but provide services and/or mobilize public opinion in areas of relevance to the UN system. The term 'civil society' refers to the sphere in which citizens and social movements organize themselves around objectives, constituencies and thematic interests. 'Civil society organizations' include both NGOs and popular organizations – formal or informal… The term 'non-state actors' is even more comprehensive, also including for-profit business" (FAO, 1999: 3-4).

In 1992, the outcome document of the UN Conference on Environment and Development predefined categories of civil society actors with the creation of nine Major Groups and included business and industry within this same interface mechanism as non-profit organizations of civil society. Similarly, the document establishing a UN Secretary-General's Panel of Eminent Persons to examine UN-civil society relations included the private sector and parliamentarians in its terms of reference as falling within the category of civil society (UN, 2004: 74). For example, small farmers' organizations are considered part of civil society because while they pursue the economic interests of their members, at the same time they promote social values and visions that go far beyond the profit motive (McKeon, 2009). Yet this understanding of civil society allows big corporations such as Monsanto, represented by the International Chamber of Commerce, to be part of civil society as much as a small farmers' organization, represented by the international peasant movement La Via Campesina.

2 World Bank. Defining Civil Society. Available at: http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/CSO/0,,contentMDK:20101499~menuPK:244752~pagePK:220503~piPK:220476~theSitePK:228717,00.html

This research thus takes the standpoint of excluding business from civil society actors. The private sector, as well as parliamentarians, state actors, and religious actors, are established circles of power and authority, whereas civil society actors, denied of such authority, claim rights to these authoritative circles. Four types of actors are considered part of civil society in this study: NGOs, comprising both internationally-operating organizations and grassroots organizations, social movements, and individual citizens. Before reviewing each of these actors in more detail, I need to stress that this research uses “civil society” in a generic and substantive meaning to refer to all the actors that are neither part of the state at national and subnational levels, nor the market. I do not refer to “civil society” in opposition to the “major groups and other stakeholders”. This understanding relates to an ongoing procedural debate within the UN, whereby the inclusive meaning of the term civil society has been diverted to shrink the participatory space for non-state actors from the nine speaking slots corresponding to the number of major groups and other stakeholders to only one speaking slot (civil society).

NGOs may either represent and advocate for broad values related to humanity and nature or the interests of particular sectors of society such as professional organizations, community groups of indigenous peoples, women or youth, or disabled people. NGOs undertake a variety of tasks such as advocacy, service and knowledge provision, and monitoring compliance with international treaties. **Social movements** are organizations or groups of individuals who use contentious politics – i.e. action which is used by people who lack regular access to institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities (Tarrow, 1998) – to bring about transformation in society. Finally, because identities are evolving with globalization and are multiple and subjective rather than being static and based on the single objective criterion of the nation-state, many people see themselves as **global citizens** and increasingly voice their views in global policymaking.

Although the goals of these actors are similar and revolve around social and environmental justice, they differentiate in their level of institutionalization and their strategies to shape global policymaking and ultimately increase oversight and accountability of global institutions and national governments. NGOs, and internationally-operating ones specifically, are highly institutionalized and organized, while social movements and individual citizens are not. Besides, although civil society actors do not possess the same – if any – coercive and financial power as states and corporations, they deploy both insider and outsider strategies to shape global policymaking. Insider strategies are deployed within negotiating hubs and consists of convincing governments to take up civil society’s perspective, whereas outsider strategies include activities to influence intergovernmental policymaking from outside negotiating hubs, such as mass protests, campaigning, naming and shaming, strategic use of, and alliances with media to raise awareness and influence the public (Keck & Sikkink, 1998;

Rietig, 2011). While NGOs and individual citizens may engage both in insider and outsider tactics, social movements are more likely to deploy outsider strategies.

Participation

Which participatory mechanisms do civil society actors engage in to channel their views in global policymaking? What does participation in policymaking exactly entail, and through which forms does it materialize?

Participation in policymaking encompasses a group of procedures designed to consult, involve, and inform the public to allow those affected by a decision to have an input into that decision (Smith, 1983). Specifically, it refers to that part of the policymaking process where authoritative institutions, be they intergovernmental organizations or governments, become aware of citizens' preferences by providing opportunities for interested and affected parties to communicate their views. Participation includes providing access to the decision-making process, seeking input from and conducting dialogue with the public, assimilating public viewpoints and preferences, and demonstrating that those viewpoints and preferences have been considered in global norm production (National Research Council, 2008).

Participatory mechanisms to channel those viewpoints and preferences may be formal or informal. Both formal and informal participatory mechanisms may further be categorized into either deliberative or non-deliberative mechanisms (see also Table 1 for an overview). Deliberative are those participatory mechanisms that use a particular sort of discussion – one that involves the careful and serious weighing of reasons for and against some proposition (Fearon, 1998: 63). In other words, deliberative methods are argumentative while non-deliberative participatory mechanisms mainly consist of information sharing.

Formal mechanisms are usually commissioned by governments and/or international organizations prior to or during the negotiations, and may take place either inside or outside global negotiating hubs. They include hearings, surveys, and virtual platforms for the solicitation of inputs and comments on the issues addressed in the negotiations and on the drafts of negotiating outputs. While hearings and consultations on virtual platforms may be deliberative, surveys are non-deliberative. **Informal mechanisms** may be commissioned either by civil society and/or governments and international organizations. They take place both inside and outside negotiating hubs. Informal mechanisms inside negotiating hubs include side events and bilateral or multilateral meetings with governments and/or the co-chairs of the negotiations. The former may involve a degree of deliberation while the latter are usually non-deliberative. Informal mechanisms outside negotiating hubs include deliberative tools such as focus groups (e.g. World Wide Views on Climate Change, Rask et al., 2012), citizens' assemblies (Dryzek et al., 2011), or mass protests (e.g. general assemblies of the Occupy Movement). Informal mechanisms outside negotiating hubs may also be non-

deliberative, such as surveys, social media campaigning and e-petitioning, or traditional mass protests (e.g. the Climate March).

This research specifically focuses on formally-commissioned consultations carried out both inside and outside negotiating hubs, as well as informal participatory spaces in which civil society engages inside negotiating hubs. I alternatively use the generic terms of 'civil society consultations' and 'participatory spaces' to refer to these participatory channels. However, the PhD leaves out the study of informal participatory mechanisms taking place outside negotiating hubs for future research.

Table 1. Civil society participatory mechanisms in global governance

Participatory mechanism	**Formal**		**Informal**	
Commissioner(s)	**Governments, International organizations**		**Governments, International organizations, Civil society**	
Negotiating hub	Inside	Outside	Inside	Outside
Deliberative	Hearings	Hearings, Consultations on virtual platforms	Side events	Focus groups, Citizens' assemblies, Mass protests (general assemblies)
Non-deliberative	Surveys	Surveys	Bilateral and multilateral meetings with governments and co-chairs of negotiations	Surveys, Social media campaigning, Traditional mass protests

Source: author.

This section stressed that substantial parts of policy and decision-making have been delegated to global forms of governance and global markets that are seldom open to public scrutiny and participation, blurring the channels of accountability and representation. This may partially explain the burgeoning of nationalistic reactions suspicious of globalization (e.g. the Brexit vote or Trump's election), which is debatably presented by deglobalization advocates as one of the causes that limits the practice of democracy within the state. Yet the partial transfer of policy and decision-making to global forms of governance has also led to cosmopolitan responses that materialize in the rise of global forms of activism and participation that bypass the state and illustrate a more widely felt need for global citizenship.

Increased public scrutiny and participation in global policymaking, however, is not only an empirical demand observed in policy practice but also an academic one. Scholars of global democratic theory have indeed provided various normative models through which democratic principles can be realized in global policymaking. The next section critically reviews the existing literature on global democracy.

1.2. How Can Democracy Best Be Pursued in the Existing Global System? A Critical Review of the Literature on Global Democracy

Undoubtedly, there has been a transnational turn in democratic theory (McGrew, 2002: 269). Since the 1990s, democratic theory, alongside international relations and political theory, has examined the possibilities for developing more representative and accountable forms of governance in the context of globalization. While communitarians (Dahl, 1999; Kymlicka, 1999), realists (Cerny, 2009) and radicals (Cox, 1996; Burbach et al., 1997) question the relevance, the possibility and even the desirability of democratizing global governance on theoretical, institutional, historical, and ethical grounds, other theories have provided different models of how democracy ought to be realized at the global level. Models represent idealized theoretical constructions designed to express the normative qualities of a democratic system as well as its constitutive institutions (Kuyper, 2015). Models of global democracy include democratic intergovernmentalism, cosmopolitan democracy, a world government, deliberative democracy, and radical democracy. I review each of these models below (see also Table 2 for an overview), starting with democratic intergovernmentalism.

Democratic Intergovernmentalism

Proponents of democratic intergovernmentalism argue that democratic legitimacy in the global arena is derived from intergovernmental negotiations among democratic sovereign states. Citizens thus have democratic representation beyond the state through their national government. Legitimacy is reinforced by civil society's ability to participate in intergovernmental decision-making and to hold sovereign states and intergovernmental organizations accountable. Although this model acknowledges that civil society participation in global policymaking complements intergovernmental bargaining, it stresses that sovereignty remains an entrenched principle of the international system and that states are the only actors with rights, obligations, and the capacity to form and be bound by international agreements (Bray & Slaughter, 2015). This model explicitly rejects the constitution of a centralized world government and holds deep skepticism about electoral forms of democracy at the global level.

Democratic intergovernmentalism has a long history in democratic thought and has been operationalized into different institutional designs. For instance, Jonathan Kuyper refers to Immanuel Kant (1991 [1795]), who, in *Perpetual Peace*, argued for a global federation of peoples composed of republican – in other terms, democratic – states. More recently, John Rawls (1999) similarly advocated for an international law of peoples in which liberal democratic states establish international laws that generate a peaceful and tolerant international order. Other scholars have provided concrete proposals to palliate the existing democratic deficit in global governance. For instance, Ruth Grant and Robert Keohane (2005) have outlined a variety of non-electoral mechanisms (e.g.

international standards, sanctions, and information) to bolster forms of accountability that already exists in global politics and constrain abuses of power without a centralized government (for a review of these mechanisms, see Grant & Keohane, 2005: 35-37). Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (2001) have proposed to strengthen the link between intergovernmental organizations and electoral forms of accountability, through the role of national politicians, which would participate directly in global policymaking or through delegated officials answerable to them.

Democratic intergovernmentalism is based on incremental adaptation and on primarily technocratic reforms rather than radical change. It seeks to palliate global democratic deficits and to reinforce the democratic control of elected governments and national publics by extending the procedural standards of liberal democracy to intergovernmental organizations. However, it does not propose any overarching political institutions, contrary to the cosmopolitan model, which I review below.

Cosmopolitan Democracy

Cosmopolitan scholars such as David Held, Daniele Archibugi and Richard Falk have been at the forefront of this increasing interest in democratization beyond the nation-state. This is why cosmopolitan democracy is perhaps the most well-known model of global democracy (Kuyper, 2015). Its advocates argue that democracy must be institutionalized – and constitutionalized – at regional and global levels, as a necessary complement to democratic institutions at the level of the nation-state. Although it recognizes individuals, rather than sovereign states, as the legitimate actors of global politics, cosmopolitan scholars do not call for "a diminution *per se* of state power and capacity across the globe" (Held, 2003: 478). Global democratic institutions would palliate the democratic legitimacy deficit through the provision of equal opportunities to all individuals to shape their own lives, by protecting their rights and developing mechanisms for citizen input in global policymaking (Archibugi, 2008; Goodhart, 2005; Held, 1995). Promoting the rule of law at global level would provide greater inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and would strengthen the principle of political equality in the management of global issues (Archibugi, 2008; Held, 1995, 2003).

How should global governance be transformed to operationalize cosmopolitan democracy? This model primarily encompasses replicating national democratic institutions at the global level. Specifically, David Held (1995), Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss (2011), Robert Goodin (2010), Johan Galtung (2000) and George Monbiot (2003) envision a global parliament directly elected by world citizens and to which all global institutions would be accountable, as well international courts and a constitutional rule of law. The long-running Campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly,[3] a global

3 http://en.unpacampaign.org/index.php

network of parliamentarians and civil society organizations advocating for citizens' representation at the UN, illustrates this approach.

World Government

A world government has also been advanced as a potential remedy to the democratic deficit that permeates global governance. Although the concept has a long history in academia, it has recently seen a revival in the work of numerous scholars (see for instance Cabrera, 2011, 2016). They advance three types of arguments as justifications for a world government: a security argument, a democracy argument, and a justice argument. First, the security argument stresses that a world government is necessary to secure individuals against global, external threats such as ecological degradation, nuclear weapons, migrations and wars, while also addressing these global issues more effectively (Craig, 2008; Einstein, 1946; Etzioni, 2004; Pojman, 2006; Tännsjö, 2008). Second, the democracy argument stresses that a world government is necessary to palliate the global democratic deficit and allow all individuals to have an equal say in the production of global norms that affect their lives, an argument that coincides with cosmopolitans (Abizadeh, 2012; Marchetti, 2008; Wendt, 2003, 2014). Third, the justice argument stresses that a world government is needed to protect the rights of all persons (Cabrera, 2010, 2014; Pogge 2008) and achieve a fairer distribution of resources (Marchetti, 2008).

How would such proposal materialize? Like cosmopolitan democracy, a world government would entail a directly-elected global parliament, empowered courts, and a singular global constitution which delineates basic rights and duties for all (Kuyper, 2015). Yet contrary to cosmopolitans, world government advocates seek a highly centralized and federal global system that would require diminishing the power and capacity of states and "bring [them] under the authority of just supranational institutions" that would enjoy autonomous and coercive decision-making potential (Cabrera, 2004: 71). World government proponents envision a major recalibration of the UN General Assembly as a potential restructuring of the global system towards a world government.

Deliberative Democracy

Global democracy scholarship has also produced a model based on public deliberation. Deliberation refers to the exchange of arguments and opinions about social issues in order to reach a consensus and make collective decisions. The deliberative model finds its most ancient advocates back to the Athenian democracy with Aristotle. Today, deliberative democrats advocate for the development of inclusive deliberation across borders that informs global policymaking (Brassett & Smith, 2008; Dryzek, 2006, 2010). In this model, democratic legitimacy stems from free, unconstrained, and inclusive public reasoning between equal citizens, and from the justification of collective decisions to those affected. Scholars in this stream further argue that deliberation is

instrumentally useful in global governance to produce better collective decisions as it allows the emergence of new ideas that challenge existing forms of knowledge and authority (Bohman, 2007; Dryzek, 2011).

Unlike cosmopolitans and world government advocates, deliberative democrats do not seek to centralize power and law at the global level or create formal institutions which challenge or complement state power and capacity. Rather this approach seeks to democratize, through deliberation, existing governance arrangements from the local to the global level. Some scholars specifically focus on informal spaces as the primary locus for deliberation to advance global democratization (Dryzek, 2011; Steffek, 2010). They claim that these informal spaces are more likely to trigger unconstrained deliberation because they are separate from the state and the market and allow global civil society to freely channel such deliberation. Other deliberative democrats call for democratization, through deliberation, of formal spaces such as intergovernmental negotiations (Bäckstrand, 2006; Pettit, 2005). According to this stream, global policymaking becomes more democratic by making negotiations more deliberative and therefore responsive to the reasoned arguments of affected individuals (Kuyper, 2015). Yet, as governments are unlikely to accept that negotiations become truly deliberative and unconstrained in the near future, deliberative democrats have also called for higher inclusion of civil society actors in formal intergovernmental organizations and negotiations as a way to further deliberative democracy at global level (Dryzek, 2012; Tallberg et al., 2013).

At least two potential materializations of deliberative democracy should be mentioned here. First, John Dryzek, André Bächtiger and Karolina Milewicz (2011) have proposed a Deliberative Global Citizens' Assembly. This semi-randomly selected body of individuals equally representing the world's population would act as an advisory body to deliberate specific issues, and would be separated from any formal authority. Developed by John Dryzek and Simon Niemeyer (2008), the second proposal consists of a Chamber of Discourses that would include self-selected or randomly-selected individuals operating as a mini-public alongside formal spaces of policymaking. By subjecting existing discourses in global policymaking to broad deliberative contestation, such mechanism would "provide a check on the degree to which the formal chamber [(e.g. the UN)] features a comprehensive and accurate set of the relevant discourses" (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2008: 491). In this sense, the Chamber of Discourses would advance democratization by empowering progressive forces of civil society to challenge global institutional agendas and unaccountable sites of transnational power.

Radical Democracy

Radical democracy is the model that most departs from the existing political and economic order at global level. Radical democrats argue for the development of self-governing communities and social movements that can resist and overthrow prevailing structures of domination encapsulated in sovereignty, capitalism, patriarchy, or

property rights (Hardt & Negri, 2004; Scholte, 2014). For Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2004), democracy is only possible globally and requires the multitude to rule itself autonomously without domination by hierarchical authorities, thus without representation. According to these scholars, new forms of autonomous rulemaking at global level should be based on solidarity, peaceful cooperation, affection, and nature, and they should aim at producing common goods.

Proponents of radical democracy remain vague in terms of the institutional operationalization of their model. They argue that practical, institutional materializations of radical democracy can only come about once existing hegemonies have been overthrown, through the process of reconstruction itself. Yet it is clear that radical democrats reject Western, liberal democratic institutions such as parliaments and constitutions, essentially because they rely on individualism and capitalism (Mouffe, 2009; Scholte, 2011). Calling for more radical innovations in the knowledge and practice of global democracy, Jan Aart Scholte develops a postmodern democratic framework which five cornerstones partly resonate with radical democratic conceptualization. In *Reinventing Global Democracy* (2014), Scholte argues that the principles of transscalarity, plural solidarities, transculturality, egalitarian distribution, and eco-ship (i.e. ecologically framed ideas of political rights and duties) should be constitutive of a global democracy model that addresses the pitfalls of, and radically departs from, the mainstream approaches of democratic intergovernmentalism and cosmopolitanism.

Table 2. Models of global democracy

Model	Rationale and path towards democratization	Locus of change	Scope of change	Leading agent(s) of change	Empirical materializations
Democratic inter-governmentalism	Accountability: Democratization of nation-states Global accountability through elected national representatives Ad-hoc mechanisms for civil society participation	Nation-states; Intergovernmental organizations	Modest	States	Participation of elected national politicians in global institutions Participation of civil society in global summits
Cosmopolitan democracy	Equality: Global electoral representation Global rule of law	Intergovernmental organizations	Ambitious	Elected representatives; Citizens	United Nations Parliamentary Assembly, Global constitutional court
World government	Security: Centralized, autonomous and coercive government Diminution of state power	Intergovernmental organizations	Ambitious	Intergovernmental organizations	Recalibration of the United Nations General Assembly
Deliberative democracy	Dialogue: Exchange of reasoned arguments Justification of collective decisions to all affected	Intergovernmental organizations; Transnational public sphere	Ambitious	NGOs; Citizens	Deliberative Global Citizens' Assemblies Peoples' Forum
Radical democracy	Resistance: Overhaul of hegemonies Autonomous rulemaking, based on solidarity and affection	Transnational public sphere	Radical	Social movements; Citizens	Occupy Wall Street Movement

Source: author, based on existing literature.

Between existing mechanisms, autonomous and non-hierarchical rulemaking, and a world government, each model defines its own normative pathway to advance democratization at global level, with varying loci and scopes of change,[4] with different ways through which democracy ought to be institutionalized, and with different conceptions of who should be the central agent leading such change. Conversely, these models share to different extents the normative assumption that civil society participation is key to advance the democratization of global policymaking. But beyond differences and similarities lies another critical issue: to what extent may these approaches to global democracy actually materialize and address global threats? I address this question below.

1.3. Between Feasibility and Effectiveness: The Critics to Global Democratic Theory

The Unfeasibility Critique

Global democracy theory has had many advocates and even more critics. A recurrent complaint is that many of these models are deemed unfeasible. Regarding the world government approach, it is hardly probable that states will readily give sovereign power to a global centralized government in a foreseeable future. Besides, Jonathan Kuyper (2015) argues that although a reform of the UN has been advanced as one pathway to a world government, "the veto position held in the Security Council by the United States, China, Russia, France and the United Kingdom undermines that option."

Similarly, the cosmopolitan model has long been criticized for its utopian ambitions, at odds with the existing distribution of power and vested interests. For instance, Daniel Bray and Steven Slaughter argue that "since cosmopolitan democracy entails large-scale economic redistribution, it would face intense resistance from capitalist classes and state elites who would seek to preserve their wealth and privileges" (2015: 89). Others argue that cosmopolitan democracy is unfeasible because it relies too heavily on ideas inherited from national western democratic practice that are hardly replicable at global level (Sen, 2003). Specifically, Michael Saward (2000) argues that cosmopolitan democracy presumes that citizens can develop an identity as world citizens whereas the grounds of political citizenship and rightful political participation, in his view, can only be clearly defined by membership in a territorial entity. Besides, this model has been claimed to have limited usefulness in guiding civil society actors that are struggling for the democratization of existing global policymaking, as cosmopolitans have devoted limited attention to the political pathways that could lead to a global democratic order. The unfeasibility argument also applies to the deliberative model. Its critics indeed argue that deliberative democracy remains aspirational because it is difficult to equally involve

4 With the notable exception of Scholte's postmodern global democratic model.

all those affected in decision-making in a world that is highly unequal (Erman, 2012). Besides, deliberating until a consensus is reached between all those involved seems, if not unrealizable, highly time-consuming. Agonistic pluralists also argue that the consensus approach of deliberative theorists ignores that conflict and ineradicable differences of preferences are key features of modern democracy (Mouffe, 1999).

The critique of radical democracy is also centered around its idealism, as it does not develop a feasible political transition, with concrete proposals to achieve democratization of global politics from a radical perspective. Also, the nature of social relations radical democracy calls for (i.e. peace and affection) is at odds with what human nature currently is. For instance, Daniel Bray and Steven Slaughter (2015: 143) rightfully question how collective rights would be realized and guaranteed, and how collective goods would be produced and fairly distributed, without any form of political authority. Other authors still argue that radical democracy is unfeasible on the grounds that the communities most in need of democratic revolution (e.g. in developing and least developed countries) are precisely those that have been marginalized from the communicative and technological benefits of globalization essential to instigate transnational revolutionary activism (e.g. access to global protests, online petitions, etc.) (Kuyper, 2015).

The Ineffectiveness Critique

Assuming global democracy models do materialize in policy practice, they may prove counterproductive in terms of democratization. Indeed, a substantial line of critique questions the effectiveness and desirability of these models for achieving democratization above the nation-state. First, democratic intergovernmentalism offers a restricted and technocratic vision of global democracy. Its vision of global democracy is restricted because while transparency and accountability are necessary democratic safeguards, they are by no means sufficient in themselves to ensure the democratization of global governance. Besides, it offers a technocratic vision of global democracy because it entails a form of enlightened elitism whereby global norms and agreements are the result of negotiations between delegates highly disconnected from their national publics rather than the political choices of democratic national publics. Furthermore, some scholars question the efficiency of democratic intergovernmentalism in palliating the global democratic deficit as this model provides civil society with a limited, passive role in achieving global democracy.

Similarly, the normative proposals advanced by cosmopolitan scholars may be counterproductive in terms of democratization. Some of its critics have argued that a distant global parliament could eventually alienate citizens from politics, who could also disengage if the global institutions that cosmopolitans call for only have a consultative power (Bray & Slaughter, 2015). Opponents to a world government have advanced similar arguments: in their view, a world government would actually exacerbate the

global democratic deficit. For instance, Kuyper (2015) refers to Kant (1991 [1795]), who argued that a world government would become a "soulless despotism" which, without appropriate checks and balances, would prompt global leaders to abuse their power.

One of the most prominent criticisms of deliberative democracy is that it fails to provide any path towards the democratization of existing authoritative decision-making bodies such as intergovernmental negotiations. Its most well-known proponents (e.g. Dryzek) mainly focus on achieving deliberative democratization within the public sphere and deny what may be a legitimate desire on the part of civil society actors to directly influence, or engage in, intergovernmental decision-making processes (Cochran, 2002: 532). As a result, deliberative democracy has also been labelled as inconsequential and ineffective: if the model does not provide any means of deliberative democratization of formal spaces of decision-making, it is hard to imagine how deliberation will influence global norm production. Oppositely, including civil society in deliberation within formal spaces of global decision-making may also be counterproductive and exacerbate, rather than reduce, the global democratic deficit. The inclusion of civil society actors in intergovernmental organizations is often seen as a form of cooptation in which civil society actually works in subordination to (and thus legitimates) the existing system (Kuyper, 2015). Finally, common to the tenants of deliberation within formal and informal spaces of decision-making is the critique that NGOs may not be the appropriate proxy for deliberative democracy. Specifically, they have long been criticized for eventually not representing peoples' preferences due to their often low levels of internal and external accountability (Scholte, 2002).

As for radical democracy, one can question whether a revolution will eventually lead to a better state of global democracy. As revolutions are disruptive by nature, it is likely that, for instance, the revolutionary outcome of radical democracy creates other hegemonies which might be more detrimental than the existing global order (Kuyper, 2015).

Lack of empirical grounding

A third line of critique stresses that the models of global democracy, while providing many interesting normative insights, lack empirical grounding, for mainly two reasons. The first one refers to the idealized and holistic nature of the models of global democracy. Because they are based on ideal-type packages that delineate an ultimate aim, models of global democracy often fail to focus on what lays between the status quo (i.e. the existing global political order) and the ultimate endpoint. In other words, they focus on the end rather than the means to achieve global democracy. Therefore, many of these models, including cosmopolitan democracy, deliberative democracy, and radical democracy, lack intermediary concrete proposals that would allow advancing democratization under existing conditions, while awaiting to reach ultimate aims. As such, various authors have

argued that global democracy can more usefully be thought of as an ongoing process of democratization in which a set of values should be strived for under the existing political and economic global order, including equality, dialogue, contestation, inclusion, transparency, and accountability (Bäckstrand, 2006; Dingwerth, 2004; Kuyper, 2014; MacDonald, 2008; Mason, 2004). Therefore, democratization of global politics should not be reduced to one locus, with one leading agent pursuing one ultimate aim, but should rather encompass multiple agents striving for different democratic values in diverse loci. Such new way of thinking about reducing the global democratic deficit would eventually be more adapted to (the study of) current empirical developments.

Second, models of global democracy remain empirically limited because they have not yet considered new forms of civil society engagement and participation in decision-making that, in recent years, have developed dramatically in the sustainability policy field. In particular, the Rio+20 Conference and the subsequent policymaking process that led to the definition of the SDGs have produced the largest civil society participation ever. Together, these processes have been hailed as the largest democratic experiment ever conducted in a global framework by former Brazilian President Rousseff and former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon (Biermann, 2013; UN, 2015a). However, no study of this breadth has yet been realized to assess the extent to which these processes contribute to reduce the global democratic deficit. This research intends to bridge this gap by studying this global, allegedly democratic experiment with a comprehensive qualitative and quantitative methodology that includes interviews, document analysis and statistical databases. Before delving more precisely into the research methods in Section 2.2., the next chapter first introduces the empirical framework of the research, starting with a brief historical review of civil society engagement in the UN.

CHAPTER 2

Empirical and Methodological Framework

2.1. Empirical Framework

Civil Society Participation in the UN: Inception and Evolution

Academic interest in the role of civil society actors in global policymaking has grown concomitantly to the dramatic participatory turn in intergovernmental negotiations on sustainability issues. The UN has been an historic and instrumental player in driving greater recognition of the role of civil society in global policymaking. To keep pace with the rapid growth of NGOs in the first half of the 20th century, the Charter adopted at the UN founding conference in San Francisco in 1945 legally recognized nongovernmental actors, thus allowing civil society a formal role in intergovernmental policymaking. Specifically, the Article 71 of the UN Charter entrusts the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) with "mak[ing] suitable arrangements for consultation with nongovernmental organizations which are concerned with matters of its competence" (UN, 1945). ECOSOC developed an accreditation system, according to which NGOs with consultative status could attend and participate in intergovernmental negotiations.

Forty NGOs participated to the founding conference of the UN in 1945. By the first global summit of the UN on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, 250 had been given accreditation to participate in intergovernmental negotiations. This figure has grown exponentially ever since, with more than 4,000 NGOs with consultative status with ECOSOC today (UN NGO Branch, 2014). Additionally, the UN developed a fast-track accreditation system allowing for a large number of NGOs to be accredited on a conference-by-conference basis (Strandenaes, 2014). In 1992, 900 NGOs participated in the UN Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, and 10,000 in the Rio+20 Conference two decades later. Growing numbers of accreditation implied that civil society actors had become recognized as a political force in global policymaking.

Over the years, the principle of participation in global policymaking has become an integral part of UN discourse and has gained a strong normative basis, with the underlying recognition that UN agreements will hardly be implemented unless citizens feel ownership with development and have the opportunity to contribute to their formulation. In 1986, the UN Declaration on the Right to Development states in its Article 2 that "the human person is the central subject of development and should be the active participant and beneficiary of the right to development" (UN, 1986). Similarly, in addition to the Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the other outcome document of the Earth Summit in 1992, Agenda 21, defines broad public participation in decision-making as "one of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development" (Chapter 23.2) (UN, 1992b).

Civil society participation thus emerged as a cornerstone of the Rio Accords and was further institutionalized with the creation of the Major Groups. This system aimed at organizing civil society participation in the UN around nine sectors of society, such

as women, indigenous peoples, NGOs or children and youth, and was pioneered by the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD). The Major Groups function with a coordinating body of facilitators, called Organizing Partners, that belong to accredited organizations, and that are tasked with coordinating inputs and streamlining communications from their particular constituencies into intergovernmental processes related to sustainable development.[5]

In 2000, UN member states further enshrined the principle of participation in global policymaking as they adopted the Millennium Declaration and resolved to "work collectively for more inclusive political processes, allowing genuine participation by all citizens in all our countries" (UN, 2000). Similarly, the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference, The Future We Want, states that "opportunities for people to influence their lives and future, participate in decision-making and voice their concerns are fundamental for sustainable development" (Paragraph 13) (UN, 2012). Its paragraph 76 further refers to enhancing the participation and effective engagement of civil society and other relevant stakeholders in the relevant international forums.

After the Rio+20 Conference, the UN and its member states kept reflecting the importance of civil society participation when designing the intergovernmental process that led to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, between 2013 and 2015. I introduce this process below.

The Conceptualization of the Sustainable Development Goals on the Road to the Rio+20 Conference

The idea of the SDGs can be traced back to early 2011, when Paula Caballero, the Director of Economic, Social and Environmental Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia and lead negotiator for the Rio+20 process first suggested, during an informal meeting with her colleagues, that her government propose a new set of goals that would extend and complete the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) after they expired in 2015. The original proposal for the SDGs was grounded on the idea that the MDGs had played a significant role in galvanizing individual and collective action, and that governing through goals with a renewed set of broader targets could bolster the operationalization of sustainable development.

Although it was first met with skepticism from many of Caballero's counterparts at the UN in New York, after several months of revisions and advocacy the government of Colombia, also joined by the government of Guatemala, formally presented the SDGs at a UN High-level Dialogue for the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development hosted by the Indonesian government in Solo in July 2011

5 For a review of the strengths and limitations of the Major Groups system, see Barbara Adams and Lou Pingeot (2013), *Strengthening Public Participation at the United Nations for Sustainable Development: Dialogue, Debate, Dissent, Deliberation*, Division for Sustainable Development, UNDESA.

(Dodds et al., 2012). The concept note that articulated Colombia's proposal expected the SDGs to "translate the green economy [6] and sustainable development debate into tangible goals which would focus the broad debate at a practical level and enable the preparatory process [of the Rio+20 Conference] to productively address key issues" (Government of Colombia, 2011). It further specified that the goals would number no more than ten and be guided by the Principles contained in Agenda 21, and that they would "complement the MDGS, be easily communicated, voluntary, universal, time-bound, organized by thematic areas, contain quantitative targets, and a suite of aspirational indicators" (Government of Colombia, 2011).

Following the Solo High-level Dialogue, Colombia ensured that similar presentations took place at every formal or informal meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the Rio+20 Conference, regional meetings, and multi-stakeholder dialogues to further debate the SDGs idea (Dodds et al., 2014). As such, Colombia again advocated for its proposal to be considered by the member states of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in the framework of the Regional Meeting Preparatory to the Rio+20 Conference, in September 2011 in Santiago de Chile. Colombia's objective was to get widespread support from all countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region so that the SDGs proposal could be presented as a regional contribution to the Rio+20 Conference (Caballero, 2016). However, the Latin American and Caribbean countries did not reach consensus and the final decision text did not endorse the proposal.

Two months later, with the support of ECLAC, Colombia held an informal workshop under Chatham House Rules in Bogota to test the idea of the SDGs as one of the main outputs of the Rio+20 Conference among 40 delegates from a wide range of countries, as well as UN agencies and civil society. This meeting was reported as a major breakthrough in building consensus around the idea of the SDGs, although deep concerns remained (Dodds et al., 2014). Specifically, divergences centered around the relation of the SDGs with the MDGs which some countries did not want to see abandoned, whether the list of SDGs should be negotiated and concluded before or after the Rio+20 Conference, and which intergovernmental process should lead to the formulation of the goals.

Felix Dodds, Jorge Laguna-Celis and Elizabeth Thompson report that "it was the willingness to engage, to listen and amend their concept based on stakeholder concerns that helped Colombia break through the initial resistance and garner enough acceptance for the SDGs to become one of the major achievements of The Future We Want", the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference (2014: 80). By November

6 A green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development were the two central themes of the Rio+20 Conference, approved in 2009 by the UN General Assembly, by consensus among its 193 member states.

2011, the SDGs were eventually mentioned in fifty national contributions submitted to the UN website as a tangible result of the Rio+20 Conference (Caballero, 2016). The UN commissioned the call for contributions on the themes and objectives of Rio+20 within the framework of the preparatory process for the conference to garner input from various stakeholders (i.e. governments, UN agencies, civil society) to be compiled into a document that would serve as the basis for a zero draft for the negotiations of The Future We Want. The SDGs thus formally became part of the Rio+20 preparatory process and the negotiating text, and were included in Chapter V on 'Accelerating and Measuring Progress'.

From early 2012 onwards, momentum (and support) for the SDGs kept growing, although the negotiations were off to a difficult start. The proposal had been endorsed not only by Colombia and Guatemala, but also by Peru and the United Arab Emirates, who persevered in their promotion and discussion efforts throughout the preparatory process of the Rio+20 Conference. Nonetheless, many delegations from both developed and developing countries feared that by including environmental considerations into the SDGs, in addition to economic and social concerns, the new set of goals would divert the funding from the core development priorities of the MDGs (Caballero, 2016). In April 2012, Colombia prepared yet another version of the concept note on the SDGs, which gained support from the Latin American and Caribbean countries, including the host of the Rio+20 Conference, Brazil, whose President Dilma Rousseff expressed the wish that the conference results in the launch of a process to develop the SDGs (Caballero, 2016).

By the time of the Third Preparatory Committee Meeting of the Rio+20 Conference held in Rio de Janeiro ahead of the conference between 13 and 15 June 2012, the international community had reached consensus on the concept of the SDGs. The negotiations in Rio focused primarily on a process for the development of the SDGs. The European Union and the United States asked for a science-based process with experts that would coordinate inputs from all sectors, whereas the Group of 77 developing countries (G77) and China advocated for an intergovernmental process under the UN General Assembly with relevant representatives nominated by their government (Earth Negotiations Bulletin [ENB], 2012). Also, while the former supported the definition of indicative themes for the SDGs as one of the outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference, the latter did not. Both groups of countries though concurred on the fact that the process should be open to the participation of other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector.

At the end of the Third Preparatory Committee Meeting, the 11-member Bureau composed of UN Ambassadors from all regions of the world and that had steered the negotiations on the preparation of the Rio+20 Conference since January 2012, handed the leadership of the negotiations over to the host country, Brazil, represented by its Foreign Minister Antonio de Aguiar Patriota. At the beginning of the pre-conference

informal consultations on 18 June 2012, Antonio de Aguiar Patriota informed the delegates that a final text of the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference would be available by the next morning and that he would convene a plenary and announce to the press that its elaboration had been concluded, thus setting a deadline for reaching consensus (ENB, 2012). Building on the proposal of Colombia and Pakistan, the Brazilian Presidency of the Rio+20 Conference proposed a compromise text that attempted to placate both the concerns of the European Union that the process should be science-led, while protecting the G77 and China's concerns about the rights of government representatives to participate in the elaboration of the SDGs (ENB, 2012). Most importantly, Brazil presented its proposal for The Future We Want on a "take-it-or-leave-it" basis. As no space was left for further negotiations, delegates agreed to adopt the 49-page document, *ad referendum*,[7] to be presented to Ministers and Heads of State and Government at the Rio+20 Conference.

The high-level segment of the Rio+20 Conference that took place between 20 and 22 June 2012 eventually confirmed the adoption of The Future We Want, including the SDGs. Nonetheless, the seven paragraphs related to the SDGs (§245-251) do not go beyond conceptual and procedural issues, leaving the themes and timelines for the SDGs to the future intergovernmental process to decide. Specifically, on conceptual issues, Paragraph 247 stipulates that the SDGs "should be action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and applicable to all countries while taking into account national realities, capacities, and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities" (UN, 2012). On procedural issues, Paragraph 248 resolves to:

> "establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on sustainable development goals that is open to all stakeholders, with a view to developing sustainable development goals to be agreed by the [UN] General Assembly. An open working group shall be constituted no later than at the opening of the sixty-seventh session of the Assembly and shall comprise 30 representatives, nominated by Member States from the five United Nations regional groups, with the aim of achieving fair, equitable and balanced geographical representation. At the outset, this open working group will decide on its method of work, including modalities to ensure the full involvement of relevant stakeholders and expertise from civil society, the scientific community and the United Nations system in its work, in order to provide a diversity of perspectives and experience. It will submit a report to the sixty-eighth session of the Assembly, containing a proposal for sustainable development goals for consideration and appropriate action" (UN, 2012).

7 A delegate may adopt an agreement *ad referendum*, which means that it is subject to the approval of his state. In this case, the adoption becomes definitive once it is confirmed by the responsible organ at domestic level (Article 12, Vienna Convention of the Law of Treaties, 1969).

The Formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Open Working Group

After months of deliberations on the composition and modalities of the OWG, the Group was eventually established by decision 67/555 of the UN General Assembly on 22 January 2013 (UN, 2013a), four months after the deadline initially agreed upon in The Future We Want. The OWG was composed of 30 seats, most of which were shared by groups from two to four countries called 'troikas' (see Table 3 for an exhaustive list of the members to the OWG).

Table 3. Member States represented in the Open Working Group on SDGs

African Group	
1	Algeria / Egypt / Morocco / Tunisia
2	Ghana
3	Benin
4	Kenya
5	United Republic of Tanzania
6	Congo
7	Zambia / Zimbabwe
Asia-Pacific Group	
8	Nauru / Palau / Papua New Guinea
9	Bhutan / Thailand / Viet Nam
10	India / Pakistan / Sri Lanka
11	China / Indonesia / Kazakhstan
12	Cyprus / Singapore / United Arab Emirates
13	Bangladesh / Republic of Korea / Saudi Arabia
14	Iran / Japan / Nepal
Latin American and Caribbean Group	
15	Colombia / Guatemala
16	Bahamas / Barbados
17	Guyana / Haiti / Trinidad and Tobago
18	Mexico / Peru
19	Brazil / Nicaragua
20	Argentina / Bolivia / Ecuador
Eastern European Group	
21	Hungary
22	Belarus / Serbia
23	Bulgaria / Croatia
24	Montenegro / Slovenia
25	Poland / Romania
Western European and Others Group	
26	Australia / Netherlands / United Kingdom
27	Canada / Israel / United States of America
28	Denmark / Ireland / Norway
29	France / Germany / Switzerland
30	Italy / Spain / Turkey

Source: United Nations, 2013. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/owg.html

Guided by the principles of openness, transparency, inclusiveness, and consensus, the OWG initiated its work in March 2013 at the UN Headquarters in New York. It consisted of two phases: a first stock-taking phase between March 2013 and February 2014 where the Group focused on content generation and that resulted in a draft outcome document, and a second negotiating phase between March and July 2014 where the members of the Group engaged into consultations on the basis of the draft document.

During the first session (14-15 March 2013), the OWG members elected two co-chairs, Csaba Kőrösi and Macharia Kamau, respectively Permanent Representatives of Hungary and Kenya to the UN, who were to serve as co-facilitators of the consultations of the Group. Delegates also shared their initial views on both the process and substance of the SDG framework. During the second meeting (17-19 April 2013), the OWG members discussed the overarching framework of poverty eradication and sustainable development. They also defined their program of work for 2013-2014 and identified the themes that were to be discussed in the following six stock-taking OWG sessions (ENB, 2013) (see Table 4 for the list of the themes discussed in the OWG). In this session, the OWG members, building on proposals from civil society and the Major Groups Programme of the Division for Sustainable Development of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), also agreed on a formal participatory mechanism to garner inputs from civil society and the private sector.

Each stock-taking session was organized as follows. An expert keynote address and panel presentations introduced each thematic issue to provide OWG members with key information to foster discussions. Then, the troikas engaged in an interactive exchange of views. Finally, the co-chairs concluded the session by presenting a summary of the discussions. The Earth Negotiations Bulletin reports that “it was during this stock-taking phase that governments, in essence, opened the sustainable development puzzle, analyzed its pieces and sorted them into possible SDG categories” (ENB, 2014a: 25).

Based on the first eight stock-taking sessions of the OWG, the co-chairs released a working document on 21 February 2014 outlining 19 focus areas (i.e. future potential SDGs) as the basis for discussions at the ninth OWG session, where governments shifted gears from stock-taking to decision-making mode (for the initial list of focus areas see ENB, 2014a: 2). Then, following the ninth session of the OWG, the co-chairs released a revised version of the focus area document ahead of, and for consideration in each monthly session. In the tenth session of the OWG, participants also discussed possible targets to accompany each focus area, with over 300 targets presented by government representatives, civil society, and the private sector (ENB, 2014a).

Table 4. The themes discussed in the Open Working Group on SDGs

OWG1 (13-15 March 2013)	Conceptualization of the SDGs
OWG2 (17-19 April 2013)	Poverty eradication and sustainable development
OWG3 (22-24 May 2013)	Food security and nutrition, sustainable agriculture, desertification, land degradation and drought, and water and sanitation
OWG4 (17-19 June 2013)	Employment and decent work for all, social protection, youth, education and culture, and health and population dynamics
OWG5 (25-27 November 2013)	Sustained and inclusive economic growth, macroeconomic policy questions (including international trade, international financial system and external debt sustainability), infrastructure development and industrialization, and energy
OWG6 (9-13 December 2013)	Means of implementation (science and technology, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building), global partnership for achieving sustainable development, needs of countries in special situations (African countries, Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States), human rights, the right to development, and global governance
OWG7 (6-10 January 2014)	Sustainable cities and human settlements, sustainable transport, sustainable consumption and production (including chemicals and wastes), and climate change and disaster risk reduction
OWG8 (3-7 February 2014)	Oceans and seas, forests, biodiversity, promoting equality (including social equity, gender equality and women's empowerment), and conflict prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding and the promotion of durable peace, rule of law and governance

Source: United Nations, 2013. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1778DrafPowSchematic0512.pdf

After another round of consultations in the eleventh session of the OWG, the co-chairs informed OWG members that "informal-informals"[8] would convene the week before each of the two remaining OWG sessions so that delegates could discuss the working document target by target. The new document, considered the zero draft of the OWG outcome document, was issued on 2 June 2014, containing 17 proposed SDGs and 212 associated targets (ENB, 2014a: 3). Participants reported to the Earth Negotiations Bulletin that "80 percent of the proposals for goals and targets [had] broad consensus", especially those related to the MDGs (e.g. poverty eradication, gender equality, water and sanitation, quality education, etc.), while "the remaining 20 percent represent[ed] some of the most challenging issues" that concerned all three dimensions of sustainable development, including climate change, cities, ecosystems, and governance and inequality, as well as other issues such as universality and means of implementation (ENB, 2014b: 12). These issues represented the main hurdles government representatives

8 Informal-informals are ad-hoc consultations between small groups of negotiators meeting outside of the conventional apparatus of plenary negotiating sessions to facilitate the achievement of an agreement.

had to face as they sharpened the list of goals and targets during the informal-informals and the two remaining formal sessions of the OWG.

However, observers reported to the Earth Negotiations Bulletin that the careful shepherding of the process by the co-chairs and their determined avoidance of word-by-word negotiations, allowing them to maintain control over the writing process, ensured that the OWG fulfilled its mandate and delivered its output (ENB, 2014a: 25). Government representatives formally adopted the "Proposal of the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals", containing 17 universal, integrated, and indivisible goals with 169 associated targets, for consideration by the UN General Assembly, at the closing plenary of the thirteenth session of the OWG on 19 July 2014 (see Table 5 for the list of SDGs, and Appendix 1 for the exhaustive list of SDGs and targets).

Table 5. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

1	No Poverty
2	Zero Hunger
3	Good Health and Well-Being
4	Quality Education
5	Gender Equality
6	Clean Water and Sanitation
7	Affordable and Clean Energy
8	Decent Work and Economic Growth
9	Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
10	Reduced Inequalities
11	Sustainable Cities and Communities
12	Responsible Consumption and Production
13	Climate Action
14	Life Below Water
15	Life on Land
16	Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
17	Partnership for the Goals

Source: United Nations, 2014. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300

On 10 September 2014, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution that paved the way for the incorporation of the SDGs into the future 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2014a). Then, in January 2015, the General Assembly convened another round of intergovernmental negotiations on the broader development agenda (the 'post-2015 negotiations'), including on means of implementation and follow-up and review mechanism. However, the OWG proposal on SDGs was not reopened for negotiations. Heads of State and Government eventually adopted "Transforming

Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" at the UN Sustainable Development High-level Summit in September 2015 (Kanie & Biermann, in press). The centerpiece of this Agenda, the SDGs, entered into force on 1 January 2016, leaving the international community a 15-year timeline to attain the goals.

The next section reviews the different ways through which civil society participated in the shaping of the SDGs and introduces the case-studies selected for this research: the Rio+20 Sustainable Development Dialogues, the OWG Hearings with Major Groups and Other Stakeholders, and the MYWorld Survey.

The Participation of Civil Society in the Shaping of the Sustainable Development Goals

During the intergovernmental policymaking process leading to the formulation of the SDGs, the UN consulted worldwide nearly ten million people for their views. Undoubtedly, one of the key features of this process has been its openness to the inputs of non-state actors, in particular to civil society. During the closing plenary of the Rio+20 Conference, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff declared the summit had been the most participatory in history, reflecting a global expression of democracy. The subsequent negotiations on the SDGs and the broader Agenda for Sustainable Development gave rise to an "unprecedented global conversation" (UN, 2013b) and were later coined as "the most inclusive and transparent negotiation process in UN history" by Ban Ki Moon (UN, 2015a).

This process indeed provided civil society with many formal participatory channels, including direct participation in formal sessions of negotiations, hearings with the members and co-chairs of the OWG, global surveys, 11 global thematic consultations, and 88 national consultations and 5 regional consultations. This research specifically focused on three pivotal participatory mechanisms, which I introduce below.

a. The Rio Dialogues

The **Rio Dialogues** were organized by the Government of Brazil with the support of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the offices of the Executive Coordinators of the Rio+20 conference. They provided an online and onsite space for discussion on ten sustainable development issues, with one Dialogue addressing each issue. The themes of the Dialogues were:

- Sustainable cities and innovation;
- Economics of sustainable development;
- Sustainable development as an answer to the economic and financial crises;
- Sustainable energy;
- Unemployment and migrations;
- Water;
- Food and nutrition security;

- Sustainable development for fighting poverty;
- Forests; and
- Oceans.

The Rio Dialogues evolved in three phases. They were first launched through a digital platform where civil society actors could partake in discussions facilitated by academic experts, and craft their own recommendations (Phase 1—16 April to 3 June 2012). Participants could also express their support to their preferred recommendation(s) on the basis of a 'like' feature similar to that available on social media. The Rio Dialogues resulted in 100 recommendations (10 for each issue), identified by the facilitators based on their relevance and support. The recommendations were then submitted to the vote of a broader public on an open website for ten days (Phase 2—6 to 15 June 2012).[9] This vote resulted in ten recommendations (the most voted recommendation from each of the ten Dialogues), which the facilitators presented to the participants in the onsite Dialogues in Rio de Janeiro (Phase 3—16 to 19 June 2012). During this final phase, which resembled more a traditional conference, high-level panelists from civil society engaged in discussions and agreed on twenty additional recommendations. The results of the dialogues were eventually conveyed to governments in the high-level roundtables convening in parallel with the plenary meetings of the Rio+20 Conference.

Overall, the discussions on the online platform engaged more than 10,000 participants, who submitted over 843 recommendations (Phase 1). Additionally, more than 55,000 people cast their vote to select their preferred recommendations among the initial set of 100 (Phase 2). An audience of about 1,300 people participated in the parallel offline part (Phase 3).

b. The OWG Hearings with Major Groups and Other Stakeholders

Following the mandate of the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference, the OWG co-chairs requested to hold "open and inclusive **Hearings with Major Groups and other stakeholders**"[10] within the framework of each OWG session at the UN headquarters in New York (UN, 2012). Beginning with the third session of the OWG in May 2013, civil society representatives could participate in daily one-hour morning Hearings, coordinated by the Major Groups Programme of the Division for

9 The results of the final vote, including disaggregated data by continent, Human Development Index (HDI), age and gender, are available at http://vote.riodialogues.org

10 The 'other stakeholders' category comprises private philanthropic organizations, educational and academic entities, persons with disabilities, volunteer groups and other stakeholders active in the areas related to sustainable development (Format and Organizational Aspects of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development—UN, 2013c). Since 2012, these actors have increasingly engaged in UN negotiations on sustainable development in addition to the Major Groups, who are the traditional civil society interface mechanism with these negotiations since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Sustainable Development of UNDESA. The Hearings provided a space for civil society representatives to share their views on the theme addressed by the OWG on that day. They were structured around two brief presentations from panelists to frame the topic, followed by interventions from the floor reacting to the information or supplementing it with different points of view. The panelists and speakers from the floor were selected by a steering committee composed of interested actors from civil society and the private sector.

Overall, 216 speakers from civil society delivered a statement in one or several OWG hearings between May 2013 and July 2014.

c. The MYWorld Survey

The **MYWorld Survey** was launched in December 2012, developed by UNDP and the UN Millennium Campaign (UNMC), and with the market research company Ipsos Mori providing advice on survey design and methodology. The Survey asked individuals which six issues (out of 16 possible) would make the most difference to their lives and those of their family. The 16 options were:

- Better job opportunities;
- Support for people who can't work;
- A good education;
- Better health care;
- Affordable and nutritious food;
- Phone and Internet access;
- Better transport and roads;
- Access to clean water and sanitation;
- Reliable energy at home;
- Action taken on climate change;
- Protecting forests, rivers, and oceans;
- Equality between men and women;
- Protection against crime and violence;
- Political freedoms;
- An honest and responsive government; and
- Freedom from discrimination and persecution.

In addition to these issues, a 17th free-text option allowed participants to suggest a priority of their own choice. Although anonymous, the Survey asked participants to report their gender, age, and country. It aimed to reach out to "people all over the world" and inform governments on citizen priorities as the latter were defining the SDGs (UNMC, 2014). For that reason, the Survey was available on the Internet, on mobile technologies through text messaging, and through paper ballots distributed by partner organizations around the world.

Overall, 9 million citizens ranked their preferences through the MYWorld Survey between 2012 and 2015.

In the next section, I detail the methodology and data this research relies upon to build its argumentation.

2.2. Methodology

This research uses a diverse set of methods, including statistical analysis (Chapters 3 and 4), document analysis and interviews (Chapters 3, 4 and 5), process tracing (Chapter 5), and discourse analysis (Chapter 6), to evaluate the extent to which global civil society consultations contribute to reduce the democratic deficit of intergovernmental policymaking.[11]

Statistical Sociodemographic Analysis

I assessed the democratic legitimacy of the Rio Dialogues, the OWG Hearings and the MYWorld Survey with both quantitative and qualitative empirical data. To assess inclusiveness (see Chapter 3 pp. 65-83, and Chapter 4 pp. 85-101), I collected quantitative sociodemographic data on the set of participants in the three consultations, including the gender, age, and country of origin of the participants. However, the breadth of the samples of participants on which I was able to gather such data varies, depending on whether the organizers kept track of the participants on an attendance sheet, and whether they were willing to give me this information.

For the MYWorld Survey, I collected data on the entire sample of participants directly from the MYWorld Analytics website. For the Rio Dialogues, I could gather quantitative sociodemographic data on the participants only in the online vote (Phase 2).[12] These data were disaggregated by gender, age, and country of origin on the entire sample of voters. Accessing similar information on the participants in the Dialogues' online and onsite discussions (Phases 1 and 3) was not possible, because UNDP could not share the list of participants in the online discussions, and because the organizers did not keep track of the participants in the onsite dialogues in Rio de Janeiro.

For the OWG Hearings, the quantitative information is based on a web survey that I designed and emailed to all participants who were included in a list that

11 This research follows the ethical guidelines for good research practice. In particular, it protects research participants and respects the principle of informed consent as well as informants' rights for confidentiality and anonymity. I communicated research participants with information related to the aims of the study, the anticipated uses of the data, and the degree of anonymity and confidentiality afforded to them.

12 The data was kindly provided by Seed Media Group, who participated in the organization of the Rio Dialogues on a pro bono basis. In particular, it designed and provided the voting website, collected and processed the data from the vote, and finally designed and developed a tool to visualize the voting results.

UNDESA had previously shared with me. I collected data disaggregated by gender, age, and country of origin on a partial sample, as only 31 percent of the participants from the list answered my survey. Additional research on the websites of professional social networks allowed me to bridge this data gap up to 86 percent of the participants from the initial list. Despite these limitations, the data provides relevant insights into the inclusiveness of the three consultations; in any case, it is the most comprehensive dataset available at this stage.

Document Analysis and Process Tracing

To further evaluate the democratic legitimacy of consultations, including effective participation, transparency, and accountability (see Chapter 3 pp. 65-83, and Chapter 4 pp. 85-101), as well as their influence (see Chapter 5 pp. 103-119), I collected qualitative data from two additional sources: primary and secondary documents. Primary documents include the concept notes and output documents of the consultations, which I analyzed to specifically inform the transparency and accountability of consultations. These documents were available on the websites of the consultations or sent by e-mail to participants. Primary documents further include the final outcome document of the negotiations on the SDGs and its draft versions, the summaries of the sessions of negotiations provided by the co-chairs of the OWG, and the position statements from governments and civil society, which I analyzed to specifically inform the influence of civil society participation on the formulation of the SDGs. These were all available on the UN website dedicated to the negotiations. In addition, secondary documents include the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, which contains summary reports from the negotiations. These were analyzed to inform my indicators of influence, specifically, and were all available on the website of the Reporting Services of the International Institute of Sustainable Development (IISD).

To assess influence, I used a process tracing method that allowed me to build a logical chain of evidence linking civil society participation in SDGs negotiations with the effects of that participation. I first identified whether civil society actors transmitted information to negotiators and which participatory spaces they used for such transmission. Second, I considered whether negotiators received the information. Third, I examined whether there were changes in my indicators, and whether these changes were consistent with the information provided by civil society. Although process tracing contributes to clarify the origins of influence, nobody can know for sure that the recommendations from civil society were the turning point over some issue. The alteration of a government's position or the final agreement may result from a combination of factors, both external and internal to civil society (e.g. political tradeoffs, interventions in outsider participatory spaces) which makes it difficult to attribute influence to one factor or one participatory space, and assess their relative weight.

Given the breadth of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the length of the negotiations, I only applied process tracing to the first target of SDG 10, which aims to "[r]educe inequality within and among countries". Target 10.1 endeavors, "by 2030 [to] progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 percent of the population at a rate higher than the national average" (UN, 2015b: 21). I selected this goal and target for two main reasons. The first one relates to the high integration of the inequality goal across the Agenda. Recent research on the linkages between the 17 goals showed that inequality ranked second in terms of connectivity, with direct links to targets in 12 other goals (Le Blanc, 2015). The inequality goal is therefore representative of the indivisibility that guided the design of the SDGs. Second, the inclusion of the inequality goal in the Agenda has been a highly controversial issue, mainly because countries differ widely both in their view of what levels of income inequality are acceptable and in the policy strategies they adopt to reduce it (UN, 2013d). I believe that civil society influence is more likely to be identified on controversial issues than on consensual ones, as I expect it is easier to segregate influence when the issues that are being negotiated generate different and competing positions between actors than when they generate similar and consensual positions.

Interviews

I extended my assessment of the democratic legitimacy and influence of civil society participation with qualitative data from 69 in-depth interviews, which I carried out during two years of fieldwork from September 2013 to October 2015 (see Appendix 2 p. 179 for the list of interviewees). Specifically, the interviews allowed me to further document the democratic legitimacy of civil society consultations, as well as the influence of civil society participation on other substantive and procedural elements of the SDGs negotiations, including Goal 13 on Climate Change, Goal 16 on Peace and Security and the provisions for civil society participation in future negotiations.

I selected key interviewees based on their level of engagement in the consultations, either as participants or organizers, and more broadly in the negotiations. Key interviewees for the Rio Dialogues were identified using the database of the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI), which had facilitated one of the online Dialogues. Key interviewees for the OWG Hearings and the MYWorld Survey were identified through personal observation in the 10th OWG session, and on the websites of the organizers of MYWorld, respectively. I further targeted interviewees based on snowball sampling. Although this method does not offer the representativeness of a random selection approach, it nonetheless allowed me to access a broad enough range of participants, including 10 UN officers, 16 government representatives and 42 civil society representatives. Among the latter category, half represented an international NGO, and half a national or local NGO. Also, 29 pertained to North-based organizations,

while 13 to South-based organizations. Seventeen interviewees from civil society were NGO lobbyists, 12 were experts and 3 were voluntary workers.

I then transcribed the interviews from which I retrieved the key qualitative data documenting my indicators operationalizing democratic legitimacy and influence. Comparing interviews with the sociodemographic data and primary and secondary documents allowed me to triangulate the data and strengthen the validity of the findings. I conducted the interview discussions on the condition of confidentiality and anonymity, thus I indicate interviewees by a general title in the text (e.g. as "a civil society representative" or "a UN officer") and by a number (e.g. "Interviewee 2").

Discourse Analysis

Finally, I used a discourse analysis method to trace whether a particular linguistic regularity could be found in the negotiations on the SDGs (Hajer & Versteeg, 2005). Specifically, I assessed discursive representation in the negotiations on the SDGs with empirical data drawn out from primary documents, which I analyzed using both a qualitative and a quantitative methodology (see Chapter 6 pp. 121-143). Primary documents include the statements and position papers delivered by government, civil society, and private sector representatives during the OWG sessions, the briefs issued by UNDESA that aimed to frame and inform the negotiations, and the summaries of the OWG sessions prepared by the co-chairs of the negotiations. I retrieved 122 texts from publicly available sources, in particular from the website of the UN (UN, 2014b). These texts originate from six types of actors: the co-chairs of the OWG (4 texts), intergovernmental organizations (9 texts), developed countries (40 texts), developing countries (44 texts), civil society (22 texts), and the private sector (3 texts).[13] While acknowledging that a comprehensive analysis of the discourses expressed in the negotiations on the SDGs should also include other sources of qualitative data (i.e. field observation, interviews with key actors) to increase the validity of the results, the qualitative-quantitative analysis of primary documents still provides relevant insights on discursive representation in the negotiations on the SDGs.

The following four chapters present the findings of the research. First, Chapter 3 analyzes the contribution of ICT to the democratization of global politics, taking the Rio Dialogues as a case study. Second, Chapter 4 assesses the democratic legitimacy of civil society consultations in the formulation of the SDGs, by looking comparatively at the Rio Dialogues, the OWG Hearings, and the MYWorld Survey. Then, Chapter 5 evaluates the influence of civil society participation on the negotiations on the SDGs.

13 Although the set of statements delivered by all stakeholders during the negotiations was not available in its entirety on the website of the United Nations (e.g. some delegations did not send their statements to the Secretariat of the OWG), I could retrieve a broad sample enough to present relevant insights into the discursive representation of the negotiations on the SDGs. Besides, the retrieved texts were all available in a language in which I am proficient (English, French and Spanish).

Finally, Chapter 6 further analyzes the democratic character of global policymaking by studying the representation of discourses in the negotiations on the SDGs.

CHAPTER 3

Cyber-democracy? Information and Communication Technologies in Civil Society Consultations for Sustainable Development

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3.1. Introduction

The introductory chapter has stressed that the growing democratic deficit of the intergovernmental policymaking system is one of the main challenges facing global governance at the present time. This global democratic deficit materializes in the lack of responsiveness of intergovernmental norms and policies to collective concerns and preferences as well as the lack of accountability of intergovernmental organizations and institutions, which are generating a crisis of legitimacy (Castells, 2001; Keohane, 2003). Resolving this crisis requires, among other things, the development of institutional mechanisms that allow citizens to participate in a meaningful way in the creation and implementation of global norms and policies (Castells, 2005).

One widely cited example of such institutional mechanisms for global participatory governance is the Major Groups that were created in the context of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro. Through these nine categories, all concerned citizens were envisioned to be able to participate in the UN activities in the field of sustainable development. Twenty years after its inception, however, the system of Major Groups raises doubts about its capacity to offer all concerned citizens direct access to global norm production.

As a consequence, researchers and practitioners have provided numerous reform proposals for further democratizing intergovernmental policymaking outside the Major Groups system. While some proposals—such as the increasing use of qualified majority voting in the UN (Biermann, 2014)—are mainly state-centered and relate to a democratic intergovernmentalist model of global democracy, others give a stronger institutionalized role to civil society. In particular, a number of proposals advocate for the establishment of separate decision-making or consultative bodies in intergovernmental institutions. While the Commission on Global Governance (2005) has advocated for the creation of an international forum of civil society within the UN, cosmopolitan scholars and deliberative democrats have proposed, respectively, a UN parliamentary assembly (Falk & Strauss, 2001; Heinrich, 2010), and a deliberative global citizens' assembly (Dryzek, 2006; Dryzek et al., 2011) to palliate the democratic deficit of intergovernmental policymaking. However, I have stressed in Chapter 1 that it is unlikely that these proposals will materialize in the foreseeable future, essentially because they lack support from most larger countries at present (Biermann, 2014: 143).

In this context, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) may offer a promise to overcome these constraints by providing alternative ways of direct participation. The Internet, in particular, appears to be an ideal channel to provide civil society with direct access to intergovernmental policymaking, given its character as a low-cost horizontal means of communication that transcends barriers of space and time.

And yet it remains an open question as to whether the Internet can indeed contribute to improving the democratic character of intergovernmental policymaking

through the development of inclusive, transparent, and accountable channels for civil society participation. The existing scholarly work on the use of the Internet at local, national, and regional levels of governance shows a mixed picture. On the one hand, 'cyberoptimists' argue that this technology can facilitate and even broaden the public participation that was lacking in twentieth-century representative democracies. Internet-based participation is supposed, in this view, to promote political knowledge, cultivate citizenship, and produce more equitable and impartial policy outcomes, which in turn deepen democracy (Bimber, 2003; Blumler & Coleman, 2001; Castells, 2001; Flew, 2008; Froomkin, 2004; Fung, 2006; Glencross, 2007; Krueger, 2002; Sunstein, 2007). On the other hand, 'cyberskeptics' doubt the relevance of the Internet in these domains, citing two main reasons for why the Internet falls short in realizing its democratic promise (Coleman, 2012; Ostling, 2010; Shane, 2004). First, cyberskeptics argue that the extent to which online participatory processes attract significant new numbers of citizens to policymaking is less than clear. Second, they maintain that these processes are rarely tied in any accountable way to actual governmental policymaking.

What then is the prospect for *cyberdemocracy* at the global level (defined here as the democratization of decision-making processes through the use of ICT)? At a time when global consultations through Internet-based discussion and voting platforms are increasingly used by governments and international organizations to solicit public input with regard to global norm production, the debate for cyberdemocracy gains in importance. This chapter contributes to this debate by a detailed empirical study of the Rio Dialogues, concentrating on the online part of this series of consultations that were organized around the Rio+20 Conference (Phases 1 and 2). Specifically, I analyze the extent to which the use of the Internet in such civil society consultations in fact addresses the participatory biases that are often found in the analysis of traditional face-to-face participation (Perez, 2012). Will the increasing use of the Internet in such consultations reduce the democratic legitimacy deficit that pervades global governance, especially in the field of sustainable development?

To address this question, I have organized the chapter as follows. First, I delineate in detail the key indicators of democratic legitimacy employed in this chapter. The sections thereafter empirically evaluate them for the Rio Dialogues. Specifically, I examine the inclusiveness of the online dialogues, then the issues of effective participation, transparency, and accountability. Finally, I conclude the analysis and reflect on the results.

3.2. Assessment Framework

Building on the work of global democracy scholars, I use the dimensions of input and throughput legitimacy in evaluating the democratic legitimacy of the Rio Dialogues. **Input legitimacy** refers to the inclusiveness and effectiveness of participation within an online consultation (Bäckstrand, 2006). **Throughput legitimacy** is satisfied when civil

society consultations are transparent and accountable (Bäckstrand, 2006; Bekkers & Edwards, 2007; Bursens, 2009; Höreth, 1998, 1999; Schmidt, 2006).[14] I operationalize these two defining elements of democratic legitimacy into the following four sets of indicators: inclusiveness, effective participation, transparency, and accountability. The precise operationalization of these indicators is discussed in detail in the relevant sections and further summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Operationalization of democratic legitimacy (Chapter 3)

Criteria	Indicators	
Inclusiveness	Demographic inclusiveness	Equal participation of women and men Equal participation of age categories Equal participation of Human Development Index (HDI) level groups of countries
	Substantive inclusiveness	Equal representation of policy preferences
Effective participation	Empowerment	Codesign Interaction with governments Decisive power Collaborative learning
Transparency	Substantive	Number of reference documents available on the online platform Diversity of sources of reference documents
	Procedural	Number of procedural documents available on the online platform
Accountability	Internal	Feedback report from organizers to participants Feedback questionnaire from participants to organizers

Source: author.

3.3. Inclusiveness

The criterion of **inclusiveness** is both demographic and substantive.

Demographic Inclusiveness

Demographic inclusiveness posits that an online consultation is democratically legitimate once it includes a broad range of actors that are representative of global civil society. Such representativeness would require that the set of included participants matches the demographics of global population, including the ratios of women to men, young people to other ages, and richer to poorer countries. I defined these categories in accordance with the Seed Media Group,[15] with age categories of ≤ thirty-four years old, thirty-five to fifty-four, ≥

14 Höreth, Bäckstrand, or Bursens frame transparency and accountability as part of input legitimacy while Bekkers and Edwards frame accountability as part of output legitimacy.

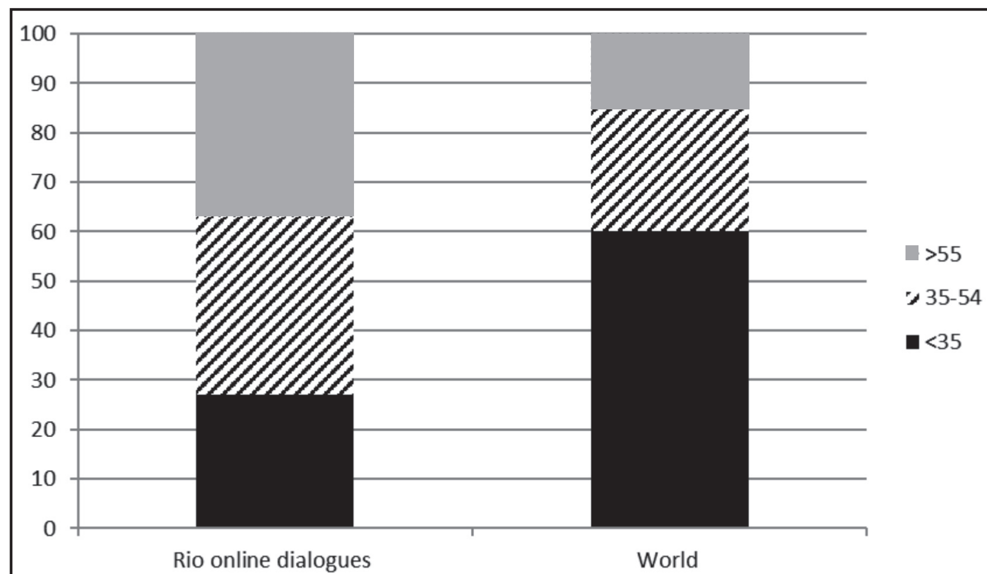
15 The categories are delineated at the voting website of the Rio Dialogues, http://vote.rioDialogues.org.

fifty-five; and country categories based on the Human Development Index (HDI), with low HDI countries, medium HDI countries, high HDI countries, and very high HDI countries.

As for possible gender biases, I found that participation was fairly balanced across gender, with 52 percent of the total 55,317 voters in Phase 2 being women. The demographics of the set of participants in the online Rio Dialogues reflect to a certain extent the gender ratio of the world's population in 2012, where 50.4 percent were men and 49.6 percent were women (UN Population Division, 2012).

In terms of age representation, young adults (≤ thirty-four years old) participated less than other age categories. While young adults (≤ thirty-four) account for 60 percent of the world's population, their participation was much lower in the online vote, with 27 percent. Conversely, the group of thirty-five- to fifty-four-year-old adults accounts only for 25 percent of the world's population, but participated with 36 percent in the second phase of the Dialogues. The older generation, aged fifty-five years and older, makes up for 15 percent of the world's population, and also participated in rather equal shares in the dialogues, with 37 percent in the second phase (Figure 1). In sum, and maybe surprisingly, the youth—those under the age of thirty-five years old—is significantly underrepresented in the online Rio Dialogues.

Figure 1. Distribution of the participants in the online Rio Dialogues (Phase 2) and of the world population, according to age category (expressed in percentage)

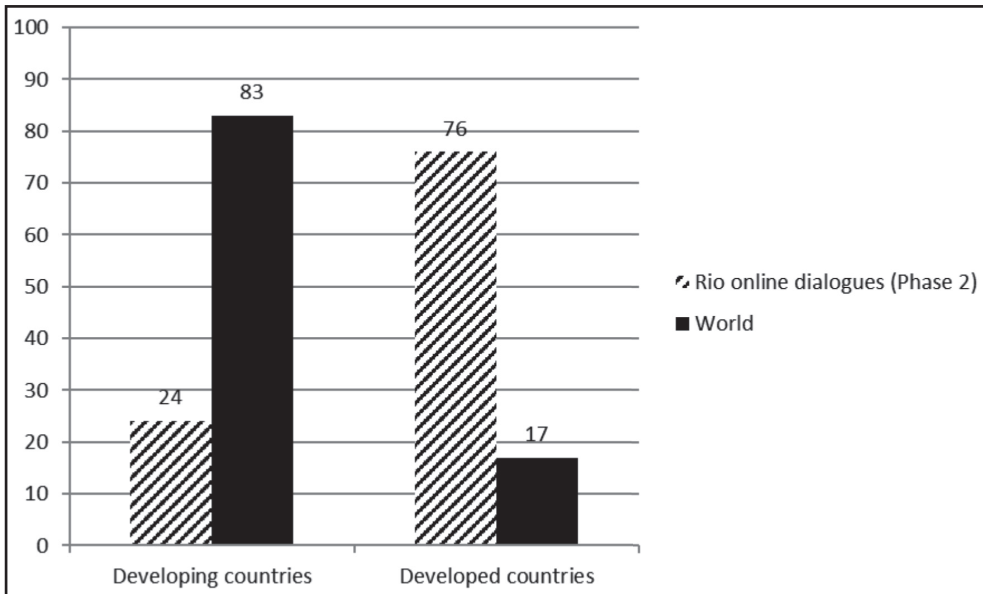


Source: UN Population Division, 2012. https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/dataquery.

As for biases among the representativeness in terms of countries, I found a generally large bias toward very high HDI countries. Although all 193 countries were represented

by at least one participant to the global online vote on recommendations, 76 percent came from a very high HDI country, even though these countries accounted in 2012 for only 17 percent of the world's population (Figure 2). On the other hand, people living in developing countries (low, medium, and high HDI levels) account for 83 percent of the world's population, but contributed merely 24 percent of the participants in the dialogues (Figure 2) (UNDP, 2012).

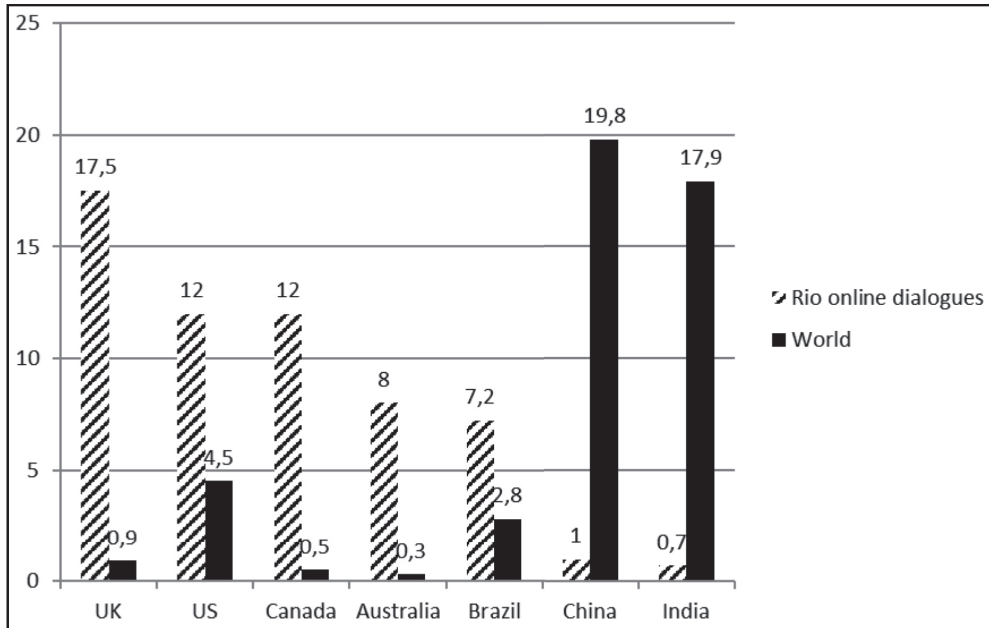
Figure 2. Distribution of the participants in the second phase of the Rio Dialogues (left) and of the world population (right), by level of development (expressed in percentage)



Source: UNDP, Human Development Index, 2012. http://hdr.undp.org/en/data.

Additionally, nearly 50 percent of the voters came from only four English-speaking countries—namely the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Australia—while these countries account for only 6.2 percent of the world's population. Conversely, while Chinese and Indians account for almost 40 percent of the world's population, they represented only 1.7 percent of the total participants in the second phase of the online Rio Dialogues (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Distribution of the Rio Dialogues voters (left) and world population (right), by selected countries (expressed in percentage)



Source: UN Population Division database, 2012. https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/dataquery.

Substantive Inclusiveness

The criterion of inclusiveness also suggests that an online consultation is democratically legitimate if it expresses a diverse set of policy preferences: this is substantive inclusiveness. Substantive inclusiveness would require, among other things, that the policy preferences of civil society participants are equally represented in the outputs of the consultation with a view to the above-mentioned demographic categories.

I did not find any differences in policy preferences across gender or age categories: the final top-10 recommendations match the policy preferences of all male and female participants irrespective of their age. However, the overrepresentation of voters from very high HDI countries created a likely bias of the results of the global vote, even though the organizers of the consultation acknowledged that the voting results were not intended as a complete representation of the opinion of global civil society. Indeed, the recommendation that gathered most votes globally matched the preferred recommendation of the voters from very high HDI countries in nine dialogues out of ten, whereas it matched the preferred recommendation of the voters from low HDI countries in only five dialogues out of ten. In other words, the preferences of very high HDI voters were excluded in only one dialogue out of ten while the preferences of low HDI voters were not selected in five dialogues out of ten (Table 7).

Were these substantively different? First, very high HDI voters seem to favor economic and fiscal instruments in contrast to voters from low HDI countries who seem to favor education and awareness raising activities. Second, low HDI voters appear to advocate grassroots initiatives and emphasize poverty and overall political and social aspects as part of the response to environmental challenges. Third, voters from countries with low HDI see a role for governments beyond tax reforms and green subsidies, that is, beyond the limited economic sphere. Accordingly, there is a fundamental divide about the core mechanisms to address future sustainability challenges between the poor and the rich, with the former expressing a more political and social approach and the latter expressing one based on fiscal and economic rationality. Such a divide underlines even more the aforementioned need for equal representation of different types of actors and socio-economic groups, which cannot be taken for granted in online consultations.

In sum, although the Internet reduces the cost of participation, my results indicate that, as far as the Rio Dialogues are concerned, the use of the Internet in global consultations does not increase inclusiveness. On the contrary, online consultations tend to reproduce participatory biases that favor the participation of Northern-based, well-resourced, and English-speaking civil society actors.

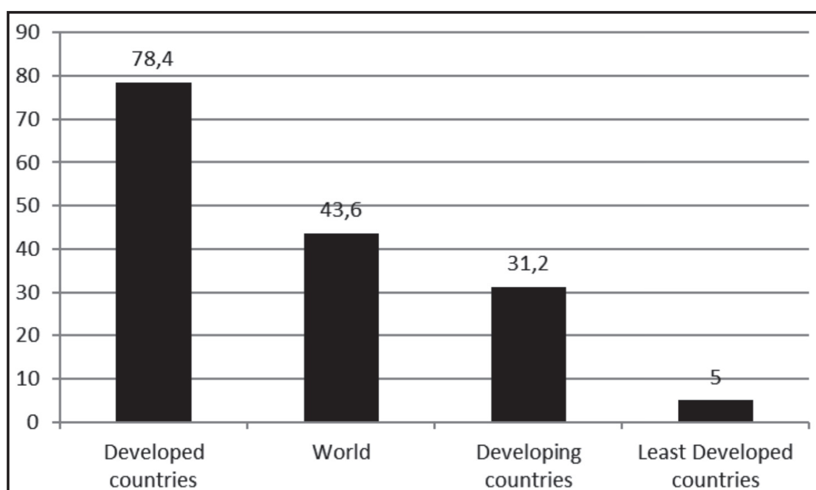
My results demonstrate that the Internet has a positive relation to inclusiveness only as long as people have Internet access as well as the capacities and skills to use it. The digital divide, understood as the differences between and within countries in terms of their levels of ICT development, remains important. Globally, there are 4.3 billion people not yet using the Internet and more than 90 percent of them are from the developing world (International Telecommunication Union [ITU], 2014). In 2014, 78 percent of households in developed countries had Internet access, compared with 31 percent in developing countries and 5 percent in least developed countries (Figure 4) (ITU, 2014).

Table 7. Divergences and convergences between low HDI voters' top recommendation, very high HDI voters' top recommendation, and global top recommendation

Dialogue	Top Recommendation from Voters from Countries with Very High HDI	Top Recommendation from Voters from Countries with Low HDI
Sustainable Cities and Innovation	**Promote the use of waste as a renewable energy source in urban environments**	
Economics of Sustainable Development	**Phase out harmful subsidies and develop green tax schemes**	Promote a holistic approach to sustainable development, taking into account environmental, economic, political and social aspects
Sustainable Development as an Answer to the Economic and Financial Crises	**Promote tax reforms that encourage environmental protection and benefits the poor**	Educate future leaders about sustainable development (PRME Initiative)
Sustainable Energy	**Take concrete steps to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies**	Educate people about energy efficiency
Unemployment and Migrations	Ensure all jobs and workplaces meet minimum safety and health standards	**Put education in the core of the Sustainable Development Goals agenda**
Water	**Secure water supply by protecting biodiversity, ecosystems and water sources**	
Food and Nutrition Security	**Promote food systems that are sustainable and contribute to improvement of health**	
Sustainable Development for Fighting Poverty	**Promote global education to eradicate poverty and to achieve sustainable development**	Promote grassroots innovations to fight poverty and achieve sustainable development
Forests	**Restore 150 million hectares of deforested and degraded lands by 2020**	Governments should support agroforestry as a promising alternative to balance the need for food and fuel wood whilst reducing pressure on natural forests
Oceans	**Avoid ocean pollution by plastics through education and community collaboration**	

Note: A recommendation in bold indicates that there is convergence with the global top recommendation. PRME, Principles for Responsible Management Education.

Figure 4. Percentage of households with Internet access by level of development, 2014[a]



Note: a. Estimate.
Source: International Telecommunication Union, World Communication/Information and Communication Technologies Indicators database, 2014. http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/publications/wtid.aspx.

Additionally, the quality of Internet access is unequal as differences in broadband speed persist between developed and developing countries. International bandwidth is a key indicator to gauge the quality and speed of Internet networks. Recent data show that there is almost five times as much international bandwidth per user available in developed countries compared to developing countries (ITU, 2014). Finally, within developing countries, the rural-urban divide in terms of Internet access and use is pronounced. Access to the Internet is extremely low for rural households in developing countries while rural households in developed countries enjoy access comparable to their urban counterparts. Considering that people living in rural areas in developing countries generally have a lower socioeconomic status compared with their urban counterparts, online consultations therefore fail to bring the voices of the most marginalized populations to intergovernmental policymaking.

3.4. Effective Participation

Secondly, I consider an online consultation to be democratically legitimate from an input legitimacy perspective if participants participate effectively. I define **effective participation** as the capacity of participants to monitor and influence the online consultation process and outcomes. Although caution should be raised since the effectiveness of participation depends on each actor's expectations and the goals they assign to the participatory process, it can nonetheless be measured by a number of qualitative and quantitative criteria.

Co-design

First, to effectively take part in the online consultation, participants should have the opportunity to co-design the process, including setting the agenda and rules of the consultation and selecting the facilitators and panelists and the background information. This is important because it directly impacts issue framing; that is, how the sustainable development issue in question was conceptualized prior to or during the consultation. As such, co-design has been identified as one way that influences the process (Abelson et al., 2003; Beierle, 1999; Branch & Bradbury, 2006; Webler & Tuler, 2000).

In this respect, I found, however, that the organization of the Rio Dialogues was mainly top down and led by the government of Brazil. The other two institutions involved played only a supportive role in providing their expertise on web-based discussion platforms[16] (UNDP) and in coordinating outreach activities (executive coordinators for Rio+20). The topics, format, and facilitators of the online dialogues were thus selected by the highest instances of the Brazilian government: for instance, President Dilma Rousseff's office decided on the ten topics of the dialogues (Interviewee 25). While the government of Brazil incorporated a few demands from the Brazilian civil society, such as a tenth topic on forests (Interviewee 25), overall civil society actors remained excluded from the design of the consultation. The Brazilian civil society initially saw the Rio Dialogues as a positive initiative for an honest and inclusive discussion on the issues to be addressed in the Rio+20 conference. However, as the organization moved forward, the dialogues lost legitimacy because the process was not participatory from the ground up (Interviewee 17).

Although civil society actors did not have their say in setting the agenda, procedures, and output format of the dialogues, the academic experts in charge of facilitation were given some leeway to frame the online discussions according to what they themselves deemed most relevant. In each online discussion, the facilitators developed and selected respectively kick-started messages and reference documents aimed to engage civil society actors and to structure and stimulate the discussions. A UNDP facilitation support staff then reviewed and agreed on these messages and documents (Interviewee 39). In the online discussion on food and nutrition security, for instance, one of the facilitators developed structural questions in such a way as to steer the discussion on food security away from agriculture issues which, he argued, are often the only focus in mainstream debates on food security (Interviewee 38). In addition, the government of Brazil invited facilitators to propose a first set of recommendations so as to "set the tone."[17]

16 UNDP had previously developed Teamworks, a knowledge management online platform that enables UNDP staff to store and share knowledge, and discuss experiences and lessons learned.

17 Information note for facilitators on the Rio Dialogues' online platform, update from the government of Brazil, May 2012.

In sum, my results indicate that the use of the Internet in global consultations does not allow for a higher ownership of the process by civil society actors. Instead, the design of the consultations mainly depends on the organizers' conception of the consultation and the extent to which its organization should be collaborative.

Interaction with Governments

Second, effective participation requires that all civil society actors have the opportunity to engage in direct dialogue with international organizations and governments. Interaction is important because it allows for identifying shared interests and developing relationships among civil society participants. Therefore, the more interaction with governments, the more chances civil society participants will have to influence their positions.

In the online Rio Dialogues, however, interaction with representatives from governments was low, simply because their participation in the dialogues was discouraged. The website of the Rio+20 Conference indeed specified that "there [would] be no participation of governments or UN agencies".[18] Similarly, the concept note of the dialogues stipulated that they were a "space created for an open and innovative discussion amongst the representatives of civil society about ten priority issues in the international agenda relating to sustainable development".[19]

Such lack of direct dialogue with delegates created significant frustration among those civil society participants who considered the space as an opportunity to break down the barriers between governments and civil society. A civil society participant representing an international NGO bluntly stated that "you need to have governments in the discussions; civil society organizations talking among themselves is useful if we are doing it 10 percent of the time, otherwise it's just a waste of time; it's bad participation" (Interviewee 8).

Again, my results indicate that the degree of interaction between civil society actors and representatives of governments is not correlated with the use of online participatory methods, but rather depends on the decisions made by the organizers of the consultation.

Decisive Power

Third, effective participation would entail that participants in a global online consultation have decisive power; that is, the right to produce recommendations and decide on those either by vote or consensus. Such a decision-making role of participants is important because it provides participants with an opportunity to share authority and, eventually, increases their chances to influence negotiations (Beierle, 1999; Fiorino, 1990).

18 See www.uncsd2012.org/sddialoguedays.html.

19 Information note for participants, available at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development web page, www.uncsd2012.org/sddialoguedays.html.

On the one hand, the innovative technical features developed in the online platform were empowering. Participants indeed had the opportunity to craft their own recommendations and support the recommendations they preferred. This last feature allowed participants to keep track of the support garnered by their input or recommendation. Similarly, the voting system allowed them to trace whether their input or recommendation ended up in the final top ten. Besides, such a system resulted in the prioritization and selection of ten recommendations for the future that civil society wants.[20] This clear and succinct output may eventually be more powerful and influential than a consultation report (Interviewee 16).

Because the online dialogues were a pioneering exercise and therefore a learning process, their technical features may also have hampered effective participation. For instance, some participants claimed that there were too many participatory tools and their relative use lacked clarity. On the online platform, participants could indeed formulate recommendations, participate in discussions and blogs, upload articles, and comment on all of the above-mentioned features. A UN officer recognized that "most of the Dialogues looked like a forest of comment, blogs, articles, and discussions" (Interviewee 16). The lack of legibility and intuitiveness of the web platform may have overwhelmed those participants lacking skills and resources, and who were eventually less able to support their position. For instance, the most-voted recommendation from the dialogue on energy, "Take concrete steps to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies," received twice as much support as any other recommendation from any other dialogue. In fact, the international NGO Avaaz led an online campaign on its website to get its network to vote for this recommendation. Therefore, the civil society participants that were best able to get their preferences in the final top ten recommendations were the most organized, with significant financial and human resources and communication and social mobilization strategies.

Therefore, the Internet has a positive impact on the capacity of civil society participants to have a decisive role in the consultation only to the extent that: (i) the organizers of the consultation are willing to share authority; (ii) the participatory tools are simple and few in number; and (iii) the civil society actors themselves have the capacity to participate and mobilize voters.

Collaborative Learning

Fourth, effective participation would require that an online consultation allows for collaborative learning and ultimately triggers mutual understanding among civil society participants, which depends on the degree of interaction among participants. This is important because, by sharing experiences, collaborative learning is thought to

20 In reference to the outcome document of the Rio+20 conference, *The Future We Want* UN Doc. A/RES/66/288, 2012.

facilitate better decisions as both substantive and procedural knowledge is gained (Gastil & Levine, 2005; Pateman, 1970; Walker et al., 2006; Webler & Tuler, 2000). Besides, mutual understanding may foster the building of coalitions between civil society actors and strengthen their negotiating position and eventual influence.

On the online platform, however, interaction among civil society participants was low: according to facilitators, 15 percent of the participants came to the platform for continuous interaction while 85 percent came for one-time contributions (Interviewee 39). Participants used the platform as a "drop box" to upload position papers and formulate recommendations, rather than as a space for live discussion. Therefore, civil society participants did not enter the platform with a learning objective.

Moreover, some participants from civil society considered that the space provided on the online platform to craft their recommendations was too small to get into the subtleties of the issue considered, and thus to disseminate knowledge and trigger learning. The ideal format for the recommendations delineated by the government of Brazil was a title specifying what should be done and by whom, and an explanation of three to six lines going over pros and cons with examples.[21] Therefore, the online dialogues resulted in broad, simplified, and nontechnical recommendations (Interviewee 5), which might eventually have harmed the credibility of civil society and its influence on the Rio+20 Conference.

Yet the space created through the web platform still was useful because it allowed identifying the issues that could garner consensus, and may have in this sense triggered some mutual understanding and the creation of new alliances among civil society participants (Interviewee 2).

In sum, my results indicate that the capacity of participants to monitor and influence the online consultation process and outcomes was undermined in the online Rio Dialogues. The criteria of co-design, decisive power, and collaborative learning were only partly fulfilled while interaction with governments was not fulfilled at all. However, the extent to which effective participation (or the lack of) is attributable to Internet use is not always clear. In particular, co-design, decisive power, and interaction with governments rather depend on political decisions made by the organizers of the consultation.

3.5 Transparency

Did the dialogues enhance the transparency of the Rio+20 conference process? I understand transparency here as the degree to which information is available to civil society in a way that enables it to have an informed voice in decisions or to assess the decisions made by governments (Florini, 2007; Gupta & Mason, 2014). I consider

21 Information note for facilitators on the Rio Dialogues' online platform, update from the government of Brazil, May 2012.

an online consultation transparent if both substantive and procedural elements of the transparency notion are met.

Substantive Transparency

First, the criterion of substantive transparency would require an online consultation to enhance access to and dissemination of information related to the substance of the consultation. Specifically, participants should be provided with reference documents stemming from a variety of sources (including academia, international organizations, and NGOs) that set out the challenges of the theme of the consultation. In the Rio Dialogues, the Internet provided better access to and dissemination of information on the topics of the discussions. Six to fourteen reference documents (i.e., briefs, notes, papers, and reports), prepared by academic facilitators with the support and oversight of UNDP staff, were available on each of the online discussion pages.[22]

However, substantive transparency was limited in the diversity of the sources from which the reference documents were selected. According to the list of documents available on the online platform in October 2014, in eight out of ten dialogues, all reference documents came from international organizations, either from specialized agencies of the UN or international financial institutions. Only two out of ten dialogues included reference documents authored by academic institutions or NGOs.

Procedural Transparency

Second, the criterion of procedural transparency would expect an online consultation process to provide information on all procedures, specifically the access to and dissemination of information related to the consultation process and outputs. In the case of the Rio Dialogues, however, the potential of the Internet for increasing procedural transparency was not fully materialized. The government of Brazil sent a concept note to participants, detailing the aims of the online dialogues, the different stages of the process, and its technical features. Additionally, information notes for participants on how to join the online dialogues were available on the website of the Rio+20 Conference. However, to the best of my knowledge, this information was not available on the online platform.

Besides, some procedural rules were not clearly defined by the organizers and not communicated to the participants. For instance, the criteria for the selection of recommendations were not transparent. Officially, facilitators selected the recommendations according to how much support they received and to their relevance. Yet as this last criterion was subjective, the selection of recommendations eventually depended on the good judgment of the facilitators whose decisions were likely to be

22 See www.riodialogues.org/sitemap, accessed 28 October 2014.

biased toward their own preferences. A representative from the Brazilian government acknowledged that "the main difficulty of Internet use in civil society consultations is that, from this mass of contributions, it is sometimes hard to separate what is important from what is not. There will always be some degree of subjectivity in this decision" (Interviewee 25).

In addition, there was an overall lack of traceability of the contributions uploaded by civil society participants on the online platform. In some cases, participants were upset by the final reports and recommendations produced by the facilitators because they did not match their initial input. A participant from civil society referred to the lack of procedural transparency as one of the major complaints formulated by civil society actors who "send their remarks and bullet points to the consultation but then feel like it goes into a black hole [or that] it's not used, or [that intergovernmental organizations or governments] just really pick up what they want" (Interviewee 1).

Such lack of procedural transparency has implications in terms of accountability as well: indeed, without appropriate follow-up information, civil society cannot make accountability claims to UN and governments representatives. I turn to this point below.

3.6. Accountability

Accountability is conceptualized as the capacity of civil society participants to exercise oversight and constraint on the making of consultation outputs and their effective integration into intergovernmental negotiations (Biermann & Gupta, 2011). There are two types of accountability: internal and external (Keohane, 2003).

First, I define internal accountability as accountability to the people inside of a process or institution (Keohane, 2003). It is an accountability relationship that institutionally links civil society participants in a consultation with the co-chairs and member states of the intergovernmental negotiations for which civil society input is sought. Second, external accountability is accountability to people outside of the acting entity (Keohane, 2003). It refers to the accountability relationship between the actors who do not have the opportunity to participate in the online consultation, but whose lives may be affected by the policy process in which it is embedded.

However, as I lack data from civil society representatives or other actors who did not directly participate in the dialogues, I focus here alone on internal accountability, which I evaluate using two criteria. First, I determined whether the organizers provided feedback report(s) to the participants on the outputs of the online consultation and its impacts on intergovernmental negotiations: this is top-down feedback. Second, I determined whether the participants were able to provide feedback information (e.g., comments, opinions) on the consultation and its outputs: this I call bottom-up feedback.

Top-down Feedback

Each report of an online discussion was written by the academic facilitators and uploaded onto the online platform. In addition, participants received an e-mail with the dialogues' final report that detailed the set of thirty recommendations presented to governments during the Rio+20 conference. However, the organizing parties did not provide participants with follow-up information on how the Rio Dialogues in general and their contribution in particular affected the Rio+20 conference process and outcomes. Without this specific information, participants could not formulate accountability claims vis-à-vis the organizers.

In fact, many civil society participants as well as the facilitators did not have a clear idea of exactly how the recommendations were to fit into the official segment of the Rio+20 conference, nor did they have a clear idea of the potential policy implications of the dialogues' outputs after Rio+20 (Interviewee 27). Although the recommendations from the dialogues were incorporated in the annexes of the report of Rio+20, such a document does not have any legal value and cannot be taken up in future negotiations by civil society to hold international organizations and governments accountable (Interviewee 17). Besides, as a UN officer put it,

> "You can have all these voices and make all these consultations but if it doesn't feed into the process, who's going to write the reports to these people saying 'here's how what you said affected the intergovernmental process, here's how what you said affected what the world is going to do'? Nobody has the mandate to do that. And if we had to do that, people [at the UN or governments] would be much less willing to do more consultations for the sake of doing consultations. Because they would have to report back" (Interviewee 2).

Therefore, while increasing access, Internet use in civil society consultations may actually decrease accountability since the organizers often lack the capacities to process, address, and report back on an ever-increasing amount of civil society contributions.

Bottom-up Feedback

Regarding bottom-up feedback, civil society participants were not given the possibility to comment on draft versions of the facilitators' reports mainly because of time constraints, nor were they given the opportunity to provide their feedback on the online consultations. However, UNDP asked the facilitators for their opinion about the discussions, recommendations, and voting phases of the dialogues as well as the technical features of the online platform and the voting site. They also provided their suggestions on whether and how future online dialogues needed to be improved (Interviewee 23).

All in all, the use of the Internet in the Rio Dialogues did not foster internal accountability between governments and international organizations, and civil society.

In fact, the only accountability relationship was between UNDP, the main entity in charge of coordinating the online phases of the Rio Dialogues, and the government of Brazil, from which it received financial support and moral authority and which led the entire consultation.

3.7. Conclusion

With the example of the Rio Dialogues, this chapter has shown that cyberdemocracy is not a panacea for the lack of democratic legitimacy of intergovernmental negotiations. On the one hand, online civil society consultations have substantial strengths, including their openness and nonhierarchical nature compared to, for instance, the more traditional face-to-face dialogues between representatives of Major Groups and governments. On the other hand, using the Internet in consultations also brings major limitations that tend to reproduce the biases that characterize face-to-face participation based on the representation of broad constituencies. Specifically, the use of the Internet may reinforce exclusion and favor the participation of the most powerful and well-organized civil society organizations over that of a broader and unspecialized public. Online consultations thus fail at fostering the equal participation of all citizens that cosmopolitans, world government proponents, and deliberative democrats envision for global democracy.

Furthermore, the potential of online consultation tools for increasing transparency and accountability in intergovernmental negotiations on sustainable development issues has not yet been materialized either. Although Internet use allows for greater access to and sharing of substantive information, the diversity from which this information is provided remains limited and may eventually constrain the exchange of diverse and competing arguments which is however deemed necessary to foster democratic legitimacy from a deliberative perspective. Besides, Internet use has not fostered procedural transparency and accountability. In some cases, it might have even reduced the capacity of civil society participants to hold governments and international organizations accountable concerning the input they provided.

The Internet is thus only a tool: whether it can effectively involve civil society in intergovernmental negotiations will have much to do with what the organizers and members of this process decide to do with such technologies. Consequently, the performance of such technologies in enhancing democratic legitimacy depends on the willingness of international organizations and governments to involve civil society beyond tokenistic practices and on the interest and ability of civil society actors to engage in such interactions.

Beyond the use of the Internet, other design factors impact the democratic legitimacy of civil society consultations. The next chapter examines the extent to

which the representativeness of global deliberation varies with different design choices, including the format and resources of civil society consultations.

CHAPTER 4

The Representativeness of Global Deliberation: A Critical Assessment of Civil Society Consultations for Sustainable Development

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4.1. Introduction

In the introductory chapter, I reviewed the different proposals advanced by global democracy scholars to enhance civil society participation and resolve a perceived democratic deficit in global policymaking on sustainable development. Specifically, I argued that the different normative models of global democracy have raised doubts as to their effectiveness in reducing the global democratic deficit in intergovernmental policymaking. In this context emerged a new way of conceptualizing global democracy, which rests on values of democratization rather than holistic models, and on intermediary and incremental proposals rather than ultimate aims. Various global democracy scholars have therefore promoted the institutionalization of civil society participation in existing intergovernmental institutions as one proposal to enhance democratization (Cohen & Sabel, 1997, 2005; Bäckstrand, 2006; MacDonald, 2008). Contrary to the cosmopolitan or radical models of global democracy, this approach has materialized in policy practice, as governments and intergovernmental organizations have increasingly been using formal consultations to solicit public input into global policymaking on sustainable development since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. This culminated in 2015, when nearly ten million people from 194 countries participated in consultations on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the 17 SDGs that stand at its center.

However, doubts have been raised regarding the legitimacy of such consultations, regardless of their impact on policymaking (Adams & Pingeot, 2013; Bäckstrand, 2006). Studies at the national level suggest that the legitimacy of consultations varies according to their design but remain inconclusive as to the direction of such influence (Abelson et al., 2003; Fiorino, 1990; National Research Council, 2008; Roberts, 2004; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; Steelman & Ascher, 1997; Webler & Tuler, 2000, 2008). At the global level, the relationship between participatory design and legitimacy is poorly understood. Two questions are especially important and demand urgent attention if one seeks to address a perceived lack of responsiveness of global policies to widespread public concerns. First, are some global civil society consultations more legitimate than others? And second, what is the role of different types of participation in explaining such variation in legitimacy?

In this chapter, I develop a framework to assess and explain the democratic legitimacy of civil society consultations in intergovernmental policymaking. I then apply this framework to the three case-studies selected for this research. While acknowledging that consultations are only one input from civil society in global policymaking, they are a crucial element of the latter's democratic legitimacy. Specifically, the democratization of any global policymaking process will depend on whether civil society consultations within such a process are themselves democratically legitimate.

The present chapter is organized as follows. First, the next section introduces my assessment framework. The sections thereafter present the findings. Finally, the

concluding section reflects on the results and offers recommendations to improve the democratic legitimacy of civil society consultations in international institutions.

4.2. Assessment Framework

This section lays out the framework for assessing the democratic legitimacy of global consultations. I discuss my conceptualization of democratic legitimacy, and the overarching independent variable that I seek to study, i.e. the participatory design of consultations.

Democratic legitimacy

Democratic legitimacy, the extent to which citizens can discuss and decide for themselves the content of norms and agreements, and hold decision makers accountable (Nanz & Steffek, 2004), has become a central issue in global sustainability governance (Haas, 2004).

The previous chapter has stressed that democratic legitimacy is operationalized most prominently as input and throughput legitimacy, i.e. the inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability of governance, along with criteria of output legitimacy (Bäckstrand, 2006; Biermann & Gupta, 2011; Blüdhorn, 2009; Bursens, 2009; Höreth, 1999; Scharpf, 1997, 1999; Schmidt, 2006). In this chapter, I specifically focus on inclusiveness and accountability, because effects of the participatory design of global consultations are most prominently observable therein.

The criterion of **inclusiveness** posits that a global consultation is legitimate once it includes a range of actors that broadly matches the demographics of the global population, i.e. the ratios between women and men, younger and older people, and citizens of richer and poorer countries.[23] I further examine the level of institutionalization of the participating actors, differentiating between well-structured and highly formalized NGOs, and individual citizens, social movements, and NGOs operating mainly at the national or local level (grassroots) (see also Tarrow, 1998: 3; Kaldor, 2003).

The criterion of **accountability** refers to the capacity of civil society participants to exercise oversight and constraint on the outputs of consultations and their influence in intergovernmental negotiations (Biermann & Gupta, 2011; Keohane, 2003). It has

23 I defined age and country categories in accordance with those set up by the organizing entities of the Rio Dialogues and the MYWorld Survey on the websites of the results of the consultations. The UN used similar country categories for the Rio Dialogues and the MYWorld Survey, based on the level of Human Development Index (HDI), with low HDI countries, medium HDI countries, high HDI countries and very high HDI countries. I then attributed one of these categories to each of the participants in the OWG Hearings. However, the UN used different age categories in the Rio Dialogues (≤34; 35-54; ≥55) and the MYWorld Survey (≤15; 16-30; 31-45; 46-60; ≥61). Because they provided a higher degree of precision, I took up those set up in the MYWorld Survey and attributed them to the participants in the OWG Hearings.

an internal and external dimension (see Chapter 3 p. 80). Like in Chapter 3, I evaluate internal – as opposed to external – accountability largely because of the difficulties in identifying who the relevant public is in a global context and the mechanisms through which they could hold their representatives accountable.

Internal accountability is met when a global consultation allows for a two-way flow of information between organizers and (civil society) participants: Did the organizers provide feedback reports to the participants on the outputs of the consultation and its impacts on intergovernmental negotiations (top-down feedback)? Conversely, were participants able to provide comments on the consultation and its outputs (bottom-up feedback)? Both indicators are equally important because this information allows participants to monitor their engagement and advance accountability claims to international organizations and governments with respect to the input they initially provided. Without such feedback mechanisms, accountability lacks foundation, provided that the consultation outputs are to inform global policymaking.

The precise operationalization of the democratic legitimacy of a global civil society consultation for this chapter is summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. Operationalization of democratic legitimacy (Chapter 4)

Variable	Criteria	Indicator
Inclusiveness	Demographic	- equal participation of women and men - equal participation of age categories - equal participation of HDI level groups of countries
	Social	- balanced participation of interest groups with different institutional structures
Accountability	Internal	- top-down feedback - bottom-up feedback

Source : author.

Design

In order to explain variation in the inclusiveness and accountability of a global civil society consultation, I hypothesize that the (participatory) design of a consultation has a major influence. I conceptualize design as the different ways in which a consultation is organized, which includes a **format variable** and a **resource variable** (based on National Research Council, 2008; OECD, 2001). *Format* relates to the rules that define the consultation; *resources* refer to the means that the organizers of a global consultation allocate to run the process.

I assess the format of a consultation by three indicators:

- **Access to a consultation.** This can be open or restricted. Rules of access are determined by the consultation organizers and by the accreditation policy of the intergovernmental negotiations for which civil society input is sought.

- **Selection of participants.** The rules and practices of the selection of participants can differ. While acknowledging that engagement in a consultation primarily depends on the interest of civil society representatives, I identify two types of selection rules and practices: (a) insider-oriented selection, i.e. when participants are selected according to criteria that favor actors that usually engage in global policymaking; and (b) outsider-oriented selection, i.e. when participants are selected according to criteria that favor actors traditionally excluded from global policymaking.
- **Degree of transparency.** This can differ inasmuch as information on the consultation topic, process and results can be made more or less available and more or less timely communicated to civil society representatives.

The resources available to a consultation are measured by three indicators:

- **Staff capacity.** There might be variation in the available staff capacity, that is (a) the number of staff allocated to the organization or facilitation of the consultation, (b) the working time this staff can spend on such activities, and (c) the overall commitment from organizers and facilitators.
- **Financial resources**. The available financial resources might vary, according to whether the budget allocated to the consultation includes: (a) provisions for travel expenses for civil society participants, and (b) provisions for communication and outreach activities.
- **Time allocated.** The time allocated for preparation and consultation might differ.

Format and resources are important because they shape the set of participants, and have crucial implications for democratic legitimacy. I expect democratic legitimacy to be higher when the consultation is (a) more open, (b) more based on a selection oriented towards outsiders, (c) more transparent, and when (d) procedural information is accessible and timely communicated to the participants. Finally, I expect democratic legitimacy to be proportional to the consultation's length, staff capacity, and financial resources. The precise operationalization of these variables is summarized in Table 9.

Table 9. Operationalization of participatory design

Criteria	Indicators	
Format	Access conditions	Open access
		Restricted access
	Selection of participants	Insider-oriented selection
		Outsider-oriented selection
	Substantive and procedural transparency	Access to and dissemination of information related to consultation topic
		Access to and dissemination of information related to consultation procedures
Resources	Human capacity	Number of staff
		Allocated work time
		Commitment from organizers
	Financial resources	Provisions for travel expenses
		Provisions for communication and outreach activities
	Time resources	Allocated time for preparation
		Allocated time for consultation

Source : author.

I apply this assessment framework to the three civil society consultations selected for this research: the Rio Dialogues, the OWG Hearings, and the MYWorld Survey (see Chapter 2, pp. 45-63). Although all three cases share the same policy domain (sustainable development), the same overall negotiation context (the SDGs), and have been conducted in the same period (2012-2015), all three differ in their design characteristics. I expect different rules in terms of access, selection of participants, and transparency of information. Also, because different agencies organized the consultations, I expect variation in their resources.

4.3. Findings: The Democratic Legitimacy of Civil Society Consultations

Inclusiveness

The breadth of the sample of participants varies greatly from one consultation to another, with 55,000 participants from 193 countries engaging in the online vote of the Rio Dialogues; 216 speakers from civil society, from 56 countries, delivering a statement in the OWG hearings; and 9 million citizens from 194 countries answering the MYWorld Survey (as of September 2015). In absolute numbers, the MYWorld Survey was thus more inclusive than the Rio Dialogues and the OWG Hearings. However, the representativeness of such inclusion did not match the demographics of the world population.

Regarding **country representation**, civil society participants from industrialized countries were overrepresented in both the Rio Dialogues and the OWG Hearings. Participants from industrialized countries – countries with a very high HDI – represented 68 percent in the Dialogues and 64 percent in the Hearings, even though these countries only accounted for 17 percent of the world population in 2012 (UNDP HDI database, 2012). Additionally, in the OWG Hearings 30 percent of civil society speakers were citizens of the United States, and 25 percent lived in New York. Conversely, people living in developing countries – countries with low, medium and high HDI levels – accounted for 83 percent of the world population but contributed merely 32 percent of the participants in the Rio Dialogues and 36 percent in the OWG Hearings. Interestingly, the results of the MYWorld Survey show a reverse bias towards the participation of people from developing countries: 95 percent of the respondents came from developing countries, and only 5 percent from developed countries. Within the group of developing country participants, it is striking that 75 percent of the respondents came from five countries alone – Mexico, Nigeria, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka – that accounted merely for 25 percent of the world population in 2012 (UNDP HDI database, 2012). So, while the Rio Dialogues and the OWG Hearings were biased towards people from richer countries, the MYWorld Survey was much more inclusive of people from developing countries, even though with a heavy dominance of just a few countries.

Regarding **representativeness of different types of civil society actors**, the Rio Dialogues and the OWG Hearings favored participation of institutionalized civil society actors such as internationally operating NGOs, at the expense of grassroots organizations, social movements, and citizens. In the Rio Dialogues, although I was not able to collect exhaustive statistical data on the type of civil society participants, I can assume that participation from lay citizens and grassroots organizations, especially those representing indigenous communities, remained low in the online discussions, all the more since these were held only in English. A civil society participant representing an NGO corroborated this assumption, stressing that "if you go to these online platforms, it means that you are already informed; if you have the motivation to contribute, it means that you are already involved in the process and that you are part of civil society networks. It's not for the general public" (Interviewee 4). In the Hearings, 61 percent of civil society participants spoke on behalf of an internationally operating NGO or a global coalition of NGOs, and only 11 percent spoke on behalf of a grassroots organization. None of the respondents to my online survey of the OWG Hearings' participants claimed to be part of a social movement. Conversely, the MYWorld Survey favored the participation of less institutionalized civil society actors as it targeted individual citizens.

Regarding **gender representation**, participation was fairly balanced across gender in the Rio Dialogues and the MYWorld Survey, with respectively 47 and 48 percent of participants being women. This reflects to a certain extent the gender ratio

of the world population in 2012, where 50.4 percent were men and 49.6 percent were women (UN Population Division, 2012). In the OWG Hearings, however, I identified a gender bias towards the participation of women, who represented 67 percent of the participants.

Regarding **age representation**, only 31 percent of the participants were under 35 years-old in the Rio Dialogues, whereas this age category accounted for 60 percent of the world population (UN Population Division, 2012). Such underrepresentation of children and youth was even more severe in the OWG Hearings, where speakers under the age of 30 accounted for 18 percent of the participants while they represented 53 percent of the world population (UN Population Division, 2012). Conversely, young people participated much more in the MYWorld Survey, where respondents under the age of 30 represented 78 percent of the participants.

In sum, the MYWorld Survey was on several accounts more inclusive than the Rio Dialogues and the OWG Hearings, despite a strong bias towards a small group of developing countries that largely belong to the English-language based tradition of the British Commonwealth.

Accountability

Regarding **top-down feedback**, participants in the Rio Dialogues received the report of the online discussion in which they partook, as well as the final report of the Dialogues detailing the recommendations presented to governments during the Rio+20 conference. However, the organizers did not provide participants with feedback information on how their inputs affected the outcomes of the conference (Interviewee 27). In the OWG Hearings, the co-chairs provided oral feedback to civil society speakers on the quality of their statements (Interviewee 58), which they then summarized in a document conveyed to governments in the OWG formal sessions. They also drafted negotiating texts to allow civil society participants to trace their contributions: in the draft outcome document following the eleventh session of the OWG for instance, each target for one SDG from the draft text referenced the actors supporting such target (Interviewee 37). Therefore, civil society actors could trace whether their input was conveyed to intergovernmental negotiations and could formulate accountability claims. However, neither the OWG co-chairs nor the Major Groups Programme of UNDESA's Division for Sustainable Development formally reported back to civil society participants on the outputs of the Hearings and their impact on negotiations.

In the MYWorld Survey, data from the online, mobile and paper formats of the Survey was consolidated in real time and available on the MYWorld website. Yet, as the Survey was anonymous, feedback information was available only to the extent that respondents searched for it on this website (Interviewee 51). In addition, the website did not provide any information for civil society participants on whether and

how the results were to feed into these negotiations. Accordingly, participants could not formulate accountability claims vis-à-vis international organizations and governments.

Concerning **bottom-up feedback**, civil society participants in the Rio Dialogues were not able to comment on draft versions of the facilitators' reports, nor to provide their opinion on the consultation. During the OWG negotiating phase, civil society used the Hearings to provide their feedback on the revised draft of the SDGs, which the co-chairs circulated ahead of each monthly session. However, in terms of the evaluation of the consultation itself, the UN did not formally request the feedback of civil society participants in the Hearings (Interviewee 45). Because the MYWorld Survey was anonymous, civil society respondents were not formally asked for their feedback on the consultation (Interviewee 52). However, they could provide comments to the organizers through a contact form on the MYWorld Survey website.

In sum, the Rio Dialogues, the MYWorld Survey and, to a lesser extent, the OWG Hearings scored low on my accountability indicators because they did not allow for a two-way flow of feedback information between participants and organizers. Overall, the democratic legitimacy of global civil society consultations varies, with some performing better on inclusiveness (MYWorld Survey), and others on internal accountability (OWG Hearings). The next section explains the different levels of democratic legitimacy by focusing on the role of participatory design, starting with the format of consultations.

4.4. Explaining Variation in Democratic Legitimacy: The Role of Participatory Design

Format

Access to a consultation. Access conditions differed from one consultation to another. Access was open in the Rio Dialogues and the MYWorld Survey. Any interested civil society actor could participate, because virtual and physical sites used to rollout these consultations were publicly accessible. For instance, the physical sites used to disseminate the MYWorld Survey and collect ballot cards included markets, fairs, schools, and universities (Interviewee 50). Open access thus broadened the sample of participants in these two consultations, without ensuring their full representativeness, however, as I have previously shown. Conversely, access to the OWG Hearings was restricted and depended on the accreditation policy set by the UN for the OWG negotiations. Participation was limited to NGOs in consultative status with the UN ECOSOC. Although there were almost 4,000 NGOs in 2013 with such status (UN NGO Branch, 2014), such restrictions still limit participation to institutionalized civil society actors and hampered that of grassroots organizations, social movements, and individual citizens.

Selection of participants. The outreach policy and primary target population set by the organizers varied in all three cases. In the Rio Dialogues, selection was carried

out according to criteria which targeted insiders. UNDP staff acted as gatekeepers by reviewing the registrations on the online platform according to the instructions given by the Brazilian government (Interviewee 16). According to the concept note of the Rio Dialogues, the Brazilian government wanted to let in actors: accredited to participate in the conference; nominated by the facilitators or a Major Group; affiliated to the Dialogues' partner universities; invited by the Brazilian Government or by the Offices of the Executive Coordinators of the UN for the Rio+20 conference; and finally invited by people already registered to the platform. A selection according to such criteria partly explains why the sample of participants does not include actors beyond those belonging to institutionalized civil society networks.

Similarly, in the OWG Hearings selection was oriented towards insiders, though with different criteria from the Rio Dialogues. The steering committee selected civil society speakers according to gender, country of origin, and constituency (from the nine Major Groups or other stakeholders). However, as demonstrated previously, this only partially ensured representativeness in the Hearings. Indeed, outreach to approach speakers was mainly carried out within the constituencies of Major Groups and other stakeholders and did not go beyond institutionalized civil society networks.

Conversely, in the MYWorld Survey, the selection of participants was oriented towards outsiders. Although the organizers did not establish specific selection criteria, they primarily reached out to actors who traditionally do not participate in global policymaking. The UN specifically wanted "as many people in as many countries as possible to be involved, [...] particularly the world's poor and marginalized communities" (UN, 2015c). The target population and outreach policy of the MYWorld Survey thus explain the high representation of young citizens from developing countries among the total sample of respondents.

Degree of transparency. The accessibility and timely dissemination of substantive and procedural information also influence the inclusiveness and accountability of consultations. Although participants in the Rio Dialogues and the OWG Hearings alluded to substantive transparency as a way to improve the quality of the discussions, unlimited access to information on the topics of the consultations hampered inclusiveness. Most of the dialogues resembled a forest of comments, articles and discussions that discouraged citizens, social movements and grassroots organizations in developing countries from participating actively in all the Rio Dialogues (Interviewee 16). Indeed, processing an important amount of information in order to keep track of the process and participate requires capacities that these actors usually do not have (Interviewee 10).

Lack of procedural transparency also negatively affected internal accountability. In the Rio Dialogues and the MYWorld Survey, many procedures lacked transparency, including the criteria for selecting civil society contributions to be compiled in the consultation output, and the consultation objective and link to the negotiations. In the

Rio Dialogues, the academic facilitators selected the recommendations on the online platform according to the support they received and their relevance. Yet, like I argued in Chapter 3, the selection of recommendations was likely to be biased towards the preferences of facilitators because this last criterion was subjective (Interviewee 25). Although the organizers provided extensive procedural information on the MYWorld Survey methodology, the criteria for analyzing and aggregating the contributions uploaded as the 17th free text option were not communicated on the website (Interviewee 49). Besides, without a clear consultation objective and link to the negotiations, organizers were unable to provide feedback to participants, while participants were unable to make accountability claims to the organizers. This further hampered the ability of civil society participants to trace their contributions and hold international organizations and governments accountable with respect to the input they provided.

In the OWG Hearings, procedural information was more accessible. However, it was not disseminated beyond institutionalized civil society networks. This again resulted in less access from less institutionalized civil society actors and less informed about the different requirements for civil society participation in intergovernmental negotiations, i.e. logistics and registration deadlines. This explains the overrepresentation of internationally operating NGOs and coalitions of such organizations, as a civil society participant testified:

> "When I first arrived in New York, it was not transparent at all how the OWG sessions were working. Sometimes we found out about something happening the next day by word of mouth with some people I got acquainted with. Even though I was in touch with UNDESA, I didn't receive any information whatsoever" (Interviewee 64).

In sum, procedural transparency and democratic legitimacy are positively correlated: the more opaque the procedures and objectives, the less inclusive the consultation and the less accountable the convening entities. Unexpectedly, the results further show that consultations with open access favor the participation of North-based civil society actors with major capacities, just like in consultations with restricted access. Finally, the selection of participants according to sociodemographic criteria does not systematically enhance inclusiveness (OWG Hearings), unless it is coupled with an outreach policy prioritizing the participation of outsiders (MYWorld Survey).

Thus, format indicators cannot fully explain the democratic legitimacy of a consultation. Other variables, particularly the resources allocated to the consultation, need to be examined.

Resources

As a numerical benchmark of the impact of human and financial resources on the democratic legitimacy of global consultations is lacking, the following findings provide a qualitative assessment.

Staff capacity. Inclusiveness and internal accountability increase when consultations are appropriately staffed, working time to promote consultations is available, and staff is committed to supporting the process (Adams & Pingeot, 2013; National Research Council, 2008; OECD, 2001). In the Rio Dialogues, UNDP assigned 9 full-time officers to the coordination team, 10 part-time officers to the facilitation support team, and 9 part-time volunteers to a youth mobilization team. Yet, because UNDP senior management did not sufficiently commit to supporting the consultation, they did not assign sufficient staff resources on communications (Interviewee 16). Besides, the thirty academic facilitators responsible for stimulating lively and inclusive debates as well as identifying relevant networks, institutions, and organizations to be invited to participate in the online dialogues engaged very unevenly in the process as they had to perform these tasks in addition to their usual workload. This consequently affected outreach efforts and limited inclusiveness.

As for the OWG Hearings, the understaffing of the Major Groups Programme of UNDESA's Division for Sustainable Development had a major negative effect on internal accountability. The Major Groups Programme was supported at that time by only two officers, who facilitated participation not only in the OWG negotiations but also in many other UN processes (Interviewee 12). Although the OWG co-chairs were firmly committed to supporting civil society participation and provided summaries of the Hearings, monthly negotiations made it difficult for UN staff to keep up with the process, compile civil society contributions and report back to participants on whether and how their contribution affected intergovernmental negotiations.

In the MYWorld Survey, however, a limited coordination team did not negatively impact inclusiveness. Indeed, UNMC allocated only 7-10 officers to the outreach and data analysis of the survey, with part-time staff from other UN agencies and offices providing support, e.g. the UN Children's Fund and the office of the UN Secretary-General (Interviewee 46). Yet, more than 80 percent of the votes were cast through ballot cards to reach the most marginalized citizens, because more than 1,000 partner organizations voluntarily committed to disseminate the survey nationally and locally. Such a system was designed to foster partners' empowerment and ownership of MYWorld and help the UN extend the survey. However, relying on partners also has limitations. Their uneven commitment and associated human capacity explain why only five countries represent 75 percent of the total votes. For instance, the municipality of Mexico recruited more than 3,000 volunteers that eventually collected the votes of 1.25 percent of the total Mexican population (Interviewee 46). In contrast, the 40 volunteers recruited by the UN Volunteers Programme in Bhutan collected a substantially lower number of votes (0.3 percent) in proportion to the total Bhutanese population (Interviewee 51).

Financial resources. An adequately funded consultation does not systematically guarantee inclusiveness. The Brazilian government provided UNDP with a budget of one million US dollars to deliver the Rio Dialogues. However, because they were mainly allocated to the customization of the online discussion and voting platforms and to staff expenses to the detriment of far-reaching communication policies, financial resources did not ensure the representativeness of inclusion in that consultation (Interviewee 3).

In the OWG Hearings, the lack of funding to cover the travel expenses of participants from developing countries undermined inclusiveness. Civil society actors can rarely rely on funding granted through UN mechanisms for their participation. The Major Groups Programme of UNDESA does not have a separate budget, even though its Division for Sustainable Development receives extra-budgetary funds to support participation of civil society from developing countries (Adams & Pingeot, 2013). UNDESA could not provide extra-budgetary funding for the first two Hearings (Interviewee 2). This substantially undermined the participation of civil society actors from developing countries, which accounted for only 8 percent of the participants in the Hearing of the third OWG session. In subsequent Hearings, the Division for Sustainable Development provided extra-budgetary funding mainly through a grant of the European Union to "bring about 6 to 8 people from developing countries" to participate (Interviewee 12). Therefore, funding for participants mainly relied on the capacities of each Major Group, their organizing partners[24] and the organizations they worked for. However, these differ substantially from one Major Group to another. For instance, the Women and NGO Major Groups have higher financial capacities than others. The organizing partners of these Major Groups are paid by their organization for facilitating the participation of their constituencies in intergovernmental policymaking, because it is in line with the goals their organizations promote (Interviewee 13). However, this is not the case for the organizing partners of other Major Groups, such as Children and Youth or Indigenous Peoples, as one interviewee concluded:

> "We have to fundraise both for this position and to be able to bring people from indigenous communities to New York to speak on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples major group. […] The NGO major group has the funding and CIVICUS[25] is working full time on this, the Women major group is very strong, they bring 10 to 20 women for each of the OWG session, while we as Indigenous Peoples can bring one or two people" (Interviewee 13).

24 Organizing partners act as facilitators between their constituencies and the UN system and governments (see Chapter 2, pp. 45-63).

25 CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation is the home organization of one of the organizing partners of the NGO major group.

The amount of financial resources thus explains the gender bias towards the participation of women in the OWG Hearings, as well as the important share of civil society speakers based in New York (thus not requiring any travel funding).

An interesting case in point is the MYWorld Survey. With a similar budget, it was more inclusive than the Rio Dialogues. The organizers benefited from start-up funding from the UNDP (25,000 USD) and the United Kingdom government (1.5 million USD) for the design and launch of the Survey. Despite limited capacity, UNMC developed communication campaigns, including on television, radio and newspaper advertisements, and provided outreach tools for partners to translate, adapt and use at national level (Interviewee 46). Then, the functioning of the survey relied on the volunteering work from partner organizations. In Haiti, for instance, the Survey was rolled out with almost no funding. A small operational budget of the UN Volunteers Programme covered travel expenses of the volunteers, while the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti printed the ballot cards at no extra cost (Interviewee 52).

Time allocated. Finally, the time allocated to the preparation of the consultation and the consultation itself affects democratic legitimacy greatly. In the Rio Dialogues and the OWG Hearings, lack of time negatively affected inclusiveness. The Brazilian government decided to go forward with the Rio Dialogues in January 2012, which left UNDP's team three months to prepare the online phase. The online discussions and vote lasted 6 weeks and 10 days, respectively. More preparation and consultation time would have allowed reaching out to a broader set of civil society actors. One UN officer pointed out that "if the online Dialogues had been longer we would have had more people coming in" (Interviewee 16). Although the OWG process lasted 18 months, the frequency of the sessions (one per month) left civil society with extremely short deadlines to provide contributions from a diverse and representative set of actors. As a civil society participant in the Hearings said:

> "Inclusive participation is difficult because the deadlines are always too short so [civil society actors] do not have time to organize their visas, they are asked for input today for tomorrow so they do not even have time to read their emails with time difference. It is partly because the process is not really well organized but also because there is not a lot of consideration of time constraints" (Interviewee 15).

This view was corroborated by one of the consultation organizers (Interviewee 12). Besides, the OWG Hearings were not simultaneously interpreted, and time constraints did not allow for important documents, such as the draft texts of negotiations, to be available in other UN languages than English. This disadvantaged the participation of those civil society representatives for whom English is not a working language or not used at all, for instance indigenous peoples (see also Adams & Pingeot 2013: 19).

In contrast, the extensive set of respondents in the MYWorld Survey is partly due to its duration. The UN collected nine million voices between the launch of the Survey in December 2012 and its closing in December 2015. Besides, the online Survey was available in 17 languages, while the offline form was often translated into local dialects, such as creole in Haiti (Interviewee 52).

In sum, the more consultation time, the more inclusive the consultation. The impact of human and financial resources on democratic legitimacy is less clear, however. Lack of human and financial resources for the consultation negatively impacted inclusiveness and accountability in the case of the Rio Dialogues and the OWG Hearings. Nevertheless, the lack of such resources did not hamper the inclusiveness of the MYWorld Survey because the organizers relied on a widespread network of national and local partners to reach out to the most excluded.

4.5. Conclusion

The examples of the Rio Dialogues, the OWG Hearings and the MYWorld Survey show that design matters, yet it does not affect democratic legitimacy as expected. Neither closed nor open consultations allow *all concerned citizens* to participate in intergovernmental policymaking on sustainable development issues, as enacted in the Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration in 1992 or defined as a normative requirement for the emergence of global deliberative democracy. While under-resourced global consultations hinder the capacity of civil society to hold international organizations and governments accountable when consultations are not tied in any formal way to intergovernmental negotiations, this is less true for inclusiveness. The example of the MYWorld Survey indeed contradicts the norm, as it demonstrates that lack of resources did not negatively affect inclusiveness.

More generally, the selected case-studies allow to draw lessons for the design of consultations. First, it is possible to overcome resource constraints and enhance inclusiveness when the organizers of the consultation develop partnerships with grassroots actors from civil society and the public and private sectors, and delegate its rollout from global policymaking centers to national and local communities, prioritizing the voices of the most marginalized. Second, enhancing democratic legitimacy requires substantial political commitment from the organizers to supporting the consultation. Such commitment includes developing clear objectives and procedures for the consultation, allocating sufficient time to participants, formally binding it to intergovernmental negotiations, and encouraging the participation of government representatives to foster accountability. It further encompasses engaging civil society early in the design of the consultation: co-defining the consultation agenda and rules is likely to increase ownership and inclusiveness.

Beyond determining the optimal design for consultations, however, lays the issue of their effects on intergovernmental negotiations. In particular, the relationship between inclusiveness and influence is a critical question which invites further research to document the conditions to effectively democratize global policymaking on sustainable development. While Chapter 5 examines this issue in depth, the findings laid out in the present chapter nonetheless tend to indicate that democratization of global policymaking cannot only rely on the insider participatory channels that democratic intergovernmentalists and other global democracy scholars have called for. Engagement channels based on disorganized protests or formalized citizen deliberation outside authoritative circles are at least equally important to increase the responsiveness of global policies to citizen concerns.

CHAPTER 5

Leaving No-one Behind? The Influence of Civil Society Participation on the Sustainable Development Goals

This chapter has been submitted as an article in *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*

5.1. Introduction

Adopted by the international community in September 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its core element, the SDGs, have been coined "a truly We the Peoples Agenda" by the former UN Secretary General Ban Ki Mon (UN, 2015a). Yet, to what extent have the ten million civil society voices gathered through different participatory spaces impacted the shaping of the goals? While the previous two chapters assessed the democratic legitimacy of global civil society consultations from an input perspective, the present chapter focuses on the legitimacy of the consultations from an influence standpoint.

Academic interest in the role and influence of civil society actors in global policymaking has grown concomitantly to the increase of their participation in intergovernmental negotiations on sustainable development. As the introductory chapter of this research has pointed out, while only 250 NGOs participated in the first global summit of the UN on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, almost 10,000 civil society representatives were accredited to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro four decades later (Bäckstrand, 2013). However, even though national governments increasingly share powers with civil society, among other actors both nongovernmental (business) and governmental (international organizations), the making of international agreements remains the domain of states, who also have the power to establish the rules for who may participate and the nature of that participation. Besides, governments are unlikely to accept voting rights for civil society in the near future, which means that there is currently no formalized way for civil society actors to influence policymaking above and beyond the right to voice their views (Biermann, 2014: 139).

Civil society actors may nonetheless try to influence negotiations by persuading government representatives to accept their perspective (Holsti, 1988). They have developed many activities to increase their chances of influencing intergovernmental policymaking, using participatory spaces both inside and outside negotiating hubs. I understand participatory space as an arena for the communicative generation of public preferences and a vehicle for marshaling those preferences as a social force capable of influencing the political field (Fraser, 2007). Inside negotiating hubs, civil society actors can voice their opinion in oral or written interventions, in formal or informal settings. Formal settings include speaking rights during the negotiating sessions, face-to-face consultations with governments and the co-chairs of the negotiations and online consultations. Informal settings include side events and bilateral or multilateral meetings with governments and/or the co-chairs. For governments, the benefits of considering civil society contributions are important and include knowledge provision and political support. Yet when governments remain unresponsive to their contributions, civil society actors will also aim to pressure governments by organizing activities to influence

intergovernmental policymaking from outside negotiating hubs, such as mass protests, campaigning, strategic use of, and alliances with media to raise awareness and influence the public (Rietig, 2011).

Academic research has been prolific in assessing the roles of civil society actors and the influence of their activities as a whole in sustainable development negotiations, sometimes taking a comparative approach across different issue areas and policy arenas (Betsill & Corell, 2008; Chasek, 2001; Fisher & Green, 2004). However, still little has been done on assessing and explaining the influence of the participatory spaces in which civil society engages *inside* global negotiating hubs.[26] Acknowledging that civil society is diverse and may express heterogeneous preferences, I nonetheless narrow down my analysis to the actors that carry the most progressive positions on sustainable development issues. Despite this limitation, this chapter still contributes to achieving a better understanding of the conditions under which civil society exerts influence on intergovernmental policymaking, based on the example of the negotiations on the SDGs.

What have been the impacts of civil society oral and written interventions delivered within insider participatory spaces on the intergovernmental negotiations of the SDGs? Which participatory space(s) best allow(s) civil society to exert influence on sustainable development negotiations? These are the two research questions the present chapter will address. It starts by delineating my assessment framework for assessing and explaining influence in the next section. Then, sections 5.3 and 5.4 present the findings, while the concluding section reflects on the results.

5.2. Assessment Framework

Influence

Defining influence can be complicated. Political science and international relations scholars often define influence in relation to power, and particularly, state power. Kalevi Holsti (1988) for instance views influence as an aspect of power, or a means to an end, while Roger Scruton (1996) states that influence is a form of power but distinct from control and coercion. Leo Huberts (1994) makes a distinction between power and influence, according to which the latter is a practice that, if repeatedly successful, sustains power.

To exert influence, actors deploy insider tactics (persuasion) and outsider tactics (blaming and shaming, mass protests, boycotts). While insider tactics are mostly used within intergovernmental negotiations to try to convince government representatives to adopt civil society's perspective, outsider tactics are carried outside the negotiating hubs. Both tactics may or may not transfer into influence, depending on various factors.

26 With the exception of Rietig (2011) who carried out a comparative assessment of the influence of insider and outsider activities of NGOs and academics in climate negotiations.

Insider tactics most likely influence if civil society actors possess sufficient capabilities (economic resources, knowledge, and information), articulate feasible and concrete proposals, deploy policy-entrepreneurial strategies to build coalitions with like-minded stakeholders, in a timely manner with respect to the formulation of governmental positions. Outsider tactics most likely impact when these are framed positively, with a clear message and simple demands, attract high media attention and mobilize a critical and representative mass of people (Rietig, 2011).

Insider and outsider tactics however share the assumption that influence is only possible when communication occurs (Knoke, 1990: 3), be it in conversational (persuasion) or symbolic ways (mass protests). Studies on civil society influence in global policymaking rely on this communication imperative to define influence. In an extensive study of the influence of global NGOs on the climate and biodiversity conventions, Bas Arts understands influence "as the achievement of (a part of) one's policy goal with regard to an outcome in treaty formation and implementation, which is (at least partly) caused by one's own and intentional intervention in the political arena and process concerned" (1998: 58). Peter Newell (2000) complements Arts' definition with an unintentional element, analyzing not only the observable and intentional interactions between governments and NGOs but also tacit forms of influence. Similarly, in a comprehensive theoretical and empirical work, Michele Betsill and Elisabeth Corell argue that "influence occurs when one actor intentionally communicates to another so as to alter the latter's behavior from what would have occurred otherwise" (2008: 24).

This chapter focuses on civil society participatory spaces inside negotiating hubs as the main communication channels through which civil society actors deliver written and oral interventions to exert influence on intergovernmental policymaking. Acknowledging that influence relies on a multidirectional flow of communication that engages a multiplicity of actors, influence is understood in this chapter as the sum of all effects on intergovernmental policymaking observable for, and attributable to, civil society interventions delivered within participatory spaces.

Building on Betsill and Corell's framework, I qualitatively assess the influence on the negotiation process and outputs with four indicators, forming a sequence:

- **Issue-framing.** First, issue-framing refers to how a policy issue was conceptualized prior to and/or during the negotiations (Betsill & Corell, 2008: 33). Influence on issue-framing occurs when there is a correlation between the frames produced and/or used by civil society actors and those used by negotiators in their statements and/or reflected in the final intergovernmental agreement.
- **Position-shifting.** Second, since government representatives ultimately decide on the text of an intergovernmental agreement, shaping and shifting the position of a key state or group of states may reflect civil society influence.

While acknowledging that position-shifting is rarely the result of civil society interventions alone, I nonetheless consider civil society as influent when specific language or ideas are reflected in a government's position consequently to civil society interventions.

- **Goal formulation.** Third, influence on goal formulation occurs when the intergovernmental agreement reflects civil society positions on what should be done to address a sustainable development issue. In some cases, specific text proposed by civil society actors in their interventions may appear in the final agreement. More likely, I may find elements of proposals formulated by civil society actors or ideas consistent with their recommendations.
- **Influence on future procedures.** Finally, influence on future procedures occurs when civil society interventions create or shape institutions and/or procedural rules that secure enhanced opportunities for civil society participation in subsequent negotiations on sustainable development.

I use a qualitative measurement in terms of high or low levels of influence. A change in the entire sequence of indicators reflects high influence. Influence is moderate when civil society interventions shape at least one of the process indicators (issue-framing and position-shifting) and one of the output indicators (goal formulation and influence on future procedures). Finally, influence is low if there is no evidence of change either in the process or output indicators. The precise operationalization, key results and qualitative measurement of influence are further detailed in Table 10.

Table 10. Operationalization of influence and key results

Variable	Indicator	Core result	Qualitative measurement
Influence on process	*Issue-framing*	Poor influence on the framing of income inequality	Low
	Position-shifting	Limited influence in shifting the positions of key countries	Moderate
Influence on output	*Goal formulation*	High influence in securing the inequality goal in the final agreement Poor influence in securing an ambitious income inequality target	Moderate
	Influence on procedures	High influence in shaping rules of procedure for civil society participation in future negotiations	High

Source: author.

Independent Variables

Betsill and Corell provide excellent tools to trace and evaluate influence of one or more civil society actors in intergovernmental negotiations. However, the framework does not

allow for distinctions between different strategies and formats of interventions. Following an inductive approach based on interview data, I identified three independent variables to further explain influence and refine Betsill and Corell's framework. All relate to the format of participatory spaces, which has been identified as a core element affecting the efficiency and influence of participation, primarily at national level (Fiorino, 1990; National Research Council, 2008; Rowe & Frewer, 2000). I conceptualize format as the different ways in which these spaces are provided to civil society and operationalize it as follows (all considered equally important):

- **Degree of formality.** First, a participatory space can either be formal or informal. Formal spaces are intentionally and explicitly organized to invite civil society participation. They are commissioned by authoritative actors (governments, international organizations, and co-chairs of the negotiations) and participation is framed by official rules of procedure. Formal spaces include the negotiating session where civil society actors usually have the right to speak, and ad-hoc, face-to-face or online consultations. Conversely, participatory spaces are informal when participation is not the main and only objective and whereby participation is framed by unofficial rules. Informal spaces may be commissioned by governments, international organizations and/or civil society actors. They include side events, multilateral or bilateral meetings with government representatives and/or the co-chairs of the negotiations. I hypothesize that the more formal the participatory space, the higher the chances of civil society influence.
- **Access conditions.** Second, a participatory space can either be based on open or restricted access conditions. Rules of access are determined by the commissioners of participatory spaces or by the accreditation policy of the negotiations for which civil society input is sought. I hypothesize that the more open the access conditions, the more inclusive the participatory space. Governments are expected to be more responsive to civil society demands when these reflect the preferences of a broad and representative sample of actors.
- **Timing.** Third, civil society influence varies according to when the participatory space is provided both in the negotiation cycle and during the negotiating session. With respect to the former, influence is likely to be high when the participatory space is set up before governments define their position. Conversely, influence is likely to be low when the participatory space is set up back to back to the intergovernmental summit that concludes the negotiation cycle. With respect to the later, influence is likely to be high when the participatory space is organized at a time that allows for a large participation of governments.

Table 11 summarizes my independent variables and assesses whether the results confirm initial hypotheses.

Table 11. The Participatory space as a factor of influence

Variable		**Result**
Degree of formality	Formal	*Unconfirmed* Influence is higher when civil society engages in informal participatory spaces: influence is enhanced through repeated informal interactions between civil society and government representatives.
	Informal	
Access conditions	Open	*Unconfirmed* Influence is higher when civil society engages in exclusive participatory spaces: influence depends on personal contact and on the capacities of civil society actors to repeatedly attend the negotiations.
	Restricted	
Timing	In the negotiation cycle	*Confirmed* Influence is higher when the participatory space is provided early in the negotiation cycle, at a time that allows for participation of governments.
	In the negotiating session	

Source: author.

Influence is evaluated on civil society interventions within the intergovernmental negotiations on the SDGs (2012-2015). Specifically, the OWG negotiations provided civil society with several participatory spaces, including:

- Speaking slots in the OWG negotiating sessions;
- Hearings between the Major Groups and other stakeholders, and the OWG members and co-chairs, prior to the beginning of each negotiating session;
- Side events in New York;
- A global MYWorld survey;
- An online platform to upload position papers; and
- Multilateral or bilateral meetings with the OWG members and co-chairs.

The following section provides an overall assessment of the influence of civil society interventions on the SDGs negotiations. Then, section 5.4 explains the observed level of influence based on different formats of participatory spaces, while the concluding section reflects on the results.

5.3. Findings: The Influence of Civil Society on the Shaping of the Sustainable Development Goals

Issue-Framing

The influence of civil society interventions on the framing of the issues addressed by the negotiations was poor. Regarding income inequality, civil society has been unsuccessful in framing the issue as a matter of reducing both poverty *and* extreme wealth, despite repeated interventions. In the 9th OWG session in March 2014, oral statements delivered by four Major Groups (NGO, Women, Children and Youth and Indigenous Peoples) and civil society coalitions (Beyond 2015) claimed that closing the gap between rich and poor also required focusing on extreme wealth reduction. In the 11th OWG session in May 2014, a broad coalition of civil society actors proposed targets to reduce income inequality from both the lowest and highest income quintiles, through redistributive policies and progressive taxation including taxes on wealth concentration (UN, 2014c). However, such interventions appeared to neither shape nor change governments' conceptualization of income inequality, which they kept framing as a poverty alleviation issue. This is exemplified in the statement delivered by the United States, Canada and Israel in the tenth OWG session in April 2014 that called to address income inequality through the reduction of the number of people living below national poverty lines (UN, 2014b).

More generally, the negotiations did not question the traditional vision of economic growth and industrialization as fundamental drivers for development. Although some delegations stressed that economic growth in and of itself does not necessarily lead to poverty alleviation,[27] civil society failed to move away the framing of the negotiations from a growth-oriented development paradigm towards a development model cognizant of the social and environmental limits to growth. A civil society actor reported that he faced strong opposition when he suggested the negotiations should address planetary boundaries,[28] because "influential delegations said: 'we're not going to participate in that discussion, we need to develop, if I can't talk to my citizens about improving and developing, I'm out of office'" (Interviewee 9).

In sum, neither on income inequality nor on the broader development paradigm conveyed in the negotiations have the frames used by civil society changed the knowledge and belief systems of government representatives and influenced their behavior. Does this mean civil society interventions have not influenced their position either? I examine this issue below.

27 In particular, the statements of Brazil, Nicaragua, Spain, Italy and Turkey delivered in the tenth OWG session reflected that economic growth has often led to higher inequalities and concentration of wealth.

28 Introduced in 2009 by Rockström et al., the framework identified nine planetary boundaries within which humanity can develop. However, by crossing these boundaries, humanity could face abrupt or irreversible environmental changes.

Position-Shifting

Overall, civil society interventions moderately influenced the positions of key countries or negotiating groups. Admittedly, civil society actors, through expertise provision, often contributed to the formulation of the positions of the delegations and permanent missions of small countries (Interviewee 57; Interviewee 67). However, the positions of key countries, which had greater weight in the negotiations, were more difficult to either shape or shift. At the beginning of the OWG negotiations in March 2014, there was almost no support for a dedicated goal on climate change except for the delegations of Bangladesh, Bhutan and the Least Developed Countries (ENB, 2014c). In April 2014, a climate goal further gained the support of the Solomon Islands, Mexico and Peru (ENB, 2014c). Two months later, key countries moved away from opposing to a neutral position, including the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), the United States, Canada, Israel, Norway, Denmark, Ireland, France, Germany and Switzerland (UN, 2014b). In the last two OWG sessions, governments were still divided regarding the inclusion of climate as an SDG. In the thirteenth OWG session, a civil society actor reported that:

> "In the latest hours, Korea, Djibouti, Egypt, Spain and Tanzania also supported the climate goal. Then at the final hour G77 [the Group of 77 developing countries] joined, collectively. You really could see how positions moved in the final hour, due to some tradeoff between countries. What was really important were the countries who were not supportive but who said [they] wouldn't mind having a climate goal. These were bigger countries like Japan, Italy, Turkey, Pakistan, China, Iran, Brazil, India and South Africa" (Interviewee 28).

Therefore, position-shifting of larger countries in the last negotiating hours was more attributable to political tradeoffs between countries than to civil society interventions. An interviewee blatantly stressed that "[those] tradeoffs are unfortunately not based on substance but may have to do with the appointment of the next [UN] Secretary General, or with Egypt's wish to get a seat on the Security Council..." (Interviewee 68).

Rather than shifting their positions, civil society interventions provided additional arguments to governments to strengthen their position. To advocate for Goal 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies, several delegations referred to the MYWorld Survey, which results showed that an honest and responsive government was ranking as one of the top priorities for citizens for the SDGs. For instance, the United States, Canada and Israel mentioned the results of the Survey in their statement in the fifth, eighth and tenth sessions of the OWG. The troika stated "publics around the world, all our publics, are demanding new seriousness about honest, fair, and responsive governance. In the MYWorld Survey, every region of the world ranked "honest and responsive governance" among people's top 5 priorities […]. That's a powerful demand"

(UN, 2014b). Similarly, in the tenth OWG session, the troika Australia, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom argued that "1.6 million people who voted in the MYWorld survey put 'honest and accountable government' and 'freedom from crime and violence' among the top 7 issues they want the SDGs to address. It is crucial to the credibility of the SDGs that we respond to the evidence—both academic and from the extensive global consultations" (UN, 2014b).

In sum, civil society interventions alone failed to directly shift the positions of key governments or groups of countries in the SDGs negotiations. They were however more influential in providing refined arguments to negotiators who used them to further advocate for a particular goal or target. Those negotiators were better equipped to bargain, forge coalitions over an issue and eventually shift the positions of their most reluctant counterparts. Such coalitions between civil society actors and like-minded, powerful countries were systematic in the negotiations, specifically on the most controversial SDGs (Interviewee 47; Interviewee 60; Interviewee 65). Therefore, civil society interventions may have to some extent impacted the outputs of the negotiations. I turn to this question below, starting with influence on goal formulation.

Goal Formulation

The influence of civil society interventions on the final agreement was moderate. Admittedly, they contributed to ensure the existence of several SDGs, including the goals on climate, peace, justice and strong institutions, and inequality (Interviewee 62). On inequality specifically, after civil society first advocated for a dedicated goal in the fifth OWG session in November 2013, the first draft agreement released by the co-chairs on 24 February 2014 included a separate goal proposal on the promotion of equality, with a target aiming to promote differentially high per capita income growth at the bottom of the income distribution. But in two iterations of the draft agreement released by the co-chairs ahead of the eleventh and twelfth OWG sessions in May and June 2014, the inequality goal was merged with Goal 1 on poverty eradication and the income inequality target was integrated to Goal 8 on economic growth. As a result, major coalitions of civil society organizations (Beyond2015, Initiative for Equality, Global Call to Action Against Poverty), after circulating a draft Google document for input among their constituencies, coordinated a statement delineating arguments to reinstate the inequality goal. In 48 hours, 175 civil society organizations had signed the document, which was sent out to the co-chairs and governments ("A Stand-alone Goal on Inequality is Essential", 2015). The lobbying of civil society contributed to ensure the existence of the inequality goal in the final agreement (Interviewee 58; Interviewee 65), among other factors such as the political will of key governments from developing and developed countries, including Brazil, Denmark and Norway (Interviewee 60).

However, civil society interventions failed to secure ambitious targets within the SDGs. The income inequality target does not quantify the level of growth in the incomes

of the poorest 40 percent, whereas many civil society interventions recommended a concrete target to reduce income inequality by a said amount per year. The final target asks for any growth at all in the incomes of the poorest 40 percent, provided that it is higher than the national average. This implies that if, on average, incomes stagnate at national level, the target could be met with an increase of 0.01 percent in the incomes of the poorest 40 percent. In addition, the target focuses on the bottom 40 percent of the population but ignores the top 10 percent. The income inequality target allows room for greater concentration in the highest income quintiles, which research recognized as a driver of inequality (Palma, 2011). This also implies that the target could be met by an increase in the income shares of both the bottom 40 percent and the top 10percent, at the expense of the middle (Cobham et al., 2015).

In sum, the SDGs reflect elements of the proposals formulated by civil society actors, or ideas consistent with their recommendations. Civil society interventions were indeed successful in obtaining that controversial issues should be covered by dedicated goals or targets. However, these are far from reflecting the ambition of the recommendations initially provided by civil society.

Influence on Future Procedures

Although they did not result in the creation of new institutions, civil society interventions did shape procedural rules that secured enhanced participatory opportunities in future negotiations on sustainable development.

The negotiations on the SDGs were very consultative of civil society, compared to traditional intergovernmental processes carried out at the General Assembly which usually excludes civil society from having a proactive role. An expert on civil society participation at the UN argued that civil society became highly involved in the SDGs negotiations as a result of the interventions of key civil society representatives in formulating and influencing the rules of procedure of the OWG (Interviewee 66). Indeed, in March 2013, the Major Groups drafted a proposal for civil society engagement in the OWG, the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group, which they submitted to the co-chairs (Stakeholder Forum, 2013). Although these did not accept all the proposals from the Advisory Group, civil society was able to access and comment on draft agreements, have regular meetings with OWG members and seat as official observers in the OWG sessions (UN, 2013e).

In addition, following the OWG negotiations, civil society actors advocated for the provisions for civil society participation in the OWG to be replicated in the intergovernmental negotiations on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development between January and June 2015 (also called the post-2015 negotiations). Major Groups, Beyond2015 and GCAP called for a non-regression of the civil society participation modalities for the post-2015 negotiations with respect to those of the OWG in a letter addressed to the President of the GA (UN, 2014d). In a subsequent decision on the

modalities for the post-2015 negotiations, the GA decided that the process would be open, transparent and inclusive, building upon the practices of the OWG (UN, 2014e).

Civil society and government representatives argued that such incremental advocacy has resulted in a normative advance in terms of participation within the UN (Interviewee 27; Interviewee 60; Interviewee 68). In fact, the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), the UN platform responsible for the follow-up and review of the SDGs, continues with this level of engagement, whereby civil society actors can attend and intervene in official meetings, access official information, submit oral and written contributions and formulate recommendations (UN, 2013c). In particular, paragraphs 14 to 16 of the resolution establishing the organizational aspects of the HLPF were the result of collaborative efforts between a few Major Groups representatives and negotiators from democratically inclined governments (Interviewee 66).

Finally, civil society interventions in the negotiations on the SDGs have resulted in the inclusion of additional civil society actors in intergovernmental policymaking on sustainable development. These actors were formally recognized by the HLPF (paragraph 16), which encourages the Major Groups and other stakeholders, such as private philanthropic organizations, educational and academic entities, persons with disabilities, volunteer groups, to autonomously establish and maintain effective coordination mechanisms for participation (UN, 2013c).

In sum, civil society engagement during the SDGs negotiations has contributed to develop a culture of openness and participation in intergovernmental policymaking on sustainable development. In particular, civil society interventions have shaped rules of procedure that secured enhanced participation opportunities of an increased number of actors in subsequent negotiations and institutions.

Overall, my results indicate that the influence of civil society on the negotiations was moderate. I found only limited evidence of influence for issue-framing and position-shifting. However, they did contribute to prevent some issues from being dropped from the negotiations and shape procedures for future civil society engagement.

5.4. Explaining Influence: The Role of the Participatory Space

Despite the increasing number of participatory spaces created for civil society to provide input into global policymaking, the influence of civil society interventions on the negotiations on the SDGs remained limited. The question thus arises of how to explain this paradox. I now turn to this point, focusing on the format of participatory spaces.

Degree of Formality

The influence of civil society interventions varies substantially with the degree of formality of the participatory spaces in which these interventions are delivered. I found that the less formal a participatory space, the more influential civil society interventions. The Morning Hearings convened by the OWG co-chairs to formally involve civil society in the shaping of the SDGs had very little influence on the negotiations (Interviewee 9; Interviewee 34; Interviewee 57; Interviewee 65). Both civil society and government representatives considered the Hearings as a symbolic space created to satisfy the principle of civil society inclusion in intergovernmental policymaking (Interviewee 67). A government representative argued that: "many civil society groups go in these formal presentations such as the Morning Hearings [to deliver their positions]. But that's not where you persuade governments to back up your position, it's rather when you take them for a coffee, sit down with them and go through the issue. […] These formal discussions seldom influence" (Interviewee 69). A civil society actor corroborated this view in the following terms:

> "Our job is to get member states to listen to us, but a lot of these [formal] spaces intended for that fail at that, and we have to find other ways to do it [such as] creat[ing] as many personal relationships with negotiators as possible. And you leverage those contacts to pass on proposals, and have meetings with government representatives. If you are just going to these Hearings, you are not accomplishing anything. We're going to the Morning Hearings because we are civil society actors and we appreciate the attempt, but we never consider them to be that important. What's important is that at the end of the formal negotiations, we go and sit down with a government representative who delivered a statement and say 'look, we really agree with this, we have several ideas that might push it', and if it's a good negotiator he'll say 'all right let me see something and I'll get back to you'. That's how you create a personal relationship, that's how you get a real exchange of information, that's how you influence" (Interviewee 8).

Increasing interaction and trust between civil society and governments by building personal relationships is all the more important since within the OWG negotiations, "only a tiny part of the work was done in the negotiating room. Around 80 percent of meetings took place in-between sessions" (Kőrösi, 2015: 75).

Similarly, online consultations formally commissioned by international organizations, such as the MYWorld Survey, had low influence on the negotiations. Civil society actors themselves were skeptical about the capacity of MYWorld to influence the shaping of the SDGs. One indeed argued that he considered the survey as "fluff, as theater [since] there was no attempt to take the outputs from that survey into the

negotiations. […] You can't just distribute a survey to governments who would go: 'oh absolutely right, if only we'd known!' It's not how it works. It works on personal contact" (Interviewee 65).

In sum, my results show that the less formal the participatory space, the higher the chances of civil society influencing intergovernmental negotiations. Influence depends on trust, which is enhanced through repeated informal interaction between civil society actors, governments, and the co-chairs. The influence of civil society interventions may further vary with the access conditions to a given participatory space. I turn to this point below.

Access Conditions

I found that influence is higher when access to participatory spaces is restricted to a limited sample of civil society actors. Since these are more likely to influence when close to government representatives and the co-chairs of the negotiations, they need to be able to attend the negotiations on a regular basis. However, not every civil society actor can have a direct physical and repeated access to the negotiations, and even less so to government representatives. Access to the participatory spaces provided within global negotiating hubs such as the UN Headquarters in New York is constrained by the rules of procedure established by the UN and its member states for a given negotiation, and by the resources available to civil society for attending such process.

Access to the OWG negotiations was limited to NGOs in consultative status with the UN ECOSOC, and to those civil society actors that had the capacities to attend the monthly negotiations in New York. As I already mentioned in previous chapters, there were almost 4,000 NGOs with consultative status in 2013 (UNDESA NGO Branch, 2014). However, such access conditions restricted participation to highly institutionalized civil society actors, with important human and financial resources. A government representative argued that the most influential NGOs are those that have the capacities to be present both in the negotiations and the corridors, and have personal contacts with the negotiators (Interviewee 69). Similarly, a civil society actor reported that "NGOs usually establish a presence in key negotiating hubs such as New York, Geneva or Nairobi to be able to attend the negotiations on a daily basis and get higher chances to influence their outputs. This means there is the same person sitting there at the microphone every day" (Interviewee 66). Both participation within negotiations based at the UN Headquarters and direct access to government representatives is therefore restricted to an elite group of professionalized actors (Interviewee 68).

Conversely, open access participatory spaces, allowing for higher representativeness in the sample of civil society participants, were also the least influential ones. Civil society actors could nominate themselves to participate in the OWG Hearings. A steering committee then selected among the nominations according to demographic criteria such as gender and country. However, government representatives

are less likely to take up the positions of civil society actors when these are outsiders. A civil society actor corroborated this in the following terms:

> "In the SDGs negotiations, people from all around the world could nominate themselves through an online system. Even a small farmer in Africa could apply. Let's say he is elected: he goes to the UN, says something during three minutes, and then goes back home and you will never see him again. […] It sounds very democratic and inclusive, but eventually it's not, because the person who sits there has no connection with the negotiations or with the civil society actors that are following the process, and even less so with government representatives" (Interviewee 70).

In sum, my results indicate that the most influential participatory spaces are also the most exclusive ones. As influence depends on personal contact, access to government representatives and the co-chairs of the negotiations is more likely to be restricted to the civil society actors that are well-acquainted with the unwritten rules of UN-based intergovernmental policymaking. Influence is therefore an insider's game.

Timing

Influence varies with the timing of civil society involvement in the negotiations. First, timing within a given session of negotiations is important. The OWG Hearings had no direct influence on the SDGs negotiations because they were set up ahead of each negotiating session, when governments usually coordinate with their negotiating group. Similarly, civil society interventions scheduled during the negotiating session, after hours of intergovernmental debates, are inaudible by governments and have no influence (Interviewee 69).

Second, civil society actors have higher chances of influence when they engage in participatory spaces provided early in intergovernmental policymaking. In the first, stock-taking phase of the OWG, many ideas from civil society were picked up by governments because at that time, they still didn't exactly know which issues they wanted the SDGs to address. A civil society actor reported that Goal 11 on sustainable cities could be assigned to the work of the Communitas Coalition whose papers were provided early in the work of the OWG (Interviewee 65). By the time the OWG reached its negotiating phase, governments had already defined their priorities and positions, leaving very little room for maneuver and influence to civil society. As a civil society actor reported, government representatives "have strict instructions which they cannot deviate from […]. Civil society can provide objectively very good insights, but it's not going to have any impact on the negotiations" (Interviewee 68).

In sum, my results indicate that civil society actors have higher chances of influence if they engage in participatory spaces that are provided early in the negotiations, at a time that allows for the participation of government representatives.

5.5. Conclusion

With the example of the intergovernmental negotiations on the SDGs, this chapter has shown that civil society influence on global policymaking was moderate. Specifically, civil society interventions were influential in preventing some issues from being dropped from the negotiations and in developing a culture of participation in global policymaking on sustainable development. However, they had only a marginal effect on issue-framing, on shifting the positions of governments, and on the final agreement. And yet, many hailed the SDGs negotiations as the most democratic and inclusive process in UN history. Although these results confirm previous research, the present chapter provides an original argument to explain influence by focusing on the role of the participatory space. Its counterintuitive findings reveal a reverse correlation between civil society influence, and inclusive, democratic global policymaking. In particular, the findings showed that civil society actors have higher chances of influence when they engage in informal participatory spaces. Yet these spaces are also the most exclusive ones, to which highly organized, professionalized civil society actors have a privileged access, compared to the resourceless. The practice of global policymaking as exemplified in the definition of the SDGs is thus still very far from the normative principles of equal participation of all affected that various models of global democracy require (i.e. cosmopolitanism, world government, or deliberative democracy).

Now, how to disentangle the democracy—influence paradox? Given that civil society influence is positively correlated to elitism, which changes could be undertaken so that elitism would eventually benefit the inclusion of a broader sample of actors in global norm production? Drawing from theories of democratic elitism, both democratization and influence could still be achieved by democratizing civil society itself. This could encompass, for instance, periodic elections to ensure elite renewal, to which not only institutionalized (NGOs) but also non-institutionalized actors (social movements and citizens) could participate. In addition, this could include the development and strengthening of mechanisms to ensure accountability between civil society elites and their grassroots. Tackling the democratic deficits that pervade civil society would enhance its capacity to perform its functions, including the coproduction of global norms, and eventually contribute to the democratization of global politics.

CHAPTER 6

Transforming Our World? Discursive Representation in Global Sustainable Development Negotiations

This chapter has been submitted as an article in the *Journal of Environment and Development*.

6.1. Introduction

The introductory chapter of this research has stressed that the prospects for global democracy have been receiving serious attention from scholars and political reformers alike (Bray & Slaughter, 2015; Cabrera, 2015; Dryzek, 2011; Dryzek et al., 2011; Kuyper, 2013, 2015; Scholte, 2011; Schwartzberg, 2012; Stevenson & Dryzek, 2012). Similarly, the democratization of global politics has become an empirical demand that has mobilized civil society worldwide and has even resulted in violent protests. The "Occupy Wall Street" movement, and the earlier anti-globalization protests in Seattle and Genoa, are examples that illustrate a more widely felt need for global citizenship. However, as the conditions for electoral democracy do not exist at global level (Keohane, 2006: 75), other ways of thinking democracy in global politics are being envisioned. One of the most prominent empirical materializations of global democracy is an increased participation of civil society actors within intergovernmental institutions.

However, it still falls short of achieving global democracy as envisioned in academic and empirical demands for mainly two reasons (see for instance Bäckstrand, 2006; Bohman, 2010; Cohen & Sabel, 1997, 2005; Dryzek, 2000, 2006, 2010; Dryzek et al., 2011; Held, 1995; Held & Koenig-Archibugi, 2005; MacDonald, 2008). First, in Chapters 3 and 4, I have argued that participation in global civil society consultations is skewed towards highly professionalized and resourceful civil society actors based in developed countries, who are frequently overrepresented in formal participatory mechanisms compared to grassroots organizations, social movements, and citizens from developing countries. Second, Chapter 5 has shown that existing participatory mechanisms that allow civil society actors to formally express their preferences during intergovernmental negotiations are seldom consequential. In other words, the outputs of civil society consultations rarely feed into intergovernmental agreements.

Proponents of the deliberative stream in global democracy theory advance discursive representation as a way to overcome the limitations of multi-stakeholder democracy (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2008; Dryzek & Stevenson, 2011; Stevenson & Dryzek, 2012). In particular, they argue that discursive representation can redeem the promise of global democracy when the participation or representation of all affected by a collective decision is infeasible (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2008: 481). Hajer and Versteeg define a discourse as "an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and political phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices" (2005: 175). As actors with different interests may support all or part of the same discourse, discursive representation has therefore the potential to advance inclusiveness through ideas and concepts, and further global democratization even though certain actors remain excluded from global policymaking.

To what extent does discursive representation effectively contribute to the democratization of global policymaking? Specifically, is discursive representation more inclusive and democratic than actor-based representation? Academic research has been prolific in assessing discursive representation within informal spaces, defined as all the places outside of global decision-making centers where a diversity of viewpoints and discourses can interact without legal restrictions (Dryzek & Stevenson, 2011). However, by primarily focusing on informal spaces, these scholars have ignored the possibility that the discourses conveyed within spaces of authoritative decision-making such as intergovernmental negotiations may actually advance democratization.[29]

This chapter maps the different discourses on sustainability conveyed during the elaboration of the SDGs and explores the extent to which each of these discourses were represented in the negotiations and by whom. Mapping the different conceptions of environmental sustainability and their relative weight, as well as determining whether these conceptions are tied to specific actors or independent from an actor variable, is important for two main reasons. First, by tracing whether a linguistic regularity can be found in the negotiations on the SDGs, discourse analysis is expected to deepen our understanding of the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion from global policymaking on sustainable development. Second, if the SDGs reflect various discursive perspectives on sustainable development, they will most likely enhance their universal relevance, mobilize a broader coalition of actors, and ultimately facilitate their implementation (Hajer et al., 2015).

I have organized this chapter as follows. The sections thereafter introduce the key criteria operationalizing discursive representation (Section 6.2) and empirically evaluate them for the SDGs negotiations (Section 6.3). Specifically, I assess discursive diversity and discourse coalitions in the negotiations on the SDGs. The final section concludes the analysis and reflects on the results.

6.2. Assessment Framework

Building on the work of global deliberative democrats, I operationalize discursive representation into two criteria to assess the democratic character of the SDGs negotiations from a discursive perspective: discursive diversity and discourse coalitions. Discursive diversity refers to the extent to which intergovernmental negotiations express competing viewpoints about sustainability, which I categorized into the four main discourses of mainstream sustainability, progressive sustainability, a limits discourse, and radical sustainability, building on existing literature. Discourse coalitions aims to measure the extent to which discourses foster cross-constituency coalitions. I discuss the precise operationalization of these criteria below.

29 Notable exceptions include Dryzek and Stevenson (2011) and Stevenson and Dryzek (2012) who analyze discursive representation in global climate negotiations.

Discursive Diversity

The criterion of **discursive diversity** refers to the relative representation of competing sustainability discourses in the negotiations on the SDGs. Sustainability means different things to different people, and the overarching concept of sustainable development has led to a diversity of discourses that legitimize different and competing sociopolitical projects (see for instance Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2006; Clapp & Dauvergne, 2011; Dryzek, 2000, 2005, 2010; Dryzek & Stevenson, 2011; Hajer, 1995; Hopwood et al., 2005; Stevenson, 2015; Stevenson & Dryzek, 2012). While acknowledging that intergovernmental negotiations are only one space where different visions of sustainability interact, assessing the diversity of discourses expressed within formal decision-making spaces is important for evaluating the inclusiveness of representation in global policymaking, and ultimately its democratic character (Hajer & Versteeg, 2005: 176). Drawing on deliberative democracy theory, I expect that the more diverse and competing the substance of the negotiations, the more inclusive the negotiations (Dryzek, 2000, 2006). Therefore, discursive diversity is met if the negotiations on the SDGs represent the competing approaches of mainstream sustainability, progressive sustainability, a limits discourse, and radical sustainability. Building on Hayley Stevenson and John Dryzek's work (2011, 2012, 2014), I introduce these four discourses below, differentiating them along their relationship to the global economy and the global political institutions.

First, *mainstream sustainability* is a conservative approach on both economic and political terms. This discourse accepts that action to stop and reverse environmental degradation is necessary but that this can be defined within the existing parameters of the global economy by actors and institutions already endowed with power and authority. In this discourse, sustainable development is primarily centered on values of economic and material growth which are deemed compatible with environmental sustainability. This can be done through decoupling growth from the use of resources. Action towards environmental sustainability only needs greater political will as well as appropriate economic incentives to fully deliver. In this approach, markets are the main agent responsible for leading transformation towards sustainability, although governments may also have a role in steering the market towards transformation. Such transformation encompasses solutions such as market-based instruments (e.g. cap and trade, taxes, sustainable public procurement, labels) and continued improvements in technology and efficiency to advance industrialization and to increase GDP, profits, and jobs. Finally, mainstream sustainability envisages human and natural worlds as external to one another, whereby nature is commodified to provide societies and economies with services and benefits to sustain growth. This discourse recognizes that the sustainable use of natural resources is important to secure future economic growth gains and that the financialization of nature is one of the most efficient ways to achieve it.

Second, *progressive sustainability* is an economically conservative, yet politically reformist approach. Sustainable development is still centered on economic growth, which is deemed compatible with environmental sustainability, yet with the overarching objective of human well-being. This can only be achieved through a redistribution of power to ensure greater equality. Environmental sustainability should serve human rights and needs while evening out inequalities between developed and developing countries (Dryzek & Stevenson, 2011). In this discourse, both governments and civil society are the main actors responsible for steering change towards more sustainable and equitable societies, with a mix of policy solutions that include both economic incentives and command-and-control measures such as publicly-funded technology transfer, direct investments to developing countries, or emissions and energy efficiency standards. Finally, like mainstream sustainability, nature is still conceived as external to human societies and commodified to sustain economic growth, while its conservation is deemed essential to secure development gains.

Third, a *limits discourse* is an economically reformist, yet politically conservative approach to sustainability. According to this approach, environmental sustainability is not deemed to be compatible with existing neoliberal development, unconstrained economic growth, material consumption, and population growth. The solutions developed under the mainstream or progressive sustainability discourses and based on technological improvements cannot allow humanity to transcend planetary limits (Stevenson & Dryzek, 2012: 4). As a result, a limits discourse calls for a radical reorientation of the economy. However, such reorientation does not require a redistribution of power in the global political order. Indeed, transformative measures towards environmental sustainability can be implemented under the auspices of existing authorities or through the voluntary actions of non-state actors towards behavioral change. Like progressive sustainability, authoritative institutions such as governments, and civil society actors are leading transformation towards a more frugal and sustainable economy. In this approach, human economies and societies are integrated in an overarching natural world, from which they are highly dependent. It recognizes the existence of ecological limits that cannot be transcended and will necessarily constrain human development, both in economic and demographic terms (Dryzek & Stevenson, 2011).

Fourth, *radical sustainability* is a transformative approach that seeks to break with existing global economic and political structures. This discourse advocates for an overhaul of current growth-based, environmentally-damaging economies and societies, for a reform of distant and marginalizing political institutions, and for small-scale community development that strives for human rights, equity, and justice (Stevenson & Dryzek, 2012). This must encompass a redistribution of power from up (governments and markets) to bottom (civil society and citizens). Therefore, civil society, and social and environmental movements specifically, are considered as the main agents steering change towards sustainability. Policy solutions to address sustainability challenges

may be rights-based, with a legal – ideally constitutional – framework that recognizes socioeconomic rights as basic human rights, and the rights of nature. Solutions also encompass grassroots initiatives that may be collaborative (e.g. partnerships) or disruptive (e.g. boycotts). Like the limits discourse, radical sustainability recognizes the existence of ecological limits and considers that human economies and societies are highly integrated in and interconnected with nature. Finally, rather than commodifying nature, this discourse personifies the natural world.

Discursive diversity is evaluated on the basis of two indicators which seek to determine which approach to the global economic and political order, and ultimately which discourse, the negotiations expressed the most (see Table 12). The first indicator evaluates the respective weight of a conservative or reformist approach to global economic and political structures in the negotiations by coding and counting the number of texts that relate to either one of these approaches. The second indicator further assesses the relative representation of mainstream, progressive, limits and radical sustainability discourses by counting the occurrences of the most characteristic terminology associated with either conservative or reformist approaches to the global economic and political order.

This terminology was drawn out both from existing literature and from reviewing the different texts delivered in the negotiations. For instance, the terms *economic growth*, *green economy*, *green growth*, and *industrialization* reflect a conservative approach to the global economy, and may therefore be associated with a mainstream or a progressive sustainability discourse. Conversely, the terms *environmental justice*, *ecological debt*, and *Mother Earth* or the concepts of *sufficiency economy* and *Buen Vivir*, which both call for an overhaul of current capitalist modes of production and consumption, reflect a reformist approach to the global economy and may therefore express either a limits discourse or a radical sustainability discourse. Finally, *human rights*, *well-being*, and *equity* reflect a reformist approach to the global political order, and may therefore express either a progressive or a radical sustainability discourse. While acknowledging that these are non-exhaustive lists, assessing the occurrences of selected words in the negotiations on the SDGs still provides relevant insights into the diversity and representation of sustainability discourses in global policymaking. These indicators allowed me to determine which sustainability discourse, among mainstream, progressive, limits and radical, was most (and least) represented in the SDGs negotiations.

Table 12: The discourses of environmental sustainability

Economic order \ Political order	Conservative	Reformist
Conservative	*Mainstream sustainability*	*Progressive sustainability*
Reformist	*Limits discourse*	*Radical sustainability*

Source: author, building on Stevenson & Dryzek (2012).

I assessed discursive diversity using a two-step approach. In a first step, I read and assessed each of the 122 texts delivered by governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society in the stock-taking phase of the OWG and available on the website of the UN (see methodology section in Chapter 2, pp. 31-32) to determine whether they represented a mainstream, progressive, limits or radical sustainability discourse. Specifically, I attributed codes to different segments of each text, considering whether they expressed a conservative or reformist approach to the global economic and political order. I counted the number of text segments that either related to a conservative or reformist approach to the global economy and the global political order. Then, depending on which approach collected the most text segments, I determined which of the four discourses was most expressed in the text. I systematically used this approach for each text and was eventually able to count the number of texts that either expressed a mainstream, progressive, limits, or radical sustainability discourse. This allowed me to document the first indicator of discursive diversity and weigh the relative penetration of each discourse in the negotiations on the SDGs. In a second phase, I processed the texts into a statistical textual analysis software[30] to document discursive diversity and assess the frequency of the use of specific terminology associated with the four sustainability discourses.

Discourse Coalitions

The criterion of **discourse coalitions** suggests that by sharing a discourse, actors, including the least represented or the most marginalized in global policymaking, can become a powerful force. The criterion of discourse coalitions has two dimensions. It first seeks to indicate the extent to which a sustainability discourse is specific to a certain actor or group of actors: this is discursive specificity. It then aims to inform whether a same actor engages in different sustainability discourses: this I call inter-discourse engagement.

30 The software *Iramuteq* identifies different lexical clusters in the text database through a statistical study of word frequency and distribution within the corpus (Reinert, 1983).

Assessing whether the negotiations trigger cross-constituency coalitions through discourses is important because it is a way to foster inclusiveness and influence through the representation of ideas and concepts in global policymaking. In other words, this criterion allows to evaluate whether it is possible to overcome the participatory biases linked to actor-based representation. Indeed, if discourses are highly specific to certain actors, then it is likely that the discourses conveyed by the most marginalized actors in the negotiations will also be underrepresented in these negotiations. Similarly, if actors engage in different discourses, then the higher the chances that actors will form coalitions over all or part of a discourse and potentially advance the ideas and concepts of the most marginalized actors in the negotiations. This is important because ultimately, transformation occurs in global sustainability politics when coalitions come to share a particular discourse. I therefore expect that the lower discursive specificity and the higher inter-discourse engagement, the weaker the tie between discourses and actors, and the more inclusive and democratic the negotiations.

I used three indicators to document the variable of discourse coalitions. To assess discursive specificity, the first indicator disaggregates the number of texts that relate either to mainstream, progressive, limits or radical sustainability discourses by the actors that delivered them in the OWG negotiations. To do so, I attributed an actor variable (e.g. governments, international organizations, the co-chairs of the negotiations, the private sector, and civil society) to each of the 122 texts. Texts were collected into a database disaggregated both by sustainability discourse and actor. By counting the number of texts per type of actor relating to the four sustainability discourses, I determined whether an actor was more likely to mobilize a particular discourse more than the others.

The second indicator further informs discursive specificity by disaggregating the occurrences of specific terminology associated with the four sustainability discourses by actors. To identify the actors that were more likely to use specific terminology associated with mainstream, progressive, limits, or radical sustainability discourses, I coded each text according to the actor that originated it within the statistical textual analysis software. Specifically, I used the *Chi2* level, which is a metric determined by the software that shows the statistical link between the word occurrences and the actor to which the text segment is attributed. A positive *Chi2* level indicates that the word is used extensively by the actor, while a negative *Chi2* level indicates that the word is least likely to be used by the actor. Conversely, a *Chi2* level close to zero indicates that the use of a word is not specific to the actor. Therefore, the closer to zero the *Chi2* level, the lower discursive specificity, and the higher the chances that discourse coalitions emerge.

Finally, to document inter-discourse engagement, the third indicator maps the distribution of text segments across sustainability discourses within a same text. By performing this systematically for each text, I was able to count the number of

texts in which actors engaged in either one, two, three, or four sustainability discourses concomitantly.

The following sections provide a detailed analysis of discursive representation in the intergovernmental negotiations on the SDGs, starting with discursive diversity (see also Table 13 for an overview of the results).

6.3. Findings: Discursive Representation in the Negotiations on the SDGs

Discursive Diversity

The negotiations on the SDGs mostly expressed a conservative approach with respect to global economic structures, and a reformist orientation to global political institutions. I detail the representation of the four discourses below.

Mainstream sustainability. A mainstream sustainability discourse, characterized by a conservative orientation to the global economy and global political institutions, represented 22 percent of the interventions delivered in the negotiations on the SDGs.

Economically, the negotiations mainly expressed the view that the existing liberal economic system, based on material growth, profit, and competition, is compatible with environmental sustainability policies whenever these policies advocate for a decoupling of productivity, pollution, and resource use. The discussions on energy, climate, sustainable consumption and production, and biodiversity consistently emphasized on the need to sustain economic growth and envisioned environmental sustainability as one of the means to achieve that goal. For instance, energy transition towards more sustainable sources is expected to trigger economic growth through industrialization, infrastructure development and job creation. In the energy discussions, a statement called for the following solutions to "ensure economic growth in a low-carbon economy: focus on climate-smart infrastructure for efficiency and preparedness; concentrate on clean energy deployment as a key sector; price carbon to fund economic development and just transition; equip workers with the skills needed to compete in a 21st century economy" (UN, 2014b). Similarly, the discussions on a climate goal emphasized on the market and economic opportunity that a shift towards climate resilient growth and a low-carbon economy would bring about. Many statements stressed that "addressing climate change is necessary to promote sustainable economic growth and protect development gains" or that "sustainable energy is a necessary prerequisite for the attainment of economic growth and poverty reduction" (UN, 2014b).

Such co-benefits between environmental sustainability and economic growth were also reflected in the discussions on sustainable consumption and production. Measures to promote sustainable patterns of consumption and production would allow leapfrogging to a more resource-efficient, profitable, and cleaner growth, whenever such growth is decoupled from resource use and environmental degradation. Such

conception was also reflected in the discussions on biodiversity, which highlighted the need to preserve the health of ecosystems to keep producing services essential to sustain economic growth, through agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and tourism. As a result, the negotiations on the SDGs mostly conveyed a relationship to the natural world based on externality and verticality. In other words, nature was primarily framed as external to human societies and economies, with the latter exercising a hierarchical position with respect to the former. The use of language that commodifies nature exemplifies such external relationship, whereby nature is primarily conceived as a resource that provides services for the benefit of economic growth and human development. Overall, the negotiations on the SDGs showed a widespread use of terms and concepts like "economic growth", "green economy" or "green growth", which are mentioned 129 times throughout the corpus. The penetration of this terminology further demonstrates that the negotiations conveyed a conservative approach to the global economy.

Politically however, the conservative orientation towards global political institutions that characterizes mainstream sustainability was poorly represented in the negotiations on the SDGs, which ultimately explains the limited representation of mainstream sustainability in these negotiations. Only 23 percent of the interventions accepted the current power structures of the global political order. Although the negotiations on the SDGs stressed that actors and institutions already endowed with power and authority remain essential to address global environmental sustainability challenges, only 27 interventions out of 122 underlined that existing institutions and norms should not be reformed to promote a more equalizing world order.

Progressive sustainability. I found that progressive sustainability held a dominant position in the negotiations on the SDGs, with 70 percent of the interventions expressing such a discourse. Economically, like mainstream sustainability, a progressive sustainability discourse accepts the neoliberal parameters of the global economy. As the previous paragraphs have shown, such an economic orientation was highly salient in the negotiations on the SDGs. Conversely to the previous discourse, however, progressive sustainability calls for a reform of existing institutions and norms dealing with environmental sustainability with an equalizing objective. In this view, addressing environmental sustainability challenges is to serve human needs and promote inclusive and equitable social development and well-being.

Progressive sustainability was reflected in the framing of the issues and solutions related to energy, sustainable consumption and production, climate action and biodiversity. For instance, the discussions on energy depicted access to secure and affordable energy as a catalyst for improving health and transportation services, promoting education, combating poverty and hunger, and improving livelihoods and shared prosperity. These discussions insisted on the equity considerations of energy access, which, when unequal, represents a serious constraint on inclusive social

development. Similarly, promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns is deemed essential to achieve food and water security, energy access, and healthy lives, all considered key objectives to promote an inclusive and equitable development. The discussions on this goal referred to current unsustainable, inequitable, and unbalanced global consumption patterns as a constraint to inclusive development efforts. Indeed, if existing institutions and norms do not catalyze ambitious action to depart from a business-as-usual scenario, the most marginalized actors will have increasing difficulties to access scarcer and more expensive natural resources, thus exacerbating existing inequalities both within and between countries. The following statement illustrates this approach by stressing that:

> "[One of the key issues] to framing our approach to SCP [sustainable consumption and production] is the sheer inequity in the consumption of world's resources. As the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel pointed out pithily but starkly, 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty account for only one percent of world's consumption of resources, while the richest 1 billion people consume 72 percent. Contrary to some commonly articulated misperceptions, the ecological footprint in developed countries seems to be rising at a faster pace than in developing countries. As pointed out by UNDESA, the ecological footprint in developed countries increased from 3.8 global hectares in 1961 to 5.3 global hectares in 2007, representing an increase of 39 percent. In contrast, the per capita ecological footprint in developing countries over the same time period increased by 28 percent from 1.4 to 1.8 global hectares, which incidentally is the same as the global average. Therefore, Mr. Co-Chair, even as SCP is of universal relevance to all countries, this is an issue on which developed countries have to be in the lead, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities [(CBDR) [31]]" (UN, 2014b).

This framing resulted in calls to establish "a new political and economic architecture [...] to promote values of social inclusion, equity and solidarity. Through this holistic and integrated approach, we could globalize a 'sustainable lifestyle', with developed countries taking the lead, as a way to acknowledge their historical responsibilities, so we can encourage a different way of inhabiting this planet in order to preserve and live in harmony with Mother Earth" (UN, 2014b).

31 Originally developed in climate negotiations, this international law principle suggests that all countries bear a responsibility in global environmental challenges, but recognizes historical differences in the contributions of developed and developing countries to global environmental issues, and differences in their respective economic and technical capacity to tackle these issues.

The discussions on a climate goal also pictured the consequences of climate change (i.e. sea level rise and extreme weather events) as threats to inclusive and equitable development. As those who suffer from climate change impacts contribute the least to the global concentration of greenhouse gas emissions, one of the rationales for climate action conveyed in the discussions was the restoration of equity. Similarly, the discussions on biodiversity emphasized on the positive correlation between the unsustainable management of natural resources, and poverty and inequality aggravation. The solutions contemplated to address environmental sustainability challenges reflected such equity considerations. Publicly-funded technology and knowledge transfer was consistently emphasized to reduce inequalities, as well as the equity principle of CBDR in addressing climate change and promoting sustainable consumption and production.

Progressive sustainability was also reflected in the penetration of specific terminology related to a reformist approach of the global political order towards equalization. The negotiations on the SDGs indeed showed a widespread use of terms such as “well-being” (72 occurrences) and “peoples’ livelihoods” (73 occurrences) which emphasize on the need to promote an inclusive human development. Similarly, terms like equality and equity were mobilized 80 times during the discussions, reflecting the equalizing endeavor of the SDGs negotiations.

However, terms like multistakeholder “partnerships” (29 occurrences) or participation in policymaking and implementation (22 occurrences) were significantly less mobilized in the negotiations. This illustrates that the reformist approach to the global political order expressed in the negotiations on the SDGs was in fact a weaker form compared to what is generally articulated in the literature. Within these negotiations, such an approach was typically state-centric with mild recognition of the importance of inclusive representation, participation and empowerment of a broader range of non-state actors in global policymaking and implementation, such as local communities, indigenous peoples, youth and NGOs, as well as future generations and non-humans.

As a result, the negotiations on the SDGs mainly expressed the view that public authorities should be leading transformation towards environmental sustainability. In this view, the role of public authorities is central and goes beyond the mere regulation of the market, as regulations (e.g. emissions standards), capacity-building and awareness-raising (e.g. implementation of training programs), or publicly-funded technology and knowledge transfer are emphasized to address inequalities of existing power structures and respond to global environmental challenges. This approach highly resonates with Maarten Hajer’s concept of “cockpit-ism” which he defines as the illusion that top-down steering by governments and international organizations alone can address global sustainability problems (Hajer et al., 2015). He and his co-authors have indeed argued that although key documents of the SDGs process, including the OWG’s proposal on the SDGs, do refer to the importance of the active involvement of all relevant stakeholders, they address business, cities, and civil society only to a limited extent (Hajer et al., 2015: 1653).

A limits discourse. Only 2 percent of the texts in the SDGs negotiations expressed a discourse that emphasizes on the need to reorient society to be able to stay within safe planetary limits. The only text that conveyed a limits discourse questioned the viability and desirability of existing neoliberal development, yet without advocating for a redistribution of power in the global political order.

Economically, a limits discourse in the SDGs negotiations either explicitly mentioned that an economy based on accumulation and profit is not compatible with environmental sustainability, or advocated for solutions to address sustainability challenges that imply a fundamental reorientation of economic development. These include, for instance, a strict cap on the use of depletable resources such as fossil fuels, fishing resources or timber, as well as the allocation of a non-transferable share of the global footprint by person and country to contain and reduce human's impact on its environment. The following excerpt from the discussions on energy illustrates this approach:

> "We need leadership to transition from a growth-focused economy, one that obsesses over profit at the expense of the Earth, to a just, equitable, and sustainable economy with a world dependent on sustainable energy. An economy which facilitates greater natural resources' conservation and management. Simply put, fossil fuels, coal, and nuclear energy are not sustainable" (UN, 2014b).

In addition, alternative concepts based on a reform of liberal and capitalist global economic structures were almost absent from the discussions. For example, there are only two references to a sufficient economy, which is a philosophy that promotes an economic development based on moderation and self-sufficiency. Similarly, a discourse that calls for development that is not growth, rejecting GDP (4 occurrences) as the only indicator to measure human progress and taking into account the ecological footprint (13 occurrences) or planetary boundaries (10 occurrences), was underrepresented in the negotiations on the SDGs.

Politically, the idea that existing institutions and norms are considered adequate to reorient development away from a growth-based model was underrepresented in the negotiations on the SDGs. The discussions that conveyed a limits discourse particularly emphasized on state action, within the framework of existing international governance arrangements, to steer transformation towards frugal societies that allow humanity to stay within safe planetary limits.

Radical sustainability. Finally, a radical class of sustainability discourse was also represented in the SDGs negotiations, yet to a very limited extent. Only 6 percent of the interventions called for an overhaul of the existing liberal economic system beyond a primary focus on economic growth, while also urging for reformed political institutions

that promote equity not only between countries but also to a broader range of actors, including non-state actors, future generations, and non-humans.

Similar to the economic approach conveyed in the limits discourse, the texts that expressed radical sustainability seek a fundamental shift of economic development away from material consumption and growth. However, as previously argued, such reformist approach to the global economy was underrepresented in the negotiations. For instance, there was only one reference to the Buen Vivir concept, which calls for a community-based development that is ecologically balanced and culturally sensitive, and that promotes harmony between human beings and nature. An economy based on this concept would require a significant overhaul of capitalist modes of production and consumption, based on a substantial reduction of consumption and the development of small-scale production.

Politically, the reorientation of current economic development requires a redistribution of power in the global political order from the global and governmental level to the local and nongovernmental level to allow for genuine participation by marginalized and affected people. The following excerpt typifies this approach:

> "The TPP [Trans-Pacific Partnership] and other state-driven investment agreements continue to alienate us from our indigenous lands by binding us to transnational corporations through agreements signed by the state of Chile, and not by the Rapa Nui people who are the proper rights-holders. I would like to express our gravest concern that just as the TPP is an agenda for privatization driven by corporations seeking to profit from our indigenous heritage and properties, the UN MDG Global Partnership for Development is the doorman who greets them, holds the door open and gives them the key to our house." (UN, 2014b)

Similarly, this approach rejects market-based instruments because they further marginalize locally affected civil society actors from policymaking and implementation. For instance, one statement argued that "financialization of biodiversity threatens communities […] because it turns nature and land into financial, tradeable assets and because it favors institutions and wealthy landowners best able to maneuver and exploit complex financial markets" (UN, 2014b).

However, the reform towards a more equitable global political order that a radical sustainability discourse endeavors was poorly represented in the negotiations on the SDGs. As previous paragraphs on progressive sustainability have argued, even though most of the texts in SDGs negotiations called for a reorientation of existing institutions and norms to even out inequalities, they conveyed a narrow, state-centric vision of equity according to which equalization should primarily be fostered between developed and developing countries, through the equity principle of CBDR. Conversely,

a broader understanding of equity that recognizes the importance of the participation or representation of a larger number of actors (e.g. non-state actors, future generations, non-humans) in developing effective responses to global sustainability challenges was almost absent from the negotiations on environment-related SDGs.

Finally, the underrepresentation of radical sustainability is also reflected in the way the negotiations framed the relationship to the natural world. Indeed, a conception of a non-hierarchical relationship between humans and nature, whereby societies and economies are integrated into and interconnected with a holistic natural world, was poorly reflected in the negotiations on the SDGs. For instance, "ecosystem services", which refer to the benefits people obtain from the use of ecosystems (i.e. food and water provision, flood and disease control, recreational and cultural benefits) and depict a relationship between human and natural worlds based on externality and verticality, are mentioned 54 times throughout the corpus. Conversely, the expressions "ecosystem approach"[32] (6 occurrences), "global commons" (12 occurrences) or "Mother Earth" (4 occurrences), which reflect integration rather than externality, are significantly less present in the negotiations on the SDGs.

In sum, the diversity of discourses expressed in the negotiations on the SDGs was limited. A progressive sustainability discourse clearly dominated the discussions on environment-related SDGs. Most of the texts did not question the existing parameters of the global economy, whereby development is essentially growth-based and nature is external to human societies and economies. Additionally, most of the interventions called for a reorientation of the global political order that evens out inequalities between developed and developing countries in order to achieve environmental sustainability, yet with limited recognition of the need to foster vertical equalization between state and non-state actors.

Beyond the underrepresentation or overrepresentation of certain discourses lies another critical question which will also inform whether the negotiations on the SDGs were democratic from a discursive perspective: were these discourses mobilized equally by different actors? Have intergovernmental organizations, governments, civil society, and business engaged in different discourses on sustainability? The next section addresses these questions by assessing whether the negotiations on the SDGs triggered the formation of discourse coalitions.

Discourse Coalitions

Discursive specificity. I found that discursive specificity, that is, how much the use of certain discourses is specific to certain actors, was high in the negotiations

32 The ecosystem approach is an integrated management strategy that promotes the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in an equitable way, and that recognizes that humans are an integral component of ecosystems.

on environment-related SDGs. The expression of ideas in line with mainstream sustainability was most specific to business, and to a lesser extent, developed countries, while least specific to civil society and developing countries. All the interventions from business actors reflected mainstream sustainability, while more than half of the interventions from developed countries reflected this discourse. Conversely, only 3 percent of the interventions from developing countries and civil society expressed a mainstream sustainability discourse.

Therefore, business and developed countries, more likely than civil society and developing countries, framed the transition towards environmental sustainability as an opportunity to foster economic growth and advocated to address environmental sustainability challenges within existing institutions. For instance, statements from business actors presented solutions to ensure long-lasting economic growth in a low-carbon economy. Specifically, regarding climate change, they stated that "the most economically feasible way to meet the climate challenge […] is through the scaling up and implementation of development, commercialization, and widespread dissemination of technologies and innovative services" (UN, 2014b).

Similarly, statements delivered by the European Union consistently emphasized on the positive opportunities and co-benefits, in terms of wealth and job creation, that the transition to more ecologically sustainable economies would bring about. The delegations of Australia, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom similarly stated that addressing climate change and sustainable energy was necessary to promote economic growth. Statements delivered by the United States, Canada and Israel also emphasized the role of the private sector as the leading agent responsible to foster technology improvements and innovation, both considered critical to catalyze such transition.

A progressive sustainability discourse was most specific to developing countries (97 percent of interventions) and intergovernmental organizations (89 percent), and to a lesser extent, civil society (54 percent). However, it was least specific to business, as none of the interventions from these actors expressed a progressive sustainability discourse, and to a lesser extent to developed countries (45 percent). Most stakeholders thus concurred on the fact that environmental sustainability and economic growth are compatible, though a redistribution of power is necessary to achieve an equalizing and inclusive human development.

The principle of equity, central to the discourse of progressive sustainability, was highly salient in the negotiations on climate action, sustainable consumption and production, and biodiversity. Specifically, civil society and developing countries consistently referred to the equity principle of CBDR as a way to even out the inequalities that characterize the current global political order. For instance, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka frequently stated that "any international response to climate change must be in full accordance with the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities" (UN, 2014b). Conversely, statements from developed countries (e.g. United States,

Canada, Australia, the UK and the EU) advocated that the equity principle of CBDR should not be applied to the negotiations on the SDGs.

he participation of non-state actors in policymaking and implementation is another key feature of progressive sustainability. However, it was more frequently mobilized by civil society, with 17 out of 22 references throughout the corpus, than by developed or developing countries who advocated for higher inclusion of non-state actors in decision-making in only five interventions. These include two statements from developed countries, specifically the delegations of Montenegro and Slovenia, as well as France, Germany, and Switzerland, and three statements from developing countries, in particular the Pacific Small-Islands Developing States (PSIDS), and the delegations of Brazil and Nicaragua, as well as Argentina, Bolivia, and Ecuador. Therefore, the reform of the global political order that a progressive sustainability discourse called for in the negotiations on the SDGs primarily encompassed a reduction of inequalities between states, with little recognition of the importance of empowering and including a broader range of non-state actors in policymaking to even out global inequalities.

Ideas consistent with a limits discourse and a radical sustainability discourse were exclusively mobilized by civil society actors. The only statement that expressed a limits discourse was delivered by civil society, while 43 percent of their interventions expressed radical sustainability. None of the interventions from state actors, business, and intergovernmental organizations expressed these discourses, although some text segments of the statements from developed and developing countries occasionally referred to concepts that pertain to a radical sustainability or a limits discourse. For instance, one statement from the delegations of Argentina, Bolivia and Ecuador mentioned the Buen Vivir concept during the discussions on sustainable consumption and production, recalling that a change of mentality is necessary to initiate the transformation towards sustainable patterns of consumption and production "to achieve sustainable development in accordance with the Buen Vivir paradigm" (UN, 2014b). Similarly, the delegations of Poland and Romania referred once to a sufficient economy, stating that the international community needs to rethink its societal objectives, moving from a focus on wealth, growth, and efficiency, towards an emphasis on well-being, quality, and sufficiency.

However, except for these rhetorical references, only civil society advocated for an overhaul of the existing parameters of the global neoliberal economy and for a more equalizing world order, recognizing the importance of including and empowering the most marginalized non-state actors to develop effective solutions to address global sustainability challenges. For instance, the statements of the Children and Youth Major Group and the Commons Cluster, a civil society network consisting of individuals and NGOs, disputed the "accumulation economy" and advanced reform proposals. Specifically, they argued that current economic structures "inevitably encroach upon the ability of our economy to provide basic goods and services and meet basic human needs" and called for a strict cap on the use of depletable resources, and for ecocide to

be considered as a crime against peace (UN, 2014b). Also, statements from civil society more than any other actor personified nature. The Commons Cluster for instance stated that "no entity however powerful they may seem to be can survive without support of people worldwide and above all of Nature herself. […] If enough of us act in our various contexts to protect the Earth's energy system, we shall find that Nature of her own accord will naturally support our actions" (UN, 2014b).

Discursive specificity is further reflected in the distribution of the use of specific terminology across actors. Business and developed countries were more likely to use terms that characterize a mainstream sustainability discourse. For instance, business actors strongly mobilized the idea that industrialization should remain a key feature of economic development under conditions of environmental sustainability, with a Chi2 level amounting to 8.2, while those of other actors remain close to zero. Similarly, "economic growth" was extensively used by developed countries, with a Chi2 level reaching 2.7, while it was less likely to be used by intergovernmental organizations and civil society, with Chi2 levels of respectively -2.3 and -2.6. The use of the "green economy" concept was more specific to developed countries than any other actor: while the Chi2 level of the former reaches 1.7, those of the latter remain close to zero. Also, developed countries were less likely to use the equity principle of CBDR, with a Chi2 level of -1.5.

Civil society and developing countries were more likely to use terms that characterize a progressive sustainability discourse. For instance, developing countries and civil society actors mobilized the equity principle of CBDR more than the other actors, with Chi2 levels of respectively 1 and 1.6. However, developing countries did not strongly engage in a discourse advocating for a reform of the global political order that would go beyond the recognition of the equity principle of CBDR. For instance, the term equity was more likely to be used by civil society than by developing countries, with a Chi2 level of 2.6 for civil society, whereas the Chi2 level for developing countries, though close to zero, is still negative. Also, only civil society actors emphasized on human rights in the negotiations with a Chi2 level of 16, whereas developed and developing countries were those actors that least referred to it, with Chi2 levels of respectively -3 and -6.

Finally, civil society actors were more likely to use terms that characterize a limits discourse or a radical sustainability discourse. For instance, they extensively used planetary boundaries and the ecological footprint, with Chi2 levels reaching respectively 3.3 and 2.5, while those of all other actors were negative. Environmental justice was also most specific to these actors, with a Chi2 level of 6.5, and least specific to developed countries, with a Chi2 level of -2. Similarly, only civil society mobilized the term of global commons, with a Chi2 level of 5, and argued that their preservation is not compatible with the existing parameters of the neoliberal economy.

In sum, discursive specificity was high in the negotiations on the SDGs, particularly for mainstream, limits, and radical sustainability discourses. Indeed, mainstream sustainability was almost exclusively specific to business actors and developed countries, while only civil society mobilized ideas and terms characterizing a radical sustainability discourse. Although most of the texts delivered by developing countries and intergovernmental organizations expressed progressive sustainability, the latter scored lower on my discursive specificity indicator. Unlike other discourses, progressive sustainability was not exclusively specific to one or two actors. All actors except business engaged to a certain extent – ranging from 45 percent of the texts delivered by developed countries to 97 percent of the texts delivered by developing countries – in a progressive sustainability discourse. My results thus indicate that progressive sustainability has most likely triggered the formation of coalitions in the negotiations on the SDGs, whereas mainstream, limits, and radical sustainability were too actor-specific for coalitions to emerge. However, the previous section has shown that in the negotiations on the SDGs, a progressive sustainability discourse only partially expressed the systemic political transformation that the least represented actors in policymaking endeavor. This indicates that the coalition around progressive sustainability did not relay the ideas and concepts formulated by the least represented actors in the negotiations, such as a both horizontal and vertical equalization of the global political order. Next, I further document the criterion of discourse coalitions by assessing the extent to which actors mobilize different discourses concomitantly.

Inter-discourse engagement. Inter-discourse engagement was high in the negotiations on the SDGs. Indeed, near 80 percent of the texts delivered in the negotiations mobilized ideas consistent with at least two discourses. Specifically, 62 percent of the texts mobilized two discourses, and 19 percent of the texts mobilized ideas consistent with three sustainability discourses. Oppositely, single-discourse interventions (i.e. those interventions that exclusively mobilize one discourse) also represent 19 percent of the total corpus of texts, while none of the interventions mobilized the four discourses represented in the negotiations concomitantly. According to the assessment framework, high inter-discourse engagement is likely to enable the formation of cross-constituency coalitions. Such coalitions would advance inclusiveness in global policymaking through the representation of ideas and concepts, including those originating from actors that are underrepresented in global policymaking, as these would be picked up by a multiplicity of actors.

However, not all discourses were mobilized to a similar extent in multi-discourse interventions, which prompts me to qualify the findings. This means coalitions were most likely to form on specific discourses only, therefore strengthening their representation while further marginalizing other discourses. When developing countries engaged in two discourses, they mostly mobilized mainstream and progressive

sustainability (49 percent of interventions), while only 2 percent of their interventions referred to ideas and concepts consistent with both progressive and radical sustainability. Similarly, developed countries only mobilized mainstream and progressive sustainability when engaging in two discourses concomitantly. Contrastingly, when civil society actors engaged in two discourses, they mainly mobilized ideas consistent with progressive and radical sustainability, or with a limits discourse and radical sustainability (54 percent of interventions), while only 18 percent of their interventions mobilized mainstream sustainability along with progressive sustainability. Overall, mainstream and progressive sustainability were most frequently mobilized concomitantly, with 83 percent of interventions expressing ideas consistent with these discourses. In turn, only 17 percent of interventions that mobilized two discourses concomitantly expressed both progressive and radical sustainability.

In addition, within interventions that mobilized three discourses, the distribution of text segments across mainstream, progressive, limits and radical sustainability is highly unequal. Indeed, whenever intergovernmental organizations, the co-chairs, developed or developing countries delivered three-discourse interventions, most text segments within these interventions related to mainstream or progressive sustainability, while a limits discourse or radical sustainability were only reflected in either one or two text segments. For instance, the fact that developing and developed countries referred to the Buen Vivir concept or a sufficient economy in their statements does not equate to engagement in a limits discourse or a radical sustainability discourse. Such references are rhetorical, as developed or developing countries did not further engage in either one of these discourses by advocating for concrete measures that would operationalize such concepts and bring about a reform of the global political and/or economic order. Similarly, the co-chairs and developing countries often advocated for a development that would respect "our beloved Mother Earth" in their statements, without further developing what harmony with nature exactly entails in terms of reforming the existing neoliberal parameters of the global economy.

In sum, with high discursive specificity and flawed inter-discourse engagement, the negotiations on the SDGs reveal that discourses remain strongly tied to the actors that deliver them. On the one hand, the results show a high level of discursive specificity. Specifically, representatives of governments, be they from developed or developing countries, were more likely to relay a mainstream or progressive sustainability discourse, while civil society actors were more likely to convey radical sustainability or a limits discourse. On the other hand, despite a high level of inter-discourse engagement, the negotiations did not foster cross-constituency coalitions that successfully channeled the ideas and concepts of the actors that are underrepresented in policymaking. Indeed, although most interventions mobilized ideas consistent with at least two discourses, my results have shown that mainstream and progressive sustainability remain hegemonic in

multi-discourse interventions, while marginal, transformative discourses fail to mobilize across actors, beyond merely rhetorical references.

In sum, as far as the SDGs negotiations are concerned, discursive representation has not allowed to overcome the biases of actor-based representation. Indeed, the most reformist ideas with respect to the global economic and political order are expressed by those actors that are also least represented in the negotiations on the SDGs, specifically social movements, grassroots organizations of civil society, and citizens.

Table 13. Discursive representation in the negotiations on the SDGs

Criteria	Indicators	Results
Discursive diversity	Relationship to the global economy	Conservative
	Relationship to the global political order	Reformist, yet with narrow, state-centric understanding of equity
	Most represented discourse	Progressive sustainability (70% of texts)
	Least represented discourse(s)	Limits discourse (2% of texts) Radical sustainability (6% of texts)
Discourse Coalitions	Discursive specificity	High Mainstream sustainability: business and developed countries Progressive sustainability: developing countries and intergovernmental organizations Limits discourse and radical sustainability: civil society
	Inter-discourse engagement	High, yet biased towards specific discourses (i.e. mainstream and progressive sustainability)

Source: author.

6.4. Conclusion

With the example of the negotiations on environment-related SDGs, this chapter has shown that the likelihood of achieving democracy in intergovernmental policymaking from a discursive perspective is dim. Specifically, two dominant discourses expressing a mainstream and progressive conception of sustainability emerged from the discussions and left very little space for alternative conceptions based on a limits discourse or radical sustainability. Indeed, the negotiations did not fundamentally question the existing neoliberal parameters of the global economy. Besides, although progressive sustainability was the most represented discourse in the negotiations on the SDGs, it conveyed a narrow, mainly horizontal and state-centric vision of equalization of the world order, and did not develop a broader understanding of equity (i.e. to non-state actors, to future generations, to non-humans, etc.). In addition, the potential to enhance the democratic

character of the negotiations on the SDGs was hindered by the inability to disentangle the discourses from the actors that delivered them.

Three reflections can be drawn out from the findings presented in this chapter, in relation with previous research in discourse analysis. First, the specific situational logic in which discourses come to interact and compete is important to explain the over- or underrepresentation of specific understandings of environmental sustainability. Language is indeed historically and institutionally embedded. In other words, discourses are internally related to the social practices in which they are produced. It is therefore not so surprising that UN-led intergovernmental negotiations still mostly convey discourses such as progressive or mainstream sustainability, which depict an efficiency-oriented approach to the environment whereby environmental sustainability is put at the service of economic growth. The idea of the complementarity and compatibility of economic growth and environmental sustainability has indeed been devised and relayed by many international organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the UN commissions on issues of development, safety, and environment since the 1980s and has dominated environmental discourse since then. Twenty years ago, Maarten Hajer documented the rise of an 'ecological modernization' discourse and showed how it became hegemonic in the struggle to define sustainable development (Hajer, 1995). After the economic recession of the late 1970s, international organizations developed storylines that appealed to many actors in the environmental domain and that called for the introduction of new policymaking strategies that do not require a change in the economic system to achieve environmental sustainability, such as renouncing to the pursuit of exponential economic growth. Previous discourses based on limits or radical sustainability and exemplified by the reports Limits to Growth, Blueprint for Survival, or Small is Beautiful, eventually became sidelined from this moment on.

In addition, the institutional embeddedness of discourses also explains why the broadest consultations ever conducted at the UN do not seem to have disrupted the dominance of a discourse similar to Hajer's ecological modernization in the negotiations on the SDGs. This new and dominant discursive order that came out of the work of the UN and other international organizations imposed constraints on what could be said within these organizations. In other words, the most critical groups of civil society had to water down their own discourse and adapt it to this new discursive order to be considered realistic, professional, and responsible actors in intergovernmental negotiations. Because participatory practices in intergovernmental settings are governed by specific norms of discussion that implicitly value certain styles of expression as dispassionate, orderly, or articulate (Young, 2000), they may ultimately be self-exclusionary.

Second, by documenting discourse coalitions in the negotiations on the SDGs, this chapter has also shown that the fact that different actors sometimes come to debate environmental sustainability in shared terms does not improve the inclusiveness and

representation of transformative discourses in global policymaking. Indeed, the fact that actors debate environmental sustainability with a shared rhetoric does not mean that they understand each other. In fact, they often interpret the meaning of this rhetoric differently (Hajer, 1995). This has been exemplified in the formulation of the goals, which has revealed a contradiction between the use of a shared, holistic narrative in the negotiations on the one hand, and the way different actors interpret this narrative and operationalize it into policy solutions on the other hand. Specifically, the narrative of the negotiations and their outcome is based on ideas that relate to progressive sustainability, with a strong cosmopolitan rhetoric emphasizing on equity and the global poor (countries and individuals). This has been for instance embodied in the "leaving no-one behind" motto that was repeatedly mobilized during the negotiations. However, actors interpreted the meaning of this holistic narrative rather differently, in order to advance the representation of a particular understanding of environmental sustainability that both satisfies their own interest and strengthens their role in global governance. For instance, while developing countries succeeded in putting forward an understanding of equity that emphasizes the CBDR principle to limit potential constraints on their development, civil society actors failed to disseminate a broader understanding of equity that would take into account the interests of actors that are not represented in the negotiations, such as future generations or non-humans.

Finally, what the results of this chapter demonstrate is that actors eventually do play an important role in discourse analysis. They actively position themselves and others drawing on discursive categories and thus fuel the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion of specific understandings of environmental sustainability in global policymaking (Hajer & Versteeg, 2005). The findings presented in this chapter thus question a central argument in deliberative democracy theory, whereby discursive representation allows to overcome the limitations of actor-based representation, especially in global settings lacking a well-defined demos, where the self-appointed representatives of such demos fail to include the preferences of the most marginalized actors in global policymaking. Yet in the shaping of the SDGs, exclusiveness in participation has precisely led to similar imbalances in discursive representation: the negotiations on the SDGs ultimately failed to represent a civil society – and popular – discourse that radically departs from the status quo.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion: Getting the Citizens (Back) In?

The transfer of power to global forms of governance instigated by globalization have created a democratic deficit which hinders the citizens from having a direct and consequential voice in global politics. Scholars and practitioners alike have offered many theoretical and empirical tools to reduce the democratic deficit that pervades policymaking at global level. However, previous chapters have reflected that both have fallen short of providing the citizens with the capacities to effectively contribute to global norm production.

Specifically, on the academic side, although global democratic theory provides many interesting normative insights, the various models of global democracy conceptualized by theorists – democratic intergovernmentalism, cosmopolitan democracy, world government, deliberative democracy, and radical democracy – have often failed to develop practical solutions to empower citizens to initiate democratization and achieve the global democratic order that each model calls for. Furthermore, all models of global democracy have, to various extents, been criticized, for at best, their unfeasibility, or at worst, their ineffectiveness and undesirability. On the policy practice side, the democratic promise of the participatory turn that global policymaking has witnessed in the past three decades have faded away. While the dramatic increase in the provision of spaces for the participation of citizens and broader civil society in global politics has often been uncritically accepted as a remedy to palliate the democratic deficit of global politics, previous chapters have unveiled, with original empirical material and a thorough analytical framework, that: (i) the extent to which civil society participation in institutionalized settings democratizes global governance is very limited; and (ii) the design and setting of global civil society participatory mechanisms are important factors in explaining their democratizing potential for global policymaking. Next, I summarize the arguments that substantiate both claims.

7.1. Summary of Findings

The democratic deficits of civil society consultations for global governance

The potential of institutionalized global civil society consultations to democratize global governance is constrained by the limited legitimacy of these consultations in the first place. Chapters 3 and 4 have shown that whether they are conducted online or within global negotiating hubs such as the United Nations Headquarters in New York, the participatory mechanisms commissioned by international organizations and governments to seek public input into global norm production often exclude those actors beyond institutionalized civil society networks, such as individual citizens, from participating. Specifically, global consultations mostly favor the participation of the most powerful, well-organized, and well-informed civil society organizations over that of a broader and unspecialized public. Besides, they show substantial sociodemographic biases, as they regularly fail to include civil society actors from developing countries.

Also, global consultations seldom succeed in strengthening accountability between citizens, international organizations, and governments, as there is no formal, legally-binding link between the consultations and the policymaking process for which civil society input is sought.

Second, civil society consultations fail to increase the responsiveness of global norms and policies to collective concerns and preferences because they only have limited influence on intergovernmental policymaking. As far as the negotiations on the SDGs are concerned, I have argued in Chapter 5 that although civil society participation was influential in preventing some issues from being dropped from the negotiations and in developing a culture of participation in global policymaking on sustainable development, it had only a marginal effect on the framing of issues for the negotiations, on shifting the positions of governments, and on the outputs of the negotiations.

Finally, the potential of institutionalized global civil society consultations for global democratization is limited because they have not ensured a balanced representation of discourses in global policymaking. Although the negotiations on the SDGs provided multiple spaces for civil society participation and were hailed as the most inclusive intergovernmental policymaking process in the history of the United Nations, Chapter 6 has shown that the diversity of the discourses conveyed within the negotiations remained low. Specifically, transformative discourses that radically depart from the status quo on both economic and political grounds have not been as much channeled as conservative discourses. While the latter develops a conception of environmental sustainability that fits with, and benefits, current global economic and political structures, the opposite is true for the former, which questions the compatibility of both the neoliberal parameters of the global economy and the inequalities of the global political order with environmental sustainability. Participatory exclusiveness produces discursive exclusiveness, thus indicating the limits of discursive representation for global democratization within formal spaces of policymaking.

Participatory design and global democratization

This research has contributed to advance our understanding of the challenges and opportunities of civil society participation for the democratization of global policymaking, by developing an original argument that is recurrently levelled across the chapters. Specifically, it stresses that the design and setting of global civil society participatory mechanisms is an important variable to explain the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion from global policymaking, as well as the influence of participation on global norm production. For instance, Chapters 4 and 5 have shown that the longer a consultation, and the earlier its organization within the policymaking process, the greater its inclusiveness and influence. Chapter 4 has also stressed the importance to develop outsider-oriented outreach policies so that the sample of participants to a global consultation includes actors beyond institutionalized civil society networks,

that are traditionally marginalized from global policymaking. Chapter 6 has reflected that the historical and institutional embeddedness of language prevents transformative discourses from penetrating UN-led intergovernmental negotiations on environmental sustainability.

Yet, the research has also shown that the relationships between design and the democratizing potential of civil society consultations are sometimes unexpected. For instance, limited resources do not systematically constrain the extent to which a civil society consultation is inclusive of those actors that are traditionally excluded from global policymaking. Specifically, Chapter 4 has shown that inclusiveness is fostered when the commissioners of global consultations empower national and local partners to disseminate the consultation from global decision-making centers to the most secluded and marginalized areas.

In addition, open access conditions do not systematically enhance the legitimacy and influence of global civil society consultations. Although the Internet is a low-cost horizontal means of communication that transcends barriers of space and time, Chapter 3 has shown that online direct participation is not necessarily more inclusive than face-to-face representative participation. In most cases, online participatory mechanisms do not allow to include those civil society actors that are traditionally excluded from global policymaking, such as the citizens. Besides, Chapter 5 has demonstrated that civil society input is more likely to influence when it is delivered inside global negotiating hubs, within informal – and ultimately exclusive – participatory spaces, thus contradicting the initial assumption of this research according to which governments were expected to be more responsive to civil society demands when these reflect the preferences of a broad and representative sample of actors. Ten million responses in a global survey have had far less impact on the negotiations than the long-term lobbying of a handful of professionalized civil society representatives based in New York and well-acquainted with the political dynamics of intergovernmental negotiations at the UN. This reveals a democracy—influence paradox, as what is democratically legitimate from an input perspective – a formally-commissioned, far-reaching and inclusive participatory mechanism such as MYWorld as opposed to self-appointed professionalized civil society representatives that are not bound by any accountability mechanisms to their grassroots – is not necessarily legitimate from an output (or performance) perspective. But ultimately, what is better for the democratization of global policymaking? One-time contributions from 10 million citizens with limited impact on the negotiations or multiple contributions from a few professionalized civil society representatives with a greater impact on the negotiations? This debate is not new. Aristotle already raised that question in *Politics* IV.11, where he defined "polity", a mixture between democracy and oligarchy typified by the rule of the "middle group" of citizens (i.e. between the poor masses of democracy and the wealthy few of oligarchy), as the best system of government. What is best is not necessarily what is most democratic from an inclusiveness point of view.

Next, I consider how the studied recent empirical developments in civil society participation have contributed to the scholarly work on global democracy.

7.2. Contribution to Theoretical Developments on Global Democracy

This research adds empirical grounding to the argument levelled by international relations scholars such as Karin Bäckstrand, Jonathan Kuyper, Klaus Dingwerth, and others, whereby global democracy ought to be pursued through the implementation of democratic values in many loci rather than through the application of a holistic global democratic model to one specific locus. Democratic intergovernmentalists argue that global democracy stems from the democratization of the nation-states. Deliberative and radical democrats claim that global democratization is to be induced in the transnational public sphere, and cosmopolitans and the advocates of a world government claim that democratization encompasses the creation of formal global institutions. I argue that global democracy cannot emerge from siloed proposals. All agents (i.e. the citizens, institutionalized civil society actors, the private sector, governments, and international organizations) and all spaces (i.e. informal, formal, at local, subnational, national, regional, and international levels) of governance need to organize around, or be bound by, democratic values for inducing global democratization. In this research, I have specifically focused on the values of inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, influence, and discursive representation in global policymaking and documented how different civil society participatory spaces help induce (or undercut) these democratic principles.

The findings of this research tend to support the argument according to which global democracy should be furthered through the implementation of different democratic values in all spaces of governance. On the one hand, the research results have shown that a more inclusive and accountable institutionalized civil society is essential to acquire democratic legitimacy vis-à-vis delegates that often claim to be the only legitimate representatives of their national publics. Unless civil society actors organize themselves according to transparent and accountable standards, the rights they claim to governments and international organizations will always be dismissed on the ground that they have no legitimacy. Therefore, strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the informal space by applying democratic values to the structure of civil society is key to advance the democratization of the formal intergovernmental space, i.e. where authoritative decisions get produced. On the other hand, the results also stress that the democratization of formal spaces, by providing participatory channels that foster deliberation, learning, and mutual understanding among civil society actors, contributes to the development of a more democratic transnational public sphere, and to the global democratization of informal spaces. Finally, the findings have demonstrated that more empowered and knowledgeable citizens at local level is essential to foster

their participation in national and global policymaking. In other words, building the democratic skills of citizens at local level nurtures democratization both at national and global levels.

Besides, by conceptualizing global democracy into different democratic values to be pursued in many loci by a myriad of agents, this research also improves our understanding of how these values relate to one another, and the extent to which they nurture each other, or are in conflict with one another in different contexts. Specifically, the research findings have shown that while transparency fosters accountability, it also hampers inclusiveness in online consultations (where access to information is unlimited and therefore overwhelming for civil society actors with limited capacities) and in formal sessions of negotiations in global decision-making centers (when civil society uses social media channels to name and shame governments, which makes civil society-governments' relations tense and prompts the latter to shrink the participatory space). Inclusiveness nurtures discursive diversity whereas it conflicts with influence in global negotiating hubs, as repeated interventions from an elite of professionalized civil society actors have more traction on global policymaking than single interventions from a more diverse and representative sample of actors. Finally, accountability triggers inclusiveness as civil society actors will be more inclined to participate if global consultations are tied in an accountable way to the policymaking process for which civil society input is sought. Although the relationship between accountability and influence is yet unclear and would need further research, the findings for the SDGs negotiations indicate that governments tend to be more responsive to civil society demands if global consultations allow its participants to make accountability claims towards governments and international organizations.

In addition, the empirical findings of this research contribute to answer to the following theoretical question: when values of democratization conflict with one another, how such conflicts should be resolved? The underlying claim developed across this research is that, if provided with the appropriate socioeconomic preconditions for participation and democratic skills, citizens have the potential to solve some of these conflicts and catalyze global democratization. The provision of socioeconomic resources and the building of democratic skills to those in the most vulnerable social positions to defend and articulate their interests will undoubtedly strengthen each democratic value taken separately. For instance, providing economic incentives, social gratification or fostering citizens' self-esteem are likely to encourage participation, foster inclusiveness, and improve citizens' capacities to hold authoritative institutions accountable. Yet the provision of socioeconomic resources and the building of democratic skills to those in the most vulnerable social positions to defend and articulate their interests may also convert existing negative correlations between democratic values into positive ones. For example, raising awareness and building citizens' analytical skills as well as providing economic incentives and/or social gratification for participation, can reverse the

negative relationship between transparency and inclusiveness, as citizens will be better equipped to sort out, hierarchize, and select the information necessary to their effective and meaningful participation.

In the next section, the conclusion advances a set of recommendations that aim to guide the future action of practitioners in strengthening global democratic safeguards. First, it provides methodological and procedural solutions that could alleviate persisting democratic shortfalls in civil society participatory mechanisms, so as to further bridge the gap between remotely-perceived international organizations and those subject to their decisions: the citizens. Second, the following section also argues that beyond their limited direct impact on the democratization of global policymaking, civil society consultations still contribute to build the basis for a more vibrant democratic life.

7.3. Lessons for Practitioners

Lessons for Policymakers: Designing a Global Civil Society Consultation

Acknowledging that design factors substantially impact the capacity of civil society participation to act as a catalyst for global democratization, this section considers the ways in which a greater understanding of the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion from global policymaking can assist in the future realization of democracy in a global context. However, I do not endeavor to define here an ideal-type participatory design that would ensure the inclusiveness and influence of a global consultation, and fully enhance its democratizing potential. This would not capture the complexity of the many different political structures in which civil society participatory processes may be embedded. Indeed, the extent to which a civil society participatory mechanism is inclusive and influential is highly context-dependent: it varies with, among other factors, the issue at stake in the negotiations, the given rules of procedures for a negotiation process, as well as the openness of the co-chairs of the negotiation process to civil society participation. Nevertheless, broad lessons can still be drawn out from this research and guide policymakers through the choices they must make when designing a mechanism for civil society participation at global level.

First, policymakers should seek to combine face-to-face representative participation in global negotiating hubs with face-to-face deliberative forums involving citizens at local level, and ICT-based participation. These different channels for participation should not compete but nurture each other. Indeed, professionalized civil society representatives partaking in intergovernmental negotiations in global decision-making centers will gain legitimacy if their lobbying strategies are based on the outputs of far-reaching participatory mechanisms that not only include those actors traditionally excluded from global policymaking, but also engage them into a constructive exchange of arguments rather than in a mere box-ticking exercise. Similarly, ICT-based participation cannot have any impact on the negotiations if its results are not appropriately relayed

in global negotiating hubs by professionalized civil society representatives such as the Major Groups' organizing partners.

Second, policymakers should develop (a) clear objective(s) for the participatory process and bind it in an accountable way to the negotiations for which civil society input is sought. Does the participatory process aim to inform citizens about the issues at stake in the negotiations and increase public understanding of complex issues? Does it aim to legitimize the global policymaking process and build trust in global institutions? Or does it seek to provide and incorporate civil society values and expertise in global norms and policies? Or to ultimately improve the quality and efficiency of global decisions? If the public has clear information about the purpose of the consultation and the way it is envisioned to feed into intergovernmental negotiations, then it will have higher interest and incentives to participate. Furthermore, binding a participatory mechanism in an accountable way to the negotiations requires that the consultation enables a two-way flow of information between civil society actors, and international organizations and governments. For instance, when organizing a global civil society consultation, policymakers could secure a space for a summary of the discussions conducted in that consultation to be presented during plenary sessions of the negotiations in short interventions, and to be included in the session reports as official inputs to the negotiations. Also, the UN system could provide feedback to civil society participants to increase the traceability of their contributions, and ultimately transparency and accountability.

Third, policymakers should involve civil society in the design and dissemination of a global consultation so as to incentivize actors to participate and increase the democratic legitimacy of the participatory mechanism. Participation to the design of a global consultation and its dissemination at national and local levels would increase the ownership of civil society actors over the consultation. Besides, by designing the consultation in collaboration with authoritative institutions, civil society actors would actively contribute to the setting of the agenda and the framing of issues for the consultation. This would provide civil society actors with yet another channel to directly share their knowledge, experience, and expertise with the representatives of governments and international organizations, and potentially shape their belief system and eventually have an impact on the negotiations. Finally, participating to a global consultation from its conception to its dissemination, and having a decisional role in the making of its output (e.g. collaboratively write the consultation report, vote, or reach consensus) are likely to generate and strengthen accountability between civil society participants and authoritative institutions.

Fourth, when organizing a global civil society consultation, policymakers should encourage the participation of government representatives to that consultation. Participatory spaces where civil society actors can interact and share their views, either online or face-to-face, with negotiators stimulate democratization for at least two reasons. First, civil society actors are more likely to engage in a global consultation if it

provides a direct access to the authoritative actors they seek to influence. Therefore, the attendance from government representatives is likely to trigger inclusiveness. Second, providing a direct access to government representatives in a participatory process is also expected to strengthen accountability, as civil society actors can act as watchdogs and use the participatory space to make accountability claims to governments. However, although social media channels such as Twitter and blogs to report directly from the negotiations allow for greater transparency and accountability, they may also prove counterproductive if not used carefully. If governments become cautious about engaging in frank and open discussions in a plenary session out of fear of being quoted out of context on social media channels, the likelihood of substantive discussions only taking place in closed sessions will increase. A greater tendency towards closed meetings would result in fewer opportunities for civil society actors to freely attend and contribute to the negotiations as well as a diminished public record of the negotiations by the rapporteurs of the Earth Negotiations Bulletin. Therefore, a careful balance must be struck between civil society actors' instinct to exert pressure on governments to act, and foster a state of greater transparency on the one hand, and the openness and substantive quality of deliberations within the sessions of negotiations on the other.[33]

Fifth, the commissioners of a global consultation should increase their political commitment to civil society participation by providing adequate and timely resources to enable civil society engagement. Specifically, they should provide timely access to all official information and documents under negotiation, including draft outcome documents, timeframes, and meeting agendas, at least in the six official languages of the UN. When consultations are conducted within decision-making centers, they should provide greater financial resources to facilitate the participation from the traditionally excluded, e.g. representatives from grassroots organizations based in developing countries or lay citizens. Besides, such greater resources should not only support the participation of these actors in global negotiating hubs such as New York, Geneva, or Nairobi but also in preparatory events at regional or subnational levels to increase ownership over, and potential influence on, the negotiations. Ultimately, global civil society consultations should not only be concentrated in New York and on the Internet. The UN system should decentralize face-to-face deliberative participatory mechanisms with the organization of national and subnational processes so that civil society actors, in all countries and especially in developing ones, could meet and raise their issues and present their recommendations to their national governments.

Lastly, a global consultation will more likely include civil society actors that traditionally do not participate in global policymaking if governments and international organizations commission the participatory process at an early stage of the negotiation

33 This has been observed in other intergovernmental processes, such as the negotiations on the use of biodiversity in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction (Blasiak et al., 2017).

cycle. Besides, participation to agenda-setting for the negotiations is at least as equally important as participation during the negotiations *per se*, as it provides civil society actors with the opportunity to feed in their views while the issues for the negotiations are still being framed.

Lessons for Civil Society Actors: Engaging in a Global Civil Society Consultation

This research has shown how some of the limitations associated with global civil society participatory mechanisms (i.e. biased inclusiveness and lack of influence) jeopardize their capacity to reduce the democratic deficit of global policymaking. While acknowledging these findings, I argue that civil society actors should keep engaging – or start engaging if they have not done so yet – in global participatory mechanisms. Specifically, these mechanisms still have substantial effects, other than their potential direct impact on the negotiations and the substance of global norms and agreements, that contribute to build the basis for a more vibrant democratic life, both inside and outside decision-making centers, at global and national levels.

First, global participatory mechanisms trigger interaction, learning and mutual understanding among civil society actors. They create a space that fosters the exchange of reasoned arguments with other civil society actors and, when possible, with the co-chairs of the negotiations and the representatives of governments. Such deliberation eventually allows participants to sharpen their position and increase their credibility vis-à-vis the governments and international organizations with whom they share their views. Global participatory mechanisms, whether they are conducted on the Internet or within decision-making centers, create a space that increases the visibility of civil society interests and positions not only to international institutions and governments but also to other actors from civil society. As such, global participatory mechanisms enable civil society actors to find common ground and network with other participants, and to eventually build partnerships to ultimately strengthen their position and impact. In this regard, the negotiations on the SDGs have particularly triggered cooperation among civil society actors and have even changed their engagement strategies. Indeed, because the negotiations were divided into thematic issues, civil society actors were prompted to go beyond their constituency-based mindset and collaborate with actors from other constituencies they were not used to work with. In other words, global participatory mechanisms in the negotiations on the SDGs have contributed to break down the silos of civil society constituency-based proposals as well as they have triggered the formation ad-hoc, official or unofficial coalitions of like-minded civil society actors around specific issues. As much as they triggered cross-constituency collaboration, participatory mechanisms within the framework of the negotiations on the SDGs have contributed to bring closer together the communities of civil society actors working on development and environmental issues, which had moved parallel since they became a central theme for the UN in the 1960s and 1970s, respectively.

Second, global participatory mechanisms indirectly contribute to improve the democratic character of global policymaking by building the democratic skills of civil society participants, both in procedural and substantive ways. From a procedural standpoint, global consultations such as the OWG Hearings, the Rio Dialogues and the MYWorld Survey introduce civil society actors to the United Nations system. Specifically, they trigger learning on the procedural rules framing the negotiations and the participation of civil society actors. A greater knowledge and understanding of the procedural complexities of UN-led negotiations is likely to generate a greater interest of civil society actors in global policymaking as well as it is expected to enhance their capacities to actively – and perhaps effectively – participate in the negotiations. From a substantive standpoint, global consultations allow to inform civil society actors that are traditionally excluded from global policymaking about the work of the UN, and more specifically, about the negotiations for which civil society input is sought. In the case of the negotiations on the SDGs, global participatory mechanisms have been used as informative tools to raise awareness on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the underlying assumption that awareness-raising would enhance civil society's ownership over the provisions of the Agenda, including the SDGs, and would eventually lead to a faster and more effective implementation at national and local levels.

Consequently, global consultations may be used not only as channels to contribute to policy and decision-making but also as tools to foster discussions among civil society actors about implementation at national and local levels. The MYWorld Survey is an interesting case in point, as it was not only used as a voting tool to voice citizens' opinions but also as an engagement tool to trigger discussions on the actions they could undertake – or ask their national government or local authorities to undertake – to address the issues they marked as their priorities in the survey. This substantially contributes to build citizens' democratic skills, as triggering reflexive thinking on what and how they could contribute to the SDGs presupposes that citizens have something to contribute. Yet this is not a given: civil society actors that are traditionally excluded from global policymaking often feel they have nothing useful to contribute, because they believe they are undereducated, and/or undervalued by the elites in their country who do not seek their input in national policymaking. Therefore, civil society consultations can be considered as effective democratizing tools for global policymaking not only when they allow civil society's input to feed into global norm production but also when they empower civil society actors, provide ownership over global norms, as well as a sense of shared responsibility in their implementation. Referring to the MYWorld Survey, a UN representative observed the following:

> "There is a lot of criticism around the MYWorld Survey as being a superficial social media campaign and that's it. But offline, and more than half of the 7 million votes were collected offline, it's a different story. Because offline, you

> don't just knock on the door of a household and say 'would you please tick 6 out of these 16 options'. If you knock on the door, you have to explain why you are coming, what the survey is about, and even more so, if you go into a local community and actually explain, have a group of people gathering on purpose, sit around in a circle with you to discuss which issues count for them, by default this conversation goes much deeper and addresses the other element of what people can do to address these issues. It basically sets the basis for a discussion on how people can keep engaged in monitoring the SDGs" (Interviewee 50).

By raising awareness among local communities, global consultations can therefore build and foster citizens' democratic skills to eventually allow them to participate in the implementation of global norms and agreements at local level, monitor their implementation at local and national level, with the support of appropriate relays from institutionalized and professionalized civil society, and hold their governments accountable.

In sum, despite their limitations, global civil society consultations provide an important impetus to global democratization. They do empower when they specifically target civil society actors that are traditionally excluded from policymaking by building their democratic skills. They also build citizens' self-esteem and confidence by giving them a say in global affairs that admittedly will have limited, if any, direct impact on intergovernmental policymaking, but most importantly by providing them with an opportunity to further engage in the national and local implementation of global norms and agreements.

It is through their participation in the implementation of global norms and agreements at national and local levels that citizens may reinforce democratic safeguards at global level, and eventually counter the feeling of political dispossession induced by the effects of globalization. Further documenting the conditions under which citizens could acquire a greater role in the global governance of sustainability should be the focus of future research on global democracy. Next, I review three specific directions through which research could set the basis for getting the citizens (back) in global governance.

7.3. What Future Research on Global Democracy?

In this section, I argue that future research on global democracy should address how the use of existing concepts (e.g. community organizing) and tools (e.g. civic technologies) could be harnessed for increasing citizen participation in global policymaking and implementation. I conclude by stressing that transdisciplinary research is essential to achieve a greater understanding of the conditions under which citizens could acquire a greater role in the global governance of sustainability.

First, future research should assess the contribution of concepts such as community organizing to the democratization at global level. This concept refers to forms of collective organization at local level that strive for the participation of citizens to the life of their community. Specifically, broad-based community organizing seeks to engage citizens in policymaking by using and developing their capacities to act through professionalized "organizers". Instead of citizens being idle bystanders of global policymaking by succinctly expressing their voice to professionalized civil society representatives who would then carry it within intergovernmental negotiations, this concept provides interesting insights on how to empower citizens to participate in an active and meaningful way to policymaking at global level. Furthermore, future research should investigate the role that ICT could play in unifying these locally-based forms of collective organization and tailoring this concept to global governance.

Second, future research should document what could be the role of citizens in the implementation of global norms and agreements on sustainability in an age of digitalization. Monitoring an agenda as broad as the SDGs, for instance, cannot only be carried out by national governments and national statistics offices. The UN have recently called for a 'data revolution' to leverage new technologies to measure progress towards the SDGs with a more expanded array of data sources aiming to accurately reflect collective preferences. The UN defines the data revolution as the transformative actions needed to respond to the demands of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, including improvements in how data is produced and used, and closing data gaps to prevent discrimination. In this context, citizen-generated data is emerging as a way to drive progress towards the SDGs while also engaging citizens in their implementation. Citizen-generated data is quantitative and qualitative, structured or unstructured data produced directly by people to monitor, demand or drive change on issues that affect them (Higgins & Cornforth, 2015). It provides direct representations of collective preferences and a complement or alternative to datasets collected by governments and international organizations. As such, citizen-generated data may be considered as a way to advance democratization in global policymaking and implementation, specifically when it is leveraged by civic technologies. These include civic applications, platforms and other software that enable the participation and engagement of citizens in policy formulation and implementation with the ultimate aim of improving empowerment, policy results, and the public good (De Feraudy & Saujot, 2016). Scholarly work on the impacts of civic technologies on the implementation of global norms on sustainability remains scarce. Although it is rapidly developing, it remains siloed to certain sectors (e.g. urban planning) and policy contexts (e.g. local or national levels). It is therefore important that future research bridges this gap by studying the extent to which these technologies improve inclusion in policy implementation and foster citizen empowerment, and by assessing the conditions under which citizen-generated data through civic technologies could be taken into account in national and international statistics to review the

implementation of the SDGs and to further adjust policies in light of the data provided. Addressing these issues would eventually allow to determine the exact potential of civic technologies for global democratization.

Finally, future research should be transdisciplinary and include communities beyond international relations or political science. Specifically, as political scientists and international relations scholars, we need to engage more with psychologists and behavioral economists to increase our understanding of what motivates actors to participate, and more broadly of the social-psychological factors explaining the act of participation, whether in online discussions for policy formulation or in data provision for policy implementation. Future transdisciplinary research could for instance test different incentivational schemes to explain, and potentially overcome, one of the primary challenges in encouraging citizen participation, that is human (lack of) motivation. We also need to undertake scholarly work with researchers from the Information Technology community to document the conditions under which tools from computer science could be harnessed for citizen participation and for a sustainable change towards democratization. Computer science tools that aim at building citizens' capacities and skills already exist and could be applied to increase the deliberative quality of online platforms for citizen participation. For instance, a tool called Reflect aims to encourage active listening and greater interaction on online platforms as it requires an individual to restate in his own words what the previous participant said to be able to contribute himself. Similarly, ConsiderIt is another tool that contributes to build citizens' capacities and democratic skills as it aims to help individuals make sense of complex issues by weighing pros and cons over an issue and visualizing key points made by other participants. As such, it also aims to help finding common ground between participants and increase interaction, learning, and mutual understanding. Developing these tools through research to enable a meaningful and constructive participation of citizens in global policymaking and implementation seems all the more important in the contemporary era.

In a time when untrue[34] – not post-truth – politics are gaining ground and rely on ICT to disseminate erroneous – not alternative – facts, the academic community needs today more than ever before to engage in transdisciplinary research and in its dissemination to policy practice to contribute to building citizens' democratic skills and critical thinking, without which any effort to safeguard democracy at national level and advance global democratization will be in vain.

34 In the words of Robyn Eckersley at the Ecological Democracy workshop convened at the University of Sydney (20-21 February 2017) by David Schlosberg (University of Sydney), Karin Bäckstrand (Stockholm University), and Jonathan Pickering (University of Canberra).

APPENDIXES

1. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets
2. List of interviews

1. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets

- Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

* Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day

1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions

1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable

1.4 By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance

1.5 By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters

1.a Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programs and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions

1.b Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

2.1 By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round

2.2 By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons

2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment

2.4 By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help

maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality

2.5 By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed

2.a Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries

2.b Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Development Round

2.c Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births

3.2 By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births

3.3 By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases

3.4 By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being

3.5 Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol

3.6 By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents

3.7 By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programs

3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all
3.9 By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination
3.a Strengthen the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries, as appropriate
3.b Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding flexibilities to protect public health, and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all
3.c Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States
3.d Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes
4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education

for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

4.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programs, in developed countries and other developing countries

4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences

5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws

5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

6.1 By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all

6.2 By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations

6.3 By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally

6.4 By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity

6.5 By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate

6.6 By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes

6.a By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water- and sanitation-related activities and programs, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies

6.b Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management

Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

7.1 By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services

7.2 By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix

7.3 By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency

7.a By 2030, enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology

7.b By 2030, expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States, and land-locked developing countries, in accordance with their respective programs of support

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

8.1 Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries

8.2 Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labor-intensive sectors

8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services

8.4 Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavor to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-year framework of programs on sustainable consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead

8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value

8.6 By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training

8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labor in all its forms

8.8 Protect labor rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment

8.9 By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products

8.10 Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all

8.a Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries

8.b By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

9.1 Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all

9.2 Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries

9.3 Increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets

9.4 By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities

9.5 Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries, including, by 2030, encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people and public and private research and development spending

9.a Facilitate sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in developing countries through enhanced financial, technological and technical support to African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States

9.b Support domestic technology development, research and innovation in developing countries, including by ensuring a conducive policy environment for, inter alia, industrial diversification and value addition to commodities

9.c Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

10.1 By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average

10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status

10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard

10.4 Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality

10.5 Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations

10.6 Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions

10.7 Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies

10.a Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements

10.b Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their national plans and programs

10.c By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums

11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons

11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries

11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage

11.5 By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations

11.6 By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management

11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities

11.a Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning

11.b By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels

11.c Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

12.1 Implement the 10-year framework of programs on sustainable consumption and production, all countries taking action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries

12.2 By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources

12.3 By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses

12.4 By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment

12.5 By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse

12.6 Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle

12.7 Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities

12.8 By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature

12.a Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production

12.b Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products

12.c Rationalize inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions, in accordance with national circumstances, including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies, where they exist, to reflect their environmental impacts, taking fully into account the specific needs and conditions of developing countries and minimizing the possible adverse impacts on their development in a manner that protects the poor and the affected communities

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*

13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries

13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning

13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning

13.a Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly $100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible

13.b Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities

* Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

14.1 By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution

14.2 By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans

14.3 Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels

14.4 By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics

14.5 By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information

14.6 By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation

14.7 By 2030, increase the economic benefits to Small Island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism

14.a Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, taking into account the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology, in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular small island developing States and least developed countries

14.b Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets

14.c Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of The Future We Want

Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

15.1 By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements

15.2 By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally

15.3 By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world
15.4 By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development
15.5 Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species
15.6 Promote fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and promote appropriate access to such resources, as internationally agreed
15.7 Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products
15.8 By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species
15.9 By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts
15.a Mobilize and significantly increase financial resources from all sources to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems
15.b Mobilize significant resources from all sources and at all levels to finance sustainable forest management and provide adequate incentives to developing countries to advance such management, including for conservation and reforestation
15.c Enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime
16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms

16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

16.8 Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance

16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration

16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

16.b Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Finance

17.1 Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection

17.2 Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of ODA/GNI to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries

17.3 Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources

17.4 Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief and debt restructuring, as appropriate, and address the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress

17.5 Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries

Technology

17.6 Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism

17.7 Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favorable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed

17.8 Fully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity-building mechanism for least developed countries by 2017 and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology

Capacity-building

17.9 Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the sustainable development goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation

Trade

17.10 Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda

17.11 Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020

17.12 Realize timely implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all least developed countries, consistent with World Trade Organization decisions, including by ensuring that preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries are transparent and simple, and contribute to facilitating market access

Systemic issues

Policy and institutional coherence

17.13 Enhance global macroeconomic stability, including through policy coordination and policy coherence

17.14 Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development

17.15 Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

17.16 Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries

17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships

Data, monitoring and accountability

17.18 By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts

17.19 By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries

2. List of interviews

Galina Angarova, Tebtebba Foundation, 14 April 2014, San Francisco (skype interview from New York)

Noura Bakkour, IDDRI, 16 June 2014, Paris

Jeffrey Barber, Integrative Strategies Forum, 2 June 2014, Washington DC (skype interview from Paris)

Ed Barry, Sustainable World Initiative, 3 April 2014, New York

Orsolya Bartha, International Disability Alliance, 13 May 2014, New York (skype interview from Paris)

Sowmyaa Bharadwaj, Praxis Institute for Participatory Practices, 19 November 2014, New Delhi (skype interview from Paris)

Julio Bitelli, Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 16 July 2014, United States (skype interview from Paris)

Adam Bly, Seed Media, 7 April 2014, New York

Chantal-Line Carpentier, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 27 September 2013, New York

Henry de Cazottes, Executive Coordinator's Office for the Rio+20 Conference, 13 November 2013, Paris

Lucas Chancel, IDDRI, 11 December 2013, Paris

Juan Chebly, United Nations Millennium Campaign, 12 November 2014, New York (skype interview from Paris)

Andrê Correa do Lago, Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 September 2014, Tokyo (skype interview from Paris)

Naiara Costa, Beyond 2015, 13 April 2015, New York (skype interview from Paris)

Simona Costanzo Sow, United Nations Volunteers, 23 January 2015, Bonn (skype interview from Paris)

Lara Cousins, Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights, 26 March 2015, New York

Lina Dabbagh, Climate Action Network International, 8 September 2014, Mexico DF (skype interview from Paris)

Raphaël Dang, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 August 2015, Paris (phone interview from Paris)

Felix Dodds, Consultant, 8 July 2015, Apex, NC (phone interview from Paris)

Adjmal Dulloo, Post-2015 Volunteering Group, 30 January 2015, New York (phone interview from Paris)

Benjamin Frowein, United Nations Volunteers Haiti, 16 February 2015, Port-au-Prince (skype interview from Paris)

Sascha Gabizon, Women in Europe for a Common Future, 5 December 2014, Utrecht (skype interview from Paris)
Sofia Garcia, SOS Children's Villages, 22 April 2014, New York (skype interview from Paris)
François Gaves, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, 30 September 2014, New York (phone interview from Paris)
Brendan Guy, Natural Resources Defense Council, 13 August 2014, Washington DC (skype interview from Paris)
Mark Hallé, International Institute for Sustainable Development, 12 August 2015, Geneva (phone interview from Paris)
Laura Hildebrandt, United Nations Development Programme, 23 April 2014, Rio de Janeiro (skype interview from Paris)
John Ingram, University of Oxford, 21 October 2014, Oxford (skype interview from Paris)
Matt Jackson, Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the United Nations, 5 May 2015, New York (phone interview from Paris)
Debra Jones, Save the Children, 26 November 2014, New York (skype interview from Paris)
Jan Kantorczyk, Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations, 4 November 2014, New York (skype interview from Paris)
Aashish Khullar, Pax Romana, 17 April 2014, Boston (skype interview from Paris)
Csasba Körösi, Permanent Mission of Hungary to the United Nations, 7 October 2014, Paris
Michelle Kovacevic, Center for International Forestry Research, 30 October 2014, Melbourne (skype interview from Paris)
Benjamin Kumpf, United Nations Development Programme, 22 October 2014, New York (skype interview from Paris)
Samuel Kwesi Kissi, Youth Coalition, 26 March 2015, New York
Paul Ladd, United Nations Development Programme, 10 October 2014, New York (skype interview from Amsterdam)
Yves Le Bars, GRET Research and Exchange Group on Technology, 30 April 2014, Paris
Thomas Le Goupil, French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy, 10 September 2014, Paris (phone interview from Paris)
Ryan Lee Hom, Permanent Mission of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations, 27 March 2015, New York
Jimena Leiva Roesch, Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations, 19 May 2015, New York (phone interview from Paris)
Xavier Longan, United Nations Millennium Campaign, 20 November 2014, Barcelona (skype interview from Paris)

Sandrine Ménard, French Ministry of Economy, 13 September 2014, Paris (phone interview from Paris)

Moema Miranda, IBASE Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analyses, 15 September 2014, Brasilia (skype interview from Paris)

Victor Muñoz Tuesta, Permanent Mission of Peru to the United Nations, 24 March 2015, New York

Gabriel Normand, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, 29 April 2015, New York (phone interview from Paris)

Dominique Olivier, CFDT French Democratic Confederation of Labour, 28 April 2014, Paris

Fabio Palacio, ATD Fourth World, 3 April 2014, New York

Andrew Palmer, Sustainable Development Initiatives, 31 March 2014, New York

Rémi Parmentier, Varda Group, 17 July 2014, Madrid (skype interview from Paris)

Iara Pietricovsky, INESC Brazilian Institute of Socioeconomic Studies, 20 May 2014, Brasilia (skype interview from Paris)

Lou Pingeot, Global Policy Forum, 27 September 2013, New York

Philippe Ramet, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 September 2014, Paris (phone interview from Paris)

Anjali Rangaswami, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 11 April 2014, New York

Leida Rijnhout, European Environmental Bureau, 9 September 2015, Brussels (skype interview from Paris)

Lea Ritter, United Nations Volunteers Guatemala, 26 February 2015, Guatemala City (skype interview from Paris)

John Romano, Stakeholder Forum, 14 October 2014, New York (skype interview from Paris)

Laure Serra, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, 15 July 2015, New York (phone interview from Paris)

Fred Soltau, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2 April 2014, New York

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, Stakeholder Forum, 13 July 2015, Oslo (skype interview from Paris)

Carlos Suarez, JCI, 12 January 2015, St. Louis, MO (skype interview from Paris)

Riikka Suhonen, United Nations Volunteers Bhutan, 9 February 2015, Thimphou (skype interview from Paris)

Pedro Telles, Greenpeace Brazil, 25 April 2014, Mexico DF (skype interview from Paris)

Vaia Tuuhia, 4D, 4 December 2013, Paris

Claire Vancauwemberge, Executive Coordinator's Office for the Rio+20 Conference, 11 July 2014, Paris

Philip Vergrart, Tellus Institute, 4 April 2014, New York

Mwangi Waituru, Seed Institute, 10 November 2014, Nairobi (skype interview from Paris)

Leo Williams, Beyond 2015, 5 November 2014, Brussels (skype interview from Paris)

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SUMMARY

In the last decade, debates about isolationism and deglobalization have pervaded politics at the level of the nation-state and found an important echo among national publics. Donald Trump's slogan 'America First' in the United Sates, the success of the Leave arguments abundantly relayed by the United Kingdom Independence Party prior to the Brexit referendum, or the breakthrough of the far-right candidate Marine Le Pen in the French presidential elections, all show that populist, nationalistic ideologies and parties are thriving. A common argument, levelled consistently by the representatives of these parties, is that globalization undercuts their country's sovereignty. Whether or not we adhere to the argument that globalization dilutes national authority and legitimacy, the fact remains that the partial transfer of power into global forms of governance have created democratic deficits whereby policymaking is increasingly conducted beyond the accountability and oversight of national publics.

In order to increase the democratic legitimacy of global policymaking, international institutions have created participatory mechanisms for citizens or their representatives to express their views and preferences on policy issues that affect them or for which they hold a stake. This participatory turn in the management of global affairs finds its most accurate expression in the sustainability domain, which has been a laboratory for experimenting with face-to-face or virtual, direct or representative, consultative or deliberative mechanisms to increase the participation of citizens or their representatives in policymaking. By providing a vehicle for reconnecting global institutions with the citizens of nation-states, participatory mechanisms that include citizens or their representatives in intergovernmental policymaking could therefore palliate the democratic deficit and legitimacy crisis of global governance.

However, whether global participatory mechanisms fulfill this promise is a subject of debate for two main reasons. The first one questions the democratizing potential of the actors of civil society that represent the interests of all the citizens affected by a collective decision in global governance. The second one is skeptical about the democratic legitimacy of participatory mechanisms, in particular regarding their inclusiveness, their influence on intergovernmental policymaking, and, assuming they do have influence, their ability to increase the quality of policy outputs.

Relying on a diverse set of methods including statistical analysis, document analysis, process tracing, discourse analysis, and interviews, the PhD contributes to the academic debate of whether and to what extent the mechanisms for the participation of civil society in intergovernmental policymaking on sustainable development issues make the existing global system more democratic. After reviewing the scholarship on global democracy in Chapter 1, including the contributions of different theories and their limitations, the dissertation introduces in Chapter 2 the empirical and methodological framework for the research. Specifically, it focuses on three participatory mechanisms conducted during the negotiations on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): the Rio+20 Sustainable Development Dialogues, the civil society Hearings of the Open

Working Group on SDGs, and the MYWorld Survey. Then, in subsequent chapters, the dissertation answers to the research question and unfolds its argumentation in four parts.

First, the PhD dissertation assesses in Chapter 3 the contribution of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to the democratization of global politics. ICT are increasingly used to engage civil society in intergovernmental negotiations on sustainable development and are often considered as a silver bullet to the democratic legitimacy deficit that pervades traditional mechanisms for civil society representation, and ultimately, global policymaking. The Internet, in particular, appears to be an ideal channel to provide civil society with direct access to intergovernmental policymaking, given its character as a low-cost horizontal means of communication that transcends barriers of space and time. However, many observers have contested the benefits of ICT for democratization on both theoretical and empirical grounds. Yet no study had been performed at the international level. Taking the numerous online Dialogues of the Rio+20 Conference as a case study, the dissertation demonstrates that despite its promise, ICT reinforce rather than reverse embedded participatory inequalities in a global context. Specifically, the use of the Internet may reinforce exclusion and favor the participation of the most powerful and well-organized civil society organizations based in developed countries over that of a broader and unspecialized public. In addition, ICT fail to substantially increase transparency and accountability in intergovernmental negotiations on sustainable development issues. In particular, although Internet use allows for greater access to and sharing of substantive information, the diversity from which this information is provided remains limited and may eventually constrain the exchange of diverse and competing arguments, which is however deemed necessary to foster democratization. Besides, by anonymizing interactions, Internet use might have even reduced the capacity of civil society participants to hold governments and international organizations accountable concerning the input they provided. This prevents, in turn, a meaningful participation of civil society in intergovernmental negotiations.

Second, looking comparatively at the Rio Dialogues, the OWG Hearings, and the MYWorld Survey, the dissertation assesses in Chapter 4 the democratic legitimacy of civil society consultations formally commissioned within the framework of the negotiations on the SDGs. While such consultations are often uncritically accepted as a way to strengthen democratic safeguards in intergovernmental policymaking, their lack of inclusiveness and limited capacity to strengthen accountability between citizens, international institutions, and governments ultimately hinder their democratizing potential. Additionally, the dissertation investigates the causes of this phenomenon by exploring the relationships between the design of consultations and their democratic legitimacy. It unveils that such relationships are sometimes unexpected. Extensive material resources and open access conditions have not systematically enhanced the

legitimacy of the studied consultations, as exemplified in the Rio Dialogues and the OWG Hearings. Conversely, the case of the MYWorld Survey has shown that it is possible to overcome resource constraints and enhance inclusiveness when the organizers of the consultation develop partnerships with grassroots actors from civil society and the public and private sectors, and delegate its rollout from global policymaking centers to national and local communities, prioritizing the voices of the most marginalized.

Third, the dissertation analyzes the influence of civil society participation on the negotiations on the SDGs. Chapter 5 pictures an overall moderate impact of civil society participation. Although civil society interventions were influential in preventing some issues from being dropped from the negotiations and in developing a culture of participation in global policymaking on sustainable development, they had only a marginal effect on issue-framing, on shifting the positions of governments, and on the final agreement. The formulation of Goal 10 on reducing inequalities exemplifies such limited influence. Despite many interventions, civil society failed to move away the framing of income inequality as a matter of reducing both poverty *and* extreme wealth. Similarly, although civil society succeeded in ensuring the existence of the inequality goal in the final agreement, their interventions failed at securing ambitious targets within this goal. Although confirming previous research on civil society influence in intergovernmental policymaking, the dissertation still provides an original argument to explain influence by focusing on the role of the participatory space. Acknowledging that civil society influence results from a combination of interventions within many participatory spaces, the dissertation nonetheless demonstrates that civil society is more likely to influence within informal and exclusive participatory spaces, and when these spaces are provided early in the negotiations, with several iterations throughout the policymaking process. This ultimately questions the democratizing potential of civil society participation in intergovernmental policymaking, as the actors with the capacities to engage repeatedly and informally with the negotiators are seldom those that are most representative of global civil society. Also, this contradicts the initial assumption of this research, according to which governments were expected to be more responsive to civil society demands when these reflect the preferences of a broad and representative sample of actors. In the end, ten million responses in the MYWorld Survey have had far less impact on the negotiations than the long-term lobbying of a handful of professionalized civil society representatives based in New York and well-acquainted with the political dynamics of intergovernmental negotiations at the UN.

Finally, recognizing that the participatory mechanisms set up by international institutions and governments have fallen short of answering to academic and empirical demands for global democratization, the dissertation examines in Chapter 6 discursive representation as a way to advance democracy in a global context and overcome the shortcomings of actor-based representation. Deliberative democrats indeed argue that discursive representation can redeem the promise of global democracy when the

participation or representation of all affected by a collective decision is infeasible. As discourses may foster cross-constituency coalitions, discursive representation has therefore the potential to advance inclusiveness through ideas and concepts instead of actors, and further global democratization. Chapter 6 thus focuses on mapping the different discourses on sustainability conveyed during the elaboration of the SDGs and explores the extent to which each of these discourses were represented in the negotiations and by whom. It reveals that in the shaping of the SDGs, exclusiveness in participation has precisely led to similar imbalances in discursive representation: the negotiations on the SDGs ultimately failed to represent a civil society – and popular – discourse that radically departs from the status quo. Specifically, the negotiations mainly conveyed a progressive sustainability discourse, according to which development is essentially growth-based and nature is external to human societies and economies, and which calls for a reorientation of existing institutions and norms to foster equity between developed and developing countries, yet with limited recognition of the importance of the participation from a broader range of actors. This chapter further shows that discourses remain strongly tied to the actors that deliver them. In other words, the potential of the negotiations to foster cross-constituency coalitions to channel the ideas and concepts of the actors that are underrepresented in policymaking has not materialized, thus indicating the limits of discursive representation for democratization above the nation-state.

The dissertation concludes in Chapter 7. While reflecting on the results, it first considers how the studied recent empirical developments in civil society participation have contributed to theoretical innovations in the scholarly work on global democracy. Each existing theory defines its own normative pathway to advance democratization at global level, with varying loci and scopes of change. Specifically, democratic intergovernmentalists argue that global democracy stems from the democratization of the nation-states. Deliberative and radical democrats claim that global democratization is to be induced in the transnational public sphere, and cosmopolitans and the advocates of a world government claim that democratization encompasses the creation of formal global institutions. This dissertation, however, has shown that global democracy cannot emerge from siloed proposals. All agents (i.e. the citizens, institutionalized civil society actors, the private sector, governments, and international organizations) and all spaces (i.e. informal, formal, at local, subnational, national, regional, and international levels) of governance need to organize around, or be bound by, democratic values for inducing global democratization. This research particularly focused on the values of inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, influence, and discursive representation in global policymaking and documented how different civil society participatory spaces help induce (or undercut) these democratic principles. Besides, by conceptualizing global democracy into different democratic values to be pursued in many loci by a myriad of agents, the dissertation improves our understanding of how these values relate

to one another, and the extent to which they nurture each other, or conflict with one another in different contexts. In the latter case, the dissertation claims that, if provided with the appropriate socioeconomic preconditions for participation and democratic skills, citizens have the potential to solve some of these conflicts and catalyze global democratization.

The conclusion also advances a set of recommendations that aim to guide the future action of practitioners in strengthening democratic safeguards in global policymaking. First, while acknowledging that the extent to which a civil society participatory mechanism is inclusive and influential is highly context-dependent, the dissertation draws out broad lessons to guide policymakers through the choices they must make when designing a mechanism for civil society participation at global level. These include, inter alia: developing clear objectives for the participatory process and formally binding it to the negotiations; combining face-to-face representative participation in global negotiating hubs with face-to-face deliberative forums involving citizens at local level, and online participation; involving civil society in the design and dissemination of a global participatory mechanism at national and local levels; allocating adequate and timely resources to participants; and encouraging the participation of government representatives to the participatory process. Second, despite their limitations, civil society actors should still engage in global participatory mechanisms. Indeed, the dissertation shows that these mechanisms have substantial effects, other than their potential direct impact on the negotiations and the substance of global norms and agreements, that contribute to build the basis for a more vibrant democratic life, both inside and outside decision-making centers, at global and national levels. Specifically, global participatory mechanisms trigger interaction, learning and mutual understanding among civil society actors. They also build the democratic skills of civil society participants, by improving their understanding of the United Nations system and the procedural rules framing the negotiations and civil society participation on the one hand, and on the other hand by raising awareness about the sustainable development issues addressed in the negotiations. As they increase citizens' procedural and substantive knowledge, global participatory mechanisms ultimately empower them to take an active role in the national and local implementation of global norms and agreements. The dissertation specifically draws on the example of the MYWorld Survey, which has been used as an informative tool to raise awareness on the SDGs and to foster discussion on the actions participants could undertake – or ask their national government or local authorities to undertake – to address the issues they marked as their priorities in the survey.

Finally, the dissertation considers some of the pathways for future research in global democratic theory and practice. These include, for instance, studying what could be the role of citizens in the implementation of global norms and agreements on sustainability in an age of digitalization. More specifically, this encompasses documenting the extent to which citizen-generated data through ICT could foster the legitimacy of

global norms and the accountability of international institutions. Because monitoring an agenda as broad as the SDGs cannot only be carried out by national governments and national statistics offices, data provision through ICT offers an opportunity for enhancing the participation of citizens in global governance. In addition, the dissertation proposes that future IR and political science research in global democracy engages with psychologists, behavioral economists, and researchers from the Information Technology community to increase our understanding of the social-psychological factors explaining the act of participation, and to assess how computer science tools could be harnessed for citizen participation in global policymaking. Developing these tools through research to enable a meaningful and constructive participation of citizens in global policymaking and implementation seems all the more important in the contemporary era. In a time when untrue – not post-truth – politics are gaining ground and rely on ICT to disseminate erroneous – not alternative – facts, the academic community needs today more than ever before to engage in transdisciplinary research and in its dissemination to policy practice to contribute to building citizens' democratic skills and critical thinking, without which any effort to safeguard democracy at national level and advance global democratization will be in vain.

SAMENVATTING

In de afgelopen tien jaar heeft de discussie over isolationisme en deglobalisering de overhand gekregen in de nationale politiek van vele landen en weerklank gekregen bij een breder publiek. Donald Trumps slogan 'America First', het succes van de *Leave* argumenten die tijdens het Brexit referendum veelvoudig werden gepresenteerd door de *United Kingdom Independence Party*, en de doorbraak van de extreemrechtse kandidaat Marine Le Pen in de Franse presidentiële verkiezingen tonen aan dat populistische, nationalistische ideologieën floreren. Een argument dat telkens door de vertegenwoordigers van deze partijen naar voren wordt gebracht, is dat globalisering de soevereiniteit van hun land aantast. Of wij nu wel of niet eens zijn met het argument dat de nationale autoriteit en legitimiteit wordt afgezwakt door globalisering, het blijft een feit dat de gedeeltelijke overdracht van macht naar mondiale vormen van bestuur een democratisch tekort heeft gecreëerd waarbij beleidsvorming steeds meer plaatsvindt buiten de verantwoordelijkheid en het toezicht van de nationale bevolking.

Om de democratische legitimiteit van mondiale beleidsvorming te doen toenemen, hebben internationale instellingen participatiemechanismen voor burgers of hun vertegenwoordigers ingesteld, waarin deze hun visies en voorkeuren kunnen uiten met betrekking tot beleidskwesties die hen betreffen of waarin zij een belang hebben. Deze verandering in de deelname aan het bestuur van mondiale zaken komt het duidelijkst naar voren op het gebied van duurzaamheid: dit kan worden gezien als een laboratorium waarin geëxperimenteerd kan worden met persoonlijke of virtuele, directe of vertegenwoordigende, en raadplegende of overleggende mechanismen, om de participatie van burgers of hun vertegenwoordigers in de beleidsvorming te verbeteren. Door een medium te bieden om opnieuw de verbinding te leggen tussen mondiale instellingen en de burgers van natiestaten, kunnen participatiemechanismen deze burgers of hun vertegenwoordigers betrekken bij intergouvernementele beleidsvorming, waarmee het democratisch tekort en de legitimiteitscrisis van mondiaal bestuur verminderd kan worden.

Het is echter de vraag of mondiale participatiemechanismen deze belofte inlossen, en hier zijn twee belangrijke redenen voor. Ten eerste worden er vraagtekens gezet bij het democratiserende potentieel van de actoren in de maatschappij die de belangen vertegenwoordigen van alle burgers wiens leven beïnvloed wordt door een collectieve beslissing van mondiaal bestuur. Ten tweede is er scepsis over de democratische legitimiteit van participatiemechanismen, met name omtrent hun inclusiviteit, hun invloed op intergouvernementele beleidsvorming, en – als we ervan uitgaan dat zij inderdaad invloed hebben – hun vermogen om de kwaliteit van de beleidsoutput te verbeteren.

Op basis van een aantal uiteenlopende methodes, waaronder statistische analyse, documentanalyse, *process tracing*, discoursanalyse, en interviews, draagt dit proefschrift bij aan het wetenschappelijk debat over of en zo ja, in hoeverre de mechanismen van maatschappelijke participatie in intergouvernementele beleidsvorming op het gebied

van duurzame ontwikkelingskwesties het bestaande mondiale systeem democratischer maken. Na een overzicht van de literatuur over mondiale democratie in hoofdstuk 1, inclusief verschillende theorieën en hun beperkingen, volgt in hoofdstuk 2 een uiteenzetting van het empirische en methodologische kader van het onderzoek. In het bijzonder wordt hier aandacht besteed aan drie participatiemechanismen, uitgevoerd tijdens de onderhandelingen over de duurzame ontwikkelingsdoelen (SDG's): de *Rio+20 Sustainable Development Dialogues*, de maatschappelijke hoorzittingen van de open werkgroep over de SDG's, en de *MYWorld Survey*. In de daaropvolgende hoofdstukken wordt het antwoord gegeven op de onderzoeksvraag en wordt de argumentatie in vier delen uiteengezet.

Ten eerste wordt in hoofdstuk 3 onderzocht wat de bijdrage is van Informatie en Communicatie Technologie (ICT) aan de democratisering van de mondiale politiek. ICT wordt steeds vaker gebruikt om de maatschappij te betrekken bij intergouvernementele onderhandelingen over duurzame ontwikkeling en wordt vaak gezien als een wondermiddel, niet alleen voor het tekort aan democratische legitimiteit dat alom aanwezig is in de traditionele mechanismen voor maatschappelijke vertegenwoordiging, maar uiteindelijk ook voor de mondiale beleidsvorming. Met name het internet lijkt een ideaal medium om de maatschappij directe toegang te geven tot intergouvernementele beleidsvorming, aangezien het een goedkoop horizontaal communicatiemiddel is dat grenzen van ruimte en tijd overstijgt. De voordelen van ICT voor democratisering worden echter regelmatig betwist, zowel op theoretische als empirische gronden. Maar geen enkel onderzoek heeft tot op heden plaatsgevonden op internationaal niveau. Met de vele online dialogen van de Rio+20 Conferentie als *case study* toont dit onderzoek aan dat in een mondiale context, ICT de ingebedde ongelijkheden in participatie eerder versterkt dan terugdraait, ondanks de belofte die van ICT uitgaat. Met name het gebruik van het internet kan uitsluiting versterken en de participatie bevoordelen van de machtigste en best-georganiseerde maatschappelijke organisaties, gevestigd in ontwikkelde landen, boven die van een breder en niet-gespecialiseerd publiek. Bovendien heeft ICT niet kunnen zorgen voor een substantiële verbetering in de transparantie en verantwoording in intergouvernementele onderhandelingen over kwesties met betrekking tot duurzame ontwikkeling. Ook al biedt internetgebruik de mogelijkheid om meer toegang te krijgen tot essentiële informatie en deze informatie te delen, de diversiteit van waaruit deze informatie wordt geleverd blijft beperkt en kan er uiteindelijk toe leiden dat de uitwisseling van diverse en tegenstrijdige argumenten beperkt wordt, ook al wordt deze uitwisseling noodzakelijk geacht voor het bevorderen van democratisering. Doordat interacties geanonimiseerd worden, kan het internet er zelfs voor hebben gezorgd dat maatschappelijke participanten minder kans hebben om regeringen en internationale organisaties aansprakelijk te stellen voor de input die zij leveren. Dit belemmert dan een betekenisvolle deelname van de maatschappij aan intergouvernementele onderhandelingen.

Ten tweede worden in hoofdstuk 4 de Rio+20 dialogen, de OWG hoorzittingen, en de *MYWorld Survey* vergeleken om zo de democratische legitimiteit te beoordelen van de maatschappelijke raadpleging die formeel was ingesteld binnen het kader van de onderhandelingen over de SDG's. Hoewel zulke raadplegingen vaak weinig kritisch geaccepteerd worden als manier om de democratie waarborgen in intergouvernementele beleidsvorming te versterken, wordt hun democratiserende potentieel uiteindelijk belemmerd door hun gebrek aan inclusiviteit en hun beperkte vermogen om verantwoordelijkheid tussen burgers, internationale instellingen en regeringen te versterken. De oorzaken van dit fenomeen worden hier ook onderzocht, door te kijken naar de relatie tussen de manier waarop deze raadplegingen zijn opgezet en hun democratische legitimiteit. Soms blijken zulke relaties nogal verrassend te zijn. Omvangrijke materiële middelen en voorwaarden voor *open access* hebben niet geleid tot een systematische verbetering van de legitimiteit van de raadplegingen die hier onderzocht zijn, zoals de Rio dialogen en de OWG hoorzittingen. Daarentegen heeft de casus van *MYWorld Survey* aangetoond dat het mogelijk is om een gebrek aan middelen te overstijgen en inclusiviteit te verbeteren als de organisatoren van de raadplegingen samenwerkingsverbanden ontwikkelen met *grassroots* actoren vanuit de maatschappij en de publieke en private sectoren, zij het implementeren overlaten aan nationale en lokale gemeenschappen in plaats van aan mondiale centra, en zij prioriteit geven aan de stemmen van de meest gemarginaliseerde bevolkingsgroepen.

Ten derde wordt geanalyseerd wat de invloed is van maatschappelijke participatie op de onderhandelingen over de SDG's. Hoofdstuk 5 laat zien dat de invloed van maatschappelijke participatie over het algemeen beperkt is. Deze maatschappelijke interventies zijn zeker van invloed geweest, en hebben ervoor gezorgd dat bepaalde kwesties onderdeel bleven uitmaken van de onderhandelingen en dat er een participatiecultuur werd ontwikkeld in de mondiale beleidsvorming over duurzame ontwikkeling; toch hadden zij echter slechts een marginaal effect op de afbakening van de kwesties, op het verschuiven van de posities van regeringen, en op de uiteindelijke overeenkomst. De formulering van doel 10 over het verminderen van ongelijkheden illustreert deze beperkte invloed. Ondanks vele interventies was de maatschappij niet in staat om te ontkomen aan het omschrijven van inkomensongelijkheid als een kwestie van het verminderen van *zowel* armoede *als* extreme rijkdom. Ook al slaagde de maatschappij erin om het ongelijkheidsdoel op te nemen in de uiteindelijke overeenkomst, toch konden er geen ambitieuze doelen worden opgesteld binnen dit doel. Hoewel het bestaand onderzoek over maatschappelijke invloed op intergouvernementele beleidsvorming hier wordt bevestigd, biedt deze dissertatie een ander, nieuw argument om de invloed te verklaren, door zich te richten op de rol van de participatieruimte. Ook al wordt erkend dat de invloed van de maatschappij voortkomt uit een combinatie van interventies binnen vele participatieruimtes, laat deze dissertatie zien dat de maatschappij eerder invloed heeft binnen informele en exclusieve participatieruimtes,

en wanneer deze ruimtes al vroeg in de onderhandelingen beschikbaar zijn, met meerdere herhalingen tijdens het beleidsvormingsproces. Dit zet vraagtekens bij het democratiserende potentieel van maatschappelijke participatie in intergouvernementele beleidsvorming, aangezien de actoren die de mogelijkheid hebben om herhaaldelijk en informeel de onderhandelaren te benaderen zelden degenen zijn die het meest de mondiale maatschappij vertegenwoordigen. Dit spreekt ook de vooronderstelling van dit onderzoek tegen dat regeringen worden geacht om meer ontvankelijk te zijn voor maatschappelijke eisen als deze de voorkeur van een brede, representatieve groep van actoren weergeven. Uiteindelijk hebben tien miljoen reacties in de *MYWorld Survey* veel minder invloed op de onderhandelingen gehad dan het lange-termijn lobbyen van een handvol professionele maatschappelijke vertegenwoordigers uit New York die zeer bekend zijn met de politieke dynamiek van intergouvernementele onderhandelingen bij de VN.

Ten slotte wordt er in hoofdstuk 6 gekeken naar discursieve vertegenwoordiging als een manier om democratie in een mondiale context te bevorderen en de beperkingen van vertegenwoordiging op basis van actoren weg te nemen. Hierbij wordt erkend dat de door internationale instellingen en regeringen ingestelde participatiemechanismen tekortgeschoten zijn bij het tegemoetkomen aan de wetenschappelijke en empirische vraag naar mondiale democratisering. Deliberatieve democraten stellen inderdaad dat discursieve vertegenwoordiging de belofte van mondiale democratie kan inlossen wanneer de participatie of vertegenwoordiging van alle betrokkenen via een collectieve beslissing niet haalbaar is. Aangezien discussie het vormen van coalities tussen allerlei sectoren kan stimuleren, heeft discursieve vertegenwoordiging de mogelijkheid om – door middel van ideeën en concepten in plaats van actoren – inclusiviteit te bevorderen, evenals verdere mondiale democratisering. Hoofdstuk 6 richt zich daarom op het in kaart brengen van de verschillende discoursen over duurzaamheid die hebben plaatsgevonden tijdens het uitwerken van de SDG's en in dit hoofdstuk wordt bekeken in hoeverre ieder van deze discoursen vertegenwoordigd was in de onderhandelingen en door wie. Hieruit blijkt dat tijdens het vormen van de SDG's, exclusiviteit in participatie juist heeft geleid tot vergelijkbare onevenwichtigheid in discursieve vertegenwoordiging: de onderhandelingen over de SDG's hebben uiteindelijk gefaald om een maatschappelijk – en populair – discours te vertegenwoordigen wat radicaal afwijkt van de status quo. De onderhandelingen hebben voornamelijk een voortschrijdend duurzaamheidsdiscours uitgedragen, waarin ontwikkeling fundamenteel op groei is gebaseerd en de natuur buiten de menselijke samenleving en economie staat, en dat oproept tot een heroriëntering van bestaande instellingen en normen om rechtvaardigheid tussen ontwikkelde landen en ontwikkelingslanden te stimuleren, waarbij slechts in beperkte mate het belang van de participatie van een breder scala aan actoren wordt erkend. Dit hoofdstuk laat verder zien dat discoursen sterk verbonden blijven met de actoren. Met andere woorden, de onderhandelingen bieden de mogelijkheid om coalities te vormen tussen allerlei sectoren

en zo de ideeën en concepten van de ondervertegenwoordigde actoren in beleidsvorming over te brengen; dit is echter niet waargemaakt. Dit maakt duidelijk wat de beperkingen zijn van discursieve vertegenwoordiging voor democratisering boven het niveau van de natiestaat.

Hoofdstuk 7 bevat de conclusie van deze dissertatie. Er wordt gereflecteerd op de resultaten, maar eerst wordt bekeken hoe de onderzochte recente empirische ontwikkelingen in maatschappelijke participatie hebben bijgedragen aan theoretische innovaties in het wetenschappelijke werk op het gebied van mondiale democratie. Iedere bestaande theorie definieert zijn eigen normatieve pad voor het bevorderen van democratisering op mondiaal niveau, met verschillende plaatsen en omvang van verandering. Met name democratische intergouvernementalisten stellen dat mondiale democratie voortkomt uit de democratisering van de natiestaten. Deliberatieve en radicale democraten beweren dat mondiale democratisering opgewekt moet worden in de transnationale publieke sfeer, en kosmopolieten en voorstanders van een wereldregering beweren dat democratisering de creatie van formele mondiale instellingen omvat. Deze dissertatie heeft echter aangetoond dat mondiale democratie niet kan voortkomen uit op zichzelf staande voorstellen. Alle deelnemers (d.w.z. de burgers, geïnstitutionaliseerde maatschappelijke actoren, de private sector, regeringen, en internationale organisaties) en alle ruimtes van bestuur (d.w.z. informele, formele, en op lokaal, sub-nationaal, nationaal, regionaal en internationaal niveau) moeten georganiseerd worden rond, of gebonden zijn door, democratische waarden voor het creëren van mondiale democratisering. Dit onderzoek heeft zich met name gericht op de waarden van inclusiviteit, transparantie, verantwoordelijkheid, invloed, en de discursieve vertegenwoordiging in mondiale beleidsvorming; hierin werd getoond hoe verschillende maatschappelijke participatieruimtes helpen om deze democratische principes te stimuleren (of te ondermijnen). Door mondiale democratie te conceptualiseren als verschillende democratische waarden die worden nagestreefd op veel verschillende plekken door veel verschillende deelnemers, bevordert deze dissertatie bovendien onze kennis over de manier waarop deze waarden zich tot elkaar verhouden, en de mate waarin zij elkaar voeden of in strijd zijn met elkaar in verschillende contexten. In het laatste geval wordt er hier gesteld dat burgers het potentieel hebben om sommige van deze conflicten op te lossen, en mondiale democratisering te stimuleren, zolang er wordt voldaan aan de relevante socio-economische voorwaarden voor participatie en zij toegang hebben tot de benodigde democratische vaardigheden.

De conclusie geeft ook een aantal aanbevelingen die gericht zijn op het sturen van toekomstige actie in het verder waarborgen van democratische principes in de mondiale beleidsvorming. Hoewel onderkend wordt dat de mate waarin een maatschappelijk participatiemechanisme inclusief en invloedrijk is zeer context-gebonden is, biedt dit onderzoek algemene inzichten die beleidsmakers kunnen helpen bij de keuzes die zij moeten maken wanneer zij een mechanisme ontwerpen voor maatschappelijke

participatie op een mondiaal niveau. Deze omvatten onder meer: het ontwikkelen van heldere doelstellingen voor het participatieproces en deze formeel verbinden aan de onderhandelingen; het combineren van persoonlijke representatieve participatie in mondiale onderhandelingshubs met persoonlijke deliberatieve forums waarbij burgers betrokken worden op lokaal niveau, en online participatie; het betrekken van de maatschappij bij het ontwerpen en verspreiden van een mondiaal participatiemechanisme op nationaal en lokaal niveau; het toewijzen van adequate en tijdige middelen aan participanten; en het bevorderen van de participatie van regeringsvertegenwoordigers aan het participatieproces. Ten tweede zouden maatschappelijke actoren zich, ondanks hun beperkingen, toch bezig moeten houden met mondiale participatiemechanismen. Deze dissertatie laat juist zien dat zulke mechanismen aanzienlijke effecten hebben, naast hun potentiële directe invloed op de onderhandelingen en de inhoud van mondiale normen en overeenkomsten, die bijdragen aan het bouwen van een basis voor een levendiger democratisch bestaan, zowel binnen en buiten besluitvormingscentra, op mondiaal en op nationaal niveau. In het bijzonder zorgen mondiale participatiemechanismen voor interactie, leren en wederzijds begrip onder maatschappelijke actoren. Ook vergroten zij de democratische vaardigheden van maatschappelijke participanten, enerzijds door hun kennis te verbeteren van het systeem van de Verenigde Naties en de procedureregels die de onderhandelingen en maatschappelijke participatie omkaderen, en anderzijds door hun bewustzijn te bevorderen over kwesties met betrekking tot duurzame ontwikkeling die besproken worden in de onderhandelingen. Terwijl zij de inhoudelijke en procedurele kennis van burgers vergroten, stellen mondiale participatiemechanismen hen uiteindelijk in staat om een actieve rol te spelen in de nationale en lokale uitvoering van mondiale normen en overeenkomsten. In deze dissertatie wordt specifiek gebruik gemaakt van het voorbeeld van de *MYWorld Survey*, die gebruikt wordt als informatief hulpmiddel om het bewustzijn over de SDG's te stimuleren en om de discussie te stimuleren over de acties die participanten kunnen ondernemen – of die zij hun nationale regering of lokale autoriteit kunnen vragen te ondernemen – om de kwesties aan te kaarten die zij als prioriteit hebben gemarkeerd in de enquête.

Tenslotte wordt in deze dissertatie gekeken naar de mogelijkheden voor toekomstig onderzoek naar de mondiale democratische theorie en praktijk. Deze omvatten onder meer het bestuderen van de mogelijke rol voor burgers bij de uitvoering van mondiale normen en overeenkomsten over duurzaamheid in deze tijd van digitalisering. In het bijzonder omvat dit het onderzoeken van de mate waarin data die met behulp van ICT door burgers is gegenereerd een rol kan spelen bij het stimuleren de legitimiteit van mondiale normen en de verantwoordingsplicht van internationale instellingen. Aangezien het bewaken van een brede agenda zoals de SDG's niet alleen kan worden uitgevoerd door nationale regeringen en nationale bureaus voor de statistiek, biedt gegevensverstrekking door ICT de mogelijkheid om de participatie van burgers in mondiaal bestuur te verbeteren. Daarbij wordt hier voorgesteld dat bij toekomstig IB

en politicologisch onderzoek naar mondiale democratie psychologen, gedragseconomen en onderzoekers uit de informatietechnologie worden betrokken, om zo onze kennis te vergroten van de sociaalpsychologische factoren die de deelname aan participatie verklaren, en om te beoordelen hoe hulpmiddelen uit de informatiekunde kunnen worden ingezet voor de participatie in mondiale beleidsvorming. Het ontwikkelen van zulke hulpmiddelen door middel van onderzoek, om zo een betekenisvolle en constructieve participatie van burgers in mondiale beleidsvorming en uitvoering mogelijk te maken, lijkt des te belangrijker in het hedendaagse tijdperk. In een tijd waarin de politiek van onwaarheid – niet post-waarheid – terrein wint en gebruik maakt van ICT om foutieve – niet alternatieve – feiten te verspreiden, moet de academische gemeenschap zich vandaag meer dan ooit tevoren bezighouden met transdisciplinair onderzoek en de verspreiding hiervan naar de beleidspraktijk, om op die manier bij te dragen aan het opbouwen van de democratische vaardigheden en het kritisch denken van burgers, zonder welke iedere poging tot het bewaken van democratie op nationaal niveau en het bevorderen van mondiale democratisering tevergeefs zullen zijn.

RÉSUMÉ

Au cours de la dernière décennie, isolationnisme et démondialisation sont réapparus avec force dans les débats politiques nationaux et ont trouvé un écho important auprès des citoyens. Le slogan de campagne de Donald Trump, « America First », le succès des arguments en faveur du Brexit, abondamment relayés par le Parti pour l'indépendance du Royaume-Uni, ou encore la percée du vote Front National lors du premier tour des élections présidentielles françaises, sont autant d'exemples qui montrent que l'idéologie et les partis nationalpopulistes ont le vent en poupe. Leur prospérité se nourrit de l'argument, constamment brandi par les représentants de ces partis, selon lequel la mondialisation affaiblirait la souveraineté, l'autorité, et la légitimité nationales. Que nous adhérions ou non à cette assertion, force est de constater que le transfert partiel de pouvoir vers des instances de gouvernance globale a généré un déficit démocratique, où les processus décisionnels échapperaient de plus en plus au contrôle démocratique des publics nationaux.

Pour accroitre la légitimité démocratique des processus décisionnels au niveau global, les institutions internationales ont créé des mécanismes participatifs qui permettent aux citoyens ou à leurs représentants d'exprimer leurs opinions et préférences quant aux décisions qui pourraient affecter leur quotidien. Ce tournant participatif de la gouvernance globale trouve sa plus flagrante expression dans le domaine du développement durable, où sont conduits des processus de participation présentiels, virtuels, directs, ou représentatifs en vue d'améliorer l'inclusion des citoyens ou de leurs représentants dans les processus décisionnels au niveau international. Parce qu'ils constituent un pont entre institutions internationales et citoyens nationaux, les mécanismes qui permettent aux citoyens ou à leurs représentants de participer aux processus décisionnels intergouvernementaux pourraient donc pallier le déficit démocratique et la crise de légitimité dont souffre la gouvernance globale.

Néanmoins, la capacité des mécanismes participatifs à tenir cette promesse est sujette à débat pour deux raisons. Il est d'une part problématique de considérer que les acteurs de la société civile qui représentent les intérêts des citoyens affectés par une décision collective sont systématiquement force de démocratisation. Bien que son rôle constructif soit reconnu en matière d'expertise et d'expression des intérêts des populations les plus vulnérables, la société civile n'en est pas pour autant plus inclusive, représentative et soumise à des politiques de redevabilité que les États ou le marché. D'autre part, la légitimité démocratique des mécanismes de participation de la société civile, et en particulier leur caractère inclusif, leur influence sur les négociations internationales, et leur capacité à produire des accords internationaux et politiques publiques nationales efficaces sont remises en question.

S'appuyant sur un ensemble de méthodes comprenant analyses statistiques, analyse de documents, reconstitution du processus décisionnel, analyse de discours, et entretiens semi-directifs, la thèse analyse la mesure dans laquelle les mécanismes de participation de la société civile dans les négociations internationales sur le développement

durable permettent de démocratiser la gouvernance globale. Après une revue des différentes théories de la démocratie globale dans le chapitre 1, la thèse présente le cadre empirique et méthodologique de la recherche dans son chapitre 2. Celui-ci se concentre en particulier sur trois mécanismes de participation de la société civile menés pendant les négociations internationales sur les Objectifs de développement durable (ODD) entre 2012 et 2015 : les dialogues du développement durable de Rio+20, les auditions de la société civile du Groupe de travail ouvert sur les ODD, et l'enquête MYWorld. Dans les chapitres ultérieurs, la thèse répond à la question de recherche et développe son argumentation en quatre parties.

Premièrement, dans son chapitre 3, la thèse analyse la contribution des nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication (NTIC) à la démocratisation des processus décisionnels au niveau international. Les NTIC sont utilisées de manière croissante pour impliquer la société civile dans les négociations internationales sur les enjeux de développement durable. Elles sont souvent considérées comme une solution miracle au déficit démocratique des mécanismes traditionnels de participation de la société civile, basés sur la représentation, et plus largement des processus décisionnels au niveau global. Internet en particulier, parce qu'il constitue un moyen de communication horizontal, bon marché, et capable de dépasser les barrières spatiales et temporelles, permettrait à la société civile d'avoir un accès direct aux négociations internationales. Cependant, de nombreux observateurs ont contesté les bénéfices des NTIC pour la démocratisation des mécanismes participatifs et des processus décisionnels, pour des raisons à la fois théoriques et empiriques. Aucune recherche n'avait été menée au niveau international jusqu'à présent. Prenant l'exemple des nombreux dialogues en ligne menés en amont de la Conférence de Rio+20, la thèse démontre que malgré leurs promesses, les NTIC renforcent les inégalités de participation au niveau global plutôt qu'elles ne les inversent. En particulier, l'utilisation d'Internet favorise la participation des acteurs de la société civile les plus organisés et les plus puissants, basés dans les pays développés, et renforce l'exclusion d'organisations de terrain situées dans les pays en développement ou du grand public. De plus, les NTIC ne permettent pas d'accroitre de manière substantielle la transparence et la redevabilité au cours des négociations internationales sur les enjeux de développement durable. En effet, bien que l'utilisation d'Internet élargisse l'accès et le partage d'informations sur les enjeux traités lors du processus de participation et des négociations, la diversité des sources de ces informations reste limitée et contraint l'échange d'opinions diverses et contradictoires lors du processus de participation. Ce débat contradictoire est pourtant une condition nécessaire à la démocratisation des processus décisionnels. En outre, une plateforme Internet a souvent pour effet d'anonymiser les interactions, rendant difficile le maintien d'un rapport de redevabilité entre société civile et représentants des organisations internationales et des États. Ceci entrave l'avènement d'une participation effective de la société civile dans les négociations internationales.

Deuxièmement, en se concentrant sur les trois études de cas sélectionnées pour cette recherche, la thèse conduit, dans son chapitre 4, une analyse comparative de la légitimité démocratique des processus de participation de la société civile commandités dans le cadre des négociations sur les ODD. Alors que les processus de participation sont souvent acceptés sans réserve comme un moyen de renforcer les garanties démocratiques dans les négociations internationales, leur inclusivité limitée et leur faible capacité à maintenir un rapport de redevabilité entre citoyens, institutions internationales, et gouvernements, affaiblissent leur potentiel de démocratisation. La thèse cherche à expliquer les causes de cette situation en explorant les relations entre l'ingénierie participative et la légitimité démocratique des processus de participation. Elle constate que ces relations sont parfois inattendues. Les processus de participation ne sont pas forcément plus inclusifs lorsqu'ils bénéficient d'importantes ressources financières pour leur organisation, ou lorsque les conditions d'accès sont libres, comme le montre l'exemple des dialogues de Rio et des auditions de la société civile menées dans le cadre du Groupe de travail ouvert sur les ODD. Inversement, l'exemple de l'enquête MYWorld indique qu'il est possible d'améliorer le caractère inclusif d'une consultation malgré des contraintes de ressources, lorsque les organisateurs développent des partenariats avec le secteur public et privé et des organisations de terrain de la société civile, et délèguent sa diffusion depuis les centres de décision internationaux vers les communautés nationales et locales, accédant ainsi aux populations traditionnellement exclues de ces processus de participation.

Troisièmement, la thèse analyse l'influence de la participation de la société civile sur les négociations internationales sur les ODD. Le chapitre 5 montre que l'impact de la participation de la société civile est, somme toute, limité. Certes, les nombreuses interventions de la société civile dans le cadre des négociations ont contribué à garantir l'existence de certains objectifs autonomes dans l'accord final sur les ODD. Elles ont également permis de développer une culture de la participation dans les processus décisionnels intergouvernementaux sur les enjeux de développement durable. Néanmoins, la société civile n'a eu un impact que très marginal sur la conceptualisation des enjeux dans les négociations, sur les positions des gouvernements, et sur l'accord final. La formulation de l'objectif 10 sur la réduction des inégalités en fournit l'illustration. Malgré de multiples interventions, la société civile a tout d'abord échoué à influer sur la conceptualisation de l'enjeu des inégalités de revenus comme à la fois une question de réduction de la pauvreté *et* de l'extrême richesse. De plus, même si les interventions de la société civile ont permis de garantir l'existence de l'objectif 10 dans l'accord final, les cibles adoptées au sein de cet objectif restent finalement bien en-deçà de l'ambition des propositions de la société civile. Bien que les résultats de cette recherche confirment les études menées précédemment en matière d'influence de la société civile sur les négociations internationales, la thèse apporte de nouveaux enseignements sur le rôle de l'espace participatif comme facteur d'influence. Reconnaissant que l'influence de la société civile résulte d'une multiplicité d'interventions au sein de nombreux espaces

de participation, la thèse démontre pour autant que la société civile est plus à même d'influencer lorsqu'elle intervient au sein d'espaces participatifs informels et exclusifs, et lorsque ces espaces sont fournis en amont et tout au long du processus de négociations. Ces résultats remettent en question l'idée selon laquelle la participation de la société civile serait force de démocratisation, puisque les acteurs capables de participer de manière itérative aux négociations et de tisser des relations informelles avec les représentants des gouvernements sont rarement les plus représentatifs de la société civile globale. De plus, les résultats présentés dans ce chapitre contredisent l'hypothèse initiale de la thèse, selon laquelle les représentants des gouvernements prendraient davantage en compte les demandes de la société civile lorsque celles-ci émanent d'un panel d'acteurs large et représentatif. Au final, les dix millions de réponses à l'enquête MYWorld ont eu beaucoup moins d'impact sur les négociations sur les ODD que le plaidoyer d'une poignée de professionnels de la représentation de la société civile basés à New York et ayant une solide connaissance des rouages des négociations intergouvernementales au siège des Nations Unies.

Enfin, la thèse examine dans son chapitre 6 la mesure dans laquelle la représentation discursive permet de remédier aux limites de la représentation par les acteurs, et de promouvoir la démocratie globale. Selon les théoriciens de la démocratie discursive, les discours permettraient d'améliorer le caractère inclusif des processus décisionnels au niveau international par la représentation d'idées et de concepts, en particulier lorsque la participation ou la représentation de l'ensemble des acteurs affectés par une décision collective est impossible. Le chapitre 6 dresse une cartographie des différents discours sur le développement durable portés lors de l'élaboration des ODD et examine la mesure dans laquelle chacun de ces discours est représenté dans les négociations, et par quel(s) acteur(s). Il révèle que la sous-représentation de certains acteurs dans les négociations sur les ODD a précisément produit des biais similaires dans la représentation des discours : ainsi, certains discours sur la durabilité, notamment ceux qui dévient radicalement du statut quo, n'ont été que très peu représentés lors de la formulation des ODD au siège des Nations Unies. En particulier, ces négociations ont principalement porté un discours de « durabilité progressive ». Ce discours relaie une conception du développement essentiellement basée sur la croissance économique, et une conception de la nature extérieure à l'homme et à sa culture, où le vivant peut être objectivé, exploité, et mis en valeur au service de l'homme. De plus, bien qu'il appelle à une réforme des institutions et des normes en vue d'améliorer l'équité entre pays industrialisés et pays en développement, ce discours ne met pas en avant d'autres dimensions de l'équité, notamment l'équité entre générations, entre acteurs étatiques et acteurs non-étatiques, ou entre humains et non-humains. Ce chapitre montre également que les discours restent extrêmement liés aux acteurs qui les portent. En d'autres termes, la représentation discursive n'a pas permis de générer des coalitions multi-acteurs pour relayer les idées et concepts des acteurs sous-représentés dans les processus décisionnels.

Ceci témoigne donc des limites de la représentation discursive pour démocratiser les processus décisionnels au-delà de l'État-Nation.

Le chapitre 7 conclue la thèse. Il examine tout d'abord comment les développements empiriques récents en matière de participation de la société civile dans les processus décisionnels au niveau international ont contribué à des innovations théoriques dans le champ académique de la démocratie globale. Le chapitre 2 a montré que chaque théorie de la démocratie globale définit son propre cadre normatif pour démocratiser les processus décisionnels au niveau international, en se concentrant sur des *loci* et des acteurs de changement différents. En particulier, les démocrates intergouvernementaux estiment que la démocratie globale doit être le résultat d'une démocratisation plus approfondie des États-Nations. Pour les théoriciens de la démocratie délibérative et les démocrates radicaux, la démocratisation globale trouve sa source dans la société civile et l'espace public transnational, et les tenants du cosmopolitisme et d'un gouvernement mondial affirment que la démocratisation passe par la création d'institutions officielles au niveau global. Cette thèse montre néanmoins que la démocratie globale ne peut advenir de propositions cloisonnées. L'ensemble des acteurs (citoyens, société civile organisée, secteur privé, gouvernements, et institutions internationales) et des espaces de gouvernance (à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur des institutions, au niveau local, national, régional et international) doivent respecter certaines valeurs démocratiques pour faire émerger la démocratie globale. Cette recherche s'est particulièrement concentrée sur les valeurs d'inclusion, de transparence, de redevabilité, d'influence, et de représentation discursive, et a décrit comment différents processus de participation de la société civile ont favorisé l'émergence, ou ont affaibli, ces principes démocratiques dans les processus décisionnels au niveau international. De plus, en conceptualisant la démocratie globale selon différents principes démocratiques devant être poursuivis par l'ensemble des acteurs au sein des différents espaces de gouvernance, la thèse permet de mieux appréhender comment ces principes interagissent dans différents contextes, et notamment s'ils se renforcent mutuellement, ou au contraire s'ils entrent en conflit. Dans ce dernier cas, la thèse avance l'argument selon lequel les citoyens sont à même de résoudre ces conflits et catalyser la démocratisation globale lorsqu'ils disposent des conditions socioéconomiques et des compétences démocratiques nécessaires à leur participation.

La conclusion propose également une série de recommandations pour guider l'action des praticiens de la participation en vue de renforcer les principes démocratiques des processus décisionnels au niveau international. Tout en reconnaissant que la légitimité démocratique d'un processus de participation de la société civile dépend fortement du contexte dans lequel est mené ce processus, la thèse tire des enseignements généraux pour guider les choix des décideurs dans la conception et l'organisation d'un processus de participation au niveau global. En particulier, les décideurs doivent s'attacher à assigner des objectifs clairs au processus participatif et à développer un lien formel contraignant avec le processus de décision pour lequel celui-ci est mis en place. Ce lien

pourrait par exemple se concrétiser par une obligation des organisateurs à justifier la prise en compte ou non des résultats du processus participatif dans les négociations et l'accord final. Par ailleurs, le processus de participation doit intervenir dès le début du processus décisionnel, lorsque toutes les options sont encore possibles, pour permettre une réelle influence. Les décideurs doivent également combiner différentes formes de participation : des mécanismes de participation représentative en présentiel au sein des centres de négociations, avec des assemblées délibératives qui impliquent les citoyens au niveau local, et des mécanismes de participation en ligne. Il est également très important d'associer la société civile à la conception du processus participatif et sa diffusion au niveau national et local. Les décideurs doivent aussi allouer des ressources suffisantes et prévoir des délais raisonnables pour permettre aux acteurs de la société civile de se préparer et de participer effectivement aux discussions tout au long du processus décisionnel. Enfin, il est important d'encourager l'implication active des représentants des gouvernements dans le processus participatif.

Malgré leurs limites, les acteurs de la société civile doivent continuer à investir les espaces de participation qui leur sont dédiés au niveau international. En effet, la thèse montre que les processus de participation, outre leur impact potentiel direct sur les négociations et le contenu des accords internationaux, produisent d'autres effets qui jettent les bases d'une démocratie plus vive, à la fois au sein et en dehors des centres de décision, au niveau national et international. En particulier, les processus de participation conduits au niveau international favorisent l'apprentissage et le partage du savoir et des connaissances, et la compréhension mutuelle entre les acteurs de la société civile. Ces processus permettent également de construire et renforcer les compétences démocratiques des participants de la société civile, en améliorant leur compréhension du système onusien et des procédures encadrant la participation d'une part, et en les sensibilisant aux enjeux de développement durable traités par les négociations d'autre part. En améliorant leurs connaissances, les processus de participation incitent les citoyens à s'approprier davantage les enjeux traités dans les négociations et à s'impliquer dans la mise en œuvre nationale et locale des accords internationaux adoptés à l'issue des négociations. Ainsi, l'enquête MYWorld a par exemple été utilisée comme outil d'information pour sensibiliser les citoyens aux ODD et stimuler le débat sur les actions que les participants à l'enquête pouvaient mener à leur niveau pour répondre aux enjeux qu'ils avaient sélectionnés lors de l'enquête comme leurs priorités pour le futur accord international sur le développement durable.

Enfin, la thèse explore les orientations vers lesquelles pourrait s'engager la recherche sur la démocratie globale. De futures recherches pourraient être menées sur le rôle des citoyens dans la mise en œuvre des accords internationaux sur le développement durable à l'ère de la digitalisation. Plus spécifiquement, ces recherches examineraient la mesure dans laquelle les données fournies par les acteurs de la société civile via des technologies à visées citoyennes pourraient améliorer la légitimité démocratique des

processus décisionnels au niveau international. Parce que le suivi d'un programme aussi large que les ODD ne peut être réalisé exclusivement par les gouvernements et les bureaux de statistiques nationaux, la fourniture de données par des technologies citoyennes offre à tout un chacun l'opportunité de participer à la gouvernance globale. La thèse appelle également les chercheurs en relations internationales et en sciences politiques travaillant sur la démocratie globale à collaborer avec d'autres communautés académiques telles que la psychologie, l'économie comportementale, et les technologies de l'information pour améliorer notre compréhension des facteurs socio-psychologiques qui expliquent les motivations à participer, et pour évaluer comment les outils des sciences informatiques pourraient être mis au service de la participation citoyenne aux processus décisionnels au niveau international. Développer ces outils par la recherche pour permettre une participation effective des citoyens à la formulation et la mise en œuvre des accords internationaux parait d'autant plus importante aujourd'hui. A l'heure où la politique de la post-vérité s'appuie sur les technologies de l'information et de la communication pour relayer des faits dits « alternatifs », la communauté académique doit aujourd'hui, plus que jamais, conduire une recherche transdisciplinaire et disséminer ses résultats dans l'espace public et politique pour renforcer l'esprit critique et démocratique des citoyens, sans lequel tout effort pour promouvoir la démocratie globale serait vain.