

Slowing trade: Global activism against trade liberalization

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Abstract

The impact of global activism against trade liberalisation is examined in this article through an analysis of the initiatives of cross border civil society networks and with a particular attention to the failed 2003 WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancun. Key aspects considered here include the internal dynamics of mobilisation – which was characterised by a strong framing and widespread protest - and the political opportunities in WTO negotiations, which were marked by divisions within the North and resistance by a large group of Southern governments. In the failure of the WTO Millennium Round in Cancun and the loss of momentum of its liberalisation agenda, a significant role has been played by civil society activism and its ability to combine protest, well-prepared lobbying, an epistemic-like community able to influence public opinion, and the development of alliances with like-minded governments of the South.

Policy implications

- Developments since the 1999 Seattle WTO Ministerial have shown that civil society activism on trade has the ability to slow down trade liberalisation.
- Global activists should be aware that their campaigns may not be sufficient to prevent trade agreements but, as the events surrounding the 2003 WTO Ministerial in Cancun have shown, they can “tip” the outcome towards failure of the negotiations.
- The case of Cancun illustrates a key strategy for achieving that result: building strategic alliances with like-minded governments of the South.

In assessing civil society's ability to influence global policy, the case of trade is of particular interest. First, in the past three decades the liberalisation of trade rules has been a key element in the project of neoliberal globalisation, underpinning an unprecedented wave of economic integration with greater cross-border flows of goods, capitals and technologies. Second, trade liberalisation has been institutionalised with the creation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1995, at the end of GATT's Uruguay Round; this is a unique case of states agreeing to establish a powerful global institution - outside the UN system and with no relation to the ILO and other UN organisations - with supranational powers on trade disputes, thus accepting a transfer of sovereignty: in no other field has globalisation led to such a well-structured governance system.

Third, trade liberalisation entails a transfer of power from government policy to the operation of markets and to the strategies of large multinational firms; business interests have generally driven the opening up of trade through extensive lobbying and close connections between economic and political power.

These three elements characterise trade policy as an issue that is very far from the reach of civil society. The latter is rooted in national contexts, as opposed to the global interactions of trade; it generally works in informal ways outside formal inter-governmental institutions such as the WTO; it mainly operates in the sphere of social relations, as opposed to the market activities of firms shaping world trade. Therefore, it is no surprise that several studies have argued that civil society has no influence on trade policy, even when it is included in consultation processes (e.g. Dür and De Bièvre, 2007).

Yet, from 1999 to recent years, civil society groups have contested trade liberalisation at the global scale, with cross-border campaigns that have continued until the trade liberalisation agenda of the WTO, the US and Europe stalled. From the blockade of the 1999 WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle to the collapse of talks at the 2003 WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancun, to the current stalemate of the Doha Development Agenda, civil society activism has been highly visible. But can we identify the specific policy impact of social mobilisations, both in the short term – e.g. in particular WTO conferences - and in the long term dynamics of trade liberalisation?

This question – as argued in the introduction to this Forum - requires a more specific definition of the actors of civil society, of the dynamics of contestation, and of how outcomes can be assessed.

Civil society activism and networks

Studies of civil society activism often focus on particular aspects in isolation, such as the role of large, international, North-based NGOs; civil society interaction with states, business and IGOs in global governance; the grassroots dynamics of social movements acting at the national level; specific instances or events of global contestation. But the impact of civil society activism can be assessed only when these varieties of activity are considered together, with a longer-term perspective.¹

To a larger extent than in other fields, civil society organisations acting on trade issues have been forced to learn to operate at the transnational level, through cross-border coalitions, networks and alliances. They needed to integrate different actors and resources, including development and environmental NGOs with their long international experience, a wide range of national organizations that could be drawn to trade activism in a large number of countries, and specialized networks of experts with knowledge of the complex issues of world trade.

International networks² became the appropriate tool for such an integration. *Our World Is Not For Sale* (OWINFS) was the major global network on trade issues, including over 200 organizations from a large number of countries, providing expertise and coordinating actions. In Europe, the *Seattle to Brussels Network* (S2B) operated in connection to OWINFS. Oxfam, one of the largest NGOs active on trade and development, played a major role, alongside ActionAid.³ UK groups such as CAFOD, Christian Aid, World Development Movement, War on Want and New Economics Foundation were also active on trade mobilisations and in such networks.

In the South, major players were the *Third World Network* (TWN), based in Malaysia, which linked Southern organizations engaged on development issues and monitored WTO activities with its Geneva office; the *Africa Trade Network* launched by TWN Africa, the *Focus on the Global South*, based in Thailand; the *Southern and Eastern African Trade Information and*

Negotiations Institute (SEATINI). In the US a key role was played by the *International Forum on Globalization* (IFG) and the organisations linked to it.

Within such a wide range of civil society groups, different perspectives were present (see Del Felice, 2012), ranging from Oxfam's focus on "making trade fair" - with an emphasis on market access for the South and reduction of subsidies in the North - to outright opposition to greater world trade by more radical groups in the North and South. However, the construction of such extensive global civil society networks helped create a consensus on common platforms for the contestation of WTO conferences from Doha to Hong Kong. While differences within CSOs persisted, a united front of global activism could emerge.

Differences within civil society also concern their resources and power within global coalitions. Activists' networks, by their nature, are asymmetrical, with a few organisations playing a central role – providing knowledge and resources, shaping strategies - and many others that are simply participants in common activities. Within such networks, a long standing problem has been the imbalance between the role of civil society groups from the North, which are often stronger, richer and more influential, and those from the South, which usually have few resources and a weaker voice in common decisions. In the case of trade, the South-based organisations listed above emerged at an early stage with an influential role in shaping the strategy of mobilisation; their influence was amplified by the importance of their close links with several countries of the South that could be prodded to resist trade liberalisation agreements. While North-South differences in emphasis within trade justice activists remained, no 'colonisation' by Northern NGOs can be found in this case.⁴

The internal dynamics of mobilisation

As noted in the introduction to this Forum, it is important to distinguish factors that are "internal" and "external" to mobilisations. On the "internal" front, what could bring (and keep) together such highly heterogeneous civil society actors? There were elements of common identity that underpinned global mobilisations; trade liberalisation was seen as a central element of neoliberal globalisation and opposing such policies became an obvious priority for a wide range of social movements that emerged since the late 1990s on the issues of global justice.

Opponents of trade liberalisation pointed out “the unfair nature of ‘free’ trade among highly unequal trade partners; the unequal distribution of the benefits from trade between North and South; the questionable impact of trade liberalization on development; and the lack of democracy in the rules and procedures for WTO decision making” (Silva, 2012, p.115). These views led to framing the question of trade liberalisation in terms of a fight for global justice against unfair markets and the power of the North; for development, the environment and the rights of poorer countries; for democracy at the global scale.

Such a framing of trade liberalisation was very effective in stimulating activism and facilitated the coming together – across borders and within each country- of diverse actors, from trade unions to environmental groups. After the 1999 protest in Seattle, campaigns against trade liberalisation became better organized and financed, were extended to a large number of countries and adopted a network structure that allowed to effectively use and share limited resources.

Trade activism developed a rich repertoire of action. Protest events involved hundreds of thousands of people in several demonstrations – especially between 2000 and 2007 - including a global day of action against trade liberalisation. The lobbying of policy makers, both at the WTO and in national governments, became more organised, targeting governments of the South that shared a critical view of the effects of trade liberalisation on their development prospects. The search for an understanding of trade issues led to the emergence of a well connected ‘epistemic-like community’ including leading activists, trade experts and policy makers, linked together by a high level of expertise, reputation and commitment to bring knowledge to the policy process; they disseminated information and developed credible arguments that could be turned into alternative proposals for trade policy. The presence of such multiple forms of action has been a key strength of trade activism.⁵

Mobilisations have often focused on WTO Conferences; actions at these events represented an opportunity for reaching global public opinion and for contestation (from the outside) and lobbying (from the inside). The total number of NGOs participating to WTO conferences was 746 in Seattle (1999), 220 in Doha (2001), 834 in Cancun (2003), 999 in Kong Kong (2005), 426 in Geneva (2009) (Sjöstedt, 2012, p.98-100). The number of countries with NGO representatives within their delegations rose from 58 in Seattle to 81 in Cancun and 80 in Hong Kong. These numbers include also business-oriented NGOs, which were usually

present in delegations of Northern countries. However, the rising presence of civil society activists is reflected in the significant increase – from Seattle 1999 to Geneva 2009 – of the number of participating NGOs assigning priority to trade principles, development, societal issues, labour issues and human rights (ibid, p. 102).

External factors: political opportunities and activist strategies

Which were the “external” conditions that trade activism had to confront? In the case of trade, the structure of political opportunities (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001) appeared at first very unfavourable to civil society. Since the late 1980s, a growing pressure for trade liberalisation had mounted, with politicians, economists and business interests praising gains from trade, lower prices for consumers in the rich North and opportunities for development in the poor South. These arguments had more impact than the losses in production, jobs and social rights, the degradation of the environment and the rising inequality that could be associated to freer trade. This climate led to a major wave of trade liberalisation, in the North and the South of the world, which was associated to the creation of the WTO.⁶

At first, civil society activism opposing trade liberalisation was weak and fragmented, and could not stop the establishment of the WTO system. Then, in 1999, the (unexpectedly) large protest in Seattle gave global visibility and new legitimacy to opposition to trade liberalization, with the emergence of a global social movement. At the same time, important political opportunities opened up.

First, WTO talks moved from manufacturing and TRIPs to include agriculture and the “Singapore issues” – liberalisation of financial flows (and foreign direct investment), greater competition, transparency on procurement practices and reductions in the cost of trade. On these new issues the asymmetries between North and South were much greater and governments of the South started to object.

Second, on such a wider range of themes, divisions emerged between Europe, the US, Japan and other advanced countries. In order to obtain liberalisation by the South in new fields, they had to deal with more pressing requests for opening up markets and reduce subsidies in agriculture, a field where domestic producers maintained considerable lobbying power. The “North” no longer displayed a united front at trade negotiations.

Third, while the gains obtained by a number of developing countries – starting with China and India - from greater access to markets in the North had been highly visible in the case of manufacturing exports, very little gains could be expected from further liberalisation in other fields. Most smaller advanced countries found themselves in a similar position. Conversely, the economic and social costs of WTO agreements started to become visible, with blatant cases such as the lack of access to drugs by poor countries due to TRIPs rules (see Odell and Sell, 2006). A greater awareness of the environmental degradation associated to trade also emerged. In this new context, the pressure for trade liberalisation lost momentum.

Fourth, in the early 2000s the balance of global power started to change, with the rise of large emerging economies – Brazil, India, China, South Africa – that was later reflected in the shift from the G7/G8 to the G20. The previous model of the North pushing trade liberalisation as part of its neoliberal agenda was coming to an end.

The political opportunities that opened up for civil society activism were not straightforward, but they did create a new space for mobilisation and for alliances with countries of the South. The strategies of mobilisations evolved over time in parallel to political opportunities. At the Seattle Ministerial Conference in 1999, protest and confrontation were the only option available to activists – and those cards were played very effectively, contributing to stop the WTO Conference. In later WTO conferences, and particularly in Cancun, civil society could adopt multiple strategies, combining contestation with lobbying and alliance building with like-minded governments. The latter was particularly important because WTO arrangements grant substantial power to national delegations; the opposition of a single state, if it is able to withstand the pressure from other governments, can stop an agreement. Through a patient work of contacts with countries of the South, lobbying of delegations, use of the spaces of inclusion and consultation opening up in the WTO, civil society activists were able to develop alliances with a significant number of governments of the South.⁷

*The case of Cancun*⁸

The complexity of these efforts has been investigated by Silva (2008, 2012) with a focus on the interaction between global civil society networks and policy makers. After the collapse of trade talks in Seattle, the next WTO Ministerial Conference was held in Doha just after 11

September 2001, at the start of the US war in Afghanistan. In that context, civil society had limited space for mobilisation and countries of the South could not prevent the WTO conference from agreeing a final Declaration laying out plans for further trade liberalization that became known as the Doha Development Agenda⁹.

Two years later the WTO Ministerial Conference was held in Cancun, Mexico, and key negotiation themes were agriculture, market access for the South and the Singapore issues, with a special concern on foreign direct investment. The North – the US, the EU, Japan, Canada and South Korea, each with their own priorities - was pressing for further liberalisation but was unwilling to accept the South's requests over agriculture. The South, after having to agree on the North's agenda in Doha, created the Group of 90, a broad front that included 60 WTO member countries, as well as an additional 30 states from the ACP and LDC countries, who opposed negotiations on the Singapore issues in Cancun (Narlikar, 2003). Opposition became visible also in the North; in Europe some countries had little interest in the Singapore issues and the Green and Socialist groups in the European Parliament explicitly opposed to the launch of negotiations. WTO talks on foreign direct investment were seen by civil society in the North as an attempt to overcome the defeat suffered when the talks over the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) at the OECD had collapsed in the late 1990s due to opposition from France and strong social movement resistance. Moreover, a link was made between Singapore issues and GATS, the agreement to liberalise trade in services, which at the time was highly contested in Europe.

In Cancun, the question of foreign investment and the Singapore issues became a new theme of confrontation between North and South; at the same time, emerging powers of the South - China, India, Brazil and South Africa – were prepared to challenge the North on agricultural subsidies and market access.

With such favourable political opportunities, civil society organized a strong presence both in the streets of Cancun and inside the WTO Conference. Almost 2000 CSOs from 83 countries participated in the Cancun events; one fourth were African CSOs. Two major demonstrations – the marches of Farmers and Indigenous Peoples – had a participation of 10 to 15 thousand people. Alternatives for world trade were discussed in fifty forums, assemblies and teach-ins, involving more than 10,000 activists from more than 100 countries (Silva, 2012, p.127).

But in Cancun civil society managed to be present also inside the WTO Conference, with 200 CSOs officially accredited to the meeting. Civil society activists were included in national delegations, such as Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda¹⁰, obtaining access to confidential information on the progress of talks and to the media. In this position, they could hold delegations accountable for the policy positions they took, playing an effective ‘watchdog’ role that introduced elements of accountability and transparency in the negotiations.

While civil society groups are excluded from decision making at the WTO, their presence inside national delegations favoured an intense interaction with like-minded government officials; the competence and expertise of activists’ networks led to positions of governments of the South that often echoed the arguments of CSO briefings. An unprecedented alliance had emerged between civil society and some governments of the South.¹¹ According to Silva, “This alliance was crucial in creating a shared awareness of the decisive character of the Singapore issues. In the run-up to Cancún, official government documents referred to the contributions of CSOs, with ministers asking for consultancy activities and meetings with CSOs. On the other side, CSOs held forums and workshops in collaboration with institutional actors, advocated policies and provided technical analysis to governments. Not only did many of the positions held by the national governments resemble the conclusions of CSO briefings and declarations; there was also a genuine interplay and exchange of ideas between the two sides” (ibid. p.130).

The result was an unprecedented influence of CSOs on the trade policy debate and a major impact on the outcome of trade talks. The delegations of Kenya and Uganda (which included CSOs) were among the 30 countries that, in the last “green room” meeting, debated the draft agreement in Cancun; Kenya was the first delegation to walk away from the negotiation table (ActionAid International, 2004). Silva concludes that “the conference ended with neither an agreement nor a final declaration. The ‘post-mortem’ ascribed responsibility to both civil society and developing countries” (Silva, 2012, p.116).¹²

Assessing the outcome

Civil society’s success in contributing to stop a trade liberalisation agreement at the 2003 WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancun has to be understood as the result of several factors. On the one hand, the internal dynamics of mobilisation could rely on a strong

framing of the contestation of trade liberalisation; activism was supported by large and cohesive global networks, leading to the simultaneous presence of widespread protest, well prepared lobbying, an epistemic-like community influencing public opinion and policy makers. On the other hand, “external” factors favoured the opening up of political opportunities due to divisions within the North and the resistance of a large group of Southern governments to the pressure for liberalisation. Such political opportunities were seized by the ability of civil society to build an alliance with like-minded governments of the South, thus finding a way to influence the outcome of negotiations.¹³

Identifying causality in the outcome of complex events such a WTO Ministerial, with a great number of actors pursuing conflicting interests, is not straightforward. Summing up the evidence from this case, we can argue that global activism may not be *sufficient* to prevent a trade agreement being reached (though Seattle came close to that). But in Cancun global activism was probably *necessary* in order to support the opposition of countries of the South, strengthen their negotiating positions and build links to opponents of trade liberalisation in the North. In a WTO context marked by powerful interests of the North and a large but fragile front of developing countries, civil society activism could “tip” the outcome towards failure of the negotiations.

This assessment is similar to the one proposed by Odell and Sell (2006) on the confrontation about intellectual property and public health at the Doha 2001 WTO conference, where “a set of mostly weak states managed to gain significantly from a WTO negotiation despite the unfavorable power asymmetry they faced. They worked together as an explicit coalition (...). The southern governments worked in tandem with a public NGO campaign to raise popular awareness of their problems in the North and reframe the existing regime in a manner more favorable to their proposal” (p.110).

In subsequent WTO conferences, the same alignment of forces – North vs. South – were again present, but civil society mobilisations were much more limited. The 2005 WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong led to limited progress in the Doha Development Agenda, but the front of the countries of the South broke down under pressure from the North, after the latter made concessions on issues of interest to individual countries. A lack of civil society activism left developing countries more exposed to the pressure of North. However, by then the trade liberalisation agenda at the WTO had run out of steam. Most

actors – including governments and business interests in North - perceived clearly diminishing returns in the benefits expected from further trade openness in such disparate fields as agriculture, services and the Singapore issues, which resulted in less political capital invested in the search of a new agreement.

The Doha Development Agenda ended in stalemate as it faced continued resistance from domestic protectionist forces, a more vocal South and a growing skepticism on the benefits from freer trade in such areas. This was a major legacy of the long term mobilisation of civil society – the normative argument made by activism that further trade liberalisation does not benefit societies, North and South. With the 2008 global financial crisis and the ensuing slowing down of world trade, the question of further liberalisation agreements in the WTO framework was effectively buried.

The national and global dimensions

The complexity of the interactions between the national and transnational levels needs to be stressed. Some assessments of global activism (e.g. O'Brien et al. 2000) interpreted the collapse of the WTO conference in Seattle as the success of civil society protest directly targeting international governmental institutions, ‘sidelining’ national political processes. Other studies (Keck and Sikkink, 1998) showed how transnational mobilisations could have the ‘boomerang effect’ of strengthening civil society in the domestic arena. According to Silva, the WTO conference in Cancun signals a ‘return to the national’ where a decisive role can be played by a few national delegations acting in alliance with global networks: “CSOs sought to affect the transnational sphere represented by the WTO by relying on the power of states and on political relations developed at the national level” (Silva, 2012, p. 134).

Recently published studies on trade activism at the national level in France, the UK and Italy offer complementary evidence (see Utting, Pianta and Ellersiek, 2012). The French case study, which focuses on agricultural trade policy, found that civil society groups developed a framing of the issue that was critical of trade liberalisation and affected the domestic policy debate. This was the result of a strong epistemic community, centered on agricultural specialists in activist and professional organizations, with high mobility between civil society organizations and government offices. However, civil society failed to generate larger

mobilisation on this issue and eventually had little policy influence at the EU level, where trade policy is largely determined (Daviron and Voituriez, 2012).

The Italian case, which has been examined by Gerbaudo and Pianta (2012), emphasizes the importance of transnational links in the emergence of domestic activism. The lack of a unified coalition on trade issues has been a weakness of Italian mobilisations that had little success in affecting policies mainly decided at the European level. However, such campaigns spurred the growth of fair trade experiences. This outcome contrasts with the success of the Italian campaign on Third World debt, which had developed over the same period and ended with the successful introduction of debt relief legislation by the Italian Parliament. In both France and Italy, the delegation of trade policy authority to the European Union made mobilisation less effective in affecting policies through domestic political processes.

The impact of civil society activism

A recent collection of studies on how civil society activism affects policy (Utting, Pianta and Ellersiek, 2012) reached the following overall conclusions:

- Global issues matter for national activism, provided that “the issue at stake is framed as an important, urgent and feasible challenge, with a global relevance that resonates in national political cultures and public opinion, leading to a sustained mobilization” (Pianta, Ellersiek and Utting, 2012, p.303).
- National political cultures and policy regimes matter, and differ across countries, leading to strong diversities in the forms of activism;
- Activism for policy change is shaped by political opportunities, network links and strategies;
- Change includes short-term success and long-term influence on policy framing; change happens when strong, feasible demands find a political space and are supported by multiple actions at multiple levels;
- When policy changes are introduced, their outcomes and implementation often fall short of activist demands;
- Cycles of mobilization on particular issues are part of an evolving and sustained global justice activism; their impact on specific cases of contention should not be examined in isolation from a broader view of activism on global issues (ibid. pp.299-305).

These considerations can equally apply to the impact of activism at the global level, as in the case of challenges to the WTO. Particularly relevant here is the role of global civil society networks, the opening up of opportunities within the institutions of global governance, and the construction of alliances with like-minded governments.

In assessing the impact of activism, however, success or failure in the 'short term' - that is, within the life span of a mobilization - needs be considered alongside the influence that mobilizations may have on policies in the longer term, even after they have subsided. In the short term what matters is achieving a specific objective - stopping trade liberalisation agreements, as in Seattle and Cancun, or introducing a change in policy. In the longer term we find that elements of the framing of issues and of policy proposals developed by civil society can become accepted by policy makers, political forces and communities of experts. Typical cases include the arguments of environmental movements on resource depletion and climate change - now the subject of global agreements - or the proposal for taxing financial transactions - now in a directive of the European Union.

Taking a longer-term view in the case of trade, we can observe that most world countries have eventually joined the WTO, including Russia; the world economy has a generally liberalised trading system; major countries, from China to India, have based their rapid growth on manufacturing exports. But only modest liberalisation took place after the 2003 confrontation in Cancun, especially on the controversial Singapore issues. The momentum for trade liberalisation has disappeared; in the North the free trade agenda has been increasingly unable to obtain majorities in Parliaments and consensus from voters; twelve years after it was launched, the WTO Doha Development Agenda is in a stalemate.

Free-trade business and political interests, however, are not standing still. In the US and the EU they have taken the road of bilateral agreements, which often include norms on foreign direct investment, and which focus on the developing countries of greater economic relevance. And little civil society mobilisation has occurred in relation to such more limited policy actions.

Twenty years after the start of the wave of trade liberalisation, what assessment can we make? The wave has long subsided; its benefits have been lower than promised, and their distribution has been very uneven; global trade imbalances are at record levels, instability

risers, and many countries ended up with a weaker industrial base, greater foreign dependency and slower growth. Civil society critics of neoliberal globalisation were far-sighted in understanding the challenge and – to some extent - successful in slowing down trade liberalisation in fields such as services, foreign investment, and public procurement. Civil society activism, with its large international networks, showed that it can be an important player in the global scene, capable of large scale protest, skilful lobbying of institutions and complex alliances with like-minded governments. Civil society had a substantial role in bringing global trade liberalisation to a dead end.

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¹ See Pianta 2001, Pianta and Silva 2003, Della Porta 2007, 2009. The impact of activism in various fields is investigated, among others, in Giugni, McAdam and Tilly (1999), Keck and Sikkink (1998), O'Brien et al (2000), Alcalde (2009), della Porta and Parks (2013).

² On networks see Diani and McAdam (2003), Marchetti and Pianta (2012); details on the groups active on trade are in Silva (2012).

³ Oxfam's campaigns against the unfair nature of a WTO trade system "rigged against the poor" (Oxfam 2005) have been examined by Aaronson and Zimmerman (2006) who conclude that "Oxfam has had a remarkable impact in changing the negotiating agenda and actual WTO policies" (p.999). Berry and Gabay (2009) set Oxfam's strategies in the context of its "liberal-cosmopolitan" vision. ActionAid's views and activities are summarised in ActionAid (2010).

⁴ This is the case in an increasing number of fields; in agricultural issues the South-based network *Via Campesina* has long played a leading global role.

⁵ An overview of mobilisations on trade issues is provided in Silva (2008, 2012), Gerbaudo and Pianta (2012), della Porta (2007). The role of 'epistemic-like communities' is emphasised by Silva in the case of trade and by Alcalde (2009) in the case of arms negotiations. The role of civil society at the domestic level in shaping, governments' negotiating positions at the WTO has been investigated empirically by Zahrt (2008), who found that in advanced countries the constituencies with the highest influence are import-competing groups, export-oriented groups, national parliaments and civil society organizations, in this order. In developing countries the ranking is similar, with Ministries and agencies exerting more influence than civil society (p.401).

⁶ The rise of trade liberalisation policies was not unchallenged within the North, with requests for protection emerging from industries and groups threatened by the rise of imports. The creation of the WTO marked a reduction in the power of domestic protectionist forces in the North, as shown in the US case by Destler (2005).

⁷ Walden Bello, a leading figure in OWINFS, argued that a key aim of civil society in Cancun was "to assist developing country delegations in Geneva to master the WTO process and formulate effective strategies to block the emergence of consensus on the areas prioritized by the trading powers" (Bello 2003).

⁸ This section draws extensively from Silva (2012).

⁹ Narlikar and Wilkinson (2004, p.450) point out the ‘democratic deficit’ in WTO procedures that forced countries of the South to accept the Doha Declaration.

¹⁰ The Uganda delegation in Cancun included, besides government officials, three civil society representatives from ActionAid, two from SEATINI, one from Food Rights Alliance, one from a Women network, one from a cooperative, as well as four Parliamentarians (of the Uganda Parliament and East Africa Legislative Assembly), one delegate from the Chamber of Commerce, one from the Private Sector Foundation, one from Consumer protection (http://www.chamber.org.hk/memberarea/chamber_view/WTO_min_attd_Rev2.pdf).

¹¹ Thabo Mbeki, the South African president, in the days before Cancun emphasised in a speech the interest of developing countries in building links with civil society groups in order to obtain a more favourable outcome at the Conference. (Silva, 2012, p.130).

¹² Narlikar and Wilkinson (2004) focus on the relationships in Cancun between North and South governments and argue that the assertiveness of the group of emerging countries within the WTO was the result of “institutional inadequacies, substantive imbalances and general feelings of embattlement” (p. 457).

¹³ A further lesson from Cancun, according to Silva (2012), is the possibility that change in international relations may emerge through determined coalitions between less powerful states, rather than from changing the preferences of the most powerful states (as ‘realist’ international relations would argue). A discussion on the ‘statecentric’ and ‘polycentric’ perspectives on global policy is in Koenig Archibugi (2010). Sjöstedt (2012) has argued that the overall impact on WTO negotiations of the increased participation of NGOs is linked to the emphasis they put on “new trade issues such as environmental protection and societal issues”; this may decrease in the short term negotiation effectiveness due to the complexities of the new issues; however, in the longer term they have to be integrated in the WTO regime and NGOs “can contribute to improved negotiation effectiveness in WTO” (p.111).