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“We the peoples of the United Nations...”
An analysis about NGOs role in the UN-reform process

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|--------------------------------|
| CSO | Civil Society Organizations |
| ECOSOC | Economic and Social Council |
| GA | General Assembly |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organizations |
| OGN | Our Global Neighbourhood |
| SC | Security Council |
| SG | Secretary General |
| UN | United Nations |
| WTP | We the Peoples |

Abstract

Over the past decades there has been a shift in world politics, from a state-centric view of world order towards a new global world order. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play an important role in this era of globalisation. Through an analysis, based on Rosenau's view of the new global world order, the purpose of this study is to explore and discuss the complexity with an increased role of NGOs in the United Nations. There are obvious benefits with an increased role of NGOs. They serve as positive contributors as agenda setter and watchdogs, they play an important role in policy implementation and they have a democratizing role. However, there is another side of these benefits. Three problems of an increased role of NGOs in the UN-system have been identified; the problem of state-sovereignty, the politicization of aid and NGOs influence and the deficit of democracy.

Another purpose of this study is to explore why it has been so hard to implement NGOs role in the United Nations. The role of NGOs was a priority in the beginning of the UN-reform process, but it almost disappeared in the final stage. How can this be explained?

Keywords: NGOs, UN-reform process, global commissions, global governance, Rosenau

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1 Introduction

To meet indian chiefs, human rights activists, developmentists and UN-diplomats side by side in the UN headquarters in New York during the indigenous forum in the summer of 2005, raised my interest for the topic of this thesis. This experience reflects a change in the United Nations, the increased influence of Non-Governmental-Organizations (NGOs) aside UN-member states. Over the past two decades, “issues such as rights of indigenous people, environmental protection and gender equality have been prominent on the international agenda with the encouragement and advocacy of NGOs” (Dahl, interview)¹. Public participation in world events, especially the major world conferences convened by the UN during the 1990th reflects success stories about NGOs achievements.

However, there have also been problems along the way. The UN World anti-racism conference in Durban 2001 is one example. During this conference, some violent NGOs took the power in their own hands. This hit back on the UN-system and the conference became a failure for the United Nations (Gabelic, interview). This brief account reflects the complex situation including with an increased role of NGOs in the UN-system.

As a consequence of the increased influence of NGOs in the UN-system, the Secretary General Kofi Annan initiated a reform process in 1997. Several reform-reports have been published since then, and improving UN’s partnership with NGOs has been an important element in this reform-process (Carlsson, interview).

Almost ten years after the first reform document was published, the heads of states and governments gathered together in the Summit in September 2005. However, at the Summit the role of NGOs had almost disappeared from the reform agenda. Apparently, despite the promises given in the Secretary General’s-reform documents, the idea of active NGOs in the UN-system has not been materialized. There remains a sizable gap between aspiration and accomplishment.

¹ I would like to thank Ingvar Carlsson, co-chairman for the Commission on global governance, Birgitta Dahl member of the Cardoso panel and Aleksander Gabelic chair in the Swedish FN-förbundet who have generously offered their time to answer my questions and share their knowledge of NGOs role in the UN-system.

1.1 Statement of purpose

This is a study of the relationship between the United Nations and NGOs. My intention with the study is to analyse the roles and prospects for NGOs in the UN system and how this role has changed during the last decade. One purpose of the study is to identify how NGOs can serve as positive contributors in the UN-reform process. This, however, also implies an understanding of weaknesses and challenges associated with the increased influence of NGOs in the UN. Thus, I aim to explore and discuss problems related to an increased role of NGOs in the UN-system. The main research question guiding this study is:

What are the problems and benefits of an increased role of NGOs in the UN-system?

The point of departure in this discussion are the reports from two global commissions that were established in order to analyse the future role of the United Nations; the *Commission on global governance* (1995) and the *Cardoso-panel* (2004). In addition to this, I will analyse how the role of NGOs has been reflected in the Secretary General's reform documents which have been published between 1997 and 2005.

Against this background, my second aim is to explore different views why the role of NGOs disappeared in the final stage in the reform process?

1.2 Significance of the study

The question about the future of the United Nations has received great attention lately. The United Nations has been highly criticized, and events in recent years have led to declining public confidence in the organization. In order to be able to address the challenges the organization faces today, it is necessary to understand what roles new actors such as NGOs play in the UN-system. As the Cardoso-panel points out, "the role of NGOs is important to the UN because their experience and social connections can help the UN do a better job, improve legitimacy, identify priorities and increase its accountability" (Roundup: 2004, p7).

Changes in world politics, with the development from a state-centric world order towards a system where numerous actors are important players, intensify the need for studying this impact on the UN-system. The ambition of this study is to provide improved knowledge and understanding of the benefits and problems of the increased influence of NGOs in the UN-system, through a theoretically guided analysis. The study is also an effort to apply a contemporary theoretical approach to a current problem, NGOs role in the UN reform process.

1.3 Method

According to Alvesson et.al a method “connects the theoretical base with the production and the fruitful use of the empirical materials”(Alvesson, et.al 2000, p 11). The description of the methodological approach for the study is of importance since it provides the reader with an understanding of the research strategies, and data collection techniques with which the research question were answered.

Firstly, this thesis can be seen as a theory-testing deductive study, insofar as Rosenau’s theory of the global world order has guided the empirical analysis (Aggestam 1999, p 8). Drawing on Rosenau’s theory, I have explored and discussed whether my hypothesis; that NGOs influence has increased in the UN-system during the last twenty years can be falsified or confirmed. I have been able to show that NGOs role has increased in the UN-system which is in accordance with Rosenau’s theory.

Relatively little has been published about NGOs role in the UN-reform process. Hence, the study is of an exploratory nature. I have undertaken a “qualitative text analysis” based on an inventory of political documents and reports from the current discussion about the UN-reform process (Esaiasson 2003, p 233). In the qualitative text analysis, I have studied the extension of the discussion of NGOs and what role they are given in these reports, and how this has changed in the period between 1995 and 2005. In 1995 the Commission on global governance published it’s report. This report was a main impetus for a discussion linking globalization to the UN’s future role. Moreover Annan’s first reform document was published in 1997, two years after this report. The empirical analysis ends with the *Draft Outcome Document* published in September 2005 and adopted by the heads of states and governments. This document was adopted a couple of months after the Secretary- General’s last reform-document *In larger freedom* was published, and one year after the Cardoso-panel’s report and can be seen as the final stage in the reform process.

In the qualitative text analysis, I have shown that my hypothesis that NGOs influence has increased can be partly confirmed. NGOs are given an important role in the reports from two commissions. However, contrary to what could be expected the role given to NGOs disappeared in the final stage in the reform process. I have also discussed possible explanations for this.

1.4 Material

In order to be able to compare different perspectives of the problem, I have chosen to use different sources of information. I have made use of both written documents and interviews. The written material that I have used to study the significance of NGOs in the UN-system is characterized by both an academic research and more policy-oriented literature. Although it is at times hard to distinguish between the two kinds of materials, whereas a great amount of research is in a grey zone between on the one hand theoretical research and on the other hand more practically related. An example is the fact that among other things Rosenau's documents were background paper for the Commission on global governance (Carlsson et.al 1995, p 394). It is clear that the reports from the established commissions have influenced academic research-and vice versa.

The written academic material includes books written of academic scholars such as James Rosenau, Jan-Aart Scholte and David Held. However I have also used articles in political science journals that have been published over the past decade to analyse the significance of NGOs in the UN-system (e.g. *Third World Quarterly*, 1997, vol 18, No 3, 2000, vol 21, No 5, *World Politics*, 2003, vol.55, 1997, vol. 49, No4, *Global Governance*, 2000, vol 6 2002, vol 8, *Government and Opposition*, 2004, vol.39, no.2).

The more policy-oriented literature includes the two reports from the Commission on global governance (1995) *Our global Neighbourhood*, and the report from the Cardoso-Panel (2004) *We the people of the United Nations*. The Secretary-General's four reform documents, which have been published between 1997 and 2005, are also included in this material. However, when I compare these documents it is important to keep in mind that these two kinds of documents differ from each other. The reports from the commissions have a more idealistic approach, while the reform documents from the Secretary General are characterized of a more realistic approach. Moreover, the latter type of documents must be adopted by the heads of states. Therefore, these documents mirror what the Secretary General believes is achievable in the short time, given the present situation in world politics. In addition to official documents, publications, research-reports from the UN research institute have also been used such as pamphlets, information sheets and web material.

The interviews constitute second type of source. I have interviewed Ingvar Carlsson who was one of the two co-chairmen for the Commission on global governance and Birgitta Dahl who served as a member of the "Cardoso-Panel". The interviews were organized according to a semi-structured conversations, based on questionnaire of 14 broad questioned were used.² The questions were broadly formulated and the respondents had the possibility to deliberate over issues they found of particular interest or relevance. The interviews were recorded.

² See appendix 1

In addition to these two interviews, I have interviewed Aleksander Gabelic, chairman of the Swedish “FN-förbundet”, who presently works as a personal advisor to the chairman of the General Assembly Jan Eliasson, regarding the UN’s partnership with NGOs. This interview enabled me an insight into the current discussion in the UN-headquarters.

The interviews may be described as open-ended discussions of an explorative nature. The respondents provided new information not only on the work of the commissions, but also anecdotes from their personal experiences.

However, the interview material requires careful and critical reflections. Since all three respondents have had the mission to analyse how NGOs can be more active in the UN-system their answers might be biased by their own functions in the process. Boussard refers to Alvesson et.al arguing “respondents answer questions in a context-dependent situation, the answers might be intentionally articulated with a view to expurgate true opinions or with excessive carefulness for reasons of for example collegiality and political correctness” (Boussard 2003, p 16). Moreover the interviewees may have identified some countries or organizations as scapegoats in the reform-process based on their own experience, perhaps overestimating particular factors or simply forgetting other relevant information. Hence, there is always a risk of misunderstandings.

Another problem is that it is difficult to explain a political development like this. There are numerous explanations of why it has been hard to implement the role of NGOs. However, I have based my analysis on different sources of information. I have been able to compare different perspectives on both secondary sources and explanations of actors involved in the political process. This breadth of information and different perspectives has made it possible for me to reach my conclusions with high degree of reliability.

1.5 Disposition

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. The *first chapter* presents the aim and purpose of the study. In this part the concept of Non-Governmental-Organizations (NGOs) is introduced.

The *second chapter* gives a background of NGOs institutional role in the UN, and how this role has changed. Moreover, it provides a historic evaluation of NGOs involvement in the United Nations.

Chapter three concludes the theoretical part of the study. This discussion springs from the globalisation debate. It is argued that a new paradigm has appeared within international relations. Scholars belonging to this new paradigm have questioned the realist and neo-institutionalist view of the world order, since it fails to explain new global issues that have appeared in this era of globalisation. One of the representatives of this new paradigm is James Rosenau. His analysis of an international system where non-state actors are direct participants is the focus for this study.

In *chapter four*, the empirical part of the study is introduced. In order to answer my research question I analyse the reports of two global commissions,

dealing with global governance and the future role of the United Nations; the Commission on global governance (1995) and the Cardoso-panel (2004). After a brief overview of the main-themes in the reports, in particular NGOs role in the UN-system a discussion how these reports mirror Rosenau's view of the new world order is introduced. The commissions stress three obvious benefits with an increased role of NGOs in the UN-system; their role as agenda setter and watch dogs, their role in policy implementation and their democratizing role.

The *fifth chapter* discusses the Secretary-General's reform-documents between 1997 and 2005. It is not my intention to discuss the entire UN-reform-debate, but rather what roles NGOs are given in these documents, and how this role has changed. The role of NGOs was a priority in the beginning of the UN-reform process, but it almost disappeared in the final stage. How can this be explained?

In *chapter six* the complexity with an increased role of NGOs is discussed and three particular problems are identified, related to an increased role of NGOs in the UN-system;

- (1) The dilemma of state-sovereignty and an increased role of "advocacy-NGOs"
- (2) "Development –NGOs" and the problem of "politicization" of aid.
- (3) The problem of democracy deficit and the increased influence of NGOs. This problem includes the democratic deficit of the internal structure of NGOs and the undermining of representative democracy with an enhanced role of NGOs in the UN.

Against this background, *chapter seven* provides an analysis why NGOs role disappeared in the final stage in the UN-reform process. The three problems that I discuss in chapter six can be seen as underlying factors for this phenomenon. However, the analysis is also based on interviews with three persons who in different capacities have been actively involved in the UN-reform process.

The study concludes with *chapter eight*, in which the empirical and theoretical arguments are summarized and some suggestions for further research are introduced.

1.6 Terminology

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

During the last two decades new global non-state actors have appeared in the UN-system. Which are these actors and what kind of organizations will be included in the discussion about the increased role of NGOs in the UN?

There is an ambiguity about what term that should be used to define these actors. As Rosenau points out, several new terms have been used, i.e. "sovereignty-free actors", "civil society organizations" (CSOs), "Non-governmental organizations" (NGOs) and "non-state actors" etc. (Rosenau 1990, p 34). One reason for this variety might be that the research in the field of transnational relations and non-state actors is a relatively new phenomenon (Geeraerts 1995, p 11). Another reason to the multiplicity might be the varied and

broad roles and functions that characterize these non-state actors. My aim with this section is to develop a terminology which will fit to the intention with my thesis and distinguish what actors that do not fit in under the types of actors that I focus on.

In order to differentiate among the actors involved in the UN that are states and those that are not, Rosenau distinguishes between “sovereignty-bound” and “sovereignty-free” actors. The latter category of actors includes all range from “multinational corporations, ethnic groups, bureaucratic agencies, political parties, subnational governments, to transnational societies and international organizations” (Rosenau 1990, p 36). Since Rosenau’s definition includes actors such as multinational corporations and political parties which are not the focus in this thesis, I will not refer to his terminology in this thesis.

Another concept used in the literature is “civil society organizations” (CSOs) (Boussard 2003, p 81). However, this term is mainly used in a domestic context rather than an international context which is the focus in this thesis (Boussard 2005, p 7).

There are several reasons why I will use the term “Non-governmental organizations” (NGOs) for the organizations that I focus on in my study. One reason is the widespread agreement on the use of this term in the UN. “NGO” is the term that is used in article 71 of the UN charter, as well as in the resolution 1296 and it is widely accepted by practioners (Weiss et.al 1996, p 21, Weiss et.al 1997, p 606, Willets 1994, p 3). Weiss definition of a NGO is “private citizen’s organization, separate from government but active on social issues, not profit making, and with transnational scope” (Weiss 1996, p 20). The Cardoso-Panel refers to “all organizations of relevance to the UN that are not central governments and were not created by intergovernmental decisions, including associations of businesses, parliamentarians and local authorities” (Cardoso et.al 2004, p 13).

NGOs are defined in various ways in the literature and their varied and broadly roles and functions, makes generalization difficult (Weiss et.al 1997, p 604). What then is a NGO? In the NGO-literature we will find some shared criteria.

(1) The first criterion is that NGOs have to be “non-profit-making” which indicates that corporations are not included in the concept (Willets 1994, p 3, Boussard 2005, p 81).

(2) Secondly, NGOs are not seeking government office. Boussard argues that organizations that are concerned with public ends rather than seek to achieve formal power are characterized as NGOs. Hence, a political party is not NGOs (Boussard 2005 p 82, Willets 1994, p 3). However, NGOs sometimes receive funding from government and sometimes assist states or agencies in the implementation of policies. For example development-NGOs often cooperate with state departments to implement development related projects.

(3) Thirdly, NGOs do not seek to overthrow governments by force; hence an NGO is a non-violent group. This distinguishes NGOs from armed opposition groups, liberation movements, criminal organizations, terrorists and insurgents.

These distinguishing features are also used by the UN in resolution 1296. According to resolution 1296 the real constraints are that an NGO cannot be:

“profit-making, it cannot advocate the use of violence, not be a school, a university, or a political party; and any concern with human rights must be general, rather than restricted to a particular communal group, nationality or country” (Willets 1996, p 290).

I will refer to this definition of NGOs in my study, since this resolution determines which NGOs that are granted consultative status in the United Nations.

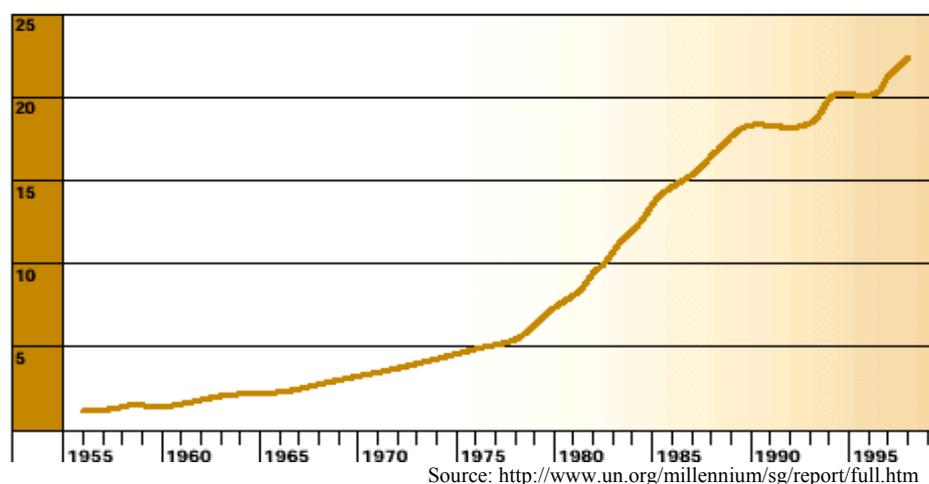
2 Background

*“Our post-war institutions were built for an **inter**-national world, but we now live in a **global** world. Responding effectively to this shift is the core institutional challenge for world leaders today”*(Annan 2000, p 11).

2.1 Historic development of NGOs role in the United Nations

Since the 1970s, NGOs role in the UN-system has increased beginning with the UN conference on human environment (Stockholm 1972). The Stockholm conference was followed by several major UN conferences in the first half of the 1990s³. These conferences dealt with new emerging global issues appearing on the international agenda. From the 1970s and especially since the end of the cold war, human rights advocates, developmentalists, and groups of indigenous peoples have become more active and visible in a discussion that was once thought to be the exclusive preserve of governments (Spiro 1995, p 25-46).

The graph below illustrates the dramatic increase in the number of NGOs with consultative status in Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)⁴ over the past decades. As the chart illustrates the number of NGOs in the UN has increased dramatically since the beginning of 1980s. In 2005, some 25 000 NGOs have been granted consultative status. The increasing number of NGOs also reflects their increasing role (Carlsson et.al 1995, p 32).



³ The world conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the international conference on population and development (ICPD, Cairo, 1994), the world Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), the world conference on women (Beijing, 1995).

⁴ ECOSOC is UN's Council for economic and social issues, responsible for granting NGOs consultative status.

2.2 The change in consultative status of NGOs in the United Nations

There are three formal arrangements that give NGOs an influence in the UN-system. Firstly, consultative status gives NGOs access to all UN-documents, once these have been officially circulated. Consultative status also gives NGOs official passes providing them facilities to the UN-building. Thirdly, being awarded consultative status gives the NGOs legitimate place within the UN political system (Willets 1996, p 43, Weiss et.al 1996, p 23).

However, already when the UN Charter was drafted in 1945, NGOs played a role. Private organizations acted in order to get a direct channel to the world organization. They lobbied successfully for the UN-Article 71, which recognizes the important roles of NGOs and reads as follows:

*“[t]he Economic and Social Council **may** make suitable arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence. Such arrangements may be made with international organizations and, where, appropriate, with national organizations after consultation with the Member of the United Nations concerned.”*⁵ (Willets 1996, p 290)

However, when the charter was drafted NGOs failed to win any provision for their involvement in the work of the General Assembly or the Security Council⁶. The vagueness and openness of NGOs consultative status in (ECOSOC) has been criticised. For example, it has been noted that the word “may” in article 71 is very vague.

Thus, the growing involvement of NGOs in the UN-system, has lead to demands to improve NGOs formal status, for constitutes changes mirroring this development. In February 1993, ECOSOC established a review of resolution 1296(XLIV)⁷. The amendments encouraged national NGOs, particularly from developing countries to apply for full consultative status (Weiss 1996, p 22).

In his book *The United Nations in a turbulent world* Rosenau refers to Pei-Heng’s argument that NGOs relations with the UN has evolved from being “second-class citizens of poor relations” (Pei-Heng 1982, p 7), and points out that “they nowadays perform a variety of functions and roles and are recognized as important partners of the UN”. Rosenau argues that NGOs now are recognized as high-status participants at the centre of policy-making in the UN-system (Rosenau 1992, p 40). The extent to which NGOs are now recognised as being integral to the UN system was reflected in Annan’s first reform document in 1997, where he states that an essential part of reforming the UN is to include NGOs in all work of the United Nations (Annan, 1997).

⁵ ECOSOC, Art. 71, UN Charter

⁶ When the charter of the UN was approved, it was presumed that NGOs would have access to ECOSOC. For further information about NGOs and the structure of the UN-system see appendix 2.

⁷ Res 1296(XLIV) retains but refines the earlier UN principle that any international organization not established by intergovernmental agreements falls into the NGO category. In 11 paragraphs of principles, the text emphasize that NGOs that seek consultative status must have goals within the UN economic and social ambit (Weiss 1996, p 22).

3 Theoretical Framework

“...the UN has increasingly moved into the multi-centric world as one of its major players, even though it also continues as a product and agent of the state-centric world” (Rosenau 1992, p 40).

3.1 The Paradigm shift: from a “state-centric world” towards a” multi-centric world”

Based on the assumption that states are the only actors in the inter-state system, both the realist and the liberal-institutionalist theories have dominated the study of international relations until the 1990s. However, since it fails to take into consideration new global actors that have appeared in the era of globalisation, this paradigm has been questioned by a new field of research, which began to develop during the late 1980s. Scholars representing this new paradigm argue that the state-centric view of world politics neglects the vast increase, in both the numbers and influence of NGOs in the UN-system (Weiss et.al 1996, p 796, Clark, et.al 1997, p 1) Thus, the “NGO phenomenon”⁸ invited many academic scholars to study the extent and significance of the role NGOs now play in the UN-system (e.g., Rosenau 1990:1992, Weiss et.al 1996, Willets 1996). The research in this field has developed over the past decade. This is mirrored in the fact that it has been a main topic in many political science journals (e.g. *Third World Quarterly*, 1997, vol 18, No 3, 2000, vol 21, No 5, *World Politics*, 2003, vol.55, 1997, vol. 49, No4, *Global Governance*, 2000, vol 6 2002, vol 8, *Government and Opposition*, 2004, vol.39, no.2).

According to scholars within international relations there has been a transformation from an inter-state world, to a global world, or what Rosenau defines as a “multi-centric world” (Rosenau 1990). “There is recognition among scholars in this field that international relations are being transformed by a process of globalisation” (Barnett 1997, p 534). Three distinct positions have emerged from within the globalisation debate: the “hyper-globalists”, the “sceptics”; and the “transformationalists” (Eatwell 1998, p 9).

The hyper-globalists refer to an end of the nation-states in what they see as a modern global borderless society. In contrast to the hyper-globalists, the sceptics argue that the process of globalisation is more limited and the focus of international relations is still exclusively inter-state. Finally, the transformationalists question both the hyper-globalists view of a global world order and the sceptics view of status-quo.

⁸ Weiss et.al 1996, p 17

In order to consider what impact the changing nature of world politics has had on the UN-system, which is the focus in this thesis, I would argue that neither the hyper-globalists position nor the sceptics understanding of international politics correctly understands the structure of the United Nations today. Rather, the transformalist position provides us the most well-informed view of the present UN-system. The common thread uniting this school of thought is the view that states still remain primary actors in international politics although their nature and role has changed since they have to share their power with new actors such as NGOs which have exerted a strong influence. The Secretary General Kofi Annan states this view in the following words “sovereign states are the basic and indispensable building blocks of the international system...states however cannot do the job alone. We need an active civil society”(Annan 1994, p 7).

James Rosenau is a representative of the transformalist position (Eatwell, 1998, p 8). In his comprehensive theory, Rosenau talks about a “bifurcation” of the world. By bifurcation he means that a multi-centric world that consist of non-state actors have emerged as a competitor of the state-centric world.

Although Rosenau’s transformalist view gained currency in the late 1980s as indicated above, it was already introduced in the beginning of the 70s by Oran Young in his article *The actors in world politics* (1972). Young refers to a system of mixed-actors which “requires a movement away from the assumption of homogeneity with respect to types of actors and, therefore a retreat from the postulate of the state as the fundamental unit of world politics” (Young 1972, p 136). Young argues that states have new roles. They are still important but not dominant actors in world politics (Ibid, p 137). According to Geeraerts, Young’s mixed actor perspective was point of departure for the development of this new paradigm, although Geeraerts stresses that Young did not succeed in developing a true general theory of a mixed actor system (Geeraerts 1995, p 9).

Further, Geeraerts argues that the most inspiring effort to present such an integrated paradigm for the analysis of the international system where non-state actors are direct participants of world politics was undertaken by James Rosenau in his book *Turbulence in world politics* (1990). Here, Rosenau presents a comprehensive theory of the international system breaking away from what he calls the “conceptual jails” of the state-centric paradigm, towards a new system characterized as a bifurcation of the world (Rosenau 1990, p 5-6). This development questions the ideas of the long-established state-centric world (Ibid, p 20). In his view world politics can be conceptualized as having three dimensions; “the macro parameter”, “the micro parameter”, and “the macro-micro parameter”.

Rosenau argues that on the macro level, a multi-centric world composed of diverse actors such as NGOs has emerged. Further he argues that these actors now coexist, compete and interact with states. Hence, realism can no longer effectively account for the changes in the international system (Rosenau 1990, p 244).

The micro parameter involves individuals, local communities and other elements of civil society at the micro level (Weiss et.al 2004, p 324). According to Rosenau, as a consequence of modern technologies and the increased interdependence of the world we can note a skill-revolution. This skill revolution

has enabled people to engage more effectively and engaged in collective action which is mirrored in the increasing numbers of NGOs.

The last of Rosenau's parameter is the macro-micro parameter, through which individuals are linked to their collective. Historically this relationship has been founded on traditional criteria of legitimacy derived from constitutional and legal sources. However, due to a variety of reasons, including the skill revolution as indicated above, individuals are now questioning the authority of governments and states. Moreover, Rosenau argues that this relocation of authority has been "downward" towards e.g. NGOs. He also argues that the relocation of authority is a contributing factor to the erosion of sovereignty.

The focus of this thesis is to consider the impact the changing nature of world politics has had on the UN-system.

3.2 Bringing the new world order to the United Nations

What role does the United Nations play in this new world order? How will the transformed world order transform the United Nations? Scholars of the new paradigm are of the opinion that the UN has an important role to play in this ongoing global transition (e.g. Rosenau 1992, p 9, Weiss et.al 1997, p 17, Carlsson et. al 1995, p 6).

Weiss et.al argues that the UN serves as a significant forum for discussion between governments and NGOs (Weiss et.al, 1996). Likewise, Rosenau argues that the global transformation has altered the functions and structures of the United Nations. In his book *The United Nations in a turbulent world* (1992), he analyse what implication "turbulence" in world politics has had for the United Nations. Even though he raises concern about the fact that the UN is constrained by the actions of states, he assumes that the transformation will offer UN a number of opportunities to function as an "agent of change" (Rosenau 1992, p 9).

He repudiates the more critical view that the changes in international relations are essentially peripheral to the ongoing interstate system and thus dismisses the notion of the UN being short-lived, rather destined to function as it always has.

Although Rosenau focuses on the dynamics of the international system in his book *Turbulence in world politics*, his analytical lenses of the three parameters represented by; bifurcation of the world, skill revolution, and the relocation of authority is helpful in pointing out new opportunities and challenges for the UN-system.

The global UN-conferences⁹ during the 1990s mirror how the UN was affected by the global expansion of analytic skills at the micro level. By engaging in NGOs, citizens are able to raise awareness on issues on the UN's agenda. Rosenau argues that NGOs now coexist, compete and interact with the states in

⁹ The world conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the international conference on population and development (ICPD, Cairo, 1994), the world Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), the world conference on women (Beijing, 1995).

the UN-system. Due to the increased numbers and influence of NGOs in the UN system the state-centric structure of the UN is no longer predominant. The UN-system has undergone a bifurcation.

Further, Rosenau argues that this bifurcation has led to a relocation of authority in the UN- system (Rosenau 1992, p16). The UN-member states have become less effective in confronting challenges and implementing policies in this widely dispersed system of global governance. Like the NGO universe, global governance implies an absence of central authority (Weiss et.al 1996, p17).

3.3 Concluding remarks

Through a theoretically guided analysis, based on Rosenau's theory I have discussed what impact changes in world politics have had on the UN-system. Rosenau's transformalistic position, where states and non-state actors coexist in the global order as well as in the UN-system is the point of departure in this thesis. I have also shown how Rosenau's three parameters, the *macro parameter* reflecting the bifurcation of the world, the *micro-parameter* reflecting a skill-revolution where people have become engage in NGOs and the *macro-micro parameter* reflecting a relocation of authority in the UN-system is of relevance when analyzing changes in the UN-system.

In the next chapter I will discuss how this theory is mirrored in the two reports from the two global commissions that have been established to address the needs for the UN in the future.

4 Two global commissions about NGOs role in the future of the UN

“Strengthening the relation with NGOs, would assist in a higher degree of anchoring among the public and an intensified democratic legitimacy for the UN-system” (Ingvar Carlsson, interview).

1. The Commission on global governance: Our global neighbourhood (1995)

2. The Cardoso-panel: We the peoples of the United Nations (2004)

As a consequence of the growth in numbers and influence of NGOs several global commissions have been established with aim to analyse changes in world politics, by focusing on different issues such as disarmament, sustainable development and human rights (i.e. the Brandt-Commission, 1981, the World Commission on environment and development, 1987, the Commission on disarmament and security, 1991, the Commission on global governance, 1995, the Cardoso panel, 2004). The reports from the latter two commissions are the focus of this thesis. There are several arguments why I have selected these two reports.

Firstly, these reports mirror the new world order, of which Rosenau is a proponent of. Secondly they represent two interesting and different periods of time. The Commission on global governance was published in 1995, and can be seen as a source for the debate about NGOs role in the central UN-system (Carlsson, interview). Moreover it can be seen as a starting point for Kofi Annan’s reform process which he initiated in 1997. The Cardoso-report on the other hand was published previous to the September Summit in 2005 and can be seen as a final stage in the reform-process.

Another reason for choosing these reports is that they focus on the particular issue that is the focus in this thesis. In contrast to the preceding reports, which dealt with very specific issues such as women’s rights, sustainable development, and disarmament the report from the Commission on global governance dealt with the paradigm-shift in general. It also addresses the roles of NGOs in this new global world order. The report from the Cardoso panel particularly examines NGOs involvement in the UN.

These reports also seem to have influenced the discussion about the future role of the United Nations during the last decade.

In this chapter I will provide some background information about the purpose and contents of these two reports. I will also investigate if, and how the paradigm-shift discussed in chapter three is reflected in the reports. Finally, I will

study the benefits of an increased role of NGOs in the UN-system according to the two commissions.

As additional information about the reports, I will refer to my own interviews with the chairman of the Commission on global governance Ingvar Carlsson and Birgitta Dahl, one of the Cardoso-Panel members.

4.1 Background

According to Carlsson, three commissions dealing with new situations, preceded the Commission on global governance, one discussing security (the Commission on disarmament and security) one discussing North-South relations (the Brandt-Commission) and one discussing sustainable development (the World commission on environment and development).

Against this background, the German Chancellor Willy Brandt took the initiative to establish a Commission in order to discuss how to meet all new challenges of the global world order (Carlsson, interview).

As a consequence, the independent Commission on global governance with Ingvar Carlsson and Shridath Rampal as co-chairmen was established in September 1992. In 1995 the twenty-eight experts and policymakers presented their report; *Our Global Neighbourhood (OGN)*. By synthesizing and extending many of the central arguments of prior commissions on the future of the world economy, security and environment, the improvement of global security was a prime concern for the commission (Carlsson et.al 1995, p 368). However, NGOs role in the United Nations also received the commission's attention.

Carlsson points out that in spite of the fact that NGOs had participated in the UN-conferences for a couple of decades, the Commission can be seen as a point of departure for the discussion how to address the problem regarding UN-NGOs interaction in the central UN-system(Carlsson,interview).

In September 2002, ten years after the Commission on global governance was established the UN Secretary-General(SG) Kofi Annan released a reform report entitled *Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change* (Annan 2002), which amongst other things stresses the importance of the interaction between the UN and NGOs.

In order to enhance the roles of NGOs in the UN, the SG Kofi Annan appointed a 13- members panel of independent persons, with different backgrounds and experiences the so called "Cardoso-Panel", lead by the former Brazilian President Cardoso (Dahl, interview). In June 2004 the Cardoso-panel presented its report *We the peoples: civil society, the United Nations and global governance* (WTP). If the report from the Commission on global governance focused on NGOs role in the central UN-system, the Cardoso-report focused on UN's interaction with NGOs on the local level (Dahl, interview).

4.2 The two commissions related to Rosenau's theoretical framework

The two reports mirror the view of global world order, that Rosenau is a representative of. Rosenau's macro-parameter, reflecting a shift from the state-centric world towards a multi-centric world where a new range of non-state actors coexist, interact and compete with states being the point of departure in the two reports. This is reflected in the opening pages of the reports; "A new world", (Carlsson et.al 1995, p 2-41) and "Enhancing UN-Civil society relations in a changing world", (Cardoso et.al 2004, p 23-30).

Similar to Rosenau, both reports draw on the transformalistic position in the globalisation debate where states remain primary actors in the UN. However according to the reports the NGOs have gained importance within the UN-system (Carlsson et.al 1995, p 4). None of the reports are constrained by or committed to state sovereignty. For example, nowhere in the bibliography or citations in OGN is there a submission that is identifiable realist (Barnett 1997, p 531). Rather, the Commission on global governance can be seen as a cornerstone of the globalisation debate.

In line with Rosenau's micro-parameter, characterized of a skill-revolution, the Cardoso-panel argues that people in general are more politically active and conscious about world politics, which is mirrored in the increasing numbers of NGOs (Cardoso et.al 2004, p 25). According to both commissions the growing involvement of different actors has questioned the traditional power and authority of national governments (Carlsson et.al 1995, p 34, Cardoso et.al 2005, p 25). Further, the Cardoso-panel suggests that "elected legislators and parliaments seem to have little impact on decisions made intergovernmentally today" (Cardoso et.al 2004, p 24).

According to the Commission on global governance, this development has devised a new governance arrangement (Carlsson et.al 1995, p 26, xvii). This is what Rosenau refers to in his micro-macro parameter; "the relocation of authority" (Rosenau 1992, p 16).

4.3 Benefits of an increased role of NGOs according to the two commissions

The two commissions emphasize some factors in the new world order, where NGOs serve as positive contributors in the UN-system.

By raising awareness of global issues including gender issues, climate change, HIV/Aids NGOs are important to the UN-system to put issues on the global agenda (Dahl, interview).

Secondly, the Commission on global governance argues that NGOs are important to locally implement decisions taken by the UN. Their local knowledge of needs, expertise and grass-root perceptions are particularly important in development and humanitarian work (Carlsson et.al 1995, p 188). However the

Commission on global governance also recognizes NGOs important role in promoting dispute settlement. In these situations NGOs independent function can help parties agree to look for possible solutions (Carlsson et.al 1995, p 100). To “connect the local with the global” and strengthening UN’s engagement with NGOs on country-level is a main focus in the Cardoso-report (Cardoso et.al 2004, p 29). The Cardoso-report stresses that NGOs no longer remain agents of programme delivery “hired” by the UN, but rather “partners” in policy-making and decision-making (Ibid 2004, p 37).

Carlsson argues that the UN has functioned as an “organization of governments”, which has led to signs of citizenry alienation from the political process. An increased role of NGOs will enhance democratic legitimacy and create new forms of democratic participation, where citizens become involved in the political process (Dahl, interview, Carlsson, interview).

The third field where NGOs role is emphasized in the commission is to help the UN to address the organization’s democracy deficit. Carlsson argues that “since democracy is more than just the right to vote, it is important that the voices of NGOs are heard in the UN-system, besides UN member states” (Carlsson, interview).

4.4 Concluding remarks

The discussion above consequently supports Rosenau’s claims that new actors in world politics such as NGOs have had an impact on the UN-system. The paradigm-shift is mirrored in the reports from the two commissions. Thus, given the fact that NGOs influence have increased in the UN-system, I have discussed three obvious benefits of an increased role of NGOs. The commissions point at NGOs role as “agenda setters” and “watch-dogs”, their role in “policy implementation” and their “democratizing” role.

In the next chapter I will explore how NGOs influence have been materialized in the UN-system. What roles are NGOs given the Secretary General’s reform-documents that have been published between 1997 and 2005?

5 The Secretary-General's reform-documents

“[y]ou are our best defence against complacency, our bravest campaigners for honesty and our boldest crusaders for change” (Annan about the roles of NGOs in the UN, in Kreijen 2002, p 373).

Lately the United Nations has been suffering serious setbacks. The UN- system has been accused for being a non-effective and closed system (Anan 2000, p 1). The organization has, as an outcome of that, experienced an increased lack of public trust. In order to regain the global public trust many scholars have argued that the UN must be more open to international civil society and the functions of NGOs in the UN-system have been highlighted. Carlsson stresses that “strengthening the relation with NGOs would assist in a higher degree of anchoring among the public, and an intensified democratic legitimacy for the UN system”. In this respect he refers to a well-known statement by Annan, where he says that “there is a fork in the road” and stresses the needs for the UN to be reformed (Carlsson, interview).

Over the past decade, the UN-system has undergone a reform-process which was initiated with the report in 1997(1) *Renewing the UN- system: a program for reform* (1997). Since this document, the Secretary General (SG) has come up with several reform documents; 2) *the Millenniumreport We the peoples* (2000), 3) *Strengthening of the United Nation: an agenda for change* (2002), 4) *In larger freedom* (2005). Drawing from these reports the heads of states finally adopted the 5) “*Draft outcome Document*” (DoD) in the September Summit 14-16 September 2005 in New York.

In a qualitative text-analysis I will explore what roles NGOs are given in the UN-reform documents the SG has been published between 1997 and 2005, and how this role has changed. I will also study to what extent the proposals from the commissions concerning the functions of NGOs have been included in the reform-process and particularly the DoD adopted by the world leaders in New York 13 September 2005? How can we understand this outcome?

5.1 Moving towards an increased role of NGOs in the UN-reform-Documents 1997-2002

The report *Our Global Neighbourhood* from the Commission on global governance formed the basis of the discussion regarding NGOs role in the central UN-system, and how this role could be enhanced. A year after this report was

published, the SG Kofi Annan published his first reform report;” *Renewing the United Nations: a program for reform*” (1997). In this report Annan stresses the importance of strengthening the links with NGOs and argues that this is an “essential part of reforming the UN” (Annan 1997, p 89). The important role NGOs were given in this report was also reflected in the fact that Civil society was one of the report’s five “substantive priorities” (Ibid, p 1). One of the recommendations in this report is to establish a “Peoples Millennium Assembly” (Ibid, p 29), drawing on suggestion from the Commission on global governance to establish a People’s Assembly” (Carlsson et.al 1995, p 257). This Assembly should be seen as a complement to the General Assembly, which is a representative of governments. Furthermore The SG states that “Civil Society constitutes a major and increasingly important force in international life” (Annan 1997, p 22).

In the Millennium Summit 2000, the UN member states resolved to give greater opportunities to NGOs and Civil Society. This is reflected in the title of the SG *Millenniumreport: “We the peoples”* (2000). In this report, the SG stresses the important roles of NGOs in the UN-system in several instances such as sustainable development, human rights and development (Annan 2000, p 13). He also argues that NGOs should be given full opportunities in the UN system (Ibid p 80).

Two years after the *Millenniumreport*, the SG published a new report *Renewing the UN system: A program for change: (2002)*. UN-NGOs interaction received great attention and became one of the seven major focuses in this report. Chapter IV analyse “how the UN can work better together with civil society” (Annan 2002, p 19-26), where it is stressed that engagement with civil society is one priority. In this regard, the SG urges the UN member states to engage with civil society in policymaking at all levels. He emphasizes that “all concerned would benefit from engagement with civil society” (Ibid, p 25). In the report the SG proposes the establishment of a high-level panel to make recommendations regarding the interaction between NGOs and the UN, the “Cardoso-Panel” (Ibid, p 25). However, in contrast to the previous reform documents, Annan also points out that there have been problems along the way with an increased role of NGOs in the UN-system (Annan 2002, p 3).

5.2 NGOs disappearance from the UN’s Reform-agenda

In 2005 the SG published the report *In Larger Freedom*. In contrast to the previous reports, the role of NGOs in the UN system is hardly given any space in this report. The only proposal, the SG Annan has taken up from the Cardoso Panel’s report on the future relations between the UN and Civil Society, is to “comprehensively and systematically integrate NGOs in the work of the General Assembly” (Annan 2005, p 59). Hence, this report has been highly criticised since

it focuses on the reform of the Security Council, and the reform-proposals regarding NGOs relation with the UN has been left out.

In September 2005 the world leaders gathered in the UN Summit in New York and adopted the Draft Outcome Document. This document builds on recommendations from the previous reform reports between 1997 and 2005. What role is given to NGOs in this *Draft Outcome Document* (Dod) in the September Summit 2005?

Even though this is the most far-reaching reform in the history of the United Nations, this Summit was a retreat from the earlier reports regarding UN-NGOs interactions. If the reform report *In larger freedom* was a setback regarding NGOs role in the UN, as indicted above, the Dod hardly gave any attention to NGOs-UN interaction. Even the proposal in the report *In larger freedom* to integrate NGOs into the work of the General Assembly disappeared in the Dod. Only four of the 178 paragraphs are devoted to the role of civil society. These four paragraphs appear on the last page of the document (Dod 2005, p 35). Moreover, the formulations in these paragraphs are vague and general and propose no specific suggestions.

Several NGOs raised major concerns regarding their limited participation in the Summit (Roundup 2005, p 8). The Dod was adopted before civil society representatives had a chance to speak. These examples illustrate that the UN's collaboration with civil society disappeared from the Summit's agenda.

Although the Commission on global governance and the Cardoso-panel, as well as the previous UN-reform documents presented a positive notion of the increased influence of NGOs, Carlsson argues that such commitments not have been realized in practical deeds (Carlsson, interview). CONGO (a collaboration-organization for NGOs in the UN) argues that there is a big difference between words and actions regarding NGOs roles in the UN. There has been very slow progress in responding to the growing involvement of NGOs in the UN. As politically described by Donini, there is a "rapidly evolving 'NGO galaxy' and [a] not-so-rapidly evolving UN solar system (Weiss 1996, p 83). As a consequence the United Nations has no institutional or even informal framework for citizen's representation and no political forum for the world's people.

5.3 Concluding remarks

It was suggested in chapter three and four that NGOs influence have increased in the UN-system. However, in a qualitative text-analysis I have shown that UN's partnership with NGOs was a priority in the beginning of Annan's reform documents but disappeared in the final stage in the reform process. How can this be explained?

6 Problems with an increased influence of NGOs in the UN-system

“There are NGOs which by nature are undemocratic, and therefore can not be held accountable for their actions. This can be considered as a serious problem” (Dahl, interview).

Changes in world politics and the new paradigm-shift reflecting an increased influence of NGOs in the UN-system, has posed new challenges for the United Nations. I have identified three problems that frequently appear in the NGO-literature (i.e. Mingst et.al 2000 Weiss et.al 1996, Willets 1996, Carlsson et.al 1995, Cardoso et.al 2004).

- (1) The first problem concerns the notion of state-sovereignty in the UN and the increased influence of NGOs.
- (2) The second problem refers to the discussion regarding the efficacy and functionality of the UN’s external activities, by illustrating a new function of NGOs as “subcontractors” of services for the UN. Some scholars argue that this trend has lead to a “politicization” of aid.
- (3) The third problem considers NGOs influence in the UN and the problem of democracy-deficit. This problem is twofold. It refers to the undermining of representative democracy as a consequence of the shift towards “participatory democracy”, and the lack of NGOs internal democratic control. These three issues serve to organize the discussion that follows.

6.1 The problem of state-sovereignty and the increased role of advocacy-NGOs

“Advocacy-NGOs”, “belong to NGOs engage in advocacy for social change such as human rights advocates, developmentalists, and groups of indigenous peoples. These NGOs aim to raise awareness on emerging global issues. As I have shown in chapter three, one of the benefits that the Commission on global governance stresses is NGOs positive role as “agenda-setters” and “watch-dogs”. By raising awareness of new threats, such as environmental degradation, violation of women’s rights and human rights violations committed by states, these organizations unaligned character give them an advantage to function in a way that UN could never do, primarily since they are impartial. Advocacy-NGOs have brought up issues on the international agenda. For example, the UN’s theme years and decades, such as the International women’s decade and the year of indigenous

peoples are international events promoted by NGOs that heightened awareness of these issues (Keck et.al 1998, p 22).

Another role of advocacy-NGOs and in particular, human rights-NGOs is their function as “watch dogs” within the UN to ensure that the member-states keep to their claims. As a result of what several scholars have called “mobilization of shame”, these NGOs have made human rights violations committed by UN’s member- states public. Advocacy-NGOs are referred in the NGO- literature as the “conscience of the world” (Willets 1996, Weiss et.al 1996 p 445). However, although several scholars have stressed the positive functions of advocacy-NGOs in the UN-system, others see their increase role as a problem. This problem derives from a conflict between the long-standing principle of unquestioned national sovereignty and non-interference reflected in the UN Charter and the increased function played by these “advocacy-NGOs” in the UN.

The bifurcation of the world and the growing impact of both international and indigenous NGOs have questioned state sovereignty. Thus, some governments in the UN, especially those criticised by NGOs and whose own legitimacy is already shaky, have been negative to the growing impact of NGOs in the UN-system. Some states see this development as a threat to their sovereignty and will attempt to restrain the formal access and participation of those organisations (Spiro 1995, p 47, Willets 1996, p 36). Hence, there are deeply embedded difficulties in the structure of the UN as an inter-state organization and it’s role as representative of sovereign states and its role as representative of peoples and individuals. This limits the possible scope of influence of NGOs in the United Nations (Clark et.al 1997, p 29, Weiss et. al 1997, p 608).

The two commissions propose that NGOs should be involved in hearings and forums in the UN. This would increase NGOs influence in ways that challenge the state monopoly on decision-making authority in the United Nations. The Commission on global governance also proposes a “Council for petitions”, a panel that could address wrongs that could imperil people’s security if they remain unaddressed. The hope is to give domestic groups normative leverage over states that violate the norms of international community on issues of domestic governance (Barnett 1997, p 538).

6.2 “Development-NGOs” and the problem of “politicization”

The second problem relates to the function of “development-NGOs” in policy-implementation. Development-NGOs are active in providing aid and services for the UN, in e.g. humanitarian assistance. This activity has witnessed an exponential growth lately. Since the end of 1980s, NGOs have become recipients of and an important channel for development aid, and collectively now deliver more aid than the entire United Nation system does (Weiss et.al 1996). According to Boussard this has resulted in an emergence of a more policy-oriented literature, emphasizing NGOs role in development e.g. The Brundtland Report 1987,

Edwards & Hulme 1996, Tvedt 1998 (Boussard 2003, p 23). This literature has been referred to as the “NGOs literature” because of its emphasis of development NGOs.¹⁰ However whether this development is desirable or not remains a controversial issue among the scholars.

There are those who argue that there are important advantages with NGOs function as “subcontractors”, delivering services and humanitarian assistance with their special on-the-ground knowledge and experience (Suy 2004, p 374, Weiss et.al 1997, p 595). Moreover, Weiss underlines that NGOs can reach people that intergovernmental organizations fail to reach (Weiss 1996 et.al, p 440). According to Weiss, development-NGOs can make up some of the gap in representation that the diplomatic nature UN creates. The presence of NGO contractors could help make the UN better informed about local politics.

However, several scholars have raised concern about this new trend¹¹. NGOs are often religious or political. Can these organizations be impartial or neutral? Do their religious or political interests result in a politicization of aid-delivering? Natis points out that some of the NGOs working in the field of humanitarian emergencies often are church-related. According to Weiss some NGOs define their aim in that light, which might lead to a “politicization of aid” (Weiss et.al 1996, p 446). The Commission on global governance argues that some NGOs serve narrow interests, which can block out perspectives on wider concerns (Carlsson et.al 1995, p 33).

Another problem which has concerned several “development-NGOs” is the fact that when NGOs are serving as “subcontractors” they lose their integrity and impartiality by providing projects targeted by their donors. The fact that UN is relying upon NGOs has brought forward the problem of accountability.

How can NGOs be held accountable for actions undertaken on behalf of the UN? The internal democratic control of NGOs will be discussed in the next part.

6.3 NGOs influence and the deficit of democracy

6.3.1 The trend from “representative democracy” towards “participatory democracy”

The shift towards a bifurcation of the world where NGOs are important actors in the global arena has encouraged some innovations in democratic practices. Even though the commissions have pointed out the positive democracy-functions of NGOs in the UN-system, the deepening of UN-civil society interactions is not uncontroversial. Hence, the third issue focuses on the democracy deficit, that some argue has been a consequence. It should be emphasized that the discussion here is twofold. I aim to analyse the internal structure of NGOs and the problem

¹⁰ What has complicated this discussion is that in the literature on development assistance, the term NGO is often used to describe development NGOs. For further discussion see Boussard: 2003, p 23.

¹¹ Weiss et.al talks about a new model where “the UN could exclusively orchestrate policy and monitoring, while NGOs could deliver specific contracted activities” Weiss et.al 1997, pp 452-453

of democracy deficit, as well as the aspect of democracy-deficit in the UN-system by involving NGOs.

The Cardoso-panel argues that “representative democracy in which citizens elects their representatives is now supplemented by participatory democracy”(Cardoso et.al 2004, p25). This shift will enhance new positive aspects of participation. As I have shown in chapter three the two commissions argue that a greater influence of NGOs in the UN will enhance democracy at the global level. Similar to this notion several scholars stress that there is a strong relation between the strengths of NGOs and democratization in this regard (Scholte 2004, Sardamov 2005, Nanz et.al 2005). Some scholars argue that NGOs directly represent citizens rather than their governments. Thus, optimists argue that involving NGOs in the UN could increase societal participation and control. Due to declining public confidence in the United Nation lately many scholars have also underlined that involving more NGOs with the UN could improve the organization’s legitimacy and make the organization more transparent, which is a crucial precondition for effective democratic accountability (Scholte 2004, p 217).

However, proponents of representative democracy have a more critical attitude to the increased involvement of NGOs in the UN (Held et.al 2004, p 125, Kamminga 2004, p 388). They argue that the UN is legitimized indirectly by the consent of the participating governments which are democratically elected and directly responsible to their electorates. Thus, proponents of representative democracy claim that an increased role of NGOs in the UN-system is rather a threat than enhancement of democracy since several NGOs are neither democratically elected nor accountable to their membership. This brings us to the second issue NGOs lack of internal democratic control.

6.3.2 The internal structure of NGOs and their democracy-deficit

Who elects NGOs and to whom are they responsible and accountable? The internal democratic control of NGOs has been subjected to criticism. Both commissions are aware of the fact that many NGOs in the UN-system have weak public basis or unclear mechanisms of accountability (Carlson et al 1995 p 61, Cardoso et.al 2004, p 59).

Those who are critical to enhance the influence of NGOs in the UN fear that “the emerging influence of NGOs in the UN-system represents a dangerous shift of power to unelected and unaccountable special interest-groups” (Kamminga 2004, p 388, Held 2004, p 230). Similarly, Held argues that NGOs are plagued by serious democratic deficits. If NGOs are going to deal with democracy issues, they also have to have a self-critical reflection on how they work themselves (Held 2004, p 230).

Another aspect is the problem of representation. Who are the people represented by NGOs in the UN? Critics have raised concerns that NGOs reflect global disparities of influence, particularly a North-South divide (Price 2003, p 590, Cardoso et.al 2004, p 65, Carlsson et al 1995, p 153). The Commission on global governance notes in 1995 that fewer than 15 per cent of NGOs accredited

the UN are from developing countries (Carlsson et.al 1995, p 153). Almost ten years later, only 16% of NGOs accredited to engage with the UN are from developing countries.

According to Scholte only a small proportion of the world's population has thus far become involved in global civil society. As a consequence, most people and especially vulnerable groups, have little influence on the policymaking process of NGOs. These organizations consist of relatively small numbers of white, northern, university-educated, computer-literate, full-time activists, and can not be considered as representative of the world demos (Scholte 2000).

6.4 Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have illustrated the complexity of an increased role of NGOs in the UN. In this part I have discussed another side of the benefits with an increased role of NGOs, which were discussed in chapter four; NGOs role as “agenda setters” and “watch-dogs”, their role in “policy implementation” and their “democratizing” role. Three problems of an increased role of NGOs in the UN-system have been identified; the “problem of state-sovereignty” and an increased influence of NGOs, the “politicization of aid” as well as the problem of “democracy deficit” and an increased role of NGOs. These problems can be possible underlying factors why the role of NGOs not has been materialized. However there are numerous possible explanations why NGOs role not has been materialized in the UN-system. In the next chapter I will discuss possible reasons based on interviews from three persons who in different capacities have been involved in the UN-reform process.

7 An analysis of why NGOs disappeared in the UN-reform process

“To enhance the role of NGOs in the United Nations will strengthen the democratic process at the expense of the bureaucracy, not everyone will like this” (Dahl, interview).

As I have shown in this thesis, Rosenau’s theory of how the world has undergone a transformation into a bifurcation is of relevance when analyzing changes in the UN-system during the last decades. His three parameters; the macro-parameter, the micro-parameter and the macro-micro parameter are all of relevance in order to illustrate how the changing world politics has been transforming the UN-system. The impact of the vast increase in sovereignty- free actors (the macro-parameter) has been considerable in the UN-system during the last twenty years (Rosenau 1992, p 24). Moreover, the major UN conferences in the first half of the 1990s reflect that citizenries through skill revolution (the micro-parameter) are more effectively engage in the UN-system. A growing concern for global issues such as human rights, environmental protection and demand for democratic influence, together with increased influence of non-state actors, mirror a relocation of authority(the micro-macro parameter). Hence, both NGOs and UN member states have different influence is this development; this is what the Commission on global governance refer to as “global governance”.¹²

However, even after the reform process, the United Nations continues “to be a product and agent of the state-centric world” as Rosenau noted in 1992 (Rosenau 1992, p 40). As I have shown in chapter five, the focus on NGOs disappeared in the final stage in the reform process. Carlsson points out, “to include NGOs in the work of the UN has not been realized in practical deed” (Carlsson, interview). He argues that regarding UN-NGOs relations the outcome of the Summit in September 2005, was a retreat.

In September 2004, the UN SG Annan gave a response to the Cardoso-report, in which he urged the UN member states to adopt many of the Cardoso-panel’s proposals. The panel’s report and Kofi Annan’s response were submitted to the General Assembly. In October 2004, there was a preliminary debate, but no conclusion on those proposals that require member states approval (Clark 2005, p 68). Despite the promises given in the SG reform documents, and the positive response from NGOs, member-states and the UN-secretariat to increase NGOs influence in the UN-system, the idea of active NGOs in the UN-system has not

¹² Carlsson,et.al 1995, p2-3 ”Governance is the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs.....At the global level governance has been viewed primarily as intergovernmental relationships, but it must now be understood as also involving NGOs...”

been materialized. There remains a sizable gap between aspiration and accomplishment.

In this part, I will discuss possible explanations of the fact that so little has been realized regarding an increased role of NGOs in the UN. I will base my analysis on interviews with three persons who in different capacities have been actively involved in the process. As I have emphasized in my methodological considerations in chapter one, I am aware of the fact that the interview material, requires careful and critical reflection. The persons interviewed are Ingvar Carlsson (co-chair in the Commission on global governance), Birgitta Dahl (representative in the Cardoso-panel) and Aleksander Gabelic (chair for the Swedish FN-förbundet, and personal advisor to Jan Eliasson in New York). The three interviewees have had the mission to analyse how NGOs can be more active in the UN-system, and their answers may be biased by their own functions in the process.

7.1 Lack of political will

Firstly, I will discuss some possible answers to the question of why NGOs role disappeared in the UN-Summit, by investigating the views of actors in the United Nations. How did the UN Member-States, NGOs and the UN –personnel from the Secretariat act? Who are resistant to the UN-reform and why?

Carlsson and Dahl agree that the main reason why the recommendations from the commissions to enhance the role of NGOs in the UN have not have been realized is a lack of political will from the UN member states (Carlsson interview, Dahl interview). As I have discussed in chapter 6.1, there is a conflict between state-sovereignty and an increased role by NGOs in the UN. Several UN member states see an increased role of NGOs in the UN as a threat to their sovereignty, particularly those totalitarian states whose own legitimacy is questionably.

However, Dahl points out that this view of states is based on a misunderstanding. Governments should not see NGOs as a threat. She argues that an increased role of NGOs in the UN-system does not have to be at the expense of state-sovereignty. NGOs and states have different roles according to Dahl; NGOs are lobbyists or consultants and will raise new issues on the global agenda. The decision-making rests with the states. Dahl underlines that NGOs should not be involved in the decision-making mechanism, even though some NGOs might demand this (Dahl, interview).

Which UN member states are then critical to an increased role of NGOs? Carlsson and Dahl argue that the resistance comes from states with different political backgrounds. Carlsson talks about a “negative coalition” between states that have different motives for their resistance (Carlsson, interview). Members of this “negative coalition are on the one hand states such as the United States which base their critique of the reform process on economical reasons. Dahl points out that there is on the other hand a strong resistance to an increased role of NGOs in the UN-system from developing countries. 132 developing countries have formed

a lobby-group in the United Nations, the Group 77. Fewer than 15% of NGOs accredited to the UN are from the developing countries (Carlsson, et.al 1995, p 153). Since vulnerable groups and developing countries are under-represented, Group 77 argues that including NGOs in the UN-system will lead to global disparities of influence. Dahl argues that this problem has to be addressed by including NGOs from the South, rather than to close the doors for NGOs in general. Hence, one of the recommendations from the Cardoso-Panel was to establish a fund to enhance the capacity of NGOs in developing countries to engage in the UN partnerships and processes (Cardoso et.al 2004, p 66).

Another factor behind the limited role of NGOs is the “silent resistance”. According to Dahl those who are part of the “International Nobility” (i.e. New York lobbyists) in the UN-headquarters, rarely participate in an open debate, but are working behind close doors. Those who are positive to the UN-reform, discuss the issue, while those who are negative do not engage in discussions but act behind the scene (Carlsson, interview, Dahl interview).

Carlsson maintains that one can not only blame the UN member states, for the fact that the recommendations from the commissions have not been realized. Also the NGOs are to a certain extent responsible, since they not have been pushing the issue as one could have expected (Carlsson, interview). Gabelic agrees with Carlsson, that NGOs in general have not been active enough (Gabelic interview).

The question arises, why then have NGOs not been able to push for increased influence in the UN-system? One reason has to do with the internal structure of NGOs. As I have illustrated in chapter 6.3 many NGOs are badly organized. Thus, a weak organizational structure has made their work more difficult and ineffective (Carlsson, interview).

According to Gabelic, NGOs limited focus is another possible reason. Some NGOs serve narrow interests which can block out perspectives on wider concerns. For example Gabelic argues that NGOs engage in human rights issues have focused on an establishment of a “human rights council”, while NGOs role in the overall reform-process did not get enough their attention. Gabelic also stresses that lack of capacity is a possible reason. NGOs have often limited resources, which limits their work (Gabelic, interview).

The resistance against an increased role of NGOs comes also from UN-Secretariat staff that fear that NGOs involvement is at the expense of the UN bureaucratic structure. Hence, some resistance to the reform process has come from the UN staff who sees this as a threat to their position (Dahl, interview, Gabelic, interview).

However, at the same time there has also been a concerted effort toward reforming the UN-system, from within the UN-secretariat, most notably from the SG Kofi Annan (Dahl, interview).

Then, why did the SG give up the ambition to increase the role of NGOs in the last reform-document *in Larger Freedom*? According to Gabelic, almost ten years after his first reform report in 1997 the SG realized that his intention to include NGOs in the UN-system, only received marginal support. Neither the UN member states, nor NGOs or the UN secretariat pushed this issue enough for him

to continue this effort. This, rather disappointing result reflects the reluctance of several actors in the UN-system to share their power with NGOs. It also reflects what the Secretary General believes is achievable in the short term, given the present situation in world politics (Martens 2005, p 9). Dahl argues, since some of the proposals from the Cardoso report to increase NGOs role in the UN were too controversial, the SG did not include these in order to be able to keep good diplomatic contact with those countries negative to NGOs increased influence, at the time before the September Summit in September 2005. This brings us to the next speculation.

7.2 Timing

To be able to understand the result of the reform process it is important to keep in mind the international political situation at the time when these panels and reports were presented. Barnett argues that the report from the Commission on global governance was undermined by the political context. The commission started its work during the optimistic period of the early 1990s, but its report appeared when the UN was suffering a series of setbacks most notably in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia. At the same time as the Commission on global governance underlines the important role of the UN, and not least NGOs role in the UN's involvement in a number of international crises failed, and as a result several states demonstrated their unwillingness to strengthen the UN (Barnett, 1997, p 527). Hence, the publication of the Commission on global governance was greeted with little enthusiasm and much cynicism.

According to Gabelic, timing is also a central factor for understanding why the proposals from the Cardoso-panel were not reflected in the Draft-Outcome-Document in September 2005. At the time when the Cardoso-Panel was about to present its findings in 2004, the UN was in a phase of an overall reform process, where several important questions were on the political agenda (Gabelic, Interview). Thus, according to Gabelic the Cardoso-report was overshadowed by other important reports and proposals. For example, Brazil one of the major actors behind the Cardoso-report (with Henrique Cardoso as chair-man) seemed to be a likely candidate to get a permanent seat in the Security Council. For Brazil focus shifted from the Cardoso-report towards the reformation of the Security Council (Gabelic, interview).

Since the United Nations is an inter-state institution, and built upon the old notion of parliamentary representation. Gabelic argues that the organization "lacks institutional frames" to include NGOs. He also stresses "lack of knowledge" about NGOs since their influence is a relatively new phenomenon as one possible factor why the process to include NGOs in the UN-system has been so slow.

7.3 Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have discussed possible reasons why the idea of more active NGOs in the UN-system has not been realized. In addition to the three problems that I have discussed in chapter six, that can be seen as underlying factors to the resistance, the analysis in this chapter was based on interviews from three persons who have been involved in the reform process. The following factors were emphasised as possible explanations; “lack of political will”, “timing”, “and lack of institutional frames” and “lack of knowledge”.

8 Summarising Conclusions

The increase in number and influence of NGOs in the UN-system has attracted vast interest over the past decades. As I have discussed in this thesis, a new scientific paradigm has been developed in order to analyse the new global world order. In contrast to the state-centric view of world order, scholars belonging to this new paradigm argue that non-state actors are important actors in world politics. The theoretical point of departure in this thesis has been Rosenau's view of the global world order. As a representative of this new paradigm, his hypothesis implies that the world has undergone a transformation into a bifurcation, where states and non-state actors coexist. I have argued that this hypothesis is of relevance when analyzing changes in the UN-system.

The aim of this thesis has been to explore and discuss benefits and problems of an increased role of NGOs in the United Nations. The research question guiding the study was: *What are the problems and benefits of an increased role of NGOs in the United Nations?*

In order to answer this question, I have analysed reports from two global commissions, dealing with global governance and the future role of the United Nations. These reports emphasize how NGOs can serve as positive contributors to the UN in three main-areas; as "agenda setter" and "watch-dogs", their role in "policy implementation" and their "democratizing role".

However, I have also discussed the other side of these benefits and the complexity with an increased role of NGOs. The process of globalisation has posed new challenges for the United Nations; three problems related to an increased influence of NGOs in the UN-system have been identified.

The first problem relates to advocacy-NGOs role as agenda-setter and watch-dogs. Since the United Nations is an inter-state organization, some states are critical to an increased role of NGOs since it challenges state sovereignty.

The second problem refers to "development NGOs" serving as "subcontractors" for implementing UN policy and the problem of "politicization". This problem refers to situations when UN supported development-NGOs have an ideological aim, for example working for religious or political goals. Some scholars have raised concern about this situation by arguing that their ideology might be reflected in their activities.

The third problem refers to democracy deficit as a consequence of an increased role of NGOs. Some argue that an enhanced function of NGOs in the UN-system is a threat to democracy, since it will undermine representative democracy and give power to unelected interest groups. These problems can be seen as possible underlying factors to explain the tension still present to include NGOs in the work of the UN.

In a qualitative text analysis, I have shown that UN's partnership with NGOs was a priority in the beginning of Annan's reform-documents but disappeared in

the final stage of the reform-process. The partnership between United Nation and NGOs is hardly mentioned in Annan's last reform-document *In larger Freedom* or in the *Draft-Outcome-Document* which was adopted by the world leaders in the Summit in September 2005.

Hence, the second purpose of this study has been explore and discuss why NGOs role in the UN-system has been so hard to implement. I have discussed numerous possible reasons for this, based on interviews with three persons who in different capacities have been actively involved in the process. These interviews enabled me an insight into the current discussion about the UN-reform process in the UN-headquarters.

Three particular factors came up in the interviews as possible factors why NGOs role is so hard to implement; "lack of political will" from UN member-states, NGOs and UN-Secretariat, "timing" and "lack of institutional frames" and "knowledge" about NGOs.

Two overall conclusions can be made. The hypothesis that NGOs influence has increased in the United Nations has partly been confirmed. I have shown that NGOs have increased both in numbers and influence in the UN-system. However, there is still a resistance against the idea of more active NGOs in the UN-system. The structure, politics and processes within the United Nations are to a great extent set by a state-centric approach.

Even though the issue about NGOs role in the UN-system has attracted interest in the past decade, several scholars have observed that further investigation is necessary in order to approach a "comprehensive theory" of the relationships between NGOs and UN activity. Clarc et.al note that "the differences, conflicts and tensions in the interstate order are relatively well documented and discussed; this is not true for the non-state order" (Clarc et.al 1997, p 2).

Changes in world politics have posted new questions for the UN-system. How can democratic legitimacy be globally achieved in a time when the influence of nation-states diminishes? How should the United Nations adopt to this new development, and how should NGOs be involved in the UN in a constructive way? These are questions for further research.

If the United Nations can meet the new challenges the organization faces and can find ways to constructively engage in partnership with NGOs, its legitimacy would increase. This can give new meaning to the first phrase in the UN Charter, and the title of this thesis "*We the peoples of the United Nations...*"

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Dahl, Birgitta, member of the Cardoso-panel, interviewed at 13/2/2006

Gabelic, Aleksander, Chairman of the Swedish FN-förbundet and personal advisor for Chairman of the General Assembly Jan Eliasson regarding UN-NGOs relations, interviewed at 13/2/2006

Appendix 1

Interview guide:

What is your background regarding this subject?

What were your responsibilities in the Commission?

What was the Commission's opinion about the functions of NGOs in the UN-system?

What are the benefits with an increased role of NGOs in the UN-system?

Can an increased role of NGOs improve the legitimacy for the United Nations?

Are there any problems with an increased role of NGOs?

What is the role of NGOs in UN's democratization process?

Do you see any problem with an increased role of NGOs in the UN-system?

How can NGOs be integrated in the UN-system?

What impact has the report had?

How has the report been received from NGOs/UN Member-states/UN-Secretariat?

What implications did the report have on the Draft-Outcome Document?

How can we understand the Summit-outcome?

Are you satisfied with this outcome?

Appendix 2

NGOs and the Structure of the United Nations

Table A.1. THE FOUR MAIN 'PRINCIPAL ORGANS' OF THE UNITED NATIONS

| | <i>Membership</i> | <i>Responsibilities</i> | <i>Authority</i> | <i>Relations with NGOs</i> |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| General Assembly | All UN members. One vote each. | All subjects. | Recommendations on policy. Binding decisions on finance and electing other organs. | Informal NGO lobbying of delegates. Written statements and speeches by NGOs at Special Sessions. |
| Security Council | 5 permanent: China, France, Russia, UK, USA. 10 elected by the General Assembly. | International peace and security. | Recommendations to UN members. Binding decisions, when Chapter VII of the Charter is invoked | Occasional hearing of witnesses by the Council or its committees. |
| Economic and Social Council | 54 UN members, elected by the General Assembly | All economic, social, sustainable development, women's rights and human rights questions. | Recommendations to UN members, to specialised agencies and to the General Assembly. | Consultative status: arrangements for submitting agenda items, written statements and speeches. |
| Secretariat | Secretary-General elected by Assembly and Security Council. Other staff appointed by the Secretary-General. | Administration of all meetings and all tasks authorised by the other principal organ. | Bringing conflicts to the Security Council's attention. Preparing reports. Internal personnel management | NGO Unit administers ECOSOC relations. Department of Public Information and other units co-operate with NGOs. |

Source Willets 1996, p 200

