Understanding Disenfranchisement: Civil Society and Developing Countries' Influence and Participation in Global Governance for Sustainable Development

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In his contextual paper for the High-Level Panel on UN-Civil Society Relations, former president of Brazil, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, points out that the "[c]ontemporary global order is increasingly the outcome of multiple, inter-locking patterns of transnational interaction shaped both by state and non-state actors."[1] This new order presents myriad challenges for international governance; among them is the challenge of meaningful inclusion for all stakeholders in the multilateral arena.

As political boundaries become more permeable, multiple social actors work on the national and international levels to negotiate regulations that affect many of the countries of the world. States come to the table to discuss what rules should be made and what policy outcomes are desirable. At the same time, a host of nonstate actors vie to make their voices heard. Within this context, the different levels of influence among nation-states and others involved in the negotiations of international treaties and policies have become readily apparent. Some actors are more successful than others in "winning" the negotiations and achieving their objectives. Others—often from developing nations—struggle to

1. Cardoso 2003.

participate on par with their more influential colleagues. At the same time, civil society actors have even fewer opportunities to take part in the policy-making process; as nonstate entities, their legal rights to participate in international decision-making are limited, and sometimes completely restricted. In other words, though both groups are widely perceived as critical for the creation and implementation of effective international policy for sustainable development, developing countries and representatives of civil society still face obstacles that impede their participation in the multilateral arena.

This paper develops a model for understanding the degree of political engagement of developing country and civil society actors in global governance for sustainable development. We use the term global governance in the broadest sense, as "a social function [which] . . . centers on the management of complex interdependencies among actors who are engaged in interactive decision-making."[2] This expansive notion of global governance acknowledges that it is not simply an interstate phenomenon, but rather, includes a variety of state *and* nonstate actors that work at a multiplicity of scales. This definition does not imply a hierarchical model of global governance; rather, it also encompasses "governance from below"[3] as demonstrated by social movements, protests against international institutions, and what scholars such as Swyngedouw[4] call "glocalization," where decision-making authority is simultaneously transferred up to international institutions and down to local actors. Throughout our discussion, we will refer to international policy-making processes and the multilateral arena as sites where global governance for sustainable development takes place.

Building on the growing literature that outlines the challenges to developing countries and civil society actors within the global arena, this paper presents a conceptual framework that explains how these actors are both enabled and prevented from participating effectively in the international policy-making process. It is divided into three sections. First, we put forward the notion of *disenfranchisement,* a term that has been developed to reflect the limitations of social actors when they try to engage with international regimes for sustainable development. Within this discussion, we review the relevant literature from the social sciences that addresses how developing countries and civil society actors are disenfranchised from the global arena. Because scholars within a number of the social sciences have discussed these issues in diverse ways, we bring together literatures that remain relatively fragmented. Second, we present a conceptual framework for understanding the factors that determine whether developing countries and civil society actors can successfully participate in and influence the international arena. In this section, the concept of disenfranchisement is disaggregated into its constituent dimensions. We outline the different characteristics for developing countries and civil society actors, and provide examples

2. Young 1997, 1.
3. See Appardurai 2001; and Brecher et al. 2002.
4. Swyngedouw 1997.

of potential ways that these dimensions might be operationalized. Third and finally, we outline a future research program grounded in our conceptual framework that can be used to conduct empirical research that explores the interrelations among these dimensions, and ultimately, explains why these actors are disenfranchised from the international policy-making arena.

Participation and Influence in an Increasingly Globalized World

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan[5] stated in his 2000 Millennium Report that the "UN and the world's people have much to gain from opening the Organization further to civil society," which he described as "a vital source of energy and expertise." Four years later, many UN processes, agencies and bodies continue to search for ways to increase civil society actors' levels of engagement. Thus, despite the growing efforts by the UN, progress toward fuller engagement with civil society often remains minimal. Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu,[6] for example, point out that civil society participation in international governance remains informal and limited. As a result, participation of civil society actors such as NGOs is often the result of accepted practices becoming codified into standard operating procedures.[7] In other words, many UN policies and initiatives have come up short, leaving some civil society actors, particularly those from developing countries, at the periphery of international policy-making.

In spite of these obstacles, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of civil society actors that have become active participants in discussions about international governance for sustainable development as well as the roles that they have assumed.[8] Particularly in the years following the 1992 United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil—or what has come to be known as the Earth Summit—civil society actors have come to serve a variety of functions in international environmental policy-making.[9]

This increased role for civil society in global governance for sustainable development has paralleled other significant shifts within the global arena. For example, the Millennium Development Goals, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2000, mark a renewed affirmation of the importance of equal participation in global governance in response to globalization: ". . . efforts [to create a shared future] must include policies and measures, at the global level, which correspond to the needs of developing countries and economies in transition and *are formulated and implemented with their effective participation.*"[10] Thus, the

5. United Nations Secretary General 2000, 69.
6. Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu 2002.
7. Oberthür et al. 2002.
8. For figures on civil society organization involvement with UN processes, see Clark et al. 1998; see also Smith 1997.
9. See, for example, Raustiala 1997; see also Wapner 1996; Fisher 1997; Smith 1997; Fox and Brown 1998; and La Vina 2003.
10. United Nations Secretary General A/RES/55/2, emphasis added.

Millennium Development Goals, which will guide (sustainable) development policies through 2015, have underscored not only the importance of attending to the needs of the developing world, as evidenced by the substance of the goals, but also the central role that developing countries must play in creating and implementing global policies. This call for developing country participation, together with the plurality of state and nonstate actors involved in global governance, demonstrates the need to consider both civil society and developing country actors together when theorizing disenfranchisement. If attempts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and other sustainable development policies are to be successful, policy reform must make efforts to engage successfully with both these groups of actors.

Yet, like civil society actors, developing countries continue to struggle to engage actively in these policy discussions. With their attempts to participate fully in discussions about policy-making for sustainable development, differences in opinion between the developed and the developing world have become apparent. One such example can be seen in the dissimilarity of their political agendas: though the "green" agenda of the North has tended to receive greater international attention,[11] developing countries are increasingly calling for more focus and action on the development-oriented, or "brown," agenda of the South.[12] Another such example can be seen in the proliferation of international and regional agreements about sustainable development, especially environmental agreements, which has taxed the capacity of developing nations in the multilateral arena.[13] The increased volume and complexity of these agreements has impeded the participation of developing countries in the negotiation process. In addition, the onerous task of implementing these agreements has further taxed developing countries' capacity.

Thus, despite the recognition that widespread participation—of both civil society actors and developing countries—is an essential prerequisite to promoting sustainable development, these groups remain limited in their ability to shape negotiations and the overall agenda. Many civil society actors and developing countries are left outside major discussions as international regimes are formed. In order to understand this phenomenon, the barriers that prevent the participation of these important social actors must be addressed.

As a first step to understanding the ways in which civil society actors and developing countries are limited in their involvement in the multilateral arena, it is important to understand the nature of their marginalization. For the sake of simplicity, we term this phenomenon, as it applies to these two groups, *disenfranchisement*. In our analysis, it is the condition of being marginalized, which is the result of a number of different important determinants. Specifically, disenfranchisement is defined as:

11. For example, Elliott 1999.
12. Agarwal and Narain 1991.
13. For example, Haas and Sundgren 1993; Bryner 1997; and Clark et al. 1998.

Being deprived of the capability to participate and to influence agenda-setting and decision-making in international regimes for sustainable development.[14]

As we continue this discussion, we will use this term to represent the notion that developing nations and civil society actors are not always able to participate effectively in policy-making when they interact in the multilateral arena. Although the concept of disenfranchisement can be applied to both developing countries and civil society actors, it is important to underscore that these groups are disenfranchised in different ways and at different levels.

In addition, it is important to note that, according to our definition of disenfranchisement, participation *and* influence are necessary for meaningful engagement in the global arena. However, our project is not to measure the ways that either delegates from developing nations or civil society actors exert influence in the policy-making arena.[15] Rather, we will present a framework for disaggregating the notion of disenfranchisement into its constituent dimensions, suggesting potential operationalizations of these dimensions that can be used to compare disenfranchisement across regimes and institutions. Thus, in the pages that follow, we describe the mechanics of disenfranchisement, outlining the reasons that these actors are disenfranchised. As a first step in this process, we will begin by reviewing the ways that developing countries and civil society actors are disenfranchised.

The Disenfranchisement of Developing Countries

As noted earlier, despite their legal standing, developing countries are still frequently unable to exercise the level of influence they wish, and to achieve their desired outcomes. Thus, to the extent that they are unable to participate in processes of agenda-setting and decision-making, developing country actors are disenfranchised.

In recent years, scholars have paid increasing attention to the ways that developing countries are disenfranchised from the multilateral process.[16] According to a strict interpretation of the rules and institutions of international policy-making, it is difficult to argue that diplomats from developing nations are marginalized from the process: as representatives of particular nation-states, they have the same legal standing as diplomats from developed countries. Effective participation in international policy-making, however, requires more than legal recognition. Other realities of the multilateral process create barriers to developing countries' participation.

14. This definition was developed by participants in both the US and Japanese roundtables in Summer 2003.
15. For useful discussions of methodologies for measuring influence, see Zürn 1998; see also Betsill and Corell 2001.
16. For example, Brown Weiss 1995; Najam 1995; Gupta 2000; Chasek 2001a; Chasek 2001b; and Najam et al. 2002.

These obstacles have been widely recognized and discussed.[17] Delegates from developing countries are often challenged by limited resources and personnel, and these constraints have been coupled with a tremendous growth in the number and scope of multilateral environmental agreements.[18] Moreover, the training and experience required for meaningful participation can also be particularly onerous for developing nations.[19] The handbook "On Behalf of My Delegation" was drafted precisely to address the frequent lack of training and information for developing countries' representatives; it provides background for Southern negotiators thrust into the complexity and unyielding pace of negotiations of both the climate change process and on multilateral negotiations more generally.[20] Just as the volume of agreements has increased, so has the volume of information that is needed to participate in negotiations.[21] Finally, even seemingly trivial details—such as the location of the meeting, the availability of interpreters, and the speed and quality of document reproduction—can affect delegates' ability to participate.[22] In short, the information and capacity requirements for successful engagement, in tandem with resource constraints, create significant obstacles to developing countries' participation in the multilateral process.

The Disenfranchisement of Civil Society

Understanding civil society disenfranchisement is more complex, for the rules governing their participation vary across regimes and civil society actors.[23] In many cases, their participation is often not sanctioned by the rules and institutions of international policy-making. As a result, civil society actors are frequently left no other options than to use ad-hoc or informal tactics to influence policy-making.[24]

Though nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have always been recognized by Article 71 of the UN charter, their presence has only been well established since the early 1990s.[25] Increases in the number of NGOs and other civil society actors involved in international governance has been significantly improved by the recent recognition of the importance of civil society involvement.[26] Consistent with this heightened attention, scholars have also begun to turn their focus to the role of the civil society sector in international policy-

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17. For example, Brown Weiss 1995.
18. Haas and Sundgren 1993.
19. Gupta 2000; and Chasek 2001a.
20. Gupta 2000.
21. Bruhl and Rittberger 2001.
22. Lang 1995.
23. For an overview of procedures governing civil society participation in UN processes, see Foster 2002.
24. See especially Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu 2002.
25. United Nations 1945.
26. For example, Annan 2000.

making.[27] In order to understand the ways these discussions have emerged, however, it is useful to begin with the broader debates about who comprises the civil society sector. Because the rules and practices that govern civil society participation are more complex and numerous than those of developing countries, we have allotted extra space to this discussion.

Most scholars who examine questions regarding this sector remain focused on defining and understanding the social sphere that has come to be known as civil society, rather than its interactions with the policy-making arena. Civil society was originally seen as a residual category: the space left over for social actors outside of the state and the market.[28] Much of the scholarly literature on civil society focuses on conceptualizing the evolving role of the citizen in society. To date, it continues to be seen as a social sphere that is separate "from both state and economy."[29] Perhaps in its most general form, civil society has come to be defined as involving a "self-organized citizenry."[30]

In contrast to a small number of scholars who have included businesses and the market sector in their definition of civil society,[31] we maintain the boundaries put forth in the majority of the recent work on the subject and exclude the market sector from our definition.[32] As a result, the so-called business NGOs and those organizations representing business groups and interests are not considered civil society actors. Given the differences between the market and civil society sectors' access to resources that affect the state—and, as a result, their power within the negotiations—this distinction is important to any discussion of disenfranchisement.

There are two particularly relevant characteristics of civil society actors that can create obstacles to their participation and influence: their perceived legitimacy and the organizational forms that they take. These characteristics are particularly important because they can create or remove obstacles to civil society actors' participation. Without what we identify as institutional legitimacy, civil society actors may encounter greater resistance, and corresponding difficulties in participation. Similarly, international processes tend to favor civil society actors with certain types of organizational forms. Generally, professionalized organizations are most likely to be granted access;[33] other less formalized civil society actors may face further challenges.

We turn first to the ways that a civil society actor gains legitimacy through

27. For example, Wapner 1996; Smith 1997, 2001; Fox and Brown 1998; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Betsill and Corell 2001; Corell and Betsill 2001; Tarrow 2001; Edwards and Gaventa 2001; Riemann 2002; Oberthür et al. 2002; and von Moltke 2002.
28. But see Gramsci 1971; Hegel 1991; see also Wapner 1996.
29. Cohen and Arato 1994, ix; see also Wuthnow 1991.
30. Emirbayer and Sheller 1999; for a complete discussion, see Cohen and Arato 1994; see also Hann and Dunn 1996.
31. For example, Gramsci 1971; Hegel 1991; and Wapner 1996.
32. For example, see Habermas 1989, 1998; Calhoun 1992; Cohen and Arato 1994; Emirbayer and Sheller 1999; see also Dewey 1927.
33. For a full discussion of professionalized social movement organizations, see McCarthy and Zald 1997.

its interactions with international institutions and multilateral regimes. By recognizing specific civil society actors and allowing them to participate as NGO observers, international institutions legitimize them. Because they frequently have a narrow conception of what types of civil society organizations can be considered legitimate, the legitimacy stemming from the institution itself—or the *top-down*—tends to limit the number of groups that are able to participate in the decision-making process. Thus, some civil society actors may enjoy greater access and, therefore, greater ability to participate and influence than others.

Second, different organizational forms can either create or remove obstacles to civil society participation.[34] Civil society actors assume many different organizational forms when they mobilize internationally or transnationally. Scholars have paid particular attention to organizational forms such as social movements,[35] transnational advocacy networks,[36] campaigns,[37] nongovernmental organizations,[38] and citizens who voice their political preferences through demonstrations and protest.[39] In other words, civil society actors are not simply the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that participate in international meetings; their organizational forms, like their opinions, are diverse. Despite their many organizational forms, the UN Charter only officially recognizes NGOs[40] and, as a result, accreditation procedures among UN bodies are targeted toward NGOs. In addition, these accreditation procedures can be particularly onerous for smaller groups, grassroots organizations and less formally constituted NGOs who may not be able to produce the requisite materials in order to be officially recognized. Thus, social movements, transnational advocacy networks, coalitions and other civil society actors face further obstacles to participation—because their organizational forms are not easily compatible with current mechanisms for civil society engagement.

It is also important to note that even though many civil society actors working on sustainable development issues can be considered transnational in their focus, the physical location of their headquarters is an important factor that determines their ability to participate and influence policy-making processes. This issue of location will be discussed in greater detail in the sections that follow.

Conceptualizing the Dimensions of Disenfranchisement

As outlined in the previous section, the disenfranchisement of developing countries and civil society actors from the multilateral process is a complex problem that extends beyond questions of legal or formal recognition. Disenfranchise-

34. Anheier and Themudo 2002.
35. For example, Smith et al. 1997.
36. For example, Keck and Sikkink 1998; and Zürn 1998.
37. For example, della Porta and Rucht 2002.
38. For example, Willetts 1996; Fox and Brown 1998; Boli and Thomas 1999; O'Brien et al. 2000; Betsill and Corell 2001; Corell and Betsill 2001; and Oberthür et al. 2002.
39. For example, Fisher et al. 2003; and Fisher 2004.
40. 1945, article 71.

ment, in fact, involves multiple, interrelated dimensions. To understand which factors promote the disenfranchisement of states and civil society actors, it is important to disaggregate the notion into its smaller, constitutive parts. Thus, in the sections that follow, we present what we identify as the three main dimensions of disenfranchisement as a means of explaining the limitations to these actors' ability to participate in and influence the agenda-setting and decision-making processes in international regimes for sustainable development. These three dimensions—endogenous resources, transnational connectivity and geopolitical status—explain the majority of the variation among levels of disenfranchisement experienced by civil society actors and developing countries within international regimes. Each of these dimensions will be addressed in turn.

Endogenous Resources

This dimension describes the resources that come from within the nation and/or civil society actor. It includes human resources, which involve the people, training, and knowledge needed to equip both civil society actors, and governments and their bureaucracies to participate in international policy-making. One critical aspect of human resources is the ability to communicate in English. Although there are six official UN languages, delegates and civil society representatives who are unable to communicate in English are often left out of the behind-the-scenes negotiating and lobbying that are crucial to the decision-making process.

A basic level of human resources is also needed to ensure participation in multilateral policy-making. Without enough delegates to attend contact groups, for example, a developing nation cannot adequately represent its position. Due to their lack of endogenous resources, some countries tend to work together, relying on delegates from other nations to represent their collective position. In some cases, this reliance on other countries takes the form of negotiating blocs.[41] Similarly, when the translators leave and meetings continue into the evening, at least one delegate must have sufficient command of English to present his or her delegation's views. To exercise influence, however, human resources must not only be in adequate supply, but also reach a certain level of capacity and experience. Delegates from developing countries, for example, must be present in adequate numbers and savvy enough to lobby effectively for their country's position. Ultimately, endogenous resources are often a matter of financial resources. Simply put, money is needed to educate, recruit and train government and civil society representatives; facilitate access to knowledge through the Internet and social networks; and fund travel to international negotiations.

Specific characteristics of the domestic political system can also be an im-

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41. It is important to note that, based on our definition, membership in a negotiating bloc is not an endogenous resource; rather, it can be used as a substitute, when endogenous resources are lacking. This issue is further addressed in our discussion of transnational connectivity.

portant endogenous resource: they may enable actors' participation or create barriers to it. In other words, a nation's political stability and its openness to dissent affects civil society actors and delegates from developing countries' ability to participate and influence international decision-making. For delegates from politically volatile nations, for example, negotiating multilateral agreements will likely be low on the list of domestic political priorities, and thus can be construed as a potential barrier to engagement. Similarly, civil society organizations (CSOs) that are based in politically unstable countries may not be permitted to organize and advocate, or their attempts to reach out to the international community may be discouraged by the government.[42] In other instances, government officials and civil society actors in politically unstable countries are likely to focus their attention on domestic issues, and therefore devote fewer resources to the global arena. Likewise, civil society actors and delegates coming from countries with autocratic political systems will be less likely to be included in participatory decision-making processes. Because of the deliberative process of environmental decision-making in the United Kingdom, for example, the domestic branch of the international nongovernmental organization (NGO) Friends of the Earth has become an influential actor in the climate change negotiations. Representatives from this organization have become part of the recent trend in the European Union where representatives from civil society are serving on national governments' negotiating teams.[43] As a result, these civil society actors have more ability to participate and influence than their counterparts in less participatory political systems.

Transnational Connectivity

Information is a key prerequisite for participation. On the international level, policy-making can often involve complex processes, with many governing and subsidiary bodies, and copious amounts of technical information about science and policy. This dimension explains the means through which disenfranchised actors obtain and circulate information that promotes engagement in international policy-making.

First, as has been alluded to above, there are many different types of information that may facilitate participation and influence. Basic information about the mechanics of a decision-making process is critical: when are the meetings held, and what is on the agenda? Equally important is the ability to follow the progress of a given international process. Civil society organizations and developing country delegates alike must be able to determine what decisions were taken at certain meetings, and the implications of such decisions. In the case of policy-making related to environmental and social problems, knowledge of the relevant science or social science is also important for participation; access to

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42. Fisher 1997, 51–57.
43. For example, Kanie 2003.

emerging regime-relevant research and/or consensus may figure prominently in an actor's ability to participate.

Many of these types of information have an important minimum baseline needed to ensure a basic level of engagement; in order to participate in the climate change negotiations, for example, delegates must have an understanding of the mechanics of the climate negotiations as well as of climate science. Exercising influence through the use of information is a more complex matter. Some scholars have suggested that influencing policy-making decisions is closely tied to persuading other actors to accept a specific set of scientific facts or logic.[44]

There are several avenues through which transnational connectivity can facilitate access to these various types of information. Through interactions with scientists, academics or policy-makers, developing country delegates and civil society actors may be able to obtain information related to a given regime. Membership in epistemic communities, such as the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change or the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, are examples of this type of transnational connectivity.[45] Through their membership in these communities, developing country representatives and civil society actors[46] may be able to obtain information related to a given regime including, *inter alia*, emerging regime-relevant research, new policy proposals and developments in related policy-making processes. However, membership is not the only way to benefit from the knowledge concentrated in epistemic communities; simply by accessing scientists and policy-makers from around the world, delegates from developing countries and civil society actors can find and efficiently distill complex, policy-relevant information that would otherwise be labor-intensive. Developing country representatives may also learn about policy issues and country positions or gain power through membership and involvement in negotiating blocs. In addition, they may also have membership in UN bodies, commissions, subsidiary bodies or other working bodies of a regime that facilitates access to information.

For civil society actors, transnational connectivity is critical for providing policy information, and information about other civil society activities surrounding specific issues. The Internet has been an important tool for organizing and mobilizing civil society actors.[47] This type of connectivity may also involve transnational advocacy networks that can bring about what Keck and Sikkink[48] call the "boomerang effect," where domestic civil society actors use their transnational connections to appeal to civil society actors and/or governments of other nations to pressure their country externally. These connections to broader political and scientific communities may serve as a critical means of gathering

44. See for example, Litfin 1994; and Jasanoff and Wynne 1998.
45. For a full discussion of epistemic communities, see Haas 1989, 1990.
46. In recent years, representatives from civil society organizations—such as think tanks—have become members of epistemic communities.
47. For example, Norris 2001.
48. Keck and Sikkink 1998.

knowledge, particularly when human capital or other endogenous resources are lacking.

Geopolitical Status

In contrast to endogenous resources and transnational connectivity, geopolitical status reflects the political realities that there are key actors in each international regime. Key actors may derive their power from money, military capability, strategic alliances, natural resources, or some combination thereof. It is our contention that both states and civil society actors experience this dimension in the same way; that is, because these sources of power are independent of institutional arrangements or regime-specific rules, both state and civil society actors can be endowed with them in similar ways.

Although some literature has pointed to an emerging global civil society,[49] as has been previously noted, we acknowledge that civil society organizations frequently gain influence from the country in which they are based. In the context of this dimension, civil society actors are not simply considered *global citizens.* Rather, to use Tarrow's expression, they are viewed as *rooted cosmopolitans,* who are "*rooted in specific national contexts, but who engage in regular activities that require their involvement in transnational networks of contacts and conflicts.*"[50] In other words, even though these civil society actors are connected transnationally, their geopolitical status—and the power associated with it—comes from their specific national context.

Turning once again to the case of the international NGO Friends of the Earth, not only does the British branch of this organization gain power from having representatives sit on national negotiating teams, it also acquires strength from its geopolitical status. In other words, because its international secretariat is based in the Netherlands, a wealthy member of the European Union whose government is one of the world leaders in implementing efforts to slow climate change, Friends of the Earth is more capable of participating in and influencing international regimes for sustainable development. Thus, the organization enjoys relative strength in the climate change regime in contrast to civil society organizations from other parts of the world.

The Friends of the Earth example illustrates the simplest way to influence the debate: through strategic alliances with wealthy and/or powerful countries. For developing nations, the Cancun Ministerial of the World Trade Organization in 2003 is an apt example of the influence of strategic alliances. At this meeting, the Group of 21, a negotiating bloc representing some of the world's largest and most powerful developing countries—such as China, India and Brazil—walked out in the middle of negotiations.[51] The Doha round, they ar-

49. For example, Lipschutz 1992; Wapner 1996; and Glasius et al. 2002.
50. Tarrow 2001b, 8, emphasis in original; see also Fisher et al. 2003.
51. Although membership or affiliation in a negotiating bloc is included in both the dimensions of transnational connectivity and geopolitical status, it serves a different purpose in each. In the

gued, was supposed to improve the plight of the developing world, and without substantial reduction in rich countries' agricultural subsidies, such a goal could not be reached. As a result of their actions, the negotiations collapsed. Though the utility of this outcome for the long-term economic well-being of developing countries can be debated, the Group of 21 effectively increased their geopolitical status by forming a strategic alliance.

Natural resources can also play an important role in determining geopolitical status. For example, in the lead up to the negotiations of a biosafety protocol, the United States was plainly opposed to such an agreement, worried that it would interfere with its biotechnology industry. Developing countries, which contain the majority of the world's biodiversity, however, were concerned about the potential risks of unregulated genetic engineering to their biodiversity. The ensuing debate pitted the political strength of the United States against many developing nations, who had in turn enlisted civil society actors and the scientific community to help support their claims. In the end, developing countries, motivated by their interest in protecting their biodiversity, and strengthened by an alliance among nations and civil society actors, won out and the Protocol entered into force on 11 September 2003. Because of its high concentrations of the world's biodiversity, many countries in the developing world were motivated to take action, and to assert their relative power in the discussions about biosafety.[52]

Geopolitical status can also be gained by proximity. In other words, sometimes countries and civil society actors gain power from their proximity to geopolitical leaders. The Czech Republic, for example, is a relatively poor country; in 2002, its Gross Domestic Product was only $500 US more per person than that of Mexico.[53] Because of its proximity to the European Union, however, it was permitted to apply for membership in the most recent round of expansion. In May 2004, the country became a full member of the Union and will soon adopt the Euro. Despite its relative poverty, it will, at the very least, gain bargaining strength from its membership, thus augmenting its geopolitical status.

Toward a Theory of Disenfranchisement

By exploring these dimensions of disenfranchisement, it is possible to disaggregate the factors that contribute to developing countries and civil society actors' limited participation and influence within the global arena. Together, these dimensions provide a framework for studying the ways in which developing

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former, membership in a negotiating bloc is viewed as a means to access information and to develop a policy position. In the latter, affiliation with a negotiating bloc is a means to attain greater influence in the global arena.

52. For a full description of this process, see Egziabher 2000.
53. Based on current exchange rates. Source: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/48/5/2371372.pdf, accessed 15 March 2004.

countries and civil society actors are disenfranchised from the international policy-making process. Table 1 presents the three dimensions of disenfranchisement with examples of types of operationalizations for each dimension for developing countries and civil society actors.[54] It is important to note two particular aspects of the dimensions. First, these dimensions are not linear in their relationship to disenfranchisement, but rather they are hypothesized to be threshold measures. In other words, once disenfranchised actors attain a certain amount of information or English capability, the benefits of these greater endowments will likely yield diminishing returns.[55] Second, these three dimensions, as has been previously noted, are interrelated. An adequate endowment of endogenous resources, for example, can potentially compensate for a lack of transnational connectivity or geopolitical status. By breaking the concept of disenfranchisement into its constituent parts, this framework contributes to a more nuanced understanding of what attributes promote or obstruct engagement in international policy-making.

In order to move forward, however, this framework must be tested empirically. Future research must explore its strengths and limitations for understanding the factors that promote disenfranchisement, as well as the interrelations among them. In particular, it should be tested in two ways. First, research must explore the ways that disenfranchisement varies across nation-states or civil society actors, paying particular attention to the interrelations among the dimensions. Second, there is a need to look more closely at the dynamics within developing states and civil society actors.

Variations across Developing Countries and Civil Society Actors

By comparing across different states and civil society actors, this research will provide necessary insights into the ways in which the dimensions are weighted against one another. Since the dimensions are identified as having threshold levels, future research must test the baseline levels required for engagement, and the ways in which these dimensions interrelate.

It is also important to note that other factors may affect the degree of a state or civil society actor's disenfranchisement. Although it is outside the scope of this paper to explore the structural realities of international institutions affecting disenfranchisement, we recognize that the norms and rules of each multilateral institution are different and have an effect on its levels of transparency and accessibility to civil society actors. Some institutions' rules, such as the Commission on Sustainable Development, permit many civil society actors to attend and even speak at negotiations. Other institutions, such as the World Trade Organization, have much more restrictive rules.[56] Any comparative analy-

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54. The examples are not meant to represent an exhaustive list.
55. We would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers of this paper for this suggestion.
56. Scholte 1999.

Table 1
Operationalizing the Dimensions of Disenfranchisement

Dimension	Civil Society Operationalization	Developing Country Operationalization
Endogenous Resources:	Human Resources	Human Resources
	Knowledge of English	Knowledge of English
	Financial Resources	Financial Resources
	Political Stability and Political System	Political Stability and Political System
Transnational Connectivity:	Membership in epistemic communities	Membership in epistemic communities
	Interactions with scientists, academics or policy-makers from other countries	Interactions with scientists, academics or policy-makers from other countries
	Affiliations with Transnational Advocacy Networks	Membership/Leadership in UN bodies, commissions, subsidiary bodies
		Membership in negotiating blocs
Geopolitical Status:	Alliance and proximity of organization's home country to colonial power/superpower	Alliance and proximity of country to colonial power/ superpower
	Natural Resources	Natural Resources

sis of the disenfranchisement of developing countries and/or civil society actors must control for the variation in these types of structural characteristics by holding the regime constant. In some cases, it may be necessary to study the characteristics of the regime as well as the countries and civil society actors involved.

Variations within Developing Countries and Civil Society Actors

At the same time, there is a clear need for greater attention to the factors influencing the dimensions and their interrelations within states and civil society actors. In other words, there is a need for research that explores the reasons why these actors are disenfranchised. This type of examination will offer insights into the external validity of particular operationalizations of the dimensions. Moreover, case studies will allow a deeper understanding of the internal

processes that explain their levels of disenfranchisement beyond the comparable quantitative indicators. Finally, this type of research will provide qualitative evidence to explain further the dimensions of disenfranchisement and the ways that they are interrelated, providing opportunities to develop and refine them.

This paper proposes a conceptual framework for understanding factors contributing to developing countries and civil society actors' disenfranchisement from the multilateral arena. By disaggregating this notion of disenfranchisement into three specific dimensions, we provide a framework for research into this extremely important aspect of international politics. Without full inclusion of those that are disenfranchised, progress toward sustainable development will be limited. In the Secretary General's report on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, he calls on "the entire United Nations family of Member States, international organizations . . . and civil society [to] join together, [for] success requires solidarity."[57] Any lesser level of inclusion will slow our collective progress toward a sustainable future.

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