

The Muskoka G8 and Toronto G20 Summits, Accountability, and Civil Society*

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This paper examines the role and impact of civil society in increasing the accountability of the G8 and G20, with particular emphasis on the 2010 summits: the back-to-back June Muskoka G8 and Toronto G20 summits, and the November Seoul G20 summit. The paper begins with a clarification of the key concepts of civil and uncivil society, and accountability. It then discusses for what and to whom the G8 and the G20, as global governance institutions, are accountable. This is followed by a look at the kinds of civil society organizations (CSOs) that play a role in the nexus with the G8 and G20. It then considers the motivations for, and range of, civil society interaction with the G8 and G20. Finally, the paper analyzes how and to what extent civil society engagement has, (or, as the case may be, has not), had an impact on the G8 and G20 accountability. Brief concluding observations end the paper.

Introduction

The Muskoka G8 summit held on 25–26 June 2010 had been dubbed in advance the “accountability summit” by the Canadian host government. Indeed, accountability was a principal theme at the summit, along with Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s maternal and child health initiative.

G8 accountability has long been a concern for CSOs, think tanks, some G8 governments and, more recently, for the G8 itself which came to realize that much of its claim to legitimacy rested on the fulfilment of its promises and that it would be held accountable for its actions or lack of actions as the case may be – not just in G8 countries but for global populations, including the marginalized.

As the starting point, some explanation of core concepts may be useful. No theoretical definitions will be attempted in this paper, only clarification of how the terms *civil society* and *accountability* are used.

The term *civil society*, as used in this paper, denotes not-for-profit groups of citizens engaging in collective action around public issues of concern. Civil society associations include formally-structured NGOs as well as social movements, campaigns and coalitions. CSOs are very diverse: they vary in size, geographic extent, ideological orientation, available resources, and strategies and tactics. CSOs engage in anti-poverty activities, peace and disarmament activities, development, environment and climate change, human rights, gender issues, financial rules and many

other issues. Faith-based groups, labour unions, and research institutes are also included under this broad umbrella [1, p. 41–44]. Some observers include business-sector groups in overall civil society, but I believe that there is a good case for excluding business groups because their objectives, *modus operandi* and ties with governmental and intergovernmental bodies are quite distinct from non-profit civil society associations.

Accountability, particularly democratic accountability, means that an actor is answerable for its actions or inactions to those affected by such actions and inactions. Put in another way, accountability “is a condition and process whereby an actor answers for its conduct to those whom it affects. ... If A takes an action that impacts upon B, then by the principle of accountability A must answer to B for that action and its consequences.” Accountability may be considered to have four main aspects or manifestations: transparency, consultation, evaluation, and correction or redress. Further questions arise when discussing accountability: Accountability for what? Accountability to whom? Accountability by what means, what mechanisms? What is democratic accountability? [1, p. 19–39]

G8–G20 Accountability: For What and To Whom?¹

For what and to whom is the G8 accountable? Its mandate, activities and evolving agenda are helpful in answering this question. They lead to the assertion that G8 leaders can be held account-

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¹ For a more G8-related treatment of these ideas see Peter Hajnal [2].

able for their actions and lack of actions on a wide range of economic, political, environmental and other global issues: political and security issues, the environment and climate change, fighting terrorism and organized crime, promoting development, alleviating the debts of poor countries, tackling infectious diseases, food security, energy, education, intellectual property issues, corruption, and so forth.

To whom is the G8 accountable? Certainly to the populations of their own countries but, more broadly, also to the global community, including marginalized populations, since all are affected by G8 decisions and initiatives. Internally, within the G8, leaders are also accountable to their peers, and sub-summit entities (task forces, expert groups and other such bodies) owe accountability to their principals. There is also mutual accountability between the G8 and other actors, particularly in respect of Africa.

What about the G20? Its original mandate, since the establishment of that forum at the leaders' level in late 2008, centred on economic and financial concerns but, inevitably, linkages have become apparent almost from the beginning. The economic and financial crisis that became global by late 2008 has had deleterious effects, for example on food prices, development assistance, climate change action, poverty, health care, new indebtedness. The G20 leaders at their summits have gradually begun to take notice of such related issues, albeit cautiously. G20 summit declarations have referred to trade (if only in a formulaic manner) and the financing of climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Canadian host government of the June G20 Toronto summit have insisted on the sharp division of labour between the G8 and the G20, thus finding justification for the continued existence and notionally continued relevance of the anachronistic G8 forum. And yet, agenda expansion in the G20 is inevitable. The Seoul G20 summit made this clear by placing development firmly on the agenda, alongside with the financial and economic issues that have been the hallmark of the G20 forum from the beginning (adding the issue of financial safety nets to the continuing financial concerns).

As has been the case with the G8, G20 leaders are similarly accountable for their actions or lack of actions on economic, financial and, by extension, other linked or new issues. These leaders can be called to account to the populations of their own countries as well as to the global community affected by their decisions and initiatives. Internally, accountability of G20 leaders to their peers operates as well. G20 accountability to financial mar-

kets is clearer than in the case of the G8, and can be seen as mutual accountability, as the G20 also expects accountability from markets and their regulators. Sub-summit entities (task forces, expert groups and other similar bodies) owe accountability to the G20 leaders, including the obligation to report back to them.

Range and Diversity of Civil Society Associations Interacting with the G8 and the G20

The range of CSOs that cultivate a nexus with the official G8 and G20 is very broad. It embraces environmental and climate change NGOs and campaigns, human rights NGOs, development and relief agencies, anti-poverty groups and movements, faith-based groups and CSOs focusing on various other economic, social and political issues such as financial regulation, health, sustainable economic growth and education. As well, there are G8–G20 relations with trade unions, professional bodies, research groups and think tanks, youth groups and, to a more limited extent, women's groups and; also, for a single time, indigenous groups [3].

As mentioned earlier, the business sector is a special case and its inclusion within civil society is problematic. Indeed, G8 and G20 officials themselves distinguish between business players and non-profit civil CSOs. If one were to include the business sector in civil society, then the overall civil society impact on the G8 would greatly increase. For example, since 2005, G8 and now G20 leaders have chosen the exclusive business gathering, the annual World Economic Forum, to flesh out their agendas for their annual G8 and G20 presidencies. Another example of this close relationship is the G20 business summit (B20). The first B20 was convened at the request of the Canadian Prime Minister and Finance Minister on 25–26 June 2010. The host government of the November 2010 Seoul G20 summit integrated the B20 (10–11 November) even more closely with the official G20 Seoul summit which, having met on, 11–12 November, overlapped with the G20 summit. In another indication of this close relationship, the official Korean G20 summit website (<http://www.seoulsummit.kr>) provided a link to the B20 website (<http://www.seoulg20businesssummit.org/en>).

Like business, celebrities, too, are a special case. Many NGOs welcome such highly visible support from famous people, but some CSO activists are concerned about the potential of celebrities stifling the voices of civil society itself. This is an ambiguous relationship.

What motivates CSOs to interact with the G8 and G20? At the risk of generalization, it may be stated that these diverse groups have in common the desire to promote social and economic justice, but there are huge variations among CSOs in ideological orientation, tactics and priorities. Those CSOs that choose to engage the G8 and the G20 (and some groups explicitly reject such engagement) also wish to have an impact on policies, governance and accountability. Moreover, they look for media exposure and a higher public profile – as, indeed, do G8 and G20 governments themselves. More radical groups (these generally do not care to have anything to do with the G8 and the G20) wish to change political and economic systems, for example, by ending capitalism and creating a different world.

The civil society nexus with the G8 and G20 has taken various forms. This paper analyzes processes of dialogue, evaluation and monitoring, alternative summits, policy papers and, to a lesser extent, other forms of interaction, focusing on the Muskoka G8, Toronto G20 and Seoul G20 summits. Such interaction contributes to G8 and G20 accountability.

Dialogue

The G8 and G20 are conscious of the importance of legitimacy. To enhance their legitimacy, both have established and maintained dialogue with the global community. Civil society is an essential part of the global community, and CSOs, on their part, have long advocated for such dialogue even before the G8 and the G20 were ready for that interaction, on their part.

The Muskoka G8 and Toronto G20 summits were preceded by a series of consultations between civil society groups and G8-G20 officials. These included the “Civil G8”, a videoconference with the Canadian host sherpa team, an in-person consultation with the Canadian G20 host sherpa team, separate consultations on maternal and child health, all before the June G8 and G20 summits in Canada; and the “Civil G20” before the Seoul summit.

South Korean President Lee Myung-bakan announced on 28 January 2010, in a keynote address to the meeting of the World Economic Forum, that his priority for the 11–12 November Seoul G20 summit will be development. The actual Seoul summit delivered on this promise; moreover, it included aspects of climate change in the final agenda. These developments opened up significant civil society opportunities for advocacy and other action.

Korean civil society actively began preparations for a series of G20-related events as early as during the June summits in Canada. Such timeliness allowed effective civil society action and more fruitful interaction with the G20.

Civil G8

A dialogue process known as “Civil G8”, which began during Russia’s G8 presidency in 2006, took place again in 2010 in Vancouver, on 15–16 April, in the lead-up to the Canadian G8 and G20 summits.² The 2006 Civil G8 was preceded by long, careful preparations, with impressive resources and substantial support from the Russian host government. In contrast, the Vancouver Civil G8 was a much more modest affair but it brought together some 60 NGO representatives from 17 countries. The Canadian Council on International Cooperation (an umbrella group of Canadian NGOs and civil society organizations) and the Make Poverty History campaign were the main organizers. Around 60 NGO representatives from 17 countries participated. The two-day session consisted of plenary meetings, meetings of working groups on major issues, a face-to-face roundtable session with G8 sherpas, and a final press conference.

The working groups were convened along particular issues or clusters of issues: health (including maternal and child health, AIDS and other infectious diseases, and the strengthening of health systems); climate change (concerned primarily with the financing of climate adaptation and mitigation); food security, water, and education; governance, human rights, and peace and security; and another group on G8 accountability, Gleneagles commitments, and innovative financing for development. Gender was seen as a cross-cutting issue discussed by various working groups. On accountability (the focus of this paper), the Civil G8 asked for a G8 accountability framework based on transparency, clarity, and a results-oriented approach; most importantly, it called on the G8 to keep its promises, notably the Gleneagles commitments. The Civil 8 recognized that the G8 has made progress on some issues, and acknowledged that the sherpas were receptive to NGO input on maternal and children’s health, the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), accountability, water and sanitation [4]. More importantly, the consultation process itself is an instrument of G8/G20 accountability. It serves to convey to G8/G20 officials the depth of society’s concerns with

² For a brief assessment of this consultation, see Make Poverty History [4].

crucial global issues; on the other hand, it allows CSO representatives to learn more about government negotiations, and about what can and cannot be realistically accomplished in the political milieu in which those negotiations take place.

A Civil G20 dialogue was the first such consultation bearing the name “Civil G20”, (although, as mentioned earlier, a civil society consultation with the G20 host sherpa team was held previously in Ottawa, prior to the Toronto G20 summit). The Korean Civil G20 took place on 15 October in Incheon, following a G20 sherpa meeting. It brought together some 100 representatives from 70 NGOs from 40 countries. The Global Call Against Poverty (GCAP) campaign was one of the main organizers of this event which was jointly hosted by G20 Preparation Committee Vice-chief Lee Chang-yong and GCAP Preparation Committee Chief Lee Seong-hun. The consultation covered trade, financial regulation and G20 governance; it also touched on food security, job creation, and G20 cooperation with international organizations. The resulting recommendations were delivered to the sherpas. The sherpas, on their part, elaborated on the G20 agenda and, significantly, called for active cooperation with NGOs [5].

G8–G20 Stakeholder Videoconference with the Canadian Host Sherpa Team

This consultation took place on 19 June in four locations: the sherpa team met a group of CSO representatives at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in Ottawa; other groups participated by video link from McGill University in Montreal, the Liu Institute for Global Issues at the University of British Columbia, and the University of Toronto.

Following opening remarks from the sherpa team, participants from each location posed questions first on items on the G8 agenda (particularly development, and peace and security), then the G20 agenda (focusing on the financial and economic crisis and aspects of recovery). The inter-locutors’ questions centred on maternal and child health, international development, the environment, trade, security issues, and accountability. The centrality of the MDGs was clear from several of the interventions. In their responses, the sherpa team members stressed the importance of consultation and dialogue with NGOs and other stakeholders, and pointed to accountability as a center-piece of the Muskoka summit. Their replies did not

fully answer civil society criticisms of non-delivery or partial delivery of prior G8 commitments. The officials reiterated their view that a clear division of labour remained between the G8 and the G20. The session ended with brief concluding remarks.

Consultations on Maternal and Child Health before the Muskoka Summit. Another group of NGOs concerned with maternal and child health (a focal point of the Muskoka G8 summit) held separate consultations with government officials. This dialogue resulted in exchanges useful to both government officials and the NGOs.

There were other consultations before the Seoul summit as well; for example, in October Korean and international civil society representatives, including those from GCAP held a workshop on the subject of G20 and development as part of the preparations for the Seoul summit. In addition to civil society discussions, the workshop featured the Korean sherpa who presented his government’s position on the major agenda items for the summit. Labour union leaders have secured bilateral talks on a high level, with G20 leaders themselves, to be held before the G20 summit. This type of engagement gives the unions unusual direct access to the leaders. But, as an indication of the fact that civil society itself has accountability deficits, the content and results of this and similar high-level consultations are not made publicly available [6].

In-Person Consultation with the Canadian G20 Host Sherpa Team

The Montreal-based FIM Forum for Democratic Global Governance – a civil society think tank – pioneered a consultation with the Canadian G20 host sherpa and his team prior to the Toronto G20 summit. FIM was able to build on its experience of initiating a similar dialogue at the 2002 Kananaskis G8 summit between the Canadian host government and three other G8 governments on the one hand and civil society representatives from about a dozen countries of North and South on the other side. (FIM has continued its leadership role around subsequent G8 summits.) This dialogue involved, on the official side, the Canadian G20 host sherpa, the finance sous-sherpa and others. Twenty civil society leaders from around the world participated. The focus was on “accountability of the G20 to the citizens of the world.” Apart from a roundtable discussion held at the British consulate in Istanbul prior to the April 2009 London G20 summit [7], the Ottawa dialogue was the first such major event in the G20 setting. It gave civil society representatives from North and South a voice that called

on the G20 to “deepen democratization of global governance institutions, processes, and decision-making.”

The consultation also covered macroeconomic policy issues such as the bailout and rescue of financial institutions in which taxpayers’ funds had been used, causing worldwide anger. Participants in the consultation asked the G20 to use stimulus measures “for the transformation of national and global economies into ‘green economies that eradicate poverty’.” As for the evolving architecture of global economic and financial institutions, civil society representatives called for ensuring support for food security, employment, and “clear and transparent regulation of global financial flows.” They asked G20 leaders to complete the reform of the governance of international financial institutions and to include in these reforms “open, transparent, global, professional, and competitive procedures for recruitment of heads of these institutions.” These ideas seem to have found at least some resonance among G20 officials.

On the overarching theme of democratic accountability of the G20, civil society representatives expressed concern “that the G20 does not marginalize and undermine other multilateral institutions like the UN system” and asked G20 leaders “to support and energize multilateral institutions and the UN system in order to follow through and deliver on commitments such as the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and the MDGs.” Civil society participants called on G20 leaders to “publicly signal their support for agreements on climate change and human rights, especially the rights of women and of indigenous peoples.” CSO representatives also asked the host sherpa to advance ways to carry forward consultation processes, particularly in respect of accountability, from the G8 to the G20. Significantly, the Canadian host sherpa promised to convey civil society recommendations voiced during the dialogue to his G20 sherpa peers. He further promised to explore ways to regularize such consultations in the G20 context. FIM subsequently issued a communiqué summarizing the results and conclusions of this dialogue. It should be added that even when full details of such dialogue are not publicly available, the process still is an important contribution to accountability [8].

Alternative Summits

Alternative or parallel summits are another form of democratic activity by CSOs that can affect G8 and G20 accountability. When an alternative summit decides to collaborate with G8 or G20 officials, this

engagement, too, is a form of consultation. Those who reject dialogue with the official G8 and G20 can still demand redress from the G8 and G20.

People’s Summit

Following the long pre-summit tradition around the “official” G8, the main alternative summit in 2010 took place in Toronto on 18-20 June 2010, just before the back-to-back G8-G20 summits in Muskoka and Toronto. It brought together a diverse group of CSOs, campaigns and coalitions. The “People’s Summit: Building a Movement for a Just World” had been in the works through a preparatory process that began well in advance, in late April 2009, with input from all participating groups and co-ordinated by a steering committee on which the following labour unions, NGOs and civil society coalitions and campaigns were represented: Canadian Federation of Students, Canadian Labour Congress, Canadian Peace Alliance, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Council of Canadians, CUPE Ontario (a labour union group), Greenpeace Canada, Ontario Council for International Cooperation, Oxfam Canada, Polaris Institute, Rainforest Action Network, Sierra Youth Coalition, Toronto Community Mobilization Network (a radical group), and the United Church of Canada. Preparations also included a fundraising dinner on 10 May and subcommittees on: logistics; programming; communications/media; funding and finances; and outreach.

The stated aims of the People’s Summit were to: “educate, empower, and organize for system change”. Its slogan was “Building a Movement for a Just World”. It did not wish to engage with G8 and G20 officials this year – a strategy in common with similar alternative summits that have taken place in the *altermondialiste* tradition. (“Un autre monde est possible”, (another world is possible) was the slogan of the first World Social Summit in Porto Alegre in Brazil, and has been taken up ever since. The Toronto Community Mobilization Network, as one of the participating groups, focused on street protests and other action, ranging from peaceful demonstrations to confrontation with authorities and their symbols. During the People’s Summit preparatory process, aspects of this were problematic for a number of other participants; a point of particular concern was the last of the basic principles of the People’s Summit: “To respect a diversity of tactics, for which individual organizations will be responsible.” This seemed to imply endorsement (whether intended or not) for less-than-peaceful tactics – even though the responsibility of particular organizations for their own actions was

clearly indicated. This concern was borne out by ensuing events in the streets of Toronto – although the majority of demonstrators remained committed to peaceful modes of action.

The programme had the following themes: global justice (defined by the organizers as “a struggle against the global expansion of corporate and national imperialism in order to build a better world based on equity, respect and dignity”); environment and climate change (land, water, climate change, resource use, pollution, and food security issues); human rights and civil liberties (“working in solidarity for dignity and justice for all, against all war and occupation, racism and patriarchy, repression and the police state”); economic justice (alternatives to neo-liberalism: “community control over resources, resistance to free trade, anti-poverty organizing, taxing the rich to support the poor”); “building the movement: skills for change”; and “hold[ing] Canada accountable for its policies and practices at home and abroad.” Thus this, too, had an accountability dimension. The format included film showings, group discussions, panel discussions, speaker presentations and workshops. Most events took place on the campus of Ryerson University in downtown Toronto.

Before the Seoul summit, major Korean CSOs organized a series of events related to a People’s Summit on 8–10 November. It was hosted by the People’s G20 Response Preparation Committee. The agenda covered financial regulation and taxation on speculative capital; decent work and basic labour rights; the environment and climate change; alternative trade agreements different from those under neoliberal policies; food security and agriculture; democracy and human rights; poverty and development; forced migration; peace and security; gender and G20; cultural diversity and IPR; and public services. The People’s summit was held during the 6–12 November “Joint Action Week”.

The World Religions Summit and the Interfaith Partnership³

It is sometimes questioned whether religious groups are an integral part of civil society. Karen Hamilton argues in the positive: “faith communities are not only a part of civil society but are also grounded in divine imperatives to be so for the sake of the world’s peoples and indeed for the sake of the globe itself” [8. 308]. This makes the case for including the Interfaith Partnership and the World Religions Summit in the wide range of civil society activities around the G8/G20 summits.

The “World Religions Summit 2010 – Interfaith Leaders in the G8 Nations” was the sixth successive annual pre-G8 meeting of faith leaders from all parts of the world. The first such summit was convened at Lambeth Palace in London just before the 2005 Gleneagles G8 summit by Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury and the Reverend Jim Wallis, a US evangelical leader. Subsequent faith leaders’ summits took place in Moscow in 2006, in Cologne in 2007, in Sapporo, Kyoto and Osaka in 2008, and in Rome in 2009. An International Continuance Committee ensures that each meeting builds on the experiences of, and lessons learned from, previous meetings and then passes the torch to the hosts of next year’s meeting. These religious leaders’ summits have all had the objective of reminding the G8 of its responsibilities to address poverty, care for the earth and invest in peace – common values of faith communities around the world. It can thus be argued that this process, too, is part of overall accountability efforts.

The 2010 gathering took place on June 21–23, just before the Muskoka G8 and Toronto G20 summits, on the campus of the University of Winnipeg whose president, former Canadian foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy, gave his full support to this endeavour. It came as the culmination of a year-and-a-half-long process under the aegis of the Interfaith Partnership chaired by the Reverend Dr. Karen Hamilton, General Secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches. The main task of the Partnership was to draft a statement for the religious leaders to consider at their summit; the draft was then circulated to various faith communities and other supporting organizations for comment. The Partnership also organized a series of interfaith dinner and dialogue sessions in federal ridings with members of Canada’s Parliament in order to take the interfaith message on poverty, the environment and peace to the Canadian government for action. As well, the Partnership conducted various public awareness activities⁴ and circulated a petition urging G8 and G20 political leaders “to take courageous and concrete actions to address poverty, care for our Earth, and invest in peace” and, in particular, to commit to put the MDGs back on track.

This World Religions Summit brought together 80 senior leaders of religions and faith-based organizations from more than 20 countries of all regions of the world, representing Aboriginal, Bahá’í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Mus-

³ For more details, see Peter Hajnal [9].

⁴ These included, among others, a website, www.faithchallengeg8.com and an article of Karen Hamilton [10].

lim, Shinto, and Sikh traditions. Thirteen youth delegates also participated, and a number of observers were present. The opening ceremonies were hosted by David Courchene, an Anishnabe elder from the Canadian province of Manitoba. This was followed by working sessions dealing with: extreme poverty and the economy; peace and security; and the MDGs. A panel of youth delegations also addressed the themes of the environment, poverty and peace.

The last session finalized the statement of the World Religions Summit, *A Time for Inspired Leadership and Action* [11]. The statement began with references to the MDGs. It urged the G8 and G20 political leaders: to alleviate poverty and injustice; to promote care for our Earth and its environment; to attend to the needs of the most vulnerable, especially children; and to halt the arms race, reduce nuclear weapons, support a culture of peace and the rule of law. It asked for a transparent and effective dialogue between international organizations and faith communities. The statement was presented at the end of the summit to Minister of State for Democratic Reform Stephen Fletcher who accepted it on behalf of the government of Canada and promised to pass it on to Prime Minister Harper. The final act of the summit was a spiritual event. Because of its emphasis on transparency and dialogue, the 2010 World Religions Summit, too, had an important accountability dimension.

Other Alternative Summits

A “Gender Justice Summit” was held in Toronto, simultaneously with the People’s Summit, under the aegis of Oxfam Canada. And the G20 University Summit, called “Twenty Voices” (the third such annual meeting of university presidents), met in Vancouver on 20–22 May, co-hosted by the University of British Columbia and University of Alberta. For the first time, this University Summit brought together participants not only from the G8 countries but from G20 countries as well. The three themes of the meeting were: sustainable energy, sustainable health and sustainable higher education. The group issued a declaration and a statement of action, both focusing on those three issues. A related event, a G8 university students’ summit, was held on 1–3 May in Banff, Alberta; it issued its own statement of action.⁵

G20 Youth Summit (“My Summit”)

The full name of this event was “My Summit 2010: The Official International G-20 Youth Sum-

⁵ URL: <http://g8universitysummit2010.com> (date of access: 01.12.2010).

mit”. It was co-hosted by the government of Canada and the NGO Global Vision, and it took place on 26–27 June, simultaneously with the Toronto G20 summit. In response to an invitation of Prime Minister Harper to his G20 counterparts to send youth delegations, seven university students from each of the 19 member countries of the G20 (the EU as such was not represented), were selected in their home countries. During the two-day event, one student from each delegation was given the opportunity to meet with G20 leaders. As this was co-organized and financed by G20 governments, it cannot be considered a purely civil society gathering. Even the event’s website appeared as a page of the Canadian government’s official website for the G20 summit.⁶

Demonstrations and Other Protest Action

The People’s Summit (discussed above) was followed by several other CSO activities leading up to the two June summits. The grassroots, radical-oriented Community Mobilization Network organized a range of activities: the “Themed Days of Resistance”, 21–24 June, focused on “migrant justice and an end to war and occupation, income equity and community control over resources” (21 June), gender justice, queer rights, disability rights (22 June), environmental and climate justice (23 June) and indigenous sovereignty (24 June). This, in turn, led to “Days of Action” in opposition to the G8 and G20: on 25 June, a feminist picnic, a “Free the Streets” march and a forum, “Shout Out for Global Justice”; on 26 June, a “People’s First: We Deserve Better” march and another march, “Get Off the Fence”.

Preparations for these actions began in September 2009, although some unfolded spontaneously during the summits. The stated aim of the Mobilization Network (also referred to as “G20 Convergence”), was “to challenge, disrupt and abolish the G8/G20.” This was a radical approach, going further than simple non-engagement with the G8 and G20.

What did these radicals achieve? They did indeed challenge the G20, but did not really disrupt it and certainly did not abolish it. Nonetheless, the group claimed victory by: organizing “Toronto’s community struggles against the impact of colonial, capitalist policies that seek to weaken us everyday”; through the “nearly 40,000 people [who] took

⁶ URL: <http://canadainternational.gc.ca/g20/summit-sommet/2010/toronto-youth-toronto.aspx?lang=eng> (date of access: 01.12.2010).

to the streets, gathered in discussion, watched movies, set up a tent city, danced and fought.”; by marching in the “thousands against colonization and for Indigenous sovereignty”, through supporting “actions for Queer and Trans Rights ..., for Environmental Justice ..., for Income Equity and Community Control Over Resources ..., for Gender Justice and Disability Rights ..., for Migrant Justice and an End to War and Occupation”; by the Days of Action; by ensuring (at least that is what the Mobilization Network claimed) “that actions with conflicting tactics took place separately; and by continuing the demonstrations in the face of being “followed, intimidated, arrested, ... [and] infiltrated by state thugs” [12].

These extravagant claims are hard to credit, and many would find the strident rhetoric of the press release of the Mobilization Network off-putting. Some of these actions did indeed highlight issues of social and economic justice but it is unfortunate that such actions were conflated – or at least mentioned in the same breath – with disruptive activities, wanton destruction of property and other “uncivil” acts. Was this a victory? The answer is unclear. But one could argue that if the aim of the Mobilization Network was to garner maximum media attention, they achieved that aim – to the detriment of the vast majority of peaceful civil society action focusing on conveying important messages on poverty, the environment and other crucial global issues. Not unexpectedly, there was confrontation between protesters and security personnel. Police appeared on foot, bicycles, horseback, motorcycles and in cars. Secure areas were surrounded by three-metre-high fences. On the other side, protesters had earplugs, masks or various description, gloves, and other gear.

The specifics of confrontation are still being debated, several months after the event. But observers assert that on Saturday the 26th of June when those protesters who used Black Bloc tactics burned several police cars, broke windows and looted some stores on the streets of Toronto, the police were notably absent at scenes of the worst violence. By contrast, on Sunday the 27th of June the police overreacted when, for example, they used the “kettling” tactic familiar from the April 2009 London G20 summit – surrounding protesters, passers-by, tourists and others, and preventing anyone from entering or leaving the area. They also arrested or detained some 1,100 people; most arrests took place in the streets but some at people’s homes. The majority of those arrested were released within a few hours or days. Only a relatively small number remained charged with offences or crimes; others were not charged or charges against them were dropped. Perverse-

ly, these police actions were used by the violent protesters and their supporters to demonstrate police “brutality” but they were also used by the Canadian host government of the G20 to justify the extravagant summit expenses [13–15]. Repercussions of the summit security measures and of the confrontation on Toronto streets still continue five months after the June summits. Several official investigations were launched or completed, with varying terms of reference [16, 17].

Petitions

The Interfaith Partnership circulated a petition entitled *A Time for Inspired Leadership and Action*. Along the same lines as the 2010 Religious Leaders’ Summit draft document which was discussed earlier, the petition calls on G8 and G20 leaders to “put first the needs and values of the majority of the world’s population, of future generations and of Earth itself ... and “to take courageous and concrete actions to address poverty, care for our Earth, and invest in peace.”⁷

The AT THE TABLE campaign was launched in March 2010 by the Make Poverty History coalition and other Canadian and global CSOs. They called for “bold and concrete action on poverty, climate change, and economic recovery for all in the G8 and G20 summits.” The aim of the campaign is to involve as many people as possible in signing a declaration with those three objectives. As well, the campaign initiated a “flat leader photo petition” with cut-out images of G8 leaders to serve as interlocutors for civil society supporters.⁸

Policy Papers

In the run-up to the Muskoka and Toronto summits, the predominantly US civil society umbrella group InterAction prepared well-focused, concise policy briefs on the economic crisis, climate change, education, health, food, water and accountability. Although primarily addressed to the US government, these briefs are strong but thoughtful examples of the way civil society can best address G8-G20 officials. US government officials showed interest in these documents, but it is not clear whether or not the Canadian host government has demonstrated similar receptivity.⁹

⁷ URL: <http://petition.faiethchallengeg8.com> (date of access: 01.12.2010).

⁸ The campaign has created its dedicated website: www.atthetable2010.org (date of access: 01.12.2010).

⁹ URL: <http://www.interaction.org>, see especially <http://www.interaction.org/canada-2010-g8g20-summit> (date of access: 01.12.2010).

Another policy paper appeared in January 2010. Entitled *What's Missing in the Response to the Global Financial Crisis?*, the paper builds on the 19–20 October 2009 conference that followed the Pittsburgh G20 summit and was co-hosted by the Halifax Initiative, the North South Institute, the University of Ottawa and the School of International Development and Global Studies. The paper included recommendations to the June 2010 G8 and G20 summits on the international financial system and international financial institutions (IFIs).¹⁰

In September 2010 the InterAction group produced a policy paper entitled *The G20 and Development: A New Era* [18], which includes the following recommendations on accountability: “a permanent G20 Accountability Framework that is robust, credible, transparent and inclusive is essential; all G20 Working Groups should be required to seek input from international organizations, governments and civil society; the terms of reference, names and affiliation of the expert groups should be public; and reporting should evaluate results against consistent and specific indicators tied to timetables and recommendations.” There are further recommendations on: education; financial inclusion; food security; the global economic crisis; governance and transparency; and trade. Another policy brief, *The Making of a Seoul Development Consensus: The Essential Development Agenda for the G20*, was produced in English, Korean, French, Spanish and Japanese by Oxfam [19].

Evaluation and Monitoring

A number of CSOs, including think tanks, have assessed G8 performance for some time before the G8's self-assessment exercise started. For example, the G8 Research Group at the University of Toronto has, since 1996, issued compliance reports on summit commitments. Its assessment of implementation of G8 undertakings at the 2005 Gleneagles summit identified 212 commitments and selected 21 of those for detailed evaluation; these included, among others, peacekeeping, good governance, HIV/AIDS, official development assistance, transnational crime, climate change, and tsunami relief [20]. Another evaluation of fulfilment of the Gleneagles commitments has been undertaken since 2006 by the Debt AIDS Trade Africa (DATA) group. In its latest annual report, released in 2010, DATA assesses progress on debt cancellation, development assistance, trade and

investment, HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, child survival, primary education, and agriculture [21]. Another example is Transparency International, which has monitored the G8's role on fighting corruption [22].

Previous steps on the part of the G8 itself toward accountability included an accountability report on G8 anti-corruption commitments at the 2008 Hokkaido summit and a *Preliminary Accountability Report* at the 2009 L'Aquila summit [23] which took a sectoral approach, tracking commitments and their fulfilment on food security, water, health and education. At that summit the G8 leaders established the G8 Accountability Senior Level Working Group, tasking it with: identifying key development-related G8 commitments since the Gleneagles summit; identifying indicators for assessing those commitments; developing a reporting methodology; exploring ways of measuring the impact of G8 commitments beyond merely assessing progress; consulting with the OECD and other organizations with expertise in data manipulation and reporting; preparing their report for G8 leaders in time for the Muskoka summit; and making recommendations on regularizing (“institutionalizing”) accountability practices after Muskoka.

How well did the 88-page *Muskoka Accountability Report* [24] fulfil this ambitious mandate? The working group asked each G8 government to identify the most important commitments as those governments saw them. As a result, the working group analyzed 56 development-related commitments, most of which were made at the Gleneagles summit, some as far back as Kananaskis in 2002, and others at summits subsequent to Gleneagles. The 56 commitments are grouped in nine thematic areas: aid and aid effectiveness; economic development; health; water and sanitation; food security; education; governance; peace and security; and environment and energy. The main sources of the report are “data and narrative evidence” from G8 governments themselves and from what the report calls “relevant” international organizations, mostly OECD/DAC. The report arrives at a fairly positive self-assessment.

An examination of the *Muskoka Accountability Report* reveals some problems of reporting. First, country-to-country reporting is uneven, seemingly based on differing emphases and data selection. For example, in the case of Russia, which is not an OECD member, the country reporting is based on national statistics. This makes comparability difficult. Second, being a self-assessment of G8 governments, the report necessarily uses diplomatic language, contrasted, for example, with the DATA group's reports which are willing

¹⁰URL: <http://halifaxinitiative.org/content/conference-whats-missing-response-global-financial-crisis> (date of access: 01.12.2010).

to name and shame G8 countries that have fallen behind, although DATA also largely bases its reports on OECD statistics. Third, there is a problem of time-lag (a problem both for the G8 and DATA): OECD statistics are at least a year behind so reporting is not quite up-to-date. Fourth, the *Accountability Report* does not adjust for level of ambition of commitments – admittedly a difficult challenge but one that should not be beyond the G8's capacity.

Another observation on this theme – and this is relevant to the civil society-official G8 dynamic in respect of accountability: it is known that, in the process of compiling this *Accountability Report*, G8 officials consulted with CSOs, and looked at the work of CSOs and think tanks that have accumulated a good record and built useful experience in G8 performance evaluation. Yet, other than rather general references to civil society, the report makes no explicit acknowledgement in the report of the role of these civil society groups.

If the G8 builds on the findings and resources of *Accountability Report* in a meaningful and comprehensive way, that will be welcomed by all. But, judging by the *Muskoka Declaration* issued at the end of the G8 summit [25], the leaders, despite referring numerous times to accountability, signalled their intention to devote future accountability reports to specific sectors rather than treating accountability comprehensively; the 2011 accountability report will focus on health and food security only.

What about the G20? Accountability (democratic, open accountability) in the G20 is more problematic than in the G8, but there are some increasingly encouraging signs. One way the G20 could move toward greater accountability would be to allow full public reporting of the IMF/World Bank mutual assessment reports (MAPs) done for G20 countries beyond the partial release of substantial but incomplete information at the Toronto summit [26, 27].

An examination of the Seoul summit documents shows that the G20 has advanced beyond the Toronto summit in enhancing accountability. The *Leaders' Declaration* states:

“We will continue to monitor and assess ongoing implementation of the commitments made today and in the past in a transparent and objective way. We hold ourselves accountable. What we promise, we will deliver” [28].

The more detailed *G20 Seoul Summit Document* calls for “strong, responsible, accountable and transparent development partnerships between the G20” and less-developed countries. It further adds:

“The G20 will hold itself accountable for its commitments. Beyond our participation in existing mechanisms of peer review for international anti-corruption standards, we mandate the Anti-Corruption Working Group to submit annual reports on the implementation of our commitments to future Summits for the duration of the Anti-Corruption Action Plan” [29].

More specifically, on corruption, the *G20 Seoul Summit Document* asserts:

“Leading by example, the G20 holds itself accountable for its commitments. Beyond our participation in existing mechanisms of peer review for anti-corruption standards, reports, agreed within the working group, on individual and collective progresses made by G20 countries in the implementation of the Action Plan will be submitted on an annual basis to the G20 Leaders for the duration of this Action Plan. ... In this context, the Anti-Corruption Working Group will prepare a first monitoring report for the Leaders at next Summit in France” [30].

And, perhaps most significantly for transparency – and facilitating subsequent monitoring and evaluation – the 49-page *Supporting Document* compiles a detailed table of policy commitments by all G20 members. They are classified into the following groups: advanced surplus economies (Germany, Japan, Korea); advanced deficit economies (Australia, Canada, France, Italy, UK, US); emerging surplus economies (Argentina, China, Indonesia); emerging deficit economies (Brazil, India, Mexico, South Africa, Turkey); major oil exporters (Russia, Saudi Arabia); and the EU [30].

G8 and G20 Parliaments

Parliaments are essential for ensuring democratic accountability of elected governments, and there have been G8 initiatives around legislatures for some years, in the form of the G8 Parliamentarians' Group of speakers of legislatures of G8 countries. As an extension of this process, the Halifax Initiative and other CSOs organized three parliamentary roundtables in Ottawa on 20, 26 and 27 April around the time of the G20 finance ministers' meeting in Washington, the G8 development ministers' meeting in Halifax and the Africa Partnership Forum meeting in Toronto. The roundtables dealt, respectively, with climate change and climate financing, the financial crisis and the MDGs – issues also on the agenda of the G8 and G20 summits. Civil society representatives and opposition members of the Canadian Parliament (from the Liberal, New Democratic and Bloc Québécois par-

ties) participated – the organizers designed the roundtables as non-partisan events but received no acceptance to invitations to the governing Conservative Party to either participate in or co-sponsor the events.¹¹ Other parliamentary events have included a meeting of the speakers of the lower houses of G8 countries, held in Ottawa on 9–12, September; and a consultation, also in Ottawa, of G20 parliamentary speakers, on 2–5 September.

Conclusions

This paper has examined the role of civil society in enhancing the accountability of the G8 and G20. Both of these powerful transgovernmental networks have significant accountabilities, and the G8, and to the smaller extent the G20, have made important strides towards greater accountability. But much remains to be accomplished, and the correction/redress dimension of accountability is largely lacking.

Civil society has played, and is continuing to play, a major role in enhancing G8 and G20 accountability, especially in the areas of consultation and evaluation. But much more needs to be done, particularly in respect of democratic accountability. One structural problem is that the push to achieve greater accountability is complicated by the informal nature of the G8 and G20.

The discussion presented in this paper leads to the conclusion that continuous and substantive consultations between CSOs and G8–G20 officials play an important role in enhancing G8–G20 accountability, particularly when both sets of players treat the give-and-take of dialogue seriously and constructively. When consultations play out as mere *ad hoc* rituals or one-time opportunities, their impact will necessarily be minimal.

Civil society's experience in interacting with the G8 and G20 points to the need and benefits of maintaining systematic, transparent monitoring and evaluation of G8 and G20 commitments. This is a crucial component of accountability.

Policy papers are also useful in conveying civil society concerns and priorities to broader society and, optimally, to G8 and G20 officials. And alternative summits, when they choose to engage with the G8 and G20, can also have an accountability benefit. It is doubtful, however, whether the accountability potential of these types of gatherings can match the relative success of the consultation/dialogue mode. More generally, civil society groups' willingness to engage with the G8 and

G20 in various types of interaction is essential for achieving positive results.

Parliaments are an essential means for obtaining democratic accountability of elected governments, and there have been G8 initiatives around legislatures for some years, in the form of the G8 Parliamentarians' Group of speakers of legislatures of G8 countries. In 2010 further advances have been made in this direction, at both the G8 and G20 context. Greater use of parliamentary channels to enhance democratic accountability the G8 and G20 benefit all: CSOs, the G8 and the G20, and the global community.

Finally, civil society can be more effective in influencing the G8 and G20 by timely preparations, thorough knowledge of the official summit preparatory process including sherpa and ministerial meetings. Steering close to the agenda of the official G8 and G20 also contributes to receptivity by officials, although it is equally important to voice other concerns not on summit agendas.

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