

Wars of Words

**An explication of the complex interface between
Transnational Advocacy Networks
and the contemporary international system**

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Abstract

Transnational advocacy networks (TANs) are a rapidly proliferating phenomenon in international contentious politics. Widely known for waging headline-grabbing wars of words, TANs remain under-theorised on important levels of analysis. Unsurprisingly, they have been termed 'elusive' in the political literature. Typically portrayed as vital service-providing agencies that by-pass official controls to relay civil society concerns to the world's media and international policy-makers, TANs are commonly assumed to be the vociferous, Internet-enabled, offspring of traditional NGOs and, thus, heirs to the reputational capital of NGOs. However, despite this respected provenance, it is evident that TANs frequently fail to achieve their goals.

Knowledge of why some TAN strategies succeed while others fail is contested and inconclusive. This empirical thesis attempts to build on the international political literature by showing why the emerging NGO typology of TANs cannot be explained without paying attention to the systemic complexity of their environment and the essentially communicative functioning of these globe-spanning advocacy cooperatives. It seeks to demonstrate also the analytical value of applying complex realism in IR praxis. Hence, the thesis explicates a real-world conundrum: What is the place and function of transnational advocacy networks in the contemporary international system and how effective are they in achieving their aims?

To identify macro-structural conditions and indicators of relationship quality — primarily involving state and non-state elements in the context of the United Nations — the thesis study reclaimed macro-sociological perspective as a first stage, 'top-down' approach to this complex, multi-dimensional problem space. The resultant data and patterns were then tested by way of a second-stage, micro-sociological, 'bottom-up', case study exploration of the UN's interface with three iconic TANs — Greenpeace, Oxfam and Human Rights Watch. By conceptualising these relationships as intersections between systemic elements constituted on different social levels and scales of complexity, the scalable methodology enabled the study to transcend the micro-macro problems inherent in the primary research question.

The results indicate that TANs *are* a distinctive typology of NGO that the international system is struggling to evaluate and accommodate within existing arrangements for NGO engagement. Unexpectedly, the study found plausible indications that the barriers many TANs encounter are endogenously produced. The results challenge prevailing assumptions about the place and function of grassroots diplomacy in the international arena; the ability of communications strategies to remedy global problems; and the reality and limitations of 'people power'. By highlighting under-exposed features of the contemporary international relational landscape, the thesis argues, we might better determine whether many contemporary TANs are, in fact, evolving as the best-suited champions for the urgent, political quests they adopt.

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Note on spelling

This thesis is written using standard English spelling. However, quotations, titles and proper nouns using alternative spellings are included in their original form. For example, discrepancies between the spelling of globalisation/globalization and organisation/organization, are acknowledged.

Abbreviations

CEO	Chief Executive Officer or Executive Director
CSO	civil society organisation
DESA	[UN] Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ECOSOC	[UN] Economic and Social Council
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
GCS	global civil society
GI	Greenpeace International
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IGO	inter-governmental organisation, or international governmental organisation
ILO	International Labour Union
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
IR	International Relations as an academic discipline
NGLS	[UN] Non-Governmental Liaison Service
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NIEO	New International Economic Order
NWICO	New World Information and Communication Order
OCHA	[UN] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OI	Oxfam International
PRQ	primary research question
SMO	social movement organisation
TAN	transnational advocacy network
TNGO	Transnational non-governmental organisation
UN	United Nations Organisation
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICPOLOS	United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNISDR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organization

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Chapter 1

1. Introduction

I have often reflected that the causes of the successes or failures of men depend upon their manner of suiting their conduct to the times.

Niccoli Machiavelli (1513)

This thesis attempts to shed greater light on the relationship between the contemporary international system and a rapidly proliferating social phenomenon in world politics that is widely referred to in the literature as ‘transnational advocacy networks’ (TANs)¹. The thesis argues that the need for analytical clarity of this interface is both important and timely because TANs, as recently emerging and increasingly spotlighted political protagonists — whose clamorous advocacy model defines them — are a variant form of the traditional NGO model that the international system is struggling to accommodate within the long-standing institutional arrangements for engaging with NGOs. Moreover, the thesis attempts to show that TANs constitute a contemporary paradox, being both widely researched by modern political scholars and yet misjudged and under-scrutinised in many aspects of their activity². They have been notably termed ‘elusive’ in the core literature on contentious international politics³.

Furthermore, an initial impression on accessing this complex interface via the literature, was that objective macroscopic overviews of the international

¹ As addressed in Chapter 2, the principal paradigm for this discussion is political sociology, in general, particularly aspects relating to contentious international politics.

² See, for example, Minkoff’s discussion of the advantages of analysing social movements at the macro-organisational level of industries, families, or sectors (2005:260-261).

³ The ‘elusive’ tag for TANs is discussed further in Chapter 2.

penetrations and impacts of this burgeoning ‘forest’, in which thousands of TANs are currently embedded⁴, are often obscured by an overabundance of micro-situational descriptions of the individual trees. Indeed, Klandermans, Staggenborg and Tarrow (2002:339) argue that the advent of the ‘transnational’ social movement — ‘these new global phenomena’ — presents unprecedented challenges for analysing expanding scope conditions that may not fit within the canon of existing research approaches. Additionally, Minkoff asserts that the organisational analysis of social movements, presumably including TANs, remains relatively underdeveloped both theoretically and methodologically (2002:260). This opinion is shared by Klandermans and Staggenborg, 2002:xiv. It is shown in the following chapters that even though TANs and TAN-type organisations are constantly referred to in the political literature, the defining parameters of TANs remain contested and blurry — a situation that this thesis aims to address, by offering an original, eight-point, referent template specifying a set of essential characteristics for identifying contemporary TANs and evaluating their importance. This TAN model is presented at *Figure 6. 2*.

Rationale and significance of the thesis

The rationale for this study was found in the literature on contentious international politics and in mainstream mass media and civil society portrayals of the high levels of confusion, adversarial posturing and frustration that, as will be seen in this thesis, characterise some relationships between transnational civil society activist organisations and elements of the international system. In particular, this interface is recognised globally as the ideological battlefield on which international actors face each other over the growing range of intractable global challenges, the so-called ‘wicked problems’⁵, such as poverty, climate change, the negative effects of globalisation, environmental degradation and human rights abuses. In the last two decades, many influential scholars have expressed serious concerns about the heightened levels of perceived risk and anxiety in the modern world and, importantly, the ‘manufactured’ aspect of much of that risk (*e.g.* Beck, 1992, 2007:115, 2009; Adams and van Loon,

⁴ See *Number of Organisations in the Yearbook of International Organizations* at *Figure 6.1*.

⁵ Contemporary global challenges, sometimes alternatively termed ‘wicked problems’ are addressed in Chapters 4 and 6. ‘The term ‘wicked problem’ was first coined by Horst Rittel in 1972 (cited by Ritchey, 2011: 1,3; and AustGov, 2007:3, 9-10) to refer to a category of social issues that are: seriously devious and contested in regard to their definition and possible solution; cannot be (meaningfully) quantified; contain irreducible uncertainties; are strongly stakeholder-dependent; are notoriously susceptible to unintended consequences; and are politically highly sensitive (*ibid*).

2000:2-3; Giddens, 1991a, 1991b, 1999, 2002; Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994; Lash, 2000:47-61)⁶. In a roughly coterminous period, TANs have emerged: their interventions and strategies in the international system typically aimed at exposing these risks to humanity — especially via the mass media — capturing attention for their agendas, and pressing for changes in the policies and behaviours of states and international organisations (Keck and Sikkink, 1998:2).

But, the contentious debates have not been one-sided in favour of TANs, although that impression has become widely entrenched in some parts of the world, not least due to media reports that inform us about things that go badly wrong and threaten us⁷ (Kuran and Sunstein, 1999; Kahneman, 2011:140-142; 300-303). On the other hand, a weight of scientific evidence has been advanced in recent years that counter-argues that the world has never been so safe for human life and is, in fact, becoming safer (*Human Security Report*, 2013; Pinker, 2011; Kuper, 2014; Ridley, 2014).

Meanwhile, authoritative voices have warned that the environmental campaign has stalled and global campaigns waged by thousands of transnational advocacy networks appear to be full of sound and fury while barely scratching the surface of the issues they were set up to champion (Secrett, 2011a, 2011b; Weyler, 2012; GI Naidoo, 2011; GI Annual Report 2012:4⁸; Helm, 2012:ix; 1-10; *The Guardian*, 2011e; Howell, 2013). As Keck and Sikkink observed in their seminal work on TANs, these networks ‘frequently fail to achieve their goals’ (1998:x).

What is to be done? If today’s protest strategies are largely failing to effect significant change within the international policy-making arena, then it seems apposite to examine the international contexts and roles in which civil society

⁶ A more detailed assessment of this situation is provided in the chapters on the United Nations (Chapter 5) and its relationships with nongovernment organisations (Chapter 6).

⁷ See also Chapter 6. Kahneman *et al* (2011:140-141) discuss these inherent human behavioural responses to negative news and threats in terms of ‘negativity dominance’, ‘loss aversion’ and ‘availability cascades’. In their identification of ‘availability cascades’, Kuran and Sunstein (1999) discuss the seeding of public fears and panic by ‘availability entrepreneurs’ — activists who manipulate the content of the public discourse in order to trigger availability cascades likely to advance their agendas.

⁸ The Executive Director of Greenpeace International, Dr. Kumi Naidoo, has commented on how often he has said, in speeches and interviews: ‘We are winning the battles, but losing the planet’. In his view, the world is facing a ‘deepening environmental crisis’ that efforts to date have not adequately addressed (GI Annual Report, 2012:4).

advocates are engaged. In this way, this thesis argues, we might better determine whether contemporary TANs are, in fact, evolving as the best suited champions for the urgent, political quests they take on. Thus, the thesis seeks to examine the complaints from TANs that their issues go unheeded by world leaders and governments, and compares their often simplistic and adversarial argumentation with the interventions of research-based organisations, such as think tanks, which lawmakers and government officials have long relied on to provide independent policy analysis and scholarship (Columbia U, 2009; Keohane and Nye, 1988:89; Stone and Denham, 2004:13; Willetts, 2011:62; McGann and Sabatini, 2011:69-70).

Clearly, there was, and is, an urgent need for more serious analytical work to produce better understanding of the salient realities conditioning these types of international socio-political engagement. At a basic micro-sociological level, involving small groups and social units within the larger social system, recent scholarship has suggested that social practices are always ‘products-in-process’ and hence are experienced as undergoing constant change⁹. Yet international relations are not confined to the micro level of human interaction but are particularly concerned with the macro-structural patterning of human activity. Indeed, the discipline of international relations deals almost exclusively with macro level issues, such as the great issues of continuity and change (Wight, 2013:86). Thus, throughout the course of this research project there was a constant tension between competing demands to (a) pay attention to ‘breaking news’ on day-to-day activism and (b) the satisfying logic and results from considering the *longue durée* of institutions and change (Braudel, 1958; Armitage and Guldi, 2014; Giddens, 1984:60-61, 199-200¹⁰). The solution to this dilemma was to do both, by considering all sources and noting distinctions between the accounts of reality they provided. This situation prompted the primary research question (PRQ) of the project, which sought to better understand:

What is the place and function of transnational advocacy networks in the contemporary international system and how effective are they in achieving their aims?

⁹ This assertion is advanced in concurrence with Wight (2013:86).

¹⁰ Giddens (1984: 90-92) also draws attention to the tensions caused by differences in ‘the knowledge that actors have of the societies which they are members (and others of which they are not); and to tensions in the debates over whether methodological individualism, or structural sociology, is the most suitable means of explaining social categories (*ibid*:220). Giddens concludes that these epistemological perspectives are not alternatives, ‘such that to reject one is to accept the other’.

Theoretical framework—Adopting a multi-lensed analytical approach

Following a process of theory development, by way of a literature review based on this question and taking initial soundings of the research terrain, a second objective was adopted for this project: *i.e.* to apply new and better tools to investigate the characteristically strained international political relationships involving TANs, without becoming overwhelmed by the dilemmas associated with specific political and normative debates. It was apparent that such an approach would need a conceptual framework that was able to grasp the totality of the object under study (*i.e.* the relational interface between the international system and transnational advocacy networks), and acknowledge the complexity of the international environment and the critical communicative aspects of the interface between the elements. Hence, the study commenced with the ontology¹¹. I emphasise here that the ensuing epistemological and methodological choices were made in order to explore the primary research question of this study and no claims are made regarding the applicability of these frameworks to other investigations.

Drawing firstly on complex realist philosophy to access an ontological vista of fitness landscapes and complex systemic phenomena, the qualitative data set was assembled and tested using a controlled combination of theoretical insights from complexity science and the sociological fields of politics and communications. The principal reason for applying additional communications lenses to subject matter that is normally regarded as lodged squarely and adequately within the Politics/International Relations paradigm, arose from my initial screening of the data, which led to the development of the following theories concerning the functioning and effectiveness of TANs, namely: (i) that the advocacy characteristics of recently emerging transnational 'advocacy' networks differentiate them markedly from other typologies of NGO operating in the international arena; and (ii) these important, differentiating, properties of contemporary TANs notably arise from the *advocacy* function of their organisations, are typically overlooked by political theorists and, therefore, are not problematised in Politics thinking and debates.

¹¹ This step is advised by Wight (2006:2-4).

Indeed, the study found that it was often a disturbing feature of the political discourses that when political theoretical perspectives alone had been applied to interpreting activism, government officials and international institutions, they appeared to have nothing useful to say about relationship qualities without throwing up some caricatures and superficial assumptions¹². As an alternative, I venture, the communications lens is politically neutral, yet it provides a valuable tool for examining reality below the surface contention of actual political issues, in much the same way as a glass-bottomed viewing boat permits a clearer focus on conditions underwater without the distraction of surface chop¹³.

I should also emphasise here, however, that in considering limitations in the Politics/IR literature concerning TANs, political sociology as a discipline appears to have been taken by surprise by the virtual revolution in information communications technologies and their widespread deployment in political advocacy strategising. Although it is evident that the American academy, in particular, is rapidly gaining ground in researching the political-advocacy-communications domain (*vide* Castells, Negroponte, Morozov, Hindman, Dean, Tufekci, Carr, Shirky, *et al*¹⁴), I consider that in trying to paper over the theoretical cracks when called on to comment on political relationships, communicative technologies, practices and behaviours, the Politics/IR literature has a tendency to resort to over-simplified assumptions about 'human nature' that are subjective and stereotypical. On the other hand, the Communications discipline is theoretically rich and eminently fit to make qualitative analyses and comment on these matters. In this regard, the thesis attempts to draw these two fields together to create better understandings of political relationships.

It also appeared that there was a need to reclaim and reinvigorate three erstwhile mainstays of international sociological research practice, namely: (1) macroscopic perspectives and analysis of IR environments; (2) the role of deep social structural analysis in investigating international political subject matter and the situated and

¹² See, for example, derisory references in Chapters 6 and 7 to international negotiators, represented as a homogeneous uncaring bloc, 'sleepwalking' as the people of the world race towards an apocalyptic future.

¹³ This is in accordance with Durkheim (Giddens, 1977:263; 1984:229), who 'regarded political revolution as agitation on the surface of social life, incapable of giving rise to major transformations of society because the evolution of basic social institutions is always necessarily slow' (Giddens, 1984:*ibid*).

¹⁴ See texts by these authors in the Bibliography.

often unconscious motivations of agents¹⁵; and (3) reintroducing Thucydides to the debates on strained relationships between elements of the international system, especially following the entry of new typologies of non-state actors to this complex environment. As Nye has noted: 'The barriers to entry into world politics have been lowered, and non-state actors now crowd the stage' (2011:xvi).

Therefore, this thesis attempts to show how these three recently neglected lenses in political sociological study are invaluable in any serious attempt to account for the disparate and frequently frustrated fortunes of civil society agents involved in trying to influence contemporary international decision-makers and, thus, change global policy.

Contributions to knowledge

This thesis proposes to make three principal contributions to original knowledge. Firstly, it aims to deepen and broaden our understanding of an important, emerging political phenomenon, namely, transnational advocacy networks, in the global politics paradigm. Secondly, it tests my premise that a complex realist philosophical and methodological approach shows us new, theoretically rich, and cogent ways to understand the relationships between state and non-state actors in the contemporary international system and better explain them in analytically useful ways. And thirdly, by applying substantive theoretical lenses from the Communications discipline to test whether TANs are different to other NGOs, and why this matters in any attempt to evaluate their inter-relationships, contributions to international system purposes (thus effecting their 'place' and 'function'), and effectiveness in achieving their stated aims¹⁶. While the NGO advocacy community has long targeted media as a key conduit for publicising their positions on issues, I attempt to examine whether more research is needed in understanding the

¹⁵ This is in accordance with Giddens's opinion that '[T]he identification of structural principles, and their conjunctures in intersocietal systems, represents the most comprehensive level of institutional analysis' (1984: 185-186). By 'structure', Giddens is referring to 'the rules and resources recursively implicated in social reproduction [...]' (*ibid*: xxxi). Moreover, Giddens believes 'practical consciousness' must be incorporated into research. This would involve ways of discovering the knowledge people have about their motivations/actions, that is not limited by what they can say about them (*ibid*:xxx). Moreover, the span of time-space distanciation is relevant here. Giddens opines (*ibid*: 171 181) that, in general, the greater the time-space distanciation of social systems, the more their institutions' bite into space and time', the more resistant they are to manipulation or change by any agent.

¹⁶ Wight (2013:92) is among those who have identified a knowledge gap in this area and specified a need for greater analytical attention to be focused not only on presenting data on the recent increase in global communication but on explaining its 'meaning' and 'impact' on social relations.

effectiveness of NGO communications strategies in influencing the information sources and media habits of international decision-makers¹⁷.

Operationalising the primary research question

The thesis understands that the primary research question is chiefly concerned with investigating *relationships* and is complex and multidimensional — its implications having relevance for different strata of complex social reality, occurring not least on different timescales¹⁸ and suffused with political power inequalities, which I suggest should not be conflated, or ignored, in research investigations. The implications this question held for exploring varying scales of social complexity at different levels of analysis — challengingly known as the ‘micro-macro problematique’ and arguably the central intellectual problem in sociology¹⁹ — clearly indicated the need for pluralistic epistemological and methodological approaches, as well as a macro-sociological approach to the international system, notwithstanding the validation risks associated with higher levels of generality (van Meter, 1990:180-181).

These research challenges were addressed by the development of a research design involving both ‘top-down’ macroscopic analysis of the macro-sociological features of the interface (observed minimally in aggregated discourses, but mainly in behavioural patterns that reflected underlying and enduring social structures; relationship qualities, such as trust; powers, tendencies and trends), and ‘bottom-up’ case study analysis of three iconic TANs: Greenpeace International, Oxfam International and Human Rights Watch (Chapters 7, 8, 9).

This, first stage, ‘ascending’ methodological approach follows Byne’s advice on surveying the social world by investigating the possible sources of social change at macro, meso and micro levels and assembling knowledge as a basis for further

¹⁷ See Chapter 5 and the Columbia University study on media habits within the UN context (Columbia U, 2009).

¹⁸ This refers to increased understandings in recent complexity-based scholarship that social and political change move at a much slower pace than economic and technological change, and that considerable divergence can occur between the pace of economic and technological transitions and the more glacial pace of cultural and social transitions (Root, 2013:1, 36, Buzan and Little, 2000:381; see also Wight, 2013:86). Earlier work by Giddens (1984:xxiv-xxvi, 171, 181), especially in regard to ‘time-space distanciation’, appears to be commensurable with this thinking. Giddens refers to these varying effects in more general terms, focusing the ‘positioning’, of an individual’s body in a multiplicity of social relationships (co-presences), scales and contexts that occur in time-space.

¹⁹ See Watts (2011:61-67).

interventions (2011:61). The strategy was guided also by Collins's assertion that in order to obtain an accurate picture of social reality it is essential to test macro-sociological data within the context of its micro-situational grounding — since, Collin's maintains, 'nothing has reality unless it is manifested in a situation somewhere'. Moreover, Collins advises that aggregated patterns of macro-data must be found to hold across micro-situations, or networks of repeated connections from one micro-situation to another (2004:259-260). Therefore, this research procedure was adopted to ensure the consistent validity of the developing 'big' picture of the 'place', 'function' and effectiveness of TANs in the international system.

Further theoretical underpinnings of the thesis

As a contextual starting point, the thesis upheld the clear evidence²⁰ that international NGOs (INGOs), which by definition include TANs, have proliferated rapidly and become an increasingly assertive presence in the international political arena in the millennial²¹ and post-millennial years. As a consequence, TANs are widely considered to be, collectively, an important and well-established social phenomenon, international political fixture and power base (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Tarrow, 2005; Castells, 2004b, 2007, 2012; Kellner 2009). But alternatively, there are compelling reasons also to question the substance for some of these impressions since so much of the commentary and assumption concerning TANs is based on what TANs, as dedicated advocacy-promoting cooperatives, strategically publicise competitively, and in vast quantities about themselves²². And, furthermore, the technological tools and techniques of modern communications have only recently provided the means for TANs to evolve as a distinctive model that could do this— *i.e.* transnationally advertise their activities, attract vital sustaining resources and regularly cite concrete outcomes to underscore the effectiveness of their strategic model. As will be demonstrated in the case studies, individual TANs are acutely aware that none of these components in their operating model could exist for long without the others. However, considering (a) the comparatively more structurally constrained spatial horizons and temporal

²⁰ See the graphic depiction of international organisations at *Figure 6.1*.

²¹ The years associated, approximately, with the 'millennials' — the generation born between 1980 and the millennium (OED, 2014). See Chapter 6 for a detailed discussion of TAN proliferation.

²² This assertion is discussed in Chapter 6. It is axiomatic that advocacy-prioritising organisations typically do not emphasise in public their strategy shortcomings and failures.

differences between perceptions of effects at micro-organisational levels of complex, open systems (*vide* Wight, *ibid*) and (b) actual, long-term, political changes, perceived effects and outcomes at macro-organisational levels of a shared complex system, claimed knowledge of concluded outcomes — particularly from short-term interventions — appear to be both unsound and unlikely. In other words (as discussed in Chapter 3), outcomes in complex systems are always ‘outcomes-in-process’ and credit-claiming is precarious (Geyer and Pickering, 2011; Wight, 2013; Archer, 2013; Holland, 2006).

These theories led to the assumptions that due to their imperative to demonstrate potency and continuous effectiveness both within and without their organisations, TANs typically claim instrumental victories and successes that, in fact, cannot be validated due to the ‘credit assignment problem’ identified by complexity scholars²³ (Holland, 2006:2; Watts, 2011:118-122). Therefore, I argue that depending on the fitness of their constituent properties, some TANs are able to assist grassroots causes within international debates more effectively than others. If aim-achievement is difficult to prove and many TANs admit their frustration and failure, then, it is reasonable to assume that under-achieving TANs should rethink their strategies²⁴. But, as will be examined, predetermined ideological commitment can be a significant constraint to pragmatic re-strategising for some TANs.

However, although TANs as a genus are challenging to define and are commonly referred to by a variety of bland labels for civil society organisations²⁵, they are widely assumed also to be the natural offspring of traditional non-governmental organisations and inheritors of the NGO mantle associated with ‘doing good’²⁶. This may be due to the fact that a proportion of TANs exhibit characteristics commonly associated with traditional NGOs, such as providing international support services in humanitarian aid and development, and might be usefully considered in

²³ See Chapter 6 for a discussion. Basically, ‘credit assignment’ is considered to be an inherent problem arising from complex, evolving and adaptive systems, because information about the performance of agents is generally irregular, partial and resulting from an intricate field of interactions. Hence, it is rare to have information available *post hoc* that overtly identifies the ‘stage setting’ options that influenced events and apparent outcomes (Holland, 2006:2; Watts, 2011:27).

²⁴ See Ganz (2010) for a discussion on the need for activist groups to develop strategic capacity.

²⁵ See Chapter 5 for more on the array of confusing terminology.

²⁶ See Fisher (1997) and Risse (2012:432) for discussions on the association of NGOs/TANs with ‘doing good’.

functional terms as NGO, or TAN, hybrids. As for NGOs generally (discussed in Chapter 5), the term ‘non-governmental organisation’ has evolved to become such a broad, catch-all term, that — despite the fact that the United Nations is statutorily committed to using this term and does not differentiate functionally among NGOs — the NGO label is now almost meaningless in its ability to connote the essential characteristics concerning what NGOs are, and are not (apart from their nongovernment-ness), and what they do. But despite these unexplainable qualities, NGOs *en bloc* are widely perceived in the advanced democracies of the global North as comparatively more trustworthy ‘moral agents’, ‘norm-promoting underdog[s]’ against more powerful forces and information providing ‘neutral experts’, than elected governments (Edelman, 2012; *The Economist*, 2014; Risse, 2010, 289-292; Ron, Cooley and Rodgers, 2005). Consequently, this thesis is based on the assumption that while all TANs are technically NGOs in regard to their social sector status, not all NGOs are TANs, and that these are key issues for how we might think about them — and, moreover, how international institutions might, and do, engage with them and how they function in the contemporary international system. For this reason, I occasionally refer in the text to NGOs/TANs, where it is not possible to support a claim that a reference applies exclusively to TANs.

Therefore, I submit that understanding the advocacy function of transnational *advocacy* networks, rather than focusing solely on the contentious political issues on which they campaign, is the primary key to understanding their international place and function. Underpinning this argument is the premise that adversarial strategies do not work for building relationships and co-operative, productive engagements between state and non-state actors in the international arena — it being difficult to enlist the cooperation of countries you have just vilified globally; just as it is inadvisable for a pilot to bail out over an area he has just bombed²⁷. This study also looks at whether TANs whose internal imperatives and dogma preclude the possibility of compromise, such as rights advocates, appear most hamstrung, and therefore less effective in deliberative contexts: unable to accommodate the opposing views of others, or to offer concessions on their own, as argued by Ignatieff (2001:20) and Brown (2008: 510-519).

²⁷ Apocryphally attributed to US Air Force training advice.

Argumentation and hypotheses

This thesis attempts to shed analytical light on the ideology-driven strategic framing of international political issues by TANs, which are widely claimed by TANs to be instrumental in international policy transformations. However, negative side effects and unintended consequences are also features of advocacy projects. A fundamental consideration with political issue framing is that (a) intended audiences should be accurately identified and (b) the issues framed for those audiences in ways that resonate with different degrees of expertise and information needs (Broom and Sha, 2013: 291-293, 323). This is a challenging area of communications practice. Whether TANs are generally effective in meeting this challenge is examined. These arguments are summarised in the following hypothesis, which is the first of five propositions, or themes, to be explored. It posits that:

H₁: Contemporary TANs are an important NGO variant in international politics that have unprecedented properties and powers emerging from their advocacy communications, which are typically neglected in politics theorising.

Further flagged for examination was a body of primary and secondary literature and discourses that suggest the elements of the international institutions have a troubled interface with a proportion of modern TAN-type NGOs. It was also noted that the differentiating communicative properties that TANs appeared to possess to varying degrees, could significantly influence the place, function and effectiveness of TANs in the international system. A sense of this argument is captured in the second hypothesis:

H₂: The international system is struggling to accommodate TANs and the elements of the international institutions have a distinctively troubled interface with modern TAN-type NGOs.

In sharp contrast to the adversarial strategies typically associated with some TAN activism, transnational interactions in most other spheres of globalising human activity, whether commercial, political or social, emphasise relationship-building (especially the fostering of mutual trust, respect and understanding) and conflict

calming. Thucydidean theory²⁸, arguably the foundational proposition in International Relations, appeared to offer further strong support for the existence of such a barrier. With the expansion of the international system to accommodate greater numbers of non-state entities, therefore, Thucydidean theory nonetheless appears to apply as equally to non-state actors in international politics as to state actors. In this situation, the results-oriented and urgency imperatives of contemporary TAN advocacy appear to constitute additional impediments to the achievement of collaborative outcomes in the international arena. This was tested by the hypothesis:

H₃: The adversarial advocacy strategies adopted by some TANs constitute a barrier to them achieving their aims in the international policy-making environment.

I develop the view that a complex realist philosophical and methodological approach had exemplary merit in approaching the subject area and primary research question of the thesis. Firstly, by enabling me to conceptualise the ontology of the international system and a category of international political relationships constituted on different scales of complexity, it provided an overarching conceptual framework that (a) reclaimed macro-structural analysis as a first-stage research approach to complex social relationships and (b) appeared also to overcome the inherent difficulties in explaining social tensions caused by hidden structural barriers and consequent capacity deficits in micro-macro situations. Secondly, complex realism was seen as capable of deepening and broadening our understanding of this emerging political phenomenon. By adding a focus on the advocacy communication properties of TANs, I surmised that a richer understanding of TAN outcomes would become more evident than a single focus on their normative political concerns would allow. This feature, I argue, is a more socially equitable means of understanding this subject matter. This led to the fourth hypothesis:

²⁸ This thesis suggests that the adversarial postures frequently associated with state and non-state actors engaged in international politics exemplify Thucydides's warning that belief in the inevitability of conflict can become self-fulfilling. Each side, convinced that it will end up going to battle with the other prepares itself militarily, which is then read by the other side as confirmation of its worst fears (Waltz, 1979:72, 105). I posit, therefore, that the 2,500-year-old insights of the Greek historian and classical realist concerning inter-polity relationships perennially shaped by degrees of distrust, remain highly relevant in contemporary international political engagements between states and between states and non-state entities. See Thucydides (2009: xiv-xv). Also Nye (2011:179) for his use of similar wording in applying Thucydides to contemporary world politics.

H4: *A complex realist approach has exemplary merit in approaching the subject area and primary research question of the thesis.*

The initial data also suggested the premise that the funding models TANs adopt have a determinative effect on their advocacy strategies and that this, in turn, has a determinative effect on each individual TAN's place and function in the international system and on its effectiveness in achieving its aims in the international arena. This led to the fifth hypothesis, namely, that:

H5: *The funding models TANs adopt have a determinative effect on their advocacy strategies.*

Thus equipped, I then interrogated the data further for any evidence that would support these hypotheses. The Evidence Tracing Log used for testing the data set is included at Annex 1.

Of course, one might ask: do these arguments and hypotheses matter? Why should we take a critical analytical position on NGOs, or TANs? As this dissertation intends to show, TANs have been assessed from many vantage points²⁹. However, many of these perspectives, if not most, have concentrated on examining individual TANs and have been noticeably sympathetic to the organisations studied and, conversely, noticeably less sympathetic to their political opponents, which I consider does not provide a sufficiently objective basis on which to analyse political relationships. By way of contrast, I have taken a macroscopic ontological approach that is less interested in the self-understandings of individual TANs but enables me to take a perspective of 'flying above them', observing salient features and patterns and presenting evidence to show where they fit in and how effective they have been.

Operationalisation of the research strategy and approach

The first step in operationalising the research project was to develop the primary research question by an iterative process of refinement while undertaking a wide-ranging literature review. This enabled the identification of the key actors, issues, debates and further, more focused, literature, theory and sources. The next stages were

²⁹ See my list of analytical approaches in Chapter 2.

the conceptualisation of the ontology of the complex, multidimensional problem space; the choice of a suitably eclectic but controlled epistemological approach³⁰, theoretical lenses and appropriate methodological framework; and the development of five grounded hypotheses for testing the empirical data.

Importantly, the lack of consistency and precision in the literature in regard to the identification of essential characteristics and labeling of TANs, led me to develop the original referent model for the TAN typology that I identify as being distinctively different and analytically important from the NGO model traditionally associated with civil society political campaigning (presented at Figure 6.2). Moreover, these patterns provided ways of conceptualising the connections between micro and macro situations and explaining the proliferation of TANs and their greatly disparate fortunes in the international arena. From these results I was able to form my premise that political theory alone is insufficient to explain these effects.

Chapter outline and content summary

The chapter outline follows a standard academic logic sequence for a social science thesis³¹. This structure enables a logical presentation of the data and analysis while sequentially building the thesis towards the conclusions in Chapter 10. The primary research question is kept active, while the five hypotheses, or themes, are used to interrogate the data. These themes are woven throughout the chapters, providing a consistent focus for the development of the argumentation and are brought together and reprised in the concluding chapter. The narrative line of presentation adopts the following logic sequence:

Chapter 2: The Literature is a straightforward review of the salient texts that inform the study and provided its academic context, as well as identifying any omissions and out-of-field interpretations of communications matters by political scholars, which I took to be knowledge gaps in the political literature, there being very few texts that synthesise the two fields using appropriate scientific and

³⁰ I emphasise that this consideration was controlled, rather than parsimonious. Guided by complexity insights (see Geyer and Rihani, 2010:117 and Chapter 3) and by Giddens (1984:*xviii-xxxiii*), and Wight's eclectic epistemological approach (2006: 241-242) and others, I see little value in artificial, self-imposed, theoretical and methodological constraints in investigating complex, macro-sociological, subject matter such as that suggested by the primary research question of this thesis.

³¹ Adoption of this framework is guided by Dunleavy (2003: 60-62).

theoretical analysis. The literature is principally cached within the core field of contentious international politics but encompasses additional bodies of literature from both international relations and policy studies, and political advocacy communications.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Methodology explains the ways in which the research project was approached and carried out. It presents and discusses the conceptual approach via complex realism, with additional theoretical lenses from the social science paradigms of Politics and Communications, the latter introduced to shed new light on the political and relational aspects of the complex interface between TANs and the international system.

Chapters 4: The United Nations and 5: The UN Interface with Civil Society commence the macroscopic discussion of the international system's relational interface by introducing the key actors: the United Nations Organisation and NGOs involved in international politics. Firstly, Chapter 4 focuses on the organisation's salient characteristics and concerns. Chapter 5 discusses the UN's relationship with NGOs generally (since the world body does not differentiate between typologies of NGO). It then examines the context, or interface, in which relationships between state and non-state actors occur, focusing particularly on the statutory arrangements that the UN makes for engaging with NGOs.

Chapter 6: Transnational Advocacy Networks narrows the macroscopic perspective and presents a centerpiece portrait of the NGO variant model known as transnational advocacy networks. I present my referent template to connote the TAN model used in developing the thesis. This model emphasises eight important points of difference from traditional-model NGOs, which the thesis asserts contemporary TANs possess to varying degrees. The chapter then applies socio-political lenses to examine the contexts in which TANs have emerged and the political issues they adopt. Communications lenses are applied to these data to explain the strategic ways in which TANs typically express themselves.

Chapters 7: Greenpeace International, 8: Oxfam International and 9: Human Rights Watch are case studies of three iconic TANs that provide the grounded, micro-

sociological testing and validation of the macro-sociological observations presented in the earlier chapters. In each case, an extensive data set was analysed using diachronic process tracing methodology, combined with the application of theoretical lenses from complex realism, politics and communications studies.

Chapter 10: Conclusions provides a summation of the salient results, patterns and tendencies. It proposes answers to the primary research question and hypotheses, distills the analyses of the case studies and presents the results. The chapter proffers the author's claims to new knowledge and identifies a number of areas for further research.

Chapter 2

2. The Literature

*Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact.
Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth.*

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (AD 121-180)

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present an overview of the fields of literature that relate to the framing of the PRQ and five research hypotheses. This thesis is situated at the intersection of three principal literatures: (1) contentious international politics; (2) international relations and policy studies (particularly the ‘globalisation’ debates concerning the role and power of civil society organisations in international institutional processes and political transformations); and (3) political advocacy communications in the Information Age. This cross-disciplinary combination reflects the complex, multi-dimensional nature of the research question; the plurality of academic disciplines interested in TANS³²; and widespread understandings that the politics/communication/media/technology nexus is now well established.³³

This literature review covers work written in (or translated into) English and published, chiefly, as academic texts in the social sciences and in academic journals. These sources provided leads into the socio-historical and international institutional contexts in which TANS have emerged and some benchmark academic

³² During this study I encountered scholars from a wide range of disciplines engaged in studying transnational activism and TANS, each from their own distinctive vantage points. Mostly accommodated in the social sciences and humanities, these disciplines included social studies, politics/IR, security studies, human geography, anthropology and history.

³³ For example in texts by Castells, 2007 (see also Castells 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2009 and 2012); Chandler, 2005, 2007, 2009; Bob, 2005; Hindman, 2009; Morazov, 2011; 2013; Prakash and Gugerty, 2010; Risse, 2010; Bob, 2010: 133-135; and Barakso, 2010:155-160).

insights, especially those emanating from the developed Western democracies, about what these NGO variants might mean and how we might think about them. Importantly, this reviewing process showed that, despite their increasing numbers and prominence in mass media accounts of their activities, not least via their own publicity efforts, throughout the academic political literature TANs are generally considered to be an ill-defined, perplexing and inadequately-theorised social phenomenon (Tarrow, 1998b; Keck and Sikkink, 1998:5; Risse, 2002:255; Diani and McAdam, 2003:1).

Although distinguishing rather than conflating the literatures was necessary, it should not be taken to suggest that they are separated by discrete boundaries, since they are as interwoven as the complex, real-world social fabrics they typically portray. Thus, I posit that the three fields of literature are interconnected, although they each display distinguishing characteristics and perspectives that partially illuminate the research problem³⁴. For example, texts relating to hard-fought, civil society campaigns for social justice tend to concentrate on pivotal historical events, conflictual relationships, concern group development³⁵, documented reactions and causal mechanisms, and are typically based on constructivist investigations among situated actors and focused on individuals and their personal experiences (*e.g.* Keck and Sikkink, 1998:4; Tarrow, 2005:20; Finnemore, and Sikkink, 2001). Conversely, the literatures taking a macroscopic perspective on international politics and relations, governance and globalisation — which, today, involve many thousands of civil society organisations³⁶ — tend to take a more detached, objective approach, concentrating largely on comparative socio-economic matters, political and historical contexts, institutional processes and collective experiences. They typically offer macroscopic perspectives based on

³⁴ A suitable analogy, I suggest, can be found in Saxe's popular verse 'The Blind men and the Elephant', based on an Indian legend about six blind men who each obtain a limited understanding of what an elephant is by feeling only separate parts of the animal (Saxe, 1873:259-260).

³⁵ This thesis uses the terms 'concern group' or 'community of interest' as synonyms for the ubiquitous term 'social movement', unless referring to works in which other writers have used that term 'social movements'. The rationale is that in the present era of globe-spanning digital media, communities of interest may be often regarded as 'connected' in networks, rather than belonging to 'collectivities' in the traditional sense associated with social movements. I posit that the term 'social movement' in Politics study has connotations of geographically localised, physically realised collective action, and is imprecise if used to explain the otherwise underspecified relationships between a multitude of politically concerned individuals connected only by the Internet.

³⁶ For example, see *Figures 5.1 and 6.1* for graphs showing the growth of NGOs and INGOs in the international arena.

quantitative data analyses (*e.g.* Held and McGrew, 2002; Scholte, 2000, 2002, 2005; Wilkinson, 2005; Weiss and Thakur, 2010; Willetts, 2011).

As the forces driving globalisation³⁷ stimulated greater opportunities for cross-national comparative research, scholars focusing on trans-, or multi-national, political activism have often combined these two approaches, correlating the global and the local aspects of their study, in order to offer a unifying conceptual framework in which causal mechanisms might be postulated. Examples can be seen in Keck and Sikkink's pioneering study on TANs (1998), and in texts by Imig and Tarrow (2001); Diani and McAdam (2003); Melucci, 1996; Edwards and Gaventa (2001); Dakroury *et al* (2009); and Khagram *et al*, 2002). These works commonly reveal a research format in which a selection of case studies based on indigenous protest groups in diverse parts of the world are offered as a representation of global citizens on the move and global social transformations. However, while this literature provides the core foundational data for studying the growing phenomenon of TANs in international politics, I will argue later that first-stage, 'bottom up' epistemologies do not, in fact, do the work of fully explaining the ontology of international system relationships with TANs, nor provide unifying frameworks for examining them — leaving important areas still to be addressed.

The third literature used — advocacy communications in the Information Age — tends to reflect a wide range of approaches from both the natural and social sciences, especially segments devoted to new technologies and endeavours to understand what mass self-communication³⁸ might mean for globe-spanning political proselytising and generating political pressure and international influence (*e.g.* Castells, 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2009, 2012; Bob, 2005, 2012; Morazov, 2011, 2013; Melucci, 1996; Negroponte, 1995; Hindman, 2009:3-19; Chandler, 2007, 2009). Indeed, this body of literature sees new texts arriving regularly, typically from the U.S. academic and popular quasi-academic publishing houses, each attempting to explain the impact on societies of new information communications technologies, especially the Internet and its instrumentality in mobilising social action.

³⁷ Here I refer especially to the unprecedented growth of affordable communications technologies and transportation links associated with the Information Age.

³⁸ This term is used by the eminent communications scholar Manuel Castells (2007).

2.2 Convergence of three literatures

2.2.1 Contentious international politics

Although it may be a truism that all politics is by definition contentious, the term ‘contentious international politics’ is a recognisable term that has been applied to a particular category of political literature. This literature chronicles the border-transcending political struggles and issues of social movements and civil society organisations, including many NGOs/TANs, and is typically associated with the work of Tarrow, Tilly, McAdam, della Porta, Diani, Melucci, Sikkink, Keck, Finnemore³⁹, *et al.*

The field to which these scholars contribute is dynamic: being constantly energised by the clashing of ideological movements with worldviews aimed at remodeling the world order according to their political interpretations (Keck and Sikkink, 1998:1-2; Florini, 2000:7). Owing to the array of terms commonly used to identify non-state elements engaging in this political domain⁴⁰ it is useful to understand how research in the long-established field of ‘social movements’ has evolved over the past two decades to accommodate unprecedented forms of transnational and deterritorialised civil society activism, which includes contemporary TANs. Nevertheless, many scholars researching in this field apply the term ‘social movements’ to networks that also fit the more precise criteria for TANs developed later. Tarrow explains (2005:24) that since the mid-1990s, scholars of social movements have expanded their scope of interest from local and national to international forms of contention, and from ‘movements’ to NGOs and international organisations, activist networks and transnational labour activism. There is a compelling suggestion in Tarrow’s overview, as in his comments on the methodological challenges entailed in this research (Klandermans, Staggenborg and Tarrow, 2002:339), that contentious international politics might arguably be viewed as a sociological paradigm that is trying to deal with unfamiliar forces driving transnationalism and shifting focal points. Therefore, while acknowledging the necessity of reviewing the foundational literature on pre-90s social movements

³⁹ Although Sikkink, Keck and Finnemore are also associated with international relations and human rights issues, I argue that there is considerable overlap in these interest areas and that they have each made significant contributions to the contentious international politics literature.

⁴⁰ See Section 5.3.1 for a list of these terms and this discussion.

for tracing the emergence of TANs and their issues, it is now largely outdated in regard to addressing the key questions and hypotheses of this thesis.

This, I argue, leaves this sector of the political literature with a significant lacuna due to its inability to provide us with sophisticated, qualitative and scientifically sound understandings of (a) the relationships between the state and non-state elements in the contemporary international system, particularly those involving TANs, seen as newly emergent participants in international politics⁴¹; and (b), the international political impacts of unprecedented levels of human interconnectivity afforded by worldwide digital communications technologies and tools, as utilised by TANs. Furthermore, the emergence of a new political phenomenon, which is defined by its communicative functions, has been identified by prominent scholars in the paradigm — but yet, as I will show, this literature is inclined to focus on an array of NGO/TAN aspects⁴² and significant gaps remain in regard to critical analysis of TAN communications functions. The hypothesis-formation⁴³ was thus strongly influenced by Castells's assertion (2013:15): '[...] the networked social movements of the digital age represent a new species of social movement'. And by Tarrow's finding (2005:136): "[...] the internet is more than a form of communication; it is at the core of a new movement form'.

For these reasons, this thesis draws mainly on the literature on contentious international politics published since the widespread public adoption of ICTs — *i.e.* between the late '90s and the present day. However, even this core literature proved inadequate, by itself, for the task of investigating the place and function of TANs in the contemporary international system, or their effectiveness in achieving their aims in the international arena. Thus, this thesis aims to make its main contribution to the contentious international political literature by helping to both fill-in these gaps and offer alternative ways to think about TANs and some of the

⁴¹ See Chapter 6 for my examination of TANs as newly emergent actors in international politics.

⁴² Towards the end of this chapter (Section 2.2.4), I provide a list of 25 research approaches that I identified in the combined literatures.

⁴³ This was factor was especially germane to the development of the first hypothesis — *i.e.*

H₁: Contemporary TANs are an important NGO variant in international politics that have unprecedented properties and powers emerging from their advocacy communications, which are typically neglected in politics theorising.

emerging beliefs concerning their political contributions and effectiveness in achieving their international aims.

International politics seen as a zone of clashing worldviews involving TANs

While the core literature underpinning this thesis is substantial and growing exponentially, it mostly reflects a realm of diverse and clashing worldviews⁴⁴, ideologies and epistemologies that are focused on dynamic situations involving contention and conflict. The titles alone are a reflection of this theme. These include such explicitly titled seminal works as: *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Keck and Sikkink, 1998); *Dynamics of Contention* (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001); *The Politics of Collective Violence* (Tilly, 2003); *Contentious Politics* (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007); *Transnational Protest and Global Activism* (della Porta and Tarrow, 2004); *The New Transnational Activism* (Tarrow, 2005); *Complexity and social movements: Multitudes at the edge of chaos* (Chesters and Welsh, 2006); *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism* (Bob, 2005); and *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (Castells, 2012).

As a result, the literature and discourses on social activism on the world stage make compelling scholarship: most notably for their depictions of real-world dramas, high tensions and strong emotions — predominantly focusing on the suffering and struggles of individuals and communities. Indeed, Castells observes (2013:13): ‘At the individual level, social movements are emotional movements’⁴⁵. By drawing attention to different levels at which social interactions occur — in this case the ‘individual level’ — Castells’s insight is valuable for conceptualising the social stratifications encompassed by the thesis: each analytical level, I suggest, presenting greater concentrations of competing interests: extending from individuals to groups, communities, organisations, governments and nations, to the United Nations. Castells also informs us that at the micro-sociological level of analysis, social movements are characteristically powered by the emotions of individuals. This qualitative feature was therefore singled out for mapping onto

⁴⁴ Wight asserts that ‘Politics is the terrain of competing ontologies’. Therefore, ‘[P]olitics is about competing visions of how the world is and how it should be’ (2006:2).

⁴⁵ Castells asserts that it is the organisation of this emotion into action that constitutes the beginning of social movements. In his colourful conceptualisation of this trigger, Castells declares: ‘[...] the big bang of social movement starts with the transformation of emotion into action’ (2013:13).

the data set in order to test its presence and consequences in TAN effectiveness and relationships within the international system.

As shown in the texts listed at the beginning of this section, contemporary research and discourses on social activism have tended to foreground first-person storytelling that emphasises the emotional dispositions of individuals involved in collective actions and *their* understandings of their situations and experiences. Moreover, I suggest, this mainstream research model⁴⁶ reflects two powerful influences: (i) constructivist epistemology, which Finnemore and Sikkink (2001) claim 'exploded' onto this research field during the 1990s (and which asserts that human interaction is shaped primarily by inter-subjective understandings); and (ii) methodological individualism, which basically claims that social phenomena must be explained by showing how they result from individual actions, which in turn must be explained through reference to the intentional states that motivate the individual actors (see Adler, 1997; Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001; and Heath, 2011). Both of these research practices, therefore, usually involve researchers being closely involved in the resistance struggles of their subjects, often embedded in their communities, in order to win trust and confidences and gather exclusive data.

Themes and ideologies schools in the area of contentious international politics were accessed mainly *via* the work of Tarrow, Tilly, della Porta, McAdam and Diani (e.g. Tarrow, 1998a, 1999, 2001, 2005; Imig and Tarrow, 2001; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001; Tarrow and McAdam, 2005; della Porta and Tarrow, 2005; Diani and McAdam, 2003; Tilly, 2003, 2004; Tilly and Tarrow, 2007; and Melucci, 1996). The perspective development seen in Tarrow's work was especially valuable for tracing the development of the contentious international politics paradigm and the emergence of TANs as prominent actors in international politics. From situated studies of specific protest movements (exemplified by his 1967 study, *Peasant Communism in Southern Italy*), Tarrow's work traces the development and increasing transnationalism of social movements and contentious politics from the

⁴⁶ While agreeing with Tarrow (2005:20) that three competing approaches have dominated studies in international politics (neorealism, constructivism and liberal institutionalism), studies of transnational social movements have been dominated by constructivist approaches in since the 1980s (Adler, 2002:95-118; Buzan, 2004:1; Brown and Ainley, 2005:48; Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001).

'70s onwards (Tarrow, 1998a; 1999; 2001; 2005:24). As his subjects forged coalitions and networks across the globe, chiefly since the 1990s, Tarrow's research became increasingly global and macroscopic in perspective. Accordingly, his approaches were seen to become more theoretically eclectic, focusing on a broad range of actors in international politics and on processes and mechanisms that link the local with the global (2005:24). Significantly for this thesis, a byproduct of Tarrow's intellectual journey was his advancement of 'scale shift' theory (posited by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001:331), which holds that contentious political environments are constituted by multiple levels of social interaction⁴⁷. Furthermore, Tarrow suggests, the different conditions encountered at these 'levels' have crucial determinative effects on the fortunes of activists seeking the right levers to progressively 'shift' their contentious political issues from initiation to resolution (Tarrow, 2005:120-124; Tarrow and McAdam, 2005; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001:331). According to Tarrow (2005:121):

Scale shift is an essential element of all contentious politics, without which all contention that arises locally would remain at that level. We can define it as *a change in the number and level of coordinated contentious actions to a different focal point, involving a new range of actors, different objects, and broadened claims*⁴⁸.

Hence, it was important to analyse this theoretical development, which, in trying to bridge the diverse scales and levels of social interaction, held such clear implications for the PRQ. However, while 'scale shift' theory makes an important contribution to studying transnational activism by recognising that levels-of-analysis (micro-macro), problems are inherent in this subject matter, I suggest it does not go far enough. It does not answer the realist question: levels of what? (*vide* Wight, 2006: 110-111). For example, the theory asserts the existence of thresholds between levels, or scales, of contentious actions but does not explain the nature, of these 'levels'⁴⁹: such as their constituent properties, origins, conditions, powers, or limits; the triggering mechanisms that shift representations

⁴⁷ Connections can be seen here with Giddens (1984:xxiv-xxv) and Wight (2006:175) who problematise the quest for a theory to explain relations between the multiple planes of social activity.

⁴⁸ Emphasis as in original.

⁴⁹ See Tarrow (2005:123) for a graphical representation of 'A Descriptive Model of Scale Shift'.

of contentious issues ‘up’ or ‘down’ (or in, or out of) scales of social engagement⁵⁰; or, indeed, the relationships between the levels and ‘range of actors’ at varying levels; and whether all actors working on an issue recognise the same ‘focal point’, or changes in it. Importantly, I suggest, ‘scale shift’ prescribes an approach to contentious political encounters from one aspect of the relationships — the perspective of protesting social groups— that confines its applicability for comprehensively theorising complex inter-relational environments, such as the international system⁵¹. Furthermore, ‘scale shift’ theory does not posit a causal mechanism, or necessary conditions, that can help us to explain why some TANs, and not others, encounter barriers within the international system that hamper achievement of their aims. These issues contributed to the development of my hypothesis #4 (H₄)⁵² and the adoption of complex realism, which interprets these ‘levels’ as differentiated strata of social reality, of varying complexity and environmental properties, in which complex, intersecting, social systems are embedded.

Tarrow’s later work was useful also for stimulating thinking about the influence of ‘the Internet as a vehicle’ for the diffusion of collective action and driving ‘scale shift’ (2005:136-138), which has clear implications for the effectiveness of TANs in achieving their aims. However, I consider Tarrow’s socio-political theorisations tend to skim over differential capability considerations of how diverse TANs drive these strategic communications vehicles and to what effects. He also brings insights into social organisation of activism and inter-group cohesion. Consequently, he is noticeably more cautious than some political scholars (*e.g.* Castells, 2004b; Rosenau, 2000:229) in estimating the strengths and effectiveness of Internet-based transnational activism. While Tarrow considers the Internet ‘is at the core of a new movement form’ (2005:136), he also believes all shifting and reticular movements, in fact, ‘reduce ideological cohesion’, and the Internet ‘may be extreme in its centrifugal effects’ (*ibid*: 138). Obvious implications for my H₁ and

⁵⁰ Tarrow maintains that: ‘Scale shift can operate in two directions: *upward*, in which case local action spreads outward from its origins; or *downward*, when a generalized practice is adopted at a lower level’ (2005:121).

⁵¹ See Tarrow (2005:120-121) for more on the definition of ‘scale shift’.

⁵² H₄: *A complex realist approach has exemplary merit in approaching the subject area and primary research question of the thesis.*

the effectiveness of TANs were also seen in Tarrow's finding (*ibid*): [...] 'because of the technological gap between activists in the North and South, the internet may actually increase the inequality within a movement that seeks global equality'.

Indeed, he expresses a view that because the 'typical internet-based unit of contention is the campaign', rather than more embedded⁵³ struggles with recurrent allies and enemies, 'the internet offers individual activists the opportunity for do-it-yourself ideological production', despite the fact that those directing campaigning organisations 'might prefer to move in another direction or end a campaign'⁵⁴. This insight had clear implications for a TAN's political potency and effectiveness, prompting me to explore the strength of the case study TANs in regard to corporate control and compliance, ideological consistency and strategies aligned with aims.

Defining TANs from the contentious international politics literature

Scholars observing the amorphous subject of 'social movements' and 'global civil society' have often described the epiphenomenon of TANs as 'elusive' (Keck and Sikkink, 1998:5; Risse, 2002:255; Diani and McAdam, 2003:1). Calling transnational civil society networks (TCS) 'the emerging third force in global politics', Florini opines (2000:7, 231) that these networks are 'unlike other major collectivities in the world', typically linking people in distant parts of the world who share values but neither history nor culture, and tending to aim for broad goals 'based on their conceptions of what constitutes the public good'⁵⁵. The 'somewhat ungainly' term 'transnational' is used, she observes, to emphasise that these networks cross borders but are rarely global. In particular, Florini observes, that the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa are 'severely underrepresented' in such coalitions.

Keck and Sikkink combine a broad range of theory from social movements, international relations and comparative politics to explore the emergence of TANs

⁵³ See Granovetter (1973) for a discussion on the implications of 'weak link' and strong link' ties in social networks.

⁵⁴ In Chapter 10, I point to new paths for research arising from this emergent feature of Internet-based transnational advocacy networking. I suggest that tensions are emerging between ideologically-predetermined TANs and a new genus of consensus-driven TANs that are enabled by Internet traffic monitoring capabilities.

⁵⁵ Risse expresses a similar opinion (2012:428).

(1998: 5). Indeed, Keck and Sikkink's investigation of what they had identified as a new NGO phenomenon, emerging exponentially since the 1970s, resulted in their coining of the neologism 'transnational advocacy network' in *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* — arguably the most cited, influential, text in the field of studying TANs (Keck and Sikkink, 1998:ix; Willetts, 2011:131-132; Risse, 2012:433-439). In this work, Keck and Sikkink asserted that the TAN typology emerging in the 1990s was a strategic information mobiliser and a 'nontraditional' international actor (*ibid*):

What is novel in these networks is the ability of nontraditional international actors to mobilize information strategically to help create new issues and categories and to persuade, pressure, and gain leverage over much more powerful organizations and governments. Activists in networks try not only to influence policy outcomes, but to transform the terms and nature of the debate. They are not always successful in the efforts, but they are increasingly relevant players in political debates.

In his cover review on Keck and Sikkink's text, Tarrow (1998b) remarked that TANs constitute 'the most interesting and least well-understood area of contentious politics in the world today'. Furthering the theme of puzzlement and elusiveness, Keck and Sikkink claim (*ibid*: 5): 'Part of what is so elusive about networks is how they seem to embody elements of agent and structure simultaneously'.

It was thus apparent that this literature lacks a clear or internationally-accepted definition for TANs that is more in tune with contemporary technological and social reality than the very basic definition sketched by Keck and Sikkink in 1998 (*ibid*, 1998:2), which stated:

A transnational advocacy network includes those relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services.

Similarly, Florini (2000:7, 231) advanced the basic definition that they are transnational civil society networks of individuals and groups with shared values — albeit displaying values that 'vary tremendously' in networks that are organisationally uneven.

Thus, an overriding impression from this literature is that the only feature scholars seem to agree on is that no-one agrees on them: what they have in common that can be meaningfully theorised; the boundary conditions of the phenomenon; and how much and in what ways, they might matter in determining international political outcomes. Many point out that transnational advocacy is increasingly important (Held and McGrew, 2004:11; Scholte, 2005: 322), while Keck and Sikkink (1998:217) are unequivocal in stating their opinion on the significance of TANs, asserting:

The concept of a transnational advocacy network is an important element in conceptualizing the changing nature of the international polity and particularly in understanding the interaction between societies and states in the formulation of international policies.

Even so, their TAN concept remains an elusive concept involved in ‘conceptualising’ international polity change: albeit, an ‘important’ one.

The literature is clearer on whether TANs should be regarded as important, new, agencies that have a place and function in the international system that merited investigation. Therefore, the fundamental argument (expressed in my H₁)⁵⁶ that contemporary TANs are an ‘important’ NGO variant engaging in international politics, is premised, from the outset, on the weight of scholarship on TANs and TAN-like⁵⁷ organisations — capped by Keck and Sikkink’s emphatic finding that TANs have a common purpose (1998:2): ‘[...] their goal is to change the behavior of states and of international organizations’.

Given such a commonly-shared mission, and considering the global media prominence and vast resources amassed by some of these organisations — which, as will be shown, often rival or surpass those of many small states — it would appear to be axiomatic that TANs should be considered important actors in international politics. Consequently, this hypothesis was developed to further verify these indications.

Keck and Sikkink’s linear, depiction of how NGOs (including TANs) are considered to be effective in exerting pressure on state elements of the international system

⁵⁶ H₁ proposes: Contemporary TANs are an important NGO variant in international politics that have unprecedented properties and powers emerging from their advocacy communications, which are typically neglected in politics theorising.

⁵⁷ This is in accordance with my referent criteria for a contemporary TAN model, presented in *Figure 6.2*.

(*ibid*:13). Known as the '*Boomerang Pattern*', their conceptualisation is reproduced in Section 5.3.4 (*Figure 5.3*), where I discuss its insights and limitations in the context of understanding relationships between state and non-state elements of the international system. While this study is a rich source of background material on TANs and on the identification of their novel characteristics, I consider their linear portrayal of the complex international political realm and the place, function and effectiveness of TANs, appears to be premised on a flattened, single-dimensional view of the international world that is at variance with more recent complexity thinking. The '*Boomerang Pattern*' was therefore held to be useful conceptually but was excluded from a more explanatory role.

In the main, writers on civil society matters have tended to consider that advocacy networks generally espouse broad, principled goals that are hard to object to — protecting the environment and human rights, combating poverty, promoting democracy and good governance, for example. Conversely, it is occasionally noted that there is nothing inherent in the nature of civil society groups that ensures they are a force for good, or represent broad public interests: their legitimacy, ethnocentricity, undemocratic nature and lack of accountability to anyone except their members and funders, being among the concerns most commonly raised (Tarrow, 2005:8; Florini, 2000:231; Rieff, 1999:11-16; Risse, 2012:428, 432-433). Indeed, Florini points out that 'neo-Nazi hate groups that exchange repugnant rhetoric over the Internet are just as much transnational civil society networks as are the human rights coalitions' (2000:231, 7). Tarrow (2005:45) and Risse (2012:432-433) express similar views on what they term the 'dark side' of transnational relations. Tarrow also provides support for Florini's argument that there is nothing inherent in the nature of civil society, local or transnational, which ensures representation of the broad public interest.

Although writers in this paradigm frequently describe the activities of transnational advocacy-oriented NGOs that display some, or all, of the definitive characteristics first identified by Keck and Sikkink, comparatively few scholars apply the exact term 'transnational advocacy network' to this phenomenon. Thus, if one were to review only literature in which this term is used for TAN-like organisations, the body of work would be small indeed. This clearly would not be a

true reflection of the scale of this amorphous phenomenon in international politics. Furthermore, it would severely limit our ability to analyse them. In response to the limitation that contemporary TAN scholarship lacked a more up-to-date referent with universal resonance, I built on to the definitions contained in the foundational literature, by developing an eight-point referent template for an archetypal, communications-oriented, contemporary TAN to be used in this thesis. This is presented in Chapter 6.

Due to the disputative character of this field of literature, it was to be expected that the interface conditions between TANs and the international system would be contested terrain. Unfortunately, the key questions of this thesis (*'what is the place and function of TANs ... etc.'* and *'how effective are they ... etc.'*), could not be answered with any certainty using only the literature underpinning the 'contentious international politics' paradigm.

2.2.2 International relations and policy studies, civil society and globalization

In international relations analysis, the concept of an 'international system' is also robustly contested (Bull, 1998; Buzan and Little, 2000: 17-18; Dunne, 2005; 2010: 141-142); Schmidt, 2002:14; Burchill, Linklater *et al*, 2009:1-6; Geyer and Rihani, 2010:110-112). Therefore, in order to unpack the key questions of the thesis it was necessary to examine the literature on the political landscape in which the elements of the international realm relate, firstly, to each other and, secondly, to TANs. A systems approach, as propounded by Wallerstein (1974), Waltz (1979:39), Buzan and Little, (2000: 407), Donnelly (2011) and others, was strongly indicated.

Defining 'international system' from the literature

According to Buzan (2002:64)⁵⁸, the basic 'international system' debate revolves around (a) the structure of states-systems; and (b) the distinction between the 'system' element (understood as interaction) and the 'society' element (understood as socially constructed norms, rules and institutions). This reference to system/society arguments is the distinctive trademark of the English School

⁵⁸ To trace the development of Buzan's insights into English School theory, see also Buzan, 1993; and 2004. See also Dunne, 2005 and 2010: 135-147).

paradigm in IR⁵⁹ — the terms ‘international system’ and ‘international society’ being employed to represent separate analytical areas. Nevertheless, despite the popularity and dominance of the English School’s ontological perspective of the international world, scholars are divided on the analytical usefulness of a distinction between structural and normative aspects of international relations⁶⁰.

According to Buzan (*ibid*), structural aspects of the international system feature strongly in the debate between neorealists, whose theory hangs on material aspects of the system, and constructivists, who seek to develop more social views of international structure as being part of a world of our making (*vide* Hurrell, 2002:142; Brown and Ainley, 2005:49; Fierke, 2010:178-180). Structures matter, Hurrell claims, but material structures cannot be understood outside of the shared knowledge and shared understandings held by the actors within them. This struck me as problematical because, as Hurrell points out, ‘ideas about change are embedded in a discourse of normative transformation that in most cases is extremely difficult to pin-down’ (*ibid*). Clear links can be seen here to Keck and Sikkink’s observation (1998: 5) that activist networks operate in social and political contexts that contain ‘stable and shared’ understandings (which I take to be a reference to relatively enduring structures), as well as contested understandings that they ‘try to reshape’ (presumably a reference to ideological disagreements): thus, engendering perceptions that they are ‘elusive’ and ‘seem to embody elements of agent and structure simultaneously’.

Many of the proponents of deep change, Hurrell maintains, ‘offer a stark and highly improbable choice: between a grossly simplified image of a Westphalian past and an invariably complex, but usually underspecified, post-Westphalian present and future’. Here, Hurrell is referring to the historical foundations of the modern world order of nation states and deficient understandings that many proponents of change have about its past, present and future⁶¹.

⁵⁹ Dunne claims the English School is the ‘dominant theoretical voice’ in IR in Britain and remains hugely influential in IR thinking worldwide (Dunne, 2010:136).

⁶⁰ See Erskine (2010:36) for a discussion of normative theoretical approaches in IR.

⁶¹ This refers to the Treaties of Westphalia (1648), or the ‘Peace of Westphalia’, which established the modern world order of nation states (Reus-Smit, 2008:282).

From such discourses, I suggest, we can clearly discern the IR trademark of theoretical disarray, as described by Smith (2010:2-8), with scholars expressing fundamental uncertainties, incomplete understandings and competing philosophies over: (1) the interface conditions and possibilities that actors encounter in inter-national relationships; (2) the relative capabilities and powers of actors to effect change; and (3) inadequacies in defining the interacting elements, such as TANS operating in the international sphere (as I noted earlier in the chapter).

Taking a comparatively broad theoretical approach, Dunne (2005) offers a valuable encapsulation of these dilemmas and fault-lines:

[T]here is no a priori reason why an interpretive approach cannot incorporate the existence of systemic logics such as brute facts and material capacities, while showing how these impact on the behaviour or individuals and communities.

Furthermore, he (2010:148) invokes Bull's insight (1995) that in the relationship between system and society, 'it is clear that the existence of a society presupposes the existence of a system'. Therefore, this thesis has no quarrel with either of the competing ontological perspectives propounding system *versus* society and, with Dunne, does not regard them as mutually exclusive alternatives.

According to Dunne (2010:144), while higher levels of economic interdependence and common interests might precipitate the development of institutions to facilitate 'society' between states, the independence of sovereign states 'remains an important limiting factor in the realization of common goals'.

For this reason, the purposes states agreed upon for most of the Westphalian era have had a fairly minimal character centred upon the survival of the system and the endurance of the dominant units within it.

Observing the quandaries encountered by IR scholars in trying to evaluate the comparative influences of 'system' and 'society' in this debate, Dunne called for English School theorists to more fully develop ways to determine 'how much 'society' is present in inter-state order' (*ibid*). Similarly open-minded, Buzan and Little (2000:407) appreciated that the 'systems' framework, provided an effective

conceptual framework for theorising the international world but considered it did not go far enough and should not be the single framework adopted for the task.

Thus faced with mainstream conceptualisations of international systems in IR that they held to be 'thin' and 'unidimensional', Buzan and Little (*ibid*:43)⁶² sought to reform the study of IR by advancing a pluralist analytical framework that they hoped would enable IR scholarship to generate 'thicker' forms of theorising to better explain 'a complex phenomenon like international systems' (*ibid*: 17). Their approach — suggesting investigators take an historical and multi-causal approach, as well as identifying different levels and sectors of analysis — appeared to reclaim a role for structural analysis in IR after several decades of 'the normative turn' and was thus a significant influence in operationalising this thesis.

From these debates, I deduced that a gap exists when the temporal/historical dimension in social structural construction and practice goes unexplained. Taking into account Bhaskar's argument that all understandings and practical activities presuppose a realism 'of one kind or another'⁶³ and social phenomena 'are the product of a plurality of structures' (*vide* Bhaskar, 2011:2-3; also Archer, 1998:196; 201-202; and Marx, 1852)⁶⁴ it seemed crucial to explore the theoretical adequacy of the socially constructed world 'of our making' as described by Hurrell *et al*. If we accept that agents construct the world with their norms, rules and institutions we must also ask not only the obvious, 'how', but when? Evoking 'dead men's shoes' imagery (similar to that of Marx, 1852), Archer offers insights into the continuum of structural legacies of past agents and the 'maintain or transform', dichotomies in which current agents find themselves. Elaborating this inescapable lot, Archer argues that the strategic actions of current agents are conditioned by inherited and cultural contexts, even as they themselves are 'shaped and reshaped in their sequential attempts to remould the structures they confront but did not

⁶² Cited also by Cudworth and Hobden (2011:60-61)

⁶³ This would appear to be commensurable with Keck and Sikkink's recognition of 'stable and shared' understandings. (1998:5).

⁶⁴ This refers to social structural theorisation (*vide* Bhaskar, 2011:2-3; Archer, 1998:196; 201-202; Giddens; 1984:xxiv – xviii and 170-172; and Marx, 1852) that understands that all social activities, and by definition institutions and collective movements, have their roots in earlier times. The above citation refers to Marx's famous quote: 'Men make their own history but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past' (Marx, 1852: Part 1, para.2).

create'.⁶⁵ In Bhaskar's analysis (2011:2-3): '[...] we will only be able to understand — and so change — the social world if we identify the structures at work that generate [those] events or discourses'. Additionally, Giddens (1984:170-172) points out that social structural facts have properties that 'confront each single individual as "objective" features which limit that individual's scope of action. These are not just external, but externally defined'.

Meanwhile, the significance and future of states as the dominant focus of analysis in the international system is a concomitant theme in the 'system' debates. Geyer and Rihani (2010:114-115) claim that although powers, capabilities, and roles are today diffused among a myriad of complex intersecting systems as international institutions, states and non-state actors interact with each other, 'nation states have been a stable element of the international system for hundreds of years' and remain powerful fixtures in the system: 'potentially *the* most powerful elements'. Similarly, Risse observes (2002:255) that while transnational actors, from multinational corporations to INGOs, have left their mark on the contemporary international system, there is little systematic evidence to sustain claims that the transnational 'society world' has somehow overtaken the 'state world'. In fact, Risse maintains, TANs and INGOs should not be seen as necessarily in opposition to the inter-state system as their work often conforms to the interests of states and international organisations: indeed, NGOs/TANs frequently act in service-providing roles, supporting the interests of states, or establishment bodies (2012: 433). Furthermore, Castells (2012:234-235) and Tarrow (2005:3) both independently assert that it is through engagement with political institutions that non-state organisations can influence the mechanisms that lead to policy change. Instead of analysing transnational and inter-state relations in zero-sum terms, Risse observes, it is more useful to study their interactions and inter-penetration⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ This concept is captured in Blackburn's limerick (1999:81):

*There was a young man who said. 'Damn,
It is borne upon me that I am
A creature that moves
In predestinate grooves —
Not even a bus, but a tram'.*

⁶⁶ In stating this view, Risse reinforces opinions expressed by Keane (2003:92). The cross-pollination of ideas and human resources, which, I argue, is often overlooked in notions about neat but fictional boundaries between state and non-state actors in the international arena, is specifically discussed in Chapter 5, where I examine the overlappings and interactions of the 'Three United Nations' (see also Willetts, 2011:116-119 and Weiss, 2009:8-9).

Consequently, this thesis contends that the inter-relational behaviours of elements in the international institutional sphere constitute not only a system — in accordance with the definition of a ‘system’ advanced by Meadows (2009:2,188)⁶⁷ — but, as I will argue, exhibit the hallmarks of an archetypal ‘complex system’, which provides new dimensions of explanatory value. In considering the international system to be a complex system, the thesis is guided by Buzan and Little (2000:17); Cudworth and Hobden (2011:70-73), Geyer and Rihani (2010:114-115) and by Wight’s argument that (2006:294):

[...] the international system is a complex, chaotic and essentially open system that is causally overdetermined. This means that the patterns we observe are not reducible to, or explainable by, any one theory.

Moreover, Cudworth and Hobden (*ibid*) point out that considering international actors as complex adaptive systems that interact with each other ‘opens a route for analysing relations between them [...]’. Such insights were crucial to the development of my hypothesis (H₄)⁶⁸ concerning the suitability of applying a complex realist philosophy and methodological tools to this investigation.

In synthesising the divergent IR perspectives on the international system, I consider it is relatively easy to hypothesise how the various actors/agents who are part of the system, and those who interact with the system, might place vastly different values on the way it operates and changes⁶⁹; who operates it; how ‘global public goods’ are husbanded; and whether the system has present, or future, relevance (*e.g.* Held, 2010:248). Plainly, notions of what constitutes ‘the public good’ can differ radically not only between national contexts, but from one individual to the next. Therefore, the contemporary international system appeared to provide a comparatively stable framework for examining how system, state and society ‘all hang together’ (Dunne:2005). This decision was also guided by Giddens’s opinion that ‘[T]he identification of structural principles, and their

⁶⁷ Meadows defines as system as ‘a set of elements, or parts, that is coherently organised and interconnected in a pattern or structure that produces a characteristic set of behaviours’.

⁶⁸ H₄: A complex realist approach has exemplary merit in approaching the subject area and primary research question of the thesis.

⁶⁹ Baker and Chandler (2005), provide a useful compendium of opinion on the contested futures for global civil society.

conjunctures in intersocietal systems, represents the most comprehensive level of institutional analysis' (1984: 185-186).

Furthermore, Keck and Sikkink concede that while states remain the major players internationally, by reversing the traditional state-centric analytical focus, studies of TANs can reveal new insights into the contemporary international system. These might include that (i) there are now multiple pathways into the international arena; (ii) domestic actors have an underestimated degree of international agency than a state-centric approach would admit; and (iii) TANs provide domestic actors with allies outside their own states (*ibid*: 217).

Bringing NGOs/TANs into the 'international system'

To gain a fuller understanding of how TANs fit into the contemporary international system — in effect, their 'place' and 'function' in the complex interweave of interacting sub-systems of international actors⁷⁰ — it was necessary to trace the relatively recent emergence of the following three contingent factors: (i) the concept of a 'transnational (or global) civil society' (itself a hotly contested term, see Section 2.2.2 and Chandler, 2007); (ii) the development of transnational networking capabilities in social movements; and (iii) contemporary transnational activism. From this analysis of the roots of TANs, it was then possible to address questions regarding their structures, agency in the international arena, the social causes they champion, their effectiveness and fitness-for-purpose of the evolving TAN model.

Therefore, the relevant literatures should encompass each of these subject areas in order to explain how the different dimensions interact and influence/change each other in the process. Complexity thinking regards this as exploring the co-evolutionary dynamics of the problem space. I suggest that envisaging civil society organisations as systemic elements that can be attracted to exploring their 'adjacent possible' opportunities is also relevant, especially when one considers these groups may be drawn to act locally, domestically, or transnationally; or individually (*e.g.* Greenpeace, Oxfam or Human Rights Watch), or in clusters (*e.g.* the environmental, humanitarian aid and human rights movements). This thesis

⁷⁰ As discussed in Chapter 3, this thesis follows the complexity-based concept of 'international system' suggested by Cudworth and Hobden (2011:70-81)

holds that examining such interactions through complex realism is hugely scaleable and coherent arguments can only be framed after integrating findings in the respective literatures.

'Global civil society' debates

Mainstream acceptance of the notion that a 'global civil society' (GCS) exists is far from being a given in socio-political debate. Rather, it is an area of intense study that is characterised by (i) the divergent philosophies and theories of pluralists, neorealists and neoliberals (Brown and Ainley, 2005:41); and (ii) a lack of clear definitions concerning the nature, existence, effects, or even the possibility, of such underspecified concepts as both 'global civil society' and 'globalisation' (Keane, 2003: *xi-xiii*; Tarrow, 2005:5, 68-76; Kaldor, 2003:559; Held and McGrew, 2002:1; Held, 2010:*ix-xii*; Buzan, 2004:77-89; Clark *et al*, 2005: 293; Friedman, 1999:*ii*⁷¹).

Criticising the adoption of the term 'global civil society' as being an imprecise — even misleading — concept and label, Keane (2003: 94-5; also Risse, 2000) argues that from the perspective of state-centred realism there is no global state, no globalised politics, and therefore no global civil society. In Keane's view (*ibid*: 92), global civil society is not driven by a single social logic but is a far messier, interconnected 'syndrome' of multiple processes and multiple dynamics. Keane holds that the idea of 'global civil society' is infused with too much contradiction and blurred parameters to be so neatly defined, therefore the term is not apt. Ergo, Keane admits the phenomenon is real, the referent is wanting.

Nevertheless, Scholte is more comfortable with the widely-accepted terminology, and claims: 'civil society has moved centre stage' in current discussions of globalisation (2005:322), although he sees the concept of 'globalisation' as more of an enigma — simultaneously an effect and a cause (*ibid*: 4). Contra Melucci (1996:7-8), who claims the tools of the Information Age are shaping a new reality in which people perceive themselves as belonging in a 'unified social space' of

⁷¹ This thesis rejects Friedman's assertion that globalisation is the new 'international system' that followed the Cold War (1999:*ii*). Contra this influential U.S. writer, I argue that the constellations to which Friedman refers might be thought of as a more interconnected and therefore transformed international order (in the sense of patterns or arrangements of elements), rather than as a system. The notion of system as applied in this thesis considers the international environment to be constituted by the intersectionality of myriad complex, open, and adaptive systems, including, but not limited to, those of nation states.

planetary scale, Tarrow sees nothing of the sort emerging from the globalisation discourses, arguing that 'there is no single core process leading to a global civil society or anything resembling one' (2005:9), in fact: 'few local citizens engage naturally in 'global thinking' and, largely due to dissimilarities in national political cultures, are highly resistant to accepting global interpretations of their local claims (*ibid*:75).

Consequently, conflicting perspectives on the relativity aspects of transnationalising, or globalising, political issues (such as those expressed by Tarrow (*ibid*), Melucci (*ibid*) and Chandler (2005, 2007, 2009), strongly influenced my epistemological approach to find new ways to investigate whether TANs are effective in their quests to promote universal norms and secure universally-recognised victories via the international system. The GCS literature also revealed a lack of commonly-recognised referents for unprecedented forms of deterritorialised, transglobal socio-political phenomena, such as TANs.

As noted earlier in the literature on contentious international politics, it was clear also from the GCS literature that political scholars typically view TANs as embedded in circumstances that are globally expansive and conceptually elusive (Risse, 2012:426-427), impelling many to rely on conventional constructivist epistemologies and methodologies to investigate their historical origins, arguably in social movements, in order to explain the phenomenon that they have become⁷². However, there was a significant discordant note in the GCS literature, with Keane voicing caveats concerning this type of hepatomancy (*ibid*: 5-8).

Taking a characteristic mainstream, social movements approach to GCS, Sikkink argues (2005:154) that, in the short term, the dynamics of social movement activity can be analysed as groups operating rationally within international and domestic contexts of opportunities and constraints⁷³. However, she continues:

Social movement theorists have long recognized that social movements not only operate within domestic opportunity structures, but they can also make

⁷² The work of Klandermans, Staggenborg and Tarrow (2002:339) is particularly relevant to understanding the difficulties political analysts face in approaching GCS, including TANs. Risse provides a comprehensive overview of these debates (2012: 426-452).

⁷³ This perspective is also explained by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998)

or expand existing opportunity structures. The same is the case at the international level. Over a longer term, the goal of many transnational activists is to transform or recreate the very opportunity structures within which they work.

Clearly, Sikkink's conceptualisation has implications for exploring the relational interface between 'international level' elements. From this, account, I developed an hypothesis (my H₃)⁷⁴ that, in a Thucydidean sense, activist groups perceived to have subversive intentions are probably met with suspicion and resistance in their relations with the representatives of international system states and institutions.

Buzan (2004:81)⁷⁵ relates how with the ending of the Cold War, 'global civil society' (GCS) became 'a kind of synonym for globalization'⁷⁶, in a descriptive sense: the term capturing a general understanding that non-state actors, entities and structures of all sorts were becoming a more influential part of international relations. Not everyone was convinced that this constituted a 'global civil society', Buzan admits:

But most analysts, whether or not they advocated the continued primacy of the state, were happy to concede that the transnational domain was uncommonly lively, and there was little doubt that GCS in this sense was making a difference to international norms and rules through successful campaigns on issues ranging from landmines and famine relief, through debt and terms of trade, to human rights and the environment.

Support for this perspective comes also from Sikkink (2005:152), who discusses the flurry of IR research activity in the mid-1990s in terms of a re-emergent transnationalist research agenda, focusing on a 'new transnationalism', transnational networks, global civil society, transnational social movements, or world polity. Despite their differences, Sikkink claims, these diverse literatures all make the common point that transnational relations in which non-state actors play a prominent role are an increasingly significant part of international relations. Furthermore, she says, the transnationalist research programme is intrinsically linked to broader concerns within constructivist IR theory (and some neoliberal

⁷⁴ H₃: *The adversarial advocacy strategies adopted by TANs constitute a barrier to them achieving their aims in the international policy-making environment.*

⁷⁵ *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation*

⁷⁶ On the other hand, Archer (2013:2) holds that 'the vast literature on globalisation [...] has been incurably "actualist"'.

institutionalism), regarding the influence of ideas, norms and identity on world politics.

However, a contrasting view on the political potency of transnational NGOs at the international level is taken by Clark *et al* (2005:293), who states:

At the international level, it is as yet unclear whether the increase in the number of NGOs with shared transnational goals can be equated with an emerging global civil society. Although NGO networks of interaction that parallel or intersect the international state system may have meaning for the participants, unless they are focused and received in particular ways, they do not necessarily affect states.

The significance of the point: '[...] unless they are focused and *received in particular ways* (my emphasis), they do not necessarily affect states' was therefore assessed as having crucial relevance for this thesis, supporting the development of my two hypotheses (H₂ and H₃)⁷⁷, concerning signs that (a) the international system is struggling to accommodate TANs and has a noticeably troubled interface with some; and (b) the adversarial strategies adopted by some TANs constitute a barrier to them achieving their aims in the international policy-making environment.

In order to acquire a fuller understanding of influential worldviews regarding the concept of a politically empowered 'global civil society' and the communicative nature of social activism, particularly in advanced capitalist states, the philosophical works of Habermas were also reviewed. In fact, I submit that within the postmodern, poststructural, post-Marxian milieu, the strong influence of Habermasian thought is a recurring sub-text. Habermas's widely cited study (1989)⁷⁸, afforded new ways of problematising and exploring the 'public sphere' (Crossley and Roberts, 2004:1), which, judging by the demand for, ubiquity and echoing of his writings in this literature and discourses, has clearly appealed to many interested in social protest⁷⁹. The 'public sphere', Habermas maintains, is a

⁷⁷ H₂: *The international system is struggling to accommodate TANs and the elements of the international institutions have a distinctively troubled interface with modern TAN-type NGOs.*

H₃: *The adversarial advocacy strategies adopted by some TANs constitute a barrier to them achieving their aims in the international policy-making environment.*

⁷⁸ *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere.*

⁷⁹ Although Habermas is not particularly identified with the contentious international politics subset of the political sociological literature, I suggest his influence can be recognised in the communications

notional space, distinct from the state, in which citizens discuss issues of general interest. They also engage in commodity exchange and social labour in that sphere (*ibid*: 1-3). The notion of the people-public sphere set in relations of permanent opposition to the two smaller, elite, social sectors set in relations of dominance over them — namely, the ‘private’ sphere and the ‘state’ authorities’ sphere — is reified in Habermas’s work.⁸⁰

Habermas (1989) discusses the colonisation of the ‘lifeworld’ (composed of the public and private spheres of everyday life, *e.g.* family, work, leisure, education) by ‘the system’ (institutions of the state and economy). Conflicts in society erupt on the seam between ‘system’ and ‘lifeworld’ (1984:xxxvii). Therefore, I argue it is possible to conceive — in simplistic terms — that some seeking social reform envision that by reducing the influence of the system, the seam and source of social conflict will disappear. While Habermas’s writing reflects a particularly Eurocentric philosophy, I consider his work on colonisation of the lifeworld and social movements are vital to a fuller understanding of the emergence of a transnational civil society and many of the trends, opinions and communicative strategies circulating within contemporary transnational activism. Habermas’s assertion that: ‘Only political orders can have and lose legitimacy; only they need legitimation’ (1984:179), is a useful guide also to understanding the ways in which transnational civil society may, or may not, value the attribute of legitimacy. This point is especially telling in light of Castell’s observation (2012:235) that:

Movements do not object to the principle of representative democracy, but denounce the practice of such democracy as it is today, and do not recognize its legitimacy.

Moreover, Habermas describes civil society actors as operating in a social ‘sphere’ of private life that is separated from both the public sphere and the state sphere (1989:3). However, the idea of ‘sphere’ in the Habermasian conceptualisation — which, as will be shown in the case studies, is frequently echoed in TAN advocacy — entails connotations of there being a pre-existing void and, moreover, one that

strategies of many TANs, and hence on the subject matter on which many writers on contentious international politics focus. Further study is required to substantiate this link.

⁸⁰ Convincing examples of this class-differentiated thinking can be seen in the case study chapters and in the Occupy movement’s key message asserting ‘We are the 99%’ (van Gelder, 2011).

is unoccupied by other entities and is available for appropriation. I take this to be a surmise that is not borne out in the international institutional realm, nor any other. Moreover, Habermas's theorisations regarding class-based 'spheres' of social existence in a 'lifeworld' are greatly at variance with the complexity theory used in this thesis, and with the multi-causal realities and social mobilities of the contemporary world. As is shown in Chapters 5 and 6, the place and function of NGOs/TANs in the international system are expanded in co-evolutionary processes to accommodate non-state actors as necessary, and do not pre-exist. This literature supported the development of my hypothesis H₄⁸¹, concerning the value of applying complex realism to explicate this subject area.

On a final note regarding 'spheres', Keane (2003:57-66) draws attention to the extensive scale and ubiquity of belief that a global civil society 'with all its blurred self-images and ambiguities' actually exists as an autonomous social space, between the state and the family, 'within which individuals, groups, and movements can effectively organise and manoeuvre on a world scale to undo and transform existing power relations, especially those of big business' (*ibid*:62-63). Noting the 'unfortunate impression that global civil society is a (potentially) unified subject', Keane warns us that a 'one-sided emphasis' on the voluntaristic choices of individuals 'has the effect of obscuring other planetary forces that currently constrain and enable their actions' (*ibid*:66). Hence, Keane's caveats and critical insights into the potential political effectiveness of TANs, operating under the mantle of global civil society, influenced my decision to explore them further via the hypotheses H₁ and H₃.⁸²

Overall, the GCS literature revealed that there are elements of the composition, ideologies and strategies of transnational, or global, civil society activist networks that need far greater clarification, since they appeared destined to impact

⁸¹ H₄: A complex realist approach has exemplary merit in approaching the subject area and primary research question of the thesis.

⁸² H₁: Contemporary TANs are an important NGO variant in international politics that have unprecedented properties and powers emerging from their advocacy communications, which are typically neglected in politics theorising.

H₃: The adversarial advocacy strategies adopted by some TANs constitute a barrier to them achieving their aims in the international policy-making environment.

negatively on their relationships with officials of state systems and international institutions.

2.2.3 Political advocacy in the Information Age

In this section I lay the groundwork for my later discussion relating to the importance of the 'Information Age' to the development and effectiveness of TANs. This literature was necessary for understanding the part of the PRQ relating to the effectiveness of TANs in achieving their aims, which I hypothesised was significantly influenced by their communications strategies and performance. In fact, Risse concludes (2012:434): '[...] the effectiveness of transnational advocacy groups and activists depends crucially on the strategies used'.

Synthesising Risse's finding with Keck and Sikkink's definition of TANs (1998:8) as transnational networks that are uniquely defined by their 'advocacy' function — *i.e.* organising to 'plead the causes of others or defending a cause or proposition' — illustrates the centrality of communications strategies to the effectiveness of TANs. Moreover, these insights support my hypothesis that TAN communications strategies also play a crucial role in determining the 'place' and 'function' of TANs in the international system.

Providing an overview of contemporary political advocacy, Buzan (2004: 83) explains that as modern, industrialised, societies have become better educated and more capable, they have also become less subservient to authority, more willing to define their own agendas, and more able to create their own nodes and networks in pursuit of those agendas. Furthermore, many people believe they can influence the world with their mobilisation, but doubt they can do it through normal political processes. This opinion is shared by Castells (2007, 2012:234-237), and by Keck and Sikkink, (1998:32).

Castells describes 'The Network Society' (2004b), as an upsurge in social movements 'in most parts of the world' in recent years. Appearing in very different forms and with sharply contrasting systems of values and beliefs to those of the past, he claims that these social transformation agendas are purposive collective

actions aimed at changing the values and interests institutionalised in society⁸³. They are, therefore, tantamount to challenges to existing power relations (*ibid*), and are communicating ('from many-to-many') through a global web of horizontal communication networks:

The emergence of mass self-communication offers an extraordinary medium for social movements and rebellious individuals to build their autonomy and confront the institutions of society in their own terms and around their own projects [...] they also intervene in the mainstream mass media as they try to influence public opinion at large.

While generally agreeing with the socio-political insights Castells offers, I consider his work suffers from an important oversight. In placing his focus on correlational aspects of the social and technological conditions that appear to have triggered the emergence of TANs, Castells not only perceives advocacy activists massively embracing new communications technologies, but uncritically assumes both the presence and uniformity of the high levels of sophisticated communications skills and techniques that are required to use ICTs effectively⁸⁴. Consequently, the impressions gained from finding this gap in the political literature prompted me to explore further, since my empirical experience had led me to an alternative proposition: i.e. that while it is apparent many TANs are availing of the talents of multitudes of communications graduates entering the NGO and non-profit world, only the better-resourced organisations can afford to hire the most skilled advocacy practitioners in a highly competitive market. Moreover, I considered there was a case to be made that international 'best practice' communications techniques among the most visible, mainstream, TANs are now highly commoditised, resulting in their increasing tendency to all look and act much the same.

Overall, the literature seeded an argument that in the Information Age, advocacy communications theorisations provide a more coherent platform from which to assess the new ICT-enabled political activist phenomena than does the commonly-found alternative: grafting mismatched extensions on to pre-existing social

⁸³ Keane argues that within global movements generally (even anti-globalisation groups), the existing form of global civil society is held to be 'a good thing' that is 'in need of militant defence, for instance staged at the feet of global institutions, before the eyes and ears of the world's media' (2003:62).

⁸⁴ The term 'effectively' is taken here to mean having the capability to strategically elicit desired responses from identified target audiences.

movements theory. The results of this latter methodology, as found in the core social movements literature, can be confusing. 'It is difficult to grasp the nature of social movements,' Diani (Diani and McAdam, 2003:1) warns, before providing a long list of group characteristics from which a researcher might choose, in order to begin conceptualising the phenomenon. Ultimately, Diani concludes: 'Social movements are in other words, complex and highly heterogeneous network structures'. Castells (2004:73) makes the claim, somewhat credulously, that social movements 'are what they say they are'. Taking a sceptical view of this claim, based on receiver-orientation aspects of communications theory (Broom and Sha, 2013:195; Gregory, 2000:91-93; Miller, 2005:10), I was prompted to propose instead that socio-political movements are what their receiver audiences perceive them to be. This, by definition, will be the majority view, and it may be far from the self-images social activist groups have of themselves⁸⁵.

A focus on TAN campaigns as an analytical framework, as first advised by Keck and Sikkink, (1998:6-7), was in my view predisposed to examining the intentionality and conduct of specific campaigns. This methodology, I surmised, provides a self-limiting, temporally constrained, picture of complex political situations, and has a limited ability to reveal multi-causality, inconclusiveness and unintentionality in the outcomes of actions. As can be seen in the quotation below, the campaign effectiveness of TANs cannot necessarily be taken at face value. The rationale given by Keck and Sikkink for the campaign focus is that it 'highlights *relationships*'⁸⁶ — how connections are established and maintained among network actors, and between activists and their allies and opponents (*ibid*:7). However, in reviewing the literature containing accounts of campaigns⁸⁷, relationships with international institutions were found to be invariably assessed, if at all, from an outside-in orientation focusing on the subjective understandings of campaigners about what

⁸⁵ As an illustration (albeit an extreme one): the violent activism of youthful Red Guards during China's Cultural Revolution was perceived from within the organisation as patriotic and morally irreproachable in its conviction that the country's culture needed transforming, although arguably the meaning of the movement for millions of others throughout the world was, and still is, that it was abhorrent and cruel (Cheng, 1987: 77-79; 87-89). This dramatic example is used here to demonstrate the importance of external perceptions of an organisation, or an individual, in making meaning and reifying identity, whether this is with majority, minority or oppositional key audiences.

⁸⁶ Emphasis as in original.

⁸⁷ Accounts of TAN campaigns, from a political perspective, were found in each of the three literatures reviewed. These included: Prakash and Gugerty (2010); Florini (2000); Keck and Sikkink (1998); Imig and Tarrow (2001); Diani and McAdam (2003); Melucci, 1996; Edwards and Gaventa (2001); Dakroury *et al* (2009); and Khagram *et al*, 2002).

they are doing and the results of their strategies, rather than an inside-out orientation, which is the only reliable means of establishing the effectiveness of specific campaign strategies and their power to elicit change (Miller, 2005:10)⁸⁸. In fact, Sikkink (2005:152) admits:

Few social movement theorists do research that looks inside of international institutions to understand how social movements work there and what kind of impact they have had. As studies of transnational campaigning increase, I believe that social movement theorists will find it useful to take international institutions more seriously as actual arenas for social movement activity, not just as targets.

For these reasons, this literature proved inadequate for mining the multi-party ontological reality of TAN relationships and influence in the international institutional system — creating an imperative to conduct deeper research into international institutional archives. In the event, these official sources enabled a range of seldom-voiced, contrasting perspectives regarding the effectiveness of NGOs/TANs in the international system; the strengths and limitations of their impact in international *fora* and raise questions about possible futures for non-state organisations in multi-stakeholder governance.

Importantly, Albertazzi and McDonnell (2008) enabled this study to identify striking similarities between the advocacy style and messages of many TANs and the simplistic and reductionist rhetoric and messages of modern-day populist movements, both on the political left and the right. Similarities included the promotion of heightened senses of insecurity and urgency, and social boundary construction based on a theoretically sparse ideology that pits a virtuous and homogeneous ‘people’ (which will be shown later to be reflected in the increasing popular appetite for the concept of ‘people power’) against a set of elites and dangerous ‘others’. Disillusionment, frustration and anger with existing regimes and institutions of democratic governance was also a recurring theme among writers focusing on populism and those observing the emergence of transnational

⁸⁸ A particularly helpful text was *Contesting Global Governance: Multilateral Economic Institutions and Global Social Movements* (O’Brien, Goetz, Scholte and Williams, 2000). This was one of the few texts available on complex multilateralism that investigates the major public multilateral economic institutions from an inside-out perspective.

advocacy nodes and networks and the features of their political engagements (see Pasquino, 2008:15-29; and Castells, 2012; 234-237).

It is fair to say that the literature outlined in this section is voluminous and expanding at an astonishing rate, as scholars vie to conceptualise and record their analyses of the global political zeitgeist. However, by comparison, research on the campaigns developed and presented by TANs is relatively limited, often confined by theoretical approaches that leave questions unanswered, and patchy in regard to the issues studied. This situation is not especially surprising considering the multitude of TAN campaigns appearing in recent years and the inherent difficulties in studying them other than as individual, or small-*n* comparative, case studies.

2.2.4 Methodological approaches and limitations in the literature

Research into social movements, generally— including TANs — and their projected intentional, and unintentional, messages, revealed a preoccupation with studying such organisations by taking an observer’s subjective perspective, and on defending one theoretical or methodological approach (Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001; Tarrow, 1999; Chandler, 2005:166). As touched on in the preceding section, approaches to NGO/TAN advocacy has tended to concentrate on assessing campaign communications outputs, rather than on evaluating outcomes, which is seen by communications professionals as essential to determining campaign effectiveness (Broom and Sha, 2013:333; Gregory, 2000: 171; Macnamara, 2000: 230-32). In fact, Chandler (2005:162-5), Colás (2002:65), and Keane (2003:95) each express caution regarding tendencies of social science researchers to exaggerate the influence and power of global civic actors through sympathetic, though often biased, empirical research methodologies. Finnemore and Sikkink (2001) also acknowledge that a bias toward progressive norms is common in constructivist IR research. Colás asserts (*ibid*):

Such primarily descriptive accounts tend to conflate the self-proclaimed aspirations and objectives of international social movements with their *actual*⁸⁹ impact, thereby falling into the trap of an excessively subjectivist and therefore one-sided view of the [...] international social world.

⁸⁹ Emphasis as in original.

Chandler also observes that, to date, constructivist approaches to global civil society seem to be driven more by a normative desire 'to support the 'principled-issues' advocated by non-state actors' than by any clear analysis of the complex relationship between state and non-state actors (Chandler, 2005:166).

Furthermore, as a general observation, strategic aims and evaluation criteria for social movement campaigns often appear to be discussed only in terms of zero-sum games — a position this thesis emphatically rejects as unhelpful in considering the real-world dialectical, compromise-dependent and conciliatory characteristics of the international policy-making *fora*⁹⁰.

This thesis does not deny the usefulness of constructivist nor methodological individualistic approaches in examining international relations subject matter but, in view of these methodological debates, I considered there is a need for caution in selecting (a) the subject matter to which these methodological lenses might be applicable and (b) vigilance in determining the limitations of the parts and levels of social relational reality that are actually being illuminated and the extent of explaining it that is possible.

Clark *et al* (2005:293) argues also for the setting of more demanding standards in evaluating transnational political processes than has been applied in accounts of such activity to date. Meanwhile, Klandermans, Saggenborg and Tarrow, (2002:339) remind us that until quite recently most social movement research was lodged securely within domestic politics. Indeed, Klandermans *et al* point out that for some theorists the '*national*⁹¹ social movement was the key subject of the study of contentious politics'. However, with the recent expansion of the authority of international institutions, the growth of INGOS and the ease with which citizens of the new century can travel and engage in contention, 'social movement scholars are challenged to adapt their theories and methods to contention beyond borders'. Consequently, they assert:

Whether these new global phenomena will fit within the canon of social movement research or require a qualitatively new theoretical effort is the most exciting issue in the field of contentious politics today (*ibid*).

⁹⁰ Evidence for this assessment is provided in Chapters 4 and 5.

⁹¹ Emphasis as in original.

In similar vein, Wight (2006: 174-175) concludes that in the contemporary analysis of social practices, ranging across multiple planes of social activity and competing theories about the relative explanatory force of agents and structures:

[T]he question remains as to whether it is possible to combine certain elements of them to form a social ontology able to integrate the various aspects of social life into one account.

Because all of the dimensions of social life 'can play an important role in social explanation', Wight observes '[...] we need a metatheory able to hold out the potential of integration across all fields of activity' (*ibid*: 175).

These debates spotlighted widespread misgivings over the credibility of present knowledge on TANs and the adequacy of applying stock epistemological templates to studying them. This led me to search for substantive⁹² theoretical frameworks and tools that would help me to bridge the multiple levels of analysis and interdisciplinary paradigms implied by the PRQ and hypotheses. In this quest, I was guided also by Giddens (1984:xxii), who argues for an eclectic approach to borrowing ideas from 'quite divergent sources' and a plurality of traditions, sharpening them and demonstrating their usefulness to illuminating complex problems of social analysis.

Inevitably, I encountered significant challenges in seeking precedents in the literature that were relevant to both my international system research area and the international-level aims and effectiveness of suitable case study TANs. In many instances, the literature presented case studies of domestic dissident campaigns that were boosted⁹³ to another level of complex international interaction, following their adoption by various TANs (*e.g.* Risse, 2000:177-209; Colás, 2005:23; Bourgos, 2000; Florini, 2000). These cases inferred political potency as a consequence of TAN interventions and offered *post hoc* accounts of selected events of interest to researchers, but left vital questions unanswered in regard to the reality of indigenous campaigns that were, say, damaged by the intervention of transnational activists, or simply failed to appear on the mainstream academic

⁹² This thesis was constructed using applied substantive theory and empirical research and makes no claims to presenting metatheory.

⁹³ See my earlier references to 'scale shift' theory in Section 2.2.1.

radar⁹⁴. I found such qualitative studies to be sources of thought-provoking human interest and ethnic data, but to be deficient in regard to international comparability and the true effectiveness of TANs interacting with the international system.

Meanwhile, others (Keane, 2003:95; Chandler, 2005:162; Clark *et al*, 2005) are united in condemning the quantitative model, whereby counting the number of non-state institutions and their rates of growth is alleged by some researchers to demonstrate their influence⁹⁵. While it is difficult to quantify specific policy changes as a result of international engagement between NGOs and non-state actors and states and international institutions (Chandler, 2005:162; Keck and Sikkink, 1998:26), I suggest that this difficulty is not resolved by taking approaches that use empirical case studies that assign primary importance to non-state actors. These considerations pointed to significant gaps in the methodological literature on ways to approach social activist groups, in general, and the research problem space in particular, requiring that this study take a more heterodox overall methodological approach and explore many alternative theories and approaches.

There were many to choose from. Indeed, the literature was notable for the profusion of research approaches that have been applied to new forms of transnational activism (Tarrow, 2005: 20-24; Klandermans, Staggenborg and Tarrow, 2002:314-322) — each one providing, I suggest, only partial illumination of my research area. In analysing how others have sought to capture and portray the place and function of non-state actors, generally, in the international system — including those found to fit some, or all, of the referent criteria for TANs⁹⁶ that I developed for this thesis — I logged evidence in the literature of each of the following analytical frameworks:

⁹⁴ Tarrow (2005:76), provides support for this hypothesis in his identification of contradictions between the 'local' and the 'global' in the framing of issues by TANs interested in representing indigenous issues globally.

⁹⁵ This thesis makes no such power claims for the statistical graphic representation at *Figure 5.1*. What the data is meant to indicate is the enormous scale of INGO growth; that this growth has occurred in a relatively short space of time; and it supports Buzan's observation that: 'the transnational domain was uncommonly lively' (2004:81).

⁹⁶ See *Figure 6.2* for the differentiating referent criteria for TANs.

- Actor Network Theory (Law, 2004; Latour, 2007);
- Argument (Risse, 2000; Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001);
- Brand analysis (Barakso, 2010:155-172);
- Campaigns (Keck and Sikkink, 1998);
- Claim-making and counter-claim making (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001:138);
- Communications networks (Castells, 2004b);
- Discourse analysis (Johnston, 2002:62);
- Frame analysis (Goffman, 1959; Chesters and Welsh, 2006:13-14; Snow *et al*, 1986);
- Globalisation theories incorporating complexity theory (Chesters and Welsh, 2006:1-9);
- Issue-based analysis (Willetts, 2011:xviii);
- Performativity (Butler, 1997; Goffman, 1959:28-82);
- Principled instrumentalism (Mitchell and Schmitz, 2014:504)
- Networks (Diani, 2002:188-194; Marsh, 1998; Castells, 2012; Keck and Sikkink, 1998:4);
- New social movement theory (Tarrow, 2005);
- Recognition and identity politics (Taylor, 1997; Castells, 2004a);
- Reflexive framing (Rein and Schön, 1995);
- Reframing (Laws and Rein, 2003:174);
- Representation (Pitkin, 1967);
- Representative claims (Saward, 2010);
- Resource management (Thomas, 2006);
- Rights marketing (Bob, 2010:133-134);
- Self-interested firms (Prakash and Gugerty, 2010:1-3);
- Social movement theory (Touraine, 1981; Kaldor, 2005)
- Social network theory (Diani and McAdam, 2003; Mueller *et al*, 2007);
- Transnational advocacy/transnational civil society collective action (Keck and Sikkink, 1998:2-4; Tarrow, 2005: 28-29; Florini, 2000:3-12).

Although it is impractical to assess here each of these rejected frameworks, I found that two that were commonly applied are connected to: (a) their organisational configurations in 'networks'; and (b) their socio-political reach, as connoted by the term 'transnational'. Despite its appeal 'as a description of some important realities in contemporary political systems', Peters argues that there are significant questions outstanding about using the concept of 'networks' and its theoretical utility (1998:21-22). Peters queries whether networks exist 'in any meaningful sense' as a means of explaining political interactions and policy-making, or whether they are 'mere constructs imposed by researchers for their own intellectual convenience'. A lack of distinction in the literature between types of networks is also problematical in that they all appear to be effectively the same, with insufficient focus on how they exert influence (*ibid*: 30). Meanwhile, the term 'transnational', in a geographical sense, has little meaning as a unit of analysis,

when TANs comprise social groups embedded in many social 'worlds', albeit existing within one ecosphere but poles apart in comparability. They may, for instance, range from groups embedded in economic development situations characterised as 'First World', 'Third World', *etc*; or social structural and cultural orders organised on tribal, class-divided, or advanced industrial capitalist lines⁹⁷. Due to space considerations, my detailed analysis of how these two frameworks helped to inform this thesis, where they revealed weaknesses and my reasons for deviating from these norms, is presented at Annex 3.

In light of the array of investigative approaches to be found in the literature, I saw credible support for Adler's opinion (2002:104) that the methodological debate on understanding the changing face of international contentious politics and transnational activism is 'outstanding, though urgent', as social scientists apply an expanding range of research approaches to the task. There was evidence in the literature also to support Law's insight (2004:2), that 'when social science tries to describe things that are complex, diffuse and messy' it 'tends to make a mess of it'. This, Law asserts, is 'because clear descriptions don't work if what they are describing is itself not very coherent'. These apparent methodological shortcomings in researching the subject area led me to explore alternative approaches, resulting in the development of my H₄⁹⁸, exploring complex realism.

Hence, extensive reviewing of contemporary studies in critical realism, complexity, and complex realism was required to trace the development of the relatively new paradigm of complex realism, which was then adopted in this thesis as a unifying conceptual framework and methodological resource. As I demonstrate in the next chapter, complex realism and communication lenses are useful tools for analysing political relationships, even conflictual ones, while at the same time avoiding the risk of becoming overwhelmed and influenced by the dilemmas associated with specific political debates.

⁹⁷ See Giddens for analysis of the importance of understanding these social structural categories (1984:91-92; 180-185).

⁹⁸ H₄: *A complex realist approach has exemplary merit in approaching the subject area and primary research question of the thesis.*

2.3 Summary

After reviewing the theoretical divisions expressed in the literature, I chose to enter the micro-macro analytical debate in IR astride the dividing fence: persuaded that the ontological understandings of complexity and neorealism are best suited to macroscopic analyses of international relations, while constructivist investigations are best suited to obtaining better understandings of typically local situations that are within the experience of situated local actors. Importantly, there were gaps in the literature that made it impossible to answer the PRQ and hypotheses without conducting further, original, research. These gaps were most apparent in the areas of (a) bringing into the contentious international politics paradigm more scientific and up-to-date understandings of the role of state-of-the-art communications in interpreting the interface between TANs and the international system; (b) explaining the barriers to international-level relationships, roles and effectiveness that some TANs encounter; and (c) explaining the different environments and effectiveness conditions that TANs encounter at various levels of complex interaction, beyond the basic mechanism identified by scale-shift theory. Moreover, these lacunae highlighted the lack of a unifying analytical framework in which micro- and macro-sociological phenomena could be accommodated and their inter-relationships explained.

I observed also that while writers in the contentious international politics paradigm frequently mention the work of others, for the most part, they tend to be engaged in separate conversations. The body of literature itself is essentially fragmented due, perhaps, to the fact that many research projects involving social movements and activism are based on fragmented case studies of specific local, regional, or national groups. The varied terminology used to refer to TANs and TAN-type organisations appears to be a reflection of this heterogeneity. Chandler's observation (2005:166), that constructivist (*i.e.* mainstream) approaches to global civil society seem to be driven mainly by a normative desire to support the 'principled-issues' advocated by non-state actors, was also evident in the body of work reviewed.

Although there is abundant literature on the readily perceived aspects of NGOs/TANs⁹⁹, little has been said on the rationality of the emerging TAN model as a communications vehicle for deployment across the multi-level, multi-dimensional social landscape of the world. The fact that TANs have emerged can be explained with reference to a rich mixture of historical and contemporary circumstances, which is adequately reflected in the literature. Whether transnational advocacy collectives are best suited to accomplish the goals they set for themselves, using the tools they select, appears open to question in light of uncertainties in the literature regarding their definition, common characteristics, and about their roles and performance in their interactions with the international system. Thus, the empirical exploration of TANs and their emergence and relationships, as assertive contenders in the international system, became the principal line of investigation in this dissertation. Constructivist narratives on the evolution of social movements are helpful in explaining the motivations and rationality of contemporary TANs and the ways in which they interact with communications technologies in pursuit of their goals, but the compilation of large numbers of individual narratives do not, I argue, adequately explain the ways in which TANs interact with international institutions, leaving much to be assumed. It may be that Keck and Sikkink's seminal study, published 1998, has been too influential among scholars, leading to a lack of critical attention by others following their groundbreaking path.

⁹⁹ These commonly include assessments of their social importance, principled issues, campaigns, justification of claims and counter-claims, impacts, setbacks, composition and possible futures.

3. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Theories are nets cast to catch what we call 'the world'.

Karl Popper (1977:59)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the way in which the primary research question¹⁰⁰, has been approached, the theoretical underpinnings of the study and the ways in which the research was carried out. The format complies with the five sequential core components of the research process as defined by Grix (2002:175): ontology, epistemology, methodology, methods and sources.

In the first instance, a macro-analytical approach to the international system was clearly indicated in order to establish the wider context of the study, notwithstanding the validation risks associated with higher levels of generality (van Meter, 1990:180-181). This, first stage, 'ascending' methodological approach follows Byne's advice on surveying the social world by investigating the possible sources of social change at macro, meso and micro levels and assembling knowledge as a basis for further interventions (2011:61; Wight, 2013:99). But equally, the question of whether TANs are 'effective' in achieving their aims in the international arena required examination by methods that would yield high levels of individual micro- and meso-level data, not least to ascertain *their* aims and effectiveness criteria. Guided by Minkoff (2002:260), I sought to avoid 'the tendency of analysts to focus on specific social movements using only the case study method', which privileges the histories and intramural understandings of individual organisations, while at the same time 'limiting the vantage point' from

¹⁰⁰ PRQ: *What is the place and function of transnational advocacy networks in the contemporary international system and how effective are they in achieving their aims?*

which we can comprehend them. These considerations dictated that a range of theoretical and analytical perspectives would be required.

Above all, this thesis contends that the primary research question is chiefly concerned with *relationships* in the international system at the macro-organisational level¹⁰¹ and is complex and multi-dimensional, its implications having relevance for different strata of social reality, occurring not least on different levels of complexity and timescales, which, I argue, should not be conflated or reduced. Neither should the question components be investigated individually and apart, but linked and explained as causal elements in a constantly changing structural relational and complex systems account¹⁰² (see Wight, 2006:294-295; Minkoff, 2002:260-264). Therefore, I resolved that Complex Realism was an appropriate all-encompassing philosophical and methodological framework, providing for observing systemic behaviours, analysing relationships between international actors and showing us ways to consider systems as having distinct properties, powers and causal effects (Mitleton-Kelly, 2003; Walby, 2009:17). Substantiation of this relatively recent theoretical addition to the international relations toolbox is presented in Section 3.2. According to Cudworth and Hobden (2011: 72):

Considering international actors as complex adaptive systems which interact with each other opens the route for analysing relations between them, whether they are, for example, states, governmental or non-governmental international organizations, or transnational corporations.

The suitability of the approach to this particular research problem space is further supported by the insights of Meadows (2009:13-14), who argues that a social system's function or purpose is not necessarily spoken, written, or expressed explicitly, and can best be deduced by investigating the way the system operates and how its various elements relate to each other. Meadows argues (*ibid*:14):

¹⁰¹ The macro-organisational level of analysis focuses on inter-organisational relationships, as opposed to interpersonal relationships between individuals. Moreover, Minkoff asserts that '*Organizational dynamics cannot be observed or measured at the level of individual SMOs or even with a focus on a few key actors*' (2002:262). Note: Minkoff uses the acronym 'SMO' to denote social movement organizations.

¹⁰² This thesis is guided by Wight's insights into the importance, in analysing social phenomena and practices, of considering both agential and structural relational logics occurring on multiple planes of social activity (2006:296-298).

The best way to deduce the system's purpose is to watch for a while to see how the system behaves. [...] Purposes are deduced from behaviour, not from rhetoric or stated goals.

Therefore, in the highly contested, rhetoric-charged environment of transnational advocacy and international policy-making, the availability of value-neutral complex system analytical tools was crucial to the development of the thesis, generating new knowledge and being fair. The main data-collecting period for this dissertation was carried out from 2010 to 2014.

3.1.1 Research design and approach rationale

The research design was driven by a PRQ that was clearly indicative of four challenging considerations in international political research: (i) it pointed to a complex, multi-dimensional, research problem space (or ontological landscape); (ii) it indicated the need for a progressive epistemological standpoint by containing, *inter alia*, implicit underlying connections to recent innovative sociological research approaches, such as complex realism, critical realism, complexity theorisations, a new wave of systems thinking in IR, and (in its allusion to social system change and self-organising processes), social morphogenesis theory¹⁰³; (iii) the essentially *relational* focus on interactions between the international system elements suggested that a cross-disciplinary study was essential, combining political and communications theory; and (iv) the focus on a contemporary social phenomenon raised important methodological challenges, especially in regard to relevant contemporary literature, the social systemic levels of researcher perspective and intervention, the selection and validity of data sources and the critical requirement to keep abreast of on-going developments within the contemporary international arena.

Thus, the decision was taken to undertake an empirical research project to try to unlock the relational interface using (a) a broad-ranging and objective primary research question; (b) a range of grounded hypotheses, or themes, employing complex realism as a conceptual framework and a range of theoretical lenses drawn principally from complexity, political and communications studies; (c) an inquiry design incorporating multiple case studies; and (d) an intensive diachronic

¹⁰³ For a succinct definition of morphogenesis theory see Archer 2013:1-2. For the value of this theory in IR, see Wight, 2013:86.

process tracing exercise. Guided by Byrne (2011:61), I considered it essential that the data were time-ordered to enable me to examine the processes of being and becoming that are necessary to understanding the emergence of TANs and locating them in the contemporary international system. The aggregated results were then systematically analysed using a qualitative methodological framework involving substantive theory, content and discourse data, direct observation, and continual iteration between all of the elements of the research design. I would emphasise that this is an empirical thesis, based on my own intensive research and synthesis of substantive theory in the identified paradigms and, despite the fact that aspects of this thesis might be considered *avant-garde*, I make no claims for developing meta-theory, although, hopefully, some rich seams for future research are indicated.

Reflections on alternative epistemologies

The forces accredited with driving globalisation in recent decades, particularly the advances in communications and transportation technologies, have increasingly brought the plight of suffering communities to new world audiences and, arguably, helped to generate social phenomena such as ‘cycles of contention’, a ‘global conscience’ and tens of thousands of new NGOs aiming to represent local and domestic concerns in the international arena¹⁰⁴. Meanwhile, research into ways to study these emerging social phenomena was also undergoing significant change. Since the late 1960s, there has been a paradigm shift as research in the social sciences moved from macro-sociological perspectives and quantitative research to micro-sociology with a preferred use of qualitative research methodologies, such as methodological individualism (Scheuch, 2004:13). This development led to a waning of interest in structural functionalism and the rise of various forms of interpretative sociology, typically privileging the roles of agents, which, in turn, has led to an emphasis on the subjective interpretation of macro-phenomena (*ibid*). However, I argue¹⁰⁵ that the limitations of an individual’s unique life experience and the complex systemic nature of the social world fundamentally problematise such extrapolations, making it impossible to inflate the micro perceptions of

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter 6 for textual references and the main discussion on these manifest expressions of social unease.

¹⁰⁵ This argument is based, *inter alia*, on the opinions of Giddens (1984:90-92) and Kant (2008/1790:49).

individuals to serve as macro understandings that could provide a valid basis for higher-level ontological claim-making¹⁰⁶.

Notwithstanding the recent advent of widely affordable globalised ICTs, which I consider unequivocally demolishes Immanuel Kant's 18th-century argument concerning the impossibility of 'universal communication' (2008/1790:49), my argument here nevertheless fully subscribes to the corresponding part of Kant's philosophy regarding the impossibility of 'subjective universality', which highlights the impenetrable cognitive barriers to the dissemination of subjective definitions of objects that are universally valid.

Therefore, this study found that complexity science has much to offer the epistemological debates concerning new international political actors, such as TANs, and how to study them, postulating — in the concept of 'emergence' — that we cannot infer understandings of higher orders of complexity from knowledge produced at lower orders of complexity, although they can be useful in building a picture (Wendt, 2003; Emmeche *et al*, 1997). This necessitates that in investigating social subject matter, macroscopic, 'top-down' and/or microscopic, 'bottom-up', analytical processes be applied, as appropriate, to the specific research questions being asked¹⁰⁷. In this case, the primary research question of the thesis required the taking of an overall macroscopic analytical perspective of the macro-level structures and boundary properties — or fitness landscape — that, I argue, largely condition the micro-level struggles of individuals and groups (such as TANs) for recognition of their subjectivities¹⁰⁸. Moreover, this sequence accords with scientific research guidance that warns against generalising (or ascending methodology) from single cases (Bryman, 2008:55; van Meter, 1990:180; Giddens, 1984:90-92). Thus, this thesis aims to demonstrate that in explaining the international world it is both valid and crucial to reclaim sociological perspectives that are suitably macroscopic in engaging with complex phenomena, but are also rigorously qualitative.

¹⁰⁶ This is the micro-macro problematique in sociology, which is a core consideration in this thesis, and is discussed later on. See Watts for a succinct overview of this problem (2011:61-67).

¹⁰⁷ See Wendt (1992a; 2003) and Emmeche *et al* (1997) for more on this approach.

¹⁰⁸ I am indebted to Wendt (2003), for these additional insights and descriptive terms.

3.1.2 Definition of terms

When the primary research question is unpacked, the object of enquiry can be seen as the relational interface in which some TANs interact with elements of the international system. This provided the empirical possibility for these relationships to be (a) assessed in terms of their relationship properties and contexts, and consequently to advance propositions concerning their 'place' orientation vis-à-vis other system elements; and (b) be examined to determine whether, and in what ways, these entities perform recognisable functions in the system and to what effect. Moreover, I took as a given Byne's advice for the conduct of social surveys that '[T]he significance of accurate description of what is and how it has become what it is cannot be overemphasised' (2011:62). For the purposes of the study, 'place' is interpreted in a broad sense to mean the recognisable institutional links, behavioural patterns, or status, of TANs in the contemporary international system. 'Function', is taken to mean the characteristics of the roles TANs perform in the contemporary international system, over time, and the effects and outcomes observed. The various definitions of 'international system' were discussed earlier in Section 2.2.2.

It is important to point out here that in investigating the 'place', 'function' and 'effectiveness' of TANs, I have sought to focus on *their* settings, or fitness landscapes, and not those of the investigator. This conforms to Garner and Zald's advice '[...] to understand the course of social movements we have to understand them as a *configuration* and within a *determining environment*' (1987:293)¹⁰⁹. This opinion appears to be commensurable also with Merton's 'role set' theory (1968:41; Watts, 2011:251), which although developed to analyse the social status of individual persons in a social system, I take to apply equally to entities that are collectivities. This is due to my own empirical research within diverse organisations, which supports Minkoff's opinion (2002:263) that SMOs may be conceptualised as unitary 'carriers of movement strategies, resources, goals, and collective identities [...]', that effect their relationship to their 'determining environment'.

¹⁰⁹ Emphasis as in original.

In essence, 'role set' theory holds that determining social status calls for a 'shift in the angle of vision' to acknowledge that each entity in a social system is positioned/placed variously, according to an acceptance, or acquiescence, to the pre-existing conditions for being part of that system; and plays not one but multiple roles, each of which entails a set of unique relationships. Giddens also offers relevant insights into the concept of 'social role' (1984:xxv). Although, like Merton, Giddens's theory sees individual persons being positioned in a 'multiple' way within social relations conferred by specific social identities, I suggest that the external message projection, by each TAN, of an individualised, strategic, corporate identity and reputation, results in message receivers responding 'as if' the organisation was an individual. Accordingly, the ways in which the case study TANs juggle the diverse stakeholder expectations associated with their multiple roles, especially by demonstrating strategic successes and on-going value to their financial donor base, is examined in Chapters 7 to 9¹¹⁰.

In developing this thesis, it was therefore important to focus on examining the specific properties and appropriateness, or fitness-for-purpose, of these multiple roles and associated relationships attributable to TANs, in general, and a selected sample of TAN models, and observe the corresponding reactions of their relational counterparts at various levels of complex interaction. I argue that political science alone cannot satisfactorily explain such international relational matters, other than loosely in terms of, *inter alia*, alignment or incompatibility with political ideologies, precedent cases, political patterns and tendencies, and conformity with statutes, practices and relative norms. Political theory does not, for example, address the widely acknowledged principal element in human relationship quality: trust. On the other hand, I aim to show that communications science has much to say that is apposite regarding relationship quality assessment, audience segmentation (or targeting), message differentiation, rhetoric, persuasion and advocacy communications effectiveness and pitfalls.

¹¹⁰ The importance of 'stakeholder analysis', including stakeholder expectations, is emphasised throughout this thesis. Stakeholder analysis is a crucial aspect of contemporary communications theory. It asserts the value of identifying and gaining knowledge of stakeholders who are in interdependent relationships with an organisation and who are in a position to influence the organisation, and *vice versa* (Broom and Sha, 2012:270). Complexity insights would see this as entities engaged in relationships that are coevolving.

Since evaluations of ‘effectiveness’ are very likely to be relative — and as will be discussed later, credit assignment for efficacy claims are inherently problematical in complex systems — this thesis takes the ‘effectiveness’ of TANs to be the achievement of *their* preferred outcomes in quest of their declared goals. I further suggest that, in accordance with Nye’s view, ‘effectiveness’ is synonymous with having ‘the power to influence outcomes’ (2011:10). Thus, to be effective implies an empowerment to achieve one, or more, positive outcomes that are in accordance with desires. Nye asserts that in the relational definition of power (as opposed to resources power), power is the ability to alter others’ behaviour to produce preferred outcomes (*ibid*). I consider this to be a reasonable yardstick, and it is the one that I adopt in this study¹¹¹.

Although overcoming the challenges of defining NGOs in general, and TANs in particular, was a fundamental consideration in operationalising the research design, I have addressed this aspect at length later in the thesis, as follows. Firstly, since the principal institutions of the international system, notably the UN, do not formally differentiate between the various typologies of civil society organisations with which they have dealings, typically referring to them as NGOs, INGOs or civil society, I have discussed the difficulties this presents for the thesis in the opening stages of Chapter 5: The U.N. Interface with Civil Society. Next, in Chapter 6, I introduce TANs and present my referent criteria for distinguishing contemporary TANs from traditional model NGOs that continue to function along more familiar lines in the sphere of international politics. This step is supported by my TAN identification template, which directs attention to characteristics that I hold to be the relatively commensurable aspects of transnational *advocacy* networks — their advocacy communications function — rather than following the usual research path of focusing predominantly on the contentious political issues on which TANs campaign and the campaign strategies and tactics that they have used that political researchers find most interesting. My argument is that in thus focusing on an array of disparate and unconnected glimpses of this phenomenon, such issue-based studies add to the confusion associated with TANs, because they typically

¹¹¹ Moreover, I interpret this to be also in accordance with Bhaskar’s views regarding the *activity-dependent* nature of social structures, as a result of which the mechanisms at work in society exist only by virtue of their effects (1998a: 229).

underrate their most prominent shared determinative feature: their advocacy communications function. In fact, this thesis suggests, precision in defining — and therefore recognising — the communications choices of TANs is crucial to thinking about their effectiveness and futures, since the contemporary communications model of TANs that I outline is now becoming globally commoditised and copied. This, I suggest, may not be to their long-term advantage, or effectiveness, in championing differentiated political interests and concerns.

3.2 Ontology

The thesis is guided by the proposition that ontology lies at heart of international relational matters and all attempts to understand and explain this infinitely complex and conflicted landscape should begin with ‘sustained ontological investigations’ (Wight, 2006:2-4; also Cox, 1996:144; Walker, 1993:82; Wendt, 1999:6). Indeed, Cox (*ibid*), argues that we ‘cannot define a problem in global politics without presupposing a certain basic structure consisting of the significant kinds of entities involved and the form of significant relationships among them’. Ergo, when we put ontological matters at the heart of analysis, as advised by Wight (*ibid*), we open the way for greater epistemological and methodological pluralism and the hope of achieving a more comprehensive body of knowledge of the dynamics, processes and outcomes of IR subject matter.

These philosophical insights form the ontological foundations of this thesis and their validity is tested by my adoption of a complex realism conceptual framework. I posit that this approach provides a way to reclaim¹¹² deep structural analysis of the international landscape, the entities involved in it and their relationships. This follows Bhaskar’s assertion that social phenomena (like most natural phenomena) are ‘the product of a plurality of structures’ and we will only be able to understand — and so change — the social world if we identify the underlying structures at work that generate the observable patterns of events and discourses in the world (2011:2-3). I now present my grounds for conceptualising the research problem

¹¹² I explain later (Chapters 6), that the socio-historical period in which TANs emerged has been a time of widespread rejection of structuralism and faith in post-structuralism and methodological individualism. This includes belief in the centrality of individual and collective agency in social explanations (chiefly in the advanced Western economies), and the determinative influence on human agency of increased information flows — the latter being visualised even as a new epoch, The Information Age.

space as such a landscape, beset with competing and contested interpretations of its ontological reality¹¹³.

Conceptualising the interface as layers of complex social reality

To demarcate the ontology of the research area I have conceptualised the interface zone between the international system and TANs as a dynamic interactive space in which conditions of possibility exist in reality, whether they are activated, latent, unknown, or even not yet imagined by human enquiry (*vide* Archer *et al*, 2004:2). Some scholars, such as Keane (2005: 1-39) describe this interface as beset with too many contradictions and messy ambiguities to make meaningful claims about it — warning, perhaps, that we should not even try to find regularities and patterns and thus develop better knowledge of the social world. However, Dunne and Nye are two IR theorists that I found to have more constructive approaches to the properties and powers to be found in the international environment. Dunne (2005) sees the interface between the international system and international society and ‘world society’ as a terrain marked by ‘fault-lines’, which in my view is a metaphor that helps us to conceptualise the fact that barriers and boundaries are encountered by the entities involved in trying to regulate world affairs (although, conversely, it does not explain the enablements, or the nature of the fault-lines and their relative disadvantages). Moreover, I consider Dunne’s perspective on this inhospitable property of the landscape assists my argument that schisms in the terrain might be usefully conceived as instantiations of incompatibility in social relational structures.

In my view, Nye’s ontological concept regarding world socio-political power structures is also useful and clear, if very simplistic. According to Nye’s theory, world power is distributed in an interactive pattern that can be visualised as resembling ‘a complex, three-dimensional, chess game’ (2011:xv). In this conceptual model, Nye envisages a top ‘chessboard’ representing military power that is largely unipolar; a middle chessboard representing economic power that has been largely multipolar for more than a decade; and a bottom chessboard that represents transnational relations that cross borders outside government control. This bottom layer includes all forms of non-state activity, from legitimate

¹¹³ According to Wight (2006:2) and Žižek (1999:158), all politics is about competing ontologies.

commercial transactions to terrorism and gun-running. While not mentioned specifically by Nye, this layer quite obviously includes the operations of INGOs and TANs (see also Florini, 2000:10-11; Keohane and Nye, 1970:379; cited also by Colás, 2002:5).

Although Nye's hierarchical power model is simplistic in its ontological depiction, I suggest it is a good starting point for thinking about relative power differentials in the international landscape. For example, it proved to be useful for considering the powers and effectiveness of TANs: why, for example, vehement protests by mass-member TANs typically appear to have had little, or no, effect in halting hugely controversial actions by governments when those actions are concerned with national imperatives regarding security and/or their economy. Large-scale public protest and petitions in foreign countries, to the UN, or online, have not prevented or brought an early cessation to recent warfare in Syria, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel/Gaza, South Sudan or Ukraine; nor impinged on Russia's annexation of Crimea, intrusion into eastern Ukraine and robust defence of its claims to Arctic oil¹¹⁴; nor impeded China's autocratic commandeering of internationally disputed offshore islands in the South China Sea, also for oil. Similarly, Florini (2000:10) considers it is standard international relations thinking to assume a hierarchy among the instruments of power: military force ranking highest; then economic resources; then 'far down the list, if mentioned at all,' such 'soft' instruments as moral authority or the power of persuasion. In this judgement, the two main strategies of TANs — asserting moral authority and persuasion tactics — are thus held to have the least political power¹¹⁵. This theory has obvious implications for evaluating TANs and the international issues in which their interventions could be considered effective.

In his visualisation, Nye sees these abstract dimensions of world socio-political power structures as interdependent and interactive and, importantly, he does not conflate the levels of reality — a common construct by empirical and linguistic realists (Bhaskar, 1975:56). It is the conflation of these multiple dimensions of

¹¹⁴ See the case study on Greenpeace (Chapter 7) for examples of Russia's uncompromising position on both its territorial sovereignty in regard to Arctic oil and the demands of a TAN.

¹¹⁵ According to Florini, the 'currency' of TAN power 'is not force, but credible information and moral authority' (*ibid*:11).

social activity that I consider to be a major cause (if not *the* major cause) of confusion in normative discussions of contemporary international affairs. I suggest that it is strongly in evidence when issues of valence and scandal at micro- and meso-levels of local societies are applied as theoretical lenses to interpret affairs in domains that are transnational, trans-cultural, or trans-worlds¹¹⁶ Thus, multitudes of mass-media consumers in the Western democracies are perplexed by the current¹¹⁷ 83% 'record high' favorability rating that Russia's reputedly hard-line President, Vladimir Putin, enjoys in his home country (Gallup, 2014; *Time*, 2014). This conundrum is not so inexplicable, I suggest, in light of the deeply embedded, multi-dimensional, social structural conditions currently extant in Russia. Therefore, I emphasise this ontological philosophy at this stage, before I go on to demonstrate in the case studies the contradictory signals — the 'elusive'-ness — that the reductionist conflation of micro- and macro-levels of complexity creates for our parochial understandings of the activities, aims and effectiveness of TANs as clusters, sectors, or families, and individually.

In general, the metaphor of 'levels' is widely used in realist theories of science to reference the different ontological layers in the world (Patomäki and Wight, 2000; Byrne, 2011:61). The importance of differentiating¹¹⁸ the social structural dimensions that influence each level has also been emphasised in recent IR theory by Buzan and Albert (2010) and by Donnelly (2006, 2009a, 2009b, 2011). In this conception of ontology, the social world is a causally efficacious emergent level. These scholars advise, and this thesis concurs, that the task of the investigator, therefore, is to (a) attempt to resolve exactly where the layers are to be located and their interrelationships; (b) determine the different structural components that make up and shape the social focus of enquiry, as a whole; and (c) try to rank the salient structural dimensions and analyse any that appear to predominate.

It will be shown in the case studies that, in accordance with Donnelly's multi-dimensional systemic approach to the social and political structures conditioning

¹¹⁶ This refers to the theory that individuals and communities exist in many 'worlds' that are beyond the comprehension of non-members — in particular, the situation of people in relation to the four developmental 'worlds' (First World, Second World, Third World, etc.). See Annex 3 for my supporting data for this theory.

¹¹⁷ As at 18 July 2014.

¹¹⁸ Sometimes referred to as 'differentiation theory' to denote the differentiation of the multiple dimensions of social reality (e.g. Buzan and Albert, 2010; Donnelly, 2011; Johnson, 2000:88).

the international relational domain (*ibid*), six salient structures were investigated. These dimensions are: stratification (vertical differentiation); functional differentiation; segmentation (unit differentiation); polarity; geography and technology; norms and institutions. Obviously, the first of these lenses to affect the relationships between state and non-state actors is 'stratification', which considers such effects as relations of superordination and subordination. In fact, I argue that in the contemporary international order there is little to dispute Waltz's reasoning that sovereign statehood is a particular status, with rights, powers, and obligations denied to other actors. Nor that '[W]hen the crunch comes, states remake the rules by which other actors operate' (Waltz, 1979: 94). In other words, states are differentiated from, and superordinate to, non-state actors. Thus, '[S]tates are legally entitled to command non-state actors, which are required to obey' (Donnelly, 2011). In Donnelly's view:

Structural analysis in IR must ask, as an empirical question, who performs which functions under what authority — rather than pretend that stratification and functional differentiation do not exist.

The research question formulation, concerning the place, function and effectiveness of TANs in their social relational interface with the international system (dominated by nation states) was therefore aligned from the outset with the type of explanations that this theoretical framework could potentially deliver.

3.2.1 Complex Realism as an ontological conceptual framework

Given that the focus of the PRQ is directed at a dynamic and complex realm of specific social and political relationships within the international system — and taking the international landscape to be 'a complex interweave of numerous systems, nested, intersected, and embedded in each other, all undergoing processes of co-evolution and linked by innumerable feedback loops' (*vide* Cudworth and Hobden, 2011:75; 2010; also Byrne, 2011:20-21; Walby, 2007; Reed and Harvey, 1992; Urry, 2003:122-24) — it was crucial to provide the study with an encompassing theoretical framework within which relationships within complex, intersecting, open systems might be properly examined. In this light, complex realism was selected as providing unparalleled strengths as a conceptual, theoretical and methodological resource. In view of the relatively recent introduction of complex realism to investigate international relations subject

matter, I have provided (at Annex 2) an elaboration of my grounds for selecting this approach.

How complex realism is used in this dissertation

Complex realism is used here primarily to construct a conceptual and theoretical framework from substantive and recognisable materials arising from the intellectual labours of others. Although it may be found to have outstanding analytical and explanatory fitness, there is no attempt made to add to the philosophical underpinnings of complex realism used here. Therefore, this section outlines some of the debts that are owed to scholars whose work has helped me to visualise and explain a specific set of social relationships in a complex, multi-dimensional problem space.

Choosing a complexity-influenced framework is far from a simple decision in carrying out an empirical research project in the social sciences, especially in political science, where I found complexity theory is not well understood and is considered by some to be far from the mainstream, if not radical¹¹⁹, and therefore, an unsafe epistemological option. Nevertheless, this thesis is guided by Wight's rationale (2006:289):

We cannot allow the complexity of the social world to force us into artificial methodological retreats that manufacture elegant simplicity at the expense of explanatory power. If the social world is complex, and undoubtedly it is, then we should expect nothing less than complex, multi-dimensional, and at times contradictory, social theories as well as a wide range of complex methodological techniques.

Thus, I assessed complex realism to be the most viable, holistic, approach to investigating relationships occurring in the realm of intersecting and dynamic structural relational logics¹²⁰ we cursorily refer to as the 'international system'.

While drawing on the strengths of Buzan and Little's work on systems thinking in international relations (2000) and acknowledging that they have undoubtedly made a major contribution to the field — principally through arguing, as I do, for

¹¹⁹ See Cudworth and Hobden (2011:4) for more on this contestation in the social research environment.

¹²⁰ On this subject I share Wight's assessment that the international political plane is not a realm of independent states so much as 'a realm of intersecting and dynamic structural relational logics' that displays observable configurations but is constantly changing (2006:299).

pluralist, multi-lensed approaches — this thesis shares Cudworth and Hobden's more recent view (*ibid*: 15) that an infusion of complexity insights would have added even greater value to Buzan and Little's approaches and enabled them to be more theoretically innovative, particularly in regard to conceptualisations of non-linearity, emergence and intersectionality. Nevertheless, I consider a particular strength of Buzan and Little's well-known engagement with systems analysis is their advocacy of an historical and multi-causal approach¹²¹, which is compatible with complex realism perspectives. This comprises a theorisation of different levels of analysis, different sectors of analysis (such as my cross-case qualitative comparison of the advocacy function in the case study TANs), and three central sources of explanation: interaction capacity, process and structure (*ibid*).

Ergo, in order to investigate the TAN interface with the contemporary international system, I applied insights from complex realism to explore the interactions of the relevant state and non-state actors using an epistemological framework that enables soundings to be taken at multiple levels of analysis — in this case, unit, cluster, and system levels. Previous studies that have focused on a single element in the system (an individual TAN), or cluster of elements (TANs), and their ineluctably parochial experiences, can tell us relatively little about their place and function within the international system, nor the true value and extent of their influence on other elements in that shared system, nor the conditions of possibility — both apparent and latent — that confront and influence their co-evolution throughout that system.

My approach embraces the recent scholarship that sees complex systems as intersecting, and being intersected by, other complex systems — thereby experiencing all other systems 'as their environment', or, in complex systems terminology, their fitness landscape¹²². By adopting this conceptualisation of social ontology, complexity scholars seek to expand and enrich the analytical framework for thinking about the way component parts of complex adaptive systems behave in their environments (*i.e.* their fitted-ness to their situations); the levels and forms

¹²¹ See Section 3.2.1 for my discussion of multi-causality in complex open systems (following Cilliers, 1998:ix; and Byrne, 2011:28-31).

¹²² 'Fitness landscape' is a term and concept frequently used by scholars working in complexity studies (Cudworth and Hobden, 2011: 68-79; Geyer and Pickering, 2011; Geyer and Rihani, 2012:143; Walby, 2007; Mitleton-Kelly, 2003; Kauffman, 2000:18-20).

of interactions between complex adaptive systems; intersectionality, change, time, context and power relations between different systems; and the ways in which actors and systems co-evolve and have impacts on each other. Considering its suitability to the multi-dimensional subject matter of this thesis, the analytical frame of fitness landscapes has been adopted. By avoiding vexing questions of relative perspectivism, this conceptualisation permits the more objective view that an intersecting, and intersected, system is not necessarily a sub-system of, nor wholly contained within, nor saturated by, another system (Cudworth and Hobden, *ibid*:72-79). Moreover, this conceptualisation does not preclude empirical investigations of power hierarchies and structure in examining the place and function of units interacting in complex systems. Instead, it enhances enquiry by focusing on the quality and patterns of complex interactions between systems (*ibid*: 79¹²³). This seemed ideally suited to exploring the interface between TANs and the international system in a scientific manner.

I further posit that investigations that ignore a complex systems approach to this subject matter cannot explore temporal questions about the implications of emergent and co-evolutionary factors generated by the interactions of elements in the system. In this respect, complex realism can be used to capture 'snapshots' of a constantly developing fitness landscape (Cudworth and Hobden, *ibid*: 75). The notion of 'snapshots' in time is useful in that it helps the researcher to remember that contingency and temporality should always be essential considerations in studying dynamic, open, systems such as the international system. Moreover, a systems approach enables the investigator to ask: What qualities define these relationships now, and what are they in the process of becoming? I make no claims that this approach can predict the future but it can reveal useful conditions, patterns and tendencies that can be applied to theorising possible futures for international political relationships.

Limitations of a complex realism approach

Complex realism does, however, have important limitations that must be acknowledged. I now discuss three of the most salient concerns I encountered.

¹²³ Cudworth and Hobden cite Capra (2007:13) for informing this insight.

(1) As acknowledged earlier, the relatively recent arrival of complex realism in the social sciences means that it is a far-from-mainstream approach, and one that despite its increasing support base, is not yet well understood. Furthermore, although critical realism is an intellectual domain that is not without its arguments and differences, there is more or less general agreement about the foundations of the intellectual current. This is not the case for complexity science (Byrne, 2011:21). Nor is it well recognised that complexity science is theoretically commensurable across a wide range of paradigms. Some social scientists consider complexity theory can be used metaphorically; some consider complexity is inherent in all matter; others consider the presence of complex phenomena in both human and non-human worlds (Cudworth and Hobden, 2011:7; 25-51). My argument here is that ‘the proof of the pudding is in the eating’. It is for others to judge whether my application of complex realism proves to be robust and convincing.

(2) When dealing with complex systems it is not possible to produce models that are simplifications of the things we are seeking to understand. An adequate description would have to be as complex as the system itself. However, as Byrne reassures us (2011:28-31), to recognise this is not to abandon the prospect of a useful applied social science. According to Cilliers (1998:ix):

[...] there is no over-arching theory of complexity that allows us to ignore the contingent aspects of complex systems. If something is really complex, it cannot be adequately described by means of a simple theory. Engaging with complexity entails engagement with specific complex systems. Despite this we can, at least at a very basic level, make general remarks concerning the conditions for complex behaviour and the dynamics of complex systems.

I deduce from this that investigations into the conditions of possibility underlying the complex behaviour patterns seen in the relationships between TANs and the international system are both possible and worthwhile. In particular, I suggest that this focus of enquiry does shed significant light on the place and function of TANs operating in the international political domain and goes some way towards revealing the conditions under which they are effective and likely to achieve their goals.

While Cudworth and Hobden caution that the application of complexity theory to international relations offers no 'quick fix' to the world's pressing challenges, it does indicate and help to explain, *inter alia*, why the challenges we face are so difficult and unpredictable, non-linear and apt to shock with large scale and fundamental change, and why the outcomes of human acts can be so different from our intentions (*ibid*: 188; Byrne, *ibid*). I consider these attributes are manifest in each of the following case studies. Acknowledging this complexity is therefore seen as the first step towards understanding the elements involved in complex systems and developing more targeted and effective interventions.

(3) A further limitation that was faced initially in operationalising a complex realist approach was that there appears to be, as yet, no recognised model for carrying out and then presenting empirical research in this paradigm. This necessitated my origination of a results presentation format that demonstrated the testing of a range of theoretical lenses on the data set and enabled discussion of the effects observed, and yet acknowledged that in analysing complex, open, systemic interactions it is impossible to ever evaluate all contingent factors and establish conclusive outcomes. These challenges were overcome by presenting some sections of the empirical results of the case studies in a list format and by borrowing valuable insights from morphogenetic theory, which also provides for enquiry into dynamic social change and the recording of 'outcomes-in-process' in respect of complex, open, systems.

The presentation of results as outcomes-in-process was informed by recent developments in morphogenetic theory, as expounded by Wight, Archer, and Porpora *et al*, which approaches social change by examining the intersectionality of 'the structural, cultural and agential relations that constitute the social order as a whole' (Wight, 2013:100). Furthermore, social morphogenesis theory is highly relevant to understanding the patterning observed in a complex subset of ongoing, changing, multi-level relationships (such as that between state and non-state actors within the international system) and the work of attempting to assign generative mechanism and macro-level meanings to them. Archer points out that empirically observing situations involving rapid social change is 'necessarily incomplete' because certain changes will have occurred without yet producing

their full manifestations (2013:3). In similar vein, Wight holds that social practices, particularly at the micro-level, are always ‘products-in-process’ (Wight, 2013:86). Meanwhile, Watts opines that the very notion of a well-defined outcome is ‘a convenient fiction’ and that, in reality, ‘the events we label as outcomes are never really endpoints’ but are ‘artificially-imposed milestones’ (2011:128-129). For these reasons, I have followed Archer’s recommendation and analysed the data for underlying structures and generative mechanisms, rather than directly inducing them from manifest outcomes, as is the usual empiricist practice (Archer, 2013:4; Bhaskar, 2011:2-3). The results of this analytical process are, therefore, presented in the following chapters, not as conclusive, and therefore concluded, ‘Outcomes’, but as ‘Outcomes-in-process and indicative macroscopic patterns’.

This style of summation does not shy away from energetically confronting the data and trying to extract social scientific meaning from it. Rather, it acknowledges the dynamic complexity of the subject matter and suggests restraint in the explication of events, trends and tendencies that appear to have significant and transformative properties, but might also prove ultimately to have been of relatively minor consequence in effecting social or political change¹²⁴. Wight advises that in order for a perceived change to be authentic it must have verifiable and significant consequences — *i.e.* we need an account of *how* events and trends that have been deemed to be significant have led to consequential change (Wight, 2013:92-94).

3.3 Epistemology

The epistemological aim of this dissertation was to reduce the problem space by investigating a specific set of international system relationships and offering coherent and plausible explanations that, as Cox advises (1996:146), ‘help to devise fresh perspectives that are useful for framing and working on the problems of the present’.

A major advantage of complex systems thinking is that it allows for analysing interactions and intersectionalities with other non-linear, open, complex and adaptive systems and observing and explaining patterns (Cudworth and Hobden,

¹²⁴ Watts (2011: 129-131) also provides an accessible discussion on these points from a complexity perspective.

ibid: 79). In this conceptual framework, the points of intersection/interface between such systems are regarded as significant points for analysis and, because of the non-reversibility of the 'arrow of time', the developments within systems are dependent on the order in which they occur (*ibid*: 80-81, 87; Prigogine, 2003:56; Giddens, 1984:xxx*i*). Consequently, systems are in a constant state of change and patterns of relations between actors will not lead to the same results in different time periods, because complex adaptive systems are in a constant state of flux as they adjust to, and co-evolve with, other systems (*ibid*: 87; Wight, 2006:296-298; Miller, 2005:186-187).

This calls for the study of history to be a key element in complexity approaches and supported my decision to study the interface terrain using the qualitative method of diachronic process tracing and pattern analysis. Moreover, the ability to carry out empirical depth analysis of TANs at unit-level, and to varying degrees at cluster-level and system-level in the international system, was also a major advantage of adopting the tenets of complex realism¹²⁵.

3.3.1 Considerations concerning alternative epistemological approaches

Up to now, the bulk of political sociological research into TANs has focused on the organisations themselves — their structures, aims, personnel and communications strategies and outputs. Assessment of their effectiveness and relationships has, similarly, been conducted largely by internal and introspective measurement employing popular constructivist methodologies that focus on the role of individual choices, ideas and identity in shaping social reality. I argue that this poststructural approach has often resulted in observations made at the micro-level of individuals and units in the international system being aggregated and extrapolated into insupportable claims about TANs and their interactions with macro phenomena (involving very large numbers of people and organisations), operating at higher levels of systemic complexity, each shaped by different contingent factors. Therefore, the fundamental thrust of my thesis is that this epistemology and this premise are faulty. Researcher oversight, or ignoring, of the

¹²⁵ This variability in data quality and depth occurs because at unit level we can conduct close-up empirical research and analyse what TANs reveal about themselves, and what others say about them, while at cluster and system levels research is heavily dependent on the availability of secondary sources, which are invariably dependent on what others have found interesting and worth documenting.

micro-macro problematique in sociology¹²⁶ does not make this thorny consideration go away. Moreover, when multiple levels of complex social activity are conflated, this process invariably exhausts the explanatory capacity of the theories and data held to account for them (Watts, 2011:64-65)¹²⁷.

As a convincing alternative, I argue that complex realism provides the tools to conceptualise this landscape and enable analytical soundings to be taken at multiple levels of complex systems and so transcend the permanent micro-macro obstacle. While many scholars appear satisfied in defense of their particular theoretical stance, it was pointed out in the literature review that the keys to unlocking the methodological challenges posed by recent developments in contentious political relations involving TANs remain elusive. A list of 25 alternative research frameworks, identified by me in the course of preparing this thesis, was provided. In my analysis of alternative frameworks, the least convincing research appeared to be produced by approaches that denied the possibility of ontological reality and structural causality in international relations contexts — beginning instead with a selected epistemology and a programme to work towards constructing explanations for macro social phenomena by aggregating individual interview data. It mostly appeared that, in privileging agent understandings, researchers could portray TANs as whatever they wanted them to be, which often bore a greater resemblance to conflict journalism than to social science.

The study also took into account findings by Watts (2011:61-67), which held that explanations of macro phenomena that rely on a 'representative agent', to denote the general tenor of larger collectives (e.g. families, firms, markets, political parties, demographic segments, nation states) employ a 'convenient fiction' that is fundamentally flawed. It is in this context that we find such fuzzy but ubiquitous terms as 'hardworking families', 'greedy firms', 'corrupt political parties', 'aimless youths', 'failed states/rich nations', etc. In fact, many examples are highlighted in the case studies to show that TANs themselves typically use this popular

¹²⁶ See Watts for a succinct overview of this constant obstacle to social explanation that he calls 'arguably the central intellectual problem of sociology' (2011:61-67).

¹²⁷ Watts notes that 'common sense' explanations are commonly advanced to paper-over theoretical cracks in interpretations of complex realms (*ibid*: 64-65) .

shorthand device in their public communications to portray themselves and those they represent: typically implying unity, solidarity, humanity and social boundaries; and targeted 'others', who are often portrayed as having characteristics generally associated with universally loathed or scandalous behaviors, especially abuse of power, bullying, greed, selfishness, lack of compassion, aloofness, duplicity, dishonesty and stealth. Thus, we will see in the significant sampling of advocacy publicity presented in Chapters 7 to 9, such throwaway and emotionally charged terms as 'the political class', 'rich nations', 'the establishment' and 'political elites', 'the world's poor', 'vulnerable communities' and 'ordinary people'. These broad-brush terms, I submit, ostensibly provide ways for TANs to communicate with some of their diverse audiences but are not analytically useful, either in selecting epistemologies to explore them, or in focusing critical attention on real, complex, global challenges and using accurate levers and tools to achieve progress toward solutions. For these reasons, this study approached the research problem afresh from the promising new perspective of complex realism.

3.4 Methodology

In my methodological approach, I adopted a qualitative, historical and case study investigation, while rejecting the alternative of computer-assisted actor-based modelling (ABM), which has emerged as the main methodological approach in regard to complexity thinking in IR (Cudworth and Hobden, *ibid*:187). Considering the incremental, trans- and multi-disciplinary development of complexity science, especially its early and influential adoption within the natural and biological sciences¹²⁸ (Room, 2001:16; Reed and Harvey, *ibid*; Williams and Vogt, 2011:12), the popularity of computer modelling is understandable, but also troubling for those who have doubts about the merits of computer simulations to imitate social phenomena.

I argue, therefore, that as complexity perspectives gain ground in the social sciences, a wider constituency will share my doubts about the ability of computer models to capture the richness of complex human interactions, including power

¹²⁸ Also, in organisational theory, economics, mathematics, meteorology, cybernetics and non-equilibrium thermodynamics (references as cited above). See Annex 2 for a further elaboration.

relationships, underlying social structures, relationship quality, physical and cognitive attractors, emphasis and influence. I suggest that historical analysis provides a more convincing alternative than actor-based modelling (as per Cudworth and Hobden, *ibid*; Wight, 2006:12, 284¹²⁹). This methodology involves analysis of the development and evolution of systems. It includes the investigation of structures and emergent properties by examining the interactions of units within a complex system, and looking at ways in which complex systems progress in relation to each other. The intention of this is 'to attempt to understand how particular forms of social relations have come into existence, to identify power relations and inequalities, and highlight relations between human and non-human systems' (Cudworth and Hobden, *ibid*).

The basis for my historical approach was the description, mapping and analysis of the social phenomenon that I assert TANS to be, through (i) primary and secondary content and discourse analysis, focusing particularly on macro-sociological aspects of the research area; (ii) developing and applying an original identification template for a TAN model that could bring precision to selecting and testing organisations for their approximation to, or divergence from, eight criteria¹³⁰; and (iii) constructing case study accounts of the formation and development of three iconic TANS and exploring their interactions within the international system¹³¹.

Using insights from complex realism, I examined the data¹³² to discern patterns in the interface between these TANS and the international institutional system that exhibited, over time, some, or all, of the systemic and inter-relational behaviours identified with complex adaptive systems¹³³, which, I held to have explanatory value for the thesis. The characteristic, patterned behaviours observed in these inter-relationships included: emergence; path dependency and 'lock-in'; co-evolution; attractors; exploration of adjacent possible' opportunities; sensitivity to

¹²⁹ Wight advises that in order to explain particular events, 'structural-understanding' needs to be complemented by 'historical-explanation' (2006:284).

¹³⁰ According to della Porta, cases that 'do not fit a theory' (the investigation of so-called 'deviant cases') may be extremely useful for specifying under which conditions a hypothesis holds true and under which conditions it does not (2002:297).

¹³¹ The validity of complex realism for case study approaches, that see case-objects as subsets of dissipative systems, is unequivocally supported by Byrne and Ragin (2009: 23-36).

¹³² This included events, narratives and discourses, relationships, structures, conditions, processes and behaviours.

¹³³ My identification of further common properties of complex adaptive systems is a work-in-progress.

initial conditions and cumulative advantage; non-linearity; the consequences of both positive and negative feedback; inherent instability and unpredictability¹³⁴. These are elaborated in the case studies and cross-compared in Chapter 10.

Consequently, I argue that instances of these systemic effects may explain the entrenched path-dependency characteristics of both international institutions, such as the UN, and the older TANs, such as Greenpeace; the unpredictability and unintended consequences of numerous, high-profile TAN campaigns; and the behaviour-reinforcing consequences of positive feedback on TAN strategies. Indeed, there is a tendency that as they evolve, social systems grow in complexity (Johnson, 2000:88), gaining greater numbers of both symbiotic and ancillary systems along the way and consequently becoming increasingly difficult to change. Complexity insights regarding the co-evolution of elements in open complex systems — whether it transpires that mutual adaptation is conflictual or harmonious — may help also to explain why we have seen the advent of TANs in international politics and not something else, and why some TANs are more effective than others in achieving their aims in their crowded and complex fitness landscape (*vide* Walby, 2007). This approach also demonstrates the analytical value of using complexity insights — particularly the concept of ‘emergence’ — to uncover and differentiate between unit-level, cluster-level and system level effects generated by the international institutional system.

It would seem self-evident that complex social systems, such as the ‘international system’, are constituted by more than just the sum of their parts. And yet, their study has invariably been constrained, until recently, by scientific approaches that concentrate on dissection and the extrapolation of results — from the specific to the general, and from the local to the national and even the global (*vide* Chapter 2)¹³⁵. In opposition to reductionism, complexity approaches require that one tries to comprehend the relations between the whole and the parts (Morin, 2006). According to (Cilliers, 1998:2):

¹³⁴ These principles of complex systems were accessed via, *inter alia*, Arthur, 1989; Mitleton-Kelly, 2003; Bousquet and Curtis, 2011; Cudworth and Hobden, 2011; Geyer and Pickering, 2011; Root, 2013; and Walby, 2009.

¹³⁵ See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the debates involving observers holding different knowledge and worldviews, as they attempt to grasp the meaning of ‘globalisation’.

If something is too complex to be grasped as a whole, it is divided into manageable units which can be analysed separately and then put together again. However, the study of complex dynamic systems has discovered a flaw in the analytical method. A complex system is not constituted merely by the sum of its components, but also by the intricate *relationships*¹³⁶ between these components. In cutting up a system, the analytical method destroys what it seeks to understand.

Fortunately, this does not mean that the investigation of complex social systems and phenomena is hopeless (*ibid*).

3.4.1 Justification for a multi-lensed theoretical model

This section explains why the multi-lensed analytical framework and tools applied in the thesis have profound explanatory strengths in certain situations — explicating subjects *as if* the theory is accurate — and were the most appropriate choice for investigating relationships in international politics. In this regard, it is appropriate that complex realism and one of the branches of its rootstock, critical realism, both emphasise ontological realism, epistemological relativity (and, by extension, methodological pluralism) and judgemental rationality. This accords with the social realist methodological approach that there are grounds for judging some competing theories as superior to others (Bhaskar, 2011:24; Sayer, 1999: 47; Collier, 1994:90-94). This approach was followed in selecting a set of theories and hypotheses for investigating the problem space of this thesis. Furthermore, the theoretical diversity now evident in the field of research that broadly covers the TAN phenomenon, reflects a complex world situation in which single-theory applications seem rarely able to describe the subject matter adequately, and even less so to explain it (Smith, *ibid*: 10-13). For all these reasons, this study required a theoretical multi-lensed approach to ‘get at’ under-explored aspects of TANs, the international system, and the interface between the actors, agents and structures.

3.4.2 Case Study methodology

Case study analysis, in which individual cases are researched in depth, is the most intensive form of investigation into TANs, according to della Porta (2003:296). Moreover, when they are approached in a theoretical way and subjected to valid cross-case comparisons, case studies are useful in building knowledge of particular phenomena. Thus (*ibid*):

¹³⁶ Emphasis as in original.

When the research begins on a specific topic, case studies of instances where the phenomenon under investigation was particularly relevant may help to build up hypotheses on its causes, dynamics and effects.

Piiparinen (2006:446) considers the critical realist approach (which informs the complex realism adopted throughout this thesis), uniquely allows a particular case study 'to reveal the real balance between possibilities and constraints' in an environment. Similarly supportive, King, Keohane and Verba claim (1994:44):

Case studies are essential for description, and are, therefore, fundamental to social science. It is pointless to seek to explain what we have not described with a reasonable degree of precision.

These insights further informed my decision to develop a TAN referent template to bring precision to defining the subject of my investigation and also adopt a case study methodology to enable depth analysis and generate new knowledge of TANs. This template is presented in Chapter 6, where I differentiate the TAN typology of NGO.

Selection of the 'international system'

The core epistemological understanding was that in order to determine the place, function and effectiveness of TANs in the contemporary international system, an investigation must take as a logical starting point the structural relationships between the state and non-state actors — seen as elements in a complex, emergent, multi-dimensional sociopolitical system, albeit one that operates on a *sui generis* international scale¹³⁷. For this reason, the research focus was centred on the principal organ of the international system, the United Nations, which can be usefully understood as the epitome of a complex system that is embedded in, and intersected by, countless other complex systems¹³⁸. In such situations, I consider, reductionist, analytical methods are insufficient to explain outcomes that are produced by the system as a whole, or to understand important systemic behaviours (evidenced, for example, in the relative utility values, positioning, functions and possibilities the system imparts to its disparate components), merely by knowing the characteristics, purposes and interactions of the system's

¹³⁷ This approach is also guided by Wight (2013:99). Wight advises that researchers taking a morphogenetic perspective should begin with the already existing structural context before proceeding to chart the structural and cultural elaborations that unfold as social practice develops.

¹³⁸ Geyer and Rihani share this complex systemic approach to the international system (2010:114-117).

units. Therefore, reductionist epistemologies were rejected absolutely as a means of explaining this particular problem space.

Taking Meadows' definition of a system (2009:2,188) as 'a set of elements, or parts, that is coherently organised and interconnected in a pattern or structure that produces a characteristic set of behaviours', the arrangements made by the world's states to institutionalise their interactions with each other through the United Nations and its ancillary international bodies, do indeed constitute a system. Moreover, by virtue of Article 71 of the United Nations Charter (UN Charter, 1945a), non-governmental organisations are, under certain conditions, admitted as participants, or parts, of this system. It will be seen later that some NGOs have maintained longstanding status as accredited parts of this system. However, how these units are placed or arranged in the system, and how they stand and behave in relation to one another, is not a property of the units themselves: it is a property of the system (Waltz, *ibid*: 80). In other words, the unit arrangements in an open system are in a constant state of flux as elements respond to exogenous, ever-changing, contingencies¹³⁹ over time. This enables this thesis to examine not only what TANs are objectively but, importantly, how they distinctively behave and interact with other elements in the international system and the wider world, the consequences of these relationships, and what we can learn from them. Therefore, I consider, a systems approach, as propounded by Wallerstein (1974), Waltz (1979:39), Buzan and Little, (2000: 407) and others¹⁴⁰, was strongly indicated.

Selection of the case studies

The three iconic TANs — Greenpeace International, Oxfam International and Human Rights Watch (Chapters 7, 8, 9) — were selected for examination primarily on the basis of the following criteria: firstly, their official listing as being in formal consultancy status with the UN (UN-ECOSOC, 2011:4, 6, 39), which establishes their suitability to be examined as elements of the international institutional system; secondly, their identification as TANs; and thirdly, their established status and the fact that they have been interacting with the international system over a

¹³⁹ Contingencies, as defined here, are future events or circumstances that are possible but cannot be predicted with certainty.

¹⁴⁰ See also more recent insights by Hobson and Sharman (2005), and Donnelly (2011).

period of time that was assumed to be sufficiently long as to afford them, and external observers, a well documented perspective on their relationships within the international system. Two of these non-governmental organisations¹⁴¹ — Greenpeace International and Oxfam International — have been granted General Consultative Status with the UN since 1998 and 2002, respectively (UN-ECOSOC NGO List, 2011:4, 6), while Human Rights Watch has held Special Consultancy Status with the UN since 1993 (UN-ECOSOC NGO List, 2011:39).

Furthermore, the case suitability of both Greenpeace and Oxfam was sealed by their having been founder signatories to the INGO Accountability Charter, which was established in 2006 by a group of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), to codify and foster a commitment to excellence, transparency and accountability among INGOs (INGO Charter, 2012). As a result, a substantial volume of intimate organisational information is made readily available by these two global entities. This was a valuable resource in studying them.

Consequently, the case studies provide an overview of the place, function and effectiveness of three long-established and iconic TANs operating, simultaneously, both inside and outside the international institutional system, at the domestic level of governments and at the international level of states. This accords with Mearsheimer's opinion (2010:84), that in order to explain how states act in the international system, we must combine domestic-level and state-level theories. These critical differences are reflected also in Wight's assertion (1966:33) that 'domestic politics is the sphere of the good life whereas international politics is the realm of security and survival'. Wight's observation is apposite, I suggest, when I discuss later how modern communications enable TANs to transform situated grassroots concerns into agenda items for international debate and policymaking.

The case-specific analysis of these TANs is intended to substantiate my argument that the 'advocacy' aspects of TANs differentiate them substantively from other

¹⁴¹ The more general term 'non-governmental organisations' is used here, rather than TANs, as this is the term used by the UN itself in granting this status.

typologies of NGO, and from each other¹⁴², depending on the *degree* to which they have adopted the sophisticated communications style and strategies, techniques and technologies of present-day political advocacy. It is a central line of argument that NGOs that have availed themselves of the new communications toolbox have created a transformatory disturbance¹⁴³ in their relations within the international system that is leading to their emergence as a previously unknown element in the international system. It is argued, therefore, that those TANs that have adopted the new enabling techniques and technologies, and have demonstrably prioritised their own profile-raising, voice amplification, financial sustainability, and social group differentiating strategies in their advocacy, do constitute a new socio-political phenomenon.

The three case study organisations are examined to establish how they fulfill the ‘international system’ relationship criteria; exhibit characteristics of TANS and/or TAN hybrids to different degrees; fit the properties, conditions and patterns observed in the wider view of the international systemic landscape; and have analytically valuable differences in their relationships within the international realm. Thus, they are not advanced as providing the entire weight of evidence for the macro-sociological arguments of the thesis. Rather, I argue that the case studies provide validating evidence of clear communicative patterns connoting the status and quality of the on-going relationships that each organisation experiences in its ‘scale-shift’¹⁴⁴ to intersect/interface with other elements of the international system. This, then, becomes their critical importance to answering the primary research question and hypotheses of the thesis, rather than any false assumptions that small *n* case studies, involving individual organisations, are generalisable. Furthermore, King, Keohane and Verba assert that case studies are essential for

¹⁴² That NGOs, including TANs are complexly divided within their genus, is not generally contested (for example, see Secrett, 2011a, 2011b; Moore, 2013: Ch.1). Some have been known to openly demonise others. Greenpeace, for example, published a book in 1993, in which it cited environmental enemies, including other organisations fighting for the same goals but using methods of which it did not approve (Shaw-Bond, 2000:URL).

¹⁴³ Describing such an effect within complex systems theory, Urry (2003:35) asserts that in tightly coupled, interactive, systems recovery from an initial disturbance — even one that may have seemed relatively inconsequential, or intended as an improvement — can have knock-on consequences throughout the system that are irreversible. This thesis asserts that the international system, in which some TANs have a formal consultancy role, is such a system. Furthermore, I suggest that the ‘disturbance’ of adopting the new communications toolbox for their advocacy has set TANs on a new trajectory that is reconstituting them as a new social phenomenon.

¹⁴⁴ See Chapter 6 for insights on the important concept of ‘scale shift’ for transnational activists. See also Tarrow (2005: 32, 120-122) and Tufekci (2014).

description — it being pointless to seek to explain what has not been described with a reasonable degree of precision (1994:44).

Defining the parameters of the subject: applying a TAN referent template

The way we describe phenomena, and the things that we are interested in knowing about them, shape and frame the methods and modes of explanation. Therefore, this thesis is informed by opinion that investigations should begin by first framing the subject matter itself (McIntyre, 1994:131-135; King, Keohane and Verba, 1994:44).

In approaching the subject matter implied by the PRQ, two main practical factors needed to be considered. Firstly, when we talk about the behaviour of collectives of social actors we immediately encounter the micro-macro problem, relating to different levels of understanding. This obstacle impels us to try to make sense of complex phenomena and situations by subjectively interpreting what we see 'as if the group acts in more or less the same way as the individuals that comprise them do. In fact, Mayntz points out that explaining social macro-phenomena 'typically involves causal regression to lower-level elements, as stipulated by methodological individualism' (2004:237). On the other hand, this thesis maintains that complex realism engages with this complexity. Watts (2011:65), explains that although groups do share some common characteristics with individuals (for example, groups can 'decide' on, 'choose', or 'pursue', *etc.*), there are clear disparities as well, especially in regard to psychological abilities and dispositions. Watts argues (*ibid*) that, subconsciously, we know that the 'behaviour' of social actors is really a convenient shorthand for the aggregate behaviour of large numbers of individuals: 'Nevertheless, it is so natural to talk this way that the shorthand has become indispensable to our ability to explain things'. In other words, we need to have referents, however imperfect, for recognisable (often stereotypical) behaviours that we assign to groups — families, politicians, markets, societies, states, allies/enemies, corporations, *etc.* — in order to be able to discuss them at all. Therefore, in choosing to explain a sphere of inter-relational behaviours, this thesis builds on the pioneering literature by Keck and Sikkink (1989: *ix*) *et al*, which, in seeking to explain unprecedented socio-historical events involving 'transnational' political protest groups, identified a typology of social phenomena

and gave it the collective name 'transnational advocacy network'. Giving a name to these configurations has been helpful as a basic referent, in that it enables us to roughly distinguish the social behaviours of TANs from the social behaviours of actors who are not-TANs.

My TAN referent model takes this project further: shedding significantly more light on the phenomenon of *contemporary* TANs and suggesting both underlying causal mechanisms for their manifest behaviours and the fitness of typical TAN strategies in pursuing stated goals in the international environment¹⁴⁵. Furthermore, I considered it was essential to develop referent criteria for the model of contemporary TANs to be used in this thesis, there being no pre-existing model, theoretical synthesis or similar conceptualisation of TANs by any researcher with a political and communications background. This model for contemporary, communications-oriented TANs was then used as a template to generally appraise a wide range of NGOs and INGOs to determine which of them most closely resembled the TAN referent and characteristics that I was interested in examining. As it turned out, this step was straightforward: the most TAN-like organisations were also the organisations that appeared to use modern communications most expertly and were, unsurprisingly, the most widely recognised.

Basically, my TAN template is a simple test for evaluating whether eight statements apply to a given NGO in order to distinguish it as a TAN for the purposes of answering the research queries and hypotheses of this thesis. It follows that if the TAN typology is assessed to be a reasonable fit, then the results of the study of this typology have validity in respect of the three case study organisations and are indicative also of general applicability. It is a key premise of the study that the TAN referent model *is* predictive of whether an NGO should be regarded as a TAN and whether, and to what extent, this matters in assessing the place, function and effectiveness of the organisation in the contemporary international system. My referent template for contemporary TANs is introduced in Chapter 6 at *Figure 6.2*, where it provides a detailed overview of TANs prior to the presentation of the three case studies.

¹⁴⁵ This complies with realist social research thinking concerning the vital importance of conceptualising the qualitative nature of social objects and relations on which causal mechanisms depend (Sayer, 1992: 2-3).

3.4.3 Applying a Communications lens

The aim of my focus on the communications aspects of TANs is to assist the reader to observe the strategic communicative behaviours of TANs, over and above their political rhetoric and stated goals, in order to identify and evaluate communicative expressions that, this thesis holds, have determinative effects on their interactions with international actors. While TANs are routinely described in the political literature and discourses as organisations involved in ‘campaigning’, ‘advocating’, ‘protesting’, and ‘championing’, it is important to note that in the context of transnational advocacy these activities are all sub-categories of communication.

Moreover, it is a basic premise of this thesis that the communications outputs of purposeful organisations, such as TANs, can be taken as strategic projections of each organisation’s collective viewpoint on matters. In this I do not mean to imply that there is ever total unanimity of individual opinions within organisations, or that this is even possible. However, my argument holds that the corporate ‘face’ and publicity outputs of organisations are the result of internal strategic decision-making processes and present the organisational identity to which other individuals and collective audiences, or publics, respond. Hence, I hold that this strategic portrayal is a definitive feature in the case of TANs, whose *raison d’être* is the assertive communication of their social imperatives. Since it is through communications that our relationships are forged or break down (Miller, 2005:166-167), I also provide, in the following sub-sections, the salient criteria for better understanding this aspect of the thesis.

In taking this approach, I have followed the advice of della Porta *et al* (2002: 286) that the conceptualisation of phenomena ‘necessitates comparing the reality we are interested in with something else’ and that this is the basis of any knowledge. Thus, in providing the substantive theoretical criteria for ‘relationship quality’ for comparison, I show how this also provided a yardstick for a falsification/testability step in my theory development for the thesis by enabling me to analyse the validated relationship information of the data set and ask: What would a good international system relationship with a TAN look like? Political theory alone cannot countenance such a question. However, as will be shown in the case studies, this fact does not handicap the imaginations of political theoreticians. I

turn now to highlighting some of the substantive communications theories that I have used to support my arguments.

Advocacy theory

Firstly, I wish to emphasise that the focus on 'advocacy' in this thesis is very much wider (and, I consider, is more explanatory), than the campaigns framework and constructivist approaches for understanding TANs, recommended by Keck and Sikkink (1998:3-6). See also Section 6.6 for more on the definition of 'advocacy' adopted in this thesis. In summary, my approach to advocacy communications theory accords with the definition employed by the world's largest humanitarian network, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (IFRC), which states (Red Cross, 2012:11-12):

Advocacy is about persuading people to make changes, whether in policy, practice, systems or structures. For the IFRC, this means changes that improve conditions for vulnerable people. Advocacy is about speaking for others, working with others and supporting others to speak for themselves. It is a way of taking community voices to a different level of decision-making.

Furthermore, the world body asserts: 'The art of advocacy lies in persuasion, not confrontation'.

The point I emphasise here is that advocacy is best understood when it is regarded as a communications function, not a political role.

Does this interpretation matter? I will argue in the case studies that aligning strategies with objectives is vital to strategic goal-achievement, notwithstanding oddities such as unintended positive consequences and plain luck. In fact, it will be shown later that there have been renowned failures of TAN strategies that have nevertheless resulted in unexpected reputational windfalls that individual TANs were then able to reinterpret as *post hoc* successes. Unfortunately, I suggest, this habit of success framing has also had the effect of (a) implying that certain strategies were more fit and aligned with aims than they were; and (b) injecting false-positive feedback into the organisations, mainstream media narratives and contemporary myth-making. Indeed, one of the basic tenets of modern public communications theory holds that communications strategies require objectives of a communications nature (Palin, 1985:4; Macnamara, 2000: 224-226; Gregory,

2000:43, 168-171; Broom and Sha, 2013:287-289). Often, organisations embark upon communications programmes, say, to increase public awareness, without any clear link, lever, or explanatory mechanism, for how generating publicity and, thus, awareness might contribute towards achieving a political goal (Broom and Sha, *ibid*). Communications theory urges caution in making assumptions about how message ‘receivers’ use information to progress to attitude and behaviour change and, ultimately, to take a desired action. Gregory (2002: 91-92) estimates that a domino-like ‘simple progression’ does not happen often, while Grunig and Hunt (1984) argue that the chances of someone progressing from the point where a message is received to behaving in a desired way are ‘4 in 10,000’.

In liberal democratic electoral systems the influence of media-generated political information is accorded a privileged, and not altogether justified¹⁴⁶, status in mainstream thinking. But the international order is not such a system and, I suggest, publicity strategies directed at influencing the elements of the system often have no sounder basis than assumption. If goals and strategies are not aligned, there is the likelihood that energies and resources will be concentrated on honing strategies, instead of achieving goals. Furthermore, public communications programme goals must not be unattainable with communications strategies, otherwise an impression is created of always failing, even if superb work has been done (Palin, *ibid*)

In assessing the explosive growth in TANs during a period roughly coterminous with the advent of affordable, globe-spanning ICTs, it was difficult not to see the development of this unprecedented advocacy phenomenon in ‘chicken-and-egg’ terms, in regard to which of the components came first. Although the literature on contentious international politics has increasingly featured the term ‘transnational advocacy networks’ — most noticeably since the publication of Keck and Sikkink’s seminal text in 1998 — and acknowledged the adoption of ICTs by NGOs and the revolution in transnational activist networking, this thesis argues that crucial aspects of this unprecedented technologically-enabled phenomenon have been theoretically neglected.

¹⁴⁶ Electoral studies reveal that media effects on public opinion are ‘generally small’ according to van der Eijk and Franklin (2009:150-151).

When political scholars note that international politics has been changed dramatically by digital communications and the Internet, they typically focus on the astonishing scale of interpersonal connectivity that has been enabled and the presumed political consequences, leaving much to inference and assumption. Even influential scholars in the paradigm, such as Castells and Tarrow¹⁴⁷, focus on the availability, form and acclaimed successes of ICTs in transnational activism, and skirt vital questions concerning the competence of the communications strategies deployed, the suitability of the framing of the messages and the possibility of alternative causal factors, beyond what appears obvious to non-specialists. This, I suggest, could be compared to telling a story about the logistics of delivering a letter from A to B without mentioning what it said.

Some writers have described recent tendencies towards uncritical over-enthusiasm regarding the political consequences of modern ICTs, by such terms as 'cyber-utopianism', 'Internet-centrism' (Morazov (2011: *xiii-xvii*) and 'technology fetishism' (Dean, 2009: 31-33). Certainly, this four-year study found no depth analyses of the communications techniques now being commonly used, and shared, by contemporary TANs. And yet, I argue, these techniques are the result of strategic communications decision-making within purposeful organisations. It may be that high-quality communications techniques are so taken for granted by lay audiences and the modern media that it is merely assumed that 'they are what they are'. However, this thesis argues that such a judgment would be unsafe. Communications techniques are designed for specific work — from 'fuzzy brand promises' to stereotypes, associative thought triggering, cues, priming, repetition, emotive graphical devices, bright colours, the placement of Website 'hot' buttons, such as 'Donate Now', and much more. These tactics are identified, referenced and discussed in Chapter 6 and in the case studies, where I emphasise the importance of analysing not only the political messages that TANs communicate, but the strategic methods they choose to do so. The advocacy communications lens is also used to illuminate my theory that the modern communications tools that TANs select are, in turn, significantly shaping these organisations, their reputations, the reputations of their adversaries, and the futures of both.

¹⁴⁷ Salient texts by these scholars were cited in Chapter 2.

Relationship quality theory

What qualities should a mutually satisfying organisation-public(s) relationship exhibit? Fortunately, this is not a speculative question in communications science, neither is it emotionally-charged, as undoubtedly it would be in a political science context. In fact, there is a wide body of communications/PR literature focused specifically on organisation-public relationships (*e.g.* Grunig *et al*, 2002; Ledingham, 2001, Broom and Sha, 2013). Research in this discipline indicates that organisation-public relationships exactly mimic interpersonal relationships in terms of the critical determinators of relationship quality. This means that we regard organisations as being people-like and describe and think about them in interpersonal terms¹⁴⁸. According to Ledingham (2004:741 and 2003), the salient determinators of relationship quality are: trust, openness, credibility, emotion, intimacy, similarity, immediacy, agreement, issue perception, shared interests, and relational history. Grunig *et al* (2002:553-554) endorse Ledingham and Brunig's research, and advise a focus on: control mutuality, trust, commitment and satisfaction. Kovacs (2001) claims the critical dimensions of relationship-building are: trust, openness, mutual respect and access. Dimmick *et al* (2001:118) list: reciprocity, trust, credibility, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction and mutual understanding.

Of these, the relationship quality most commonly mentioned in the literature and perhaps the most fundamental in relationship-building, is trust. Giddens considers 'trust' and 'tact' to be the 'basic properties' that people bring to their encounters: trust being a primal human instinct that develops in infancy, with tact being 'the main mechanism that sustains trust' (1984: 51-60, 75, 86). Kohn (2008) observes that 'to understand our changing society, we need to look at human relations at every level, and at the heart of all such relations lies trust'. Trust, he suggests, 'is an expectation, or disposition to expect, that another party will act in one's interests'. When public issues boil over, blame will 'find its way to the government, as inevitably as water flows downhill, highlighting the mistrust of political institutions that helps define the modern political condition'. Where people feel that their lives are in the hands of others, such as officials, 'mistrust may rapidly

¹⁴⁸ This will be pointed out in the case studies, where organisations are variously characterised, for example, as greedy, wealthy, bullying, or caring.

flare into a sense of betrayal'. According to the behavioural scientist Farson (2008) people cannot manufacture trust but they can act in ways that help trust develop and they can demonstrate 'trustworthiness'. Thus, in developing the thesis I tested the data principally for evidence of 'trust' in evaluating relationship quality between each of the actors and its diverse publics¹⁴⁹ at all levels of engagement. I also tested for signs and extents of the following five relationship qualities: mutual respect, tact, credibility, mutual understanding and access. This process led to my synthesis of Thucydidean theory (regarding mistrust between nations) with my direct observations, and the development of my grounded Hypothesis #3, which asserts: *The adversarial advocacy strategies typically adopted by some TANs constitute a barrier to them achieving their aims in the international policy-making environment.*

Perception theory

Perceptions regarding whether the above qualities are present in a relationship are relevant in the present context. Bennett (2001:56) contends that 'however nebulous, image *is* reality because people can only react to what they experience and perceive'¹⁵⁰. For this reason, organisations must deal with real and perceived public opinion, as they establish and maintain relationships with their diverse publics (Miller, 2005:10; Bennett, *ibid*: 207). Organisations often misclassify a problem, focusing on the technical aspects and ignoring issues of perception (Regester and Larkin, 2002:122). For those receiving communications, perception is influenced by culture and establishing 'a sense of commonness' with the message sender (Broom and Sha, 2013:323¹⁵¹; Jandt, 1995:136). Ultimately, argues DeVito, perception is central to the study of communication in all its forms and functions (2000:38). This is mainly because: 'Whatever you perceive you also organise into a pattern that is meaningful to you. It is not a pattern that is necessarily true or logical in any objective sense'.

¹⁴⁹ Grunig emphasises that the value of public relations comes from the relationships that communicators develop and maintain with publics, and that reputation is a product of relationships. Moreover, the quality of reputation and relationships 'result more from the behaviour of the organisation than from the messages that communicators disseminate' (2002:xi).

¹⁵⁰ Emphasis as in original.

¹⁵¹ Broom and Sha point out that '*to communicate effectively, the sender's words and symbols must mean the same thing to the receiver that they do to the sender*'. Therefore, '*communication means establishing a sense of commonness*' (2013:323).

Issues Management and Activism theory

Issues and crisis management are areas of intense concern to organisations and communicators because increasing activism and mismanagement of issues ‘poses a threat to that most important of all assets – reputation’, claim Regester and Larkin (2002:ix, 1, 10). This theory was tested over a prolonged period in the case studies, where its relevance to TANs was strongly indicated, while its relevance to the international realm was debatable. According to Hunt and Grunig (1994:16), ‘publics make issues out of problems that have not been resolved’. Indeed, activist groups play a powerful role in making public issues out of problems. According to Smith (2004:5), activism is the process by which groups of people exert pressure on organisations or other institutions to change policies, practices or conditions that they find problematic. Regester and Larkin (ibid:10) observe:

In today’s complex environment, organisations have to understand and respond to our rapidly shifting values, rising expectations, demands for public consultation and an increasingly intrusive news media. It is no longer enough to focus on internal objectives alone: *outside-in* thinking¹⁵² [...] is an essential prerequisite for achieving the tacit acceptance of society to continue to operate.

However, many organisations resist being ‘managed from outside’ (Bennett, *ibid*: 57), and so resist pressure from activists and endure on-going negativity in relationships. Grunig (2006), cites research into the use of symmetrical, two-way, communication by the World Bank, IMF, WTO and Shell Oil that found these organisations did engage in dialogue with their publics and made concessions to publics in their behaviours; however, ‘they changed just enough to maintain social order and preserve their own hegemony’.

Testing the research data for signs of schemas and stereotypes was also important. This is because communication scholars warn that higher levels of persuasion are required once stakeholders or activists have formed heuristic/schematic responses to issues. Christen and Hallan (2004:661) contend that schemas are unique mental frameworks of knowledge, beliefs and expectation that people construct based on their personal history, current circumstances, future plans and

¹⁵² This perspective is commonly referred to in communications contexts as ‘receiver-orientation’, which takes account of receiver factors in communications and makes allowances for their frames of reference, as opposed to the egocentric position of ‘sender-orientation’ (Chandler and Munday, 2011:356-357).

interactions with others. One form of schema, stereotypes, can lead people to habitually look for a particular undesirable, or desirable, trait in another. In many cases, people compare and screen new messages for relevant information already stored in memory and focus on inconsistencies. Schemas, once formed, are resistant to change and often form self-confirming effects (*ibid*). Deegan (2001: 42) claims that the views of activists and organisations are often not as disparate as either side would believe, however, 'a lack of trust keeps both sides apart'.

Thus, Cutlip *et al* (*ibid*: 415) emphasises the role of good quality communications practices in providing a crucial feedback mechanism in society:

Without an informed and active citizenry, elected and appointed officials may lose touch with the true needs and interests of their constituents. [...] Citizen discontent may linger just beneath the surface, then suddenly appear and be fuelled by simplistic rhetoric in place of a deeper understanding of issues.

3.5 Methods and Sources

The data set was compiled from an extensive range of primary and secondary materials. The literature review and content analysis encompassed the following cross-disciplinary subject areas: international relations and political science (particularly texts relating to contentious international politics, the UN and other international institutions, social movements, civil society advocacy and issues, globalisation and contemporary global governance challenges¹⁵³ and alternative worldviews); sociology and communications studies; cognitive and behavioural studies and methodology.

Content analysis of primary sources included official documents, such as statutory documents and reports published by international institutional bodies, such as the UN Secretary-General, the UN General Assembly and UN agencies, treaty bodies and world conferences; the Arctic Council and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation; academic journal articles and papers; media reports and commentaries from the legacy print media, electronic and online publishers, and an extensive array of communications outputs by TANs, including official Website content, annual reports, strategy documents, constitutional and financial documents and archival material, media releases, videos and podcasts. The

¹⁵³ Also referred to in the literature and this thesis as 'wicked problems'.

collation and analysis of these materials was a painstaking undertaking over an extended period and all of the sources cited here are from reputable, identified outlets. Whilst I acknowledge that some of these latter materials are not from peer-reviewed academic sources, the information they contain is in the public domain and, I suggest, is influential in the formation of widespread audience perceptions of TANs, as well as each TAN's perception of its identity, role and effectiveness in society. As such, I submit, consideration of this material is crucial to understanding each TAN.

Due to the contemporary focus of the research project, the data were collected and analysed in an ongoing, iterative process to refine the propositions and explanatory credibility of the thesis. This involved interrogating the data according to five criteria that I selected and ranked, as follows: (1) Relevance to the research question and hypotheses; (2) Authority and weight of the source material, including any added weight contingent on the possibility to triangulate, cross-reference, or further validate the data in a scientific way; (3) Potential to make a valuable contribution to new knowledge and raise important questions; (4) Agreement, or disagreement, with the processed data and the theoretical assumptions and hypotheses of the thesis; and (5) Evidence of processes, patterns and trends leading to sound propositions regarding underlying structures and causal mechanisms. The large volume of media reports and commentaries were subjected to a further interpretive, filtering, test to evaluate whether the data contained implications that were 'positive', 'negative', or 'neutral' to the organisation's external relationships with its diverse publics.

Øyen (1990:12) supports this method with her assertion that content analysis of many types of written documents can be used for making inferences about public opinion, attitudes, values, or the nature of social structure. Further advantages of the method lie in its unobtrusiveness, which eliminates interaction between the investigator and the data producer. Disadvantages, however, lie in the sampling and in the indirectness of the observations, 'which assume knowledge about the translation from the observable'. Constant awareness was needed, therefore, regarding possible political or ideological agendas of sources, and self, in analysing data that was often politically-charged. Nevertheless, I was guided in applying an

interpretivist intervention in the data by Grix's contentions that (2002:179): 'All research necessarily starts from a person's view of the world, which itself is shaped by the experience one brings to the research process'. Similar support for this standpoint was provided by Miller (2005: 58), Maxwell (1996:17), and Cloke, Cook, *et al* (2004:24). In Miller's view: 'Personal and professional values are a lens through which social phenomena are observed'.

Acceptance of the researcher's empirical baggage — as distinct from the clear unacceptability of researcher bias — does not, according to these scholars, necessarily compromise the integrity of the research process but, rather, constitutes a normative starting point. In this author's case, the experiential base is over 40 years' professional involvement in media, public and private sector communications and public relations, mostly in international organisations. Combining the dual paradigms of politics and communications was, therefore, familiar terrain. The author's view of the world was, therefore, utilised to underpin the methodological approaches and selection criteria. Attempting to purge oneself of personal goals and concerns is neither possible nor necessary, according to Maxwell (*ibid*:16):

What *is* necessary is to be aware of these concerns and how they may be shaping your research, and to think about how best to deal with their consequences.

This placed the onus for demonstrating value, validity and rigour on the author, guided by Holliday (2007:8, 31). Data were verified wherever possible by triangulation between data sources, such as documents, authoritative statements and commentaries and direct observation. A very high component of direct observation was enabled in this research by the volume of material published on-line on official Websites. Much of this material was in the form of videos, podcasts, Webcasts of conference and high-level panel proceedings, *etc.*, which I hold to be primary sources. Furthermore, I consider the large volume of media releases and statements published on official Websites to be primary source material, since they are untouched by secondary intermediaries.

While a few internal 'elite' interviews might have provided some added interest and validation of claims, in approaching the case study organisations this research

method was not pursued due to the overarching macroscopic perspective of the thesis, which rejects methodological individualism as the primary means of investigating higher-order levels of analysis of social systems. Support for this view can be found in Archer (2013: 2), Wight (2013: 99-100) and Watts (2011: 65-67). In choosing to rely heavily on documentary evidence, rather than on interviews, I kept in mind that spokespersons for organisations, especially in the world of public relations-advocacy-marketing, are charged above all with the responsibility to protect the reputational capital of their organisations. In most cases, a spokesperson's employment prospects will be impacted by the ability to convey to external interviewers an unfailingly positive and blameless corporate image. Candour can hardly be extended in such circumstances, nor expected. Moreover, all of the data collected and used in this thesis can now be readily traced and verified by those pursuing subsequent academic research projects.

Because TANs employ the mass media as a strategic communications delivery tool, significant amounts of data were also collected from a wide range of news organisations. Although popular media reports are generally regarded with scepticism in academic studies and under normal circumstances are considered to have only limited value, I aver that in the case of the three case studies, such reports constitute a valuable resource — often the only resource — for assessing the evolution of each organisation and its capability over time to influence diverse audiences, achieve its aims, and provoke counter-reactions from others. Such reports greatly assisted in providing context and balance to a TAN's advocacy outputs, especially in regard to the portrayal of those perceived to be an organisation's adversaries, and the claiming of successes and victories. As many of the media records were in the form of opinion pieces (op-eds) from recognised commentators either familiar with each TAN, relevant social sectors, or eye-witness perceptions of situations and events, I take them to be high quality primary sources and, therefore, able to provide corroborating evidence.

Visual data

Owing to the visual nature of a large percentage of the strategic publicity outputs of TANs, it was necessary to include a number photographs in the presentation of the three case studies. The rationale for including this material is that it demonstrates the corporate communications strategies of these organisations, depicting how they perform their public face to their intended audiences and, by extension, desire to be seen¹⁵⁴. I suggest that a range of sophisticated advocacy communications tactics are readily apparent in these displays and their appropriateness, or 'fitness' to achieving the declared aims of each TAN, or TAN-hybrid, can be discussed using actual visual aids.

In the next chapter, I discuss the United Nations Organisation and highlight some of the evolutionary factors that have shaped both its present form and the ways in which the UN mediates the boundaries between a multitude of competing social groups for recognition of their particular worldviews and resolution of their concerns¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵⁴ For more on 'performativity' see Butler (1997) and Goffman (1959:28-82).

¹⁵⁵ See Wendt (2003) for insights on the macro-level systemic boundary conditions that, *inter alia*, shape the evolutionary paths of micro-level entities.

Chapter 4

4. The United Nations

*This organization is created to prevent you from going to hell.
It isn't created to take you to heaven.*

Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.¹⁵⁶
U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (1953-1960)

4.1. Introduction

This chapter and the following chapter support the main thesis by introducing the key actors: the United Nations organisation and NGOs¹⁵⁷ involved in international politics. I then elaborate salient aspects of the structural context in which they are engaged. For these reasons, this chapter should be read in close conjunction with the following chapter (Chapter 5), which puts a more human face, rather than an institutional one, on the UN's relationships with non-state actors.

Most importantly, this chapter demonstrates my ontological argument that the international system as exemplified by its principal organ, the United Nations system, can be usefully understood as the epitome of a complex system that is embedded in, and intersected by, countless other complex systems¹⁵⁸. Moreover, I argue, many of the institutional characteristics that are widely associated with the United Nations organisation are manifestations of complex systemic 'path-dependent' behaviours set up over the course of the UN's history. Instances of this may be seen in the enduring primacy of the UN Charter of 1945 (UN Charter (1945a) and the perturbations introduced by large-scale decolonisation after World War II, when over 100 new Member States joined the world body. Thus, in

¹⁵⁶ Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. biodata. See U.S. State Department data (2014).

¹⁵⁷ This term, rather than TANS, is widely used in this chapter, as it is the one used by the UN.

¹⁵⁸ This assertion was elaborated earlier in Chapter 3.

analysing the UN and its relational behaviours, I tested a range of complexity lenses that demonstrate also the complexity insight that the more complex the system, the more ancillary systems it supports and the more difficult it is to change — those involved having so much invested in maintaining the existing arrangements¹⁵⁹. Inevitably, then, those involved in extremely complex national, regional and international systems of policy-making and implementation, developed through painstaking collaboration and compromise over time, have much invested in established orders either not changing, or at least not changing disruptively, or in ways that might harm the stability of the system or their interests. In the case of UN Members, who by definition are the recognised governments of nation states, responsibility to accurately evaluate arguments and risks in order to safeguard the interests and future security of entire populations, is a paramount consideration and constraint. This is particularly consequential in advanced economies where the machinery of liberal democracy is mature and well-oiled and elected representatives are publicly accountable.

An historical perspective matters also in this thesis because, as I show later, various factors in the UN's past have had profound and enduring consequences for the ways in which the organisation can, and does, interact with civil society. Milestones that this thesis considers to have had — and still have — implications for the international body's relationships with NGOs¹⁶⁰ are addressed in the subsections of this chapter.

From its outset in 1942¹⁶¹, the United Nations has provided for an official interface with both international and national non-government organisations. It does this per *Article 71* of its original Charter and enabling mechanisms arranged by the Economic and Social Council, which is one of the UN's six established principal organs (UN Charter, 1945a). The constitutional provision for this engagement with NGOs is, as follows:

¹⁵⁹ I am indebted to Prof. Eve Mitleton-Kelly for this valuable insight. See also Root, 2013: 20.

¹⁶⁰ A similar assessment of salient milestones in UN-NGO relations is contained in the UN Background Paper for the Secretary-General's Panel of Eminent Persons in United Nations Relationships with Civil Society, of May 2003 (UN-NGLS, 2003c).

¹⁶¹ The formal birth of the United Nations was not, as might be assumed, the signing of the UN Charter on 26 June, 1945, but the adoption of the 'Declaration by the United Nations' in Washington, DC, on 1 January, 1942 (Weiss, 2008:xiii; UN data, 2014).

Article 71

The Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation 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.

Charter of the United Nations (1945)

Despite the obvious latitude for interpretation this statement is the UN's bedrock for legitimising consultation with non-Members. Therefore, this thesis argues that by focusing on the UN and identifying key actors, study areas, moments and statutes in the UN's *relationships* with the thousands of non-state actors currently present in the international system, it is possible to: (a) capture non-state¹⁶² actors in both logic and systemic frameworks for the study of international relations; and (b) advance explanations and theories about the place and function of non-governmental actors (including TANs) within those relationships and the contemporary international system¹⁶³ as a whole. This is not just because the UN itself is the primary focus of a great deal of NGO political activity, providing one of the most accessible vantage points from which to observe some of the most active NGOs in the world, but also because UN policy and practice have together been a major influence on all other international institutions¹⁶⁴. Furthermore, it is argued that only an understanding of state actors can provide the principal condition of possibility for any account of a non-state actor; and one can only identify non-state actors on some or other account of the state (Wight, 2009:109). This sequence of argumentation lays the groundwork for my later analysis of the effectiveness of TANs in achieving their goals.

¹⁶² The term 'non-state' actor is employed here as an analytical device and should not be taken to imply that states are dominant in the relationships, or that other actors are of secondary importance. Indeed, many NGOs, including trade unions, churches and many human rights and environmental campaigning groups, number their memberships in the millions, whereas 41 of the 193 states in the UN have populations of fewer than one million. Of these, 13 have fewer than 100,000 people (UN data, 2011a and CIA data, 2011).

¹⁶³ This is a paraphrasing of the primary research question: *What is the place and function of transnational advocacy networks in the contemporary international system and how effective are they in achieving their aims?*

¹⁶⁴ This line of reasoning is supported by Weiss and Gordenker (1996:17) and by Willetts (2011:3).

4.2 Identity and Aims

The United Nations is widely assumed to be a mature and powerful, globally-recognised organ of international cooperation and management, albeit one with a mixed record of successes and failures (Weiss, 2008:8; Kennedy, 2007:243-4). Constituted by 193 sovereign States of the world, it is acknowledged as a key player in security issues; an influential mediator in conflict zones; a mobiliser and provider of services and other aid in humanitarian crises. To some it is a unique and indispensable evolving project, and with a history of a mere 69 years, a relatively recent international model for Man's attempt to live in harmony with his own and other species. Living up to the scrutiny and expectations of the entire world is undoubtedly a tall order, and yet amid the critical hubbub some of the UN's most important contributions have gone largely unrecognised (Emmerij *et al*, 2010:ix; Krasno, 2004:xi, 260). The UN's moral voice has often been underestimated by its detractors; the quality of the UN's work has, at its best, been considered to be outstanding; its intellectual work has often been ahead of the times; and in terms of impact, the UN's leading contributions have literally changed history (*ibid*; Weiss and Thakur, 2010:10; Willetts, 2001:374; 2008: 332).

It has been said that 'ideas'¹⁶⁵ have been among the UN's most valuable contributions to the world (Jolly *et al*, 2004:257) — prompting questions, such as those asked in this study, regarding how, and from whom, the UN gathers and assimilates ideas and how the movement of ideas not only affects political agendas but also political outcomes. Such questions have direct relevance in determining the place, function and effectiveness of transnational advocacy networks, since these collectivities form specifically to implant transformational ideas and values in an international audience by building multiple channels of access to the international system.¹⁶⁶ In this pursuit, I submit, TANs — as a variant form of NGO — can be seen to distinctively employ the currency of ideas and information to obtain their influence, strategic direction and network cohesion¹⁶⁷. It is therefore important to ask: If the primary target audience for transnational advocacy is the international system, then how do TANs achieve this vital interaction? If they are

¹⁶⁵ Exchanges in the currency of ideas between officials of states, secretariats and non-state actors, in the context of the UN system, is a key focus of examination in Chapter 5.

¹⁶⁶ This conceptualisation of transnational advocacy networks, as a differentiated form of civil society activism, is advanced by Keck and Sikkink (1998:1).

¹⁶⁷ See Chapter 6 for a comprehensive account of the distinctive characteristics of TANs.

effective in achieving their strategic connection to international audiences then what are the impacts when they do? What are the consequences when they do not?

With over 4,000 non-governmental organisations currently¹⁶⁸ in consultative status with the United Nations, and increasing numbers of NGOs seeking to obtain it,¹⁶⁹ it is clear that NGOs find consultative status to be of value¹⁷⁰. However, the usefulness and level of participation of NGOs in the UN has been hotly debated since NGOs were first granted consultative status, which, according to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs ‘has led to a number of barriers’¹⁷¹. These ‘barriers’ in the relationship, along with the more symbiotic aspects, are discussed further in Chapter 5. This thesis argues that states also continue to find recognition by, and participation in, international society at the United Nations to be of value, despite the plethora of recent International Relations and ‘globalisation’ literature speculating on the diffusion of power away from states to non-state actors and the continued relevance of Westphalian sovereignty¹⁷². As evidence of the attraction of UN recognition and membership in today’s international order — especially for new, small, and/or vulnerable states — the new state of South Sudan declared its independence on 9 July, 2011¹⁷³ and was admitted as a new Member State of the UN General Assembly only five days later on 14 July, 2011¹⁷⁴. Similarly, the President of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, began a politically-charged bid to gain UN entry for Palestine in September 2011, declaring: ‘We need to have full membership at the U.N [...] We need a state, a seat at the United Nations’ (*NY Times*, 2011). For many small and vulnerable states, international recognition is their only substantial power resource (Donnelly, 2011).

¹⁶⁸ UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) statistic as of September 2013 (UN ECOSOC, 2013). An additional 157 member NGOs were on suspension at that time.

¹⁶⁹ In 2012, a statement by the UN ECOSOC Committee on NGOs revealed that the number of NGO applications for consultative status had increased almost four-fold in four years (UN-ECOSOC, 2012). Costoya (2007) also describes this trend.

¹⁷⁰ This view is shared by Zettler (2009), and Martens (2004).

¹⁷¹ UN-ECOSOC (2011). This factor is also described by Zettler (2009.)

¹⁷² Among those speculating on these trends are Held, 2010:122; Donnelly, 2006, Tarrow, 2005:3, 27; Castells, 2012: 234-237; and Shadian, 2010.

¹⁷³ According to Foreign and Commonwealth Office data (FCO, 2011).

¹⁷⁴ According to United Nations data (UN data, 2011a).

4.3 Socio-historical context and milestones

The United Nations story is impossible to understand, asserts UN historian Paul Kennedy, unless one understands the tension between sovereignty and internationalism that is 'inherent, persistent and unavoidable' in the organisation and has been 'built into the system since its beginning' (UN Report, 2004a; Kennedy, 2007:xi; Ruggie, 2010: xv). To develop this understanding it is also crucial to note that no 'government' apparatus exists at the global level. Although states have sovereignty individually in the Westphalian world order model, no overarching, sovereign authority, with powers of coercion, exists at the planetary level. In this chapter I emphasise that the UN was not designed for the sovereign global governance role, although as the principal organ in the international system it has frequently been viewed as such and has been widely assumed to have powers and resources that it lacks. Hence, the natural condition of states in the *inter*-national system is regarded by many scholars to be one of anarchy (Brown and Ainley, 2005:3-4; Weiss and Thakur, 2010: xv; Weiss, 2009:11; Ruggie, *ibid*; Cudworth and Hobden, 2010¹⁷⁵), or at least anarchy with some vertical structural stratification, in effect, a 'hierarchy in anarchy' (Donnelly, 2011), if this is not read too literally as a nonsensical contradiction in terms.

How, then, are we to understand the UN and the human agency that animates and navigates its passage through a myriad of complex, multi-level, relationships across the world and over time? Quite simply, it may be deduced that the United Nations is a voluntary association of sovereign States of the world, established by states principally to maintain international peace and security; solve international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character; and to protect and promote basic human rights and freedoms (*Article 1*, Ch.1, UN Charter (1945); Bull, 1995:44; Gold, 2004:4). It is not a world government and it has no sovereign powers of coercion. The UN was created also to facilitate cooperation and regulate the interaction of states with each other: such co-operation as exists, being assumed (in the dominant realism of the era) to be conditioned by self-interest, with each state expressing, and primarily intent on securing, its national self-

¹⁷⁵ Cudworth and Hobden (2010) argue for reconceptualising 'anarchy' in IR theory using insights from complexity theory. Thus, when the international system is seen as a 'complex adaptive system with a tendency to self-organise' we can begin to theorise both the manifest behaviours of the system, and extant theory, in a new light.

interest and priorities, especially in regard to security (Jackson, 2000:170; Burchill and Linklater *et al*, 2009:9).

Today, the UN's work can be divided into two broad categories: peace and security; and economic and social development (Emmerij *et al*, 2010:x). Although the United Nations is constitutionally one large organ and is sometimes referred to as if it were a monolith (Weiss, *ibid*: 2), in practice, the system gives the impression that there are many UNs. According to Kennedy (2007: *xiv*):

To some observers it is best known as the UN of peacekeeping and Security Council resolutions; to others it is the UN of economic development; to others it is the UN of advancing civil rights worldwide; and to others, it is the body chiefly responsible for rebuilding the social fabric of broken down societies, protecting the environment, and encouraging cultural understanding among people.

In this depiction, the UN is a massive, complex, organisation that functions, in the absence of a world government, as the best mankind has been able to do to provide a global governance forum, but whose workings and structures are considered by many analysts to be in dire need of varying degrees of overhaul (UN-NGLS, 2011; UN Report, 2004a; Kennedy, 2007:277-8).

4.3.1 Post-War self-organisation and emergence of the United Nations

Conceived in 1942, the UN was set up by the Allies in the aftermath of World War II in a very particular set of historical circumstances, crucial to any understanding of the thinking and priorities on which the organisation is founded (Weiss, *ibid*:2; Gold, 2004:25). U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was a driving force, and some saw the UN as an American idea, set up to promote American values and principles on a global scale (Gold, *ibid*). Perhaps a more reasoned historical account might attribute the founding motives to a deep conviction that there was a need for collective action at the global level, particularly by the five major powers, to oppose aggression and ensure political stability (UN Charter, Chapter 1, *Article 1*, 1945b; Krasno, 2004:4; Stiglitz, 2002:12). It had an initial membership of 51 countries¹⁷⁶. While historical accounts are unlikely to be politically neutral in any event (Brown and Ainley, 2005:3) the dominant narrative recounting the early

¹⁷⁶ Although 50 states signed the UN Charter in San Francisco on 26 June 1945, Poland was allowed to sign as an original member in the months that followed (Krasno, 2004:40).

days invariably describes the initiators as 'principled' and 'idealistic' and their project as 'noble', 'lofty', 'visionary', 'utopian', 'a dream'. The organisation they envisaged was a three-pillared structure for promoting peace, development and democracy throughout the world (Kennedy, 2007:278).

The founding fathers were anxious also to avoid recreating the flawed model of international cooperation provided by the defunct League of Nations, which had, *inter alia*, failed to counter the rise of the Axis powers in the 1930s, the invasions of Ethiopia, Manchuria and the Rhineland, and ultimately, the outbreak of World War II. Perhaps the most important lesson in the minds of planners of the new body was providing for the different capacities, or qualities, of large versus small states within one organisation (UN Charter, Chapter 1, Article 2, 1945b; Kennedy, 2006: 28). They achieved this structurally through the principles of the sovereign equality of all States, non-intervention in the sovereign affairs of any Member State, General Assembly membership for all Member States, and the one-country-one-vote mechanism in the General Assembly (UN Charter, 1945b).

The planners were also acutely aware of the need to anticipate the possibility of future aggression by Germany and Japan, or any others. Separate structural provisions were therefore adopted for the Security Council. This thesis argues that these constitutional and structural arrangements have had profound effects on world affairs, including the UN's relationships with both state and non-state actors, and have proven to be notoriously resistant to transformation. Complexity theorisations see this characteristic not necessarily in terms of individual Member State waywardness, but in terms of complex systemic elements greatly constrained by their embedded positions within a myriad of other complex systems, arrangements and relationships that cannot be disrupted without incurring consequences, many of which will eventuate as unintended, unpredictable outcomes in the distant future¹⁷⁷.

¹⁷⁷ For example, the arbitrary redrawing of territorial boundaries in the Middle East under the Anglo-French Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916 have recently been cited as the trigger for almost a century of simmering anger underlying the recent brutal conflicts in Syria and Iraq, leading to the recent declaration of the Islamic Caliphate (BBC, 2013; *IBT*, 2014).

4.3.2 Bretton Woods and the nascent 'international system'

Another lesson from the interwar years related to the economic and social collapse of the open market system in the 1930s — the Great Depression — to which was attributed the political unrest and extremism that led to world war. In response, schemes for rebuilding a devastated Europe and designing a new, depression-proof, international financial system were explored in parallel with negotiations to construct a postwar security order. The first fruits of these efforts were the formal establishment of the UN in 1942, followed in 1944 by the UN Monetary and Financial Conference at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, at which an agreement was signed to found an international financial system based on twin institutions — the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Stiglitz, 2002:11). It should be noted that the emphasis at the time was on hard-nosed arrangements for economic cooperation and fiscal responsibility rather than improving the lot of humanity regardless of cost (Kennedy, *ibid*: 30). The vastly different institutions seen today are the result of countless adjustments and reforms over time. The 'third leg' of the Bretton Woods system, the World Trade Organization, was added in 1995 (*ibid*: 140)¹⁷⁸. Together, the United Nations, the IMF, World Bank and WTO formed the hub of what has come to be generally referred to as the 'international system'.

4.3.3 Human rights concerns

In 1945, amid the prevailing mood of relative optimism that followed the grim years of war, the United Nations Charter was infused with human values and human concerns (Jolly *et al*, 2004:5), reflecting international hopes for a better world. Concerns about human rights, which had been intensified by the emergence of fascism and revulsion at the recent demonstration of human savagery in war,

¹⁷⁸ Although it was proposed much earlier as the 'third leg' of the Bretton Woods institutions, it was not until 1995 that the World Trade Organization (WTO) replaced the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which was set up in 1947 under the supervision of the UN's ECOSOC apparatus (Kennedy, 2006:120, 140-142; Weiss and Thakur, 2010:177-182). Established as an independent body — and no longer a part of the UN system — the WTO was given more teeth than the GATT and a much wider remit to administer the world's trading arrangements. Today, the UN continues to remain mainly on the sidelines in crucial matters concerning trade and many of the concerns of the developing countries are but marginal issues in the WTO (Weiss and Thakur, *ibid*: 182). As a consequence, the WTO is a generator of controversies and a focal point for violent confrontations over the equitable handling of international economic and trade matters (Kennedy, *ibid*: 140). As will be shown in Sections 4.3.6 and 8.4.2, TANs are often engaged in these conflicts.

were suddenly higher on the political agenda. Many UN observers still consider human rights to be the boldest idea in the UN's Charter: documenting the compelling claim that all *individuals* have inalienable human rights (Weiss and Thakur, 2010:260-1; UN Charter, 1945b). Such ideas were far ahead of the times in a world in which half the global population then lived in colonies and a significant proportion of the rest lived under conditions of dictatorship (Jolly *et al*, *ibid*: 6).

The Charter was soon followed by one of the UN's major accomplishments, the promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 1948 (UDHR, 1948). Both documents expressed grand aspirations for overcoming problems and effecting international leadership and decision-making in a world of self-interested states. But the UN Charter was of many parts, each with varying capacities for achieving positive outcomes — or, conversely, facilitating gridlock and paralysis (Kennedy, 2006:45). As referenced earlier, it also enshrined the principles of one-country-one-vote in the General Assembly, the sovereignty of states, and non-intervention by other Members in the domestic affairs of any state. Throughout the UN's history, these provisions — which, this thesis argues, have constantly served to redraw the fracture lines between pluralist (characteristically, state) and solidarist (characteristically, non-state) thinking — have ignited contention and lie at the core of much of the criticism leveled at the UN over its perceived failures and powerlessness.

The feature of the UN architecture that I consider of most relevance to this thesis is the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), set up under the General Assembly in 1945, to provide for international cooperation in the fields of economic, social, health, environmental, human rights and cultural advancement (*ibid*: 43). Some believe this was an overambitious remit for the body (*ibid*), and that, having achieved their privileged positions on the Security Council and the Bretton Woods institutions, the Great Powers were amenable to seeing an ECOSOC composed of 18 rotating members (now 54), reporting to the General Assembly and taking directions from it, but drafting its own rules and largely acting with considerable autonomy in setting up its own commissions and partnerships, calling conferences, and consulting with non-governmental organisations. And yet, this body only convenes once each year for four weeks and is the focus of much criticism for its

alleged feebleness, and the patchy quality of its splintered assortment of agencies. In the words of one critic it is 'a coordinating body that can't coordinate' (Kennedy, 2006:270).

It is to this body that NGOs have their consultative status, their input screened by an ECOSOC standing committee, which considers requests for consultative status and receives requests from NGOs for items to be put on the ECOSOC 's agenda (UN-ECOSOC, 2011a). Direct access to the General Assembly, let alone the Security Council, is not possible for non-governmental actors — leading cynics to wonder whether the ECOSOC's role, at least in this regard, is to simply act as a UN gatekeeper to civil society's concerns and agitations (*ibid*). The processes and mechanisms that the UN, through ECOSOC, employs to engage with NGOs are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

4.3.4 Decolonisation and changing dynamics of the international order

At the time of the UN's establishment there were sharp differences between the major powers with colonies and the 80 or so countries that were, or had recently been, colonies (Jolly *et al*, 2004:4). After the War, the process of decolonisation shifted the West's relations with the rest of the world from unequal and coercive to legally equal and diplomatic (Buzan and Little, 2000:317). Decolonisation created an onslaught of newly independent countries whose acceptance as members of the UN had special meaning in that it signified final recognition of their sovereign statehood¹⁷⁹ (Weiss and Thakur, 2010:155).

By the mid-1960s, some 100 new Member States had joined the original Charter-signatories. However, the new members did not just boost the membership dramatically, they also placed their own concerns on the UN's agenda. Those located in what was becoming known as the 'Third World' were mainly interested in state-building, nation-building, and economic development to raise their people out of subsistence, poverty and unemployment (*ibid*). The addition of so many new states was seen as challenging, not because of race, religion or nationality, but

¹⁷⁹ As evidenced in the recent accession of South Sudan and in aspirations by the Palestinian National Authority for the UN to recognise Palestine as a sovereign state (referred to in Section 4.2), this aspect of UN Member status has been enduring.

because of the clash of political ideologies (Gold, 2005:33): many of the new states wanting international rules more suited to the needs of political arrangements other than those of democracies. Ideological pluralism was felt also in debates over human rights. According to Gold (*ibid*: 31), by the mid-1990s, the majority of the Afro-Asian bloc was asserting that human rights was a Western liberal invention and, as such, had nothing to offer countries whose values were derived from tribal wisdom and other communal traditions. Even today, only 60% of the world's countries are estimated to be electoral democracies (Freedom House, 2013: 29). Fewer still can be classed as 'liberal democracies', with their implied presence of an array of civil liberties (*ibid*).

The internal political dynamics of the UN thus changed profoundly during its first few decades, and distinctively different voting patterns became a feature of the new power blocs. At the outset of the 1950s, the 'Third World' lobby was just beginning to gather strength and, from 1964, this pressure was represented in the UN system by the Group of 77 (G-77), a working caucus of 77 developing countries. But decolonisation in the ensuing decades rapidly boosted the numbers and, today, there are over 133 UN Member States in the bloc (G-77, 2014) According to Weiss and Thakur (2010:177):

The crystallization of developing countries into a single bloc for the purposes of international economic negotiations represented a direct challenge to industrialized countries. In parallel with the Non-Aligned movement, which initially focused more on security issues, the Third World's "solidarity", or at least its cohesion for the purposes of many international debates, meant that developing countries were in a better position to champion the NIEO¹⁸⁰ and policies that aimed to challenge the distribution of benefits from growth and trade in the mid-1970s.

According to Gareau (2001:122), much of the 1970s was characterised by this power struggle by a majority bloc of developing countries, as they sought to challenge the 'First World' economic hegemony by promoting their model for more favourable economic arrangements — a New International Economic Order. But the 'Third World' suffered economic decline in the years following the launch of the demands set out in the NIEO and by the end of the '70s decade the project had failed, defeated by a combination of factors, including nature, counter-measures by the West, and dwindling cohort support (*ibid*, 125-6). A further aspect, identified

¹⁸⁰ New International Economic Order.

by Van Rooy (2004:48) was the inadequate message framing of the NIEO for a Northern public, which in turn did not exert sufficient pressure on Northern governments to support the proposal. In 1991, the General Assembly passed a resolution endorsing arrangements for a distinctively liberal new economic order. Gareau (*ibid*:126) notes somewhat ominously:

But the new neo-liberal hegemony and the death of the NIEO do not imply that the grievances of the third world¹⁸¹ have disappeared. Like festering sores, they burst open to reveal themselves from time to time.

As a result of the advocacy lessons learnt during the failed NIEO campaign, development NGOs adopted markedly different campaign tactics during the 80's and onwards (Van Rooy, *ibid*, citing Clark, 1992:198). Framing of issues became more sophisticated and targeting was focused specifically on aid, trade, international finance and foreign policy, rather than on more general moral and ideological issues. Closer links were forged between lobbying and public education and much closer attention was given to the strategic use of the world's mass media (*ibid*).

4.3.5 The Cold War and aftermath

In the era of the Cold War, differences between the Western bloc and the Soviet bloc were a major polarising factor within the UN (Jolly *et al*, 2004:4). Containment of communism became the focus of U.S. foreign policy as the two rival superpowers — the USA and the USSR — sought to expand their spheres of influence in various regions of the world. The security crises, conflicts, economic sanctions and 'Cold War' tensions of that long, troubled, era were reflected on to the world stage at the UN (Krasno, 2004:242). Washington scorned the UN as a bastion of Third World nationalism and pro-communism and carried out a policy of non-cooperation with the UN, even withholding its funding at various times. Confrontations with the Soviet Union resulted in Central America, the Horn of Africa, much of southern Africa, and parts of Asia becoming battlegrounds for the two superpowers, or their proxies. This standoff continued until the mid-1980s, when the world witnessed the Soviet system gradually crumbling from the inside (Weiss, Forsythe and Coate, 2004:42).

¹⁸¹ Gareau does not use capitals to denote the proper noun, although he does imply they are a particular category of world citizen.

The Cold War is widely considered to have ended in November 1989, when the Berlin Wall was brought down. According to Krasno (2004:244), the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the end of the Soviet empire, and the beginning of ‘a paradigm shift of major proportions’. The UN, which had been to a great extent frozen out from playing an intermediary role by Cold War vetoes in the Security Council, now took on a greatly increased number of new peacekeeping roles in the transition countries to assist their reconstruction. UN peacekeepers were also deployed in situations of conflict and failed states. Not only had the Security Council overcome its bi-polar deadlock, its ability to reach agreement on any number of issues had increased (*ibid*, 246).

But the performance of the UN in the period since the end of the Cold War is a highly controversial topic: its role as a positive force for world order, stability, or global justice being vociferously contested in some quarters. A former U.S. ambassador to the UN, Dore Gold (2004:2; 10), condemns the UN’s failure to seize the opportunity for a stable world order once it was no longer ‘paralyzed by the Cold War’s superpower stalemate’, and could ‘at last perform as envisioned by its founders’. This was a moment, Gold claims, that saw a re-emergence of the ‘utopian enthusiasm’ that has been voiced when the UN was founded in the wake of World War II. That moment was reminiscent of the earlier post-war initiatives to prevent future conflict throughout history — the League of Nations after World War I and the Concert of Europe at the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 — and, like these efforts to promote peace, it had failed:

The post-Cold War order, with the US as its centerpiece, had quickly collapsed — more quickly than either the Concert of Europe, which lasted for ninety-nine years, or the League of Nations, which was active for about twenty.

By 2002, Gold laments, all prospects for a stable, more secure, world had vanished and a ‘new crisis seemed to threaten world peace every few months’. The UN, he claims, is singularly unsuited to preserving global order, is congenitally flawed, and beyond redemption. Far from any impression that the UN may give of being a benign but ineffective world body, Gold examines the UN’s record and concludes that the organisation has actually ‘accelerated and spread global chaos’ [...] its involvement in conflict situations only making matters worse. Although the UN

was born at a moment of extraordinary moral clarity, he ascribes many of the UN's recent failures to a pervasive culture in the institution of 'moral equivalence' and an inability to make moral choices.

4.3.6 Globalisation

If the sociopolitical and socio-historical factors described so far have had deep and enduring impacts on the development of the UN's relationships with NGOs, the socio-economic and technological effects of 'globalisation' have been comparatively convulsive. The ending of the Cold War, and the ensuing acceleration of globalisation, is widely credited with having pivotal significance in the emergence and rapid rise of a 'global civil society'¹⁸² (UN Report 2004; Hill, 2007; Van Rooy, 2004:30), large segments of which were, and still are, greatly opposed to the forces driving globalisation and its extremely uneven effects throughout the world (see Chapter 6). According to Kaldor, understanding the forces and effects of globalisation is central to understanding what is new about the concept of civil society since 1989 (2003a:1)¹⁸³.

This thesis argues, therefore, that it is useful in explaining the interface between NGOs/TANs and the international system, to focus research on accounts of globalisation's effects on NGO activity at the UN. A UN Secretariat briefing paper (UN-NGLS, 2003c)¹⁸⁴ states that during the 90s there was 'an explosion of NGO involvement in all activities of the UN', especially to those involved in the UN world conferences. Moreover, the paper noted, this 'melee of activities' by NGOs was regarded by some observers as:

[...] a truly 21st Century phenomenon — a compelling product of the Network Age and a corrective to the failings of traditional democratic institutions

¹⁸² Although this thesis is sceptical of claims asserting the existence of an analytically useful category of ordinary citizens that is qualitatively different from the rest of humanity, apart from their having jobs in social administration, religious orders or the military, references to 'global civil society' abound in the world politics literature and must be respectfully acknowledged. Nevertheless, I would venture that the vast majority of civil servants consider their lives to be categorically 'ordinary'.

¹⁸³ Opinion differs widely regarding the definition, meaning and effects of 'globalisation' and also of 'civil society'. For a range of these opinions see Scholte, 2005:1; Held and McGrew, 2002:1-2; Buzan, 2004: 77-89; Kaldor, 2003b: 559; Clark *et al*, 2005:293; Keane, 2003: xi-xiii; Donnelly, 2011; and Stiglitz, 2002.

¹⁸⁴ This Report (*UN System and Civil Society — An Inventory and Analysis of Practices*) provides an overview of the UN management's (*i.e.* secretariat/insider) thinking on participation by civil society groups in the deliberative processes of the UN at that point in time (UN-NGLS, 2003c).

(which focus on the parochial and short-term in an age when people are increasingly worried about the global and the long-term).

Given an end-20th Century conceptualisation of civil society as a constellation of non-state actors who occupy a space between the state and the market (Van Rooy, *ibid* 6-7), NGOs are widely understood in the literature and media as actors who take up causes and act as interceding agents with both states and markets. Moreover, within the globalisation concern movements, the main reference point for ideological debate is an agreement that there is something dangerous called 'globalisation', and there is something to be done about it (Van Rooy, *ibid*: 26). Intensifying these concerns is the view that globalisation has put democracy in peril, arising from the 'free trade' policies of the international institutions, such as the WTO, IMF and World Bank (*ibid*: 27-28). As might be expected, globalisation has had a major impact on the UN and the other major international institutions, especially the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO, which govern globalisation (Stiglitz, 2002:10; Weiss and Thakur, 2010:34-35; Norris, 2003:287-297). In describing the widespread effects of globalisation in its 2004 Report, the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization (UN-ILO, 2004) stated in dire language that the world had reached a governance 'impasse' in its response to globalisation and global imbalances were 'morally unacceptable and politically unsustainable'.

According to the UN's Panel of Experts on UN-Civil Society Relations¹⁸⁵ (*ibid*: 8) a clear paradox is thus seen to be emerging: while the substance of politics is fast globalising, (in the areas of trade, economics, environment, pandemics, terrorism, *etc.*), the process of politics is not; its principal institutions (elections, political parties and parliaments) remaining firmly rooted at the national or local level¹⁸⁶. The Report claimed that in response to 'the weak

¹⁸⁵ This Report is examined in greater detail in Chapter 5.

¹⁸⁶ I should add here that a dispassionate complexity reading of these social inequalities would not condemn the irrepressible drivers and conditions that enable societies, disproportionately, to explore new opportunities beyond their known worlds, but would instead seek to better understand the deep structural properties that generate the disparate fitness of people everywhere to survive and thrive in their different environments. Thus armed with sound data, the machinery of governance is more likely to eschew assumptions about causes and effects and easy targets, and take action against real causes, using appropriate levers, to produce desired effects. See Giddens (1984:xxiv-xxvi; 34-37, 83-92) for a discussion of time-geography distancing theory, which *inter alia* gives particular attention to

influence of traditional democracy in matters of global governance', citizens of diverse countries increasingly act politically 'by participating directly, through civil society mechanisms, in policy debates that particularly interest them'. It continues:

This constitutes a broadening from representative to participatory democracy. Traditional democracy aggregates citizens by communities of neighbourhood (their electoral districts), but in participatory democracy citizens aggregate in communities of interest. And, thanks to modern information and communication technologies, these communities of interest can be global as readily as local.

However, Thucydidean realism¹⁸⁷, which guides the realist perspectives of this thesis (and is reflected in my *H*₃), provides a starkly contrasting interpretation of the international response to these developments. Most importantly, it provides a compelling explanation of why situated political processes throughout the world are so resistant to 'fast globalising' (even assuming a desire of governments adapt their political arrangements and the intricacies of the *sui generis* social contracts they have with their peoples). Classical realism also offers a coherent account of why individual nation states prize their sovereignty and raise barriers to protect their perceived national interests from remote control by exogenous others. I suggest this is especially so (and will be seen in the following chapter), if this pressure comes from civil society organisations with the technological tools they believe have the capability to by-pass the international deliberative processes, in order to exert pressure 'from-below'-from-above¹⁸⁸ on topics 'that particularly interest them'.

Furthermore, the view of globalisation as a portmanteau for relatively unwanted aspects of modern life is not universally shared. In many instances, globalisation has been a force for good (Stiglitz, 2002:4) — the removal of barriers to free trade and the closer integration of national economies having the *potential* to enrich

constraints over activity deriving from physical properties of the body and different environments in which agents move.

¹⁸⁷ See Gilpin (2001:15-19) for an overview of classical Thucydidean, realism, as adopted in this thesis. Although Gilpin draws a distinction between state-centred realism and systemic realism, I argue that in light of complexity insights there is no analytical value to be had in separating these theories, which simply reflect just two different, partial, interpretations of the ontological reality of the complex international system.

¹⁸⁸ See Chandler (2004), for insights on the concept of political power 'from below'.

everyone in the world, particularly the poor. However, Stiglitz¹⁸⁹ (2002:3,7) and others (especially the Report by the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, UN-ILO, 2004), have had scathing criticism for the way globalisation has been *managed* by the international economic and financial institutions, producing devastating consequences for people in developing countries, especially the poor. Further destructive spin-offs of this increased interdependence and interconnectivity include underworld trafficking in drugs, arms and humans (Weiss and Thakur, *ibid*). While the process of globalisation is considered to be irreversible (UN Global Compact, 1999; Sec-Gen, 2001), the international institutions, including the UN, are increasingly coming under intense pressure from concern groups to radically rethink the policies that enable globalisation's most extreme consequences, repair damaged communities and promote principles of social justice.

A major initiative to involve civil society in finding solutions to the harmful effects of globalisation was announced in January 1999, when the then Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, asked the world's business leaders attending the World Economic Forum in Davos, to support a 'global compact of shared values and principles, which will give a human face to the global market' (UN-Global Compact, 1999). At the same venue, Annan said in 2001, 'if we cannot make globalization work for all, in the end it will work for none' (UN Sec-Gen, 2001). This initiative also brought the voices of corporations and big business into the UN's dialogues with civil society.

But the collective raised voices of transnational civil society groups appear destined to continue their tense relationships and to target the international *fora*, whether they are working in partnerships, or against the international order. This is because, as Clark *et al* announced after a major study of NGO activity in and around UN world conferences: 'State sovereignty sets the limits of global civil society' (2005:314).

¹⁸⁹ It is a point of interest that Joseph Stiglitz, author of the seminal globalisation text '*Globalization and its Discontents*' (2002), was also a member of the ILO's World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, that compiled the UN report '*A Fair Globalization: Creating Opportunities for All*' (UN-ILO, 2004).

4.4 Outcomes-in-process and indicative macroscopic patterns

4.4.1 *The UN today*

Today, as the General Assembly passes the milestone of its 69th Session¹⁹⁰, the UN is nevertheless keenly aware of its many critics and manifold shortcomings, its cumbersome institutional arrangements, inability to react to global challenges and notorious resistance to reform (see UN General Assembly opening speech, UN-GA Opening, 2011; and UN-NGLS, 2011). At a conference¹⁹¹ held by the General Assembly in June, 2011, the Assembly's then President, Joseph Deiss (UN-NGLS, 2011), expressed the urgent need to develop an efficient system of global governance to address increasingly global problems. He observed the progressive fragmentation of global governance and warned Member States that the UN must reform in order to remain relevant. To make his point, one speaker quoted the words of the veteran UN insider Sir Brian Urquhart¹⁹²:

The UN lives to a considerable extent in a political past where independent sovereignty was the gold standard of international affairs. What is needed now is to reconcile national sovereignty with the demands of human survival and decency in the astonishingly dangerous world which absent mindedly we have created.

Echoing these concerns in a speech at the opening of the 66th General Assembly, in September 2011, the incoming UN President, Nassir Abdulaziz al-Nasser (UN-GA Opening, 2011) said the world was now at a critical juncture and the UN would have to rethink the way it operates 'in the wake of ongoing global economic turmoil, popular protests that were upending once-stable Governments and the seemingly unending raft of natural hazards and man-made disasters'. But in view of widespread misgivings, such as those cited above, it seems unlikely that this urgent and impassioned call to action will, or can, elicit any significant collective response from the UN, given the plurality of sovereign national interest that has

¹⁹⁰ The General Debate of the 69th Session of the General Assembly was held in New York in September 2014.

¹⁹¹ The UN General Assembly held an 'Informal Thematic Debate on the United Nations in Global Governance' in New York on 28 June 2011. Its purpose was to provide input to a report on global governance being prepared by the Secretary-General in the lead up to the 66th Session of the General Assembly (UN-NGLS, 2011).

¹⁹² A veteran British diplomat involved in establishing the United Nations in 1945 and later serving for many years as Undersecretary General for Political Affairs. He retired from the UN in 1986 (UN Urquhart Bio, 2011).

long characterised — some might say ‘hobbled’ — the UN’s normative capacities and any illusions about its ability to act as a *de facto* form of global governance. However, the UN’s constitutional fundamentals only partially explain its dysfunctionality and threats to its relevance in the contemporary world, since much of the disagreement between Member countries is related to the values embodied in their particular, different, economic, social and historical situations (Jolly *et al*, 2004:4).

Up until the recent transformations in the physical technologies of transportation and communication that power globalisation (Buzan and Little, 2000:288), there was little prospect of significantly reducing the incompatibilities between the views and concerns of UN Member States. But transnational ‘norm entrepreneurs’ — such as TANs — are now often credited with helping to close those gaps. By having the ability to inject unexpected voices into international discourse regarding problems of global scope, new ideas, norms and identities, TANs act as agents of change. Indeed, when advocacy networks are able to convert ‘voice’ into ‘power’, by influencing policy-making, they are in effect exercising power over governments (Nye, 2011:8-10; Willetts, 2011:131-2). Moreover, because a great deal of past NGO advocacy has been directed against governments and UN policy, these non-state actors have become ‘a salient phenomenon in international policy making and execution’ (Weiss and Gordenker, 1996:24). Unsurprisingly, a growing number of NGOs are now eager to institutionalise a full-fledged partnership with the United Nations (*ibid*: 39; Zettler, 2009; UN-ECOSOC, 2012).

However, these demands frequently encounter strong resistances and barriers to participation. At the same time countless UN projects, programmes and even agencies are dedicated to facilitating and enhancing the status, roles and capacities of NGOs in the work of the UN. This is obviously a fitness landscape in which all parties are challenged to find common ground, not least because of the increasing commitment of the UN and the international community to scientific, evidence-based, policy making (UNICEF, 2008)¹⁹³. According to Segone and Pron (2008), international evidence-based policymaking is ‘a policy process that helps planners make better-informed decisions by putting the best available evidence at the

¹⁹³ UNICEF brochure *Bridging the Gap* (2008).

centre of the policy process'. This approach stands in stark contrast to 'opinion-based' policy, which 'relies heavily on either the selective use of evidence (*e.g.* on a single survey irrespective of quality) or on the untested views of individuals or groups, often inspired by ideological standpoints, prejudices, or speculative conjecture'. Thus, argumentation is central in all stages of the policy process and 'evidence is an important toll for those engaged in the discourse'. In this environment, it goes without saying that answering complex global challenges with thin argumentation and incoherent ideologies is not considered a suitable response.

4.5 Summary

To many observers, the UN and its system of related organisations is seen as deeply flawed and mired in perpetual crisis (Kennedy, 2006:245; Weiss, 2008:1; Weiss and Thakur, 2010: *xix*; Gold, 2004:3), still served by yesteryear's institutional arrangements and urgently in need of reform (UN Sec-Gen, 2003; UN Report, 2004a; UN-NGLS, 2003, 2003b, 2003c; UN-GA Opening, 2011; UN-NGLS, 2011), yet notoriously resistant to instituting the scale of adaptation needed to tackle the present generation of 'global problems'. This opinion testified to Durkheim's conviction that institutions are intrinsically limited and necessarily slow in their ability to undertake major transformations (as opposed to evolutionary ones), *vis-à-vis* political agitation for change (Giddens, 1977:263; 1984:229).

Thus, despite the many criticisms of the UN's performance record, there seems little likelihood that, without the United Nations, the world would have seen a more stable world order during the past six decades. Notwithstanding the deterritorialising effects of globalisation and increasingly complex interdependencies between nations, grounds were seen for the Westphalian order of states, underpinned by the principles of the UN Charter, remaining the most intellectually coherent basis for conducting international affairs for the foreseeable future. That is not to deny the dynamic and emergent properties of the UN system, nor the imperative for new knowledge, fresh ideas and outspoken voices in the system that are non-aligned with domestic governments, not obligated to protect

national sovereignty at any cost, and willing to propose solutions that transcend ideologies.

A useful succinct reminder of the UN's lack of coercive power, and what it can and cannot do, is provided by Jolly *et al* (2004:257):

The UN writes and records, it sets goals and objectives. But ultimately governments and countries, leaders and ordinary people, farmers and craftsmen, companies and entrepreneurs take action. The UN can do little more than promote priorities for action, help monitor, and provide modest levels of technical and financial support.

I turn now to examining the relationship between the United Nations and non-governmental organisations throughout the world, including transnational advocacy networks, whose interests and operations, by definition, transcend the borders of nation states.

5. The U.N. Interface with Civil Society

The clear strains in relations between the United Nations and civil society may originate partly in the lack of a clearly articulated case for enhancing such engagement today.

Extract from the Report by the Panel of Eminent Persons on
United Nations-Civil Society Relations
(The Cardoso Report)¹⁹⁴

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the development of the relationship between the United Nations and NGOs (including TANS), in order that the place and function of TANS, as a typology of NGO operating in the international system, may be better understood. However, I should emphasise that this chapter component does not cover all NGOs, or TANS, operating planet-wide. It is not epistemologically feasible, in a study of actors interacting in the UN system, to survey NGOs/TANS who are outside the system, although tendencies in the international system's relationships with NGOs are quite clear. They are congenitally strained (UN Report, 2004a; Joachim and Locher, 2009:28) and likely to remain so as long as tensions persist between those who view the UN as mainly an intergovernmental body representing the states of the world and those who want to see the UN as a more democratic body representing the people of the world (Joachim and Locher, *ibid*). This thesis takes neither side in this dualistic debate, instead sharing Tarrow's argument (2005:60) that 'while globalization provides incentives and themes for transnational activism, it is internationalism that offers a framework, a set of focal points, and a structure of opportunities for transnational activists'. Acknowledging the ineluctable fact and function of the UN today, as discussed in the previous chapter, my argument turns now to exploring the relational interface between the leading institution of the international system and NGOs/TANS.

¹⁹⁴ UN General Assembly report A/58/817, dated 11 June 2004 (UN Report, 2004a).

Typological challenges in the UN system

Taxonomy and ambiguous terminology are major challenges in differentiating between civil society (*i.e.* non-state) actors operating in the UN system, with imprecision in defining these blurred areas leaving much to interpretation and assumption¹⁹⁵. Clarification is therefore provided on what is meant by the term 'NGO' in the context of international politics. From this basis, I am then able to make a further distinction, in the next chapter, between NGOs in general, and those NGOs that demonstrate the emergent characteristics associated with TANs, which this thesis argues can, and should, be distinguished from other forms of NGO by the distinctiveness of their relatively recent utilisation of the fruits of the Information Age: the technology; the centrality of the Internet and media relations in their communications strategies; their information management; interconnectivity; and network structures. While this is not, yet, a widely recognised insight, it is shared by Costoya (2007)¹⁹⁶, who describes civil society networks as 'information-age extensions of NGOs' and posits, as does this thesis, that the Information Age is transforming the very composition of the social sector widely understood as 'civil society'.

The UN system formally makes no distinction between NGOs functionally, or philosophically — whether service-providing or lobbyist, radical or reformist¹⁹⁷ — as long as they meet the UN's accreditation criteria (see Section 5.3.3), although there has been an evident tendency for decades towards encouraging greater participation in the work of the UN by NGOs from the global South to redress

¹⁹⁵ In September 2013, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published a clarifying note concerning the 'confusing terminology', as an annex to its eBook *Working with Civil Society in Foreign Aid: Possibilities for South-South Cooperation?* (UNDP, 2013:123-125). The UNDP's clarification states that while many aid actors, particularly governments in developing countries, refer to 'NGOs' and their role in international aid and development cooperation, the phrase 'non-governmental organisation' is contested terminology. The clarification points out that, for many people, NGOs are understood to be organisations that are subsumed within the broader category of civil society organisations (CSOs), and this is the UNDP's preferred term. Where a distinction is made for International NGOs (INGOs), they are seen as a sub-category of NGOs. Following this genealogical tree, this thesis posits that transnational advocacy networks (TANs) are a subset of INGO.

¹⁹⁶ Costoya's views on developing a typology of civil society actors are expressed in a paper prepared while a Research Fellow of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development programme on Civil Society and Social Movements, Geneva.

¹⁹⁷ A concise encapsulation of NGO diversity on similar lines is provided by Edwards (2000:36).

imbalances in relation to NGOs from the North¹⁹⁸. ECOSOC Resolution 1297 (XLIV) of 29 May, 1968 (UN-ECOSOC, 1968b) urged the UN's Office of Public Information (OPI) to increase its association with a greater number of NGOs in general, particularly according 'immediate and sympathetic consideration' to 'inadequately represented regions of the world, particularly in Africa', and to also favour NGOs representing racial groups, especially to people 'of African descent'. The only groups the OPI was directed to exclude from its relationships were 'organizations whose aims or practices tend or contribute to the propagation of Nazi ideology and racial and/or religious discrimination' (UN-ECOSOC, 1968b). In 1996 (ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31) expressed a general hope that NGOs from developing countries would be encouraged to have greater participation in the UN's international conferences; greater involvement should also be encouraged among 'countries with economies in transition' (UN-ECOSOC, 1996). However, such references to specific groups are indicative of thinking within ECOSOC only and have not been enshrined in UN policy.

Therefore, in the UN's un-nuanced taxonomy the Zoroastrian Women's Organization is functionally the same as Greenpeace and Amnesty International. I argue that the UN system does not have a coherent response strategy to accommodate the diverse voices of today's TANs that do not fit the UN criteria last reformed over 18 years ago (UN-ECOSOC, 1996) to take into account NGOs operating at that time. In fact, in comparing UN amendments it is apparent that the basic criteria for consulting NGOs is little changed from 1946, when 41 NGOs were accredited (UN-ECOSOC, 2011c).

This thesis argues, however, that in established practice within the UN system, differentiation between NGOs exists — not least between different genera of NGOs

¹⁹⁸ It is a commonplace to find documents on CSOs (including NGOs and INGOs) circulating in the international system that make the distinction between organisations based in the global North (NCSOs) and those based in the global South (SCSOs). A practical element in making this distinction is due to the fact that in most North-South CSO cooperative relationships, NCSOs or INGOs have traditionally taken the dominant role of aid donors, managers and service providers, while SCSOs have been cast in the comparatively weaker roles of recipients and local enablers (OECD-DAC, 2008:3-4; CCIC, 2006:14-15). A discussion paper on aid effectiveness by the Canadian Council for International Co-operation echoes concerns in the aid sector over the imbalances in these 'partnerships', that *'it may be more effective to retain a distinction between CSOs with a service delivery mandate and CSOs seeking societal reform and changes in the structures of injustice'* (CCIC, *ibid*). Such calls for differentiating typologies of civil society organisations support the underlying premises of this thesis.

themselves — and has a significant bearing on the place, function, and effectiveness of these individual civil society actors in global politics (Willetts, 2011:61-63). Because of the UN system's usage of a broad, umbrella categorisation for all NGOs, a discussion of the place, function and effectiveness of TANs in the international system needs to first ask which organisations the UN accepts, or refuses to accept, as NGOs at the level of global politics; what criteria the UN adopts for recognising NGOs and what the state of the relationships can tell us.

5.2 The relationship between the UN and NGOs/TANs

The interface between the UN and NGOs is a densely crowded landscape. Over 13,000¹⁹⁹ civil society organisations have established a formal relationship with the United Nations, in diverse roles and on a range of levels. These roles include advising UN agencies and Member States, disseminating information, raising awareness, policy advocacy, joint operational projects and providing services and technical expertise. Although only governments of Member States make decisions in the UN, the decision-making *process* has increasingly been opened to an array of non-state players, including NGOs, the private sector, trade unions, foundations, think tanks, local authorities and academic researchers (UN-ECOSOC, 2011; UN-NGLS, 2007a; Zettler, 2009). Almost 1,000 of these NGOs are indigenous people's organisations, some of which represent the interests of diasporas that are larger than the populations of some sovereign states²⁰⁰ — such as the Roma and the Inuit (Klímová-Alexander, 2005:14; ICC, 2011; Shadian, 2010) — but whose constituents live as marginalised minorities within contemporary bordered states. As such, these NGOs are of special interest in examining the trajectories of transnational advocacy networks in the UN system, since they fundamentally contest the state-centric, Westphalian, basis for collective representation in world politics with political, legal and normative claims developed over many decades. But whose voices should, or can, be heard? Who speaks for whom on the world stage, and with what authority?²⁰¹ However compelling their case for recognition, attention, and support on the world stage — by the *sans frontières* Roma, Inuit,

¹⁹⁹ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs data (UN-DESA, 2011b).

²⁰⁰ Estimates differ as to the number and geographical distribution of the Roma, but accounts generally put the population at 10-15 million throughout the world (Klimova: 2005:14). According to the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Inuit population is approximately 155,000, which is larger than some 38 UN Member States (ICC, 2011: UN-DESA, 2012).

²⁰¹ For background to this debate, see Spivak's seminal thesis on this subject (1985). See also Cochran, (1999) and Erskine (2010:36).

world's women, elderly, youth, consumers, gay liberationists, blind, Bahá'í, farmers, grannies, tunnellers, rainwater harvesters, or by the Association of Garbage Collectors for Community Development²⁰² — they are not alone. The following diagram speaks for itself:

The Growth of NGOs at the UN

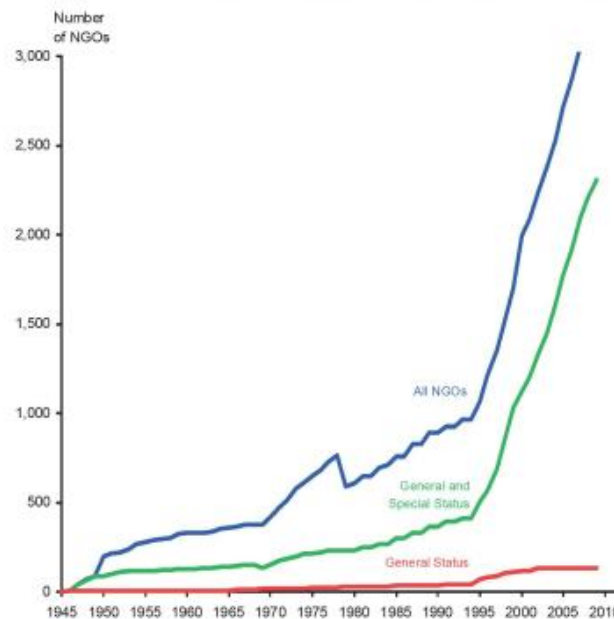


Figure 5.1

(Graphic reproduced from Willetts, 2011b:335.)

According to the Union of International Associations the number of international NGOs has grown to almost 65,000²⁰³, and countless thousands more work regionally, nationally and locally. Thousands of these bodies, and other civil society groups, have informal links with parts of the UN system throughout the world. The complexity of this interface is what the UN has called, in customary understatement, ‘the often complex interplay of differing political perspectives’ (UN-NGLS, *ibid*). This torrent of competing voices at the international level was described somewhat more expressively as ‘white noise’ (and its effect as ‘gridlock’), by Keohane and Nye, as long ago as 1988 (1988:89), in their ‘paradox of plenty’ commentary²⁰⁴, which asserts:

²⁰² Extracted from the full list of NGOs in consultative status with the UN, as of September 2010 (UN-ECOSOC, 2010).

²⁰³ Union of International Associations Yearbook data (UIA, 2011).

²⁰⁴ Cited also by Stone (2004:13) in the context of think-tank development and influence.

[...] to understand the effect of free information on power, one must first understand the paradox of plenty. A plenitude of information leads to a poverty of attention. Attention becomes a scarce resource, and those who can distinguish valuable signals from white noise gain power.

This thesis posits, therefore, that it is more fruitful to investigate not what this information *is*, individually, but what it *does*,²⁰⁵ collectively, to generate desired outcomes for specific units (*e.g.* TANs), within the system. Given that the definitive goal of TANs is to influence political policy and change the behaviour of states and international organisations²⁰⁶, the principal foci of investigation called for in this study are the mechanisms and relationships through which TAN goals are pursued at the international policy-making level.

Once registered with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), civil society groups can apply for consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and over 4,000 NGOs²⁰⁷ are currently in consultancy relationships with the UN at various levels of participation and influence in international affairs and policy-making. This status gives NGOs access to the particular audiences they need to influence in order to advance their agendas, win allies and effect political outcomes (UN-ECOSOC, 2011c; Zettler, 2009). The UN-DESA NGO Branch also services over 31,000 other NGOs working with the United Nations (UN-DESA, 2014; UN-ECOSOC, 2012). Accredited NGOs are currently able to address plenary meetings of UN Member States, contribute alternative reports and strategic information to treaty bodies, occasionally and informally brief the Security Council by way of the imaginative but unorthodox 'Arria Formula'²⁰⁸, and sometimes sit on government delegations at UN meetings (UN-NGLS, 2007a; UN-NGLS, 2003c). If access to important influencers is limited the prospects for

²⁰⁵ TAN effectiveness, goals and influence are examined further in Chapter 6. The basic premise of relational power in international relations follows Nye's insight that it is the power to achieve one's preferred behavioural outcomes (2010:10)

²⁰⁶ This understanding of TAN goals is advanced persuasively by Keck and Sikkink (1998:2), and is adopted and developed in this thesis.

²⁰⁷ These civil society organisations range from service-providing and academic bodies, to religious, business, consulting, and lobbying groups.

²⁰⁸ This term refers to a meeting-fringe practice initiated in 1992 by the then President of the Security Council, Ambassador Diego Arria (Venezuela). Arria-formula meetings are not meetings of the Security Council. They are convened at the initiative of a member or members of the Security Council in order to hear the views of individuals, organisations or institutions on matters within the competence of the Security Council (UN data, 2011b).

influencing policy may become more challenging (Zettler, *ibid*). Such accreditation also enables NGOs to participate in international conferences convened by the UN and in meetings of the preparatory bodies. Interaction between the UN and NGOs has been continuous and evolving throughout the UN's history, with both state and non-state actors, and their relationships, morphing into unpredicted new forms over time. The relationships have taken on unforeseen dimensions also in terms of new political controversies arising, *inter alia*, from the uneven effects of globalisation; an increase in global challenges; and the rapid escalation in the number of NGOs seeking political policy redress at the international level. All of which phenomena the UN system has struggled to accommodate — with varying degrees of unanimity and success.

Resolutions, blueprints and promises: an archetypal UN formula

The UN system's intention to strengthen UN-NGO relations has been underpinned in recent years in a somewhat drawn-out string of documents²⁰⁹ (UN-NGLS, 2011a; UN-ECOSOC, 2011c), particularly in the UN Millennium Declaration of September 2000. In this landmark document, the General Assembly resolved, *inter alia*: 'To give greater opportunities to the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society, in general, to contribute to the realization of the organization's goals and programmes' (UN-Millennium Declaration, 2000, Section VIII/30). The commitment of Member States to provide greater opportunities for NGO engagement was also reaffirmed in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (UN GA Resolution, 2005; UN-ECOSOC, 2011c). Therefore, it was to be expected that the early years of the new millennium would see the UN, under the pro-reformist helm of then Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, take determined steps towards a more fruitful engagement with NGOs (UN-Report, 2004a), however vague the wording of the overarching policy directive.

This fresh momentum in the relationship was especially evident in civil society involvement in the UN's continuing programme of World Summits and major conferences, which had experienced a period of intense activity in the 1990s. Convened around such topics as human rights, the environment, women, ageing,

²⁰⁹ For example, see UN Resolution 1996/31 (UN-ECOSOC, 1996); UN Global Compact, 1999; UN Millennium Declaration, 2000; UN-Sec-Gen (2003); UN Report 2004a; UN Report, 2004b; UN Resolution, 2005.

gender issues, sustainable development, the information society, population, food and many other crucial themes (UN-DESA, 2011a; Pianta, 2005), this extra-institutional outreach was part of a UN initiative to foster multi-stakeholder governance as a means of democratising international institutions. To the participants, these events created an unparalleled opportunity for advocacy groups to engage with international organisations and governments and to play a greater role in redesigning the institutional tools for addressing global issues. The new impetus for more inclusive relationships engaged new, transnational voices, fresh perspectives and novel ideas. It greatly expanded the reach, activities and hopes of globally-focused civil society groups, led to increased engagement with national governments and grassroots organisations, and opened up a complex and important relationship between the UN and civil society organisations. It also led to the tidal wave of applications for NGO consultation accreditation at the UN that has overwhelmed the ECOSOC accreditation process ever since (Martens, 2004). But it was not an unqualified success in anyone's terms, as evidenced in reports of these events (Pianta, *ibid*; Syracuse University, 2005; Mueller, Kuerbis, *et al*, 2007).

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose

Mindful of the large, widely-publicised protests against international organisations characteristic of the late 1990s²¹⁰, the UN's global conferences and summits also saw international organisations on the defensive and raised concerns about their legitimacy. During the World Summit on the Information Society (2003 to 2005), one research team observed (Syracuse University, 2005), that the opportunity extended to civil society crumbled amid 'tumultuous battles', demonstrations, and chaotic efforts to establish a satisfactory interface between state and non-state actors within an institutional environment. Very often the negative experience of the UN conference process — restrictions on meaningful participation, slow follow-up and negligible benefits (UN-NGLS, 2003c) — had quite unintentionally spurred the emergence of global social movements challenging global powers on the same issues that were addressed — and left unsolved — by the UN summits (Pianta, *ibid*). Such reactions strengthen the theory that TANs seek to fill a

²¹⁰ For example, the WTO Ministerial Conference 1999, dubbed the 'Battle of Seattle', during which 50,000 anti-globalisation demonstrators overwhelmed police in Seattle, Washington, and closed down parts of the WTO meeting (WTO Release (1999); BBC News Archive (2007)). See also UN-NGLS, 2003c, for a UN perspective on the issues of 'violence' and 'disruption' by CSOs.

perceived lacuna for their voice within international politics, outside of the 'consultative' role and the affiliation route.

In tracing the course of NGO participation in UN decision-making processes — through analysing published statements for changes in UN institutional arrangements, terminology and linguistic tone (*e.g.* enthusiasm) — it is possible to detect the waxing and waning of dispositions to NGO inclusivity, within the UN. For example, following the UN Earth Summit²¹¹ in 1992, the United Nations Environment Programme adopted what was termed 'a Major Groups approach' to embrace broader public participation in the environmental decision-making processes of the UN (*vide* Article 21; UNEP, 2013.) In 1999, the UNEP created a Major Group & NGOs Unit in its Policy Branch to further facilitate the involvement of non-state actors. However, when the Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch was created within the UNEP in 2004 'to enhance participation of Major Groups and other Stakeholders in its work', NGO exceptionality was not recognised in the title of the new Branch. Instead, the agency affirmed its commitment to multi-stakeholder governance by recognising that sustainable development 'requires the meaningful involvement and active participation of all nine Major Groups in society'. These were named, in order, as: business and industry, children and youth, farmers, indigenous people and communities, local authorities, non-governmental organisations, the scientific and technical community, women, workers and trade unions. NGOs were on the list, but they were not accorded a privileged status over any of the other social groups. Explaining the rationale for this mechanism, the UNEP stated (UNEP, 2013):

UNEP recognises the importance of engaging Major Groups and other Stakeholders as partners and appreciates the perspectives they bring to the table, valuable research and advocacy functions they perform and their role in helping foster long-term, broad-based support for UNEP's mission [...] Major Groups and other Stakeholders also play a direct role in the formation of policy as researchers, think-tanks, and watchdogs, or through advocacy.

By 2005 the commitment of Member States to give greater opportunities to NGOs was stated in the Outcome Document of the 2005 UN World Summit (UN GA Resolution, 2005; UN-NGLS, 2011a), but mention of NGOs came towards the end of

²¹¹ Formally entitled the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED).

the 40-page document (paras. 172-4) and the language was comparatively low key, stating:

We welcome the positive contributions of the private sector and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in the promotion and implementation of development and human rights programmes.

No more, no less. NGOs, amongst others, were quite plainly welcome to make contributions to the UN's work, conditional on their inputs being considered 'positive', and being restricted to specific activities and certain areas. Moreover, the reference to the non-state sector was now more overtly inclusive of other non-state entities than previously. Up until mid-point of the millennium's first decade, the UN had invariably referred to non-state actors as 'civil society', or 'NGOs'. Now, the language was featuring, in the same contexts, 'the private sector', 'local authorities', and ethical business proponents in the 'Global Compact'.

This study noted a further challenge for advocacy-oriented NGOs who focus heavily on attracting media attention as a conduit for channeling their advocacy messages to decision-makers and the wider world. A study on the influence of the media on UN officials²¹², found that the 'credibility' of information sources was of paramount importance and that UN officials had very selective habits concerning the media sources they trusted and used (Columbia U, 2009). Information delivered directly from NGOs had to compete with research from trusted think tanks and academic sources, with trustworthiness and 'high quality research' deemed the most important qualities required for external communications to be influential²¹³. I argue that these research findings support the earlier insights of Keohane and Nye (198:89) that information overload has led UN officials to put a premium on information sources who can supply them with only the most 'valuable signals' required for their work.

²¹² The research project involved international civil servants and officials of country missions attached to the UN (Columbia U, 2009).

²¹³ The International Crisis Group's reporting was lauded as being of 'high quality' and 'very trustworthy'. This independent NGO is co-chaired by a former UN Deputy Secretary-General and Administrator of the UN Development Programme, Lord Malloch-Brown.

Reading between the lines of the diplomatic discourses

It is impossible, however, to make an accurate external assessment of the UN's interface with NGOs, based solely on the careful diplomatic language of the UN's public communications, which are produced by the organisation's international civil service staff; or from the wording of UN statutory provisions for engagement with NGOs. In reviewing a body of major reports and speeches published by the UN secretariats, including those by recent holders of the post of Secretary-General, this study found it rare for the positive contributions of NGOs and/or 'civil society' to the work of the UN *not* to be mentioned prominently and quite appreciatively. It was also noted that it was rare for the UN's references to NGOs to be other than rosy-hued.

Nevertheless, allusions to serious divisions in the relationships are to be found in mining the discourses for telltale signs²¹⁴. In setting up a panel of experts to investigate ways of improving the UN's relations with civil society in 2003, the then Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, said (UN Sec-Gen, 2003):

Improving the interaction between the United Nations and the many diverse actors in civil society is an essential step towards reforming the United Nations. The goals of the United Nations can only be achieved if civil society as well as Governments and international agencies are fully engaged.

Reading between the lines there are implications that: 1. UN reform is crucial (otherwise it cannot achieve its goals); 2. Significant faults exist in the relationship with civil society (otherwise there would be no need to mention improvement); and, 3. Improving and increasing ('fuller') engagement with civil society is essential to the UN reform process. Endorsing this sentiment, a Coordinator of the UN Non-Government Liaison Service (NGLS) stated that the world's global governance architecture is 'in crisis' but is at the same time developing rapidly — a process in which civil society is seen as a 'vital driver of change and the democratisation of global decision-making' (Hill, 2007).

Unsurprisingly, in reviewing UN/NGO relationship discourses (from non-official UN observers) it is commonplace to find references to 'obstacles', 'barriers', 'ups-

²¹⁴ See Section 5.3.1 for an unusually candid example of disagreements.

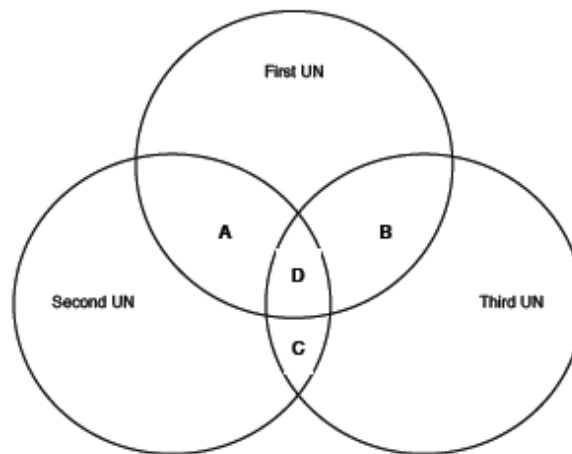
and-downs', 'opposition', 'tensions', even 'hostility'²¹⁵. Overall, I consider the current relationship between international state and civil society actors might best be described as ideologically messy, unequal in powers and resources, spasmodic in development and inherently difficult — most notably, fraught with mutual suspicion, defensiveness and reluctance to compromise. Despite more frequent official usage of inclusive terms such as 'partnerships' and 'multi-stakeholder governance' to refer to relatively recent cooperative projects with NGOs in the UN system, relationships with non-state actors might be more accurately depicted as a sphere of non-state entities operating on the fringes of policy-making and debate, as supportive adjuncts to states. Although there is some evidence that historical tensions between states and NGOs have been slowly dissipating and that the UN's world conference processes have ameliorated many states' fears, Member States generally remain defensive regarding challenges to their sovereignty, especially to any intimation that they should be accountable to international civil society (Otto, 1999).

The 'Third UN'

The growing layers of non-state actors operating in the United Nations system has been classified by Weiss *et al* as the 'Third UN' and this seems to be a neat, useful, encapsulation of a complex relationship (*Figure 5.2*) (2008:8; 2009; 2010:12). While analysts often identify a two-part United Nations (one composed of Member States and a second composed of the UN secretariats led by the Secretary-General), Weiss claims a third UN should also be recognised — one 'composed of actors that are closely associated with the world organization but not formally part of it'. They include, *inter alia*, NGOs, academics, consultants, experts, and independent commissions. Unfortunately, the graphic representation envisaged by this reading of the situation and reproduced here does not provide any indication of the true size of the various elements of this system in relation to each other, nor the actual extent of their overlap.

²¹⁵ See Adams (1996); Zettler (2009); and Otto (1999), for additional testimony to this trend.

Interactions among the Three United Nations



- A International and national civil servants' interactions
- B State-civil society interactions
- C Secretariat-civil society interactions
- D The network space within which individuals and private organisations interact with the first UN and the second UN to influence or advance UN thinking, policies, priorities, or actions

Figure 5.2

Graphic reproduced from Weiss, Carayannis and Jolly (2009)

5.2.1 Taxonomical Challenges: What is an NGO in UN terms?

Before looking at the interactivity of the three notional UNs and the mechanics of how the UN ‘makes suitable arrangements for consultation’ with NGOs (*Article 71* of the UN Charter), it is necessary to determine which organisations the UN regards as NGOs. The definitions of ‘Member States’ and ‘UN secretariats’ are relatively straightforward. Apart from the general agreement that NGOs are, by definition, independent of governments and are not profit-making or engaged in commercial activities, there is no clear specification of what constitutes a NGO in the UN context (this claim is supported, *inter alia*, by Otto, 1999; Willetts, 2003; 2011:9-10; and Costoya, 2007). While the term ‘non-governmental organisation’ and the initials NGO first appeared in the UN Charter, they were left undefined. Even today, the general practice within the United Nations is to refer to civil society organisations using broad umbrella terminology — such as ‘civil society organization (CSO)’, ‘NGO’ and ‘INGO’ — which encompass, but inadequately

differentiate, the specific agency of the various forms of NGO. Indeed, of NGOs overall, a former UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali said:²¹⁶

We are aware of what some nongovernmental organizations do in social, cultural and humanitarian fields, as well as their work to protect human rights and to promote development. But we do not often have occasion to think about what these organizations can do for international peace and security. And we too rarely think about the taxonomy of linkages — formal and informal, in education, advocacy and operations — between NGOs and the UN system as a whole.

Where a distinction is made for International NGOs (INGOs), they are seen as a sub-category of NGO. Following this genealogical tree, this thesis posits that TANS are a subset of INGO. It is one of the central arguments of this thesis that such taxonomical differentiation is crucial to making sense of the relationship between state and non-state actors in the UN system. This thesis suggests that the UN regards TANS as NGOs, or part of ‘civil society’²¹⁷, but that these assertive contemporary networks are co-evolving in response to constantly changing conditions in their environments and do not fit the ideal model of the traditional NGO depicted in UN official communications²¹⁸.

Up until the 1990s, this traditional model was presumed to be an operational, or service-providing, organisation running its own projects or interacting with UN operational bodies in the ‘field’, and concerned with development, humanitarian work, human rights or the environment²¹⁹. The provision in the UN Charter for consulting with NGOs (*Article 71*), dating from 1945 and unchanged since then, strongly implies that NGOs may be singled out for formal discussion if they can be helpful in matters with which the UN is concerned. The reference²²⁰ that the ECOSOC ‘may make’ such suitable arrangements with NGOs as it deems fitting, unequivocally makes the point that judgments on the suitability of the NGOs, the form and extent of any consultation, and ‘the matters’ themselves, rest entirely at the discretion of the UN. It also accords with Donnelly’s opinion that states are

²¹⁶ Cited in Weiss and Gordenker, 1996:8.

²¹⁷ Keck and Sikkink (1998:33), specifically contend that the advocacy network concept is a variant and cannot be subsumed under notions of ‘transnational social movements’ or ‘global civil society’.

²¹⁸ See Fisher (1997) for additional insights on the dynamic conditions shaping emerging forms of NGO.

²¹⁹ This view is shared by Martens (2006) and Fisher (1997) *et al.*

²²⁰ *Article 71: ‘The Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence’.*

'superordinate' and NGOs are 'subordinate' in these relationships (Donnelly, 2006). From this, it is difficult to envisage a cooperative consultancy role for transnational 'advocacy' NGOs that exist solely to lobby for international policy change — more in the style of global political parties.

In these changed circumstances, the UN's official lumping together of non-government actors under broad banners does not appear to assist clarification for observers both outside and inside the UN system, since it is demonstrated in the following chapters that such distinctions are made in practice. For many people, to define a NGO is equivalent to stating a political position, which may involve pejorative inferences. Consequently, it seems reasonable to hypothesise that reluctance to more accurately sub-categorise NGOs may be due as much to difficulty, as to deliberate diplomatic practice. Because the UN does not make this distinction, references to NGOs and INGOs, vis-à-vis the UN (which are explored in the following sub-sections), should be taken as applying also to TANs, unless otherwise noted. In other words, all TANs are phyla of NGOs, so UN references to NGOs include them by implication.

5.3 Milestones in the UN/NGO relationship

By establishing a system of consultative status, under its Charter, the UN provided a permanent opportunity for NGOs to promote their values at the global level. However, the extent to which this opportunity has been consistently enabled in the UN system, or availed of by NGOs, has varied throughout the years.

5.3.1 Three Generations of outreach to civil society

In the official Guide²²¹ for NGO representatives participating in the UN system, the Coordinator of the UN's Non-Governmental Liaison Service, Tony Hill, chronicles 'three generations' of UN-civil society relations since 1945 (Hill, 2007²²²). The first generation, extending up to the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, involved

²²¹ UN-NGLS (2007).

²²² Hill is cited in his personal capacity although his remarks are published in an official UN publication. It is a widespread practice for the UN to add a disclaimer that the views expressed in its publications and Websites do not necessarily represent those of a particular service, agency, or any other part of the UN system. However, it is difficult to envisage a situation in which the UN Members of secretariats would permit the publication of material that was considered to be contentious, or with which officials disagreed. Materials cited in this study that fit into this category (from UN official sources), include those by Bendell, Boström, Costoya, Hill, Pianta, Sidhu, and Zettler.

mostly international NGOs, including professional and business associations, which were granted formal consultative relations with the UN in recognition of their international standing. It is for this first generation model of non-government organisation that the UN Charter provision was designed, since the evolution of today's multi-faceted, international civil society was far beyond imagination at that time. It will be demonstrated later on that both this original presumption of a simplistic, supportive, NGO-as-a-resource model, and the UN's constitutional provision for engagement with its manifestations, have proven steadfastly resistant to change both in terms of statute modification and Member perceptions.

The second generation of UN-NGO relations began where the Cold War ended and covered the period up to the early years of the new millennium. This era saw an explosive growth in NGO presence across the entire UN system and relationships changed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Above all, the second generation of UN-NGO relations were essentially political and reflected the motivation of NGOs to engage with the UN as part of the institutional architecture of global governance (Hill, *ibid*).

In the first few years of the new millennium, a 'third generation' began to take shape. Its distinctive features involved 'like-minded' coalitions of governments and civil society, and various forms of multi-stakeholder, public-private, public policy networks and partnerships, such as the Global Compact.²²³ Hill asserts:

These new forms of partnership relations currently co-exist with the second generation political and advocacy role of civil society and raise many critical questions concerning the role of the UN as a broker of partnerships, the future of multilateralism as a form of global governance and the future of the UN's relations with the second generation of largely advocacy NGOs, many of whom view these latest developments with scepticism, to say the least.

The United Nations Global Compact project is certainly representative of this trend. Launched by the then UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 1999, and promoted enthusiastically by the present Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, the Global Compact is a UN strategic policy initiative for bringing private sector business voices into the international policy

²²³ A UN initiative, launched in 1999, to bring business voices into its conversations (UN-Global Compact, 2011).

arena, promoting shared values and principles, and giving a human face to the global market (UN-Global Compact, 1999; 2007). Now comprising over 8,700²²⁴ private sector companies in 130 countries, it represents a radical departure from UN orthodoxy: prompting criticisms from many countries in the South, and from some NGOs, that the UN has lost its soul and gone pro-capitalist (UN-Global Compact, 2011; Weiss, 2009:170). The question of which collectivities qualify as non-governmental actors is, therefore, highly pertinent not only for this thesis, but for non-state non-commercial actors, since the UN recognises transnational corporations as NGO actors and the NGO lobby generally does not.

The recent General Assembly conference on global governance reflected urgent concerns for reform in order to remain 'relevant' (UN-NGLS, 2011) — a sober reference to anxieties that globalisation is fuelling a debate about democratic remits and alternative models of governance at the global level to that of international institutions²²⁵.

5.3.2 Making 'suitable arrangements': Key statutes

The most visible building blocks of the 'suitable arrangements' providing for the UN-NGO relationship are the UN's chartered mechanisms and key statutes for consulting NGOs, supported by a number of notable outreach initiatives by the UN to engage non-state actors over the years. These documented procedures, outlined below, therefore provide acknowledged reference points and an historical framework for analysing UN/NGO relationships. Theoretical lenses can then be applied to open up a discussion on how well, or badly, these UN mechanisms operate, identifying points of compatibility and discord that have shaped the UN/NGO relationships as they stand today. For example, it would seem to be a warning indicator of relationship quality that despite the thousands of NGOs now in accredited consultancy relationships with the United Nations, the UN last updated its rules for engagement with NGOs in 1996²²⁶ (and prior to that, in

²²⁴ Statistics provided by the UN Global Compact official Website at <http://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/index.html>

²²⁵ For example, the UN recognises the rejectionist tendencies of the global social justice movement, which expresses itself through the World and Regional Social Forums, that have been held since the historic Porto Alegre World Social Forum in 2001 (UN-NGLS, 2007:141).

²²⁶ Per UN-ECOSOC Resolution, 1996/31(1996).

1968²²⁷). This does not readily indicate a healthy, adaptable, relationship that is highly tuned to the rise of non-state actors, the escalation of global challenges, the advent of the Internet, and new forms of interdependence and cooperation in the contemporary world.

Opening the door — Article 71

As specified earlier, the relationship between the UN and non-state actors is enabled under *Article 71* of the United Nations Charter (UN Charter, 1945a). While this mechanism may have seemed mutually advantageous, even progressive²²⁸, in its provisions for formalising consultation with non-state groups on international matters in 1945, it hardly seems so today. Yet, its tenets still drive the UN relationships with NGOs and policy in this field. The UN guidelines for NGOs working with ECOSOC (UN-ECOSOC, 2011c), reminds NGOs in its opening lines that *Article 71*, in conjunction with the enabling resolution (UN-ECOSOC, 1996/31), form the bedrock of today's NGO consultancy arrangements.

Although *Article 71* opened the door for NGOs, the scope for variable interpretation of the ambiguous terminology is obvious. One could question, for example, what constitutes 'suitable arrangements' then, or now? What might be the form, scope, content and purpose of 'consultation'? What should delimit 'matters within its competence'? Should consultations with NGOs be confined only to matters covered by the ECOSOC? How should consultable organisations be defined if the only criterion is what they are not (*i.e.* not governmental)? How should any contributions by them be assessed? Must their contributions be limited only to 'consultation'? Since 'consultation', in contemporary communications practice implies two-way symmetrical dialogue and mutual responsibilities — such as listening and some degree of mutual benefit — is the ECOSOC process fit to operate in this way? (Grunig *et al*, 2002:27; Nagy, 2004:870; Doorley and Garcia, 2009: 14-15; Miller, 2005:12; Spicer, 2006:27; Cutlip *et al*:2006). Furthermore, under what conditions, or circumstances, is it appropriate to resort to consultation with national NGOs, and what should be the repercussions if the relevant national government disapproves?

²²⁷ Per UN-ECOSOC Resolution, 1968/1296 (XLIV).

²²⁸ Otto (1996), contends that Article 71, in effect, eroded earlier practices in that it confined mandated consultations to areas covered by the ECOSOC and by limiting NGO involvement to 'consultation'.

Notwithstanding the UN's principle of sovereign equality, this thesis concurs with opinion that the international society system is both stratified and functionally differentiated (Hobson and Sharman, 2005; Donnelly, 2006:204). Therefore, the perturbations inherent in the structural differences, at the very least, suggest that both states *and* NGOs demonstrably cannot (under these arrangements) have equal possibility to participate in, or benefit from, the consultation process²²⁹; that attitudes and decision-making will be relativist and, therefore, tension-generating and/or controversial; and regional/national, geopolitical, cultural, ideological, technological, resource and capability differences will invariably trump efforts to advance planet-wide projects. As will be seen in the case studies, the ideological framing of issues by civil society groups operating at the transnational level, often infers universal, rather than relative, values and norms and clear-cut, single-thesis, solutions. By contrast the Member States of the UN are exercised primarily by their individual sovereign concerns (or sometimes, regional concerns), and dialectic that optimises the possibility of achieving their preferred outcomes. Therefore, this thesis regards it as axiomatic that because issue areas in world politics are context-dependent, one-size-fits-all prescriptions tend to ensure they become intractable²³⁰.

The imprecision and implications of *Article 71* are, therefore, highly pertinent to a modern world in which, *inter alia*, tens of thousands of political concern groups

²²⁹ In their seminal study of human communication, including processes of consultation by an organisation with its activist pressure group stakeholders, Grunig, Grunig and Dozier questioned the likelihood that a large organisation with more power than its publics would ever deliberately choose to practice symmetrical public relations. Nonetheless, there is strong evidence that continuous symmetrical dialogue is instrumental in the success of activists and organisations in dealing with each other (Grunig *et al*, 2002:462).

²³⁰ Two recent examples of intractability in addressing global challenges and international responses can be seen in (a) the outcome of the 2011 UN Climate Change Conference in Durban; and (b) the 2013 UN Arms Trade Treaty. The outcome document from the climate summit, the Durban Platform, has been hailed as a breakthrough by the U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change, Todd Stern, because for the first time the new international climate agreement has been designed to be broadly inclusive of all nations and sensitive to relativist national concerns and realistic capabilities. Expressing optimism, Stern said the blueprint proposes, *inter alia*, individuated responses that are customised to national circumstances and capabilities (Stern, 2013). In contrast, and following a decade of talks, the UN introduced an Arms Trade Treaty, in April 2013, which requires parties to adhere to a universal code. The Treaty, which remains to be signed and ratified, is widely regarded as toothless and 'littered with loopholes', because in order to finally pass through the General Assembly the draft text was significantly weakened by numerous concessions and a substantial group of major countries do not support it (see OI news, 2013b).

now organise themselves transnationally, without allegiance to any state, to lobby the international fora on global issues of *their* choosing.

Matters within ECOSOC competence

In May 1968, the Economic and Social Council passed a resolution (ECOSOC Resolution 1296 (XLIV))²³¹ clarifying, *inter alia*, the arrangements for consultations with NGOs, the basics of which are unchanged today (albeit updated in 1996) and are outlined in the following sub-section. For the first time, the 1968 statute elaborated on the organisational characteristics required by the UN for NGOs who wished to be accredited under the consultation terms of *Article 71*, and listed the matters within the competence of ECOSOC, namely, ‘international economic, social, cultural, educational, health, scientific, technological and related matters and to questions of human rights’.

Opening the NGO consultation door a little wider

The provisions of the 1968 Resolution 1296 (XLIV) remained in force and were apparently considered to be adequate²³² for some 25 years, until pressures to update them led to the commencement of a review in 1993 and an updated resolution in 1996 (UN-ECOSOC, 1996/31). The 1996 update was considered necessary, *inter alia*, to: take into account the full diversity of NGOs at the national, regional and international levels; acknowledge the breadth of NGO expertise and capacity to support the work of the UN; and to take account of changes in the NGO sector, ‘including the emergence of a large number of national and regional organizations’ (*ibid*). A major reform initiative — known colloquially as the ‘Cardoso Report’ (UN Report, 2004a) — launched at the behest of the then Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in 2003, did not lead to any substantive changes in the UN’s arrangements for NGO consultation. This intensive effort to overhaul the consultative arrangements for NGOs is examined in greater detail in Section 5.3.5.

²³¹ See UN-ECOSOC (1968a).

²³² This impression is due to the fact that there was no significant pressure to update them for some 25 years, when the review for update commenced (ECOSOC Resolution 1993/80 of 30 July 1993), culminating with ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31. The records of one NGO active at that time also reveal that they were considered by NGOs to have been adequate to regulate the arrangements but needed updating to reflect present realities (BIC, 1994).

On the face of it, the procedure for achieving consultation status is straightforward: its requirements are readily stipulated on the UN Economic and Security Council Website (UN-ECOSOC, 2011A), which links to the full provisions of the prevailing statute (ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31). This data explains that consultative status for NGOs is granted by the ECOSOC upon recommendation by the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs, comprising 19 Member States. There are three categories of NGO accreditation status: General, Special, and Roster status. Currently,²³³ there are 147 organisations accredited with General status, 2,774 with Special Status, 979 with Roster status, and 157 with their accreditation suspended. The official line is that practical differences between the three categories are small (UN-ECOSOC, 2011a).

General consultative status is reserved for large international NGOs whose area of work covers most of the issues on the agenda of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. These tend to be fairly large, established international NGOs with 'considerable' membership and a broad geographical reach. Special consultative status is granted to NGOs that have a special competence in, and are concerned specifically with, only a few of the fields of activity covered by the ECOSOC. These tend to be the smaller and more recently established NGOs that ECOSOC, or the UN Secretary-General, considers can make 'occasional and useful contributions to the work of the Council or its subsidiary bodies'. Organisations that do not fit into either of the other categories are usually included in the Roster. These tend to have a rather narrow and/or technical focus. NGOs that have formal status with other UN bodies, or specialised agencies (FAO, ILO, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, WHO, and others), can also be included on the ECOSOC Roster.

While the official publicity for accreditation is welcoming and friendly (*vide* UN-ECOSOC, 2011a), the need for greater clarity begs for investigation and overhaul, according to the Cardoso Panel of Experts (UN Report, 2004a), which investigated the UN-NGO relationship, between 2003 and 2004. Some 10 years later this is unchanged. Zettler (2009), who observed the NGO accreditation scheme as an academic intern at the UN, endorses the Panel's claims that consultancy status involves a complicated accreditation process. Furthermore, the 'extensive process'

²³³ Last published data as of September 2013 (UN-ECOSOC, 2013).

can take years to complete, due to the limited resources of the ECOSOC NGO Branch and the politics that inevitably arise among Member States, when discussing which NGOs should be accepted, or rejected (*ibid*).

Each of the above factors was highlighted in the Cardoso Panel's call for reform (UN Report, *ibid*) and also by Martens (2004) and Boström (2011), who claim the NGO Committee, while formally a technical committee, can be a stumbling block for NGOs and is noted for frequently becoming the stage for debate on political issues and being used as an instrument for delay.

In a sub-section of the Cardoso Report (UN Report: *ibid* :20) specifically entitled 'Streamlining and depoliticizing accreditation and access', the review panel called on the UN to 'realign accreditation with its original purpose, namely, it should be an agreement between civil society actors and Member States based on the applicants' expertise, competence and skills'. Because its membership reflects the UN's membership as a whole, the UN ECOSOC NGO Committee will always have a majority from developing countries, which raises the possibility of bias in the direction of developing countries' issues and concerns. China and Chile, for example, have held on to their places on the Committee for decades and have successfully blocked the applications of anti-Chinese and anti-Cuban NGOs (Boström, *ibid*). Financially too, it is expensive, costing an estimated US\$26,000 per accredited applicant, notwithstanding that the NGO could still be denied accreditation based on political, rather than technical, reasons (UN Report, *ibid*; Zettler²³⁴, *ibid*). If a case fails to make it through the mechanism smoothly the cost can be a significant barrier for an NGO. Although some 20 applications a year are deferred (some by as much as two or three years), on average only four applications per year are declined (UN Report, *ibid*). The Cardoso Report asserted that: 'Given that the main purpose of the process, in practice, is to determine which applicants are unsuitable, the true cost of the current mechanism amounts to nearly \$1 million per rejection'.

The question of which NGOs might successfully negotiate this obstacle course is clearly open to dispute. The ECOSOC Website claims that, in most cases, the

²³⁴ Zettler estimates the cost is slightly lower at US\$24,000 (Zettler, 2009).

Council decides to approve the recommendations and in only very rare cases, it does not. It does seem, however, that there is some room for interpretation in regard to the success rate: annually some 400 organisations apply for consultative status. On average, between 100 and 150 applications are recommended by the Committee in each of its two sessions per year (UN-ECOSOC, 2011a). This does not, I submit, indicate a high success rate. According to Willetts (2011:19) the current state-of-play is that the Economic and Social Council will give access to the consultative arrangements to ‘almost all organizations that are non-violent, non-criminal and non-commercial’. Kennedy (2006:218), on the other hand, disagrees, saying many applications for accreditation are turned down. From this, I argue that such discrepancies in texts by these UN scholars indicate that what we are looking at is a complex, dynamic, system in which conditions are unstable and constantly in flux.

5.3.3 Who is eligible?

To become accredited for consultancy status with ECOSOC, NGOs must meet the following conditions set out in the ECOSOC resolutions — 1296 (XLIV)²³⁵ of 1968 and 1996/31 of 1996²³⁶ — and in the Guide to consultative status (UN-ECOSOC, 2011c). An NGO must:

- Work in a field that is relevant to the work of the ECOSOC;
- Have aims and purposes that conform to the spirit, purposes and principles of the UN Charter. Furthermore, it should undertake to support the work of the UN and promote knowledge of its principles and activities;
- Not engage in a politically motivated act against a Member State, or promote activities that are against the UN Charter;
- Should be a representative body, with identifiable headquarters and an executive officer. It should have a transparent and democratic decision-making mechanism and a democratically adopted constitution;
- Have authority to speak for its members;
- Have appropriate mechanisms for accountability;

²³⁵ UN-ECOSOC (1968a).

²³⁶ UN-ECOSOC (1996). These are the principal statutes regulating the contemporary relationship with NGOs. Earlier resolutions were consolidated in a statute (ECOSOC Resolution 288 B (X) of 27 February, 1950, and these were superseded by the 1968 ECOSOC Resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May, 1968 (UN-ECOSOC, 1968a).

- Be funded mainly by its members and provide the Committee with its financial documentation and reports;
- Cannot be a profit-making body. Individual companies cannot gain consultative status, but trade federations and commercial interests are recognised as NGOs;
- Cannot use or advocate violence;
- Respect the norm of ‘non-interference in the internal affairs of states’. This means an NGO cannot be a political party, but parties can, like companies, form international federations. NGOs concerned with human rights should not restrict their activities to a particular group, nationality or country;
- Cannot be an intergovernmental organization;
- Have been in existence for at least two years before applying;

Because many of these terms, such as ‘politically motivated act’, ‘violence’²³⁷, ‘non-interference’, and ‘commercial’ activity are contested concepts, it is not surprising that the ECOSOC accreditation arrangements have a certain arbitrariness about them. For example, there is no formal barrier to gay, lesbian bisexual or transgender organisations, although none has achieved consultation status throughout the organisation’s history (UN-ECOSOC, 2011d).

It is certainly open to question whether the NGO statute does, or does not, provide the main framework for deciding which NGOs should, or should not, be granted consultative status (Willets, 2011a:61). In a recent study of controversial issues and conflict patterns in the ECOSOC Committee on NGOS (Boström, 2011), the following were listed as recurrent controversial topics in the Committee’s formal sessions between 2008 and 2010: separatism; terrorism; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights; freedom of expression; and human rights. Of course, many of these issues overlap: LGBT rights are also human rights, and one country’s terrorist may also be another country’s separatist. The principle that existing borders are not to be moved is very strong in the UN, which means that accusing an NGO of separatism is a quite powerful argument against it gaining consultative status, or for suspending or withdrawing its status if it has already obtained it (*ibid*). Statutory backing for opposing NGO eligibility on these grounds comes from *Article 2* of the UN Charter (UN Charter, 1945b), which emphasises sovereign

²³⁷ See Galtung (1969) for a discussion of the difficulties faced in defining ‘violence’.

equality of Member states and territorial integrity, combined with ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 (UN-ECOSOC, 1996 and bullet point two, above), which specifies that the aims and purposes of an organisation in consultative status must be 'in conformity with the spirit, purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations'. Furthermore, it has been noted (Boström, 2011) that independent human rights organisations that criticise Member States have difficulties in gaining consultative status and holding on to it.

From these contradictions it is apparent that some NGOs, particularly those that have the characteristics of TANs, are distinctly disadvantaged under the present accreditation rules, even before questions of subjectivity are raised. In light of the records of the NGO Committee decision-making and reports by others (UN-ECOSOC, 2011d; Boström, 2011) there is evidence to suggest that the attitudes of the Committee members are based more on principles and political positions than on judgments of individual NGOs. Due to brevity constraints for this dissertation it was not possible to discuss all of these implications for TANs, however after applying the UN accreditation criteria to the data set, I prepared an *indicative* list of challenges likely to be faced by TANs. This is attached at Annex 4.

According to Willetts (*ibid*: 62), the most important variables in determining the rights of NGOs within the UN system are not the formal rules at all, but the status, expertise, communications skills and trust established between NGO representatives and government delegates. It is for such reasons that this thesis considers it is vital that typology and multi-dimensional structural aspects of NGOs (including TANs), be explored, since transphenomenal²³⁸ subjectivity is strongly indicated as the primary determinant of NGO outcomes in the UN/NGO relationship, whatever the formal arrangements might be.

5.3.4 Influence: Inside and Outside the UN

How do NGOs exert their influence in the UN system? The UN's Non-Governmental Liaison Service states (UN-NGLS, 2007a), that formal ongoing relationships of NGOs with the UN are based on two main activities: consultative status and

²³⁸ Collier (1994:6) discusses the rationale for transphenomenal theorising (beyond appearances) to explain underlying structures that may endure longer than the appearances, and generate them or make them possible.

information outreach. The former includes interacting with Member States and the institutional arms of the UN; monitoring agreements; briefing governments on issues; circulating information inside and outside the UN; advocating positions at the national level; underscoring links between national actions and international commitments: organising caucuses to strengthen advocacy work; forging connections between the UN and NGOs around the world; and drawing the attention of the media to issues. Most forms of NGO participation in UN decision-making start with applying for accreditation²³⁹. The NGLS (*ibid*) notes:

With NGO activity now at an unprecedented level, NGOs can be found across the UN system, speaking to governments, serving on panels, holding briefings, forming issue caucuses, offering technical expertise, advocating on the national level, and implementing UN-related projects.

Conditioning this statement, the NGLS also notes that NGO involvement varies across different subjects, bodies and processes, 'depending to some degree on the momentum of civil society activism outside the United Nations'. According to Willetts (*ibid*, 135), NGO strategies directed at agenda setting have their greatest influence on policy formulation. After the opening stages of attention-seeking on an issue, however, Willetts considers NGOs have much less influence on the broad goals being set by governments. Nevertheless, they can influence the detailed text towards the end of the negotiation process for a treaty or resolution, and they can affect the implementation of a policy by monitoring its effectiveness and influencing governments to commit the necessary resources (*ibid*). Yet, for all the work done by NGOs inside and outside the UN, some observers have said that it seems clear that their greatest impact is elsewhere — on public opinion and the media — and not on the representatives of states, who can be 'aloof to outside voices' (Kennedy, 2006, 218; see also Columbia U, 2009).

A popular conceptualisation of the 'pressure' NGOs ostensibly exert on states is represented by the linear graphic labeled the '*Boomerang Pattern*' (*Figure 5.3* over page). Presented by Keck and Sikkink in 1998 (*ibid*:13), its authority is frequently cited in commentaries on the processes by which transnational advocacy

²³⁹ This refers to the formal process that allows organisations, or groups, to attend UN meetings. Accreditation for specific UN conferences is via separate *ad hoc* processes for each conference (UN-NGLS, 2007a).

networks gain influence. Undoubtedly, this diagram has become ‘famous’ in debates on this subject matter (Willetts, 2011: 133).

Keck and Sikkink’s ‘Boomerang Pattern’ of NGO pressure

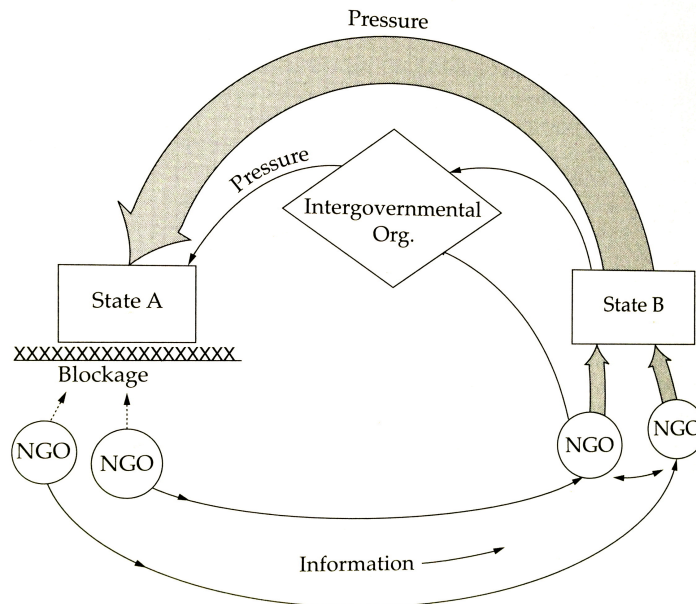


Figure 5.3

In the Boomerang Pattern, State A blocks redress to organisations. They, in turn, activate a network, whose members pressure their own state or states (B) and (if relevant) a third-party organization, such as the UN, which in turn pressures State A. Graphic reproduced from Keck and Sikkink, 1998:13).

Having reviewed the ‘Boomerang Pattern’ in the light of complexity conceptualisations of social phenomena as being non-linear²⁴⁰, and my own observations, this thesis holds that this linear depiction does not come close to reflecting international relational reality. Furthermore, the depiction of inter-state power relationships by way of simple linear diagrams is almost meaningless in the real world. In particular, the ubiquitous presence of degrees of collusion, corruption and nepotism are ignored. Religious, geo-political, cultural and linguistic affinities are relegated and historical enmity hatchets are buried. Therefore, I submit, that however attractive it might seem, it is over-simplistic to imagine that states and NGOs respond to ethnocentrically-determined ‘naming and shaming’ tactics and bring ‘pressure to bear’ on each other in this direct, linear, way. As Geyer and Pickering point out (2011), such visualisations have a tendency

²⁴⁰ See Geyer and Rihani (2010:6) for a complexity overview of the non-linear conceptualisation of social phenomena.

to simplify and polarise discussions and debates about complex international situations. While this may be politically expedient for some actors, it 'has the potential of leading international policy leaders into extremely problematic contexts and situations'. Crucially, Geyer and Pickering assert (2011:23):

From a complexity perspective, it is both misguided and dangerous to use linear tools to analyse evolving and emergent complex systems and situations.

Meanwhile, the extent of NGO influence at the intergovernmental level is debatable (Bendell, 2006:32; Joachim and Locher, 2009: 177-8). Some analysts point to the development of conventions to ban landmines, to reduce carbon emissions and the establishment of the International Criminal Court, as examples of the influence of NGOs. Others suggest that NGO influence is exaggerated and these civil society organisations have little effective power in influencing decisions, especially on issues of peace and war. An assessment that is more in line with the analysis in this thesis is the finding by Joachim and Locher, in their comparative study of NGO influence in the UN and EU (2009:177-8), that assumptions about the instrumental agency of NGOs at the international level should be tempered. Rather than being 'the supposed shapers of international norms and principles' a less positive, alternative view, was that NGOs were the 'takers' in the relationship with IGOs, their abilities, choices and actions being 'far more structurally conditioned than previous research has suggested'. Through a process of 'finely-tuned gate-keeping mechanisms, incentives, and sanctions', international organisations shape the behaviour of NGOs — rewarding actions that are in line with the institutional rules and penalising those that challenge or contradict them. Ultimately, NGO access to international organisations 'is granted rather than achieved' (*ibid*). According to a high-level UN executive²⁴¹ the consultative role of NGOs in the work of the Economic and Social Council is 'a privilege, and not a right'. Moreover, NGOs taking up the consultative role were advised that '[H]igh standards of behaviour, in line with the Council's own demanding set of ethics, were universally required' (UN-ECOSOC, 2012).

²⁴¹ The Acting Director, Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, David Hanif (UN-ECOSOC, 2012).

As Tarrow has observed in his study of *'The New Transnational Activism'*, which examines the relatively recent arrival of legions of new non-state organisations on to the international political scene (2005:28):

International institutions, regimes and processes are not the expression of democracy, a global civil society or a world polity: they are arenas in which Conservative and progressive, global and antiglobal, religious and secular nonstate actors intersect.

5.3.5 'Common concerns and apparent misunderstandings'

The Cardoso Report and fallout

Strong indications regarding the status of the relationship between the UN and NGOs and other civil society actors can be found in a number of UN reports published in recent years, particularly those connected with the Cardoso Report²⁴². In 2003, the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, set up a 'Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations', chaired by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a former President of Brazil, to look into ways of improving the system for facilitating the UN's interaction with civil society (UN Sec-Gen (2003; UN Report, 2004a). Annan, who took up his post in 1997, was an ambitious reformer and a strong supporter of civil society participation in the UN (UN Report, 2004a). Just as the provisions for formalising the UN's relationship with NGOs had been reviewed and enhanced in 1968, then reviewed and updated in 1996, Annan tried to reform the arrangements once again in 2003 by launching the major review initiative of the Cardoso Panel (UN Sec-Gen, 2003). The Panel worked on the reforms for one year and submitted its controversial report, *We the peoples: civil society, the United Nations and Global Governance*, in 2004 (UN Report, 2004b; UN Report 2004c). Since then, none of the significant recommendations have been adopted. However, the Panel's investigation process did extract some revealing insights on the state of the UN-NGO relationship.

The covering letter to the Report (UN Report, 2004a) commenced by asserting the Panel's view that 'the rise of civil society is indeed one of the landmark events of our times', with global governance no longer the sole domain of governments. Three aspects of global trends were identified in the Report as being particularly

²⁴² Referred to throughout the remainder of this chapter as the 'Report' (UN Report, 2004a).

relevant to the Panel's purpose, influencing how it had approached its task. These were: (i) deficits of democracy in global governance; (ii) the growing capacity and influence of non-State actors; and (iii) 'the rising power of global public opinion'.

The Report described a world that had changed radically from the time of the UN's origins, a world 'no longer as unified by the imperatives of preventing future world wars, rebuilding devastated States and making colonies independent'²⁴³. Present challenges were seen as 'ranging from terrorism to unilateralism and war, from pandemics and climate change to economic crisis and debt, from ethnic or sectarian tensions to international crime, and from the universality of rights to respect for diverse cultures'. Furthermore, the Panel noted, the intergovernmental world had become more complex and diverse, with 'four times as many Governments defining global priorities through their membership in the United Nations' than at the foundation of the world body.

The rising power of public opinion was seen as a major concern, which the Panel, addressed in the following terms:

Globalization, new information technologies and the low cost of all forms of communication also mean that the world order has become more open and interconnected than ever before. That brings new opportunities but also new threats, as problems spill swiftly over national frontiers [...] Governments alone cannot resolve today's global problems. A wide array of actors now jostle alongside Governments — civil society, corporations, local authorities and parliamentarians — seeking a role in defining priorities and contributing to the solutions.

Highlighting the role of civil society in shaping 'global public opinion'²⁴⁴ the Report pointed out that civil society organisations, through their Websites and other channels, are informing citizens about policy choices. Global networks of activists, parliamentarians, journalists, social movement leaders and others are also influencing policy debates, especially on international issues. Moreover (*ibid*):

²⁴³ See Chapter 4 for an overview of the significance of these eras in the UN's development and their relevance to contemporary issues championed by NGOs/TANs, as well as to the UN's relationships with non-state actors representing these interests in the international arena.

²⁴⁴ See also Chapter 6. While the Cardoso Report uses the term 'global public opinion', the notion of a collective 'public opinion' — let alone a global one — is controversial (Chandler, 2007; van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009,148-9). Clark *et al* (2005:313), noted the disunity in political opinion between NGOs, as well as states (in the context of the UN world conferences), where political differences were markedly polarised along North-South, rich-poor, and developed-less developed lines.

All this is reinforced by the impact of the mass media on current affairs — and by the diverse sources that most people can turn to for information. And all this is creating a new phenomenon — global public opinion — that is shaping the political agenda and generating a cosmopolitan set of norms and citizen demands that transcend national boundaries.

It seems incongruous that UN official communications so frequently refer to ‘global civil society’, and the need to engage with it, when the concept of a cohesive society at the global level is so contested among scholars (Chandler, 2009; Keane, 2003:94-5; Risse, 2000; Bartelson, 2006, 2009). Similarly, the concept of a ‘global public opinion’, as recognised in the Cardoso Report (UN Report, 2004b) is equally debatable (Chandler, 2007; van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009,148-9; Clark *et al*, 2005:313). A contradiction seems to be evident in that global politics is essentially concerned with a deterritorialised, abstract, idealised and less socially-grounded politics than that of the UN’s Member States, whose political concerns are quite the opposite. As Chandler (*ibid*) points out:

It is the abstract, disconnected nature of global politics that enables the rhetoric to far exceed the reality. While the assertions of global threats, global values and global wars imply that the stakes are higher than ever — that politics is more focused and more urgent — the reality is that the growing level of abstraction reflects a lack of engagement with these concerns.

One of the main reasons for interrogating this discourse is because, in agreement with Chandler (2007), this thesis is critical of the more sweeping claims about the role of communicative interaction between ‘global civil society’ actors that has been central to the argument that an alternative approach to politics is being constituted in the global sphere. This latter line of political argument has been expounded in a landmark trilogy by Castells (UN Report, 2004a: 75; Castells, 2000, 2007, 2009). However, this thesis notes that the Cardoso Report’s distinctive emphasis on the power of global public opinion and global civil society is unsurprising in light of Castell’s membership of the 12-strong Panel of Experts (UN Report, 2004a: 75).

A further document of interest is the Panel’s, more detailed, pre-Report survey on the experiences of NGOs with consultative status (UN-NGLS, 2003b), which revealed some common themes of dissatisfaction with NGO relationships within

the UN system, and with each other²⁴⁵. Some notable comments seen among the questionnaires completed by NGO representatives were: “Civil society is given a grudging, and mostly ceremonial, access to the deliberative process”; “Treating NGOs like naïve children who can easily be given the runaround invites cynicism and anger — which often then turns from informed policy recommendations to frustrated protest.” Moreover, the UN provided poor access to decision-makers, and for Southern-based civil society inexperience in lobbying skills this was considered to be a serious handicap. Many expressed a need for more UN-support for institutional capacity building skills for NGOs (particularly non-accredited NGOs, who were often detrimentally ‘confrontational’); logistical support for Southern NGOs; and for facilitating co-ordination, networking, and communications between NGOs²⁴⁶.

Other recommendations (in the pre-Report survey) for improving UN-Civil Society relationships at the international level, included amending the ‘unfair criteria in the UN ECOSOC accreditation process’ which made it difficult for small African NGOs to become accredited, since they are ‘required to fulfill the same criteria and operate under the same rules as their Northern counterparts who have been operating in a democratic climate for the last 50 years or more’ and who operate with budgets exceeding those of many African states. In particular, the requirement for NGOs to disclose information about their governing body and sources of income ‘might result in undemocratic governments classifying certain NGOs as subversive, and even banning their activities’, especially if the activities include advocacy and lobbying campaigns for democratic reform of governance and freedom of speech. Furthermore, there were calls for the accreditation review to be made by a technical committee rather than a political process²⁴⁷.

²⁴⁵ Joachim and Locher (2009:27-28) found that while the ‘partnerships’ and ‘global compact’ rhetoric permeates the UN system’s interactions with NGOs and multinational corporations, there is resistance. Some of the larger, more established NGOs are worried about their influence being diluted by an influx of thousands of new NGOs, and some States (notably the Non-Aligned Movement) opposing expanded NGO access.

²⁴⁶ It appears, from the UN-NGLS Website (<http://www.un-ngls.org>) and the UN Department of Public Information NGO Branch Website (<http://www.undpi.org>) that considerable efforts have been made in recent years to address these latter grievances and improve support and communications services for NGOs.

²⁴⁷ This line of argument is supported by Zettler (2009) and Martens (2004).

The Panel's survey report (UN-NGLS, *ibid*) concluded by quoting some statements by NGO representatives that 'exemplify the diversity' of the civil society responses:

What gives you the right to govern the whole earth? We all ready [sic] have politicians that are corrupt why would we want to complicate matters further with a government that can not be reached on a local or national level. It is simply a communist action on your part to control the lives of people around the globe. I would not want to be part of a group that thought they knew what was best for me. I can think for myself! Control is your goal not freedom or individual rights.

Another activity in support of the Cardoso Panel's review was the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service's two-day consultation²⁴⁸ event with civil society representatives, on the theme: 'The Crisis in Global Governance: Challenges for the United Nations and Global Civil Society'. Nearly 60 NGO/CSO representatives from more than 20 countries attended the meeting in Geneva, as well as a number of representatives from the UN system. The meeting report (UN-NGLS, 2003a) noted that one of the most striking developments in global governance in the previous 10-15 years had been the emergence of global civil society as 'a new factor in power relationships at the global level'. The comments in the conference report (*ibid*) were unusually candid: In referring to the notion of a crisis in global governance, one participant pointed out by that there had never been an effective system of global governance, and even that had 'somehow broken down in recent years'. Another reportedly stated: 'The United Nations was created by the victors of World War II, for the victors of World War II'. Moreover, there was further criticism that the history of the UN had been marked by a range of dualities, which had tended to reflect a contrast between the UN's normative goals and the realities of power in the world. Several participants urged the Panel to reject current opinions that downplayed the value of the work of advocacy NGOs in favour of operational NGOs in the integrated follow-up to UN conferences. The emergence and influence of neo-conservative think-tanks and policy institutes was also troubling to the NGO/CSO participants, who viewed increased questioning of their legitimacy, accountability and representativeness, from that quarter, as a reaction to the pressures they were beginning to exert on centres of power.

²⁴⁸ The NGLS convened the consultation from 2-4 June, 2003 in Geneva (UN-NGLS, 2003a).

When the Cardoso Report (A/58/817) was tabled in June 2004 (UN Report, 2004a), it contained 30 recommendations for reform, among them calls for the UN to become more 'outward-looking', more democratic in its processes, embrace a plurality of constituencies and 'connect the global to the local'. However, there were many criticisms of the Report. One UN analyst²⁴⁹, claimed the content was 'extreme naïve idealism, which is out of touch with reality'. In response to the immediate concerns by Member States about these recommendations, the Secretary-General was moved to issue a follow-up report, entitled 'Clarification of some common concerns and apparent misunderstandings' (UN Report, 2004c). Its content, summarised below, provides a very clear picture of the mistrust and reservations some Member States and NGOs have for changes in the UN's relations with civil society, particularly NGOs, and why they are so resistant to reform.

Among the concerns of governments documented (*ibid*) were:

- Opening up the UN to greater participation by NGOs could impact on the balance of power within the UN, raising fears of the erosion of state sovereignty and prerogatives;
- Strengthening the role of NGOs in global politics could further limit their authority over domestic policies and make them more vulnerable to outside influence;
- Some governments were wary of the role of NGOs in their own countries and reluctant to see the UN engage more closely with them;
- Governments questioned the assumption that it is the NGOs, not the government, that really 'represent the grass-roots people' of their countries;
- Some governments were concerned that an increase in the number of NGOs would further unbalance North-South relations within the UN;
- Some governments were worried about the impact of NGOs on the effectiveness of the UN, overburdening an already complex governmental deliberative process;
- Similarly, some were concerned that the accreditation process would continue to expand and become more cumbersome;

²⁴⁹ Willetts (2011:11).

- Some said that preserving the confidentiality of deliberations between Member States was important and ‘may be undermined if NGOs are always around’; and
- Regarding recommendations for increasing the NGO outreach by UN offices at the country-level, governments responded unfavourably, expressing concerns that UN offices are basically focused on governments and should not be diverted from their work by local NGOs.

Among the concerns of NGOs were:

- The proposed new accreditation mechanism could erode their existing rights;
- The criteria for accreditation at the level of the General Assembly would be stringent and actually have the effect of reducing the number of NGOs eligible for consultative status to the UN;
- Disquiet was expressed over which accredited NGOs would be selected to participate in UN events, such as the proposed public hearings, and how such selections would be made.
- There were concerns about the elevation of the private sector over and above NGOs, adding fears that ‘the UN may get hijacked by for-profit organizations’;
- Concerns were expressed about any changes that could further increase the weight of Northern NGOs at the expense of NGOs from the South; and
- NGOs were sceptical about the likely level of support for the proposed Trust Funds: how funds would be allocated and the extent to which the recipient NGOs would be constrained as a result of receiving funding support.

On reviewing these reservations it is clear that representatives of NGOs are as protective about their statutory status in the UN system as States are regarding theirs. Therefore, calls for reform of the provisions for NGO participation in the policy-making mechanisms have met with varying degrees of support and opposition on all sides, not least from NGOs currently working in the system, who are suspicious that any changes may erode the entitlements they have already secured and admit other voices, of which they disapprove, to the system. In light of

the surrounding controversy, the Cardoso Report appears to have been shelved²⁵⁰ since 2004 and this opportunity for modernisation and reform has foundered.

Relationship trends: setting the rules and controlling the action

Despite its greater openness, the UN remains an institution governed by its Member States and structured primarily to support opportunities for governments to debate and make decisions. By virtue of their sovereign statehood, states set the international scene and make the rules of the international order by which all other actors operate (UN Report, 2004a; Waltz, 1979:94). States are, therefore, differentiated from, and superordinate to, non-state actors (Donnelly, 2011: 6). On this subject the Cardoso Report (*ibid*) commented that ‘while civil society can help to put issues on the global agenda, only Governments have the power to decide on them’. Given this long-established and fixed state of affairs, this thesis study found that the relatively recent and rapid emergence of TANs in international relations and policy-making is a cause of uncertainty within international policy-making institutions, leading to perceptions that the policy-making paradigm is in transition.²⁵¹

Evidence that the UN struggles to accommodate some elements of civil society can be seen in the Background Paper prepared by the UN Secretariat in 2003 (UN-NGLS, 2003c):

UN-civil society relationship in essence concerns **participation**.²⁵² Handled well, it enhances the quality of decision-making, increases ownership of the decisions, improves accountability and transparency of the process and enriches outcomes through a variety of views and experiences. But — handled badly — it can confuse choices, hamper the inter-governmental search for common ground, erode the privacy needed for sensitive discussions, overcrowd agendas and present distractions at important meetings.

²⁵⁰ On its Website, the NGLS claims that since the tabling of the report “some concrete developments” have taken place, such as the General Assembly beginning to hold informal meetings with civil society and the establishment of a Trust Fund to support the efforts of UN in-country teams in their work with civil society. These are relatively inconsequential concessions in light of the calls for reform contained in the Cardoso Report, A/59/354 (UN-NGLS, 2011a; UN-Report, 2004a).

²⁵¹ Kuhn (1996:151-152) provides an authoritative account of the defensive behaviours of those who perceive themselves to be keepers-of-the-paradigm in the face of revolutionary change.

²⁵² Emphasis as in original. This Background Paper was prepared as an official brief for the Secretary-General’s Panel of Experts on the Relationship of the United Nations with Civil Society. The Panel conducted its enquiry between 2003 and 2004 and presented its Report (‘The Cardoso Report’) in June 2004 (UN Report, 2004a).

Notwithstanding the diplomatic framing of these relationships as engagements that are ‘handled well’, or ‘handled badly’ by unidentified parties, the second part of the statement clearly shows that key qualities of good relationships²⁵³ — notably trust, tact, mutual understanding and mutual respect — are prone to serious lapses. It may be deduced also from this statement that the typologies of NGO that the UN might struggle to ‘handle well’, are those that deploy the forceful public communications strategies I describe later on as typical of contemporary TANs.

These fears, particularly regarding unwanted disclosures during ‘sensitive discussions’, will be shown to have particular relevance for NGOs who adopt the publicity-seeking communication style definitive of TANs. The statement also intimates the possibility that counterparts in international policy-making situations are motivated to adopt Thucydidean defensive postures in their engagements with TANs and other types of NGO²⁵⁴.

Thus, the UN’s Non-Governmental Liaison Service acknowledges that in international matters, ‘not all governments have readily, or in some cases consistently, embraced a wider role for civil society’ (UN-NGLS, 2007b). The Introduction to the UN guidebook for NGO participation in negotiations and decision-making at the UN points out, somewhat enigmatically (UN-NGLS, *ibid*):

The relationship between non-State actors and the United Nations is an ever-evolving one; and, what the future holds for access and input by civil society remains unclear. However, it is clear that no matter the modalities, civil society will be involved. Ban Ki-moon, the eighth Secretary-General of the UN, noted in his first address to ECOSOC that ‘Today, no UN development effort — whether advocacy for a broad cause or support for specific goals — can make real headway without support from civil society.’

To a prospective, or newly accredited NGO actor, the message to NGOs here is stark: the supporting role of civil society in the UN’s work is valued, but prospects

²⁵³ Substantive communications theory on the key qualities of good relationships is discussed in Chapter 6.

²⁵⁴ This refers to Thucydidean theory regarding security and suspicion of the motives of mistrusted others, who are perceived as ‘not us’. This thesis argues that the tenets of Thucydidean theory are thus evident in the behaviours of all parties to relationships within the international system, and never more so than in the conspicuous stalemate between UN Member States and NGOs that is now enshrined in the Cardoso Report.

for a more instrumental role for non-state actors, indeed any change of role, are unpromising.

5.4 Summary

The UN's contemporary relationship with NGOs is greatly encumbered by historical baggage, which can be usefully understood as resulting from the complex system effects of sensitivity to initial conditions, path dependency and lock-in. The United Nations Charter, so visionary in its conceptualisations in the mid-1940s, did not envisage a world facing today's global challenges, developmental disparities and shifting power relationships; nor one endowed with such a wealth of scientific and technological advances. It certainly did not foresee the evolution of powerful, supranational actors on the world stage that were not states or inter-governmental organisations²⁵⁵. And yet, the UN provides the institutional structures for civil society actors to achieve their aims, allowing them, as necessary, to by-pass domestic structures.

However, there are significant downsides for NGOs in seeking relationships with international institutions: many fear that, *inter alia*, they could lose their independence, funding or ability to react quickly to situations if they were encumbered by international institutional bureaucracy and processes (Martens, 2006). Recent UN outreach initiatives to include a greater business and commercial interests component in the consultation framework with civil society (reflected in the new 'coalitions and partnerships' terminology in UN publications) may signal a turning point in relations with NGOs. Certainly, some NGOs represented at the UN have expressed their dismay at the perceived 'elevation of the private sector over and above NGOs'. To what extent this apparent change of policy reflects the differences in leadership culture between Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon, is not yet reflected in current commentaries but may become more apparent over time. The capacity to include civil society voices in decision-making exists, although the ECOSOC mechanism appears to operate in an inconsistent manner — in theory open to all issues and all applicants, apart from paedophile groups, Nazis, and organisations that propagate racial and/or religious

²⁵⁵ These properties of complex systems can be readily seen in the locked-in constitutional arrangements of long-established policy-making unions. For example, they are evident in the enduring difficulties faced within the European Union, when Member States try to institute constitutional reforms by way of the Treaty mechanism.

discrimination (UN-ECOSOC, 2011d; UN Report, 2004a; UN-ECOSOC, 1968b); Boström, 2011; Willetts, 2011a: 19) — in practice, the accreditation criteria appears to be applied flexibly.

Conversely, significant sectors among NGOs/TANs find the statutory obligations required for UN consultant accreditation — such as supporting the Charter and work of the UN and not engaging in ‘politically motivated’ acts against Member States — incompatible with their ideological principles and posing insurmountable barriers to their participation in the contemporary international system via the UN (See Annex 4 for further examples).

Overall, NGOs, including TANs, appear to *function* in the United Nations system in an irregular, unpredictable, manner that is not easily comprehensible without taking into account my following examination of the distinctive nature of TANs (Chapter 6) and the empirical case studies presented in Chapters 7 to 9. The *place* and *function* of NGOs is formally established by the UN Charter, but in practice, NGOs appear to contribute to policy-making at arm’s length, if at all — and Member States, on the whole, prefer to keep things that way.

6. Transnational Advocacy Networks

*Hope is like a path in the countryside:
originally there was no path —
yet as people are walking all the time in the same spot,
a way appears.*

Lu Xun (1921)²⁵⁶

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I examined the institutional mechanism for engagement and state of the relationship between the international system, as exemplified by the UN, and the world's NGOs *en bloc*. I emphasised that the UN system does not formally differentiate between typologies of NGO and that this is a longstanding institutional norm. However, this thesis argues that this is anachronistic: an instance of path-dependency in a complex system that was shown to be now struggling to accommodate an increasingly numerous and vociferous variant of the traditional NGO consultancy model. Mindful of the comments of leading political scholars²⁵⁷ that TANs are an 'elusive' social phenomenon to capture conceptually for analysis, this chapter explores the nature of the TAN variant, the context in which they developed, the ways in which they differ from traditional NGOs and establishes an eight-point referent model by which they can be defined. The chapter then shows how political activism, no longer hostage to the gatekeeping predisposition of the traditional media, has been radically transformed in recent years.

I aim to demonstrate that not only are TANs distinctly different from other NGOs and that they are politically important, but in what ways they are important, which among them appear to be important and whether they do, in fact possess the

²⁵⁶ Chinese writer and dissident.

²⁵⁷ For example Keck and Sikkink (1998:5), Risse, 2002:255; Diani and McAdam, 2003:1.

powers widely attributed to them to significantly 'change the behavior of states and of international organizations' (Keck and Sikkink, 1998:2). This thesis is premised on the assertion that contemporary TANs have emerged as a variant, or sub-genus, of the traditional NGO operational model long associated with notions of non-governmental service-providing, crisis fieldwork, grassroots welfare and issue-promotion; and 'doing good' (Fisher, 1997; Risse, 2012:432; OECD-DAC, 2008).

6.2 Overview of TAN-specific arguments and assumptions

Therefore, this chapter points out some of the ways in which the aggressive brand differentiation and attention-seeking activities adopted by many TANs have aroused concerns about whether they are prioritising the helping of others, *versus* primarily helping themselves (Weiss, 2013:7; Cooley and Ron, 2010; Polman, 2010; Lecy, Mitchell and Schmitz, 2010, 229-251; Polis Report, 2012:2). Even within the sector, concerns have been raised that because of the exponential growth in access to mobile and social media technology and platforms NGOs are no longer considered the 'de facto guardians' they once were (Polis Report, *ibid*).

In advancing this premise, I intend no suggestion that present-day variants to the earlier NGO model are therefore, necessarily, not constituted for 'doing good'. My argument holds value judgments regarding the political causes taken up by TANs to be matters of subjective ideological opinion and, therefore, in most cases, unsuited to objective macroscopic perspectives of international relational phenomena. Moreover, it was shown in Chapter 5 that the UN has a statutory obligation to take an extremely broad view of NGOs and their concern issues and, apart from a few controversial exceptions²⁵⁸, does not discriminate on ideological grounds against the majority of NGOs that apply to have their voices heard in a consultancy role with the UN. Therefore, this thesis does not give undue weight to political theories that presuppose civil society groups fail to achieve their preferred outcomes in the international arena principally *because* they have ideological differences with other participants. Although, it is shown in the following case studies that some TANs do claim they are discriminated against

²⁵⁸ Organisations associated with paedophilia, or extreme violence, appear to encounter the strongest opposition from Member States.

because their arguments are unpalatable to state interests²⁵⁹, this premise obliged the study to investigate multi-causality by encompassing a much wider range of possible constraints and barriers than ideological conflict. In taking this approach, the study was guided, *inter alia*, by the record of achievements of the international deliberative culture and the famous 1984 ('We can do business together') quote by the then British state leader, Margaret Thatcher, about the Soviet Union's Mikhail Gorbachev, with whom she had massive ideological differences (Thatcher, 1984)²⁶⁰.

Firstly, I argue that TANs should be seen as a new and distinctive genus of social collectivity: constituted by civil society organisations that have adapted to the conditions in their environments by adopting advocacy communications strategising as their principal tactic. This thesis suggests that when organisations engaging in micro- and meso-levels of systemic complexity aspire to communicate their external messages to audiences transnationally, or globally, they encounter complex, macro-level, fitness landscapes and barriers that are uniquely challenging. Therefore, it is the crux of this thesis that the essential characteristics of transnational 'advocacy' NGOs (post-NIEO²⁶¹, media savvy, predominantly or exclusively 'advocacy'-oriented, Internet-enabled, burgeoning rapidly since the 1990s/millennium) differentiate them from other typologies of NGO operating in the international arena.

Although it is evident that TANs come in many sizes and political hues, I construct here the outlines of a TAN referent object that in its more complete formulations tends to exhibit the following advocacy-oriented, non-traditional international NGO characteristics: (a) prioritising of strategic corporate image marketing and public donor-market outreach; (b) prioritising of self-promotion and social

²⁵⁹ A recent example was the strategic NGO walkout at the COP19 international summit by a number of environmental and climate change groups (BBC Archive, 2013d; GI news, 2013e, GI news, 2013f).

²⁶⁰ Full quote: '[...] *We can do business together. We both believe in our own political systems. He firmly believes in his; I firmly believe in mine. We are never going to change one another. So that is not in doubt, but we have two great interests in common: that we should both do everything we can to see that war never starts again, and therefore we go into the disarmament talks determined to make them succeed. And secondly, I think we both believe that they are the more likely to succeed if we can build up confidence in one another and trust in one another about each other's approach, and therefore, we believe in cooperating [...]*' (Thatcher, 1984).

²⁶¹ The relevance of this distinction was explained in Section 4.3.4. See also Woods (2008:247) and Van Rooy (2004: 47-50).

boundary construction²⁶²; and (c) adoption of advanced ‘new media’ tools and sophisticated communications techniques to ‘transnationalise’ the advocacy ‘voice. In light of these recognisable characteristics, which I argue are increasingly commonplace properties of TANs, the chapter prepares the ground for examining three specific cases of TAN relationships with elements of the international system to find whether they ‘can do business together’.

As discussed in Chapter 3, scholars have approached TANs from a very wide range of sociological vantage points in a comparatively short timeframe. For example, some political scholars have foregrounded the ‘transnational’ aspects of new forms of activism (*e.g.* Tarrow, 2005), while others deem the ‘network’ analogy to have special salience (*e.g.* Castells, 2004b, 2007, 2012; Marsh, 1998). Many scholars focus on the specific political advocacy campaigns waged by TANs (*e.g.* Keck and Sikkink, 1998), emphasising the moral aspects of the causes they champion and asserting the existence of universal norms. The complex realism approach adopted in this thesis accepts such theoretical plurality and relativity and the partial explanations that these diverse analytical frameworks can provide. However, I posit that understanding the advocacy function of transnational *advocacy* networks, rather than focusing solely on the contentious political issues on which they campaign, is the primary key to understanding their international relevance and fortunes. Moreover, advocacy is integral to politics and is not restricted to any particular policy domain (Prakash and Gugerty 2010:1).

Where Tarrow sees dissimilarities in national political cultures as constituting the main barrier to effective transnational advocacy — essentially bridging the political divides between the local and the global (2005:75) — I consider that the adversarial advocacy communications strategies typically employed by TANs may constitute a more significant barrier to them achieving their aims in the international arena. My argument here is grounded in the understanding, touched on earlier, that dissimilarities in national political cultures are a fact of everyday life in the dynamic relationships among the ideologically disparate elements of the international system²⁶³. It can be argued that since the end of World War II²⁶⁴ and

²⁶² See Section 2.2.1 for a discussion of Tilly’s insights (2004) into the significance of ‘social boundary mechanisms’ in providing the socio-cultural ‘glue’ for collectivities.

²⁶³ This includes all elements involved in the international system, not only nation states.

the establishment of the UN and Bretton Woods institutions, the international system elements have striven, relatively successfully, to overcome their political dissimilarities — and, importantly, have managed to keep the international system largely functional and peaceful.

In contrast to the adversarial strategies typically associated with much TAN activism, transnational interactions in most spheres of globalising human activity, whether political, commercial or social, emphasise relationship-building (especially the fostering of mutual trust, respect and understanding²⁶⁵) and conflict calming. Added to this, I argue that the peremptory, results-oriented and urgency imperatives of contemporary TAN advocacy — while essential to their public credibility, media interest, supporter attraction and retention and competitive fund-raising — constitute additional resistances and barriers to their achievement of viable collaborative relationships in the international policy-making arena. It hardly needs stating, but to the officials who are their counterparts in the international system these typical TAN imperatives are not concerns they share.

Various scholars point out that TANs operating in global civil society are, in fact, distinctive in their rejection of formal engagement in existing political institutions and practices — what Chandler describes as ‘the anti-politics of rejectionism’. (Chandler 2004, 2005; Castells, 2012: 234-237), Indeed, Chandler opines that global civil society activism is distinctive not only in its rejection of state-based processes ‘which force the individual to engage with and account for the views of other members of society’, but exhibits a broader problem: an ‘unwillingness to engage in political contestation’ at all (2004). Thus, Chandler concludes:

Advocates of global civil society ‘from below’ would rather hide behind the views of someone else, legitimising their views as the prior moral claims of others—the courtly advocates—or putting themselves in harm’s way and leading by inarticulate example, rather than engaging in a public debate. The unwillingness of radical activists to engage with their own society reflects the attenuation of political community rather than its expansion.

²⁶⁴ The dangerous years of the Cold War are not overlooked, however, they were years of serious tensions and comparatively contained proxy wars. World war involving the major nations was averted and continues to be forestalled.

²⁶⁵ An overview of relationship qualities, as acknowledged in substantive communications theory, is presented in Chapter 3.

While this might be a harsh perspective, it will be seen in the case studies that it is a commonly encountered alternative argument in the debate about the contributions of new voices in world politics. If this can be proven, it is a world away from the traditional notions of NGO humanitarian service-providing, collaborative projects with states, and 'doing good'.

6.3 Conceptualising the scale of NGO/TAN activity

Considering the vast numbers of INGOs, including TANs, which are currently operating in the international sphere, this study sought to answer the primary question: What is the place and function of TANs in the contemporary international system and how effective are they in achieving their aims? The thinking behind this question took the following form and led to the development of the cross-discipline theories and five hypotheses (presented in Chapter 1): What is it that so many INGOs do? — *i.e.* what is the place and function of transnationally inter-connected, non-government, groups in the international political domain, a space that is dominated by almost 200 sovereign states and their interests and concerns? Given their numbers and resources, why do some TANs appear to be underperforming²⁶⁶ in policy change at the international level? Furthermore: What are the barriers to their participation? What are the properties of their fitness landscapes? What strategies do they typically use to communicate their concerns? What work do they want these strategies to do? Are they effectively doing it? Can they do it? Why does it matter?

Before moving on to differentiate TANs, it may be useful at this juncture to look at the scale of the subject and reflect on the explosion in the numbers of international NGOs since the 1980s. The UIA Yearbook currently records over 60,000 INGOs and the trend is rising (UIA data, 2013a).

²⁶⁶ Apart from the data on the failure aspect that appears in the literature and discourses (*e.g.* Keck and Sikkink, 1998:x; Secrett, 2011a, 2011b; Howell, 2014), the high levels of frustration expressed by TANs themselves are highlighted in the case studies.

**Number of Organisations in the *Yearbook of International Organizations*
(by year, 1909 – 2013)**

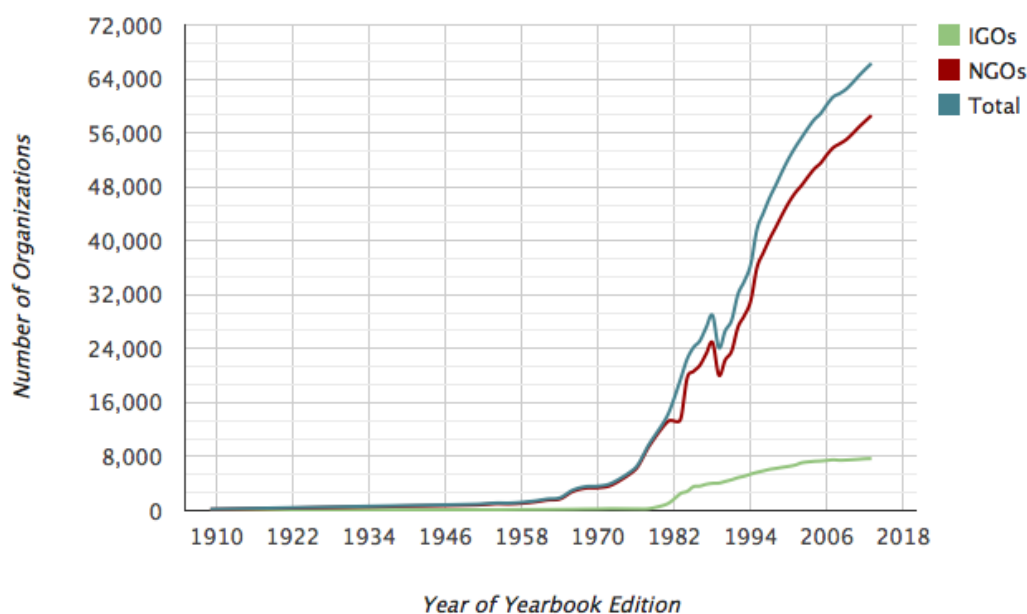


Figure 6.1

Fig. 6.1. This infograph indicates: (i) the enormous scale of INGO growth; (ii) that this growth has occurred in a relatively short space of time; (iii) that it has proliferated from the 1980s onwards; and (iv) it supports Buzan’s observation that whatever else was going on in the world of non-government organisations during this time, ‘the transnational domain was uncommonly lively’ (UIA data, 2013a; Buzan, 2004:81).

Some of the organisations in this field of transnational advocacy have become familiar, well-established, advocacy brands: Greenpeace, Oxfam, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty, Médecins Sans Frontières, Transparency International, Make Poverty History, the International Red Cross. But the vast majority of INGOs have not established a prominent advocacy voice. [To test this, one could ask: How many of the INGOs on the UN consultancy lists, mentioned in Chapter 5, have a familiar ring?] And there are no records to show the numbers that have tried to form but failed, merged, morphed into something else, or disbanded. In fact, this thesis argues that there is a strong case to be made that the globally-recognised NGO brands mentioned above are renowned *because* they alone have the resources to sustain their desired corporate identity and communicate using the sophisticated tools and techniques that are not only characteristic of contemporary TANs but are absolutely necessary to their survival and efficacy. Whether they are termed CSOs, INGOs, NGOs, TANs, or something else, it is important to note that there is no global requirement for civil society organisations

to be formally registered, and it is reasonable to assume that the vast majority of these enterprises are not captured by the UIA's statistics.

It would be questionable to presume that the explosion in the numbers of TANs since the late 1980s and the global dissemination of vast amounts of information on protest issues, is due chiefly to there being greater numbers of issues to protest about and unprecedented numbers of people with concerns in their lives²⁶⁷. Critical and complex realism insists we look beyond agents, events and discourses and probe deeply into the underlying structural and systemic multi-causality of events by asking: what else is going on in this socio-political environment and why have these patterns emerged?²⁶⁸ Having chosen the advanced tools of contemporary advocacy communications, many TANs have embarked on a course that, fuelled by both hopefulness and competitive pressures²⁶⁹, is shaping their place and function in the international system and their effectiveness in achieving their aims. Moreover, I argue that this selection of communications tools is shaping the very nature of the organisations themselves — both positively and negatively — and, thus, influencing their future hopes, trajectories and achievements.

6.4 Socio-political context

It has been argued that what is new about the new transnational activism is its connection to both the current wave of globalisation and the changing structure of international politics (Tarrow, 2005:4). While for many, globalisation provides the incentives and causes of resistance, Tarrow observed that it is the latter that offers activists focal points for collective action, provides them with expanded resources and opportunities, and brings them together in transnational coalitions and

²⁶⁷ This issue is addressed separately in Section 6.5, in the discussion of 'risk' portrayal and dissemination.

²⁶⁸ See Bhaskar (2011: 2-3) for an overview of the critical realist perspective on investigating structural causality. In similar vein, Aristotle wrote that he was fairly certain that 'everything has been discovered', and that many times over, in the long course of history. Therefore, one ought to make full use of what has been discovered, but also endeavour to investigate whatever has been overlooked (Aristotle, 1992:419).

²⁶⁹ My argument here relates to the forces and emotions driving the tool selection, which I consider have determinative, path-dependent, effects. It does not contradict the observations by Castells (2012:13-14) and Brader and Valentino (2007:180-181), that the emotions that are most relevant to social mobilisation and political behaviour are varying degrees of fear and enthusiasm. According to Castells (*ibid*), fear is directly related to other negative/avoiding emotions such as anxiety/anger/outrage, while enthusiasm is a positive/approach-stimulating emotion that is linked to hope. Hope has the ability to project behaviour into the future and is fundamental to goal-seeking behaviour.

campaigns. I consider the following background contextual issues are relevant to this argument:

- ❖ *'Cycles of contention' phenomenon*: Some contemporary TANs (notably Greenpeace) had their roots in the 'cycle of contention'²⁷⁰ that emerged in North America in the 1960s and early 70s. This was a period of heightened collective activism that witnessed social movements moving from the fringes of society to the mainstream (Tarrow, 1998; Klandermans and Staggenborg, 2002:x). However, guided by Castells's assertion that 'the networked social movements of the digital age represent an entirely new species of social movement' (2013:15), this thesis focuses on the period that saw NGOs adopting new tools of advocacy communications — and suggests, consequent TAN emergence — from the 1990s up to the present time.

- ❖ *The rise of a 'global conscience' and the 'normative turn' in IR*: With the end of the Cold War, contradictory trends in the emerging international system, namely globalisation and fragmentation, served to renew and reshape the debate concerning a universal human rights order (Patman, 2000:7). Furthermore, the negative effects of globalisation, particularly on developing countries and the world's poor, were causing alarm (Stiglitz, 2002:214; Scholte, 2005:9). Hand-in-hand with globalisation trends and consequent increases in knowledge about the plight of vulnerable people throughout the world, academic research into social phenomena began to favour constructivist approaches²⁷¹ involving investigations made at the micro-level of individual opinion and experience, albeit sometimes aggregated, rather than at the macroscopic level of observed systemic patterns, behaviours and large-scale social structural consequences over time. Considering the greatly increased attention being given to humanitarian concern issues and the accompanying need to find the causes of social problems negatively affecting people in their immediate environments, it is understandable that post-structural epistemologies

²⁷⁰ Tarrow is accredited with coining the term 'cycle of contention' or 'protest cycle' (1998). Foremost of these collective actions were the West-centric peace/anti-nuclear, civil rights and women's movements.

²⁷¹ Some scholars have observed that the concept of transnational social agency is fraught with contradiction due chiefly to the advent and influence of constructivist ideas in international relations, since the 1980s (Adler, 2002:95-118; Buzan, 2004:1; Brown and Ainley, 2005:48).

would be indispensable as a research tool when applied to relevant subjects. In other words, we can learn much about how individuals understand *their* social world by asking them. However, we can learn only partially from the subjective understandings of individuals about *other* social worlds²⁷², beyond their certain knowledge, in order to ascertain the ontological ‘big picture’.

The nature of the prevailing social concerns of recent decades and consequent ‘normative turn’ in IR theorising required that hitherto excluded voices be brought into political debates. In particular, there was unprecedented impetus, now on a transnational scale, to address the question: Who speaks for the voiceless? — as exemplified in Spivak’s seminal thesis *‘Who speaks for the subaltern?’* (1985). Indeed, ‘who *should* speak for the voiceless’ also became more of an issue. Inevitably, the question of TANs as agents, or representatives, of principled issues and causes became a spirited debate. Who has the right to represent whom, was raised as a key concern, especially when it involved those who cannot speak for themselves — such as the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed; whales and sharks, Asiatic moon bears, coral reefs, rainforests, Mother Earth, the unborn, future generations, *etcetera*. This thesis suggests there are also fairness concerns to be considered about political policy processes that hear only those TANs that are endowed with the most competitive resources and, consequently, are able to generate the loudest voices.

- ❖ *Emergence of multi-stakeholder governance pressures*: The international system, and in particular the UN, attempted to establish greater engagement with civil society in the early 21st century, particularly by embarking on policies of multi-stakeholder governance, involving a greater role for civil society organisations to contribute fresh perspectives and voices. However, there remained incompatibilities between state and non-state entities in attempting to engage with each other within the international institutional framework²⁷³. Individual Member States

²⁷² The relative merits of ‘insider-outsider’ constructivist approaches and perspectives, discussed by Blee and Taylor (2002:97-98), are relevant to this methodological debate.

²⁷³ For examples, see Pianta, 2005; Syracuse University, 2005; Mueller, Kuerbis, *et al*, 2007.

evidently struggled at times to accommodate civil society presence and acknowledge its legitimacy. Along with Waltz (2002:350) and Burchill (2013:80-81), I argue that nation states have not been supplanted in this contest by non-state actors and remain the basic elements of the international system; they have not 'withered away because of globalization', according to Patten (2008:4; see also Risse, 2002:255; Tarrow, 2005:3, 8; and Castells, 2012:234); and nation states 'continue to be the crucial links in any chain of global action against problems that cannot be dealt with by a single government'. Tarrow clearly shares this view (*ibid*) when he argues:

[...] while globalization provides incentives and themes for transnational activism, it is internationalism that offers a framework, a set of focal points, and a structure of opportunities for transnational activists.

Similarly, Castells concludes after studying social movements around the world (*ibid*):

[...] the critical passage from hope to implementation of change depends on the permeability of political institutions to the demands of the movement, and on the willingness of the movement to engage in a process of negotiation.

From these perspectives, it is only when social movements have the potential to contribute to the pre-set policy agendas of the political actors that political reform becomes possible (Tarrow, 2005:3.8; Castells, 2012:234). Thus, the possibility of obtaining 'rewards' is a vital condition for successful relationships (Giddens, 2002:61), while in regard to social capital in the interaction ritual market 'persons with more resources can demand more from those they interact with' (Collins, 2004:151).

However, despite the relatively sudden arrival of the multifarious 'global conscience' phenomenon in the international arena and the multi-stakeholder governance initiatives, Castells reminds us (*ibid*: 235) that the 'fundamental challenge' from social movements concerns (a) their denial of the legitimacy of 'the political class' (over such matters as 'lack of representativeness', due to perceived inequalities of money and power that they consider lead to distorted electoral

processes and biased electoral laws); and (b) the 'denunciation of their subservience to the financial elites'. Moreover, in most cases:

[...] the movements do not trust existing political institutions and refuse to believe in the feasibility of their participation in the predetermined channels of political representation.

As a result, Castells, admits, there is little room for a 'true acceptance' of NGO involvement in social change policymaking processes by most governments, either.

Support for these arguments can also be found in Tarrow's work with contentious political advocacy groups who 'shift the scale of contention' in waging their protests (Tarrow, 2005:121). In fact, Tarrow claims: '[S]cale shift is an essential element of all contentious politics, without which all of contention that arises locally would remain at that level'. I argue that Tarrow's conceptualisation is theoretically arid, in that it ignores the properties and powers of the relational fitness landscapes that condition these shifts, enabling and constraining all interactions. Instead of acceptance that these activities happen mechanically in a relational vacuum, I argue that complexity theorisation would see them more convincingly as encountering differing levels, or planes²⁷⁴, of complexity and resistance, and co-evolving. All of which, I submit, tends to further substantiate my argument that Thucydidean insights regarding trust, wariness, uncertainty and debilitating suspicion in relationships apply as much to the burgeoning relationships between state and non-state elements in the international system, as they do between states.

Consequently, the lines of international argument are being continually redrawn and the multitude of new civil society actors coming into the international arena have meant that ideological differences between the more traditional realist, state-centric, IR viewpoints²⁷⁵ and those holding alternative political perspectives — such as international liberalist, neo-liberalist, Marxist, and universal cosmopolitanist²⁷⁶ — must now be considered in any analysis of engagement

²⁷⁴ This follows Wight's theorisation of 'structural relational logics' associated with planes of social reality (2006:175, 298-299). However, the application of complexity insights that recognise planes of differing complexity is mine.

²⁷⁵ Dominant in IR thinking in the 1980s, '90's and still influential (Brown and Ainley, 2005:40).

²⁷⁶ See Beitz (1998) and Held (2010:ix-xii) for definitions of cosmopolitanism.

between states and these non-state actors (Buzan, 2004: 1; 6-10; Brown and Ainley, 2005:40-59; Norris, 2003:287-297, and Cochran, 1999:21-22). For these reasons, this thesis holds that using only political lenses to analyse the TAN phenomenon as a large and growing cluster of collectivities serves to make them seem more confusing and elusive.

In assessing the international-level interface and degrees of responsiveness between state and non-state actors it is also relevant to consider worldwide differences in (a) interpretations of democracy and democratic governance models and the degrees to which the nearly 200 governments worldwide are amenable to the demands of foreign, often Eurocentric, non-state pressure groups; and (b) the extent to which greater numbers of politically disinterested individuals are actually being empowered and motivated by TANs to participate in national and international politics²⁷⁷. In fact, Prior (2007:111-115) found that although Internet use increased political knowledge among citizens already interested in politics, it had the opposite effect among the previously apathetic²⁷⁸. As Hindman concluded (2009: 8-10, 142): 'It may be easy to speak in cyberspace, but it remains difficult to be heard'.

Uncertainty and Risk

In the last two decades, many influential scholars have expressed concerns about the levels of perceived risk, danger and anxiety in the modern world and, importantly, the 'manufactured' nature of that risk (*e.g.* Beck, 1992, 1994:2007:115, 2009; Adams and van Loon, 2000:2-3; Giddens, 1991a, 1991b, 1999, 2002; Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994; Lash, 1994:Ch.1; 2000:47-61). Archer considers 'we still live in the crisis of late modernity', in which the world has witnessed the growing rapidity and intensification of social change over the past quarter of a century (2013:2). In these circumstances, Giddens asserts (2002:28-29), there is a new moral climate of politics, marked by polarised groups trading

²⁷⁷ Analysis of which, I suggest, cannot be done adequately through the literature, but only through website analysis. To illustrate, the world's largest online TAN, Avaaz, which claimed to have almost 6.5 million 'members' in November 2010, was claiming over 37 million members in June 2014 (Avaaz, 2010; Avaaz, 2014). This TAN describes itself thus: '*Avaaz is the global online advocacy network that brings people-powered politics to global decision-making*'.

²⁷⁸ Prior's research defined apathy regarding political knowledge (among those with Internet access) as having a low, or no, interest in news consumption but a high, or exclusive, interest in entertainment programmes. This work is also cited by Hindman (2009:10).

accusations of ‘scaremongering’ on the one hand and ‘cover-ups’ on the other, as people try to gather information that might enable them to calculate the severity of the risks they face in their lives. Similarly, Adam and van Loon argue (*ibid*) that perceptions of risk are manufactured not only by the application of technologies, but also by the work of ‘making of sense’ of perceived technological outcomes²⁷⁹.

To deal with this complexity, some are comforted by simplistic solutions. Evans (2012) suggests that in the face of risk and uncertainty we feel less powerless and impotent if we perform an action, something visible, or a ritual, (‘theatre’), to provide an illusion of control. It feels better than doing nothing. On the other hand, many are overwhelmed by their understandings of contemporary global challenges. In this context, popular forms of social protest can be seen as attempts to ‘colonise the future’ and try to make it more certain and secure (Latour, 2013: 486; Giddens, 1991b:114). Indeed, Giddens, asserts (1991b:125): ‘Individuals seek to colonise the future for themselves as an intrinsic part of their life-planning’.

But whilst knowledge of risk and fear impels some people to take direct action themselves, for others the opposite is true. It is a known paradox that heightening the urgency and magnitude of social challenges may actually postpone, or suppress, concerted actions to resolve them. Gould opines that the linguistic framing of issues in terms of disasters, daunting prospects, uncertainty and risk, often done for rhetorical effect, may lead to attitudes of defeatism and despair (2012:95-96). According to Broom and Sha (2012:315) research on the impact of messages shows low-fear messages achieve greater compliance than high-fear messages — the latter producing defensive reactions that lead to distortion, denial or rejection of the message. Castells opines that, when faced with an external threat over which they have no control people, generally, are inclined to do nothing: ‘Thus, anxiety leads to fear, and has a paralyzing effect on action’. Beck asserts (1992:183; 1994:9) that, paradoxically, people’s horizons dim as their perception of risks grow:

For risks tell us what should not be done but not what should be done. With risks, avoidance imperatives dominate. Someone who depicts the world as risk will ultimately become incapable of action. The salient point here is that

²⁷⁹ See also Lyotard (1984).

the expansion and the heightening of the intention of control ultimately ends up producing the opposite.

One effect of TAN political interventions that, I suggest, has clear implications for the future of democratic systems of governance is the tendency to disparage elected authorities and politicians in demanding that they reset their priorities. However, elections research has shown that disillusioned voters tend not to switch their ideological dispositions: they respond by not voting at all (van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009:91). I would argue that mass media highlighting of anti-politician valence²⁸⁰ claims could also have profound implications for heightening anxieties and skewing public opinion towards ill-considered political priorities by activating 'availability heuristics' and 'availability cascades', as identified by Kahneman (2011:8-8; 142), Kuran and Sunstein (1999).

'Precautionary principle'

One response to the globalised, creeping sense of anxiety, has been the emergence of a co-evolving coping mechanism: the notion of the 'precautionary principle' (Giddens, 2002:32; Beck, 2009:11-13). While Giddens recalls that this idea first emerged in Germany in the context of ecological debates in the early 1980s, this thesis suggests that the influences were probably more widespread, since the precautionary principle was already enshrined in the UN's *World Charter for Nature*, adopted by the General Assembly in 1982 (UN GA Resolution, 1982:11).

The precautionary principle makes the proposition that in situations where planned human activities are likely to pose a significant risk to nature, and where any potential adverse effects are not yet fully understood, the activities should not proceed (*ibid*). In these circumstances, Giddens observes (2002:28-29), there is a whole new dimension to risk: uncalculated and uncalculatable risk, and a new moral climate of politics. Nevertheless, Giddens points out (*ibid*: 34): 'Our age is not more dangerous — not more risky — than those of earlier generations, but the balance of risks and dangers has shifted'. There is, furthermore, confusion regarding what constitutes sufficient scientific evidence and persistent doubts about the competence being applied to complex political decision-making, and

²⁸⁰ See van der Eijk and Franklin (2009:166), for a discussion of the use of valence issues to question the competence of political rivals.

disquiet about whose voices are being heard, or should be heard, and whom to trust (Beck, 1992:57-59; Giddens, 2002:29-35).

6.5 Identification of contemporary TANs

The challenges of defining TANs are not only faced by elements within the international system but by observers everywhere, who use the term as a form of convenient shorthand²⁸¹. In fact, according to Willetts (2011:31), there is 'no such thing as a typical NGO':

NGOs are any organized groups of people that are not direct agents of individual governments, not pursuing criminal activities, not engaged in violent activities, and not primarily established for profit-making purposes.

At first sight, there is nothing especially complicated in understanding the individual words, or the label 'Transnational — Advocacy — Network'. In fact, in a descriptive sense it aptly depicts groups of civil society activists engaged in advocating their principled issues, organised into networks, and operating across more than one state border (Brown and Ainley, 2005:35). According to Keck and Sikkink (1998:2), a TAN is an organisation composed of social change activists '[...] working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services'.

Linguistically it is not surprising that definitions and interpretations of terms vary widely, considering the literature emanates from a wide range of transnational sources, each with a distinct school of thought (Buzan, 2004; Brown and Ainley, 2005: 11-12). Even in English, the words 'transnationality', 'advocacy' and 'networks' each have their own theoretical paradigms to be considered (Marsh, 1998), besides any further interpretations as to what these ideas might mean collectively. According to Risse, (2002:255) 'transnational relations' is a 'rather elusive concept' and he considers it is actually 'impossible to theorize about them in any systematic sense'. Others define transnational relations as 'relationships that involve transactions across state boundaries in which at least one party is not a

²⁸¹ See Watts (2011:26-27) for insight into the common device of imagining a 'representative agent' with the characteristics of an individual to represent the character of a group.

state' (Brown and Ainley, 2005:35), and this is a reasonable definition that I also adopt.

In examining the literature for signs of TAN formation and activity (and applying Keck and Sikkink's definition), I have found writers in different parts of the world — and approaching from different perspectives — frequently ascribe transnational, advocacy and/or social network characteristics to all of the following typologies, and more: global social movements (GSMs), social movement organisations (SMOs), international social movements, global civil society, civil society organisations (CSOs), transnational collective actions, transnational campaigning, issue networks, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and, of course, transnational advocacy networks (TANs). Role delineation becomes confusing, for example, when NGOs form nodes in transnational advocacy networks and it becomes more difficult for observers to establish whether the TAN, or NGO, is the dominant voice in the advocacy. Keck and Sikkink claim international and domestic NGOs play a central role in *all*²⁸² advocacy networks (1998:9).

Keck and Sikkink (*ibid*: 30) identified three different types of transnational network, based on their motivations and each corresponding to different endowments of political resources and patterns of influence:

- Those with essentially *instrumental goals*, especially transnational corporations and banks;
- Those motivated primarily by *shared causal ideas*, such as scientific groups or epistemic communities; and
- Those motivated primarily by *shared principled ideas or values* (transnational advocacy networks).

It is this third category that provides the focus for this thesis, being distinctive in the centrality of 'principled ideas'; employing strategies that aim to use information and beliefs as tools to motivate political action and using this leverage to gain the support of more powerful institutions (*ibid*).

²⁸² Emphasis is my own, not in original.

The 'new media turn' in NGOs

In response to what I saw as useful but outdated definitions of TANs, as identified above by Keck and Sikkink (1998:2) and to substantiate my premise that contemporary TANs should be regarded as distinct from other typologies of NGOs and INGOs²⁸³, I developed the following eight-point analytical framework for the study. While accepting the general validity of Keck and Sikkink's referent criteria for TANs at a particular pre-millennium point in time, this thesis posits that it does not go far enough to help us understand the contemporary TAN protest model. These scholars observed, almost two decades ago (*ibid*):

Despite their differences, these networks are similar in several important respects: the centrality of values or principled ideas, the belief that individuals can make a difference, the creative use of information, and the employment by nongovernmental actors of sophisticated political strategies in targeting their campaigns.

In particular, this thesis argues that the manner in which present-day TANs express themselves in the world deserves a more analytically useful basis than to say they make 'creative use of information'. Moreover, this thesis considers Keck and Sikkink's conclusion that TANs share a capacity for adopting 'sophisticated political strategies in targeting their campaigns' is largely mistaken. On the contrary, I suggest that in general TANs increasingly employ sophisticated communications strategies in their campaigns but that sophisticated political strategies are not an essential characteristic of contemporary TANs. In fact, when viewed through the prism of complex realism, the structural multi-dimensionality, diversity of national interests and disparate complexity levels of the international landscape make the possibility of non-state actors deploying 'sophisticated' political strategies likely to be rare. On the other hand, sophisticated communications strategies are well in evidence in international politics and are becoming increasingly easy to deploy.

Just as the field of IR witnessed a 'normative turn' in the 1980s²⁸⁴ and a corresponding burgeoning in NGO activity, the contemporary form of globalised

²⁸³ This thesis is also guided by Castells's specific insights into the communications practices of contemporary activist networks (2007; 2012).

²⁸⁴ See Erskine (2010:36-42) and Kurki and Wight (2010:28), for a discussion of the 'normative turn' in IR.

NGO activism, or TAN model, might be usefully regarded as the 'new media turn' in NGOs. The thinking behind this approach was three-pronged: (a) Since TANs employ communications strategies and tools that, I suggest, are distinctively different (and determinative) from the attributes associated with traditional service-providing NGO models, it is important to better understand what these are; (b) when we can better understand the characteristics that TANs possess, we can begin to assess also the intended, and unintended, effects these properties might have on the audiences and environments they aim to influence. In this way we can better evaluate also their fitness to pursue their diverse political advocacy agendas in the contemporary international landscape; and (c) I sought to develop a prototype for a more relevant referent for contemporary TANs: one that might be of practical value in empirical research.

Moreover, I sought a referent model that could help to distance the contentious aspects of TAN activism in order to concentrate the research focus on the patterns of TAN behaviours and relational interactions with others. This seemed to be a more compassionate means of analysing the international environment for TAN interactions, instead of alternatives that typically focus on the moral relativity of TAN issues, since difference of opinion is an unstable basis for theorising causality and outcomes in the international institutional arena. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the institutional arrangements of the international *fora* have been established, over many generations of deliberation, for the specific purpose of airing disagreements, hearing arguments and broadening participation in the interactions and discourses that lead to persuasion, compromise and change. The eight characteristics that I identify as commonly exhibited by TANs and having determinative effects on their international relationships were developed on the basis of broad content analysis of the literature and discourses, an iterative process involving interrogation of the three case studies and personal experience of media and public communications practice. The properties that this thesis regards as the essential characteristics of a contemporary TAN model are:

Transnational Advocacy Network Identification Matrix

<u>Iconic attributes of case study TANs</u>	Present/Not present
1. Distinctive, highly-visual, transnational, corporate identity	
2. Demonstrable prioritising of self-promotion	
3. Demonstrable prioritising of voice-amplification strategies in advocacy	
4. Highly media-savvy* with unremitting media relations** activity	
5. Demonstrable high degree of adoption of sophisticated public/political communications style and strategies#	
6. Demonstrable high-degree of adoption of advanced information and communications technologies	
7. Demonstrable high degree of strategic social boundary mechanism construction §	
8. Demonstrable differentiation strategies within the NGO sector and within the typology of TANs	

Figure 6.2

Key:

*'Media-savvy' is interpreted as demonstrating a high level of awareness of contemporary media and news generation.

**'Media relations activity' is interpreted to mean strategic engagement with the news media, with the aim of eliciting positive news coverage and ameliorating unfavourable coverage.

#Sophisticated public communication strategies assessed are: brand development, creative framing, ideological cue delivery and priming.

§'Social boundary mechanism' indicators assessed are: prominence and repetition of symbols, heroes, myths, mysticism and empty signifiers, and representations of otherness and 'the other' in the organisation's grand narrative.

This referent model is designed for the identification of contemporary TANs²⁸⁵. Although it is a truism that epochs cannot be identified until they have ended, I suggest that the current phase of TAN development might in future be regarded as a second-generation model — a type of TAN 2.0 — that is an NGO offspring of the second generation of World Wide Web technology, Web 2.0, which emerged in the late 1990s. This phase of technological development saw the information-sharing capabilities of static Websites further revolutionised to allow unprecedented levels

²⁸⁵ That is, TANs emerging during a period roughly conterminous with the popularisation and affordability of globe-spanning communications tools and best-practice techniques (*i.e.* the 1990s to the present).

of globe-spanning interaction between information providers and information consumers and the advent of new social media — what Castells calls ‘mass self-communication’ (2007:239). In my proposition, we should expect to see a further generation of TANs emerging in a co-evolutionary dynamic with the technological tools that will be contingent on the advent of Web 3.0.

6.6 Outspoken champions of causes

There appears to be little argument in the literature that advocacy networks can generate attention to new issues and help to set international agendas when they mobilise their networks and provoke media attention, debates, hearings and meetings on issues that previously had not been a matter of public debate (Biersteker, 2002:170; Keck and Sikkink, 1998:25). However, Keck and Sikkink concede (*ibid*:x):

The ideas and principles that participants of these networks espouse do not, all by themselves, produce these changes. Networks frequently fail to achieve their goals; in many instances, serious transnational problems exist but no network is formed.

Leaving aside for the moment speculation on why they might fail to meet their own aspirations, or champion some causes and not others²⁸⁶, it is apposite to ask: Who then are these ‘others’ on whose behalf advocacy networks act as non-elected agents, or representatives? The literature reveals that the three central issue areas of contemporary advocacy are human rights; the environment or ‘nature’; and women’s rights and other broad humanitarian interests (Brown and Ainley, 2005:208-210; Keck and Sikkink, 1998: ix). People suffering physical harm, especially the vulnerable or innocent, are particularly compelling (Keck and Sikkink, *ibid*: 27). Castells suggests that movements based on such issues arise to challenge what activists often define as ‘global capitalism’; patriarchalism on behalf of the rights of women, children and sexual minorities; and productivism, in defense of a holistic vision of the natural environment and an alternative way of life. This, I would point out, clearly reflects the socio-historical ‘global conscience’ landscape discussed earlier.

²⁸⁶ It is pointed out in Chapter 8 that NGOs themselves have voiced concerns over what they view as imbalances and inconsistencies resulting from ‘media-driven attention’ that popularises some humanitarian crises but leads to the neglect of others that ‘fail to grip the media’s attention’ (Collinson *et al*, 2010; OI Report, 2012; U.S. NSS, 2002 and 2010).

6.6.1 Advocacy communications as a theoretical framework

In demonstrating the importance and effectiveness of the advocacy-oriented analytical framework adopted for this thesis, I would first pose a question: If present-day TANs are constituted by the communications technologies and techniques they adopt, what would happen if these tools were removed? I suggest the answer would be: no tools, no TANs. Indeed, Castells asserts that the networked social movements of today 'could not exist without the Internet' (2012:234). It is further argued that a communications lens is, therefore, indispensable to examining the tools TANs select, the strategies they devise to express their purposes, and the resulting disparate fortunes of TANs. This should not be taken to indicate that this thesis is in the thrall of 'cyber-utopianism', Internet-centrism (Morazov (2011: xiii-xvii), or technology fetishism (Dean, 2009: 31-33).

Instead, I argue that the new, affordable, tools by themselves are of little use in political activism: it is the levels of skill and sophistication in their selection and use that have important implications for the effectiveness of TANs in the international system, the quality of their relationships with other international actors with whom they engage, and the ways in which all of these relationships have an impact on the effectiveness of each TAN in achieving its preferred outcomes. Castells (2007) asserts that 'politics is based on socialised communication' — on the capacity to influence people's minds:

[...] power relations, that is the relations that constitute the foundation of all societies, as well as the processes challenging institutionalized power relations are increasingly shaped and decided in the communications field.

Moreover, Calabrese (2004) maintains that communication issues will be 'vital' for the future of a democratic and egalitarian global civil society. Accordingly, I suggest, these observations raise a number of obvious questions: (1) Why do TANs routinely employ simplistic, micro-sociological understandings in their communications practices that are ostensibly focused on positively influencing complex international, evidence-based, policy-making? And (2): Have important communications principles been blind spots for some TANs in their quest to install

popular, mainstream, understandings of complex issues on the international policy-making agenda and, as a consequence, sowing the seeds of self-defeat?

Since around the beginning of the millennium, the majority of public relations and communication professionals worldwide have embraced the term and connotations of 'advocacy' as a primary function of public relations²⁸⁷ (Fitzpatrick and Bronstein, 2006:ix, 24; PRSA, 2013). Thus, 'advocacy' is now widely understood within the international communications paradigm to be a salient form of communications practice. In their study of advocacy NGOs and collective action, Prakash and Gugerty claim the term 'advocacy' 'suggests systematic efforts (as opposed to sporadic outbursts) by actors that seek to further specific policy goals'²⁸⁸. Moreover, they opine '[A]dvocacy is integral to politics and not restricted to any particular policy domain' (2010:1).

Nevertheless, I argue that despite all of the recent advances in communications technologies and skills, the basic understandings of acceptable human communications qualities have not changed significantly. This is expressed in Florini's belief that (2000:234):

All civil society advocacy stands or falls on the persuasiveness of the information it provides. Over time, groups whose facts and arguments prove unfounded discredit themselves.

6.6.2 Communication strategies adopted by TANs

In this section I discuss just some of the sophisticated communications strategies

²⁸⁷ In 2000, the Public Relations Society of America acknowledged 'advocacy' for the first time as one of the core values of public relations. While agreeing that the paradigm shift that sees public relations in terms of an advocacy function is now most cited by contemporary practitioners, Fawkes (2011:17) notes that advocacy-model thinking is strongly U.S.- based and that there are a number of other substantive theoretical approaches to public relations that also have their supporters. The observation that this new wave of advocacy thinking emerged in the U.S. does nothing to undermine my premise that there exists a now dominant PR concept of 'advocacy' and that it applies perfectly to modern TANs. In fact, Fawkes's observations strongly support my argument that the most highly visible TANs, particularly those attracting attention from the mainstream mass media, have evidently adopted international brand marketing and communications practices that were developed primarily for multinational enterprises headquartered in the U.S. The cross-pollination of ideas and the migration of communications personnel across all sectors of society, and transnationally, are also highly relevant to this thesis. As will be shown in Chapters 7 to 9, these tendencies are pronounced in each of the three case studies examined.

²⁸⁸ See also Kahneman, particularly in regard to 'availability entrepreneurs' and 'availability cascades' (2011:142); Kuran and Sunstein (1999); and Rogers and Frey (2014).

and tactics that can be observed by way of an external communications audit of TAN practices. This empirical process included data collection and analysis of a wide range of communications outputs by TANs, particularly the case study models. It also included my analysis of a comprehensive data set of news media discourses, as reflected in the Bibliography. Based on this, I argue that organisations that most closely resemble the TAN referent for this thesis also display signs of commoditisation of contemporary communications 'global best practice' technologies and practices²⁸⁹. These public communications strategies and tactics are the product of strategic corporate decisions and are designed to elicit predetermined responses from targeted audiences in accordance with the organisation's preferred outcomes and goals. Those commonly observed²⁹⁰ as being used by TANs include:

- ❖ *Framing*: Of all the rhetorical techniques typically practiced by TANs, strategic framing and reframing of issues is arguably the most well known, even by lay audiences²⁹¹. For example, packaging information in terms of 'the crisis' or 'the catastrophe' is commonly seen in TAN advocacy framing²⁹².
- ❖ *Priming and cognitive cues*: It is to be expected that the primary tactic of TANs is to strategically communicate information to the actors within their networks and to their target audiences (Brader and Valentino, 2007:184, Keck and Sikkink, 1998:2, 8). Among the cognitive cues this study found to be most in evidence in TAN communications were (i) stereotypes, which can lead people to habitually look for a particular undesirable, or desirable, trait or inconsistency in another; (ii) associative biases with things that are

²⁸⁹ This argument that many TANS are all beginning to look the same, act the same, use identical commoditised activist strategies and promote similar populist political messages, is evidenced, *inter alia*, by the Websites of the following prominent advocacy organisations: Avaaz (<http://www.avaaz.org/en/>); CAFOD (<http://www.cafod.org.uk/>); Caritas: (<http://www.caritas.org/>); Christian Aid (<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/>); Tearfund (<http://www.tearfund.org/>); Friends of the Earth (<http://www.foei.org/>); Greenpeace International (<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/>); Oxfam International (<http://www.oxfam.org/>); and Save the Children International (<http://www.savethechildren.net/>).

²⁹⁰ For a more comprehensive discussion of these terms, see Annex 5.

²⁹¹ See Goffman (1986) for his seminal work on perspective framing.

²⁹² Kahneman argues (2011: 301, 367) that human brains have a mechanism that gives priority to bad news, so we pay far more attention to alerts about threats and warnings than we do to information about opportunities, or good news.

liked or, especially, disliked; and (iii) priming for receptiveness to ideas and suggestions (see Kahneman, 2011: 50-58).

- ❖ *'Fuzzy' brand promises*: TANs often employ the communications technique of designing 'fuzzy brand promises' that trigger emotional responses with widely diversified audiences. This thesis argues that the setting of 'fuzzy', idealised but humanly unactualisable goals, is a critical performance indicator in evaluating the disparate fortunes of TANs, while the setting and advocacy of clearly-defined goals that are within the bounds of possibility and are aligned with prudent strategies, is intrinsic to understanding the outcomes of the handful of most often cited TAN success stories: the campaigns to ban land mines and cluster bombs, end slavery in the USA, extend suffrage to women, establish the International Criminal Court, regulate conflict diamonds, and end foot binding in China (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: Ch.2; Lecy *et al*, 2010:236).

- ❖ *'Validity of voice' authentication*: Deployment of this tactic is clearly evident in the strategic presentation of advocacy material by TANs. Examples include the relating of personal experiences of advocates and their expertise, novelty such as the deployment of celebrity influencers, newsworthiness of the information conveyed, and personal accounts by victims of the relief brought by TAN interventions.

- ❖ *Perlocution*: Perlocutionary communications tactics are often evident in TAN communications — that is, linguistic forms that have action as their aim and imply action but do not embody an explicit call for the receiver to take an action (Habermas²⁹³, 1989:133; Miller, 2005:147). Oblique forms of persuading, or convincing, may fall into this category²⁹⁴. Another form is the use of language to confuse the boundaries between 'seriousness' and 'play' (Habermas, *ibid*).

²⁹³ This communications theory is presented in Volume 1 of Habermas's *magnum opus*, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1989:331).

²⁹⁴ I posit that an accessible example of this linguistic device is Mark Antony's funeral oration in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, during which the prevailing sentiment of a crowd is manipulated from one extreme to another.

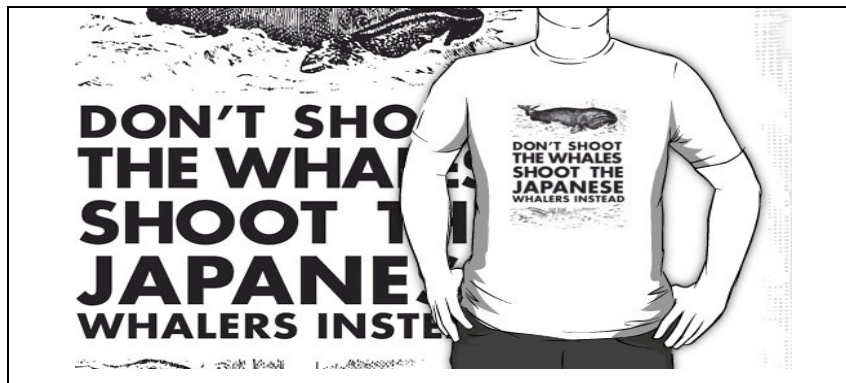


Figure 6.4 An example of an intentionally confusing strategic communication.

Significant evidence of these techniques was particularly found in the case study on Greenpeace International (GI news, 2009a; GP UK news, 2013; Weyler, 2012).

In modern communications understanding there is no such thing as a singular 'general public' but many 'publics' to be strategically approached at multiple levels of analysis, each with its own scale of complexity, structural influences, properties, resistances and limitations²⁹⁵. (Broom and Sha, 2013: 291; Rawlins and Bowen, 2004:718;). 'Public opinion' is a collective phenomenon not an individual phenomenon, van der Eijk and Franklin claim²⁹⁶. (2009:155). And because individuals differ from one another, what works to influence one individual may not work with another. Guided by Granovetter's study of 'threshold' models of collective behaviour (1978), this thesis argues that untargeted, inexpert, advocacy that is framed to heighten the emotional responses of communities-at-large, risk creating unpredictable consequences.

Thus, I suggest that, when a communications lens is applied, the concept of 'people power' is seen to be theoretically unstable and politically naïve. This is because there is no one-size-fits-all in a world where each individual is unique. However, collectivities can be formed between approximately like-minded individuals on certain levels of their interests. Bonds of unity are thus formed when our

²⁹⁵ See Kahneman (2011:142) for insights into 'availability cascades' and 'availability entrepreneurs'.

²⁹⁶ See van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009:154-155 for more on 'the magic of aggregation', by which individual opinions cannot be aggregated to constitute 'public opinion', since different aspects of it come from different individuals, but 'the public' as a collective entity can be very knowledgeable on topics of salience to the component members and can very quickly acquire knowledge on new areas of interest.

metaphors for understanding the world are shared, or are believed to be shared, by others. In particular, the human tendency to generalise from negative specifics — such as in communicating fears of risks and seeking to maximise support from others in overcoming them²⁹⁷ — can be activated now by emotional triggers that are often communicated electronically across formerly impenetrable barriers of state boundaries, ethnicity, language, parochial knowledge, social status, gender and age. Complexity theories also cast doubt on the possibility that assumptions about individuals can be extrapolated to provide us with knowledge about the unknowable preferences and properties of collectives, such as crowds (Watts, *ibid*; Geyer and Rihani, 2010:29). However, this study found that some TANs frequently make exaggerated claims for the political instrumentality of ‘people power’, increasingly so since the arrival of interactive new media tools. The notion that political mass mobilisation follows information delivery and consequent awareness is a popular meme in online activism, which has reified the concept of ‘people power’. For example, the advocacy network ‘38 Degrees’ (Slogan: ‘38 degrees is the angle at which an avalanche happens’), claims one million online members and is a typical example of this mechanical, quantitative, thinking about social causality (38 Degrees, 2014)²⁹⁸.

6.6.3 How instrumental are TANs in effecting international policy change?

Before examining the question of TAN instrumentality in effecting international policy change, it is helpful to first consider (a) whether changing international policy is a typical aim of TANs; (b) what are typical aims of TANs; (c) whether, and in what ways, TAN effectiveness can be assessed; and (d), whether TANs are effective in achieving their aims.

According to Keck and Sikkink (1998: 2), TAN aims, taken overall, are ‘to change the behaviour of states and of international organizations’. These writers claim that, more distinctively than other kinds of transnational actors, (*ibid*):

²⁹⁷ See Kahneman, 2011:300-303; Collins, 2004:24; Goffman, 1959: 91-94).

²⁹⁸ Other examples include Greenpeace International, which now claims to have 24 million supporters (GI Annual Report 2012:4, 52), up from ‘2.9 million in donor-supporters’ in just a few years, while Avaaz claimed to have almost 6.5 million ‘members’ in November 2010, and over 34 million members in April 2014 (Avaaz, 2010; 2014).

[...] advocacy networks often reach beyond policy change to advocate and instigate changes in the institutional and principled basis of international interactions.

Without probing too deeply into what reaching 'beyond policy change' might mean and whether influence and attitudinal change are more likely to come before rather than after policy change, this assertion would appear to indicate that instrumentality in international policy change is not a typical aim of TANs. Yet, I argue (supported by the case studies) that TANs typically claim significant, or sole, instrumentality in effecting conclusive victories in the contested areas of international policy change and treaties.

What we know about individual TANs and their aims is almost exclusively what they tell us about themselves²⁹⁹. Castells says 'social movements are what they say they are' (2004a: 73), which in light of the numbers and mass communication capabilities of contemporary TANs, I suggest, puts the onus on sceptical and attentive publics to examine their self-advocacy. But although the publicly-expressed aims of TANs tend to be generally targeted and unidirectional, their campaigns show a wide divergence between conformist, reformist and transformist strategies (Scholte, 2005:324). Their issues might include, *inter alia*, human and non-human rights, social justice, the environment and climate change, immigration, aid, trade and labour activism, and TANs who link domestic activists to international institutions. But transnational civil society relations also has a 'dark side', producing clandestine cells of terrorists and militants, international drug rings and traders in human beings (Tarrow, 2005:43), that is not always acknowledged. Nevertheless, these covert activities of certain types of transnational activism and social networking tend to be bypassed by the mainstream political science literature on social networks. The saying that 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom-fighter' comes readily to mind in this discussion³⁰⁰. This factor served to reinforce the research decision to put aside questions about the ideological and moral relativity of the issues TANs adopt in

²⁹⁹ Apart from the occasional public comments by whistleblowers and disgruntled/disillusioned former insiders. See for example, Polman (2010); Brand (2006, 2009); *The New Statesman* (2010); Moore (2005, 2007, 2008, 2013); Bernstein (2009); and *Bloomberg* (2010).

³⁰⁰ The origin of this well-known quote is obscure. This exact quote and versions of it have been attributed to several sources.

order to focus closely on the communicative approach to the primary research question and hypotheses.

Therefore, I consider the way to better understanding TANs is not to focus on the confusing range of disparities in their aims, issues, ideologies and strategies. Instead, I argue that we can learn much about TANs by better understanding the advocacy characteristics they have in common. The referent criteria presented in Section 6.5 is intended to assist this endeavour.

Contra the often emphatic claims of political success, or conclusive victories, by TANs themselves and relayed by the mainstream media³⁰¹, the correlation between non-state actors' international engagement with states and international institutions and specific policy changes is hard to quantify (Chandler 2005:162; Keck and Sikkink, 1998: x, 202; Forsythe, 2012: 248-249). Indeed, complexity science considers the 'credit assignment' problematique to be an inherent feature of complex, evolving and adaptive systems (Holland, 2006:2; Watts, 2011:27). The credit assignment problem arises because information about performance of agents is often irregular and partial: the result of an intricate skein of interactions extending over space and time. Holland notes that it is rare to have information available that overtly identifies the 'stage setting' options that influenced events and apparent outcomes (*ibid*).

Questions then arise as to whether advocacy networks are due credit, or merely claiming credit, for principled causes that are being championed more discretely and effectively through the agency of other civil society agents, such as the proliferating global 'think tanks', and by conventional diplomacy. It was noted in the data set that *post hoc* assumptions are a prominent characteristic of the discourse on TANs. Watts opines (*ibid*) that because we seek to explain happenings after the fact, concentrating on what strikes us as sufficiently interesting, 'our explanations place far too much emphasis on what actually happened relative to what might have happened but didn't' (*ibid*). The result is that:

³⁰¹ Many examples are provided in the three case study chapters.

[...] what appears to us to be causal explanations are in fact just stories — descriptions of what happened that tell us very little, if anything about the mechanisms at work.

In view of the impossibility of knowing and evaluating all of the contingent factors in play that impact on the contentious political issues championed by TANs, this thesis has taken the ‘effectiveness’ of TANs to be assessed based on evidence of whether they have been successful in achieving *their* preferred outcomes in quest of their stated goals.

International policy-making is a different matter. From the perspective of the states of the international system that are called upon to formulate global policy, the policy options available to them are complex and far from the clear-cut demands of TANs, which Forsythe found are often considered by many foreign policy professionals to be moralistic, rigid, utopian or naïve (2012: 248-249). Regarding foreign policy-making as ‘the management of inherent contradictions’, Hoffmann (1977) declared that foreign policy officials were challenged to manage the contradictions inherent in the effort to blend security, economic, ecological and human rights concerns into one overall policy. The problem was not to eliminate these contradictions, Hoffmann opined, but to ‘think them through’, as every foreign policy was confronted with a ‘formidable variety of issues’. Moreover, ‘no government is in full control of its own agenda. Other nations intervene, and accidents or crises occur’.

One useful device in examining TANs has been to compare and contrast them to their civil society rivals in terms of policy-influencing success: *i.e.* the increasing and ever more prominent global think tanks. Commenting on transnational think tanks, Stone (2004:13) observes that institutional procedures entail that the international system responds better to the well-organised and knowledgeable rather than to ‘disorganized, poorly-financed, unskilled pressure groups’. Willetts also endorses this point (2011:62), stating that, in the context of the UN:

The most important variables determining the rights of NGOs are not the formal rules, but the status, the expertise, the communications skills, and the trust established in personal relationships between NGO representatives and government delegates.

Indeed, Stone claims, the 1999 UN meeting on think tanks identified a role for think tanks to act as a 'quality check system', vetting NGOs and their worthiness for interaction with the UN — a decision that, I suggest, gives some indication of attitudes within the UN regarding the relative merits of think tanks vis-à-vis TANs.

The difficulties of engaging TANs in collaborative relationships with international organisations and states was also observed by McGann and Sabatini in their research into global think tanks, policy networks and governance (2011:69-70). Noting that '[A]bove all, the primary objective of a transnational advocacy network is to raise global consciousness' they found:

[...] advocacy networks often phrase their mission in terms of a superior moral argument, thereby rendering most opposition ineffective. However transnational advocacy networks are generally not well integrated into policymaking and tend to operate more like "outsider groups."

These negative assessments are not intended to deny, or obscure, the achievements that have been credited to the efforts of TANs. But they are intended to highlight the need for more critical approaches to the typically exaggerated efficacy claims of many TANs. This need for greater balance is crucial given that claims for the effectiveness of TAN strategies and tactics predominantly come from TANs themselves and are sometimes relayed and disseminated widely by the mass media.

Reflecting the perspective of UN counterparts inside the machinery of global policy making, the UN guide to consultative status for NGOs uses comparatively restrained terminology in covering the contribution of NGOs, at the international level, in a single sentence (UN-ECOSOC, 2011c), to wit:

NGOs contribute to a number of activities including information dissemination, awareness raising, development education, policy advocacy, joint operational projects, participation in intergovernmental processes and in the contribution of services and technical expertise.

Commenting on TAN agency and the bargaining process that takes place in policy negotiation, Risse (2000), points out that rhetorical action as a tool to reach one's goals can only be effective if the other side 'listens and remains open to

persuasion'. This is a factor that, I consider, may well be ruled out in situations where the TAN tactics of confrontation and 'shaming' have already been deployed. Thus, I found additional support for my Hypothesis #3³⁰² in the important insights expressed by Pasquino (2008:28-29) and Albertazzi and McDonnell *et al* (2008) regarding populist political movements. There were clear indications of populist political messages in the strategic communications of some TANs (including two of the case study TANs). Analysing the negative impact that populism exerts on democratic frameworks, Pasquino asserts (*ibid*):

Hostility prevents collaboration and accommodation and maintains a situation of conflict which is not conducive to an accepted democratic outcome.

Florini and Simmons (2000:4) assert that while 'the world badly needs *someone* to act as the 'global conscience' they question whether transnational civil society can, and should, fill the gap between the supply of, and the need for, problem solving. An overriding problem, they claim, is the paucity of analysis of TANs linking civil society organisations across territorial boundaries, comparisons of their strengths and weaknesses, or studies examining more than one isolated country case at a time. They question:

[...] whether, and under what conditions, it is desirable for transnational civil society to play a significant part in making the decisions that shape the future for all of us.

Multitudes and 'white noise'

The multitude of 'voices' competing to be heard troubles some observers of the emergence of TANs — as exemplified by the 'white noise' analogy used by Keohane and Nye to describe the cacophony of competing protest voices (1988:89). Lamenting the difficulties TANs now face in finding novel ways of capturing attention for their political causes, a former head of Friends of the Earth UK observed more recently that: 'The media is saturated with protest' (Secrett, 2011a). As a possible restorative, he urged fragmented groups to pool their resources and to 'stop working in parallel, and join with other causes —

³⁰² Hypothesis #3 concerns the barriers that I consider some TANs encounter as a consequence of their adversarial strategies.

development, human rights, poverty, public health, democracy, community well-being — united under one banner: ‘For people, for the planet’ (Secrett, 2011b).

However, this advice appears to miss the point that while a *prima facie* case can be made for the amalgamation of NGOs/TANs to achieve greater political power focused on their commonly desired aims, there are generally worlds of differences between all of the following: their ideological underpinnings³⁰³; supporter demographics and sensitivities; relative statures and reputations; strategic practices; organisational cultures, memories and key personalities; geographical reach and influence; complex micropolitics³⁰⁴ and rivalries; track records of achievement; capabilities; resources provision and donor market attractors. Thus, this thesis argues that while in theory TANs, as clusters, ought to get along — such as all those concerned with human rights issues, or the environment, for example — it appears that, in practice, they rarely do: the similarities being sufficient to identify the political cause typology but insufficient to explain an organisation’s, or cluster’s, fitness and inter-relationships within its environment.

6.6.4 Impacts of funding on TAN goal achievement

The argument turns now to the propositions made in my H_5 ³⁰⁵, which posits that the funding models adopted by TANs may have a determinative effect on their advocacy strategies. I argue, using the case studies as evidence, that these choices, in turn, have a determinative effect on each TAN’s place and function in the international system and on its effectiveness in achieving its aims in the international arena. Observations supporting this premise have also been made by many others (*e.g.* Howell, 2013; Barakso, 2010:157-158; Cooley and Ron, 2010:205; Young, 2010:53; Bob, 2010:134-135; Lecy, Mitchell and Schmitz, 2010:235; McGann and Sabatini, 2011:69-70).

Without disputing the normative motivations of Greenpeace, Oxfam or Human Rights Watch, or other TANs, an uncritical focus on what advocacy organisations reveal about themselves publicly does not adequately reflect the organisational

³⁰³ See Buzan, 2004: 1; 6-10; Brown and Ainley, 2005:40-59.

³⁰⁴ As identified by Fisher, 1997:455.

³⁰⁵ H_5 : *The funding models TANs adopt have a determinative effect on their advocacy strategies.*

insecurity, competitive pressures, institutional rivalries, and fiscal uncertainty that characterise the transnational sector (Cooley and Ron, 2002:5-6; Weiss, 2013:113). Therefore, in order to gain a clearer picture of the financial reality of the environment in which TANs operate, it is useful to de-centre the ideological rhetoric and stated goals for a moment, as advised by Meadows (2009:13-14) and ask: What is the primary purpose of TANs in their competitive market? Political theorists might conceivably respond that it is the quest for self-determination and emancipation; political normative theorists might counter that it is the pursuit of social justice for self and the championing of social justice for others (*vide* Chapters 1-2). On the other hand, organisational, business, communications and marketing theorists would argue that the primary purpose of all ventures and all organisations, is the imperative to first ensure their own survival by persuading others to provide the resources needed to pursue the secondary, ideological, goals³⁰⁶. Indeed, Weiss observes in regard to humanitarian INGOs (*ibid*): 'Survival is a minimum goal; prosperity is the real objective'.

Whilst it would be charitable to assume that these imperatives are pursued concurrently and with equal vigour, recent studies indicate that many TANs are highly aware that their survival comes first: that they operate in a crowded and competitive environment where the rules of the game are based on market rules and their relationships with their donor publics are complex and unstable, with target audiences largely too uninterested and ill-informed for meaningful engagement beyond the making of (often impulsive) micro-donations (Polis Report, 2012:8-9; Lecy *et al*, 2010:229, Cooley and Ron, 2002; 2012:205-7; Ron, Ramos and Rodgers, 2005; Darnton and Kirk, 2011:6; Weiss, 2012:*xii*).

Contra the majority of early studies³⁰⁷ in the field of International Relations that viewed TANs as altruistic actors seeking to advance universally accepted principles, or norms³⁰⁸, some of the more recent scholarship argues that these transnational NGOs are better understood as interest-driven actors motivated

³⁰⁶ This view is shared by Weiss, Slim, *et al* (Weiss, 2013:*xii*).

³⁰⁷ See, for example, Keck and Sikkink, 1998:35.

³⁰⁸ Some studies have advanced an argument that organised groups emerge in response to shared grievances rather than shared norms (Prakash and Gugerty, 2010:2). However, this debate does not alter the argument being made here that survival of the collective entity in an increasingly challenging environment is the paramount concern of those seeking to project and sustain an organised political advocacy 'voice'.

primarily by the imperative of organisational survival in a competitive environment (Lecy *et al*, 2010:229, 234-36; Ron, Ramos and Rodgers, 2005; Cooley and Ron, 2002; Weiss, 2013). Putting this in blunt terms, Lecy *et al* (*ibid*: 236), argue that the growth of the transnational NGO sector should be interpreted not as a sign of the growing strength of global norms — and proof of an emerging global civil society³⁰⁹ — but as ‘a free-market scramble of self-interested TNGOs³¹⁰ vying for attention in an economic environment of limited donor funds’.

Some observers of TANs argue that today ‘the corporatization of activism is deepening and accelerating across all causes and cultures’ (Dauvergne and LeBaron, 2014:1; Polman, 2010; Weiss, *ibid*). Activist organisations, they claim, have ‘increasingly come to look, think and act like corporations’. Moreover, this trend is seen as speeding along a two-way street, with businesses (a) seeking out advocacy organisations for legitimacy and marketing opportunities and (b) activists courting companies for funds and partnerships. Whilst conceding that travelling this route can ‘enhance the influence of advocacy groups *within*³¹¹ ruling political and economic institutions’, providing them with access to the corridors of power and even gaining them seats on corporate boards and at international negotiating tables, Dauvergne and LeBaron (*ibid*) consider principled activists must pay a ‘big sacrifice’ by leaving their radical credentials at the door and accepting that they must work within the confines of global capitalism and forsake any thoughts of transforming the world order. Because of these costly trade-offs, which brought into question the independence of NGOs due to their reliance on their funding sources, Howell has queried³¹²: ‘Are NGOs fit for the purpose of advocacy and campaigning?’ (2013). Similarly, Dauvergne and LeBaron observed that (*ibid*):

One consequence for world politics is that activism is now less ‘radical’ than it was forty or fifty years ago, at least in terms of systemic and far-reaching change.

Nevertheless, they admit (*ibid*):

³⁰⁹ This debate is discussed in Chapter 2.

³¹⁰ Lecy *et al* favour the term ‘Transnational Non-Governmental Organization’ (TNGO).

³¹¹ Emphasis as in original.

³¹² Professor Howell’s comments are published in an op-ed he wrote for *The Guardian* (UK), to coincide with the opening of the 2013 World Social Forum.

[...] compared to those outside of the establishment, activists on the inside are more likely to be able to shape corporate governance or prod a policy reform.

Overall, this study noticed a pronounced trend for scholars and the media to take a more critical view of the operations of TANs than in the past, particularly highly visible, attention-seeking organisations — such as Greenpeace and Oxfam — that source large amounts of their funding from members of the public. Although it is early days yet in terms of the worldwide adaptation of INGOs to new communications technologies, this increasing trend might suggest that the radical transparency of social media may not be advantageous to large numbers of TANs. Indeed, Polman says of humanitarian aid agencies in crisis situations (Polman, 2010): ‘Aid organizations are businesses dressed up like Mother Teresa, but that’s not how reporters see them’.

6.7 Summary

This chapter pointed out that a significant number of political sociologists consider TANs to be politically important (thereby supporting my H₁)³¹³, increasing rapidly in number and distinctively different, characteristically rejecting of the international governance order (H₂, H₃)³¹⁴. But, there remains much confusion and gaps in the literature regarding the essential nature of those differences and how to approach and analyse them. An advocacy-oriented referent model was presented as a practical step towards addressing this lacuna (H₁). Communications theoretical lenses were presented to assess some of the conventional wisdoms with a range of phronetic wisdoms³¹⁵ regarding TAN activity; and, thus, aid understanding of the advocacy strategies that contemporary, ICT-enabled, TANs are increasingly employing in pursuit of their goals (H₂, H₃). A discussion was opened regarding the competencies and consequences of those strategic choices on both international stakeholders and heterogeneous worldwide audiences. The complex, multi-dimensional and analytically multi-level international landscape, in which UN-consultant TANs operate, was described (H₄). Support was presented for

³¹³ H₁: *Contemporary TANs are an important NGO variant in international politics that have unprecedented properties and powers emerging from their advocacy communications, which are typically neglected in politics theorising.*

³¹⁴ H₂: *The international system is struggling to accommodate TANs and the elements of the international institutions have a distinctively troubled interface with modern TAN-type NGOs.*

H₃: *The adversarial advocacy strategies typically adopted by TANs constitute a barrier to them achieving their aims in the international policy-making environment.*

³¹⁵ Praxis-based.

H₅³¹⁶, which proposes that the funding models TANs adopt have a determinative effect on their advocacy strategies.

Having differentiated the properties of the TAN variant and the international fitness landscape in which they operate, (Chapters 4 and 5) I turn now to presenting three case studies involving activist organisations that exhibit these characteristics to varying degrees. This follows the analytical sequence set out in Chapter 3, which explained my prioritisation of a macro-sociological approach³¹⁷ to examining the already existing structural context of the international system *before* drilling down to seek validation of my observations at the micro-level of individual case studies. Thus, the investigation explores three on-going international system relationships from a range of 'bottom up' perspectives.

³¹⁶ H₄: *A complex realist approach has exemplary merit in approaching the subject area and primary research question of the thesis.*

³¹⁷ This is also in accordance with the morphogenetic approach expounded by Wight (2013:86,99), Archer, Propora, *et al* (2003).

7. Greenpeace International

*Say not the struggle nought availeth,
The labours and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been, things remain.*

Arthur Hugh Clough (1862)

7.1 Introduction

This chapter advances the thesis by examining the environmental advocacy organisation Greenpeace International (GI) as the first of the study's three case studies of TANs that operate at unit-level in the international system. In order to assess GI's place and function in the international arena it uses a combination of diachronic process tracing and complex realism to explore the organisation's development, the ever-changing features of its fitness landscape³¹⁸ and the processes and interactions in which it engages with other international actors (H₄). From this analysis, a number of propositions are made regarding GI's influence and effectiveness in achieving its desired outcomes during certain episodes in its history, and overall. The chapter further identifies the salient structures, conditions of possibility, properties and powers of GI's social ecosystem, which might have been causally implicated in events and their outcomes. Because of length constraints, this chapter represents a truncated version of the original research project.

By applying the multi-lensed methodology described in Chapter 3, the chapter supports the dissertation hypothesis that the adversarial advocacy strategy adopted by some TANs is a barrier to them achieving their aims in the

³¹⁸ 'Fitness landscape' is a term and concept frequently used by scholars working in complexity studies (*vide* Chapter 3, also Cudworth and Hobden, 2011: 68-69; Geyer and Pickering, 2011; Geyer and Rihani, 2012:143; Walby, 2007; Mitleton-Kelly, 2003; Kauffman, 2000:18-20).

international institutional system (H₃). In the case of GI we see a TAN that has been constitutionally and actively committed to an adversarial advocacy strategy for over 40 years and follow its development and effectiveness over this time.

While focusing on documented accounts of GI's advocacy activities, the research was predicated on an assumption that it was important to critique also the counterfactual aspects of GI's operations — *i.e.* what GI's advocacy function does not appear to do by comparison with other prominent TANs, such as Oxfam International and Human Rights Watch, which are examined in the following chapters. This dissertation argues that the popular research approach of focusing on the campaigns waged by NGOs, including TANs, and the reasons *they* give for their effectiveness, is reductionist and inhibiting, offering only a very partial view of the contexts and differentiated power relationships underlying events in international politics (Kotkin, 2009; Morazov, 2013:41-42)³¹⁹. Many scholars caution against taking the 'micro' choices of individuals at one level of analysis to fully explain the 'macro' phenomena of the social world at different levels of analysis (Archer, 1995:7; Wendt, 1991: 387; Wight, 2006:103; and Watts, 2011:61-67)³²⁰. Consequently, I argue, that when analysing the records of protest events and evaluating effectiveness, it is crucial to ask: What else was going on in the fitness landscape for Greenpeace at given moments in the past that, apart from the historical accounts provided by Greenpeace and mass media reports often influenced by these accounts, may have impacted its fortunes?

The chapter demonstrates also the explanatory advantages of using complex realist perspectives and communication theory, in addition to political science, to obtain a better intellectual grip on Greenpeace and its impacts (H₄). Moreover, where regularities with other TANs can be observed³²¹, the Greenpeace case helps to shed light on the elusive phenomenon of TANs as a distinct typology and their relative place, function and effectiveness in the contemporary international system (H₁, H₂, H₃). In particular, attention is drawn to those aspects of Greenpeace that show conformity with complex realist theorisation, which takes the 'international

³¹⁹ *Contra* Keck and Sikkink (1998:6-8), Kotkin (2009) argues that in focusing on political opposition from quarters that could be categorised as civil society, 'analysts too often leave out the other side across the table from the opposition (*ibid*: xiv)'.

³²⁰ This refers to the micro-macro problematique in sociology, or the problem of levels-of-analysis.

³²¹ This does not ignore the methodological principle that correlation does not imply causality but is intended to assist potentially fruitful further investigation.

system' to be a complex, open and adaptive system, made up of innumerable, intersecting, sub-system elements that influence, shape, or constrain each other³²². As a globe-spanning network of people and resources, Greenpeace is itself shown to be a complex evolving system, similarly composed of innumerable, intersecting, sub-system elements, co-evolving in a social 'ecosystem'³²³.

Complexity lenses were used on the Greenpeace data set in order to recognise and explain, *inter alia*, instantiations of each of the following key features of complex systems — emergence, sensitivity to initial conditions, resilience, path dependency and lock-in, co-evolution, the effects of negative and positive feedback loops, exploration of 'adjacent possible', opportunities, instability, unpredictability and unintended consequences³²⁴. In my analysis, all of these features were observed and their relevance to the political fortunes of Greenpeace is pointed out.

Chapter outline

The chapter and the following two are organised on a four-part structural framework. This is intended to aid comprehension and cross-chapter comparison of the large volume of case-based data that was collected by way of the process tracing methodology. This format provides the reader with information and evidence data on each organisation, divided under five rubrics: identity and aims; the socio-historical context and reasons why the organisation emerged when it did; its salient strategies over time (*i.e.* what happened); data collection and methodology; and the debated outcomes³²⁵ of its international impact. The 'outcomes' are presented not as concluded episodes with unequivocal results but as 'Outcomes-in-process and indicative macroscopic patterns', in accordance with morphogenetic approaches advised by Archer (2013:3-4) and Wight (2013: 86-93) *et al.* In keeping with process tracing analytical methods, this section maps the main theories and arguments on to the data set and discusses my corroborating evidence and results. To assist this analysis, the section is further organised into

³²² A persuasive case for this reasoning is presented by Cudworth and Hobden (2011:72-73).

³²³ See Mitleton-Kelly (2003), for a discussion of the richness that a complexity perspective lends to thinking about organisations.

³²⁴ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the significance of these features of complex systems, and also Geyer and Pickering (2011), Mitleton-Kelly (2003) and Walby (2007).

³²⁵ The discussion of 'outcomes' here is a presentation of competing ontological perspectives regarding events and situations that are essentially open-ended because of our complex systemic social world. It is for the reader to weigh whether a TAN achieved its preferred outcomes in a specific instance.

the three theoretical themes, which this thesis posits have the greatest potential to explain the conundrums posed by a particular TAN in its international relationships: (a) its political philosophy; (b) its advocacy function; and (c) its relationships with elements of the United Nations system.

The chapter concludes with a summary of the proof points tending to support the theories and hypotheses. In this way, it contributes to the comparative case study analysis of Chapters 7, 8 and 9, which supports the overall conclusions of the dissertation.

7.2 Identity and Aims

This section provides a basic introduction to GI and describes the salient aspects of its activities and reputation as discussed in the mainstream media and discourses. Through tracing the development of the organisation's mission, vision, values, aims, imperatives and principal commitments, we can observe also the strategic corporate, or brand, image that Greenpeace projects to the world and, by extension, deduce how the organisation desires to position itself in its environment, which includes the international political arena.

Arguably the world's most recognised and iconic³²⁶ TAN, GI has an establishment of 2.9 million audited donor-supporters³²⁷, 14,500 volunteers, over 2,500 permanent staff, and over 40 years' experience in capturing news headlines for its diverse political protests.

³²⁶ Urry (2003:58, citing also Szerszynski, 1997: 46) claims Greenpeace's brand identity has 'such an iconic status that it is a world-wide symbol of ecological virtue quite above and beyond the actual practical successes of the organization.' Calling Greenpeace a GIN (Globally Integrated Network), rather than a semantically similar TAN, Urry asserts that, like other global players, Greenpeace devotes much attention to developing and sustaining its brand identity throughout the world.

³²⁷ According to the latest information published in GI's Annual report for 2012 and on its Website at <http://www.greenpeace.org>. Empirical analysis of GI's annual reports (2005-12), revealed that this supporter figure has remained flat in recent years, never rising above 2.9 million. However, in the 2011 *Annual Report*, the Executive Director, Dr. Kumi Naidoo, commented that owing to GI's positive experiences with Web-based advocacy campaigns '*we have changed the way we count our supporters. We no longer refer to having 3 million "financial supporters", but instead talk of over 17 million people who have given us approval and agency to contact them and work with them on future campaigns. They are all to be considered Greenpeace supporters, partners and collaborators, and together we have become more effective and powerful*' (GI Annual Report, 2011:3). In the annual report for the following year (2012), this supporter figure was adjusted further upward to cover '*a growing supporter base of some 24 million: those who work for us, volunteer, donate, follow, like, and take online action*' (GI Annual Report, 2012: 4, 52).

From relatively under-resourced beginnings as a small and largely disorganised protest group in Vancouver in the early 1970s, Greenpeace is today headquartered in Amsterdam and has offices in 40 countries worldwide. Although Greenpeace emphasises its global reach and operations, it is predominantly a European organisation in its funding and supporter base. Germany, by far, provides both the largest number of donors and funding, followed at the top end of the scale by The Netherlands, the USA, Switzerland, the Nordic countries and the UK (*ibid*: 39). Its global organisational structure resembles the hierarchical, multi-national corporation model, with national and regional offices franchised to use the name 'Greenpeace'. This hierarchical management structure appears to enable a high level of central management control over the network and compliance with centrally-approved brand activities. It also is key to GI's business transactional model in which, I suggest, Greenpeace management and staff take the roles of both principal and agent and the organisation's endogenous supporter-partner-collaborator base is also, predominantly, its client.

7.2.1 'Creative confrontation' at the core of advocacy strategy, identity and aims

While in sectoral terms Greenpeace is an international NGO, GI strongly self-identifies in terms of its purposive, advocacy role, describing itself as 'an independent global campaigning organisation' that 'uses non-violent, creative confrontation to expose global environmental³²⁸ problems' and 'force the solutions which are essential to a green and peaceful future' (GI data, 2012a; GI Annual Report 2010). In GI's use of descriptors such as *campaigning*, *exposing*, *confronting* and *forcing*³²⁹, this thesis suggests that Greenpeace not only differentiates itself from NGOs that are merely interested in advocating issues: it makes advocacy strategy its primary identifier and function and, thereby, explicitly commits itself to an adversarial stance in its communications and tactics. Adding something of an anomaly to this mission plan, Greenpeace's objective is not, as might be expected, a

³²⁸ According to Shaw-Bond (2000), Greenpeace can no longer strictly call itself an environmental group as it is fighting as much against global trade and the multinationals. He gives the example of the destruction by Greenpeace activists of an experimental crop of GM maize near Norwich, UK, in the summer of 1999. In taking this action, Shaw-Bond contends, the protesters were effectively saying that they were rejecting GM crops irrespective of whether or not these had a detrimental effect on the environment. Political comments by GI's Executive Director, Dr. Kumi Naidoo, during the 2012 World Economic Forum at Davos are also reminiscent more of the anti-corporation/anti-globalisation lobby than of environmental protection campaigning (*vide* GI Naidoo, 2012a)

³²⁹ My emphasis.

communication goal³³⁰. Rather, it is 'to ensure the ability of the earth to nurture life in all its diversity' (*ibid*). Although there is no definitive algorithmic link³³¹ between this vague mission statement and the strategy and methods to achieve it, GI targets its campaign work at 'the greatest threats to the global environment'. Accordingly, Greenpeace has identified an increasing number of global threats³³², over the past four decades and its campaigns have grown both in number and scope (see Section 7.4). At the present time, Greenpeace has on-going campaigns in the areas of climate change, forests, oceans, ecological farming and food, toxic pollution, nuclear issues, and peace and disarmament. In the past few years, Greenpeace has identified climate change as the greatest environmental challenge yet faced by Mankind and 'the one that will define success or failure of our movement' (GI *The Guardian*, 2011d; Annual Report 2012:3).

GI's core values are accompanied by the direction that they be reflected in all Greenpeace campaigns and guide its work worldwide. These are: 'bearing witness, non-violence³³³, independence, having no permanent friends or foes, and promoting solutions'. This operating ethos was framed by Greenpeace's co-founders over 40 years ago, and the organisation reiterates prominently in its publicity materials that these tenets still drive its work today (GI data, 2012a). From a complex realism perspective, the path dependency implications of these initial commandments will be shown throughout the chapter to have had a profound and ongoing influence on (a) the type of organisation that Greenpeace has become; (b) on its external relationships; and (c) its effectiveness in achieving its corporate aims³³⁴.

³³⁰ Greenpeace strategies and prime goal run strangely counter to some of the basic tenets of modern public communications theory, which holds that communications strategies require objectives of a communications nature. If goals and strategies are not aligned, there is the likelihood that energies and resources will be concentrated on honing strategies, instead of achieving goals. Furthermore, public communications programme goals must not be unobtainable, otherwise an impression is created of always failing, even if superb work has been done (Palin, 1985:4). The role of metaphor and 'fuzzy promises' in global branding strategies is discussed in Chapter 6.

³³¹ Mass awareness does not ensure the Earth's ability to nurture all life.

³³² As listed on GI's Website at <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/about/>

³³³ Although Greenpeace robustly promotes the message that its tactics are non-violent, I aver that understandings and definitions of what constitutes 'violence' are relativistic rather than universal and absolute.

³³⁴ See Arthur (1989) for a discussion on the implications of locked-in practices and processes than may be difficult to change.

7.2.2 Identifying Greenpeace as a TAN

Is Greenpeace a TAN? This section examines the rationale for describing GI as a TAN. This thesis is premised on the assumption that TANs are conceptually different from other typologies of NGO in a number of distinctive ways (H₁). The ways in which GI exactly fits all eight criteria of the reference model designed for this thesis (*Figure 6.2*) are set out, as follows:

Criterion #1:

- ***Distinctive, highly-visual, transnational corporate identity***³³⁵

Indications: The distinctive Greenpeace corporate logo, shown below, is prominently displayed on all Greenpeace branded protest actions.



Figure 7.1 The distinctive Greenpeace logo (GI image, 2007)

A selection of publicity photographs is reproduced here from the GI Website to demonstrate the way GI typically amplifies its voice in its political communications strategies. The distinctive logo is unmistakable, as well as unmissable due to the enormity of the signage generally used to display it. It is posited that in these few images it is possible to find evidence that GI satisfies at least seven of the eight criteria in the TAN referent model³³⁶.

³³⁵ Although these criteria are not presented in any particular hierarchical order, it is difficult to conceive of an advocacy NGO achieving significant prominence with transnational audiences without the necessary condition of having a recognisable corporate identity.

³³⁶ The only criterion not specifically shown in these images is a 'demonstrable high degree of strategic social boundary mechanism construction', which would arguably necessitate the presence of an explicit partisan message of 'us-versus-them', rather than an implied one (such as might be achieved *via* audience cognitive association with a visual cue, sign, or symbol — *e.g.* potential alignment with those who take action to 'Save' aspects of the global commons, or protect polar bears, or prominently defy perceived abuses of power. Evidence that satisfies this requirement of the referent model is presented later.



Figure 7.2 Greenpeace and the environment share equal billing (GI image, 2012a)



Figure 7.3 Banner message: 'Save the Arctic! Free our activists!' (GI image, 2013a)



Figure 7.4 Greenpeace protest theatre has a distinctive brand identity. (GI image, 2013b)

Criterion #2:

- ***Demonstrable prioritising of self-promotion***

Indications: Greenpeace branding is foregrounded in all GI publicity outputs, as exemplified in the Arctic campaign publicity photograph (below), in which the Greenpeace name appears four times on a single publicity image. Another demonstration of this distinctive communications strategy can be seen in the frequent, prominent, portrayal of GI’s Executive Director, Dr. Kumi Naidoo, as an on-the-ground activist³³⁷. The publicity photo ‘GI photo, 2013a’ (see previous page), shows a Greenpeace protest banner that was unfurled across the venue for the UN climate conference COP19 in Warsaw in November 2013. The banner states ‘*Save the Arctic! Free our activists!*³³⁸’, arguably giving equal weight to both messages alongside the Greenpeace logo. A GI press release at the time prioritised the TAN’s message in its headline: ‘Warsaw iconic building is stage for call to free activists as COP19 fails to respond to climate emergency’ (see GI news, 2013f). Three further publicity releases that typify the political issues GI chooses to pursue may be seen on the GI Website, headlined: *Greenpeace International head boards*

³³⁷ Evidence of these numerous references is readily available from the Greenpeace International official Website.

³³⁸ This is a reference to the Greenpeace activists the ‘Arctic 30’, who were imprisoned in Russia at that time.

Gazprom Arctic oil platform; An open letter to the people of Russia; and A Letter to President Putin' (GI Naidoo, 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; 2012d; 2012e).



Figure 7.5 A single publicity image features the Greenpeace brand signage four times (GI image, 2012b)



Figure 7.6 CEO Kumi Naidoo (Centre) gives added news value to a 'media mindbomb' by scaling a Russian oilrig.

Criterion #3:

- ***Demonstrable prioritising of voice-amplification strategies in advocacy***
Indications: GI's commitment to campaign-orientation, bearing witness and 'media mindbombs'. The prioritisation of voice-amplification advocacy strategies is amply demonstrated by the wide range and enormous scale of the publicity outputs emanating from Greenpeace, as may be seen on the organisation's international HQ and national branch Websites.

Criterion #4:

- ***Highly media-savvy, with unremitting media relations activity***
Indications: Demonstrably large volume and professional quality of media releases posted on the GI and Greenpeace national Websites and on Greenpeace platforms on social media³³⁹. This includes up-to-the-minute breaking news (often transmitted from remote locations³⁴⁰), press releases, photographic images, videos, Webcams and podcasts, feature articles, interviews with newsmakers and background reports. GI's latest annual report declares a commitment to further exploring the frontiers of on-line activism and encouraging 'people power' via social media activity (GI Annual Report, 2012:40-41). Greenpeace also makes explicit statements concerning its media-savvy traditions and continuing commitment to a high level of media relations activity (see Hunter and Naidoo, 2011). The text credited to Hunter and Naidoo (2011), further demonstrates this point, being a revised edition of Robert Hunter's 1979 eye-witness account of the early days of Greenpeace (Hunter, 1979). The modernised, 2011 version of Hunter's book, re-issued under his name, was provided with a foreword by the current CEO and published by GI to mark its 40th Anniversary. This skilled communications tactic provides for Greenpeace to control the reiteration of a version of its narrative of which it approves, and the story arguably becomes re-energised, despite the fact that Robert Hunter died in 2005³⁴¹.

³³⁹ Such as Greenpeace sites on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Tumblr and Feedburner. In addition to Greenpeace's own Websites, these social media sites are all kept supplied with fresh news and publicity materials by Greenpeace communications staff.

³⁴⁰ For example, the real-time video transmission from the *Arctic Sunrise* during the September 2013 protest action to board a Gazprom oilrig in the Pechora Sea in the Russian Arctic (GI Naidoo, 2013b).

³⁴¹ According to the GI Website, Bob Hunter died of prostate cancer on 2 May 2005, aged 63. See Section 7.3.3.

Criterion #5:

- ***Demonstrable high degree of adoption of sophisticated public/political communications style and strategies***

Indications: The high quality of GI's communications outputs, reflecting advanced international public communications standards, and explicit statements concerning the importance and resources in its communications function. These statements can be found on the GI Website. Greenpeace includes 'embedded' freelance journalists on its missions and calls on a talent pool of 20 world-class freelance photographers (GI data, 2013; GI Quarterly, 2011; GI news, 2011c).

Criterion #6:

- ***Demonstrable high degree of adoption of advanced information and communication technologies***

Indications: The high speed, quality and global reach of GI's external communications outputs and explicit statements on GI official Website. The state-of-the-art communications equipment installed on the new oceangoing vessel *Rainbow Warrior III* is apposite (GP USA, 2012). From its inception, Greenpeace has adopted the cutting edge technology-of-the-day in its campaigning. In 1970, this included short wave radio, Zodiac speedboats, a radio direction finder and 35 mm film (Hunter and Naidoo, 2011). Today, it includes installed satellite communications technology aboard a fleet of oceangoing vessels, helicopters, high-performance speedboats, computers and advanced mobile communications equipment for recording and transmitting images, editorial content and audio-visual outputs³⁴².

Criterion #7:

- ***Demonstrable high degree of strategic social boundary mechanism construction***

Indications: In brand positioning terms it can be argued that GI's construction and brand 'ownership' of the evocative 'Warriors of the Rainbow' imagery constitutes a powerful social boundary mechanism. In this reading of Greenpeace's promotion of the legend as an advocacy tactic, audiences for Greenpeace messages are primed

³⁴² Demonstrated to me during a visit on board *Arctic Sunrise* in the UK, June 2013.

to identify with the virtuous deeds of a mystical tribe of proselytising eco-warriors (see Section 7.4.1), while at the same time mentally distancing themselves from the perversity and otherness of those who do not subscribe to its uncompromising ecological message. It can be argued also that when the Greenpeace CEO (Naidoo), calls on supporters to take urgent action against allegedly apathetic political leaders and those who do ecological harm, in order to save the planet ‘for our children and grandchildren’, he is conceptually ring-fencing a socially-responsible, pro-Greenpeace, world from a socially-irresponsible, sub-class of humanity (see GI Naidoo, 2012a; GI news, 2012b and GI Annual Report 2012, 2012:8).

Criterion #8:

- ***Demonstrable differentiation strategies within the NGO sector and within the typology of TANs***

Indications: As evidenced in the following section, Greenpeace has constructed a distinctive, brand identity that is typically regarded as ‘iconic’ in comparison to other NGOs, including other TANs. Although aspects of the Greenpeace protest model appear to have become commoditised over the years by other environmental and non-environmental groups³⁴³, complexity theory offers the analytical tools to explain why Greenpeace has apparently retained certain cumulative advantages as the first-adopter of an innovative model of political protest that was — as will be seen in the following section — specifically designed by its founders in the early 1970s, to capture public and mass media attention. Among the differentiators that are pointed out throughout this study, and that Greenpeace consistently highlights in its protest actions, are *inter alia*: its flagship *Rainbow Warrior III* and incomparably large fleet of oceangoing vessels; its professed adherence to non-violent tactics; its commitment to ‘speaking truth to power’³⁴⁴; its staging of audacious publicity stunts, and its particular transactional protest model in which multitudes of donor-supporters act as ‘principals’ in an exchange arrangement under which small bands of Greenpeace activists carry out acts of defiance and protest, as ‘agents’, acting with a mandate on their behalf³⁴⁵.

³⁴³ For example, the Greenpeace breakaway group, Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, and Friends of the Earth (Sea Shepherd, 2012); *The Times* (2013); Secrett (2011a).

³⁴⁴ GI annual Report, 2012:37; GI Naidoo, 2012d.

³⁴⁵ A recent example was the Arctic protest action in attempting to board a Russian oil rig, resulting in the arrest and detention of 30 Greenpeace activists (GI news, 2013d, 2013h; BBC Archive, 2013b, 2013c).

7.3 Socio-historical context

The Greenpeace narrative is the stuff of legend — an impression that has been undoubtedly reinforced by the fact that most accounts of the organisation's beginnings use the same leitmotifs and tend to rely on a finite stock of lore, recurring details and factoids³⁴⁶. The GI Website³⁴⁷ is a rich source of background data and, given GI's declared commitments to transparency and accountability³⁴⁸, this thesis takes it to be the authorised portrayal of Greenpeace's collective view of itself, even if the content is expressed in a contemporary, Web-friendly, narrative style that lends the 1970s and 80s an air of once-upon-a-time antiquity^{349, 350}.

7.3.1 *Pacifists, environmentalists and newsmakers*

Four³⁵¹ Canadians are now recognised by GI to have been prominent in guiding its first defiant steps. The four, each of whom has been provided with a cameo on the GI 'Founders' Webpage, were (according to their thumbnail bios): 'a relentless visionary and mystic storyteller' Bob Hunter; 'pragmatic, driven and famously ruthless' David McTaggart; and 'committed pacifists and lifelong activists' Dorothy

³⁴⁶ This point is noted not to disparage the historical accounts themselves, only the limitations of the information available and its frequent recasting in Greenpeace promotional materials, to the point where, I suggest, it becomes difficult to separate historical fact from legend. All of the four core founders of Greenpeace are now deceased (Hunter, McTaggart and the Stowes), and selected aspects of their lives have become reified. Complexity theorising problematises the effects of repetition occurring in complex open systems over time, highlighting the eventual corruption of intended pathways brought about by small, incremental, alterations in the repeated pattern (see also Kahneman, 2011:8). I suggest this is happening in the case of Greenpeace legends and founding tenets and that this has implications for the place, function and effectiveness of Greenpeace in the international system.

³⁴⁷ At <http://www.greenpeace.org/>

³⁴⁸ Apart from statements to this effect in its publicity materials, Greenpeace was one of the founder members of the INGO Accountability Charter (INGO Charter, 2012).

³⁴⁹ GI's Website showcases many pithy chunks of content that provide snapshots of the organisation's founding circumstances, founding fathers, and early victories. This content is reminiscent of the observations of social movement scholars concerning the role of heroes, myths and mysticism, emblems, symbols and 'empty signifiers' (Burgos, 2000:8-9) in constructing bonds with the past that provide a rationale for what the organisation is now and is intent on becoming. It is, therefore, important to bear in mind that the problem with stereotypes and icons is that they are incomplete, admitting factors that comply with a particular interpretation and omitting those that do not.

³⁵⁰ Cross-matching Greenpeace's narrative with other socio-historical accounts of the era, such as Turner, 2006 and Moore, 2013, provided additional individual perspectives as well as a necessary measure of substantiation. Obviously there are strategic gaps in the Greenpeace narrative, particularly in regard to political undercurrents, such as the combining of elements of the New Left and the New Communitarianism in the emerging youth counterculture in the U.S. (Turner, 2006:31-33). However, it is hardly fair to compare an individual organisation's Website with the content of academic texts.

³⁵¹ Greenpeace does not recognise other founder members who left the organisation and with whom it has issues, such as Dr. Patrick Moore (Moore, 2008; Moore, 2013) and Captain Paul Watson (Sea Shepherd, 2012, URL).

and Irving Stowe³⁵², who banded together in Vancouver, in 1970, as the Don't Make A Wave Committee (Hunter and Naidoo, 2011; Weyler, 2004 and 2012; Sea Shepherd, 2012:URL). Its sole objective was to stop a second U.S. nuclear weapons test at Amchitka Island in the Aleutians.

Described by GI as 'Quakers, pacifists, ecologists journalists and hippies' the group was credited with 'dreaming big, infectious dreams'. The links with newsmaking were particularly strong. Describing the group years later, one of the founders, Rex Wyler, is quoted as saying (Wyler, 2012):

In Greenpeace, we were all journalists. We understood how the media worked. We were all Marshall McLuhan devotees, and we had all these big ideas how we were going to use the media to change the way people thought about things, and we did. Part of the thing with using the media is that you've got to create stories. And we knew how stories worked. You've got to have characters and they've got to be doing stuff, it's got to be dramatic and visually interesting and all of that.

7.3.2 Civil protest movement of the 1960s

In keeping with their pacifist ideals, the group took a boat into the nuclear test zone in an act of passive protest³⁵³. Non-violent, citizen action strategies had been used during the 1960s by the U.S. civil rights, women's rights and peace movements and were being widely viewed in the North American context as effective, novel and headline-grabbing³⁵⁴. The Don't Make a Wave Committee members hoped they could similarly create an anti-nuclear, environmental conservation movement and popularise it in mainstream public awareness, using the mass media as their strategic delivery instrument (GI news, 2004c; Hunter,

³⁵² These four were part of a larger, loose-knit, group of Canadian anti-war and anti-nuclear weapons dissidents, and environmental conservationists belonging to the British Columbia branch of the Sierra Club and members of the Society of Friends (Quakers). Established in 1892, the Sierra Club claims to be the largest and most influential grassroots, environmental organisation in the U.S.A. (Sierra Club, 2012:URL).

³⁵³ The idea of sailing a boat into a nuclear weapons testing zone was not new, having been originally tried in 1958 by an American ex-Navy officer, Albert Bigelow, in a protest against U.S. nuclear testing in the Pacific (Bigelow, 2011/1959; Wittner, 1997:55). According to Hunter and Weyler, Bigelow's campaign was the inspiration for the group's decision to adopt the same tactic (Weyler, 2004:65-66; Hunter, 2005:18; Hunter and Naidoo, 2011).

³⁵⁴ In addition to the descriptive accounts on the Greenpeace International Website, see also Turner, 2006; Weyler, 2004 and 2012; GI Naidoo, 2011; and *The Guardian* 2011b, for substantiation.

1979; Hunter and Naidoo, 2011; Wyley, *ibid*). They had no intention of starting an international organisation (GI Naidoo, 2011).

The provenance of the Committee's name change to the distinctive 'Greenpeace' is also linked to this formative period and to countercultural currents in the prevailing social and political moods³⁵⁵. To fund the voyage, a sell-out rock concert in Vancouver had attracted some 16,000 supporters — and *pro bono* performances by singers Joni Mitchell and James Taylor, amongst others — raising Greenpeace's public and media profile enormously, as well as some US\$23,000 in donations³⁵⁶. Although such fund-raising and media-attracting strategies are now standard tactics in the political advocacy toolbox, they were groundbreaking at the dawn of the 70s (GI data, 2007; Secrett, 2011a and 2011b). However, the original voyage was considered to be a disaster by those involved³⁵⁷ (GI data, 2007). The boat was intercepted and turned away by the U.S. Navy well short of the target area; there was bitter in-fighting from the outset among the heterogeneous activists on board; and the nuclear test went ahead as scheduled. However, a sea change in political advocacy had occurred that, according to GI, had changed the face of protest, and perceptions of protest, irrevocably³⁵⁸. Public and media interest had been ignited about the group of activists who, in a modern-day David and Goliath scenario, had challenged one of the greatest military forces on Earth. Greenpeace now counts the campaign amongst its victories, recalling how, after the voyage, the remaining nuclear tests were cancelled and five months later the entire Amchitka nuclear test programme was halted and the island subsequently turned into a bird sanctuary³⁵⁹.

³⁵⁵ Greenpeace lore relates that, as the group members were leaving one of their preparatory meetings for the voyage, one of their number (Irving Stowe), raised two fingers in a 'peace' sign, to which another (ecologist, Bill Darnell), commented, 'make it a green peace' in keeping with the group's concern for the planet and opposition to nuclear arms. Others overheard and were impressed by this exchange and, shortly thereafter, the iconic Greenpeace name was born.

³⁵⁶ This protest rock concert to raise funds for the Amchitka voyage has been described as 'the biggest counter-culture event of the year' (GI data, 2007; see also Turner, 2006: 3-9; and *The Guardian*, 2011b).

³⁵⁷ This assessment of the initial outcome of the voyage is openly admitted on the Greenpeace International Website at <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/about/history/amchitka-hunter/>.

³⁵⁸ See also Wyley 2004 and 20012; also GI news, 2004c for first-person accounts by Rex Wyley, who was intimately involved in designing and carrying out these strategies.

³⁵⁹ This section recounts the historical context according to the Greenpeace narrative. It is not part of this thesis to examine whether, or not, it represents either reality or a *post hoc* interpretation of the causes of the cancellation of the Amchitka nuclear testing programme.

7.3.3 'Media mindbombs'

Although the enormous scale of the public and media response was unpredicted and apparently took both the activists and observers by surprise, the newsworthiness of the story was not lost on the cadre of journalists among them, particularly the late Bob Hunter, who shaped the protest model that has come to be known as a 'Greenpeace action' using what he termed 'media mindbombs'. GI describes this tactic as 'consciousness-changing sounds and images that would blast across the world in the guise of news' (GI data, 2008). In a complexity theorisation of these events, I suggest that Hunter was able to recognise some of the pivotal properties and powers of the fitness landscape for the proposed anti-nuclear enterprise.

7.3.4 Taking a left turn after the Cold War

A further significant development was, arguably, brought about by the ending of the Cold War, which led to the peace movement being largely disbanded and many of its members gravitating to the environmental movement (Moore, 2013: Ch.1; *The Independent*, 2014). Describing his experiences at the core of Greenpeace at this time, one of the organisation's co-founders, the ecologist and author Patrick Moore, claims³⁶⁰ he was compelled to leave after 15 years in the top committee when increasingly extremist 'neo-Marxist, far-left agendas' began to emerge and the group adopted policies that he could not accept from a scientific perspective:

To a considerable extent the environmental movement was hijacked by political and social activists who learned to use green language to cloak agendas that had more to do with anticapitalism and antiglobalization than with science or ecology [...]. There was a lot of power in our movement and they saw how it could be turned to serve their agendas of revolutionary change and class struggle.

Today, the identification of 'green' campaigning with left-wing politics endures (Brand, 2009:213-214; Helm, 2012:64). As Brand observes (*ibid*):

Worldwide, the political stereotype these days is that Green equals left, left equals Green, and right equals anti-Green³⁶¹ [...] Becoming politically narrow

³⁶⁰ A candid account of this period is contained in Dr. Moore's recent text, *Confessions of a Greenpeace Dropout: The Making of a Sensible Environmentalist* (Moore, 2013).

³⁶¹ Brand's theorising is taken here to be the personal perspective of a veteran environmentalist and activist and does not assume any deeper political inferences as to whether, or not, the territorialised

limits Greens' thinking and marginalizes their effectiveness, because whatever they say is automatically dismissed by anyone who has doubts about liberals.

Although this study focuses principally on Greenpeace's relationships with international actors, we have seen here how changing conditions in political, economic and cultural structures, *inter alia*, led to the perturbations caused by autonomous new agents joining the Greenpeace system and Moore, for one, leaving it; and all parties availing of 'adjacent possible' opportunities (Kauffman, 2000:22 and Mitleton-Kelly, 2003:15).

7.4 Milestones and salient strategies

The following salient milestones and strategies are considered to have shaped (a) not only the outcomes of its activism; but (b) the very nature of Greenpeace itself; (c) the mainstream media face of the environmental movement; and (d) the advocacy strategies of countless sociopolitical protest groups worldwide.

7.4.1 Warriors of the Rainbow

The *Rainbow Warrior* legacy has helped to prolong, promote and widely disseminate a cross-cultural cognitive link between the Greenpeace corporate identity — the trademark 'Greenpeace action' — and controversial, and therefore newsworthy, acts of protest. Greenpeace co-founder, Rex Weyler claims they set out 'to create an environmental movement' and had no plans to start an organisation to spearhead the project, let alone an international one. He emphasised also that: 'We weren't trying to make Greenpeace famous but to make the environment famous' (Weyler, 2004 and 2012; GI Naidoo, 2011). Nevertheless, Greenpeace *has* made itself famous and can be seen to assiduously cultivate a status as 'the world's most visible environmental organisation' (GI data, 2007). The powerful imagery and feisty tactics the Greenpeace founders employed in their advocacy strategies evidently touched human emotions in the 1970s, and in the decades since then, and have shaped the formation and development of a novel organisational model for political issue-promotion and protest. This thesis argues that a key cross-cultural, motivational, meme underlying the popularity and

Left-Right axis of political orientation is actually transferable, or meaningful, as an analytical framework for understanding global politics, as questioned by Chandler (2009:537).

magnetism of the Greenpeace brand image is the constant reinforcement of an association with the empathetic, apocalyptic³⁶² legend of the Rainbow Warriors³⁶³.

In 1978, the organisation's first dedicated vessel was purchased, secondhand, and renamed *Rainbow Warrior* (GI data, 2012: FAQs): the first in GI's distinctive, global-roaming, 'eco-navy', which remains deployed in the forefront of Greenpeace campaigning (Weyler, 2004; GI news, 2004c; GI news, 2009d). Weyler, has been candid in pointing out the value of mythmaking in framing Greenpeace stories (GI News, 2004c):

By 1972, I had read everything published by media guru Marshall McLuhan, and his idea that "we think and live mythically" influenced our tactics. Although we employed good science, we understood that the facts don't always win the public mind.

[...] The Internet is a tremendous tool, like the printing press and television before it, that democratizes knowledge and culture-making. Some of the cyber-activist messages I witness on the Internet today are brilliant, but the fundamentals of good storytelling haven't changed much in two thousand years. We still have to find those mythical images that touch the human emotions.

7.4.2 *Rainbow Warrior sinking and aftermath*

The single, albeit tragic, event that attracted the most media coverage and international attention in Greenpeace history, was the 1985 mining and sinking of the first *Rainbow Warrior* by French secret service agents, and the death of a Portuguese³⁶⁴ freelance photographer crewmember (UN Sec-Gen Report, 1986; GI Archive, 2012; GI data, 2012b; GP USA data, 2005a; BBC Archive, 2005). The BBC

³⁶² Apocalypticism, pairing Mankind's cataclysmic annihilation with promised salvation for the faithful and retribution for one's persecutors, is a recognisable theme in many of the world's historical religions and civilisations (Bennett, 2001:10-11). The projection of an imperative mission to regain an objective common good that has been lost (a type of Holy Grail), exactly fits the description of 'empty signifiers' noted among social movements by Burgos (2000: 8-9). Lomborg (2001:12-13) asserts that the communication of environmental knowledge taps deeply into our doomsday beliefs. He cites Greenpeace as one of the organisations he considers to have been involved in some 'outstanding examples of environmental mythmaking' (*ibid*: 13).

³⁶³ The origins and accounts of this legend are contested. This version, promoted by Greenpeace, is attributed to Bob Hunter and purportedly underlies the decision to name a succession of Greenpeace protest vessels *Rainbow Warrior*. In this typically apocalyptic story, an old Indian woman relates how the Cree foresee a time when 'the white man's materialistic ways strip the earth of its resources. Just before it is too late the Great Spirit of the Indians will return to resurrect the braves and teach the white man reverence for the earth'. The legend states that these courageous people will become known as The Warriors of the Rainbow (GI data, 2012; GI news, 2011a, 2011b).

³⁶⁴ Descriptions of the photographer, Fernando Pereira, vary because he was both a Portuguese national and a citizen of The Netherlands (UN Sec-Gen Report, 1986; GP USA data, 2005; GI data, 2012).

claims it was this single event that ‘hurtled Greenpeace into instant global celebrity and ensured that Rainbow Warrior Mark II became an enduring icon of the environmental movement’ (BBC Archive, *ibid*). The mining of the ship, in Auckland Harbour, was a covert operation by French services agents acting under official orders³⁶⁵ to sabotage the Greenpeace campaign to stop nuclear weapons testing on Pacific islands (UN Sec-Gen Report, *ibid*; GI data, 2012b; *The Times*, 2005). The New Zealand Prime Minister, David Lange, was to later describe the attack as ‘a sordid act of international state-backed terrorism’ (GI Archive 2012; King, 1986:202).

The ruling on the case by the UN (UN Sec-Gen Report, 1986) could arguably be interpreted as the product of an international institution that appears to be wholly focused on mediating the conflicting interests and sensibilities of two of its members and expresses a comparative lack of concern for the interests of the primary victims in the case: Greenpeace and its slain photographer. Indeed, a sense of the UN’s standpoint and relatively apathetic orientation towards Greenpeace could be interpreted in the UN’s naming of the ruling document — *viz.* ‘*Case concerning the difficulties between New Zealand and France arising from the Rainbow Warrior affair*’ (UN Sec-Gen Report, *ibid*). Whether the UN could, or should, have discharged its role differently is not at issue here. As explained in Chapter 4, the UN is a voluntary association of sovereign States and has no powers of coercion. Nevertheless, the ruling by the UN Secretary-General as arbitrator — which Greenpeace labels ‘a political deal’ (GI Archive, 2012) — appears in a humanitarian reading to have been of no consolation to Greenpeace whatsoever (UN Sec-Gen Report, 1986, Ruling 7: GP USA data, 2005b).

It can be deduced from Greenpeace Websites that institutional memories of the attack on the *Rainbow Warrior* and the unsatisfactory aftermath process evidently still rankle with Greenpeace (GI Archive, 2012; GI data, 2012a, 2012b; GP USA data, 2005, 2005d). Throughout the years, the entire issue of apologies, appropriate compensation and punishments — and the involvement of the UN in arbitrating the matter — has evidently been, from the Greenpeace perspective,

³⁶⁵ Twenty years after the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior*, the former head of the French intelligence service disclosed previously classified details of the mission and admitted that it had been personally authorised by the then President of France, François Mitterand (*The Times*, 2005).

unsatisfactory (GP USA data, 2010; 2005b). On the 25th anniversary of the sinking, Greenpeace concluded (*ibid*, 2005b): ‘The guilty have not been punished and justice has not been served’.

Consequently, this section builds on my theorisation that, for an organisation that looks to its past for inspiration and has a core commitment to ensuring its backstory is not forgotten (GI data, 2012a), the effect of Internet-enabled institutional memory reinforcement, such as this, should not be discounted in assessing the roots and depth of contemporary, distrustful, attitudes within Greenpeace towards the UN. Thus, GI’s editorial framing of accounts of the *Rainbow Warrior* attack live on, on its Website, as a reminder of the failure of international action — and of the UN, specifically — in responding to Greenpeace’s loudly-voiced interests and concerns. As time passed, Greenpeace reframed the *Rainbow Warrior* disaster as being one of its triumphs (GP USA, 2005c).

7.4.3 Working with the anti-nuclear international lobby

The anti-nuclear confrontations between Greenpeace and France did not end with the dramatic events of the mid-’80s. The French government was to maintain an unyielding stance to all opposition to its nuclear testing programme in the next decade, up to January 1996, when the tests were finally halted amid an increasing international outcry (GI Archive, 1996; CNN, 1995a, 1995b). Many world leaders expressed their condemnation of France’s resistance to the prevailing international nuclear-test-ban mood, which in November 1995 had seen 95 countries at a UN disarmament committee meeting voting in favor of a resolution to ban nuclear testing immediately (CNN, 1995b)³⁶⁶. Giving an indication of the extent and fervour of international indignation just one month before the French cessation of testing, the South Pacific’s strongest critic of the tests, the then New Zealand Prime Minister (Bolger), said (CNN, 1995a):

It's really quite incredible that France didn't listen to not only the South Pacific, listen to the Commonwealth leaders, listen to the United Nations. The voice of the world says no to nuclear testing, and you are left wondering what part of 'no' the French government doesn't understand.

These were comparatively heady days for Greenpeace, with headline-grabbing confrontations taking place in the South Pacific between Greenpeace vessels and

³⁶⁶ France halted the tests on 29 January 1986, some two months after this meeting.

the French navy, and GI's anti-nuclear activists, world leaders, international institutions and widespread public opinion all seemingly fighting on the same side. This thesis argues, however, that given the increase in scientific knowledge regarding the dangers of nuclear war and radioactive fallout from nuclear weapons testing, and the intensity of international sentiment³⁶⁷, the possibility that conventional power relations and diplomacy had prime instrumentality in resolving the standoff should not be discounted, or subordinated to assertions by Greenpeace that France's cessation of testing was due to the more visible accounts of battles with Greenpeace anti-nuclear activists being played out in the international mass media (GI news, 2009c).

7.4.4 Brent Spar campaign

On a different battlefield in 1995, Greenpeace was in international headlines for its controversial conduct to prevent Shell UK from dumping its unwanted Brent Spar oil platform into the North Sea (GI data, 2011; Bennie, 1998). Following the British Government's approval of plans for a deep-sea disposal of the huge oil facility, Greenpeace began a media-intensive advocacy campaign, raising the issue from the domestic to the international political arena. This campaign included media-attracting, protest spectacles, such as sending teams of activists to seize and occupy the condemned oil installation. After pressure from its sister companies in Europe (where public green-consumer sentiment was more overt than in the UK), Shell UK was forced to capitulate (Bennie, *ibid*). Throughout the affair, the Greenpeace key message was that if the disposal went ahead it would both damage the environment and send the wrong signal to industry that this was an acceptable form of waste disposal (*ibid*).

Despite the fact that Greenpeace quickly seized the moral high ground and landscaped it with the type of symbolic, moral messages that have been a common theme throughout its campaigning history (*ibid*), this study noted that from all accounts, none of the warring parties finally emerged as an unequivocal winner

³⁶⁷ Nuclear scientists are credited with mounting the first substantial challenge to the nuclear threats emanating from East-West tensions during the Cold War (Willets, 2011:160-61). In particular, the conclusions of some of the world's most eminent scientists, brought together annually under the auspices of the Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs (founded in 1957), were discreetly passed on to decision-makers in both East and West, to promote peace. The Pugwash conference was subsequently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995 (*ibid*).

from this famous clash of worldviews concerning the environmental commons. According to Bennie, the notable features of the episode include: (i) The campaign involved a moral stand 'against the double-headed monster' of business and government and it appealed to the emotions of the general public; (ii) Greenpeace took the issue to an international audience, via the international mass media appetite for its bold confrontation of powerful institutions and actors³⁶⁸; (iii) It had a dramatic and enduring effect in reversing business attitudes towards the environment³⁶⁹; and (iv) Greenpeace demonstrated that the volatility of reputational capital applies equally to NGOs, as well as to big business and politicians.

Widely perceived as more trustworthy³⁷⁰ than its powerful rivals, Greenpeace began its campaign with a distinct reputational advantage. It had established a positive image in the media and, as a result of uncritical media coverage early on, was the most important informational source during the 'definitional period' of media interest. However, after widely-acknowledged serious errors and evidence of deceit in its timing and use of 'scientific' data to support its claims, there was a marked decline in respect for the 'Greenpeace expert' and the organisation suffered enormous reputational loss (Risse, 2012:291; Van Rooy 2004:84; Forini, 2000:231). After the campaign, the media reassessed their willingness to be 'led by the nose' and as a result they are now held to be more cautious about supporting Greenpeace claims (Risse, *ibid*). Van Rooy (*ibid*) posits that 'probably the most serious accusations of misreported evidence, in recent years, have been directed at environmentalists'³⁷¹, and of these 'the most infamous case is widely regarded to have been that of the Greenpeace 1995 campaign'. Greenpeace eventually

³⁶⁸ Although Greenpeace had been successful in appealing to public sympathy in Britain, it had not resulted in dramatically high levels of public protest at the domestic level (Bennie, 1998).

³⁶⁹ Bennie (1998) considers the reversal in attitudes largely involved the business world acknowledging the unpredictability of public opinion and the potential for reputational damage and 'green consumer' retaliation.

³⁷⁰ See Risse, 2010:290-291 and also Rom, Ramos and Rodgers, 2005.

³⁷¹ In discussing his statistically-supported scientific findings that challenge the widespread conception that the Earth's ecosystem is collapsing and catastrophic consequences are imminent, Lomborg (2001:4,12), states that 'the public environmental debate has unfortunately been characterized by an unpleasant tendency towards rather rash treatment of the truth.' The constant repetition and often heard environmental exaggerations of what he calls 'The Litany' (the self-destructive, trashed planet scenario) has pervaded the debate 'so deeply and for so long that blatantly false claims can be made again and again, without any references, and yet still be believed' (*ibid*:12). See Kahneman's research in relation to 'availability bias' in which the frequency with which see instances of a risk, whether it is real or not, increases our assumptions of its dangers and importance (2011:138-140)

apologised publicly for, *inter alia*, exaggerating the potential pollution from any associated petroleum leak by a factor of 37, but the memory of this highly charged campaign endures (*ibid*).

Today, Greenpeace chronicles the Brent Spar campaign on the Victories Timeline on its Website³⁷², describing it as a ‘dramatic win’ for Greenpeace’s confrontational tactics and ‘consumer power’, with mention of wrong-headed opposition but not of GI’s ignominy or the highly controversial political, industrial and scientific nature of the issue (GI data, 2012; GI Archive, 1995; Bennie, *ibid*) — exemplifying quite openly, Shaw-Bond observes, ‘how scientific facts frequently play second fiddle to politics’ (Shaw-Bond, 2000).

7.4.5 Widening the range of campaign issues

Greenpeace also chronicles (GI data, 2012) among its victorious moments the campaigns against nuclear energy production, seal culling, whaling, over-fishing, deforestation, discharge and disposal of toxic substances, genetically modified crops and palm oil production. The list of campaigns in which Greenpeace claims sole instrumentality for achieving a conclusive victory shows an increasing diversity of issues and number of claimed successes, as well as a very noticeable shift from mainly targeting governments towards predominantly targeting major corporations, or global brands (Shaw-Bond, 2000), using a combination of social media networking, online petition generation, ‘faux tweets’, ‘faux press releases’ and protest street theatre aimed at mocking the brand image (GI Annual Report, 2012:40-41). Among the world’s biggest brands to have been the focus of its adverse publicity are: Unilever, Coca-Cola, McDonalds, Ford, Volkswagen, Nestlé, Duracell, Shell, Esso, Nike, Puma, Adidas, H&M, Zara, Levi’s, Sony Ericsson, Apple, Dell, Hewlett-Packard, Monsanto, Mattel, Xerox (GI data, 2012c; BBC Archive, 2012a; *L.A. Times*, 2011; GI Guide to Greener Electronics, 2011).

In the past decade, Greenpeace has responded to changing circumstances on a number of fronts, mainly by honing its strategies, doing more of the same with more and better resources and selecting new high-profile targets that guarantee headlines. The policies to prioritise climate change and scale up activities in the global South, discussed later, while signalling a marked refocusing of GI’s strategic

³⁷² Available at <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/about/history/Victories-timeline/>.

direction do not appear to have yet made any directly attributable impacts on the achievement of environmental goals³⁷³. Meanwhile, GI's tactical actions continue to follow its trademark repertoire involving small teams of risk-taking activists, giant-sized banners, mountaineering equipment and hardhats, humorous costumes, a fleet of ships, speedboats and aircraft, and state-of-the-art information communications technologies and media relations techniques. The latest *Rainbow Warrior*, launched in October 2011, is described as '[A] floating communications hub' (GP USA, 2012).

Maintaining a presence on social media networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Tumblr and Feedburner is further enabling Greenpeace to reach out to mass audiences through new channels³⁷⁴ (GI Annual Report, 2012:41; GI Quarterly, 2011; GI news, 2011c).

Both the Greenpeace co-founder Rex Weyler and the current Executive Director, Kumi Naidoo, have also emphasised the corporate strategic belief that self-mockery and 'humor goes a long way toward easing the public's mind and disarming the media's natural skepticism' (GI Naidoo, 2011; GI news, 2004c)³⁷⁵. Therefore, they both admit that GI uses a 'reverse psychology' advocacy strategy that holds that if organisations laugh at themselves the public tends to take them seriously, and *vice versa* (GI Naidoo, *ibid*). There is arguably an inverse relationship evolving between the seriousness of the increasingly complex campaign issues now being championed by Greenpeace and the amount of popularisable humour invested in its campaign strategies³⁷⁶.

³⁷³ Some critics, such as Stewart Brand claim GI's 'anti-science' agenda is, in reality, obstructing progress in developing countries. Brand is an influential American writer, environmentalist and noted critic of environmental groups such as Friends of the Earth and now Greenpeace, who, he claims, allow ideology to cloud their acceptance of scientific advances (Brand, 2009; *New Statesman*, 2010).

³⁷⁴ Greenpeace currently claims to have 24 million email or mobile subscribers, Facebook fans or Twitter followers.

³⁷⁵ This, I submit, shows a parallel with Habermas's recommendations for activists to use rhetorical techniques and perlocution (Habermas, 1989:133 and Section 6.5.2).

³⁷⁶ Two recent examples, in connection the with GI's Save the Arctic campaign and, by extension, the challenge of global warming, were publicity stunts involving what GI termed 'our rather hilarious hijack' of the Formula 1, German Grand Prix, awards ceremony (GI news, 2013c), and the Greenpeace UK construction of 'a giant people-powered polar bear', a 'super-puppet — the size of a double decker bus' that was built to be hauled through the streets of London in an advocacy tactical action described as 'part protest, part performance'. According to the Greenpeace UK publicity release, the artificial fur fabric of the enormous marionette 'carries the names of each and every member of the movement to save the Arctic' (GP UK news, 2013).

7.4.6 Re-orienting Greenpeace's geopolitical polarity

A recent policy shift is currently taking place under the direction of GI's South Africa-born Executive Director, Kumi Naidoo³⁷⁷. This involves Greenpeace acknowledging 'the growing importance of the Global South' by focusing resources on countries such as the so-called BRICS (GI Naidoo, 2012b; *The Guardian* (2011d)). It is too early to say what impact this stratagem will have on GI's place, function and effectiveness in the international system. However, projections of such a shift in the world's economic polarity have not eventuated and have been significantly eroded by recent data³⁷⁸ (IMF, 2013:41; Davos Global Economic Outlook 2014; Magnus, 2014).

7.5 Outcomes-in-process and indicative macroscopic patterns

7.5.1 Assessment of Greenpeace applying a Complex Realism analytical framework

In this section, I argue that when Greenpeace is viewed 'as if' it is a complex system the characteristics so far identified with complex adaptive systems can be seen to be present. This means that when assessing GI in light of the PRQ and hypotheses, weighting must be given to considering factors that result from its embeddedness in webs of complex systems and to knowledge of the behaviours of complex systems that provide alternative explanations for phenomena³⁷⁹. This study found instantiations of each of the following key features of complex systems in the Greenpeace data set: fitness landscapes, structural plurality and multi-dimensionality, emergence, co-evolution, sensitivity to initial conditions, path dependency and lock-in, the effects of negative and positive feedback loops, 'attractor' properties, exploration of 'adjacent possible' opportunities and unintended consequences. Due to space limitations, this listing of observed features of complex systems is indicative only and far from exhaustive of the range of possible lenses that can be fruitfully applied to this data. The following are some

³⁷⁷ Dr. Kumi Naidoo was appointed Executive Director in November 2009 (GI Naidoo, 2009; GI Naidoo, 2012b).

³⁷⁸ In recent years, the rapid economic growth seen in the BRICs has slowed dramatically, prompting forecasters to revise their earlier optimistic estimates. According to the International Monetary Fund, the economic growth rates in the BRICs have fallen much further than expected and the severity was unanticipated. Moreover, the potential for growth has also fallen (IMF, 2013:41).

³⁷⁹ Where the international system is conceptualised as an extraordinarily complex, biotic, adaptive system composed of interacting subsystem elements (see Chapter 3). For insights supporting this approach see also Geyer and Rihani (2010:114-115) and Cudworth and Hobden (2011:72-73).

of the more readily apparent complex system traits and the behavioural alignments I have identified.

❖ **Fitness landscape embeddedness**

Greenpeace can be seen to have emerged due, *inter alia*, to the presence and convergence of a fortuitous assemblage of geographical, cultural, socio-political, social bonding and interpersonal factors, in a specific place, at a specific time. Complexity insights tell us that this configuration would have been shaped by, and in response to, an assemblage of properties and powers in the social environment that enabled and constrained it — *i.e.* its particular fitness landscape.

Conditions that appear to have enabled this social configuration to emerge include: (i) the personal characteristics of the leaders of the dissident community in Vancouver (*e.g.* passionate and outspoken convictions about then current controversies: the menace of global annihilation, warfare and preserving the environment; media-savviness; and differentiating counter-cultural attitudes and behaviours to the mainstream North American socio-political climate; (ii) being based in an independent sovereign territory (Canada) whilst campaigning against the U.S. nuclear arms policy³⁸⁰; (iii) the nature and effects of the U.S. military conscription policy that had resulted in a large population of angry U.S. draft evaders in Canada; (iv) accessible knowledge of the anti-nuclear voyages in the 1950s; (v) memories of the confrontational civil protest movements in the U.S.A in the 1960s, including the prominent role played by the mass media; (vi) the popular reinforcement of the idea that questioning authority on environmental matters had become essential to all societies (GP USA data, 2005e); and (vii) advances in communications technologies and techniques that catalysed social interactions and increased the appetite and influence of the mass media industry.

Fitness landscape conditions that appear to have constrained the group's fitness in achieving early success include their naivety and conjecture in the areas of international relations and national security, and inability to accurately determine the magnitude of the complexity, nor properties of, the fitness landscape for the

³⁸⁰ Hunter also raises this point (2004:16), asserting that such an anti-government campaign could not have been launched by U.S. citizens in the U.S.

venture. This thesis argues that each of these factors still pertain to the international fitness landscape for Greenpeace and other TANs operating today. Wittner offers an historical perspective and valuable analysis of this environment (1997:462). In describing the once robust, globe-spanning, anti-nuclear weapons movements of the 1950s and 1960s³⁸¹, and the increasing complexity and consequent schisms that weakened them, Wittner asserts (*ibid*):

[...] many activists moved beyond emphasizing the dangers of the Bomb to developing systemic analyses. Proceeding down these lines they became the major reformers and social critics of their time. But their systemic critiques, although laying the groundwork for an attack on an array of other important problems, failed to contribute much to the campaign for nuclear disarmament. Quite the contrary, when it came to the nuclear menace, their systemic analyses often proved either futile or debilitating [...] In their desperate efforts to cope with the multiple crises of the 1960s, many activists had either lost sight of or failed to comprehend the driving force of the nuclear arms race — the pathology of the international system. And, inevitably, this misreading of the problem weakened their attempts to generate a solution.

I posit that by examining the contingent circumstances of the original campaign and subsequent advocacy campaigning, we can recognise not only the conditions of the fitness landscape for this particular protest model. There is evidence here also of underlying social structural influences, particularly in regard to political power disparity; adaptation; co-evolution; responsiveness to positive and negative feedback; unpredictability; unintended consequences; sensitivity to initial conditions and early-adopter advantages; and 'adjacent possible' opportunism.

Today, it is evident that Greenpeace is embedded in a multitude of socio-political landscapes, of different levels of complexity, in which its fitness to achieve its preferred outcomes is constantly challenged — and sometimes facilitated. It appears that this TAN is highly successful in its interactions at the comparatively lower levels of complexity that characterise its fitness landscapes for fundraising, ideological marketing, social network formation and maintenance, exposing global environmental problems, information dissemination, raising online petitions and campaigning against global commercial brands. Conversely, it seems less successful in the more hazardous international fitness landscapes for its

³⁸¹ Bigelow's voyage of the *Golden Rule*, and several other protest voyages that were inspired by his actions, belong to this time (Bigelow, 1959/2011; Wittner, 1997:55).

confrontational advocacy functions that aim to ‘force the solutions which are essential to a green and peaceful future’. Thus, I argue that a deep, complexity-focused analysis of Greenpeace’s international systemic fitness landscape can help us to advance plausible arguments regarding this TAN’s regularly expressed disappointments and admitted failures in that sphere of operations, and help to explain why the outcomes of Greenpeace’s acts can be so different from its intentions³⁸².

❖ **Structural plurality and multi-dimensionality**

Evidence of underlying social structural dimensions is interwoven throughout the Greenpeace narrative. Among the most salient are:

(i) National and international security structures involving military power³⁸³. Since its beginnings, the Greenpeace story has shown evidence of the effects of military power structures — generating enablements and constraints for GI, such as those linked to Cold War and nuclear armaments anxieties and, more recently, to Russia’s vigorous defence of its interests in the Arctic, including capturing at gunpoint and gaoling GI activists and impounding the *Arctic Sunrise* (GI news, 2014).

(ii) Economic structural realities: as exemplified by various national governments and prominent multi-national corporations in their conflictual relations with Greenpeace over such issues as nuclear energy; the Brent Spar incident; exploitation of Arctic oil; shale fracking and tar sands oil and gas extraction methods and oilspill regulation; whaling; deforestation; palm oil; and wildlife trafficking. In the context of past economic affluence, liberal democratic attitudes and increasing post-materialist trends in the developed world, the recent economic downturn and subsequent financial austerity measures have noticeably impacted on Greenpeace advocacy and policies: arguably spurring a steep rise in rhetoric and activism aimed at anti-capitalism and linking these socio-political

³⁸² Cudworth and Hobden explore some of the factors that combine to make policy formulation at higher levels of international complexity so complicated and unpredictable (2011:181-182)

³⁸³ See Nye, 2011: xv, for a discussion on the paramount importance of military power in the social world.

(and arguably NIEO-influenced) themes to the environmental cause (GI Annual Report, 2012).

(iii) Political structures: encompassing the differences in GI's protest activity when engaging with liberal democratic, nominally democratic and non-democratic systems. The shock expressed by Greenpeace over Russia's use of force and lengthy gaoling of the entire 'Arctic 30' group of activists was arguably an instance in which Greenpeace was dismayed that it had miscalculated the likely severity of Russia's political response to its strategy.

(iv) Cultural dimensions: including the variety of dispositions to the Greenpeace model of confrontational advocacy. Cultural structures can also help to explain the disparate levels of opposition and support Greenpeace encounters in the recognition of environmental degradation and wild animal welfare, *e.g.* as seen in contrasting intra- and trans-national attitudes to the ivory, whale meat, shark fin, palm oil and fur trades. Transnational bonds of solidarity and support for Greenpeace can also be seen to cross cultural divides, but inevitably they come into conflict with diverse cultural and religious dispositions, including varying openness to essentially Western standards of norms and norm-sharing.

(v) Polarity tendencies: exemplified in orientation to a particular regional or hemispherical focus, such as the current appeal of the Greenpeace model to supporters in Europe, especially Germany, and advanced Western democracies, and the recent gravitation towards projects in the BRICSAMs³⁸⁴ and the global South; and

(vi) Technological structures. It is probably uncontroversial to claim that Greenpeace is primarily constituted by the communications technological capabilities and opportunities associated with a globalising mass media industry and globe-spanning transportation networks. As an iconic TAN, Greenpeace could not exist in its present form and be competitive in the market for NGO funds

³⁸⁴ The BRICSAM countries are: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa and Mexico. The acronyms BRIC and BRICSAM are often used to denote two groups of large emerging economies that have shown rapid growth in recent years and, it has been speculated, have the potential to transform the international economic order (IMF, 2013:41; Davos Global Economic Outlook 2014; Magnus, 2014). See also Section 7.4.6.

without the ability to promote itself vigorously via the Internet and advanced communications technology.

Importantly, I emphasise that complex situations are multi-causal and no single structural account can explain an entire phenomenon³⁸⁵. Thus, an eco-ethical argument based on, say, the cross-border poaching of ivory in parts of Africa, cannot disregard structural enabling influences created by a daunting mixture of border security and political conditions, cultural attitudes, economic conditions, technological capabilities and geographical possibility.

❖ Emergence

Greenpeace has continually demonstrated the complex system characteristic of 'emergence', by which a system is seen to have tendencies for self-organisation and the creation of new order in response to internal and external conditions in its fitness landscape. It is reasonable to surmise that key attractors for GI's emergence included geographical, cultural, socio-political, social bonding and interpersonal factors. When Greenpeace is viewed 'as if' it is a complex, dynamic and adaptive system with emergent properties, the organisation well fits Giddens's description of a 'shell institution' that has retained recognisable external features over time while undergoing constant, dynamic, transformations (Giddens, 2002:18-19).

GI's expressed frustrations with its international counterparts and at its inability to achieve its desired aims in the international system, appear to indicate the presence of significant barriers to its efficacy in the international arena. The recent self-organisation by NGOs (including Greenpeace), who united to stage a mass walkout at the recent COP19 international Summit was arguably a manifestation of emergence resulting from the group's dynamics and its interactions with international system entities. However, it is too early to detect whether this systemic disruption will have any implications for new order of any sort. Nevertheless, it would be remiss to keep a watch out only for co-evolutionary implications stemming from the walkout act (which would be a relatively easy task), whilst ignoring the possibility of new order emerging from the parties who did not walk

³⁸⁵ See Cilliers, 1998:ix; Byrne, 2011:28-31 and Wight, 2007:1.

out and did not make public statements (which could be virtually impossible to assess but might become apparent over time).

Collaborative relationships between Greenpeace and other TANs are generally not in evidence, other than in *ad hoc* instances³⁸⁶, which may show the presence of significant relationship barriers also at TAN cluster level in the international system.

❖ Co-evolution

Patterns of adaptation over time show Greenpeace co-evolving by way of reciprocal influences that change the behaviour of interacting entities in complex systems. I posit that the primary example of this effect of complex systems is the institutionalised adversarial position adopted by Greenpeace, as a corporate entity, in its relationships with many different state elements of the international system (*e.g.* U.S.A., France, UK, Russia), and with the international institutional system as a whole. The habitual bristling of the organisation, seen in macroscopic analyses of Greenpeace statements of international encounters, particularly those of its CEO (Naidoo), undoubtedly owes much to the institutionalised memories of the past behaviours of powerful states and the UN, vis-à-vis the interests of Greenpeace. Thus, I suggest, Greenpeace can be seen as co-evolving with other elements of the international system in a dysfunctional and divergent pattern.

This antipathy was not always so. Greenpeace appears to have co-evolved in a more collaborative way with the international anti-nuclear movement during the 1970s and 80s, when it adopted an advocacy role that gained widespread attention in the media. Disruptions in the co-evolution of these relationships were arguably caused by the bombing of the original *Rainbow Warrior* in 1985 and the murder of a crewmember; the investigations by the UN Secretary-General and the behaviours of various UN Member states; the ending of the Cold War; and the extension of the anti-nuclear weapons debate to encompass an emphatic and controversial anti-

³⁸⁶ Such as the mass NGO walkout at COP19 (GI news, 2014), and occasionally joining forces with TANs such as WWF, Oxfam and Avaaz to present petitions (as can be established by reviewing press releases on the Greenpeace International Website). There is no evidence of large scale, on-going, cooperative projects with other TANs. Secrett and others have sharply criticised environmental NGOs for being fragmented and working in parallel, disinclined to pool their vast resources and make a real impact in their advocacy (Secrett, 2011a; 2011b).

nuclear energy position.

❖ **Sensitivity to Initial conditions**

Historical analysis of Greenpeace reveals a wealth of data and distinctive patterns that can be categorised as instances of sensitivity to initial conditions, path-dependency/lock-in and resistance to change. These features of complex systems are not only seen to be present in the corporate culture of Greenpeace but are constantly maintained through adherence to a revered set of founding principles, corporate beliefs, practices and behaviours that have become deeply institutionalised. Thus, the founding condition involving the choice of a seagoing vessel to deliver a protest message to authorities is perpetuated today in the maintenance and growth of the Greenpeace fleet of oceangoing ships. There is nothing inherent in environmental political protest that necessitates, even suggests, the amassing of such a fleet: it is essentially an enduring visual identity symbol associated with Greenpeace that is historically rooted in the initial conditions of the organisation's emergence³⁸⁷. The strategic deployment of ships appear to enable the Greenpeace functions of fundraising and exposing global environmental problems, but may have less impact and influence in the more complex realm of international debate and policy formulation in such intractable challenges as climate change. As an advocacy tool, the Greenpeace ships can also be seen to have had a characteristic marine-world influence on the organisation's environmental issue selection over time — *e.g.* overfishing, marine reserves, shark-finning, tuna fishing, whale hunting, polar oceans, and pirate fishing.

❖ **Path dependency/Lock-in**

The Greenpeace data set portrays an organisation that has essentially remained faithful to a fixed prescriptive ethos and operational code, now over 40 years in service. In practice it entails an on-going commitment to a high visibility, non-violent, direct action, confrontational strategy that was designed at that time with

³⁸⁷ An eco-navy is also operated by the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. Founded in 1977 by a former Greenpeace co-founder, Captain Paul Watson, the emergence of the SSCS might be seen as an exaptation and commoditisation of the earlier Greenpeace protest model rather than the manifestation of an original idea. I would argue that SSCS and Greenpeace both still display sensitivity to the initial conditions of Greenpeace's emergence (in which Watson played a leading role), and that SSCS shows significant evidence of availing of 'adjacent possible' opportunities in diverging from the Greenpeace model of non-violent confrontation.

the aim of 'forcing solutions to changing global problems that threaten the environment and peace' (GI data, 2012a; GI Annual Report 2010). However, the strategy was designed to shock and attract attention, mainly in North America, at a particular time with its own contingent circumstances influencing attitudes and events. Complexity theory holds that because contingencies change, optimal strategies also change over time. As Mitleton-Kelly points out (2003:14):

Complexity suggests that a single 'optimum' strategy may be neither possible nor desirable. Any strategy can be optimal under certain conditions, and when these conditions change, the strategy may no longer be optimal. To survive an organisation needs to be constantly scouring the landscape and trying different strategies.

Therefore, I posit that failure to identify changes in their fitness landscape over time, and adapt appropriately, could also explain why Greenpeace has experienced some notable instances of unpredictability and unintended consequences from its campaign strategies³⁸⁸. Only later were its milestones claimed, *post hoc*, as strategic successes. Indeed, I argue that the corporate culture of routinely claiming conclusive victories for its strategies, whether they qualify as victories or not, is commensurable to cultivating a positive feedback loop in the organisational system that reinforces existing strategy policies, whether or not they are effective in achieving the collective aims³⁸⁹.

Another way of looking at these institutionalised, locked-in, practices suggests that while the world and its global problems have vastly changed in the past 40+ years, the distinctive 'Greenpeace methodology' remains a largely predictable and inflexible formula³⁹⁰. Communications technology has helped to ensure that, in the words of a leading TAN executive, 'the media is saturated by protest'. Tactically,

³⁸⁸ As mentioned earlier, the Greenpeace founders had no intention to create an international movement and the initial voyage was an acknowledged failure.

³⁸⁹ In describing a 'founder effect', Arthur (1989) explains how the dynamics of increasing returns, competition, and historical events may cause a complex system to become locked in to an outcome that is not necessarily superior to alternatives, is not easily altered, and is not entirely predictable in advance.

³⁹⁰ In keeping the circumstances of its origins alive and in the foreground of its publicity, this thesis posits that Greenpeace not only recreates an enduring cognitive framework for thinking about its organisation and reinforces its provenance and supporter-solidarity with an evocative narrative: it also exemplifies aspects of complexity theory relating to, *inter alia*, path-dependency or lock-in, sensitivity to initial conditions, increasing returns, and the effects of positive and negative feedback, as theorised by Brian Arthur (1989; 1994) and other complexity scholars (North, 1990:99; Mahoney, 2000; Mitleton-Kelly, 2003:38-40; Urry, 2003:55-56). North argues (cited also by Urry, *ibid*) that: '[O]nce a development path is set on a particular course, the network externalities, the learning process of organizations, and the historically derived subjective modeling of the issues reinforce the course'.

the environmental movement might be regarded as having stalled and the 'shock of the new' — so powerful in decades past — now barely raises a flicker of interest (Secrett, 2011a). A founding member of Greenpeace, Paul Watson, derided Greenpeace as 'the Avon ladies of the environmental movement' (*The Guardian*, 2011b). Whatever inferences might be drawn from this metaphor, it is reasonable to surmise that it refers to an uncomplimentary view that Greenpeace functions as a well-known but otherwise uninspiring consumer brand in the global environmental movement. Certainly, it can be argued that in its application, the definitive Greenpeace strategic action today lacks the surprise, simplicity and guilelessness of the motivated amateur of earlier days³⁹¹.

Furthermore, belief in, and commitment to, a locked-in charter appears to have resulted in Greenpeace continuing to hone its trademark strategy and apply it to new subject matter, despite a significant body of criticism from external observers that the strategy is incoherent in some crucial contexts, such as GI's opposition to nuclear energy, 'golden rice' and GM foods (see Brand, 2009:153 and 2006; Shaw-Bond, 2000). This thesis hypothesises that this trademark strategy constitutes a barrier to Greenpeace achieving its aims in the contemporary international system. Even Greenpeace regularly asserts that environmental campaigning is fractured and failing to tackle, at the international level of decision-making, 'the deepening environmental crisis' (GI Annual Report, 2012:4).

In the specific context of advocacy organisations, Pralle points out that a significant number of authors have suggested a rather 'static model' for advocacy group behaviour, namely, that strategies and tactics decided on at the founding of an advocacy group shape its behaviours throughout its life (2010:190-91). Expressed another way, the oft-quoted insight of the late communications scholar McLuhan holds that 'we shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us'³⁹². When viewed in this light, Greenpeace's actions and outcomes over the years appear to have been shaped irrevocably, and to a very large degree, by its distinctive methodology and tool selection.

³⁹¹ For exogenous comments on Greenpeace's fighting form in the environmental campaigning arena, as it passed its 40-year milestone, see *The Guardian* (2011b); *The Times* (2013); and Secrett (2011a and 2011b).

³⁹² There are many similar versions of this McLuhanism. This citation is from McLuhan, Marshall (1994:ix). This notion appears to be commensurable with contemporary path-dependency theory.

❖ Feedback mechanisms

There is considerable evidence that the UN's NGO consultancy mechanism³⁹³ provides valuable individual unit and cluster-level feedback into the international system, as discussed in Section 5.2. It is unclear from a macroscopic assessment whether Greenpeace is availing of the potential for this mechanism to assist collaboration and two-way, symmetrical, feedback. However, the tone and frequency of condemnatory public statements by Greenpeace suggests that as far as it is concerned, its relationships with key elements of the international system, at the more complex level of systemic interaction, is dysfunctional and futile (GI Naidoo, 2014). I posit that this situation is (a) reminiscent of Thucydidean insights regarding conflictual international relations; (b) has determinative effects on the co-evolution of Greenpeace and the international systemic elements with which it interacts; and (c) negatively affects Greenpeace's effectiveness in achieving its preferred outcomes within the international system.

At the comparatively lower order of complexity of Greenpeace's own internal systems, the implications of positive and negative feedback processes are very different. Complexity theorising³⁹⁴ tells us that while negative feedback may indicate the need for change to rebalance a system, positive feedback tends to reinforce systemic behaviours and progressively amplify discrepancies in the normal operation of the system. Therefore, inaccurate or exaggerated assessments can greatly damage the functioning and effectiveness of complex systems. I suggest that the weight of data that Greenpeace publishes about its claimed campaign successes and conclusive victories³⁹⁵, might indeed be regarded as misleading positive feedback that reinforces ineffective strategies. Examples have been presented throughout this thesis of situations in which Greenpeace has claimed instrumental victory for its strategic actions in the international sphere, when Greenpeace has not been the sole actor; the effectiveness of the Greenpeace contribution to precipitating change cannot be verified; and an episode cannot be

³⁹³ See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the relationship between the United Nations and NGOs and the various facilitation mechanisms established by the UN, including affiliation via ECOSOC and arrangements for NGO participation in UN World Conferences.

³⁹⁴ See, for example, Mittleton-Kelly (2003:15-17).

³⁹⁵ As can be seen summarised on the 'Victories Timeline' of GI's official Website (GI data, 2014).

regarded as concluded³⁹⁶. Expressing profound disappointment with ‘the deepening environmental crisis’ the Greenpeace CEO frequently proclaims in his public statements: ‘We are winning battles, but we are losing the planet’ (GI Annual Report, 2012:3). Hence, the characteristic Greenpeace intimation that it is the singular spearhead of the global environmental campaign appears an example of false positive feedback.

❖ **Attractor properties**

The multi-level, macroscopic, analysis of Greenpeace enables a fresh conceptualisation of this TAN’s effectiveness in achieving its preferred outcomes. I believe that if one assesses the range of possible attractors at various levels of system complexity (in this case, TAN unit, TAN cluster and international system) it is possible to discern patterns in which attractors that stabilise the system and enhance cohesion and effectiveness at one level, in fact, are not present or in conflict with system elements at higher levels of systemic complexity. This, I submit, is the prime impediment to Greenpeace presently achieving the effectiveness it seeks in the international negotiation and policymaking arena.

The strong system attractors that I consider to be present at the lowest level of GI’s relational interaction with its (potential and actual) donor funding sector, include: iconic status as an established environmental protest model; early adopter advantages of perceived pre-eminence, authenticity, durability and a track record of success claims; cognitive associations with memorable acts of protest; cognitive impressions of popularity, enormous, globe-spanning support base and consequent power to mobilise large numbers of people to apply political pressure on authorities³⁹⁷; cognitive associations with bravery (*e.g.* Warriors of the Rainbow legend), audacity, humanity, and ‘doing good’³⁹⁸; and perceived autonomy from unpopular institutions associated with the governing establishment, industry and big business. I argue that it is possible to trace changes in the status of certain key properties of the organisation, say, membership and

³⁹⁶ Two cases in point are the continuing limbo status of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), since 1995, and the overall failure of the environmental movement despite decades of widely diffused protest actions, often claimed as singular Greenpeace victories by Greenpeace (see GI data, 2014; CTBTO data, 2014; CTBTO data, 2013b; UN GA Resolution, 2009; UN GA Resolution, 2010; GI news, 2012a; CTBTO data, 2013a; FAS data, 2013).

³⁹⁷ I argue that this is a mainstream impression, not necessarily a fact.

³⁹⁸ See Fisher (1997) for a discussion of the importance of this association for NGOs.

funding, in accordance with real, or perceived, changes in the attractors that help to give the system stability. In simple terms, these salient attractors could be regarded as the qualities that keep Greenpeace looking like Greenpeace.

At the cluster level (*i.e.* environmental TANS viewed as a group operating in the international system), the relative value of most of GI's inimitable attractors to other (rival) TANS is debatable. At still higher levels complexity, involving systemic interactions within the international institutions, Greenpeace and its international counterparts do not appear to have the properties and powers that are valued by each other³⁹⁹. Moreover, the institutional processes of the international arena are not ones readily associated with Greenpeace, being notoriously painstaking, egalitarian, diplomatic, legalistic, compromise-oriented, and slow.

❖ 'Adjacent possible' opportunism

A macroscopic perspective of Greenpeace spotlights patterns of this TAN's development over time into adjacent fields. Even the original formation of Greenpeace can be seen as having its roots in an earlier, adjacent, situation. While this thesis holds that complex intersecting systems are non-linear, it is possible to trace processes of NGO formation through historical instances of self-organising, in-group dissatisfaction and disruption, bifurcation, and breakaway group exploration of alternative opportunities perceived to exist in adjacent environments. Greenpeace arguably exhibits such a pattern: bifurcating from the Sierra Club in the U.S.A., to the formation of the British Columbia branch of the Sierra Club (involving a contingent of pacifist Quakers⁴⁰⁰), to the Don't Make a Wave Committee, to Greenpeace, to innumerable GI-inspired adaptations (*e.g.* the militant breakaway group Sea Shepherd Conservation Society⁴⁰¹ and the radical,

³⁹⁹ It was shown in Chapter 5, that the UN Member States of the international system value the dialectical participation of accredited NGOs in evidence-based, decision-making and policy formulation. They also value, *inter alia*, supportive, collaborative arrangements with NGOs; service provision; trustworthiness and tact; and the provision of credible scientific data.

⁴⁰⁰ This is a colloquial name for The Religious Society of Friends.

⁴⁰¹ In 1977, following disputes over what he saw as increasing bureaucracy and opposition to his direct action tactics, one of the Greenpeace pioneers, Paul Watson, led a breakaway group to set up the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. The SSCA campaigns specifically to safeguard the marine environment and frequently engages in violent confrontations with fishermen, whalers and seal hunters (<http://www.seashepherd.org/>; *The Guardian*, 2011b).

ecotage-promoting Earth First!⁴⁰²).

In order to remain relevant, Greenpeace can also be seen to exploit this spillover characteristic of complex systems. While encountering barriers to achieving the 'media mindbombs' it needs in pursuit of its major goals, this TAN shows a co-evolutionary pattern of interventions into adjacent environmental campaigning opportunities. This was seen in GI's history of organisational expansion and spillover effects: beginning with a peace campaign to stop a single nuclear bomb test, to adding 'green' concerns for the environment in the test zone; followed by system extension into anti-whaling, oceans, forests, ecological farming, toxic pollution, etc. In turn, campaigning on these themes has illuminated adjacent campaigning opportunities⁴⁰³. Thus, I argue that this pattern resembles the ultimately debilitating disposition of NGO 'systemic critiques' identified by Wittner (1997:462).

❖ Unintended consequences

Greenpeace publishes statements on its Website to the effect that the failure of the original Amchitka campaign, the sinking of the first *Rainbow Warrior* and death of a crewmember, were unintended consequences of the protest strategies in force at the time. The reputational damage to Greenpeace during the Brent Spar campaign and the recent arrest and gaoling of 30 Greenpeace activists (the 'Arctic 30') in Russia were unpredicted, and unintended negative consequences of strategic operations. Furthermore, Weyler (GI Naidoo, 2011) recalls that the original group of activists had no intention to start an environmental campaigning organisation, and yet that is what they did. In mining the Greenpeace data for deeper explanations as to why the organisation's advocacy strategies sometimes reap unintended results, a complex realism lens sheds light on the probability that the ontology of the fitness landscape for GI advocacy, at critical moments, was either not considered or was misread. And, furthermore, that these critical contingencies were inadequately assessed in developing effective, aim-progressing, advocacy strategies.

⁴⁰² Ecotage is a neologism for ecological sabotage and is used to describe acts of sabotage for environmental purposes (Plows, Doherty and Wall, 2004; OED, 2012).

⁴⁰³ The toxic pollution theme, for example, has led to increasingly targeting world famous brands in the fashion, cosmetics and toiletries industries.

7.5.2 Assessment of Greenpeace using a political theoretical framework

To understand Greenpeace's effectiveness during its protracted anti-nuclear campaigning in the 80s and 90s, I argue that it is also necessary to understand the international climate of increasing trepidation. Realist theories focusing on the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War in 1989 demand a place in any account of the anxieties being felt within the international system about the world order during the Soviet and ensuing post-Soviet decades. Thus, the then heightened insecurities in international society, particularly widespread fears concerning the balance of power, can best explain why many world states might act within the UN to bring France to heel in regard to its development of nuclear weapons. Such concerted international opposition was not necessarily due to policies of opposition to nuclear weapons *per se* — since other countries had long compiled nuclear arsenals⁴⁰⁴ and carried out thousands of tests — but to their united opposition *to France having* them amid the fluidity of the uncertain world order. In this alternative to the Greenpeace reading of the situation, a further argument can be made that France's recalcitrance was overcome in 1996 by a combination of having almost reached the scheduled end of its nuclear testing programme anyway, and a contingent decision that its security interests — indeed, all its interests — could be better served in the post-Cold War era by restoration of its image as a responsible and recognised member of international society.

Nevertheless, Greenpeace still infers in its publicity that its anti-nuclear campaign was a victory, with GI having been instrumental in contributing to 'a number of important international success in 1995', most prominently, pressuring 'France, the US, the UK, Russia and China to commit to signing a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and to pursue other nuclear disarmament measures [...]' (GI Archive, 1995; GI data, 2012a). However, despite this inference, the CTBT remains

⁴⁰⁴ In the five decades between the first nuclear test by the U.S.A. in 1945, until the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996, over 2,000 nuclear tests were carried out worldwide. The U.S.A conducted 1,032 tests from 1945 to 1992; the Soviet Union conducted 715 from 1949 to 1990; the United Kingdom carried out 45 from 1952 to 1991; France carried out 210 between 1960 and 1996; and China performed 45 tests between 1964 and 1996. After the CBTB was opened for signature in September 1996, around half a dozen nuclear tests have been conducted by India, Pakistan and North Korea (CTBTO data, 2012b). Israel is also widely speculated to have carried out nuclear tests (Albright and Gay, 1997; Dombey, 2010). To suggest that the major players in international society are convinced of the moral argument against nuclear weapons would, therefore, appear to be both wrong and imply their hypocrisy. This thesis holds that leaders of world states appear to be individually not so much against nuclear weapons as against their international fellows having them.

an unfinished item on the international back burner (CTBTO data, 2014, 2013a) and has still not entered into force⁴⁰⁵. It is, therefore, difficult to see how pressures on states to uniformly agree to accept this nuclear testing constraint have been successful or significantly influenced by Greenpeace actions.

Competitive, crowded world of Green politics

Despite the high-visibility and levels of grassroots donor-support achieved for its campaigning, the Greenpeace political ideology, vision, model of activism and strategic choices are not shared by some of its rivals in the crowded sector of environmental TANs (Prakash and Gugerty, 2010:14-15; Lecy, 2010:235-236; Barakso, 2010:156-162; Polis Report, 2012:15-16,18; Cooley and Ron, 2002). GI is considered to be dangerously anti-science⁴⁰⁶ in its premises by some internationally prominent environmentalists (Plows, Doherty and Wall, 2004; Moore, 2007, 2008, 2013). Moreover, while GI's confrontational tactics are able to garner media attention, they raise concerns among some members of the public that the organisation behaves unfairly with respect to its targets, and/or oversimplifies complex issues (Barakso, 2010:155; AP news, 2012; Moore, 2008, 2013). Inuit seal hunters in Greenland, for example, blame Greenpeace campaigns against seal hunting for nearly wiping out the demand for sealskins, a key part of their income (AP news, *ibid*).

Areas of criticism (Brand, 2009:86, 208, 215; 2005; Moore, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2013; *The Age*, 2007) include GI's fierce opposition to nuclear energy and genetically modified organisms. Moore⁴⁰⁷ (2005) wrote that the environmental movement had lost its way, asserting that 'by the mid-1980s, the environmental movement had abandoned science and logic in favor of emotion and sensationalism'. This strategy included using 'chilling rhetoric and apocalyptic images to drive us in the wrong direction'.

⁴⁰⁵ China and the USA signed the CBTB on 24 September 1996 but have ever since declined to formally ratify it (CTBTO data, 2014; CTBTO data, 2013b). See also UN GA Resolution, 2009; UN GA Resolution, 2010; GI news, 2012a; CTBTO data, 2013a; FAS data, 2013.

⁴⁰⁶ The criticism that Greenpeace is 'anti-science' is disputed by the head of the Greenpeace Research Laboratories at the University of Exeter, Dr. Paul Johnson (see Johnson, 2011).

⁴⁰⁷ Dr. Patrick Moore is a former Director of Greenpeace International.

Effects of independent funding model on issue selection and transparency

Greenpeace's total reliance on funding from its worldwide mass membership and foundation grants also appears to have a determinative effect on the issues and targets the organisation pursues, the ways issues are framed and the outcomes it publicises. Observing the relationship between supporters and organisers of environmental groups, Lomborg ⁴⁰⁸ (2001:38) comments that the relationship is entirely symbiotic, with the survival of the organisation totally dependent on what the members, sympathisers and supporters believe is good and necessary 'because without their backing the organisations' campaigns would be more or less worthless'. According to Bennie (1998:407), Greenpeace income 'depends on the public thinking that it is getting something for its money'. Conversely, the problem with seeking quiet influence lies in persuading financial supporters that they are making an impact, since '[E]ven an unsuccessful stunt has more impact than successful insider negotiation' (*ibid*).

Therefore, although dramatic media stunts — such as Greenpeace's assaults on the Russian Gazprom oil platform in the Arctic in 2012 and again in 2013 — may be effective in terms of publicity and popular support, the actual political and/or industrial impact is unclear⁴⁰⁹ (AP News, 2012). An oil and gas expert at the World Wildlife Fund's Global Arctic Program (Babenko), observed (*ibid*): 'It probably sounds a bit cynical, but if they invest billions of dollars it's not likely they will give it up just because somebody is attacking their oil rig'. Drawing a line between WWF and Greenpeace, Babenko continued (AP News, 2012):

We want to be part of this discussion. We don't want to stimulate oil and gas development, but if we follow (Greenpeace's) approach we will be simply out of the game⁴¹⁰.

⁴⁰⁸ Bjørn Lomborg is a former Greenpeace member, professor of statistics at Aarhus University and author of the controversial academic text *The Skeptical Environmentalist* (Lomborg, 2001).

⁴⁰⁹ Furthermore, I submit, the stakes for the Russian Federation are inestimably high in terms of the state's economy, internal stability and future security (US National Intelligence Report, 2013: *iv*, 62, 80, 133). Russia's declining economy is its Achilles' Heel. Its budget is heavily dependent on energy reserves and an ageing workforce is a drag on economic growth. The Russian state is counting on revenue from its Arctic oil and gas fields to revitalise the economy and so stave off potential internal discontent, as well as external perceptions, notably from an aggressive China, that it is becoming debilitated.

⁴¹⁰ The possibility that the WWF spokesman's disparaging comments on Greenpeace tactics are part of WWF's own differentiating strategies in their crowded environmental advocacy market is not discounted.

Importantly, WWF commenced its Global Arctic Programme over 20 years' ago⁴¹¹ and has channeled many millions of dollars into Arctic research projects and advocacy. Greenpeace began its Save the Arctic campaign in 2012⁴¹² (WWF-Int, 2014; GI Annual Report, 2012:4).

7.5.3 Assessment of Greenpeace using an advocacy theoretical framework

Arguably, the three most international headline-grabbing campaigns in Greenpeace history — the Amchitka voyage, the sinking of the first *Rainbow Warrior* and the Brent Spar campaign — were unmitigated setbacks, albeit ones that resulted in unexpected consequences and profile-raising publicity that was not as planned at the time by individuals within Greenpeace. The *post hoc* interpretation of these events as Greenpeace tactical victories may be, therefore, more usefully explained by alternative theoretical means⁴¹³. Thus, I argue that GI's heavy reliance on methodological individualism to frame its advocacy messages — typically involving emotional first-person story-telling — is a barrier to this TAN achieving genuine influence in the demanding and legalistic arena of international debate⁴¹⁴.

Although both the Greenpeace and mainstream media narratives of the voyage to Amchitka emphasise the effectiveness of the advocacy strategy to stop a nuclear bomb test, a more critical analysis suggests the Greenpeace strategy and actions worked in an altogether different way. I argue that the advocacy strategy was principally effective in producing a dramatic news story: one that was strategically crafted by a band of independent young journalists and had widespread resonance at a time of significant social anxiety and uncertainty. A secondary result of the strategy was to introduce the name Greenpeace to the world and excite interest and support for a bold, new, protest model with a mission to confront the political Establishment and a refreshing capacity to shock conventional society. These desirable communications outcomes were a happy consequence of a

⁴¹¹ In 1992.

⁴¹² There is a discrepancy between a Greenpeace statement that the Save the Arctic campaign was launched following the Rio+20 Earth Summit in 2012, and a statement that the 'Arctic and oil' campaign 'began in earnest' in 2011 (GI Annual Report, 2011:18; GI Annual Report, 2012:4).

⁴¹³ Kahneman and Tversky's concept of WYSIATI ('what you see is all there is') is highly relevant in explaining the way the human mind treats information that is readily available and typically ignores information it does not have, in order to quickly form coherent stories and 'make sense of partial information in a complex world' (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974:425-427; Kahneman, 2011:85-88).

⁴¹⁴ See also Barakso, 2010:160, Robnett, 2002: 267-268 and Holyoke, 2003.

communications strategy. What the communications strategy did not do and, I submit, could not do, was stop the U.S. from pursuing a security aim by carrying out a nuclear test. At that level of complex intersectionality the Greenpeace advocacy strategy was a failure⁴¹⁵.

Considering the global scale of concerns about nuclear warfare, and the anti-nuclear activities of many other influential campaigning and lobbying groups, acceptance of the Greenpeace *post hoc* claims of success in halting the testing programme seem unsafe. Facts that *are* known are that the U.S. Navy repulsed the Greenpeace protest, proceeded with the Amchitka bomb test, and many more tests until 1992. The United States has never ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and remains today a leading nuclear power⁴¹⁶.

Although Greenpeace asserts that the Brent Spar campaign was a triumph for people power and green consumerism (GI data, 2011), the campaign was probably more about a chance pattern of events — contingent circumstances — than strategy perfection (Bennie, 1998:407; GI data, 2011)⁴¹⁷. Looking beyond the contested merits of the advocacy strategy, a complexity analysis of the situation focuses on how all of the actors co-evolved during and after these events. Rather than assuming the environmental strategies in industry and big business were changed because the consumer lever used was ‘green’, it can be argued that prominent commercial enterprises are sensitive to any risks to their reputational capital and attendant shareholder and market censure, regardless of the belief systems of those activating the consumer lever. It can also be argued that Greenpeace co-evolved by adapting its advocacy targeting strategies to capitalise on fresh insights into the vulnerability of commercial brand leaders to market censure.

⁴¹⁵ I was a journalist in Australia and Hong Kong during this period and was highly attuned to the extreme tensions generated by the Cold War, the on-going Cold War proxy conflicts in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, and the threat of conflict escalation into all out nuclear warfare involving the world’s major powers.

⁴¹⁶ See CTBTO data, 2012b.

⁴¹⁷ However, high quality research can be a determinative factor in campaign outcomes. For example, the high quality of research is credited, by Van Roy and others, with being the determining factor in the campaign to restrict the trade in conflict diamonds (Van Rooy, 2004:83).

Today, Greenpeace operates a fleet of oceangoing vessels at the forefront of its campaigning. Its tactical craft include helicopters, small submarines, a thermal airship and a hot-air balloon. The accompanying information technologies enable Greenpeace donor-supporters and millions of people worldwide to vicariously accompany activists on their audacious missions and witness GI's characteristic framing of specific environmental issues⁴¹⁸. In this communications frame of analysis, GI's eco-navy vessels arguably assume the character of communications props, mobile telecommunications hubs and custom transportation for small teams of centrally-directed activists.

Alternative framings involving abuse of power scandals

Given the Greenpeace core value of non-violence, its stated 'battle to save planet Earth' is not a literal one but a notional 'battle' to win hearts and minds via advocacy campaigns (GI data, 2012a; GI Annual Report 2010). Therefore, I posit that this factor necessitates using a communications lens to make sense of it. The creative framing of issues, especially the claiming of alleged instances of abuse-of-power, is a key technique used by Greenpeace to try to gain a major share of the advocacy donor market⁴¹⁹ and thereby secure political influence (CNN, 1995c). For example, the seizure of Greenpeace boats and equipment might be usefully interpreted, according to a combination of communications and complexity theories, as instances of 'globally mediated scandals' that involve what are seen in some societies/cultures as significant transgressions of particular norms of acceptable behaviour, especially if they relate to sexual behaviour, financial matters, or the use or abuse-of-power (Urry, 2003:114-5; Thompson, 2000:15).

Therefore, this thesis maintains that the David and Goliath symbolism and globally mediated scandal of Greenpeace's original voyage to Amchitka, was very greatly surpassed — on assumed scales of newsworthiness, public interest, international affront and reprehensibility — by what was widely perceived as a French abuse of power in blowing up the original *Rainbow Warrior*, the culpable homicide of the Greenpeace photographer, and in using heavy-handed military force for many

⁴¹⁸ This accords with Goffman's seminal work on 'interaction rituals', which argues that humans have tendencies that see them drawn to places where they can vicariously enjoy watching another's involvement in action, 'someone *like* themselves, but someone else' (1967:269).

⁴¹⁹ The pressures and tensions generated by competition from other TANs and NGOs in the advocacy representation and funding markets is discussed in Section 8.3.2.

years afterwards to deter a non-violent, civil society protest group committed to bearing witness on behalf of humanity. Consequently, I argue that it becomes difficult to speculate, on a global scale, whether GI's claimed inflammation of world opinion against France could be accurately attributed to an increase in outrage against that country's nuclear weapons testing policy, or against its hauteur and seemingly arrogant abuse of power, measures of both, or, indeed, was due to a complex blend of some other anti-French or political sentiments prevailing at that time. The principal framing of the matter as the generator of a significant upswing in worldwide anti-nuclear solidarity is, therefore, unsafe and requires deeper analysis to discern possible causal mechanisms and contingencies that might have been also capable of producing the observed effects.

A more recent example of an abuse-of-power framing is suggested by the Greenpeace missions to disrupt operations on a Russian oilrig in the Arctic in 2012 and, again, in September 2013 (GI news, 2012c; GI Naidoo, 2012c; BBC Archive, 2012b; *Russia Today*, 2012; BBC Archive, 2013c; *The Atlantic*, 2013)⁴²⁰.

The extreme disparities in the framing of the outcomes of the most recent UN climate change conference, COP19, are also important considerations⁴²¹. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change⁴²² announced significant progress had been made and the negotiation process was on track to achieve a universal climate change agreement in 2015 (UN-COP19, 2013). Meanwhile, Greenpeace joined a walkout by a group of NGOs attending the conference and issued a statement calling the talks 'a sham'. Continuing a class-based theme of the 'powerful' oppressing 'the people' (where the powerful included national governments, leading corporations and the coal, oil and nuclear energy industries), GI claimed states were blocking progress, were inclined to 'ditch their responsibilities', and

⁴²⁰ Meanwhile, Russia arguably carried out a skilled tactical gambit by using the recent event for its own international publicity purposes: framing it, *inter alia*, to show that the Russian state is powerful and uncompromising in matters of its national interest and given to emphatic responses to foreign intrusions.

⁴²¹ See Section 3.4.3 for a discussion of substantive research underpinning the body of communication theory that relates to the primacy of trust in relationships, particularly that pertaining to organisations. This theory asserts that organisational relationships exactly mimic those of interpersonal relationships in terms of the critical determinators of relationship quality, such as trust, access, mutual legitimacy, mutual satisfaction, credibility, openness, mutual understanding and mutual respect (Ledingham and Bruning, 2001:5, 31, 83; Ledingham, 2003; Grunig *et al*, 2000:553-554; Kovacs, 2001; Dimmick *et al*, 2001:118).

⁴²² This UN body has a nearly universal membership of 195 countries.

lacked commitment to address climate change issues. Moreover, there had been ‘a complete failure of rich countries’ to honour their earlier promises on financing, thereby ‘putting the most vulnerable people at risk’ (GI news, 2013e; 2013i).

It might be timely to reiterate the assurance given in Chapter 1 that this thesis does not dispute the legitimacy of claims by Greenpeace, or other TANs, in their communications with their audiences. The point made here is that the way issues are strategically framed by Greenpeace’s advocacy professionals and presented to global audiences, especially in terms of high impact/high stakes scandals, provides a rich source of data on this TAN, which can be critically examined for clues to underlying outlooks and motivations, changing policies and (most importantly for this thesis), Greenpeace’s external relationships and effectiveness.

A further issue concerning Greenpeace tactics in mounting high-visibility advocacy campaigns to confront powerful Goliaths⁴²³ relates to the ‘politics of trust’⁴²⁴ (Thompson, 2000:111-113; Urry, 2003:114-115). This thesis suggests that Greenpeace struggles to recapture its pre-Brent Spar reputation and influence — and that it characteristically does this by performing high-visibility targeted acts, in strategic venues, that are intended to reinforce its brand integrity and keep the faith with supporters. A recent study of ‘brand personality’ in non-profit organisations in the USA indicates, however, that Greenpeace is challenged in this respect, with the public perception of Greenpeace’s integrity scoring low marks in comparison with other prominent non-profits (Venable *et al*, 2005; Barakso, 2010:155). The study pointed out that due to the intangibility of the services that non-profit organisations offer and the social nature of the exchange in their relationship with donors, reliability and integrity play a central role in the way their external audiences evaluate them (Venable *et al: ibid*).

The advocacy prism is especially useful for analysing the effectiveness of Greenpeace campaigns targeting global brands, which have shown a marked increase in recent years. In targeting famous brands that have allegedly flouted

⁴²³ Such as the military might of the USA and France.

⁴²⁴ This theory was reinforced by the recent Polis report in the UK and comments contained in it by a senior press officer (Ian Bray) at Oxfam, in which the close connection between transparency, accountability, communications and trust were affirmed (Polis Report, 2012:14; *vide* Section 8.4.2).

ethical norms relating to social responsibility, abuse-of-power, fairness and environmental protection, Greenpeace can be seen to link environmental issues to economic and political issues associated with anti-capitalism and anti-globalisation messages. Usually, the campaign messages imply, *inter alia*, that powerful entities are susceptible to the external pressure of sufficient numbers of right-thinking campaigners and, moreover, that their compliance with activist demands is a testament to the power of the activists' strategy. However, somewhat counter-intuitively, a body of communications research suggests that the larger the targeted corporation the more *likely* it is to accommodate the demands of a powerful external public, such as consumer activists (Reber, 2006:2). This, I suggest, is a reflection of the normal, contemporary, principles of commercial public relations best practice, which prizes reputation protection and damage limitation to business interests. I further suggest that the use of news media and social media to trigger this lever is very straightforward in situations of low systemic complexity, such as within single companies (and, to a lesser extent, within corporations), where chains of authority are comparatively confined in space and time. As will be seen in the other case studies, Greenpeace is not alone in implying that advocacy strategies that enlist the support of large numbers of individuals to coerce commercial organisations to yield to their demands (i.e. the pressure of 'people power'), are equally efficacious, unconditionally, in the realms of domestic and international politics if sufficient numbers of people are mobilised to act (GI Annual Report, 2012:4). But Greenpeace stands out in its longstanding commitment to large scale signature collecting and delivery of petitions in all its campaigns, with the inference that this tactic is commensurable in its instrumental power across a range of social sectors⁴²⁵.

Greenpeace's adversarial tactical approach towards specifically targeted global brands is in striking contrast to that of the similarly long-lived, although one decade older and significantly larger, global environmental campaigning

⁴²⁵ A case in point was the Greenpeace expedition to the North Pole in April 2013 to cut a hole in the ice and lower a time capsule containing almost three million signatures to the sea floor. The petition asked for the Arctic to be made a global sanctuary and protected from commercial operations (GI news, 2013g). Another instance was the delivery of a petition containing one million signatures to the EU Commission in Brussels in December 2010. The petition, jointly delivered by activists from Greenpeace and Avaaz, called for a moratorium on genetically modified crops (GI news, 2010). In both of these cases of international political protest, the awareness-raising information provided by GI was focused on the people and processes involved in making and delivering the petitions.

organisation, the WWF⁴²⁶. Although the environmental aims of both organisations are almost identical, their approaches could hardly be more different, with the WWF staunchly committed to engaging with the commercial world and using its influence in diplomatic networking and boardroom dialogues, while eschewing the overtly combative approaches pursued by Greenpeace. Observers have noted that despite their differing approaches the prominence achieved by both of these global brands is a testament to their success over the decades. However, considering that environmental concerns and degradation are universal, what is not clear is whether these types of NGO model actually work outside the Western democracies (*The Guardian*, 2011a).

Effects of grassroots financial support on issue selection, message and tactics

Advocacy organisations' funding sources have been found to play a role in the tactical approaches they adopt (Prakash and Gugerty, 2010:18; Cooley and Ron, 2010:205, 2002; Jenkins and Perrow, 1977; Barakso, 2010:157-162).

This normally means that NGO strategists choose to work for change either inside existing institutions, outside them, or while attempting to maintain a two-pronged strategy involving both endo- and ex-institutional tactical fronts (Willetts, 2011:62, Barakso, *ibid*). For example, 'preservationist' environmental groups in general depend on funding by corporations and have an insider/conventional tactical repertoire⁴²⁷, while 'ecocentric' groups are typically supported by members and have an outsider/contentious tactical orientation (Willetts, *ibid*)⁴²⁸. Greenpeace is frequently identified with 'outsider' strategies, as it targets policy arenas such as the media, the public, and the marketplace (Pralle, 2010:191). In pointing out some of the differences between advocacy models, Shaw-Bond observes (2000)⁴²⁹ that the large environmental activist groups rely chiefly on grassroots support and public pressure and do not depend on governmental acceptance, or co-operation to achieve their ends — in contrast to those focused on either rights or

⁴²⁶ WWF stands for both the Worldwide Fund for Nature and World Wildlife Fund (its original name). Founded in 1961, the WWF today claims it is the world's largest independent conservation organisation, backed by over five million people throughout the world. The WWF further states that it has invested well over US\$1 billion in more than 12,000 conservation initiatives since 1985 (WWF-Int., 2014).

⁴²⁷ An example of both insider and outsider tactics employed by an environmental advocacy NGO can be seen in the Sierra Club's acceptance of a US\$50m corporate gift from the New York Mayor and philanthropist, Michael Bloomberg, in July 2011 (Sierra Club, 2011).

⁴²⁸ Willetts also cites Carmin and Balsler, 2002.

⁴²⁹ Cited also by Van Rooy (2004).

development issues⁴³⁰, who require permissions to carry out their work within countries, and often receive international subsidies to assist under-resourced national agencies. The constraining effect on the behaviours of transnational NGOs that springs from the necessity to tender for these subsidies and contracts in a crowded, competitive, development aid market⁴³¹, has been increasingly noted by scholars (Cooley and Ron, 2002; 2010:205-225).

Given that Greenpeace relies on donations from its 2.9 million donors, independent trusts and foundation grants, to fund its operations — eschewing funding from governments, corporations, political parties or any sources that could present conflict of interest issues (GI Annual Report, 2012:37) — it is unsurprising to find that publicity about its operations is highly geared towards attracting popular and media attention, encouraging continued commitments from supporters and highlighting victories, and differentiating itself from other environmental advocacy groups. Putting this more bluntly, Browne (2001), opines that ‘green groups — with revenues of hundreds of millions of pounds a year — are using increasingly desperate scaremongering tactics to sustain donations’⁴³².

Heightened urgency message and strategy shift to ‘war footing’

In recent years, Greenpeace’s ‘creative confrontation’ model of activism has been accompanied by impassioned publicity messages, containing heightened levels of urgency and frustration, asserting that the Earth is heading for environmental catastrophe of Man’s doing, while present systems of global governance are suffering a ‘leadership vacuum’ and failing to take the necessary actions to avert it (GI news, 2012a; 2012b; AP News, 2012; Moore, 2007). GI CEO, Naidoo, has admonished world leaders, as a group, for ignoring danger warnings and ‘sleep-walking’⁴³³ into looming environmental catastrophes. Civil disobedience, he urges,

⁴³⁰ Such as Human Rights Watch (rights) and Oxfam International (development and rights), which are described in the following chapters.

⁴³¹ This observation has increasing significance in light of the trend for ‘local’ recipients of humanitarian and development aid to specify their assistance needs and the means of its provision (*vide* Section 8.3.1).

⁴³² This view is also supported by Patrick Moore (2005), *et al.*

⁴³³ The metaphor of world leaders ‘sleepwalking’ into environmental catastrophes is a familiar one in Greenpeace publicity materials and has in recent years featured prominently in protest publicity issued in connection with international meetings and conferences, such as the UN climate talks in Bonn in 2009 (when Greenpeace activists campaigned in their pyjamas) and the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2012 (GI Kumi Naidoo’s Blog, 2012a; GI news, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c).

is the only way left for people to 'push' their governments to listen and act with the urgency the situation demands (GI Naidoo, 2009).

Continuing this theme following the UN's Earth Summit in 2012 (Rio+20), Naidoo called the event 'a failure of epic proportions' (GI news, 2012b) declaring:

We didn't get the Future we Want⁴³⁴ in Rio, because we do not have the leaders we need. The leaders of the most powerful countries supported Business as Usual, shamefully putting private profit before people and the planet. [...] The only outcome of this Summit is justifiable anger, an anger that we must turn into action.

Greenpeace, he announced, now had no option but to change its strategy and start planning waves of civil disobedience, moving to a 'war footing' (*The Guardian*, 2012). This thesis notes that this statement appears to presage a significant shift in GI's tactical repertoire and stakeholder relationship policy⁴³⁵. In fact, Naidoo has more recently reiterated his call on GI's geographically dispersed support base to mobilise in local contexts and engage directly in acts of civil disobedience (GI Naidoo, 2014; GI Naidoo, 2013a, 2013b).

Up to now, Greenpeace protest actions could not be accurately termed 'collective actions', as they have invariably involved small bands of highly motivated and trained activists, acting in a coordinated manner under Greenpeace central direction and using the organisation's formidable resources. This thesis asserts that it is, therefore, inappropriate to apply either collective action or conventional social movement lenses to Greenpeace theorising, which must take into account an advocacy strategy in which comparatively small numbers of Greenpeace campaigners act *on behalf of* GI's global audiences (GI Naidoo, 2012c), the vast majority of whom have limited incentives to become actively involved in protests themselves and are remotely empowered to participate vicariously in large-scale

⁴³⁴ All capitalisations are as per the original statement.

⁴³⁵ Indeed, scholars have a great deal to say about the 'repertoires of contention' that advocacy organisations use to define themselves over time and which give them a sense of self and a tactical consistency, even to the point of continuing to persist with particular tactics that are unlikely to yield results in order to avoid the censure of a board of directors, or membership, that expects such action (Barakso, 2010:160; Robnett, 2002: 267-268; Holyoke, 2003). By calling into question the continued connection between a group's values and an individual supporter's values, radical changes in tactical choices can be jarring to a group's constituency of members, staff, volunteers and donors, inducing negative reactions that range from disillusionment to abandonment (Barakso, *ibid*).

acts of defiance while exposed to minimal costs⁴³⁶.

In light of studies that support the premise of this thesis that advocacy organisations can be understood as ‘firms’ and ‘brands’ (Prakash and Gugherty, 2012:3; Lecy *et al*, 2010:229-49; Barakso, 2010:156-57), another way of looking at the Greenpeace call to supporters to mobilise on a ‘war footing’, might be to see it as a strategic repositioning of the Greenpeace brand. But such projects are notoriously risk-laden and there are no indications that Greenpeace has the resources, other than communications channels, rhetoric and optimistic expectations of ‘people power’, with which to make ‘war’ on world leaders to ‘push’ them into ideological conformity and action. Moreover, many scholars (such as Chandler, 2004, 2009; and Morazov, 2011:191) are highly sceptical of suggestions that Internet-enabled global advocacy supporters, sometimes called ‘slacktivists’ (Morazov, *ibid*: 189-90) or ‘clicktavists’ (Darnton and Kirk, 2011:10) in general, have either the inclination or the required levels of political engagement to convert mere ‘awareness’ into action.

GI’s strategic aims underlying the call-to-action by its CEO are therefore perplexing from, at least, the standpoints of TAN mobilisation, communications best practice and complex systems theory. Such tactics are arguably effective in news-making, fundraising and social boundary mechanism construction but are not highly valued in the esoteric world of international, evidence-based, negotiation and policymaking.

Escalating costs of maintaining the ‘Greenpeace action’ model

It is evident that the scale of GI’s 24/7 news traffic and the newsworthiness and theatricality of the organisation’s ‘media mindbombs’ has risen exponentially and comes with escalating costs. With offices in 40 countries the explosion in Greenpeace’s publicity traffic in recent years was to be expected — so too, the

⁴³⁶ Prakash and Gugerty (2010:12: see also Cooley and Ron, 2010:211-12) suggest this relationship between advocacy NGOs and their supporters should be thought of in terms of ‘principals’ and ‘agents’, with advocacy being outsourced by concerned individuals to actors who have the organisational capacities and willingness to do it. In this conceptualisation, Prakash and Gugerty explain (*ibid*), the publics on behalf of whom advocacy NGOs agitate are *de facto* principals, as well. See also Metz (2006:2-3) for insights regarding the ideological make-up of activist movements. Chandler and Morazov are among those who similarly question the expansive power claims made for deterritorialised, de-socialised, virtual political participation in online networks (Chandler, 2007; Morazov. 2013: 128).

need to remain newsworthy amid the torrents of competing publicity from other TANs, NGOs and INGOs, many of whom have commoditised the Greenpeace model⁴³⁷ for their own use. The 'voice' impact that Greenpeace achieved with a small, rusty boat and a relatively shoestring budget in 1971, today costs Greenpeace €274 million⁴³⁸ per year, to emulate (GI Annual Report, 2012:44-45), including nearly €25 million for media and communications and a further €10 million for public information and outreach. The new *Rainbow Warrior III* cost €20.3 million (GI Annual Report, 2010:17).

7.5.4 Assessment of Greenpeace's relationship with the United Nations

This section supports the macroscopic overview of the interface between TANs and the international system by highlighting observed signs and patterns in the relationship between Greenpeace and elements of the UN system. Importantly, this section builds on the historical record of acrimony, contested outcomes and bitter memories, discussed earlier.

Conspicuously, there is very little balanced, or academically validated, information publicly available on the development of GI's relationship with the UN system. In principle, one of the key institutional conditions of possibility for multi-level interactions between these state and non-state parties does exist, given that in 1998 Greenpeace was granted General Consultative Status with the UN (UN-ECOSOC NGO List, 2011:4). What this formal consultancy status means in the context of this thesis is that it allows for the application of a macroscopic systemic frame of analysis to explore relationships between the elements of the UN system, and furthermore between the elements of other systems to which the elements of the UN system are intersected, or connected in relations of exteriority (*vide* DeLanda, 2006: 10-11, 18). The UN consultancy status for Greenpeace also provides a scaleable frame of reference for using complex realism to theorise about the state of the relationships, the power differentials, and the points of analytical focus, from unit-level, to cluster and system-level.

Such indications as are publicly available concerning GI's interface with the UN

⁴³⁷ Commoditised, for example, by the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society.

⁴³⁸ Worldwide expenditure amounted to €274 million in 2012 (GI Annual Report, 2012:44-45).

provide glimpses of a relationship that is, overall, far from harmonious. Indeed, the few instances of direct, public, interaction between Greenpeace and the UN (touched on earlier) reveal a relationship that appears to be — from the Greenpeace perspective, at least — one of on-going dysfunction, frustration and renunciation. At the UN summit on climate change, COP19 in November 2013, the Greenpeace CEO (Naidoo), was a prominent figure among NGO attendees who staged a high-profile walkout from the negotiations (GI news, 2013e).

Thus, Greenpeace, as an element in the international system, appears to be currently divergent in its relationships with certain other elements in the system, most notably in relationships with state actors. Although GI's former Political Advisor (Sack), is showcased on the GI Website directly addressing the UN General Assembly in 2004, and another major UN consultancy event in 2005⁴³⁹, the study found no further public record that Greenpeace has availed of the UN's NGO consultation mechanism, in a similar fashion, since 2005⁴⁴⁰ (GI news, 2004a, 2004b). If Greenpeace is also actuating the quieter mechanisms for engaging in the international decision-making structures that its UN consultative status provides, there is currently no evidence of it in the public domain. The UN listing of accredited NGO participation in international conferences and meetings records that GI last participated in an international meeting in 2009 (UN-DESA data, 2012). This is a salient point, since collaborative strategies are supported by the bulk of the literature as being the most effective in dealing with 'wicked problems' that have many stakeholders amongst whom power is dispersed⁴⁴¹. Such collaborative arrangements enable stakeholders to reach shared commitments to results and have at their core, a win-win view of problem solving (AustGov, 2007:10). The sleepwalking analogy that has been developed as a key message strategy in the intervening years, might suggest that Greenpeace, as an organisation, has taken the view that its voice in international debate is failing to awaken world leaders to their responsibilities.

In 2014, Naidoo expressed the view that Greenpeace needs to question whether it

⁴³⁹ United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (UNICPOLOS), on 7 June 2005).

⁴⁴⁰ This assessment is based on accounts of what Greenpeace says it does and the nature of the media relations and publicity outputs as reflected on the GI Website.

⁴⁴¹ See also Tufekci and Kriess, 2012.

has any real influence at the international political level (GI Naidoo, 2014), stating:

We go into meetings with, say, the United Nations, and we think we have influence. But a lot of it is access without influence and we need to ask how much energy we should put into the formal inter-governmental processes and how much we put into action with people and really mobilising real resistance.⁴⁴²

Naidoo claimed that on the issue of climate change '[I]t is not that the solutions are not known', but progress is being hampered by 'dithering and a lack of political will', amongst leaders and 'business elites'. In strongly reinforcing his call for members of the general public to engage in acts of civil disobedience on climate change, Naidoo said (*ibid*):

History tells us that direct action is the best tool that we have to push our leaders, to get the political will to do that which they do know they really need to do, so that we can secure this planet for our children and grandchildren.

As an advocacy organisation, Greenpeace is the only party to its formal consultancy agreement with the UN to be publicly outspoken about: (i) its disparaging views on international leaders, as a group, and their representatives at the UN; and (ii) about the quality of Greenpeace's particular relationship with them (*e.g.* GI news, 2012b and 2013b). This thesis acknowledges that, as a multinational organisation, it is not in the least abnormal that the research underlying this study found no public official statements emanating from the UN on the organisation's relationship with one of the 139 NGOs on its General Consultative list (UN-ECOSOC NGO List, 2011:1) — in this case, Greenpeace International.

Meanwhile, Greenpeace's current corporate viewpoint on the UN can be gauged from two further public statements made on behalf of his organisation. In a blog post, Naidoo, asserted (GI Naidoo, 2012b):

We live in a world today that's seen first hand the failure of the multilateral process at events like Rio+20, the strengthening grip of corporate interests in the political arena and the shrinking democratic space around civil society movements.

⁴⁴² This text and the following one are based on my transcription of the lecture videocast (see original at GI Naidoo, 2014).

And in a separate statement, quoted in newspaper articles in June 2012, immediately following the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Naidoo, said that in order to overcome the 'state parochialism' that was stopping any progress in multilateral talks to address environmental problems, Greenpeace would have to 'give up on international negotiations and move to a campaign of civil disobedience' (*The Age*, 2012; *The Guardian*, 2012). Since that time, his messages have consistently castigated international negotiators over a range of global challenges, rebuking them for not only perceived incompetence and failure to achieve GI's preferred outcomes, but questioning the morality of their motivations and commitment to safeguarding humanity (GI Annual Report, 2012:4; GI Naidoo, 2012f; GI Naidoo, 2013). In a recent blog post, Naidoo commented (GI Naidoo, 2013; BBC News, 2013):

It is obvious that too many corporations and governments do not listen and put power and profit over people, ignoring what is in the best interest of humanity. It is becoming increasingly difficult to get their attention – but one thing that we know that works is civil disobedience and peaceful protest. Every act of rebellion – no matter how seemingly insignificant – adds up.

Viewed in the context of the most ordered aspects of the international system — as epitomised by the interaction of stable nation states within the UN framework⁴⁴³ — the Greenpeace policy of praising 'people power' and advocating mass acts of civil disorder appears to be greatly at variance with at least four of the undertakings it made to the UN to secure NGO consultancy status (GI Annual Report, 2012:4, 40). The NGO: 'Must have aims and purposes that conform to the spirit, purposes and principles of the UN Charter. Furthermore, it should undertake to support the work of the UN and promote knowledge of its principles and activities'; 'Must not engage in a politically motivated act against a Member State, or promote activities that are against the UN Charter'; 'Cannot use or advocate violence'⁴⁴⁴; and "Must respect the norm of 'non-interference in the internal affairs of states'.

It can be determined from Greenpeace's public statements, particularly in the past decade, that the interface between Greenpeace and the state actors and official agencies of the international system is a tense battleground of competing

⁴⁴³ See Geyer and Rihani, 2010:114-115 for a complexity perspective on international order.

⁴⁴⁴ See Galtung (1969) for a discussion of the difficulties faced in defining 'violence'.

narratives. Although it is axiomatic that Greenpeace's public expressions of disgust and frustration with international bodies and officials are designed for publicity purposes, there is no reason to assume that these interactions are less adversarial behind closed doors — as demonstrated recently by the NGO walkout at COP19 (BBC Archive, 2013d; GI news, 2013e, GI news, 2013f).

Previously, the Greenpeace advocacy theme of alleging subhuman levels of greed, political incompetence, obtuseness, habitual neglect of duty and collective failure by international leaders and negotiators, had been expressed forcefully in public statements by Dr. Naidoo following the UN 2012 Climate Change Conference (COP18.CMP8), in Doha, Qatar (GI news, 2012d). In a press statement (*ibid*), the Greenpeace CEO highlighted GI's unchanging assessment of the international world, alleging: (1) the persistent failure of international negotiation processes; (2) the 'glacial' pace of progress toward solving weather-related natural disasters; (3) the inability of world leaders, governments, and politicians, collectively, to comprehend the gravity and urgency of climate change challenges; and (4) the 'other-world'-ness of governments and politicians, *versus* a hypothetical universal community of concerned average people. It is on behalf of such an imagined global constituency that the Greenpeace media release states: 'Today we ask the politicians in Doha: Which planet are you on?'(GI news, 2012d).

In contrast to the Greenpeace 'strategic portrayal'⁴⁴⁵ of monumental failure, the official announcements at the Conference conclusion hailed the outcome as 'an historic post-Kyoto (Protocol) breakthrough', by the representatives of 194 nations. The statements praised the skills of the negotiators and celebrated the fact that agreement had been achieved on setting a firm timetable for adopting a legally-binding universal climate change treaty by 2015, which would cover all countries by 2020⁴⁴⁶ (UN-COP18.CMP8, 2012a; 2012b; 2012c).

⁴⁴⁵ *Vide* Keck and Sikkink, 1998:8.

⁴⁴⁶ The COP18.CMP8 Climate Change Conference, held in Doha in December 2012, was the most recent meeting of the world's highest decision-making body set up under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which entered into force in 1994. The Parties to the Convention (COP), comprising 195 nations of the world, meet annually to assess progress on dealing with climate change — including analysing the most advanced scientific data. The Doha conference comprised negotiators from 194 countries and around 16,000 participants, including 6,868 delegates and 5,829 observers (UN-COP18.CMP8, 2012d; 2012c).

Without entering into the political cut and thrust of the climate change discourses here, it is necessary nevertheless to highlight countervailing evidence that the 'attention' of the leading institutions of the international system is in fact intensely focused on urgently finding solutions to the world's 'wicked problems', particularly the complex challenges of climate change and poverty. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported in September 2013 that human activity was certainly the cause of much of the global warming seen in recent years, particularly due to the burning of fossil fuels. Prepared by hundreds of the world's leading scientists, the report called for an urgent global response to halt any further rise in world temperatures (IPCC, 2013:13,17,19). Moreover, the World Bank acknowledges climate change as a top priority and adopts robust policies for driving climate change mitigation action in its worldwide projects. The President of the World Bank Group⁴⁴⁷ recently warned that the world was now in a 'make-or-break decade' for tackling the challenges of climate change. Pointing out that climate change and extreme poverty are interlinked, he declared that decades of progress to end poverty would be reversed unless concerted, immediate, action was taken to confront global warming⁴⁴⁸ (World Bank, 2013).

If one follows Giddens's suggestion (2002:61) and thinks of a relationship as the zone in which rewards become possible for the participants and that these are the main basis for the relationship to continue, GI's record⁴⁴⁹ of unsatisfactory experiences within the international system over many years could reasonably be taken as indicative of a poor relationship quality (and consequent limits to its expectations of rewards), or effectiveness in international political debates. Moreover, the relationship qualities of trust, tact, credibility⁴⁵⁰, mutual understanding and mutual respect, among others, are not in evidence in these public statements. What this means for Greenpeace and its stated aim to 'force the solutions which are essential to a green and peaceful future' (*vide* Section 7.2.1; GI data, 2012a), is difficult to predict at the present time since, at the global level,

⁴⁴⁷ Dr. Jim Yong Kim

⁴⁴⁸ Dr. Kim was speaking at the Opening Ceremony of Climate Week NYC 2013 in New York.

⁴⁴⁹ For example, the UN Secretary-General's ruling in the *Rainbow Warrior* affair and GI's outspoken criticisms on the performance of the United Nations and world leaders.

⁴⁵⁰ The credibility of information has been assessed as being crucial to effectiveness of advocacy organisations in the outcomes of campaigns (Van Rooy, 2004:83; Forini, 2000:234). For example, the high quality of research is credited, by Van Roy and others, with being the determining factor in the campaign to restrict the trade in conflict diamonds (*ibid*).

climate change adaptation — a Greenpeace priority area — is anchored in the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) ⁴⁵¹. Therefore, in order to influence the international response to climate change, it is clearly necessary for non-state interest groups, as well as state agencies, to be able to exert influence in the international deliberative process.

For purposes of comparison, it should be noted that Oxfam International, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (IFRC) ⁴⁵², World Wide Fund for Nature International and many leading advocacy NGOs collaborate closely on global threats, including climate change, with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), and participate in the world's foremost forum on reducing disaster risks — The Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction — while Greenpeace International does not ⁴⁵³ (*vide* UNISDR, 2013). Both the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Oxfam International have also adopted the UN's Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA, 2005), to guide their work ⁴⁵⁴. Indeed, the IFRC has recently published a guide to global disaster risk advocacy in which it unequivocally asserts): 'The art of advocacy lies in persuasion, not confrontation' (Red Cross, 2012c:12).

In accordance with the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the thesis, which asserts the imperative to examine how the parts of a complex open system interact and not how they act taken separately (as advised by Ackoff, 1999:9; Meadows, 2009:13-14, *et al*), the quality of GI's interface with the UN is regarded in this thesis as having a critical bearing on its effectiveness in influencing policy discourses in the international arena (*i.e.* the inter-relational problem space of this study).

⁴⁵¹ This international treaty, to which 195 countries are a party, was agreed on at the 2009 climate summit in Copenhagen, to set general international goals and rules for tackling climate change (Red Cross, 2012c).

⁴⁵² The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), commonly known as either The Red Cross or the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, is the world's largest humanitarian network, reaching 150 million people in 187 National Societies through the work of over 13 million volunteers (Red Cross data (2012d).

⁴⁵³ Participants' lists for the biennial Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction conferences (2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013) are available on the UNISDR Website (UNISDR, 2013).

⁴⁵⁴ *The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* is the UN Member States' key blueprint for worldwide collaborative efforts to reduce the vulnerabilities of nations and communities to extreme hazards that threaten lives and development gains (HFA, 2005).

If one were examining here only GI's relations with other specific *units* within the international system, such as individual governments and political leaders, an uneven and extremely limited picture would necessarily emerge that could tell us little about GI's effectiveness in influencing policy transformation within the wider sphere of international political processes. Separate studies would be required to try to untangle the particular intersectionalities of the actors and gauge individual, unit-level, contingencies and relationship qualities⁴⁵⁵. International meetings on the environment have tended to provide a suitable context for this analysis.

In its most recent denouncement of the outcome of an international summit conference⁴⁵⁶, Greenpeace castigated the multi-national Arctic Council's ministerial meeting of Foreign Ministers for what GI claimed was the forum's overriding failure to achieve any 'concrete' progress, listening only to the 'rich and powerful' and being 'in the thrall of business interests' (GI news, 2013b). The rhetoric of GI's statement is reminiscent of its condemnation of world leaders after the UN's Rio +20 process in 2012, when GI rebuked heads-of-state, as a group, for 'shamefully putting private profit before people and the planet' (GI news, 2012b). Evidently, this latest protest statement, issued by Greenpeace, is a reliable reflection of GI's current corporate stance on international dialectical practices, as well as GI's current issue-construction on the subject of international measures to protect the Arctic environment. It should be noted, however, that the substance of the GI statement is at considerable variance with documentation on the composition⁴⁵⁷ of the Arctic Council and its work, reports on the relevant

⁴⁵⁵ To illustrate this point, one could examine the recent meeting between the President of Indonesia and GI's CEO (Naidoo), aboard the *Rainbow Warrior III*, in Jakarta. This encounter was reportedly characterised by a new and unprecedented spirit of bonhomie in the relationship and mutually supportive publicity statements were issued. Whatever the underlying contingent circumstances that led to this conciliatory meeting at this time, it was a far cry from the country's past pattern of harassment of Greenpeace activists (GI news, 2013a; *Jakarta Post* 2013).

Such a relatively dramatic thaw in GI's bilateral relationship with a specific country leader, however, contrasts strikingly with GI's on-going, outspoken, criticism of national leaders and officials, collectively, over their deliberative processes and stewardship of the Earth's resources. Therefore, the analytical framework for this problem space must be capable of encompassing the ontology of the processes, practices and interrelationships that have emerged from Greenpeace relations with a plurality of states, considered collectively at cluster and/or system level.

⁴⁵⁶ Held in Kiruna, Sweden in May 2013 (Arctic Council, 2013b).

⁴⁵⁷ The Arctic Council is composed of eight Member States and six Permanent Participants, the latter being leading Arctic indigenous peoples' organisations with full consultation rights in the Council (Arctic Council, 2012; 2013d).

stakeholders and indigenous interest groups participating in the negotiating process, and the material decisions and workplans prescribed in the Arctic Council's meeting outcome document, *Vision for the Arctic*⁴⁵⁸ (Arctic Council, 2013b; 2013c).

To say the international joint agreement does not go far enough, or fast enough in specific areas, might be considered fair comment in some quarters. But the Greenpeace message states unequivocally, and evidently incorrectly, that important voices 'of those most affected' were excluded from the deliberations and scientific evidence was routinely and perversely ignored. It further states that the meeting concluded with 'no plans for binding international agreements to regulate black carbon emissions or curb the Arctic oil rush', disregarding (a) the purposes and constitutional powers of the Arctic Council; (b) the impossibility that this forum, let alone one of its biennial ministerial meetings, could produce binding international treaties on these thorny issues; and (c) the complex reality of international politics. As a matter of record, the high-level meeting was attended by approximately 300 ministers, delegates from eight Arctic states, official representatives from 12 non-Arctic countries, representatives of indigenous peoples, scientists, nine inter-governmental and inter-parliamentary organisations and 11 NGOs designated as formally-accredited 'Observers'⁴⁵⁹ (Arctic Council, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). Greenpeace International was not one of them. A notable inclusion was the NGO, World Wide Fund for Nature (Global Arctic Program), which was one of the 11 NGOs accorded Observer status at the meeting. The WWF, with over five million supporters worldwide and a global network active in over 100 countries, including offices in Arctic countries, has campaigned to safeguard the Arctic environment since 1992, working in close co-operation with the Arctic Council, the UN, World Bank and other international institutions (WWF-Int, 2013).

Although Greenpeace is clearly wrong in asserting that world leaders, governments and politicians do not listen to scientific arguments and do not treat

⁴⁵⁸ This latter document, in the form of a multi-national joint agreement, was described by the Swedish foreign minister as: [...] '*a vision statement for the future of the Arctic, shared by the Arctic states and the indigenous peoples. This sends an important signal to the rest of the world*'.

⁴⁵⁹ The accredited Observers were groups that the Council determined could 'contribute to its work'. They included the official representatives from 12 non-Arctic countries, scientists, nine inter-governmental and inter-parliamentary organisations and the 11 NGOs (Arctic Council, 2013).

climate change and environmental degradation with seriousness and effort, Greenpeace appears to be correct in stating that it is finding it harder to gain the attention of international policymakers and that they are not listening to Greenpeace's arguments.

7.6 Summary

This chapter has shown that GI conspicuously embodies all eight referent criteria for an archetypal TAN and is an element in the international system⁴⁶⁰. Its UN consultancy role, or function, possesses considerable analytical value, especially in light of GI's frequent negative statements regarding its inter-relationships and perceived lack of influence in the international *fora*. The conclusion arising from this pattern is that GI's *place* in the international system is in a constant state of flux⁴⁶¹ and can be seen to fluctuate in relation to GI's adaptations to: (i) its role and value to other sub-elements of the system (such as allies who facilitate its activity and opponents who restrict it); (ii) perceptions of its role, reputation⁴⁶² and the value it derives from the system; and (iii) its contribution to the collectively-determined purposes, joint agreements and continuing well-being of the overall system (H₁,H₂,H₃)⁴⁶³. Consequently, GI's

⁴⁶⁰ Although Greenpeace arguably began to interact with elements of the international system in the early 1970s, in its composition (mostly Canadians and Americans) and focus on U.S. nuclear policy, it was predominantly a North American organisation. By 1975, the group was opposing the French government's atmospheric nuclear testing in the South Pacific and had launched its anti-whaling campaign and begun to physically confront international whaling fleets on the high seas and lobby the International Whaling Commission. It could then be said to have established *ad hoc* associations with elements of the international system, rather than a *place* in the system, and that it was functioning in the system as a supplier of information and sometime lobbying ally and publicist, especially in the international anti-nuclear campaign.

⁴⁶¹ This observation regarding the analytical value of complexity perspectives and the constant fluctuation of interacting elements of the international system was also noted by Cudworth and Hobden (2011:64).

⁴⁶² For example, the commentaries on the Brent Spar protest action showed that Greenpeace's international reputational capital is vulnerable to fluctuations in perception, therefore affecting its standing.

⁴⁶³ H₁: *Contemporary TANs are an important NGO variant in international politics that have unprecedented properties and powers emerging from their advocacy communications, which are typically neglected in politics theorising.*

H₂: *The international system is struggling to accommodate TANs and the elements of the international institutions have a distinctively troubled interface with modern TAN-type NGOs.*

H₃: *The adversarial advocacy strategies typically adopted by TANs constitute a barrier to them achieving their aims in the international policy-making environment.*

function in the international system is constantly shaped, *inter alia*, by its interactions with other sub-elements in the system (H₄)⁴⁶⁴.

The study found no evidence to support the Greenpeace key claim that world leaders and the international world are 'sleepwalking' into global catastrophe and doing little to find answers to the world's intractable ecological challenges. On the contrary, in light of the evidence of intensive efforts and concerns, the contradictory Greenpeace message framing appears likely to strengthen barriers to the TAN's international influence-brokering and goal attainment (H₁, H₂, H₃). Greenpeace's ongoing condemnations of state actors and international fora, and calls for mass civil disobedience, are arguably at variance with at least four of the undertakings it made to secure NGO consultancy accreditation to the UN in 1998 (H₂, H₃). In its recent announcement to prioritise the fostering of Internet-enabled activism and 'people power'⁴⁶⁵, there is evidence that Greenpeace elides the notions of 'collectivity' and 'connectivity' in estimating the potential of Internet-enabled activism and the possible mobilisation of 'people power' (H₁, H₃).

The study found that Greenpeace has developed a distinctive style of interpreting and framing complex global environmental and political issues according to a narrow set of campaign issue areas, which appear to have been developed to suit its organisational capabilities. The subject matter within those categories has been typically framed by GI in emotive language. This tends to produce publicity outputs containing oversimplified personal viewpoints; linear snapshots of complex problems; popular assumptions, often employing stereotypes and humour⁴⁶⁶. There is a high incidence of human-interest detail, often involving anthropomorphised wild animals⁴⁶⁷. However, a fundamental consideration in communication praxis is that intended audiences need to be accurately identified and the issues framed for those audiences in ways that resonate with different degrees of expertise, information needs, and resistance. There was no evidence of either unqualified representation or information shortage within the international

⁴⁶⁴ H₄: A complex realist approach has exemplary merit in approaching the subject area and primary research question of the thesis.

⁴⁶⁵ GI Annual Report, 2012:40-41

⁴⁶⁶ This tactic is described by Wyler and Naidoo (GI Naidoo, 2011; GI News, 2004c).

⁴⁶⁷ This tactic is demonstrated in Figure 7.4 and in the strategic deployment of the huge *papier-mâché* polar bear described earlier in this chapter.

decision-making sphere (H₁, H₂, H₃). On the contrary, Keohane and Nye referred to the surfeit of information at that level as torrents of ‘white noise’ and consequent ‘gridlock’⁴⁶⁸.

There was no clear evidence that the trademark ‘Greenpeace action’ of creative confrontation is effective in matters impinging on a nation state’s security and macro-economic issues (H₃).

For over 40 years, Greenpeace has developed and maintained a sector-leading brand presence in the advocacy NGO sector, using the newest ideas and most up-to-date communications and brand marketing techniques and technologies. Today, we see a large-scale decentralisation of resources and, arguably, degrees of strategy incoherence and decreasing effectiveness in which the numerous Greenpeace branded campaigns appear to compete with each other, and with other environmental TANS, in terms of their capacity to mount attention-grabbing spectacles and secure resources. In light of the crowded, competitive, world of environmental politics, Greenpeace claims of effectiveness and conclusive victories for its confrontational activism model cannot be validated (H₄).

A growing body of evidence suggests that the formulaic ‘Greenpeace action’ model of protest has become less effective as a news-making strategy — a casualty of its own renowned success — and lacks novelty and impact. The political protest landscape, at all levels of complex interaction, is now crowded with later models of activism based on the Greenpeace prototype (H₄). Yet Greenpeace continues to apply this locked-in strategy, developed for a different media environment over 40 years ago, which arguably failed to achieve the intended aims then and, the organisation’s CEO admits, is not forcing the desired responses from the international system now (GI Annual Report, 2012:4).

Strong support was found for Wittner’s theory⁴⁶⁹ that when faced with an impenetrable barrier to aim-achievement in the international arena, some activists have shown a pattern of developing systemic analyses and fighting side battles

⁴⁶⁸ See Keohane and Nye (1988:89).

⁴⁶⁹ See section 7.6.2 and Wittner (1997:462).

instead (H₄)⁴⁷⁰. Similar outcomes were seen in GI's gravitation towards 'adjacent possible' opportunities to campaign against nuclear energy producers and, additionally, to battling climate change *via* vigorous campaigns aimed at shaming leading commercial brands for allegedly harming the environment. It was observed that all of the campaigns against prominent corporations — negatively framed as Goliaths and 'business elites' — showed the discursive emblems of an underlying anti-capitalist agenda: the populist rhetoric, arguably, indicative of a NIEO revivalist vision.

Strong corroboration was found for the hypothesis (H₅) that the funding model Greenpeace has adopted to finance its operations has a deterministic influence on the communications strategies it selects; and that this, in turn, has a critical bearing on this TAN's place and function in the international system and on its effectiveness in achieving its aims in the international arena. In stark terms, the high visibility self-promotion⁴⁷¹ and adversarial rhetoric that Greenpeace invariably adopts in its public advocacy regarding the UN, and other international actors, is undoubtedly effective in resonating with diverse audiences in the news media, donors and supporters (H₁, H₂, H₃). On the other hand, it is clearly indicative of poor relationship quality⁴⁷² with international system counterparts. In probing why this might be so, the study found wide contrasts between the relative unaccountability of Greenpeace in its trademark framing of global challenges, repetitive argumentation and pressure tactics, and the mature, ordered and institutionalised deliberative processes of contemporary international engagement (H₁, H₂, H₃).

There is clear evidence in numerous statements by the CEO, that Greenpeace does not consider *itself* to be effective in achieving its aims in the contemporary international system. Naidoo's 'Message'⁴⁷³ that 'We are winning battles, but losing the planet', is apposite, given that Greenpeace declares its main purpose is 'to ensure the ability of the earth to nurture life [...]'. I argue, therefore, that

⁴⁷⁰ Insights by Tufekci and Kriess (2012) regarding some activist tendencies to mistake the movement itself to be the goal, rather than the means to pursue the movement's goals, are relevant.

⁴⁷¹ See Section 7.2.2 for a discussion of the ways in which Greenpeace can be considered to prioritise self-promotion in its advocacy.

⁴⁷² Communications theory relating to the components of relationship quality is discussed in Section 3.4.3.

⁴⁷³ GI Annual Report, 2012:4.

Greenpeace is largely not effective in achieving its aims in the contemporary international system but confuses the picture by claiming sequential victories on a micro-sociological agenda. In light of recent advances in understanding fitness landscapes and different levels of inter-relational complexity it would seem appropriate for Greenpeace to question the work its trademark adversarial strategy is actually doing to shape environmental solutions in the international system: Whether its strategy is optimal for the complex deliberative world of international engagement. Whether it ever was.

Chapter 8

8. Oxfam International

*Bear ye one another's burdens,
and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

Galatians 6:2, *The Bible* (1957)

8.1 Introduction

Oxfam International (OI) exhibits the characteristics not only of an iconic TAN, but as this chapter shows, might be usefully thought of as a 'mega-TAN'. It is both older and larger (in terms of funding and global network reach) than either of the other two TANs examined. Oxfam's embodiment of contemporaneous political activist concerns in the international arena over the past 70 years makes it ideally-suited to a study of TANs and their interface with the international system. Amid the tumultuous events of the past we see that Oxfam's track record is also a story of complex systemic intersectionality: of fitness landscapes traversed and survived, of emergence, co-evolution, adaptation and growth⁴⁷⁴. Today, Oxfam is a confederation of 17 organisations networked together and operating in 94 countries. It has 10, 230 staff and over 47,000 volunteers, 35,000 of whom are involved in running Oxfam's signature charity shops (OI Annual Report, 2011-12:5, 46, 56; BBC news, 2002).

The chapter outlines Oxfam's identity and aims, the socio-historical context in which it emerged and developed, key milestones and the strategic choices that have shaped its trajectory. I then show how complex realism aids explanation of the PRQ and hypotheses. I introduce theoretical prisms from the politics and communications paradigms to show the alignments between Oxfam's political aims and the effectiveness of the strategies it chooses to achieve them. The focus on communications strategies also helps to conceptually disengage Oxfam's

⁴⁷⁴ See Section 8.4.2 for an independent observation of Oxfam's co-evolutionary behaviour in the context of Oxfam's interface with the World Bank.

predominant advocacy function⁴⁷⁵ from other aspects of its operations. This was a crucial methodological step in the study of Oxfam. Such a separation of operational functions was not necessary to the same extent in studying Greenpeace, which defines itself primarily in terms of its high-profile ('creative confrontation') advocacy function, thereby making the prominent story of its advocacy seemingly more uni-dimensional and easier to tell.

This chapter progresses the thesis by closely examining the contexts in which Oxfam has engaged with the international system and has, I suggest, co-evolved with it, gradually adapting to changing circumstances and developing the characteristics of an archetypal TAN.

As will be shown, Oxfam tackles its complex objectives using a range of operational strategies on multiple fronts. Thus, OI's strategic arsenal can be seen to include all of the following activities⁴⁷⁶: political diplomacy, formal lobbying and informal influence brokering, scientific research and knowledge-sharing, humanitarian crisis response capability, development aid and field support, coalition and stakeholder relations, media relations, public outreach and information, public and institutional fund-raising and fund disbursement. What Oxfam's characteristic patterns of adaptation and effectiveness might mean for this organisation and other TANs, are questions that I suggest can be approached more constructively after examining the path travelled by Oxfam.

8.2 Identity and Aims

Oxfam, while allocating the largest portion of its budget to advocacy and campaigning and placing 'advocacy' at the top of its list of primary activities (OI Annual Report, 2010-11:62; OI Annual Report, 2011-12:67), does not primarily

⁴⁷⁵ Oxfam International's Secretariat allocated some 38% (£3.2m) of its expenditure to advocacy and campaigning in the 2010-11 reporting period and 35% (£3.5m) in 2011-12. This was by far the largest, single, category of OI's total expenditure in both financial years. As the Secretariat's main base of operation is in the UK, its reporting currency is in GBP (OI Annual Report, 2010-11:48; OI Annual Report, 2011-12:54).

⁴⁷⁶ These functions were identified, by me, via an external communications audit of Oxfam's advocacy communications performance. The list is indicative of the range of advocacy functions rather than an attempt to be exhaustive.

identify itself as a TAN, as yet⁴⁷⁷, and its several operational functions overlap each other — necessitating a temporary repression (or bracketing out) of some of Oxfam’s well-known humanitarian and charitable activities in order to place a specific analytical focus on its advocacy function. Asked ‘What is Oxfam?’ the popular response in the UK would very likely contain references to its operation of charity shops and fundraising for overseas disaster relief, particularly as these traditional activities of the group are highlighted in Oxfam GB’s publicity materials and Website (Oxfam GB, 2012a). However, the strategy underlying Oxfam’s corporate identity construction, political ideological cues, commercial marketing tactics⁴⁷⁸ and public relations activity — which prompt audiences to form these perceptions — is the critical, but easily overlooked, work of its dominant advocacy function⁴⁷⁹.

Oxfam began without pretension in 1942. A small group of citizens in Oxford, UK, met to discuss their concern over the starvation pervading Europe as a result of World War II. They included a successful Quaker businessman, Cecil Jackson-Cole, who was to become the group’s Secretary and spearhead the novel introduction of sound business practices to the charity sector, launch the first Oxfam shop in 1947, and steer Oxfam’s growth and expansion as a global charity (Oxfordshire data, 2012). These founders subscribed to the ‘internationalist’ ideology that had underlain the League of Nations and, in Britain, in the 1920s and 1930s, a number of movements and societies dedicated to brotherhood and peace. As such, they

⁴⁷⁷ My argument that Oxfam appears to be in the process of becoming an ever more advocacy-focused organisation, especially one promoting digital activism, is elaborated in Section 8.4.2 and the Outcomes analysis in Section 8.5.

⁴⁷⁸ This thesis argues that it was Oxfam’s inspired founding and ‘ownership’ of the charity shop sector for many decades that has sustained its high-recognition levels and widespread reputation as a global doer-of-good-deeds. A major factor in this was undoubtedly the marketing ability to bring international crises into domestic High Streets by providing ordinary people with a simple, practical and affordable opportunity to express solidarity and kindness to more needy souls in crisis situations overseas — albeit combined with a convenient way for them to offload their unwanted clothes and household paraphernalia. This forging of a cognitive link (or schema) between relatively low-cost opportunities to help others and relatively high satisfaction rewards was to prove a winning formula for recognition and fundraising that continues to this day.

⁴⁷⁹ The methodological steps that I have taken to identify the more influential underlying structures and generative mechanisms for the observed social phenomena follow the critical realist philosophy and methodology recommended by Bhaskar (2011:2-4). Accordingly, the temporary bracketing-out of some Oxfam functions and activities that are not recognisably involved in advocacy is merely one analytical prism amongst several that I use to make sense of the inter-relational reality of Oxfam’s connections with the international institutional system. This should not be taken as showing an exclusionary favouritism for either deconstruction or discourse analysis, above the other methodological tactics used to ‘get at’ the underlying structures.

were appalled by the brutality and hatred that Hitler had unleashed across Europe, and were concerned about the consequent suffering inflicted on innocent civilians (Black, 1992: 1)⁴⁸⁰. Calling themselves the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, they campaigned throughout the remainder of the War for food supplies to be sent through an Allied naval blockade to starving women and children in enemy-occupied Greece (OI data, 2012a; Oxfam GB, 2012a).

Showing some parallels with the simple and unpropitious origins of Greenpeace, the original campaign aim to breach the blockade for famine relief was a failure. Resolutely opposed by the British government, the food aid was never allowed through the blockade. Nevertheless, by the end of the war, the Oxford Committee's publicity and charitable fund-raising and support from eminent individuals in all walks of public life had attracted widespread attention. On closing its Greek Relief Fund in 1945, with a then considerable balance of over £13,000⁴⁸¹, the Committee resolved to enlarge its charitable objective to 'the relief of suffering in consequence of war,' and press on with its work — holding firmly to the notion of 'one humanity'. Amid the post-war upheaval and hardships, Oxfam was born⁴⁸² (Black, *ibid*: 20-21, 24).

8.2.1 Track record of emergence, adaptability, and pragmatism

It can be deduced from Oxfam's publicity materials and current Website⁴⁸³ that Oxfam is at pains to project a sector-leading image as an organisation that is continually striving to adapt and respond to changing conditions, whether natural or Man-made, that bring suffering to people worldwide (OI Annual Report, 2011-12:5-10; Oxfam GB Annual Report, 2011; 3; OI data, 2012a; OI Strategic Plan, 2013). Unlike Greenpeace and Human Rights Watch, which both assert their firm

⁴⁸⁰ Arguably the most authoritative text on Oxfam, *A Cause for our Times: Oxfam, the first 50 years*, (Black, 1992), was a valuable source of facts and observations for this thesis. However, as its author, Maggie Black, was a former Oxfam employee, the work could not be taken as entirely independent and impartial. Nevertheless, Black's careful attention to compiling Oxfam's historical record, her intimate knowledge, access to data sources and her obvious affection for the organisation, were invaluable in providing authoritative, albeit secondary source, data for analysis.

⁴⁸¹ According to the UK National Archive currency converter, a sum of £13,000 in 1945 would have had an equivalent value of £337,350 in 2005— the last year in which the Archive's currency converter was updated (National Archive, 2012).

⁴⁸² Despite its wider remit, the Oxford Committee kept its original name officially and did not formally adopt the diminutive 'Oxfam' until 1965 (Oxfam GB data, 2012a).

⁴⁸³ Oxfam International website at <http://www.oxfam.org/>.

adherence to founding principles and ‘proven’ methodologies⁴⁸⁴ (GI data, 2012; HRW Annual Report 2011:24; HRW data, 2012), Oxfam appears to celebrate its ability to morph over time in order to stay relevant to the task of relieving human suffering irrespective of context.

A sense of this development and repositioning of organisational goalposts can be seen in a comparison of Oxfam’s stated aims over time. From the relief of suffering in one country as a result of a single war, in 1942, the goal had been altered, by 1945, to the relief of suffering caused by any wars. In 1949, Oxfam’s objective was broadened to: ‘[T]he relief of suffering arising as a result of wars or of other causes in other parts of the world’ (Black, *ibid*: 37). After the establishment of the Oxfam International confederation in 1995, the prime mandate⁴⁸⁵ became ‘to relieve poverty, combat distress and alleviate suffering in any part of the world regardless of race, gender, creed or political convictions’ (OI Constitution, 2005). Today, Oxfam’s primary corporate aim is ‘finding lasting solutions to poverty and injustice’ (OI data, 2012a)⁴⁸⁶.

8.2.2 People-centred, rights-based and ubiquitous

While this globalised alliance bears only a passing resemblance to the Oxfam of earlier decades, it has adopted ‘Oxfam’ as its primary brand and thereby is able to utilise all of the corporate capital, including brand identity and recognition, accumulated over the past 70+ years. OI lists its ‘[P]rimary activities’ in the following order: ‘advocacy, social marketing, research, service provision, capacity building, humanitarian assistance, etc.’ (OI Annual Report, 2010-11:62; OI Annual Report, 2011-12:67). Perhaps, the most useful indicator of Oxfam’s corporate worldview and intended purpose can be seen in its central commitment statement and performance pledge (OI Annual Report, 2011-12:5):

⁴⁸⁴ Albeit, that both GI and HRW describe how they are broadening and deepening their mandates and capabilities, literally doing more of the same but better, while remaining true to their original ethos.

⁴⁸⁵ Paragraph (a) of Article 2, Stichting Oxfam International Constitution. The rest of the mandate, covering paragraphs (b) and (c) of Article 2, is: To research the causes and effects of poverty, distress and suffering and to educate the general public and decision-makers as to the same; and [with a view to achieving its stated objectives] to work as an international partnership of goodwill (OI Constitution, 2005).

⁴⁸⁶ An excellent overview of the what, why, when, where and how of Oxfam International is available on the organisation’s official Website at <http://www.oxfam.org/en/about> (OI data, 2012a).

We are outraged by the poverty and injustice in the world. We must challenge unjust policies and practices and we must respect people's rights. Together we can achieve a fair world without poverty. With partners and allies, we will act in solidarity with people living in poverty, especially women, to achieve their rights and assert their dignity as full citizens.

In choosing to condition its aims with the requirement that solutions be 'lasting', Oxfam can be compared with Greenpeace in specifying an aim that is not only indefinable in any meaningful sense but is also unactualisable. Even if the concepts of 'solutions', 'poverty', 'injustice' and 'fair' could be defined in universally meaningful terms, amelioration of social adversity is always contingent and cannot be lasting. Furthermore, the organisation's aims represent its specific corporate visions of social ideals and the way to closing the gap between the perceived *status quo* and the achievement of these ideals. In a recent major restatement of its corporate vision,⁴⁸⁷ Oxfam asserted:

Oxfam's vision is a just world without poverty: a world in which people can influence decisions which affect their lives, enjoy their rights, and assume their responsibilities as full citizens of a world in which all human beings are valued and treated equally. [...] The ultimate goal of Oxfam is to end the injustice of poverty.

In the same document, Oxfam presented its prescription for strategic action to tackle the challenges of poverty (OI Strategic Plan, 2013: 5): 'Ultimately, it will require people-power to find a new and more sustainable path from poverty'.

Oxfam's current aims appear to be characterised by a lack of universally acknowledged referents and measurable aims. Departing markedly from the more practical aims of earlier decades, OI's more recent goal statements might be seen instead to adopt a broad-brushed, emotive, approach to portraying local situations in distant places to globalised audiences. To what extent Oxfam could be adopting the brand marketing tactic of delivering 'fuzzy' brand promises to its audiences, is discussed later in this chapter⁴⁸⁸.

⁴⁸⁷ The Power of People Against Poverty: Oxfam Strategic Plan 2013-2019 (OI Strategic Plan, 2013:6).

⁴⁸⁸ In 'fuzzy promises' theorisation, brands deliver fuzzy functional, symbolic, and experiential promises to their target consumers that result in behaviours that, *inter alia*, encourage consumers to use brands as narrative material to communicate self-identity; facilitate courses of consumer action that are conducive to the promised functionality; and motivate consumers to adopt and play a social role implicitly suggested and facilitated by the brand (see, for example, Anker *et al*, 2012).

8.2.3 Identifying Oxfam International as a TAN

Oxfam International is obviously many things to different people, but is it a TAN? I suggest the following observations indicate that the advocacy function of OI is sufficiently highly developed to fit my eight-point referent model.

Criterion #1:

- ***Distinctive, highly-visual, transnational corporate identity***

The distinctive Oxfam corporate logo (*Figures 8.1 to 8.4*), is prominently displayed on all OI corporate branded items. It shows a proprietary interest, even implied ownership, of the internationally recognised, stylised, ribbon symbol for awareness and solidarity with a social cause. The corporate identity reinforcement value of Oxfam signage on its charity shops and collection banks in community centres is inestimably high.



Figure 8.1 Oxfam's distinctive corporate identity and logo



Figure 8.2 Brand differentiation strategy includes availability, low-cost and convenience (Oxfam Int).



Figure 8.3 Displaying a distinctive, highly-visual, corporate identity (Oxfam Int).



Figure 8.4 Brand promotion and fieldwork go hand-in-hand (Image: Oxfam Int).

Criterion #2:

- ***Demonstrable prioritising of self-promotion***

Oxfam branding, usually in the form of name, logo and corporate colour, is prominently positioned in all OI publicity outputs. A high proportion of Oxfam's publicity outputs, such as media releases and Website content, is based on attention-capturing revelations in Oxfam-commissioned investigative reports. This advocacy strategy has multiple advantages in regard to self-promotion: when news stories are generated from Oxfam reports, the media story will cite Oxfam (usually prominently) as the information source⁴⁸⁹; this tactic also drives reader traffic to the location of the source report, which ensures further name-recognition and income to fund further reports. Oxfam thereby seeks to enhance its brand reputation as a source of independent, scientific data; it also serves to promote itself to media outlets as an on-going valuable source of newsworthy stories. According to Lauren Gelfand⁴⁹⁰: 'A lot of what Oxfam does is to sustain Oxfam' (Rothmeyer (2011)).

⁴⁸⁹Ethical conventions on source-citing are widely followed by reputable media organisations.

⁴⁹⁰ A journalist who took a year off to work for Oxfam.



Figure 8.5 'A lot of what Oxfam does is to sustain Oxfam' (Rothmeyer, 2011) (Image: Oxfam, UK).

Criterion #3:

- ***Demonstrable prioritising of voice-amplification strategies in advocacy***

Evidenced by OI's demonstrable commitment to people-centred, voice-amplification strategies in its advocacy publicity outputs. The Oxfam Strategic Plan 2013-2019 is explicit in its emphasis on combining 'programming and influencing approaches' in Oxfam's worldwide operations. It prioritises the advocacy strategy of 'influencing others to address poverty and injustice' (OI Strategic Plan, 2013:5. For an example of this advocacy strategy in practice, see also OI Annual Report, 2011-12: 30).

Criterion #4:

- ***Highly media-savvy, with unremitting media relations activity***

Exemplified by explicit statements on OI official Website⁴⁹¹, OI Annual Report, 2011-12: 5, 7, 12, 24, 25, 30, 34, 43, 63; and OI Strategic Plan, 2013-2019. A job description for an Oxfam 'Communication Advisor' reveals the organisation's requirements for high-level of professional communications expertise in its headquarters communications function (OI Ad, 2010)

⁴⁹¹ All Oxfam Websites project an image of a geographically extended TAN operating simultaneously worldwide on a dizzying array of fronts.

Criterion #5:

- ***Demonstrable high degree of adoption of sophisticated public/political communications style and strategies***

Clearly exemplified by statements on OI official Website. Oxfam is explicit in describing its advocacy approaches using contemporary brand marketing terminology. In its latest Annual Report (2011-12:12-13), OI reported on a major rebranding initiative, which frames the reorganisation of its relationships with affiliates as a new, global brand — a ‘One Oxfam’ with ‘one brand and one voice’. It explains:

The global identity is much more than a house style or introduction of new colors and logo. It articulates what we stand for and who we are. The global identity will be a key asset for SMS countries, where we are building the one Oxfam approach, and it will bring a very strong and unified brand to all affiliates.

The recently-published Oxfam Strategic Plan contains numerous references to Oxfam using its expertise and resources to politically empower grassroots communities through skills-building in advocacy and campaigning operations (OI Strategic Plan, 2013:16, 23 - 26).

Criterion #6:

- ***Demonstrable high degree of adoption of advanced information and communication technologies***

Exemplified by explicit statements and high quality content on OI’s official Website. OI runs seven ‘Blog Channels’ connected to its various campaigns on its Website, posts new videos and images every day and invites Website visitors to ‘tweet, pin, or share’ their stories with Oxfam via social media dialogues.

Criterion #7:

- ***Demonstrable high degree of strategic social boundary mechanism construction***

It is almost axiomatic to assert that Oxfam has established a compelling brand image centred on mobilising large-scale humanitarian assistance to communities in need. It is equally straightforward to argue that Oxfam has been highly visible in expressing its appreciation to donors, volunteers and supporters: embracing them in its proclamation that people who support Oxfam are helping ‘to achieve a fair world without poverty’⁴⁹². Thereby, these messages arguably imply that in supporting Oxfam, such supporters are joining ‘a global movement for change’ (*ibid*). Oxfam GB compliments its supporters by stating that ‘Oxfam is a vibrant global movement of passionate, dedicated people fighting poverty together. Doing amazing work, together. People power drives everything we do’ (OI data, 2012a; Oxfam GB, 2013). It is, therefore, reasonable to surmise that such statements constitute a social boundary mechanism that (a) confers on Oxfam supporters a measure of recognition that they possess certain virtues that are much valued by the group and by humanity-at-large⁴⁹³; (b) asserts that Oxfam’s ideology and supporter base are part of a coherent ‘global movement for change’; and (c) is implicitly reproachful of those who do not subscribe to its humanitarian messages.

Criterion #8:

- ***Demonstrable differentiation strategies within the NGO sector and within the typology of TANs***

Just two of Oxfam’s outstanding differentiation strategies are its origination of the charity-shop business model for NGO fundraising and its strategic positioning of itself as a founding member of the INGO Accountability Charter, which sees Oxfam adopt the role of doyen of an elite upper echelon of international NGOs. Its differentiation strategies within the TAN typology also include: its customary rejection of naming-and-shaming as an advocacy tactic; distinctive use of authentic, grassroots voices in its storytelling; and the eminence and range of A-List celebrities in its advocacy outreach.

⁴⁹² OI Annual Report 2011-12:5

⁴⁹³ For insights into ‘interaction rituals’ and ‘interaction ritual chains’ see Goffman (1967: 5-15), Collins (2004:150-151) and Ross (2010).

8.3 Socio-historical context

The changing world appears to have had a far greater impact on Oxfam's journey than fixed doctrines, or log entries describing its significant milestones. There have been two important changes in Oxfam's operating environment, which have created vastly different conditions to those in which this organisation emerged:

8.3.1 A new world order in humanitarian aid delivery

Humanitarianism, as a human enterprise, has seen significant upheavals since the '70s and '80s — a time when disaster relief was not regarded as an issue of major concern to the international community (Kent, 2004). However, that situation has since undergone a dramatic reversal (*ibid*). Factors that have been cited for reversing attitudes to crisis aid delivery include shifting international polarities; Post-9/11 and 'War on Terror' security stabilisation policies; strategic disengagements from the international consultative *fora*; and ambivalence on the part of international players to intervene in each other's sovereign affairs. Kent observes that international factors were particularly significant in the post-Cold War period, when an 'international community of indifference' seemed to have replaced the bipolar order and 'humanitarian action' often became a substitute for bilateral political commitment or military intervention (Kent, 2004; 2010). Intimately connected to the outcomes (and often tragic failures)⁴⁹⁴ of a number of highly-politicised interventions, or denials, of both emergency and development assistance from foreign sources, has been an increasingly widespread view that humanitarian action is ultimately determined by the political, economic and socio-cultural contexts in which it takes place (Kent: 2010; OI Report 2012). This realisation, in turn, is forcing a paradigmatic refocusing on the concept of *local* in humanitarian crisis intervention and aid delivery (UN GA Resolution, 1991; OI Report, 2012; Red Cross, 2012a, 2012c, 1995; Collinson *et al*, 2010)⁴⁹⁵. Kent points out that (*ibid*:2010):

⁴⁹⁴ Kent (2004:854) posits that an 'international community of indifference' that seemed to have replaced the bipolar order, resulted in tragic consequences in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and especially Rwanda.

⁴⁹⁵ Reflecting the evolving pattern in aid delivery, since 1991 the UN has recognised that crisis-affected states, and not the international agencies, have the primary role in providing humanitarian assistance (UN GA Resolution, 1991; OI Report, 2012:2). As part of a programme to reform its humanitarian responses and reflect the changing aid environment, the UN reorganised its Department of Humanitarian Affairs in 1998, expanded its mandate, and renamed it the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA, 2013).

A perceived paradox of globalisation is that the more globalised the world, the more “localized” it would seem to be. In other words, the more one has focused on global commonalities and inter-relationships, the more will local variations, reflected in customs, cultures and even language, come to the fore. Consistent with changes in government attitudes towards international humanitarian intervention [...] governments, too, will be more inclined to opt for local over international. This would mean that humanitarian actors will increasingly be drawn from national and local community networks and organizations, and that external intervention will be less and less encouraged, and “localism” will be the preferred option.

Oxfam demonstrates that it understands this paradigm shift well, stating in its annual report (OI Annual Report, 2010-11:9-11; see also OI Annual Report 2011-12 and OI Strategic Plan, 2013: 5).

Oxfam is committed to engaging with local communities, partners, supporters, and institutions and working with other NGOs to ensure that we listen to our stakeholders at all levels of our work.

In 2012, Oxfam published a report⁴⁹⁶ stating the organisation’s belief that ‘a new world order’ in humanitarian aid delivery was underway. It highlighted the importance of local engagement: a shift away from the situation in which Western-based donors, INGOs and the UN provided the bulk of assistance, to a new norm in which ‘new donors and NGOs from around the world now provide a significant share of humanitarian aid’. In many countries, it claimed, there had been a growing sentiment against Western-based humanitarian agencies. The closer linking of the U.S. security agenda to development aid in the Post-9/11 and ‘War on Terror’ era had also had a marked impact on this mood of ill feeling. Furthermore, the report was critical of what it viewed as imbalances and inconsistencies resulting from ‘media-driven attention’ that popularised some humanitarian crises but led to the neglect of others that ‘fail to grip the media’s attention’ (Collinson *et al*, 2010; OI Report, *ibid*; U.S. NSS, 2002 and 2010).

Further emphasising the changing environment for humanitarian projects, Oxfam was one of the eight founder signatories to the 10-point *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief*, in 1995 (Red Cross, 2012a, 1995). Four principles of this Code commit NGOs to

⁴⁹⁶ Oxfam briefing paper, entitled *Crises in a New World order: Challenging the humanitarian project* (OI Report, 2012); see also Collinson *et al* (2010).

operate: to attempt to build disaster response on local capacities; to find ways to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid; to strive, in the provision of relief aid, to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs; and to hold themselves accountable to both those they seek to assist and those from whom they accept resources. Viewed in this light, Oxfam's demonstrable and growing commitment to 'glocalisation'⁴⁹⁷ can be more readily understood. What we see is Oxfam adapting its capabilities for engaging with local agents in terms of their interpretations of their needs and demands, while concurrently continuing to function as a veteran, traditional model NGO with its own mandate, global-scale structures and complex power relationships.

In contrast to both Greenpeace and Human Rights Watch, Oxfam acknowledges its collaborative network of 'thousands of local partner organisations'. It makes frequent references in publicity materials to the quality of the local knowledge it is able to bring to its research and to 'working with our partners and allies' to achieve organisational goals as 'part of a global movement for change' (OI Strategic Plan, 2007). These comments arguably enhance Oxfam's image as an organisation that has the capability to be both global and local at the same time, in line with the paradigmatic refocusing on the concept of *local* in humanitarian crisis intervention and aid delivery (Kent, 2010; Jones, 2006:116, 190).

Apart from its own member country network, Oxfam is currently working with more than 1,000 of its partner organisations on projects worldwide (Oxfam GB, 2012a). Many of these are grassroots organisations (local NGOs, producer groups, co-operatives and small businesses). These local views are then incorporated into designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the Oxfam programmes that

⁴⁹⁷ Glocalization/or glocalisation, is a neologism coined in the 1980s to refer to the telescoping of the global and local scales to form a blended concept. The original business applications of the term were applied to the tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global, or near-global, basis to increasingly differentiated local and particular markets. The concept was then developed in a social theoretical sense to overcome what some sociologists perceived to be a weakness of the term 'globalisation', which was being used to describing a phenomenon that was cast in tension with 'localisation' (the global-local problematique in sociology). 'Glocalisation' is, therefore, considered by some scholars to be a preferable term to 'globalisation', as (a) it involves the creation and incorporation of locality in its meaning, and (b) it makes the concern with space at least as important as the focus on temporal issues. In fact, Jones asserts (2006:116,190) that contemporary globalisation is constituted through various forms of glocalisation, although, he concedes that, in a wider sense, other forms of globalisation could be possible. See Section 8.5.3 for my further discussion of the relevance of glocalisation theory to the challenges faced by TANs in promoting global (and in the case of Human Rights Watch, non-negotiable) political ideologies in local contexts.

affect them (*ibid*: 10). The following sections illustrate further ways in which Oxfam has adapted to meet changes and challenges in this new world order in humanitarian aid delivery — along the way, showing a gradual drift into matters it views as connected to human rights and injustice in local contexts. Indeed, this study found that in response to these changing circumstances, Oxfam has carried out a strategic gear change by placing greater emphasis on developing its role as a political organiser and civil society advocacy enabler in local contexts (*vide* OI Strategic Plan, 2013:14). This is discussed in Section 8.4.3.

Considering the globe-spanning reach of the Oxfam confederation, the task of operationalising a single group ideological programme in scores of multi-local, multicultural, contexts is undoubtedly immense. Nevertheless, the Oxfam system has grown by accumulating an array of national chapters. In a major organisational restructuring in the mid-1990s⁴⁹⁸, Oxfam UK and Ireland amalgamated with Oxfam groups in eight other parts of the world to form the confederation Oxfam International, which is a separate legal entity registered as a charitable foundation in The Netherlands (Oxfam GB, 2012a; Oxfam GB Annual Report, 2010-11:32)⁴⁹⁹. Current plans are to remain on the expansion path, with the aim of having 20 to 25 affiliates in the confederation by the year 2020 (OI data, 2012b; OI Annual Report, 2011-12:13).

In order to be relevant in the 21st Century, Oxfam has declared that it needs a presence and will prioritise links with allies and civil society in the emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and Mexico (the so-called BRICs or BRICSAMs), which have been forecast to be among the world's largest economies by 2050⁵⁰⁰. Moreover, Oxfam points out, these countries will also be increasingly important on issues such as climate change, food security and global inequality. Therefore, Oxfam has adapted by announcing its intention to increase

⁴⁹⁸ There is some discrepancy as to the exact date Oxfam International was established. Oxfam GB claims the date was 1994 (Oxfam GB, 2012a), whereas Oxfam International claims it was set up in 1995 (OI data, 2012a).

⁴⁹⁹ The eight joining Oxfam groups were Australia, New Zealand, America, Canada, Quebec, Hong Kong, The Netherlands and Belgium (*ibid*). Oxfams in France, Germany, India, Spain and Mexico followed later. In what may be taken as a sign of the core network's continuing growth and expansion, Oxfam Italy and Oxfam Japan achieved full affiliate status in 2012.

⁵⁰⁰ I posit that, at this stage, it is too early to estimate what implications this situation will have on Oxfam's recent policy decisions that were evidently predicated on the increased economic power of the global South.

its advocacy and campaigning in these countries (OI Annual Report, 2010-11:8; OI Strategic Plan, 2013: 13,18). However, there are signs emerging that this reorientation might not prove to be fruitful in the foreseeable economic climate (Davos Global Economic Outlook 2014; IMF, 2013; Magnus, 2014)⁵⁰¹.

The appointment, in May 2013, of a world-recognised authority on human rights — Ugandan, Winnie Byanyima — as Executive Director of Oxfam International appears also to send out a strong message regarding Oxfam's current and future imperatives (OI data, 2013a). Mrs. Byanyima is described by OI as: a 'grassroots activist, human rights advocate, senior international civil servant and world-recognised expert on women's rights'. Mindful of Oxfam's current imperatives, as stated in its latest Strategic Plan, and clearly reflected in this biodata, I suggest that Oxfam's listing of Mrs. Byanyima's skills set, commencing with 'grassroots activist', is probably illustrative of the priority areas in which her expertise will be applied.

8.3.2 Differentiation challenges in the competitive NGO market

Weiss (2013) points to the strong market dynamics of the multi-billion dollar⁵⁰² humanitarian aid delivery sector and challenges international humanitarians and their government donors to move beyond the largely idealistic and passé model of the traditional NGO 'relief' agency and think about their profession as a business. Indeed, notes Weiss, some federations, such as Oxfam and Save the Children are 'big businesses' (Weiss, 2013:7):

[...] like entrepreneurs, humanitarian agencies are concerned with image and marketing strategies in an expanding global business that over the past two decades has become increasingly competitive with a glut of suppliers vying for their share of the market.

In scrutinising the operations of TANS, Lecy, Mitchell and Schmitz (2010:229-251) endorse the business and marketing firm analogies. They found that while the majority of early studies in IR viewed advocacy organisations as 'altruistic actors seeking to advance universally accepted principles', more recent scholarship has argued that 'they are better understood as interest-driven actors motivated by the

⁵⁰¹ By the end of 2013/early 2014, the rapid growth and momentum witnessed recently in the emerging economies was slowing greatly, causing serious concerns amongst the world's leading economic experts regarding their structural deficiencies and ability to weather exogenous economic risks. Meanwhile, the advanced economies were back on the road to modest recoveries after some seven years of hard times.

⁵⁰² U.S. dollars.

imperative of organisational survival in a competitive environment⁵⁰³. Ironically, the competitive pressures Oxfam encounters from NGO rivals may be due in no small measure to the visible success of the Oxfam model, which has been copied and commoditised on a global scale. Town centres in many parts of the developed world are now home to an expanding range of NGO fundraising charity shops, all based on Oxfam's original model.

Contrary to its popular image, nearly 40% of Oxfam's funding comes from institutions such as governments (accounting for €344.9m in 2011-12); the United Nations (€46.5m), the European Union (€74m), other supranational institutions (€1.5m), NGOs and other institutions (€32m). Commenting on the 2010-11 financial year, in which Oxfam reported a revenue shortfall of €17 million, Oxfam's then chairman⁵⁰⁴ and executive director⁵⁰⁵ cited the global financial crisis 'created by the rich countries' as having an 'impact' on fundraising in some countries (*ibid*:7). The 'current financial climate' was also held to be 'raising questions about the effectiveness of development and aid' (*ibid*:8).

Balanced against Oxfam's successful fundraising projects, its annual expenditure on present commitments is colossal and in recent years has been falling far short of its income (OI Annual Report, 2010-11: 40-42; OI Annual Report, 2011-12: 48; OI Strategic Plan, 2013:19, 27, 30; *The Guardian*, 2013). To tackle its extensive array of adopted causes, the Oxfam confederation dispersed some €920 million and €911 million in each of the past two financial years,⁵⁰⁶ respectively (2011-12 and 2010-11). Although Oxfam, in its *Annual Report 2010-11*, singles out and offers 'tremendous thanks' only to its thousands of regular donors throughout the world (OI Annual Report, 2010-11:40-42), funding from this revenue source amounted to only 17.1 % of the total income for the year 2011-12 and 17.8 % in 2010-11. Oxfam shops and online trading brought in similar amounts. Community

⁵⁰³ Further contemporary perspectives on the challenges of operating in an aggressively competitive market for donor funds are contained in the Polis Report (2012:1). This Report, entitled '*Who Cares? Challenges and opportunities in communicating distant suffering*', showcases the concerns of a group of NGO professionals (including a representative from Oxfam), who are involved in development and humanitarian communications, advocacy and fundraising.

⁵⁰⁴ Keith Johnson

⁵⁰⁵ Jeremy Hobbs

⁵⁰⁶ In its Annual Report for 2010-2011, Oxfam reported a shortfall (- €17 million) of income for the year (€894m) over expenditure (€911m) — (OI Annual Report, 2010-11:42).

fundraising events contributed just 1.8% in 2011-12 and 1.1% in 2010-11, while public appeals netted 11.5% in 2011-12 and 12.2% in 2010-11.

Judging by the weight of arguably anti-capitalist criticisms of ‘rich countries’, ‘corrupt governments’, ‘powerful vested interests’, ‘corporate dishonesty’, ‘profligacy in the rich world’ and ‘reckless lending’, the constrictions on funding and recent income shortfalls are clearly a serious concern for Oxfam (OI Annual Report, 2010-11:7-8. OI Annual Report, 2011-12:45; OI Strategic Plan, 2013:5). However, this thesis argues that these stereotypical references to exogenous causality, obscure structural challenges for transnational NGOs, such as Oxfam, in their quest to persuade others to provide the financial resources essential to their survival and pursuit of their goals.

8.4 Milestones and salient strategies

Oxfam International does not dwell on its past performances, conceding just three short paragraphs to its history on the official OI Website. There is no individual mention there of Oxfam’s founding ‘heroes’, nor the ups-and-downs of 70 years in the frontline of humanitarian crisis relief: neither the low points of a highly public scandal in 1963 when the UK’s Charity Commissioners challenged Oxfam’s status as a ‘charity’ and its right to provide international ‘development’ aid (Black, *ibid*: 85); nor high points, such as the innovative and highly successful use of advertising and marketing techniques to promote charitable appeals in the media (which had the concomitant effect of making Oxfam a household name throughout Britain and beyond), and the enterprising, and original, establishment of Oxfam charity shops, selling donated clothing and other unwanted articles. These imaginative ventures, so novel in the late 1940s and 50s⁵⁰⁷, have evolved to become commoditised templates for legions of ‘charity shops’ and charity fund-raising strategies throughout the world (BBC news, 2002). Today, Oxfam has 1,200 of its branded outlets operating in nine countries.

If Oxfam’s salient milestones are not easy to discern amid the tumultuous events that have occurred during its lifetime — including provision of crisis aid during hundreds of natural calamities across the globe — its pattern of significantly

⁵⁰⁷ The prototype of the charity shop model was opened in 1948 (Oxfam GB, 2012a).

changing its organisational aims and strategies seems somewhat better defined. Indeed, an analytical focus on Oxfam's adapting strategies is rewarding not only because of its variety, but because it reveals the characteristics that have helped Oxfam to change and survive in its fitness landscape.

The gradual morphing of Oxfam's aims is easily traceable: from providing material relief to suffering communities to progressively incorporating strategies for tackling the socio-political and economic causes of suffering communities. This thesis posits that from a political relations perspective the implications are profound: from organising community-level emergency humanitarian relief and development assistance to states (which Oxfam still does), the confederation is evolving its advocacy capability to focus on influencing the political priority-setting of states by organising grassroots communities to 'drive change locally and globally'⁵⁰⁸.

8.4.1 Reorienting strategies: From victims of war to wars of words

Although OI does not specifically provide public information on the origins or development of its advocacy function, Oxfam GB (Oxfam GB, 2012a) notes that in 1979, 'with Oxfam increasingly making a noise about the causes of poverty', a dedicated Campaigns Department was established. As a further innovation, 'area campaigners' were recruited in the early 1980's. Its Website went online in 1996 (OI data, 2012a. In confronting poverty, Oxfam adopts a people-centred, ideological position, predicated on the idea that 'respect for human rights will help lift people out of poverty' (OI data, 2012a). According to Oxfam's 50th Anniversary chronicler (and former staff member) Maggie Black (Black, 1992:vii):

There is almost no subject in the international pantheon of causes that Oxfam can bear to leave alone, not a geographical corner of the Third World that it abjures.

This fundamental commitment prompts an hypothesis that the enormity of this open-ended, multicultural, multi-local, problem space has been a major factor in determining that as Oxfam developed it was compelled to make significant

⁵⁰⁸ See the Foreword to the *Oxfam Strategic Plan 2013-2019: The Power of People Against Poverty* for an overview of current policy and what Oxfam has described as 'a clear change of direction' (OI Strategic Plan, 2013:5-11).

adjustments in its strategic focus and operations. Thus, from its origins as a small UK concern group involved in a single instance of famine relief, it has evolved to become, an international icon for charitable fundraising and a world leader in the management and delivery of emergency relief in humanitarian crises. Importantly, the organisation is also well known for its heavy engagement in service-providing fieldwork to implement long-term development programmes in communities it regards as 'vulnerable' (OI Annual Report, 2011-12:6; OI Strategic Plan, 2013:5).

It is a striking feature of the organisation that in the highly fissiparous INGO sector, Oxfam has implemented a Single Management Structure (SMS), aimed at increased integration, efficiency and transparency (OI Annual Report, 2010-11:7). Although each Oxfam affiliate has its own strategic plan, these are ostensibly aligned with the overarching *Oxfam International Strategic Plan 2007-2012: Demanding Justice* and the *Oxfam Strategic Plan 2013-2019: The Power of People Against Poverty*, both of which set out OI's strategy for achieving 'a just world without poverty'⁵⁰⁹. Under these strategies, all OI's work between 2007-12 was framed by a commitment to 'five, broad, rights-based' aims; while from 2013 to 2019, work is to be focused on 'Six goals to change our world'.

By comparing these goals we can see not only strategic shifts in emphasis on projects, but also evidence of theorising the possibility of goal attainment. In the earlier period (2007-12), the five rights-based goals were: the right to a sustainable livelihood; right to basic social services; right to life and security; right to be heard; and the right to an identity⁵¹⁰. In the latter period (2013-19:3), they are: 'The Right to be Heard — People claiming their right to a better life'; 'Advancing gender justice'; 'Saving lives, now and in the future'; 'Sustainable food'; 'Fair sharing of natural resources'; 'Financing for development and universal essential services'. A 'right to be heard' has moved to the top of the agenda and the

⁵⁰⁹ These two strategic plans were extant, consecutively, during the research phase of this thesis.

⁵¹⁰ It should be noted that apart from the right to life and security (which are enshrined in the UDHR), these so-called 'rights-based' aims all refer to controversial social and economic (or 'positive') rights that remain aspirational, and reflect a distinctly cosmopolitan liberal left political philosophy. It is necessary to note that freedom of speech and expression, which is enshrined in the UDHR, is not the same thing as a 'right to be heard', which is not. Also, the right to 'social security' (UDHR), is not the same as 'a right to basic social services', and is, in any event, conditional on a number of factors including national resources and inability to work due to circumstances beyond an individual's control. See Brown (2008:519) for an additional perspective on this debate.

remaining goals have been framed more in the language of social justice rather than as universal rights⁵¹¹. I argue that this indicates a shift from benchmark goals to idealistic goals, which have no clear standards for attainment, while the ways to achieve them are essentially matters of political opinion.

By adopting its Single Management Structure, Oxfam's stated aim is to ensure it can more efficiently share its services throughout the network, raise funds jointly, and promote 'one brand and one voice', 'one Oxfam' (OI Annual Report, 2010-11:7; OI Strategic Plan, 2013:22). In light of its present financial difficulties this would appear to be an efficient move. However, I would argue that there is an apparent contradiction in this new organisational strategy: on the one hand Oxfam appears to be adapting to international institutional precepts in regard to subsidiarity⁵¹² and localisation practices (see Section 8.3.1), which manifests itself in a dispersal of central authority, while on the other hand, adopting an organisational compliance strategy (the SMS) to strengthen its central control.

8.4.2 Overview of Oxfam's advocacy strategies

This section discusses a number of communications strategies I have identified in Oxfam's advocacy operations by way of an external communications auditing process⁵¹³. From its inception as a campaigning organisation to raise funds for wartime famine relief, Oxfam now puts considerable advocacy expertise into framing international political issues in language that is colloquial, potentially influential and strategically motivational. The reason Oxfam currently gives for

⁵¹¹ This thesis notes the similarities between the 'right to be heard' language of the Strategic Plan 2013-2019 and the 'Right to Communicate' debates in support of the historical civil society campaign for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). The notion of a NWICO, in turn, is regarded as an offspring of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) campaign that foundered in the UN during the 70's and 80's. See Dakroury, *et al*, 2009:2-4, 112-114, 127; OI Strategic Plan, 2013:13.

⁵¹² The principle that tries to ensure that decisions are taken as close as possible to the citizen (see, for example, Cini, 2007:37, 465).

⁵¹³ This process uses communications theory as an analytical lens to evaluate the external communications of an organisation. There are some unavoidable areas of overlap between this section and the following section outlining political strategies, as it is in many instances impractical to try to separate the political messages of advocacy strategies (which can be analysed from both political and communications standpoints), and the advocacy/branding aspects of political strategies (which, again, can be analysed from both of these theoretical positions). I argue, however, that if TANs are analysed using only political theoretical frameworks then important, indeed crucial, explanatory insights into political relationships are missed as these can be only partially explained by Politics theories. I suggest, therefore, that at least a basic overview of the following Oxfam advocacy strategies is needed in order to understand how it expresses itself to its targeted audiences — so portraying its corporate qualities and strategic purposes. The reactions to these activities by both targeted and untargeted audiences can also be observed in the discourses and analysed.

selecting this methodology is to ‘raise public awareness of the causes of poverty and encourage ordinary people to take action for a fairer world’. Its campaigns are major, on-going, commitments and are waged, as part of a wider global movement, to end ‘unfair trade rules’, demand better health and education services for all, combat climate change, support causes related to food and agriculture, and fight for arms control and an end to conflicts and disasters (OI data, 2012a) ⁵¹⁴.

What then does a contemporary Oxfam campaign involve? A typical example can be seen in the protracted ‘Control Arms’ campaign. OI describes this campaign on its Website as ‘a global civil society alliance’ that is calling for a global, legally binding Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) to control the international arms trade (OI news, 2013a, 2013b; OI data 2013c; OI Report, 2013b) ⁵¹⁵. While the UN General Assembly’s adoption of this Treaty, was claimed by Oxfam and other NGOs as a conclusive victory for civil society instrumentalism — ‘a truly historic, astonishing day’, ‘the dawn of a new era’ (OI news, 2013a) — the reality is that the ATT is an unfinished project on the international back-burner, widely regarded as toothless and ‘littered with loopholes’ (*vide* OI news, 2013b; *The Washington Times*, 2013; *Ceasefire*, 2013). Nevertheless, Oxfam’s campaign perseveres in its quest for a legally-binding instrument that is a definitive treaty in more than name only⁵¹⁶. Assessing its current value is, I suggest, dependent on whether one is optimistic about the prospects for blocking warring factions from acquiring lethal weapons on globalised markets⁵¹⁷. It is difficult to envisage a situation in which 50 of the world’s smaller states could compel any one of the most powerful sovereign states

⁵¹⁴ This thesis notes an apparent contradiction in Oxfam’s stated ambition to raise public awareness of the causes of poverty while at the same time imposing self-restraint in its advocacy in regard to naming-and-shaming, or referring to social, cultural, religious and political structural factors as the possible, or even probable, causes of others’ misfortunes and the poverty that afflicts their lives (see Red Cross, 2012a). The distortions of complex reality and the ethical questions raised by over-positive messaging by transnational NGOs were specific subject areas investigated in the Polis Report (Polis Report, 2012).

⁵¹⁵ The Oxfam International Website text implies that Oxfam was the principal driver of the petition and campaign (using the words: ‘When Oxfam and the Control Arms coalition launched this campaign a decade ago...’). In fact, Oxfam was just one of around 100 NGO members of the Control Arms campaign, which includes many large and prominent worldwide organisations, such as Amnesty International and the International Action Network Against Small Arms (IANSA) — (OI data, 2013b; CAC data, 2013).

⁵¹⁶ Despite strong inferences on the Oxfam Website that following the UN vote ‘this ATT may soon become a reality’, the ATT is widely considered to be many years away, if ever. China, Russia, Iran, North Korea and Syria are among the powerful states that have not endorsed it. Some U.S. Senators described the ATT as ‘dead on arrival’. Although 154 states approved the ATT in April 2013, by year’s end only 144 had followed up by signing it and only eight had ratified their earlier endorsement. The Treaty will not be considered formally completed until 50 countries have both signed and ratified it.

⁵¹⁷ As this thesis was nearing completion, the Ukraine crisis added strength to this concern.

to abide by the Arms Trade Treaty against its will (OI news, 2013a; *The Washington Times*, 2013; UNODA, 2013; *Ceasefire*, 2013; *The Independent*, 2013b). Indeed, *Ceasefire (Ibid)* claimed ‘NGOs mis-sold the treaty to their supporters’.

This study noted striking parallels between the role played by NGOs in the ATT campaign and other disarmament treaty campaigns — the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Mine Ban Treaty (1997)⁵¹⁸, promoted by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), (CTBTO data, 2013c; ICBL data, 2013). Although the landmine campaign is routinely cited by scholars⁵¹⁹ and journalists as one of a handful of outstanding successes of advocacy NGOs, the misleading impression that landmines are an aberration of the past is incorrect but widely believed in many parts of the world. Intriguingly, the ICBL Website describes the current status of the project to secure universal support for the ban ‘a success in progress’ (ICBL data, 2013; *The Independent*, 2013b). Similarly, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty remains unsigned and/or ratified by a substantial group of states, whose endorsement is essential for it to become international law (CTBTO data, 2013c).

Oxfam’s campaign strategies are operationalised using an extensive array of state-of-the-art communications techniques and technologies from the current transnational advocacy toolbox. As may be gauged from its Website and mass media coverage (OI data, 2012a), these tools include: developing a strategic brand identity through communications techniques and technologies; framing and disseminating news stories and analyses; issuing press releases, feature articles and status reports; providing links to FAQs, reports, documents, other Websites,

⁵¹⁸ Formally entitled the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction* (UNTC data, 2013b). The global landmine ban, which began in 1997 with a similar treaty to the Arms Trade Treaty, currently has 161 states signed up to it (UNTC data, 2013b). However, the world’s largest landmine manufacturers, including the U.S.A, Russia, China, Iran, India and Pakistan, have refused to support it. As a result, landmines are still routinely available and are still being used.

⁵¹⁹ For example, Willetts (2011:54, 161) and Florini (2000:2). On the other hand, Tarrow, (2005: 163,173-175) provides unusually deep insights that do not tell the story from any one perspective or attribute achievement of the international agreement to a single, or principal, causality (*i.e.* the efforts of the coalitions of NGOs). Tarrow identifies a wide range of contributing factors that resulted in the successful landmines Convention of 1997. Tarrow notes: ‘*These groups might have made scant headway had it not been for the convergence of their efforts with international institutions like the International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN, and with three medium-sized states, Canada, France and Norway, which gave the movement legitimacy, provided for its meetings, and formed the core of a bloc of interested governments.*’

academic papers and texts; posting photo images, videos, podcasts and blogs; maintaining a presence on leading social media sites (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Flickr); maintaining media centres and media liaison officers worldwide; providing spokespersons and celebrity ‘influencers’ for media interviews; launching polls, appeals and petitions; and collecting donations through *Donate Now* ‘hot’ buttons on its Website.

Thus, Oxfam conforms with the communications strategies of both Greenpeace and Human Rights Watch in the way it uses advanced advocacy tools, but at the same time has differed until recently, by using a less sensationalist and more politically sensitive messaging tone to frame its messages. I argue that this emphasis on framing and individual storytelling at the micro-sociological level is distinctive⁵²⁰ and in line with international communications best practice techniques—emphasising the authentic ‘voices’ of the poor and their suffering, on whose behalf Oxfam makes representative claims⁵²¹.

In opting to publicise ‘distant suffering’ in this way, Oxfam can be seen to be following two, contemporary, ‘best-practice’ trends in humanitarian NGO communications praxis: (i) adherence to Principle No.10 of the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, to which Oxfam is a signatory (Red Cross, 2012a, 2012b, 1995⁵²²):

In our information, publicity and advertizing activities, we shall recognize disaster victims as dignified human beings, not hopeless objects.

And (ii) attempting to deepen the engagement of supporters by using narrative styles that go beyond eliciting feelings of sympathy and focusing more on creating strategic cognitive and emotional cues and biases that convey meaning to cross-cultural audiences. This, it is argued, can be achieved by highlighting universal needs and aspirations and key moments in life that people everywhere recognise

⁵²⁰ These include, most prominently, OI’s Website and the messages, news articles, videos and publications available there (OI data, 2012).

⁵²¹ See Saward (2010) for a recent treatise on the use of a claim-based approach to political representation. For an alternative view of TANs as self-interested actors competing in an aggressive market for resources, see Lecy, Mitchell and Schmitz (2010:229-251).

⁵²² The 1995 document is the original Code of Conduct, while the 2012 wording cited here is the contemporary, abridged, version. Oxfam International was one of the eight leading NGOs who developed and signed the original Code (Red Cross, 1995, 2012a).

as resembling features of their own life experiences (*vide* also Polis Report, 2012:18). Weiss (2013:2): proffers the dispassionate view that:

NGOs need contributions from donors who wish to have their heartstrings pulled with a story of one suffering child (indeed, two is often too many for the most effective image) who is caught in the crosshairs of war and can only be saved by their donations.

However, many NGO advocacy professionals have admitted that while emotion is vital for creating a personal connection and motivating people to demonstrate their solidarity with others supporting a cause, the use of emotion in strategies can antagonise and lead people to feel manipulated through feelings of guilt. Consequently, techniques to promote sympathy can cause disengagement, resistance and criticism (Polis Report, 2012:5)⁵²³. In our information-dense environment, states the Polis report, ‘people know, but they do not necessarily act’ (*ibid*:1):

It seems that there is a gap between knowledge and action; between what people know about suffering and how they act and react. We know very little about this gap: how people respond to messages about suffering, what elicits certain responses and what blocks or works on people’s hearts, minds and pockets. [...] Some commentators have suggested that audience disengagement can be caused by the approaches and cultural frames NGOs themselves have used to communicate: that the emphasis on urgency, small donations, “giver power” and grateful recipients may be part of the problem.

To differentiate itself in this crowded and competitive market, Oxfam harnesses the media attraction of high-profile influencers and celebrity ‘global ambassadors’ to tell its stories. In adopting a personalised style of portrayal, this thesis suggests, the enormity and complexity of situations such as drought and warfare can be reduced in regard to cognitive effort⁵²⁴ and framed in the minimalist terms of individual human experiences and emotions, to which external mass audiences can more readily relate and, possibly, be more motivated to assist.

⁵²³ In late 2011, the academic research team responsible for the Polis report ‘*Who Cares? Challenges and opportunities in communicating distant suffering*’, held a public debate at the LSE in London, to gather the contemporary perspectives of NGO professionals involved in development and humanitarian communications, advocacy and fundraising (Polis Report, 2012:1).

⁵²⁴ Kahneman (2011:7-15, 59-70, 71-78, 105, 209) discusses the human inclination towards simplifying heuristics, appeals to cognitive biases and the implications of ‘System 1’ (automatic) and ‘System 2’ (effortful) thinking. He explains how persuasive messages can be made more effective and believable by appealing to the cognitive ease of our dominant System 1 thinking, which *inter alia* relies on resemblances, is ready to jump to conclusions, and focuses on existing evidence (which may be flimsy, vague or wrong), and ignores absent evidence. Moreover the ‘affect heuristic’ describes situations in which judgements and decisions are guided directly by feelings of liking and disliking, with little deliberation or reasoning (*Ibid*:12).

Indeed, the placement at centre stage of those most affected by an issue — emphasising the ‘dependent affectedness’ of people — has been shown also to have the greatest effect in establishing authenticity for advocacy organisations and enhancing validity of ‘voice’ in political deliberations⁵²⁵. This strategy stands in sharp contrast to that of Greenpeace, which tends to concentrate on its own activities. A further advantage of Oxfam’s use of situated actors is the ability to foreground the involvement of both receivers and providers of aid at the local level. Therefore, Oxfam’s storytelling tactic of using grassroots and frontline spokespersons to deliver both information and authenticity cues to its audiences in news articles is a logical one. Of special relevance to this argument is Kahneman’s work on people’s natural inclination to construct fast, seemingly coherent, narratives that help them to make sense of partial information in a complex world (2011:87-88). Examples of Oxfam’s use of this communications technique can be found on the OI Website, with advocacy news articles deploying a human interest editorial style (*e.g.* OI news, 2012).

This account of personal struggles in adverse circumstances should not be taken as a cynical treatment of these texts, or one that is intended to drain the accounts of socio-political, or other, meaning. The editorial crafting of complex political and humanitarian issues as individual human-interest stories is just one of a number of possible editorial styles that could have been chosen by Oxfam writers⁵²⁶. Oxfam’s underlying motivation in adopting this editorial style is considered in this thesis to be significant. In particular, it is taken to be an indicator of Oxfam’s understanding of its audiences and, by extension, assumptions about sources of income. It is less obvious how Oxfam attracts its funding from international institutions. However, in view of Oxfam’s demonstrable adaptability (*vide* Section 8.3.1 and Malloch

⁵²⁵ Bendell (2006) has shown that there are five primary bases upon which a ‘voice’ can be considered to have value in political deliberations — a subject of particular significance for those who advocate on behalf of others. Providing these findings in a UN Dossier, Bendell lists the following five evaluative criteria: relevant experience of the speaker, expertise, novelty, content, and what can be called the ‘dependent affectedness,’ of a voice. Of these, Bendell asserts that the last is considered to be the key to effectiveness. This theory holds that those most affected by an issue are considered to have the greatest ‘validity of voice’ in discourses on that subject.

⁵²⁶ Given the international professional level of Oxfam’s external communications it would be inconceivably naïve to assume the organisation’s external affairs executives were aiming their communications at unidentified audiences.

Brown's observation in Section 8.4.2) it is hypothesised that Oxfam is coevolving⁵²⁷ with the institutions with which it has relationships.

In contrast to the framing of issues by both Greenpeace and Human Rights Watch, Oxfam's storylines have avoided pointing fingers at political or structural causation, focusing instead on harmful effects on real lives and the situated nature of much human misfortune and suffering. In my analysis, Oxfam typically positions its represented subjects as under-recognised heroes, who carry on their lives with determination and dignity, despite great hardships or injury, and having no effective political voice. In marketing and PR communications practice this is widely understood as capitalising on the Panda effect⁵²⁸ to project subliminal cues to presumed commonalities in human experiences, including admired attributes, in order to influence audiences in forming judgements (Prendergast, 2000:450).

From the 1980s 'flies-in-the-eyes' imagery⁵²⁹ of starving African children, Oxfam has adopted its current, humanising, style of portrayal of distant suffering, presenting aid beneficiaries as resilient, empowered and able to make real changes to their lives and their communities⁵³⁰. This is in accordance with Oxfam's commitment to the Red Cross Code of Conduct for NGOs in disaster relief (Red Cross 2012a, 1995). This Code (Red Cross, 2012b) contains the principles: 'The humanitarian imperative comes first'; 'We shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy'; and 'We shall respect culture and custom'.

While Oxfam has historically refrained from commenting on deep structural mechanisms that may have determining causality in the communities in which it

⁵²⁷ See Chapter 3 for a discussion on the interaction of agents and the outcomes for agency, as separate from the effects agents have on systemic outcomes. See also Archer, 1995:247-48, for a definition of the 'double morphogenesis' that is involved in this process. In Archer's theorisation, agency leads to structural and cultural elaboration, but is itself elaborated in the process (*ibid*:147).

⁵²⁸ The concept of a Panda effect in marketing practice is linked to China's use of so-called 'Panda diplomacy' to humanise its image and soften psychological opposition in intractable political situations (*L.A. Times*, 2006). For a more scientific basis to this mainstream communications conceptualisation, see relevant work on 'associative activation' and 'judgemental heuristics' by Kahneman (2011:50-58, 419), and Tversky and Kahneman (1974).

⁵²⁹ This neologism is used in the humanitarian aid sector and is not this author's construct (*e.g.* Polis Report, 2012:4).

⁵³⁰ This paradigm shift in NGO portrayals of international aid recipients is examined in the Polis report on the portrayal of 'distant suffering' (Polis Report, 2012:4).

works, there have been signs during 2013 and early 2014⁵³¹ that Oxfam's previous pattern of mainly concentrating on alleviating suffering through assisting in the provision of material goods in needy communities, and avoiding blame attribution, may be changing. The period during which these changes have appeared are broadly coterminous with the arrival of Winnie Byanyima as Oxfam International's new CEO in May 2013 and the presentation, shortly afterwards, of a new five-year Strategic Plan, entitled *The Power of People Against Poverty* (OI Strategic Plan, 2013).

Oxfam has recently begun targeting major multinational corporate brands in its advocacy and linking them, through their supply chains, back to sugar producers, alleged 'land grabs' and, ultimately, to individual cases of poverty. In a report and video released in October 2013 (OI Report, 2013a; OI video, 2013), Oxfam cited Coca-Cola, Pepsi and Associated British Foods as benefiting from sugar obtained unethically (*Figure 8.6*). In 2013, Oxfam launched an exposé-oriented initiative entitled 'Behind the Brands', calling on governments and companies to build a more equitable food system. The 'Behind the Brands Scorecard' tracks 10 of the world's biggest food and beverage companies⁵³² and assesses their policies and commitment in seven areas: women, small-scale farmers, farm workers, water, land, climate change, and transparency. Oxfam claimed the 'Big 10' lack adequate policies to ensure local communities' land rights are protected along their supply chains, and none has declared zero tolerance in regard to 'land grabbing' (OI Report, 2013a: 2).

⁵³¹ See the OI briefing paper '*Working for the Few: Political capture and economic inequality*' (OI Report, 2014), which was released to coincide with the opening of the 2014 World Economic Forum annual conference at Davos. I argue that this briefing paper both complies with, and progresses, the sea change in advocacy policy, towards greater politicisation, outlined in the Strategic Plan 2013-19. Oxfam's criticism of its Oxfam Global Ambassador of eight years, the actress Scarlett Johansson, for concurrently becoming a global brand ambassador for the Israeli fizzy water company SodaStream International Ltd., was also overtly political and partisan in its message and prompted mass media headlines in January 2014 (see OI news, 2014; *The Independent*, 2014; *The Huffington Post*, 201; *The Times*, 2014). Oxfam's public rebuke of the actress, who has a long record of worldwide advocacy work on Oxfam's behalf, was attributed to SodaStream's operation of a factory in an Israeli settlement on the West Bank. In a statement on its Website, OI stated: 'Oxfam believes that businesses that operate in settlements further the ongoing poverty and denial of rights of the Palestinian communities that we work to support. Oxfam is opposed to all trade from Israeli settlements, which are illegal under international law'. Ms Johansson ended her relationship with Oxfam at end-January, stating that she supported building bridges between the West Bank communities and not boycotts, divestments and sanctions (*The Times*, 2014).

⁵³² The 'Big 10' companies are: Associated British Foods (ABF), Coca-Cola, Danone, General Mills, Kellogg, Mars, Mondelez International, Nestlé, PepsiCo, and Unilever.



Figure 8.6 Media-savvy advocacy links giant brands to poverty, via sugar and 'land grabs' (Image: Oxfam Int).

As noted in the Greenpeace case study, empirical research⁵³³ suggests that a corporation's size matters in confrontations such as those listed above, with the larger corporations often more likely to accommodate a powerful external public such as consumer activists (Reber, 2004:2). In light of this theory, the apparent mega-brand capitulation victories frequently publicised by Oxfam and Greenpeace, for example, could be portrayed as 'straw man' situations with easy targets. Thus, I suggest, the extrapolation of apparent advocacy strategy effectiveness in the commercial sphere to infer that equivalent success is being obtained with the same advocacy strategies in other spheres — such as in the international political arena — is, at best, misleading and unsound.

I argue that by framing advocacy messages in terms of ordinary individuals who suffer life setbacks, injustices and denials of universal rights and norms — while skirting the contentious structural and political realities of their situations and the particular properties of the actors — OI generates publicity outputs that are typically politically thin. Such analysis, from a communications perspective, suggests that in its adoption of communications technology and marketing tactics that were developed commercially, Oxfam encounters a TAN dilemma: Oxfam needs to communicate a consistent brand identity and specific messages that resonate with audiences, but the subject matter of its advocacy — deterritorialised

⁵³³ Applying the communications paradigm's Contingency Theory in public relations (Reber, 2004:2).

social ideals and belief in universal norms — does not suit the globe-encircling media and the cultural understandings of heterogeneous audiences.

Therefore, the thesis maintains that Oxfam's efforts to promote its ideology manifests itself in Oxfam's simplification of critical issues to levels of assumed understandings that fail to acknowledge the complexity — especially the multi-causality and disparate fitness landscapes — of the challenges communities face in humanitarian crisis situations. Support for this argument can be found in the authoritative Polis Report, which surveyed the opinions of numerous NGO professionals, including Oxfam executives, who are involved in development and humanitarian advocacy and fundraising (Polis Report, 2012:1,7). The study found that NGOs admitted they were seriously challenged in the tasks of raising public awareness, enhancing understanding and encouraging long-term commitments beyond immediate reaction, without losing audience attention⁵³⁴. Commented one NGO communications director (*ibid*: 7):

We're trying to engage people, to get them interested in development, think about the world and that they need to take action, whereas what is successful often is appeals that pull at heartstrings, that use extreme images which don't necessarily engage. [...] That way of messaging works in terms of raising money but it doesn't work in terms of engagement.

The report acknowledged that professional advocates in NGOs were alert to the criticisms that their depictions of distant suffering can produce dehumanising imagery and simplistic misrepresentations of complex situations (*ibid*:4, also Moyo, 2010: *xviii-xix* and Weiss, 2013:49-52). From an ethical perspective, some saw the messaging as potentially dangerous — actually masking reality⁵³⁵ — and there were notable differences of opinion between the separate functional categories (policy and programme workers and fundraising staff) over the framing of issues⁵³⁶.

⁵³⁴ See also Darnton and Kirk (2011: 5-6) for their Oxfam-initiated study on the 'precarious' situation faced by NGOs/TANs in gaining and sustaining public engagement and funding.

⁵³⁵ For example, concern was expressed that messaging about superficial aspects of aid victims' lives often failed not only to address violence but, in fact, masked violence. An advocacy director asserted: 'it actually makes a lot of people feel good but it is masking reality' (Polis Report, 2012:4).

⁵³⁶ Zambian economist Dambisa Moyo is scathing in her criticism of misconceived Western portrayals of African countries as hopeless charity cases in order to encourage 'giving alms to the poor'. The notion that aid can alleviate systemic poverty, and has done so, is a myth, she asserts. Instead, Moyo laments that aid has been a disaster for developing countries and has ruined Africa (Moyo, 2010:*xviii-xx*)

To progress the possibility of audience uptake of its messages and consequent motivation, an organisation might choose an audience messaging strategy geared to either particularity (horses-for-courses), or generalisation (one-size-fits-all), or some form of compromise. Global commercial brands manage this situation through collaboration with their agents, and customising their brand communications using terms and motivational cues that are locally appropriate for specific audiences and stakeholders⁵³⁷ (see also Pendergrast, 2013:348). What Coca-Cola does, with undoubted success, is to identify commonalities of human experience⁵³⁸ and then forge cognitive links between these pleasurable experiences and their products, without any intention to alter cultures and beliefs. (Pendergrast, *ibid*). Plainly, the objective of the Coca-Cola business model is to sell more fizzy beverages, not proselytise Western values, although some forge negative cognitive links between the two.

A further strategy is the move in 2006 by Oxfam, Greenpeace, Amnesty International and other prominent NGOs to found the INGO Accountability Charter, a self-regulatory code of conduct for international NGOs, (INGO Charter, 2012; OI Annual Report, 2010-11:11). This appears to be not only a creditworthy enterprise in an ethical sense, but also suggests a more self-preserving motive: the possibility that its establishment is a move by these NGOs/TANs to redraw the boundaries of their social groups, framing a new differentiating identity, and dissociating themselves from other NGOs/TANs that are crowding the market and do not meet their membership criteria.

⁵³⁷ This point is argued from authority. The author is a former Coca-Cola International Communications Manager, responsible for the company's corporate communications function in over 60 countries throughout the Middle and Far East.

⁵³⁸ For example, boy-meets-girl, family celebration, friendship, sporting achievement, thirst, laughter, enjoyment of music, love of nature. The pejorative term 'Coca-Colonisation' is sometimes used loosely by the media as a metaphor for unwanted effects associated with modernity that are perceived, in non-Western countries, to have emanated from the West. This author would argue that the ubiquity of Coca-Cola signage and products in modernising countries renders the Company a highly visible target for such critics, belying the fact that far greater, confusing, and unrecognised social disruptions are normally taking place within globalising markets than are caused by the energetic marketing of a brand of non-alcoholic beverages. Kahneman (2011: 50-58) explains that the cognitive mechanism that causes such an association of ideas has been known for a long time.

If this initiative to form an exclusive INGO accountability 'club' in 2006, and the earlier joining of the Red Cross Code of Conduct ⁵³⁹, is indeed part of a differentiating strategy for a number of the more established INGOs like Oxfam, it would fit a theory about the self-interest and material concerns of market-driven TANs that is now gaining ground among some scholars (Lecy *et al*, 2010; 229; Cooley and Ron, 2002, 2010:205; Ron, Ramos and Rodgers, 2005). As an indication of Oxfam's standing among its peers, its former Executive Director,⁵⁴⁰ was concurrently the honorary Chairman of the INGO Accountability Charter's Board of Directors.

In the realm of transnational advocacy, it is noted that Oxfam's Honorary President from 2002 to 2012 was the renowned human rights scholar and campaigner, Professor Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Its Honorary Adviser is the distinguished economics scholar Professor Amartya Sen, who is Professor of Economics and Philosophy at Harvard University, a former Nobel Prize winner in Economic Sciences, and until recently the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge.

In 2007, Oxfam launched a Global Ambassador's Programme involving media-friendly celebrities, including actors Scarlett Johansson⁵⁴¹, Colin Firth, Dame Helen Mirren and Minnie Driver; pop music artists Coldplay and Annie Lennox; Senegalese singer Baaba Maal; and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Although the involvement of advocates could be thought of in terms of Oxfam's political strategy, their engagement suggests a sophisticated communications strategy: one that ensures Oxfam's reputation is enhanced by association with transnational influencers and thought leaders; virtually guarantees media coverage; and is attuned to the types of entrée Oxfam aims to secure and the audiences it desires to influence.

⁵³⁹ The *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief*. Like most professional codes, this is a voluntary one. It was developed and agreed upon in 1994 by eight of the world's largest disaster response agencies. Today, it has 492 NGO signatories (Red Cross, 1995, 2012).

⁵⁴⁰ Jeremy Hobbs was Executive Director of Oxfam International from 2001 to the end of April 2013. He has remained Chairman of the Board of Directors of the INGO Accountability Charter, sitting as an Independent Director.

⁵⁴¹ Following a public disagreement with Oxfam at the beginning of 2014, Ms Johansson ceased her association with the INGO after eight years in the Global Ambassador role (OI news, 2014; *The Times*, 2014).

Oxfam competes in a transactional market for welfare services where its primary raw material is donor funds. Weiss (2013:2) argues that transnational NGOs may be usefully regarded as ‘agents engaged in resource acquisition and distribution’. Thus, Oxfam’s advocacy is bound up with motivational messages to encourage supporters to provide the donor funds needed. Oxfam then aggregates these ‘raw materials’ and converts them into its primary product: resource redistribution services. I argue that Oxfam’s funding — about half of it provided by national governments and national, international, and supranational institutions — is central to understanding the organisation’s choice of advocacy strategies. This is particularly the case in regard to Oxfam’s characteristic avoidance of adversarial rhetoric and eschewal of the naming-and-shaming tactics directed at governments and politicians that are characteristic of other TANs (see Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 16, 23). Oxfam’s typical advocacy mien — as projected to external audiences — contrasts strikingly with those of GI and HRW in this regard. While it is impossible to assess the extent to which harmonious relations affect allocations by funding agencies to NGO service-providers, it is reasonable to assume that hostility in such relationships would have a negative effect on this allocation and hence their capability and effectiveness. In Oxfam’s case, the sources of funding and the essential permissions for in-country logistical facilitation could not be sustained other than by symbiotic institutional relationships that have been consolidated over many years⁵⁴².

Conflict between Oxfam’s funding difficulties and its operational priorities was seen in October 2013 when *The Guardian*⁵⁴³ newspaper reported prominently that Oxfam GB was ‘poised to axe 125 UK jobs as global strategy shift looms’ (*The Guardian*, 2013). This story quoted Oxfam GB executives as revealing that, as a result of financial pressures, Oxfam would accelerate its strategy to scale back the delivery of large development projects in middle-income countries (*i.e.* in several unidentified countries in the Caucasus and Asia), in order to reinvest the savings in

⁵⁴² McGann and Sabatini (2011:69-70); Howell (2013); Barakso, (2010:155-158); Cooley and Ron (2010:205); Young (2010:53); Bob (2010: 134-135); Lecy, Mitchell and Schmitz (2010:235). An example of this type of symbiotic relationship was the six-month study, entitled *Finding Frames: New Ways to Engage the UK Public in Global Poverty*, which was initiated by Oxfam UK and supported by the UK Department for International Development (Darnton and Kirk, 2011).

⁵⁴³ *The Guardian* maintains a dedicated Webpage for Global Development news and views and appears to maintain close contacts with sources in the development sector.

policy-influencing work and advocacy. The Chief Executive of Oxfam GB, Mark Goldring, was quoted as saying (*The Guardian, ibid*):

We are spread too thin [*sic*], working in too many countries. In middle-income countries, we can't make a large impact through delivery but by gathering and sharing information... A lot of our work is focused on the UK, the EU and international financial institutions. We want to reduce our focus there and seek to influence governments in the south.

He added that Oxfam would concentrate on women's rights, food, climate and inequality in countries in the global South, with reports on policy and strategy. Although the statement that Oxfam is currently disposed to pulling back on its commitments because it is 'spread too thin, working in too many countries', appears to contradict the statement by Black (1992:*vii*) that there is almost no cause that Oxfam 'can bear to leave alone', nor 'a geographical corner of the Third World that [Oxfam] abjures', it is premature to try to evaluate the strategic implications.

The recent appointment of an international-level negotiator to the post of Executive Director of OI would appear to be an indicator of Oxfam's imperatives in international relationships. Crediting the 'astuteness' of Oxfam's development strategy via its lobbying expertise, Malloch Brown⁵⁴⁴ (2011:140-48) recalls that during his tenure at the World Bank (1994-99), Oxfam fought and won numerous battles with the Bank over debt relief and securing World Bank investment in education and health. These strategies, he observed, had resulted in a far more consequential use of Oxfam's resources than if the NGO had spent them on direct relief in a poor village (*ibid*: 141). Furthermore, as a result of these associations, the World Bank's management had become closer to Oxfam than to their government shareholders. It is suggested, therefore, that Oxfam's strategic engagement in this lobbying reveals an organisation that is co-evolving with counterparts in its institutional environment in ways that are less adversarial, more conducive to collaboration and mutual understanding, and more promising of worthwhile outcomes, than in previous stages of its development⁵⁴⁵.

⁵⁴⁴ Mark Malloch Brown, now Lord Malloch-Brown, is a former director of global communications of the World Bank, former Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and an ex-Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations (Malloch Brown, 2011).

⁵⁴⁵ My argument here does not ignore the fact that there are now unprecedented numbers of politically powerful international institutions to lobby. I merely observe that Oxfam chooses to do so.

8.4.3 Overview of Oxfam's political strategies

Linking poverty and rights as a political solution

There is no clear link between Oxfam's ideology that people will be released from lives of material poverty by notions held by distant others regarding their human rights. Although this overarching egalitarian rhetoric may link Oxfam's commitments across a network of heterogeneous supporters, it is theoretically weak in its ability to explain the implied mechanism that will liberate people from poverty, or the particular rights provision that is sufficient to trigger the beneficial effect. While vast numbers of poor people across the world do lack basic human rights, I argue that this duality⁵⁴⁶ is not absolute — to which the substantial numbers of impoverished people in developed, human rights-protecting, countries attest.⁵⁴⁷ However, Oxfam's campaign rhetoric has evaded speculating that social and political structural factors might be the causes of others' misfortunes, promoting instead guidance on what publics should care about and the idea of universal norms, which, it can be observed, are essentially Western norms⁵⁴⁸. On the other hand, other international authorities (see UN Earth Summit, 2012, paras 8-9; and Malloch Brown, 2011:96, 122) hold that adoption of a democratic model and economic reforms provide the best solution to overcoming poverty.

Retaining internationalist core activities

Oxfam appears to be evolving as a hybrid NGO model, combining aspects of its traditional, internationalist, NGO model — sometimes associated with notions of 'doing good', unencumbered and untainted by the politics of government or the

⁵⁴⁶ Furthermore, I submit, the research maxim that 'correlation does not imply causality' is relevant here (Utts, 2005:206).

⁵⁴⁷ According to Oxfam GB, over 13 million people in the UK live in poverty — 'That's one in five without enough to live on, discriminated against and stereotyped, forgotten by the government, and given far fewer opportunities than the rest' (Oxfam GB, 2012b). Yet, few would argue that the UK is lacking in human rights provisions and protections.

⁵⁴⁸ A different perspective to Oxfam's corporate view on causality and effectiveness is expressed by an international development authority and former head of the United Nations Development Programme, who asserts that the real key to poverty reduction in the contemporary, globalising, world is the adoption of the democratic political model (with its implicit provision for accountability to the poor) firmly coupled with economic reform (Malloch Brown, 2011:96, 122). A similar view, also asserting an essential connection between democracy and the eradication of poverty, was expressed in the outcome document *'The Future We Want'* (UN Earth Summit, 2012, paras 8-9) published recently at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (*aka* the UN Earth Summit, Rio +20). Although the report reaffirms the 'importance' that the countries of the international system place on 'respect for all human rights' (*ibid*: paras. 8,9), there is no suggestion that respect for human rights is considered by current world leaders to be either a sufficient, or necessary, condition for lifting people out of poverty.

presumed greed of the market (Fisher, 1997) — with an increasingly assertive, ICT-enabled, TAN model. Thus Oxfam mounts its distinctive emergency responses, summing up its hybrid roles by stating (OI Strategic Plan 2013:22):

We deliver latrines in the midst of disasters and write carefully reasoned and respected reports on the future of development. We couldn't do one without the other, and there are few others who try.

This thesis suggests that these widely-admired functions are vital to the dynamic mixture of old and new functions within the Oxfam confederation as they reinforce Oxfam's reputation for moral substance and doing good, as well as the more overt fundraising advocacy. There is a maxim in public relations practice that there can be 'no publicity without performance'⁵⁴⁹ and Oxfam appears to have ample instances of 'doing good' to highlight in its campaigning materials. As a result, Oxfam appears to have created a successful symbiotic relationship between its traditional service-providing and newer advocacy functions. This suggests also that Oxfam considers its hybridity to be a brand differentiator in the NGO market.

Dedicated offices for international institutional lobbying

OI maintains six offices in strategic locations for campaigning and high-level advocacy. These are in Washington (focusing on the international financial institutions — primarily the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund⁵⁵⁰); New York (leading Oxfam's work at the UN Headquarters); Brussels (lobbying the EU); and Geneva (focusing on influencing key international organisations, such as the UNHCR, OCHA, ICRC, WHO, UNCTAD and WTO). The location of Oxfam's remaining two offices — in Brasilia and Addis Ababa — are a striking indicator of changing geo-political polarities and new, strengthening, regional alliances. It might also be argued that the establishment of these offices is yet another portent that in an increasingly multi-polar international order, powerful, new, regional

⁵⁴⁹ It is not suggested that this maxim, of unknown origin, is to be taken literally. In my professional experience its meaning relates to the fact that if an individual or organisation has done nothing of substance, it will be very difficult to find a basis for generating any worthwhile publicity, especially independent media coverage.

⁵⁵⁰ Malloch Brown, recalls (2011:140) that he was 'initially alarmed when NGOs like Oxfam set up advocacy offices in Washington' because of their presumed intention to target the WB and other official international developmental institutions. Although he mentions that he was furious with Oxfam's tactics during a protest (distributing a pamphlet that was ostensibly increasing hostility and misunderstanding of the WB's position), he came to acknowledge the astuteness and effectiveness of Oxfam's development strategy.

bodies are emerging to challenge the power and roles of the contemporary international institutions. OI describes its Brasilia office as focusing mainly on economic justice and women's issues while seeking to influence Brazil's global and regional engagement as a key player and emerging power within the emerging BRICSAM countries. Oxfam's presence in Addis Ababa is in the form of a Liaison Office with the African Union. Recognising the African Union as 'a positive force for realising social, economic, political and cultural rights of Africans', Oxfam claims to have supported, for many years, the emergence of strong civil society coalitions in Africa to engage and support the AU. The range of issues is extensive — from social and economic rights, HIV/AIDS, peace and security, poverty, gender equality and women's empowerment, to good governance, information technology, economic policies and shared growth.

8.5 Outcomes-in-process and indicative macroscopic patterns

This section applies theoretical lenses from complex realism, politics and communications.

8.5.1 Assessment of Oxfam using a Complex Realism analytical framework

The following key features associated with complex systems were observed: suitability to fitness landscape modeling, structural multi-dimensionality, emergence, sensitivity to initial conditions and cumulative advantage, resilience, path dependency and lock-in, co-evolution, the effects of negative and positive feedback loops, exploration of 'adjacent possible' opportunities, instability, unpredictability and unintended consequences.

❖ Fitness landscape embeddedness

It is relatively simple to think about Oxfam as embedded in a fitness landscape during its early years. The structural and agency aspects, even the contingent circumstances of its operating environment, seem much easier to understand and less complex than they are today⁵⁵¹. Oxfam emerged as it did, when it did, due to a range of contingent factors, embedded in complex social systems, converging and intersecting at a particular moment and, through immanent social activity,

⁵⁵¹ For a discussion on this point see Kahneman (2011:85-88) and Watts (2011: 27). Both Kahneman and Watts warn that we learn far less from history than we think we do, owing to the human propensity to form conclusions based on partial information and paper over narrative gaps caused by information we do not have.

producing a novel configuration with group-specific properties. When Oxfam is viewed in this way, the ‘fitness’ of the newly emerged configuration to engage with others in its multi-dimensional environments becomes apparent.

❖ **Structural multi-dimensionality**

Underlying structural dimensions that appear throughout the Oxfam narrative to have conditioned its place, function and effectiveness in the international system have been:

- (i) Security structures: enablements and constraints in times of war;
- (ii) economic structures (ordinary citizens to crowdfund charitable projects; and constraints due to current financial austerity);
- (iii) political structures (including engaging with democratic and non-democratic systems);
- (iv) cultural dimensions (including different religious dispositions and relative openness to essentially Western notions of norms and norm-sharing);
- (v) polarity (exemplified in strategic orientation to a particular regional or hemispherical focus, such as Oxfam’s recent gravitation towards projects that involve the BRICSAMs and the global South); and
- (vi) technological capability structures (evidenced by Oxfam’s expressed conviction that grassroots communities are restricted in asserting their rights and political preferences through lack of digital communications capabilities)⁵⁵².

❖ **Emergence**

The agential attributes of the original Oxford Committee for Famine Relief in 1942 included⁵⁵³: a shared internationalist philosophy; business and organisational skills; humanitarian and anti-war ideologies; and pragmatic inclinations to collaborative ideology and responsiveness to changing circumstances. In complexity thinking, these attributes might also be considered systematising ‘attractors’ — some stronger than others — that would not individually have resulted in the Oxfam prototype, but did so when combined.

⁵⁵² Thus, Oxfam has made technological capacity-building a strategic priority in its quest to end poverty.

⁵⁵³ Based on Black’s findings (1992).

Oxfam's chameleon-like functional hybridity appears to have emerged from its original mixture of corporate properties. Furthermore, while Oxfam has undergone changes during its evolution, it has continued to sustain, and be sustained by, these favourable primary drivers and the corporate capital they have helped to amass. I posit that Oxfam's typically pragmatic approach to refraining from blaming and shaming specific governments (who may be donors), show that Oxfam, as a collective entity, has emerged with a capacity to adapt to suit changing circumstances. This does not contradict the path dependency effects of complex systems. Rather, a high measure of pragmatism is among a number of locked-in corporate qualities that demonstrate path-dependency.

The group emerged in the form it did, notwithstanding the state of war, because of the contingent enabling properties in its fitness landscape, such as the UK's democratic political system (including tolerance for alternative viewpoints, respect for human rights and freedom of speech); an influential and vibrant news media interested in covering new ideas and enterprises; and widespread religious and social dispositions to charitable gestures and generosity towards those less well off than oneself.

While the collective humanitarian instincts of the Oxford committee is emphasised in the historical accounts, this study found no explanation for why the Committee focused its concern on the famine in Greece when far greater numbers of people were concurrently starving in China and elsewhere?⁵⁵⁴. However, signs of the conditions of possibility for Oxfam's emergence (*i.e.* enablements and constraints) include the following: (i) Their narrative suggests that the underlying enablements and constraints predisposed them to tackling a cause they believed they could win; (ii) The inclusion in the group of a 'Greek scholar' (Black, *ibid*) may also have favoured the decision to focus their relief efforts on Greece; and (iii) Despite the apparent effectiveness of the fund-raising and awareness-raising strategies, official opposition in time of war (showing compatibility with military structures) proved to be an insurmountable barrier and the consequence was failure. I suggest that the group misread the prevailing conditions in the fitness landscape for their

⁵⁵⁴ Some three million people were reported to have starved to death in China's Henan Province alone in the same year (1942), (*N.Y. Times*, 2012c).

enterprise, especially the risks, power differentials and security concerns. In due course, they reassessed their options, adapted their goal and struck out in a fresh direction. This, I consider, shows the systemic behaviour of emergence, co-evolution, the effects of feedback loops and the availing of a 'next adjacent' possibility — *i.e.* on encountering a barrier to attainment of their preferred goal (failure to send relief supplies to Greece), the Committee members evidently retained their group dynamic and accrued corporate capital and applied these resources to championing a revised goal.

The attraction of the group to a businessman, Cecil Jackson-Cole, can be viewed as a perturbation that resulted in the emergence of the marketing strategy that generated the charity shop phenomenon. I posit also that the application of this expertise established cumulative advantage conditions for Oxfam's communications and advocacy functions⁵⁵⁵.

I submit that Oxfam's periodic resetting of its strategic aims is evidence of this complex system's characteristic adaptive and emergent behaviour patterns in response to (a) disruptive changes in its fitness landscape; (b) the influence of elements of the international system, as well as intersectional impacts with elements of other complex social systems; and (c) pragmatic gravitation towards enabling conditions for its operations — including a tendency to embrace the tools of information communications technologies. Oxfam's development and growth from a single committee to a worldwide confederation operating in 94 countries exhibits classical characteristics of emergent behaviour in complex, dynamic, systems⁵⁵⁶.

❖ Co-evolution

Patterns of adaptation show Oxfam co-evolving in relation to influences from other elements in the international system. Examples include its strategic reactions to

⁵⁵⁵ This included the establishment of a dedicated Campaigns Department to amplify advocacy messages regarding the causes of poverty.

⁵⁵⁶ It is interesting to note the emergent traits of the various national groups as they joined the Oxfam system (or, looking at this from a different perspective, as Oxfam joined them). A case in point is that of Oxfam Australia, which emerged as an Oxfam affiliate in 2005, having itself emerged out of an earlier merger between two leading Australian international development organisations that traced their roots back to 1953 (Oxfam Australia, 2013).

changing international attitudes to the localisation of humanitarian and development aid; and reorientation of its strategies and operations to changing socio-economic, climate and political conditions in Africa and the BRICSAM countries.

Co-evolutionary forces appear responsible also for strategy reshaping in Oxfam's current five-year strategy (OI Strategic Plan, 2013-2019). Two salient areas are: (a) Severe funding constraints appear to have driven Oxfam to place greater emphasis on developing its advocacy function (OI Annual Report 2011-12:67). Advocacy, Oxfam asserts, is cost-effective and capable of influencing local structural factors underlying poverty in national contexts; and (b) the changing attitudes to humanitarian aid, leading to Oxfam's increasing emphasis on promoting localised political empowerment in developing countries.

❖ **Sensitivity to initial conditions**

Indications of Oxfam's sensitivity to its founding conditions and consequent cumulative advantage is demonstrated by the longevity, growth and worldwide commoditisation of its novel charity shop funding model.

The 'shell institution' phenomenon, described by Giddens (2002:18-19), may owe properties to the 'sensitivity to initial conditions' aspect of complex systems. Oxfam shows continuing resemblances to properties associated with its longstanding and iconic corporate identity, even though its aims, functioning, personnel and fortunes have undergone extensive revisions over the course of seven decades. Some of these enduring and intrinsic properties appear to have been framed so that they perform the role of social institutional 'attractors'. These attractors are a cognitive phenomenon, a type of norm totem to which some people are drawn (Geyer and Rihani, 2010:38-39). Oxfam's core ideologies of humanitarianism and internationalism would appear to be strong attractors, despite extensive changes in attitudes towards humanitarian projects⁵⁵⁷.

⁵⁵⁷ Oxfam exemplifies the expression '*plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*', which I consider denotes not something's immutability but a complex system's sensitivity to initial conditions and the presence of attractors.

❖ Path dependency/Lock-in

From the outset, Oxfam was constituted as a collective entity with a recognisable beginning, a goal and a plan for goal attainment and organisational survival. Therefore, as Oxfam has survived and progressed, we can deduce that what happened to Oxfam was determined by its own history and properties and the contingent properties of its fitness landscape. Although the full extent of these influences cannot be known, it can be argued that the overarching *raison d'être*, or ideological attractor for the original collectivity that became Oxfam was, and is, humanitarianism. This locked-in notion and driving force to bear one another's burdens can explain Oxfam's preferred causes, strategic choices and spillover effects that have led to the organisation's growth into a worldwide confederation⁵⁵⁸. In revealing this growth pattern, Oxfam exemplifies the notion of path dependency reinforced by positive feedback, which encourages a complex system to maintain its course. Thus, I argue that Oxfam's spillover tendencies appear to have no braking mechanism other than in disparate areas where the system shows signs of failing⁵⁵⁹.

Many distinctive corporate characteristics appear to have been locked into Oxfam's corporate identity from its earliest times — it is Oxfam's particular mixture of these characteristics that has contributed to its durable existence. Although it has had a single focus on humanitarian projects in its ethos, other qualities locked in from the start have been an internationalist philosophy, business expertise, pragmatism, a collaborative philosophy and responsiveness to changing contingencies. There are indications that Oxfam's hybridity emerged from these core properties and, furthermore, that the evolved hybrid model has continued to sustain these favourable primary

⁵⁵⁸ Thus, with humanitarianism at the core of its corporate values and identity, it is relatively easy to understand the comment that: *There is almost no subject in the international pantheon of causes that Oxfam can bear to leave alone, not a geographical corner of the Third World that it abjures* (Black, 1992:vii).

⁵⁵⁹ e.g. On the one hand, Oxfam GB has recently announced hundreds of staff redundancies necessitated by serious funding constraints and being 'stretched too thin (*sic*), working in too many countries' on development projects (*The Guardian*, 2013). On the other hand, OI's annual reports and strategic plans show a confederation that is still adding countries and projects to its network and planning to expand significantly further into policy and advocacy activities in local communities, especially in the global South, in a strategic endeavour to try to influence the thinking of policy-makers and corporations (OI Strategic Plan, 2013:13-20, 24).

drivers. The mixture of locked-in core properties appears crucial to examining such organisations⁵⁶⁰.

❖ **Feedback mechanisms**

I suggest that the Oxfam system exhibits an array of positive feedback mechanisms that reinforce the system, and negative ones that disrupt the system and force adaptations. Examples are: (1) Oxfam is an active participant in the formal consultancy mechanism to facilitate liaison and symmetrical, two-way, feedback within the UN system. This formal mechanism appears to benefit both intersecting systems (when viewed at the international level of complexity), enabling them to co-evolve and constantly reconfigure their relationship; (2) Oxfam has established dedicated liaison offices to work closely with international institutions to facilitate symmetrical, two-way, feedback and enhance responsiveness and cooperation; (3) Recently, Oxfam introduced its Single Management System to ensure the confederation's responsiveness to central directives and facilitate feedback; (4) Adjustment to negative feedback was recently seen when Oxfam GB implemented extensive staff redundancies and a review of priorities in the face of income shortfalls.

❖ **Unintended consequences**

The Oxford Committee for Famine Relief encountered an unexpected barrier to achieving its primary aim in wartime Britain. Thwarted in achieving a preferred outcome, and left with the unexpected consequence of excess funds, they adapted by continuing to operate with a broader amended goal.

An unintended consequence of foreign aid practices over decades prompted a backlash among some developing nations and a worldwide shift towards a new aid-sector order, emphasising locally-appropriate solutions, rather than imposed solutions from geographically distant benefactors⁵⁶¹.

⁵⁶⁰ As ancillary and intersecting systems connect in the changing system, interdependencies are established and the overall complexity of the burgeoning system increases and it becomes harder to change it. Moreover, physical and notional structures, mechanisms and practices become intrinsic to the functioning of the system and become established as pathways and locked in. The more ancillary systems a system supports the more difficult it is to change, since those involved have so much invested in it (Root, 2013: 111-113).

⁵⁶¹ See Moyo (2010: xviii-xx).

Unregulated portrayals of distant suffering by NGO campaigning in the aid sector have led to pressure⁵⁶² on NGOs to show self-restraint and a higher regard for human dignity in their framings of the lives and hardships of aid recipients. Oxfam reacted by switching to differentiating advocacy strategies.

❖ **'Adjacent possible' opportunism**

As Oxfam's relief-delivery model evolved, a pattern can be seen of development into adjacent fields, including reorienting its focus from a single theatre of war to all wars anywhere; outreach into campaigning; being an early adopter of the fruits of ICTs, especially the Internet; developing digital activism skills; and offering advocacy knowledge-transfer to grass-roots organisations.

Oxfam's historical development also shows patterns of adaptation to changing conditions by availing of opportunities that, in retrospect, appear to have been adjacent earlier along the 'arrow of time'⁵⁶³. Unfortunately, we cannot know the ontological reality of opportunities that existed for the Committee but were not taken up. Historiography is not very interested in recording un-events and 'what ifs'. From within the organisation this pattern would have appeared to be a natural process of simply reviewing options and making choices, rather than of taking obvious neighbouring opportunities. I suggest that use of the word 'adjacent' is only relevant to the way something appears in retrospect; but 'possible' is certainly apt⁵⁶⁴. Nevertheless, considering Oxfam's trajectory in this way is extremely useful to understanding how events played out. For example: the Oxford Committee's emergence as an NGO, rather than as a faith-based assemblage or in some other form, arguably shows a convergence of micro-level individual interests and a collective availing of conditions that favoured their reconfiguration and development as a new social entity at a higher level of complexity. After the war, having failed in its primary strategic aim, the Committee was facing a different

⁵⁶² For example, by the Code of Conduct for the international Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief.

⁵⁶³ See Geyer and Rihani (2010:37-38) for clarity on this term.

⁵⁶⁴ I suggest the word 'adjacent' is not applicable in all instances, but only seems to be so in retrospective analysis because of the illusion that courses of events were obvious (because we know the outcome). Watts describes this effect (2011:127-134). Thinking in terms that presume an opportunity was explored and chosen because it was obvious or nearby when using building blocks already available (see Mitleton-Kelly, 2003:15 and Kauffman, 2000:142-143, 243-244), does not take into account the many instances when a chosen course is a 'long shot', and yet when these succeed they are all the more interesting and we are inclined to use them as the basis for theorising about the present and future.

range of contingencies, including accumulated corporate capital, knowledge and reputation. History tells us that sufficient enabling conditions existed for the Committee to alter its aim substantially and progress in a new direction and to survive — because that is what happened⁵⁶⁵.

8.5.2 Assessment of Oxfam using a political theoretical framework

This thesis has presented evidence that OI reached its present place and function in the international political sphere through adopting a pragmatic, robust, and multi-pronged strategic approach⁵⁶⁶ to developing and consolidating its relationships with other elements of the international system and to maintaining its value to them. Indeed, it appears that Oxfam, by way of its increasing information exchanging and awareness-raising activities, provides an important feedback mechanism and legitimising role to the UN and other leading international institutions — further consolidating its functional value in the contemporary international system. Oxfam receives about half of its funding from the UN and UN Member States and in return provides expert crisis aid and development services. The shift in the pattern of humanitarian aid delivery in the 70s and 80s appears to have enhanced Oxfam's value to the international community, given the organisation's exceptional experience and embedded position in resource networks that link local-scale crises and humanitarian causes with global-scale assistance provision.

Oxfam's movement into more outspoken advocacy in human rights and social, economic and climate justice is undoubtedly more controversial than its humanitarian aid-delivery work. This intersection of functions is where this thesis locates the point of greatest potential relationship tension between Oxfam's hybrid TAN model and the international system. It is also the point at which the analytical lenses of advocacy communications and political science overlap. Thus, I argue that the activities of Oxfam's advocacy function that most resemble my eight-point TAN referent model affect the organisation's place and function in the contemporary

⁵⁶⁵ Watts advises caution in accepting historical explanations, which tend to downplay multiple causes and omit things that might have happened but didn't, while emphasising simple, linear determinism over complexity, randomness, and ambiguity (2011:131-134).

⁵⁶⁶ As mentioned in the chapter introduction, these strategies include political diplomacy, formal lobbying and informal influence brokering, scientific research and knowledge-sharing, humanitarian crisis response capability, development aid and field support, coalition and stakeholder relations, media relations, public outreach and information, fund-raising and fund disbursement.

international system and constitute a barrier to its effectiveness in achieving its political aims in that environment. In calling for a new world economic order propelled by 'people power' (OI Strategic Plan, 2013:5-11), Oxfam appears to be reviving the grievances and power struggles that characterised the failed New International Economic Order (NIEO) campaign by 'Third World' countries, during the 1970s and 80s. See comments by Gareau (2001:126), regarding the tendency for this contested issue to 'burst open' from time to time.

This thesis also found that in Oxfam's championing of communications rights as a means of grassroots emancipation and equality, there were reverberations of the Right to Communicate debates and the controversial New International Information and Communication Order project. In this context, OI's current advocacy messages calling for radical political and economic change could be interpreted as echoing the alter-globalisation and anti-capitalist political lobbies of the developed West⁵⁶⁷ and the grievances of the post-colonial bloc of developing countries. As such, this strategy has the potential to cause significant relationship strain between Oxfam and the states of the international community who consider their interests lie in preserving the *status quo*.

By the same reasoning, it remains to be seen whether OI's recent use of politically-charged labels for popular stereotypes will have any bearing on Oxfam's relationships and funding from international institutional sources. These pejorative stereotypes encompass such nebulous entities as: 'the polluting rich world', 'the children of the rich', 'the rich countries' and just 'the rich'. International institutions, national governments, political leaders, financiers and commercial corporations, are also variously accused⁵⁶⁸ of: endemic political weakness, irresponsibility, exacerbating social injustice and perpetuating inequality⁵⁶⁹. I posit

⁵⁶⁷ Indications of these political positions may be found, for example, in each of the three most recent annual reports. In particular, the assertions that political decision-makers and multinational corporations must be pressured to adopt policies and practices that are 'fair', rather than those that 'reinforce poverty and injustice' point to some of the most contentious debates in world politics (OI Annual Report 2010-11:6). See also OI Annual Report 2009-10; and 2011-12). Oxfam's vigorous transnational advocacy on the mooted imposition of a global Financial Transition Tax — the so-called 'Robin Hood Tax' — is one such debate (OI Annual Report, 2011-12:24).

⁵⁶⁸ See OI Strategic Plan, 2013.

⁵⁶⁹ Other accusations include profligacy and reckless lending, corporate dishonesty and excesses, resource overconsumption and squandering, corruption, lack of accountability and transparency, unwillingness and failure to protect vulnerable social sectors, self-serving policies tied to personal

that associative biases might make many of these rhetorical terms intensely meaningful for individuals, but in the service of serious, evidence-based, international argumentation they are unhelpful.

While the extent is unmeasurable, it appears that Oxfam is effective in achieving desired outcomes within the United Nations system and other multilateral international institutions (including the World Bank, IMF, and European Union). Presumably, Oxfam's relationships with international actors are healthy enough for these bonds to continue, as evidenced by: (i) Oxfam retaining its status as an accredited consultant NGO to the United Nations, since 2002; (ii) on-going patterns of engagement, and continuing close involvement in, collaborative projects with these other elements of the international system; (iii) receiving almost half of its funding from international institutions; and (iv) expanding its network of international liaison and lobbying offices.

8.5.3 Assessment of Oxfam using a communications theoretical framework

Oxfam has fully availed of modern communications tools in order to adapt its campaigning to suit its purposes and audiences. It also projects a powerful and unified corporate brand identity. This maintenance of a single, global, brand identity for over 70 years could be regarded as a remarkable feat of corporate communications strategy and practice, bearing in mind Giddens's identification of 'shell institutions' to explain the rapid transformation of traditional and/or familiar social forms that, due to the forces of globalisation, retain their outer shell although they have changed substantially inside. I submit that this brand identity is Oxfam's 'outer shell', the familiar face of Oxfam that many believe they know, and expect to see, because the end product and user interface appear to be unchanging. When considering how Oxfam has burgeoned from a tiny group of individuals to becoming a global NGO colossus that has revised its strategic aims and directions significantly throughout the years, the endurance of this brand identity is extraordinary.

enrichment, protection of vested interests and inappropriate collusive practices between socially privileged actors (*ibid*).

There can be little doubt that Oxfam has been extremely effective in (a) promoting its position as a doyen in the sphere of humanitarian relief provision, (b) amplifying its 'voice' and the voices of others on humanitarian issues, and (c) advocacy in support of its fundraising. In this, Oxfam's advocacy has had the immense advantage of a simple key message: selflessly helping others in need. It seems probable that the attractiveness and universality of this message⁵⁷⁰ has proven to be easy to broadcast to worldwide audiences. Oxfam did not invent the idea of charity. The world's religions, for example, have long spread the idea of charity: What Oxfam did was to develop and institutionalise mechanisms for individuals to express charitable tendencies to others in distant locations. Importantly, this project requires ongoing motivational advocacy to keep the machinery running. Indeed, to understand the appeal of the charity message and the inseparable function of advocacy, one can compare the advocacy issues and outputs of Oxfam with those of major religious charities⁵⁷¹. I argue, therefore, that the similarities between the advocacy 'face' of these organisations, with their emotive human interest stories, eye-catching graphics and prominent 'Donate' hot buttons, attest to the extensive commoditisation of the TAN advocacy model throughout the charity development aid sector. Where Oxfam has had an edge in this market is that it promotes the key message of helping others but without the divisive and obligating trappings of religion.

Thus, Oxfam's 'traditional NGO' advocacy strategy in support of its operations in disaster zones appears to have been relatively uncomplicated in its audience messaging, targeting and tactics; uncontroversial in its issue-framing; and outstandingly effective in achieving communications aims. Undoubtedly the skilled handling of the corporate image, when the eyes of the world were upon its major relief interventions, contributed greatly to the Oxfam's enviable reputation. However, this thesis holds that Oxfam's newer methodology aimed at achieving

⁵⁷⁰ This thesis holds that an organisation's key message is not necessarily the same as its stated aim. A key message can be conveyed by various means, language or behaviour, for example. I argue that far more people believe they know what Oxfam 'is about', than know the organisation's strategy underpinnings or policies.

⁵⁷¹ Such as Christian Aid, the Catholic church's Caritas and Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), and Tearfund, as evidenced by their Websites. For a comparison of Websites see Christian Aid: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/> ; Caritas: <http://www.caritas.org/>; Cafod: <http://www.cafod.org.uk/>; and Tearfund: <http://www.tearfund.org/>.

broad socio-political goals is of a different macro-sociological theoretic nature and requires the following separate analysis.

I argue that Oxfam's current primary aim to 'raise public awareness of the causes of poverty and encourage ordinary people to take action for a fairer world' sees Oxfam functioning in the distinctive marketing style of a contemporary TAN. This study found two key differences between Oxfam's traditional crisis aid communications and those of its current TAN campaigning model. The TAN model outputs revealed: (1) an increasing tendency to project conspicuous brand differentiating qualities in the crowded NGO market; and (2) the application of sophisticated advocacy skills and creativity in order to frame complex political issues in simplified storylines that assume phenomena are orderly and linear and that causes lead to known effects in a predictable and repeatable manner⁵⁷². In Oxfam's current five-year strategy, the nebulous 'people power' sector is identified as a priority target audience for Oxfam's advocacy messages and empowerment strategies. See Section 6.6.2 for my discussion on the contested merits of 'people power' as a synonym for mass mobilisation. While their advocacy strategy based in methodological individualism appears effective in achieving desired outcomes with uncritical audiences, the downside of this strategy is that its messages and aims do not stand up well to a critical appraisal and appear to be not only unobtainable in the real world, but lack unambiguous referents and benchmarks.

These advocacy practices point to a potential barrier to Oxfam's effectiveness and influence in international conversations. Even Oxfam has begun referring in its publicity to the presence of 'blockers', who obstruct progress in its areas of operation⁵⁷³, and 'drivers', who enable it. Considering the real world complexity of the political issues that Oxfam champions and the tendency for oversimplified and inadequate premises to contain misdiagnoses of causality and errors⁵⁷⁴, this form

⁵⁷² See Geyer and Rihani (2010:6) for a discussion on the important differences in conceptualising social phenomena as being linear and orderly, or non-linear and disorderly.

⁵⁷³ OI Strategic Plan, 2013:11.

⁵⁷⁴ Kahneman uses the acronym WYSIATI (What You See Is All There Is) to describe the human propensity to jump to conclusions of the basis of one's own limited knowledge and experience, while completely ignoring information we do not have (Kahneman, 2011:85-88).

of advocacy strategy is unlikely to be considered useful by specialists engaged in international political debate.

On a more affirmative reading of the advocacy strategy, Oxfam's practice of communicating messages in terms of presumed universal norms, evading questions of national contexts, has obvious advantages for both social boundary construction and facilitating fundraising. Oxfam advocacy implies that there exists a humanitarian diaspora of like-minded, socially 'responsible', caring souls, who require greater awareness, mass mobilisation facilitation and a sense of 'outrage'⁵⁷⁵ in order to support forceful messages of discontent and threats of people-powered retribution⁵⁷⁶ against Oxfam's identified 'blockers'⁵⁷⁷. However, this communications strategy assumes that attitudinal changes will necessarily cause a domino topple, activating (i) behavioural changes that result in (ii) sufficient political pressure being applied to (iii) accurate levers to (iv) cause the desired change in (v) 'the policies and practices of governments, institutions and business, to improve equality and inclusion and help people rise out of poverty' (*ibid*: 11). Indeed, some NGO professionals have raised concerns that the framing of issues by NGOs/TANs, for their own purposes, typically mask the multiple causes of complex social problems and the true scale of the tasks faced in addressing them⁵⁷⁸.

Furthermore audience awareness may not be the obstacle to achieving Oxfam's aims. Audience engagement and commitment to their causes have been notoriously difficult to mobilise, beyond spontaneous charitable gestures or verbal support. I argue that further study may show that this intransigence may originate with what Kahneman (2011:105) identifies as our System I, or automatic, cognitive capabilities, which are vital to responding to stimuli and making sense of partial information in a complex world. But this type of thinking is unsuited to effortful

⁵⁷⁵ This thesis takes at face value Oxfam's assertion that it is a characteristic of the organisation that it is 'outraged by the poverty and injustice in the world'. No guide is provided as to what this means.

⁵⁷⁶ See Foreword to the *Oxfam Strategic Plan: The Power of People Poverty 2013-2019* (OI Strategic Plan, 2013: 5–11). As has been argued in Chapter 5, mainstream assumptions about the existence of 'public opinion' and 'people-power' are contested topics in communications and politics scholarship.

⁵⁷⁷ This thesis noted Oxfam's new commitment to progressing development *via* 'power analysis' and social structural change. The terms 'blockers' and 'drivers' are now used, evidently to refer to foes and friends, or constraining and enabling conditions of possibility, in development situations.

⁵⁷⁸ See Polis Report (2012:2,4).

thinking about complex information and structured problem-solving. Moreover, communicators have raised concerns that audience disengagement is caused by the approaches and cultural frames that NGOs themselves have used to communicate their issues. They suggest that the emphasis on urgency, small donations, 'giver power' and grateful recipients may be part of the current disengagement problem.

Extending this line of enquiry to the international level, the effectiveness of Oxfam's advocacy campaigns in influencing policy transformations is unclear. The requirement to show victorious outcomes to demonstrate effectiveness and maintain credibility and support leads Oxfam to impose time limitations on its advocacy performance. For example, when a significantly diluted version of the Arms Trade Treaty was accepted by the UN in 2013, Oxfam was vociferous in claiming that it had achieved an 'historic' victory, despite the considerable ongoing debate that it was nothing of the sort and that it is still far from achieving its stated aim. In comparison with TAN demands for urgent, politically prescriptive solutions and global decrees, international society — as exemplified by the UN — relies on carefully diagnosed issues, formalised processes and context: predicated on the concepts of each state's exceptionality, context differentials and sovereignty.

I argue that the appointment of celebrated influencers is a strategy by Oxfam to 'scale shift' its issues to different levels of social influence by grafting intersections between its own globe-spanning complex systems and the systems in which these individuals are embedded. This strategy is effective and advantageous for Oxfam in bridging communications strategies, which emphasise information exchanging, and political strategies, which require political expertise and opportunities to access and influence policy-makers⁵⁷⁹.

On the other hand, there is the matter of Oxfam's central commitment in its advocacy communications to 'finding lasting solutions to poverty and injustice', since understandings of both 'poverty' and 'injustice' have no universally accepted

⁵⁷⁹ While OI continues to appoint celebrities from the world of entertainment to the list, Mary Robinson stood down as Honorary President in 2012 and the foremost role of eminent international influencer has remained unfilled.

referents and are always relatively conditioned. To gain some sense of the scale of the challenge in disseminating culturally-grounded ideologies and norms, it is worth noting that over thousands of years of human history none of the world's major religions or political philosophies has ever achieved universal resonance and adoption.

8.5.4 Assessment of Oxfam's relationships with the UN

Oxfam's relationship with the UN system could be summed up in three words: accreditation, funding and dialogue. In 2002, OI became an accredited consultancy organisation to the United Nations and appears on the General Consultancy List (UN-ECOSOC NGO List, 2011:6). The reasons underlying Oxfam's decision to seek formal consultancy status with the UN then are not documented. Nevertheless, there are reasons for surmising that Oxfam has an active interface with the UN system on a diverse range of issues (*vide* OI Report, 2012). A particularly visible indicator of relationship quality is Oxfam's substantial funding from the United Nations and UN institutions.

In view of the nexus that this thesis takes to exist between the three phenomena of globalisation, current global challenges and TANs it is apposite that OI has a on-going association with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) in pursuing its goals regarding global challenges. Evidence of this relationship and some indications of the relationship quality can be seen in numerous references to Oxfam on the UNISDR Website; in Oxfam's response document to the UNISDR mid-term review of the UN-backed Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA); and in Oxfam's formal recognition of, and use of, the HFA as the key global instrument for disaster risk reduction. Oxfam acknowledges that in the majority of cases, its global affiliates are currently using the HFA to frame, or inform, their advocacy strategy (UNISDR, 2012; OI Report, 2010; HFA, 2005).

While Oxfam is critical that 'UN leadership and co-ordination is inconsistent', with too little international aid achieving optimum impact through 'working with local organizations on the ground' (OI Report, 2012:2), glocalisation is a priority policy area for Oxfam itself (*idem*:15) and it can be argued that a degree of political posturing is sometimes to be expected in its external statements, without causing undue damage to its relationships with UN counterparts. Taking into account the

expertise amassed over time within the Oxfam system, it can be presumed that executives within Oxfam understand where the line is drawn between justifiable claim-making and causing long term, relationship-damaging, offence. Given the increasing levels of effort and investment being put into its high-level lobbying and liaison work with the UN and other international actors, Oxfam does appear to be satisfied that engagement is worthwhile and that it is making some headway towards achieving its preferred outcomes within the international institutional system.

8.6 Summary

This chapter has shown that OI embodies all eight referent criteria for an archetypal TAN. This is an important distinction because Oxfam is recognised primarily for its traditional service-providing NGO function, which has evolved in a complementary relationship with its advocacy function⁵⁸⁰. However, the increasing, ICT-enabled assertiveness of OI's political and socio-economic ideological advocacy on matters that are not tied to specific humanitarian projects does not yet appear to be widely recognised as an OI policy change⁵⁸¹ (H₁, H₂, H₃). This strategic redirection shifts OI's focus away from service delivery in favour of ideological political advocacy, including a range of activities supporting a new world economic order⁵⁸². This rhetoric is suggestive of a NIEO revivalist campaign (H₁, H₂, H₃).

Oxfam has maintained a 'place' in the international system since 1945. This stems from its adaptation to a new fitness landscape at the end of World War II and its redrafted strategic aim (*viz.* to provide 'relief of suffering caused by any wars'⁵⁸³), which necessitated the establishment of inter-relationships with international actors. OI also has a recognised place, in the UN system by way of its accredited NGO consultant status. This status provides a mutually beneficial mechanism: it gives Oxfam direct access to international audiences, while also providing for the TAN to function as part of the international system's feedback mechanism and legitimising substructure. Oxfam's 'place' and 'function' in the international system

⁵⁸⁰ OI asserts this duality of functions (see OI Strategic Plan, 2013: 22).

⁵⁸¹ See OI Strategic Plan, 2013: 5-11, 22 and OI Report, 2014.

⁵⁸² See OI Strategic Plan, 2013: 22.

⁵⁸³ From 1942 to 1945 the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief was a UK domestic NGO with limited intersectionality, if any, with elements of the international system.

are further indicated by its strategic involvement in a complex array of institutional relationships, especially as a prominent advocate of human welfare, rights and social justice issues and as a long-established provider of international crisis and development aid services (H₁).

Considering the huge proportion of Oxfam's funding that comes from international sources the strategic maintenance of an embedded position in the international system would appear to be a shrewd policy (H₂). There are indications that Oxfam's funding model has had a determinative effect on its advocacy strategy of avoiding 'naming and shaming' governments (H₅).

Oxfam has traditionally founded its reputation on a platform of apolitical and areligious aims and practices. It cannot be predicted where the observed tendencies towards more overt political advocacy will lead OI in the future. The influence and instrumentality of public relations and communications strategies are notoriously difficult to measure; can have unpredictable and unintended consequences; generally need to be administered over time; and are difficult to interpret in value-for-money terms — none of which are likely to prove appealing in the donor-funding market (H₅).

Using complex realism to trace and interpret its historical path, Oxfam revealed an array of key features associated with complex systems⁵⁸⁴. There were strong indications that Oxfam's functional hybridity emerged from its original mixture of core attractor properties⁵⁸⁵. Furthermore, it was noted that while it has undergone significant changes during its evolution, the organisation has continued to sustain, and be sustained by, these locked-in primary drivers and the corporate capital they amassed. This approach provided analytical tools to extend understanding of Oxfam and its relationships, and was far from exhausted by this study (H₄).

⁵⁸⁴ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the significance of these features of complex systems, and also Geyer and Pickering (2011), Mitleton-Kelly (2003) and Walby (2007). See also Annex 2.

⁵⁸⁵ An internationalist philosophy, humanitarian principles, pragmatism, strategic business and communications expertise, collaborative ideology and responsiveness to changing circumstances in its fitness landscape.

In its extrapolation of the issues and understandings of 'dependent affected' individuals to explain complex macro-sociological challenges⁵⁸⁶ Oxfam demonstrates a TAN characteristic: the conflation of scales of complex social reality to emphasise particular rhetorical arguments (H₁, H₂, H₃).

Of the three case studies, OI was distinctive in one particular aspect: it exhibited the most striking historical pattern of restructuring its strategic approaches to fit the changing circumstances in its worldwide bailiwick. When faced with changes in its operating environment, Oxfam characteristically readjusted its strategic goals and forged new paths to achieve them. In contrast, the other two TANs showed strong, complex systems path-dependency attributes by strict adherence to their foundational aims and imperatives,⁵⁸⁷ irrespective of altered socio-political and power contexts. However, there are signs emerging⁵⁸⁸ that OI is placing increasing emphasis on tackling its primary goal of ending poverty and injustice via advocacy strategies.

Until recently, Oxfam's strategic communications have not adopted an adversarial position vis-à-vis other international actors and, therefore, the overall linguistic tone of its public communications has apparently not constituted a significant barrier to its place, function and effectiveness in the international arena. However, there are indications that its impartiality, as stated in its constitution⁵⁸⁹ may be changing.⁵⁹⁰ Parallels are now appearing between Oxfam and Greenpeace in their use of the same social stereotypes and political ideological cues. Oxfam's drift into more outspoken advocacy in human rights and social justice is undoubtedly more controversial than its humanitarian aid-delivery work has been. Oxfam's commitment to assisting grassroots political organising and fostering Internet-enabled activism and 'people power' is, arguably, at variance with its UN

⁵⁸⁶ For example, climate change, multi-lateral trade relationships, international peace-keeping and world income inequalities.

⁵⁸⁷ By comparison, Greenpeace is committed to an institutionalised advocacy strategy based on 'creative confrontation' and 'media mind-bombs', while Human Rights Watch, as a rights-championing organisation, is committed to an uncompromising confrontational posture in its advocacy, since to assert a right is essentially to declare it non-negotiable. See Ignatieff (2001:20) for a discussion on this point.

⁵⁸⁸ OI Strategic Plan, 2013.

⁵⁸⁹ *i.e.* 'to relieve poverty, combat distress and alleviate suffering in any part of the world regardless of race, gender, creed or political convictions' (OI Constitution, 2005).

⁵⁹⁰ For example, Oxfam's statements during its highly public quarrel with its ex-Global Ambassador, Scarlett Johansson, in January 2014, were unequivocally political and partisan (see Section 8.4.2).

consultancy undertakings to refrain from engaging in any 'politically motivated act against a Member State' and respecting 'the norm of non-interference in the internal affairs of states' (H₂, H₃).

Arguably, OI's advocacy messages now echo the alter-globalisation and anti-capitalist political lobbies of the developed West⁵⁹¹. Income inequality and redistribution has recently become a political theme and there is strong evidence of social-boundary construction in Oxfam's portrayals of implied wrong-doing by those perceived as the 'rich' and powerful in societies, against the interests of 'ordinary people', and 'everyone else'⁵⁹². Oxfam appears to be reviving the grievances and power struggles that characterised the NIEO campaign in the 1970s and 80s. Right to Communicate and New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) themes are also in evidence in Oxfam's communications outputs⁵⁹³.

Oxfam has carried out policy changes in line with assumptions regarding predictions of favourable socio-political conditions in the emerging BRICSAM economies. However recent economic analysis⁵⁹⁴ has shown that this interpretation of shifting polarity in the world economic order has been overestimated. It remains to be seen whether OI's recent strategic repositioning in solidarity with social mobilisation in the BRICSAMs and more adversarial rhetoric directed at the 'rich countries', will have a bearing on OI's international institutional funding, its place and function in the international arena, and its effectiveness in achieving its globe-spanning aims.

⁵⁹¹ Indications of these political positions may be found, for example, in each of the three most recent annual reports, the current Strategic Plan 2013-2019, and the Working Paper, OI Report 2014. In particular, the assertions that political decision-makers and multinational corporations must be pressured to adopt policies and practices that are 'fair', rather than those that 'reinforce poverty and injustice', point to some of the most contentious debates in world politics (OI Annual Report 2010-11:6). See also OI Annual Report 2009-10; and 2011-12. Oxfam's vigorous transnational advocacy on the mooted imposition of a global Financial Transition Tax — the so-called 'Robin Hood Tax' — is one such debate (OI Annual Report, 2011-12:24).

⁵⁹² See OI Strategic Plan, 2013:14 and OI Report, 2014:2.

⁵⁹³ See Wight (2013:92-94) for insights on analysing trends.

⁵⁹⁴ See Davos Global Economic Outlook (2014), IMF (2013:41), and Magnus (2014).

9. Human Rights Watch

*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
They are endowed with reason and conscience
and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.*

*Article 1, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
(UDHR, 1948)*

9.1 Introduction

Human Rights Watch does not self-identify as a TAN, labeling itself ‘one of the world’s leading independent non-governmental organisations dedicated to defending and protecting human rights’ (HRW data, 2012a). However, this chapter shows that when HRW is analysed in respect of its overall operations, this iconic human rights agency is, like Oxfam, a hybrid TAN with an increasingly conspicuous advocacy function. By focusing on HRW’s communications operations, I show that HRW exhibits a high proportion of the TAN-like advocacy characteristics that I argue have determinative properties that impact on its amalgamated functions and fortunes.

Following the same structure as the previous two chapters, this chapter examines the history and context of HRW’s development, and its current status in an evidently exceptional place and function in the international system. It also points out the ways in which HRW is different to other TANs, not least in the fewer barriers it encounters in its access to politicians and policymakers and in its interactions within policy-making institutions. Indeed, HRW is shown here to have forged an evidently established place in the international sphere⁵⁹⁵. In contrast to the common complaint of many TANs that their protest voices lack high-level

⁵⁹⁵ Whether, or not, HRW considers its international relationships to be in a ‘satisfactory’ state is beyond the scope of this macroscopic study. For the purposes of this thesis, these relationships are considered to be satisfactory due to the fact that they are abundant and increasing.

impact — exemplified by the Greenpeace CEO's statement: 'we have access without influence' — HRW's track record shows that when this TAN speaks the international community invariably listens⁵⁹⁶ and responds. It also shows how HRW's advocacy communications function, invigorated by recent advances in ICTs and communications techniques, is now transforming this almost 40-year-old organisation⁵⁹⁷ into a globe-spanning, rights abuse-oriented, news agency in its own right.

9.2 Identity and Aims

HRW is active in 90 countries (HRW Annual Report, 2013:5). It maintains a headquarters in New York and a network of 17 principal offices in major cities. As an indication of the importance HRW places on advocacy, the post of 'Advocacy Director' has been established to head this function in 10 of its offices. In addition, HRW has 'field presences' in 20 other locations — although it is notable that up to now only one of its principal offices, Johannesburg, could be deemed to be in the global 'South' (HRW World Report, 2012).

Today, HRW employs a worldwide staff of 'roughly 400 human rights professionals including country experts, lawyers, journalists, and academics of diverse backgrounds and nationalities' (HRW data, 2014c). This thesis suggests that it is a useful conceptualising device to use metaphors that personify the different segments of HRW's operations and corporate identity, and to think of them in terms of their functional roles: part advocate (lawyers and journalists), part warrior (political activists), part academic and part diplomat. To illustrate the organisation's extraordinary growth, two years earlier this figure stood at approximately 280 staff (HRW data, 2012a). HRW highlights the fact that '[A]t the heart of our work are more than 80 researchers on staff' (*ibid*). As a consequence, this chapter argues, HRW has always presented a more intellectual outward face than either Greenpeace or Oxfam and this is a differentiating property that sets it apart from many other TANs. This, I argue, also increases HRW's value within the international system and tends to ameliorate the barriers to engagement that are

⁵⁹⁶ See GI Naidoo (2014); GI news (2013e); Hansard (2013); UN-OHCHR (2008:6); HRW video (2014a) and Columbia U (2009).

⁵⁹⁷ The forerunner to Human Rights Watch, Helsinki Watch, was founded in 1978 (HRW data, 2012a).

faced by those TANs that openly express their deep-rooted hostility to the current international order. HRW claims (HRW data, 2014):

Because of our meticulous field research and reputation for impartiality, reporters, columnists, broadcasters, and editors, as well as policymakers of concerned governments, the United Nations, and other intergovernmental entities worldwide rely on our reports, citing our findings in their work.

To mainstream observers, HRW might appear to have won its sector-leading reputation for championing human rights on normative moral grounds, arguably assisted by its diligence and the immense scale of rights abuse issues it faces. Unlike Amnesty International, HRW does not credit campaigning as its foremost driver⁵⁹⁸: its brief self-label statement⁵⁹⁹ sets out only HRW's relational orientation to official bodies and others — *i.e.* its 'non-governmental' status — and its primary goals. However, I submit that HRW achieved its present prominence largely through the strategic publicising of its own work⁶⁰⁰. This analysis does not denigrate the innovative and acclaimed quality of HRW's work, but emphasises only that other bodies are involved in human rights work but do not possess the communications capabilities of HRW and so remain uncelebrated⁶⁰¹. Until recently, HRW's reputation was undoubtedly achieved through cultivating an enabling environment in the traditional mass media.

Despite HRW's self-description, its external communications-prioritising function is clearly prefigured in the following statement on its official Website (HRW data, 2014c):

[...] Human Rights Watch is known for its accurate fact-finding, impartial reporting, effective use of media, and targeted advocacy, often in partnership with local human rights groups. Each year, Human Rights Watch publishes

⁵⁹⁸ Amnesty International, with whom HRW is often compared, *does* identify itself in terms of its advocacy function, asserting on its UK country Website: "We are a campaigning organization: it's what we do" (AI data, 2012).

⁵⁹⁹ As quoted in the opening of this chapter: 'one of the world's leading independent non-governmental organisations dedicated to defending and protecting human rights' (HRW data, 2012a)

⁶⁰⁰ Once information reached the public domain, this thesis posits that it seems plausible that its widespread cognition was greatly assisted by what Kahneman describes as the 'availability heuristic' (2011:8-9), and what Watts explains as the human inclination to rely on 'circular reasoning' to make sense of certain happenings and explain why some things succeed and others fail — *i.e.* 'X succeeded because it had the attributes of X' (Watts, 2011, 57-61). Ergo, we understand HRW to be a world-leading rights crusader because it has just the right attributes, but the only attributes we know about are the ones HRW possesses; thus we conclude that these are the attributes that must have been responsible for HRW becoming a world-leading rights crusader.

⁶⁰¹ For example see UN-OHCHR data (2012) and UN-OHCHR (2008).

more than 100 reports and briefings on human rights conditions in some 90 countries, generating extensive coverage in local and international media. With the leverage this brings, Human Rights Watch meets with governments, the United Nations, regional groups like the African Union and the European Union, financial institutions, and corporations to press for changes in policy and practice that promote human rights and justice around the world.

Furthermore, HRW claims, it is this operational formula — combining its traditional on-the-ground fact-finding with ‘new technologies and innovative advocacy’ — that keeps HRW ‘on the cutting edge’ of promoting respect for human rights throughout the world (HRW data, 2012a). It is ‘a proven methodology to achieve long-term, meaningful impact’ (*ibid*): Furthermore:

Our work has resulted in sustained, positive change in the behaviour of governments, lawmakers, court systems, rebel groups, corporations, regional bodies, and the United Nations.

Although its advocacy function shows similarities with those of the other two case study TANs, this thesis argues that HRW differs to varying degrees from them in at least four important ways: (i) it focuses exclusively on human rights issues; (ii) it is not a mass-membership, grassroots, organisation reliant on funding from this source⁶⁰²; (iii) it does not demonstrate a high degree of strategic social boundary mechanism⁶⁰³ construction (or, put simply, it does not appear to deliberately construct alter-cultural barriers between ‘us-and-them’); and (iv) while HRW can be seen as having a conspicuous advocacy function, as an NGO it is more a hybrid in the way it functions than either of the other two organisations.

Over the years, HRW’s workload has burgeoned, to the extent that the organisation now divides its programme into six parts (one for each region plus the United States), and thematic programmes devoted to a wide range of topics⁶⁰⁴: HRW has recently begun using statistical research, satellite photography and bomb-data analysis, among other new methodologies, and is also increasingly applying its

⁶⁰² Greenpeace International states that it is financially independent from political or commercial interests and relies on grassroots support (*vide* Section 7.5.1.4 and 7.5.2.2), while Oxfam International receives only around 17% of its funding from direct public donations (*vide* Section 8.4.1).

⁶⁰³ Social boundary mechanism indicators assessed in this author’s model are: prominence and repetition of symbols, heroes, myths, mysticism and empty signifiers in the organisation’s grand narrative. See Tilly (2004).

⁶⁰⁴ Including torture, women’s rights, children’s rights, refugees, arms and military affairs, free speech, international justice, terrorism and counterterrorism, the human rights responsibilities of corporations, gay and lesbian rights, health and human rights, disability, extractive industries, the CIA, the United Nations and European Commission, and ‘killer robots’.

research methodology to economic, social, and cultural rights, particularly in the areas of education and housing (HRW data, 2014a, 2014c).

Behind-the-scenes analysing, lobbying and diplomacy

An element of HRW's work is in behind-the-scene research of human rights issues, followed by representation within the various international institutions, and then highlighting the results in its publicity and advocacy materials (HRW Annual Report, 2013:5). Arguably, this helps not only to achieve publicity goals and show HRW's capacities and multi-pronged approaches. An example may be seen in this Website post, under the heading 'Success Stories'⁶⁰⁵ (HRW data, 2012):

Burma Frees at Least 200 Political Prisoners – Oct 12, 2011

The Burmese government yesterday freed at least 200 of its estimated 2,000 political prisoners. Officially, Burma denies having any such prisoners – but Human Rights Watch has worked hard to make sure these imprisoned activists weren't forgotten. We held high-level meetings with UN and government officials visiting Burma, arming them with the evidence they used to pressure Burma into releasing these journalists, artists, and Buddhist monks.

A more recent example of HRW's view of its intermediary role is provided in its depiction of its work during the Arab Spring upheavals. A senior executive⁶⁰⁶ claims that, through its work in Libya, HRW 'found itself in constant dialogue' with the United Nations, the U.S. State Department, and the governments of France and Britain: ' [...] telling them not only what was happening on the ground, but what they needed to do' (HRW video, 2012). The official further asserted that HRW played 'a significant role' in lobbying for UN Security Council Resolution 1970, which referred Libya to the International Criminal Court in an 'unprecedented' four days, instrumentally due to the provision of HRW data (*ibid*). HRW officials claim they have worked 'incessantly' to push the United States and the EU to establish targeted sanctions against the Syrian Government.

Overall, I argue, HRW projects an image that portrays its role in diplomatic affairs as that of a valued 'insider', deeply embedded in international collaborative projects, yet uncompromisingly autonomous. To what extent this might be due to

⁶⁰⁵ At URL <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/10/12/burma-frees-least-200-political-prisoners>

⁶⁰⁶ Human Rights Watch Executive Director, Middle East and North Africa Division, New York Office, Sarah Leah Whitson

its origins and independence from official influence and public funding, is assessed later. The diplomatic/international consultative role is arguably one that Human Rights Watch values greatly.

9.2.1 Identifying Human Rights Watch as a TAN

The following analysis shows that the advocacy function of HRW is sufficiently highly developed and distinctive to support the argument that it fits the referent model for this thesis and *is* a TAN.

Criterion #1:

- ***Distinctive, highly-visual, transnational corporate identity***

The distinctive Human Rights Watch corporate logo, shown below, is prominently displayed on all HRW publicity outputs, including a wide range of world, country and issue-based reports, press releases, videos, posters and Internet-based social media websites, such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and StumbleUpon.



Figure 9.1 Human Rights Watch logo

Criterion #2:

- ***Demonstrable prioritising of self-promotion***

HRW, like Greenpeace, Oxfam and other prominent TANs, promotes itself aggressively in its constant stream of publicity and media outputs. This scale of HRW's corporate identity promotion can be readily accessed and evaluated *via* Internet search engines and the HRW Website.

Criterion #3:

- **Demonstrable prioritising of voice-amplification strategies in advocacy**

HRW projects commitment to people-centred, voice-amplification strategies in its publicity outputs. Capturing this aspect of HRW's work in the video title 'Giving a voice to those who have none', graphic examples of personal accounts by rights abuse victims can be seen on the HRW Website, You Tube and StumbleUpon (HRW data, 2014d; HRW video, 2014a; 2014b).



Figure 9.2 A range of HRW report covers that prioritise voice-amplification on behalf of 'dependent affected' persons

This study found that HRW routinely adopts the communications tactic of using the voices of the 'dependent affected' victims of human rights abuses. Individual stories involving bloodshed and brutality, especially those relating to murder, torture and rape, are prioritised in publicity releases, over less dramatic and less photogenic subject matter. This adoption of newsworthiness criteria in rights abuse publicity selection prompts obvious comparisons of HRW's communications function with the operations of international news agencies⁶⁰⁷.

⁶⁰⁷ This thesis makes no moral judgment on the adoption of this advocacy tactic. The aim here is to point out that the use of a particular storytelling style, rather than another, is the result of an intentional communications strategy.

Criterion #4:

- ***Highly media-savvy, with unremitting media relations activity***

Demonstrated by the large volume and professional quality of HRW's media releases, social media presence, and all other publicity outputs. Reporting and disseminating rights abuse news speedily to worldwide audiences is clearly a HRW priority (HRW data, 2014d; HRW video, 2014a; 2014b).

Criterion #5:

- ***Demonstrable high degree of adoption of sophisticated public/political communications style and strategies***

Demonstrated by the high quality of HRW's communications outputs, reflecting advanced international public communications 'best practice' standards. HRW makes explicit statements concerning the importance of its 'cutting edge' communications resources, which combine 'new technologies and innovative advocacy' (HRW data, 2012a). These statements can be found on the HRW Website.

Criterion #6:

- ***Demonstrable high degree of adoption of advanced information and communication technologies***

Demonstrated by the high speed, quality and global reach of HRW's external communications outputs and explicit statements on its Website. HRW has a vibrant presence on the leading social media platforms YouTube, StumbleUpon, Facebook and Twitter and provides RSS alerts on its news to subscribers, via desktop computers and mobile devices.

Criterion #7:

- ***Demonstrable high degree of strategic social boundary mechanism construction***

Of the three case study TANs, HRW was the least engaged in demonstrable social boundary construction. However, in its promotion of its absolutist humanitarian core values, HRW arguably implies that those who subscribe to its corporate vision are just and joined in solidarity with rights supporters, who are ring-fenced from all others who do not share its uncompromising worldview⁶⁰⁸.

Criterion #8:

- ***Demonstrable differentiation strategies within the NGO sector and within the typology of TANs***

HRW's emphasis on its reputation for high academic standards in its on-the-ground, fact-finding and research methodologies and report production is a differentiating factor. By comparison, most TANs, as a cluster, aim to appeal to popular audiences, rather than to narrower intellectual sectors, especially those whose existence depends on funding by the public. HRW also emphasises the value of its human rights abuse exposés to the media, governments and international policy-makers. The sheer volume of HRW's rights abuse claims is a differentiator. HRW's prioritisation of high-level lobbying, and the claimed scale of this communications activity, is a further differentiator among TANs.

HRW has arguably developed the following attributes in the TANs sector: (i) an identifiable, differentiated, brand image and reputation as a one of the world's leading champions of human rights; (ii) an authoritative international TAN 'voice'; (iii) a reputation as an international mass media 'go to' rights watchdog; and (iv) an extensive global network of 'listening posts' and first responders (HRW Annual Report, 2013).

⁶⁰⁸ Social boundary construction is arguably reflected in the opening remarks to readers of HRW's Annual Report (2013:1): 'Thank you for the part that you play in supporting our vision for a more just world'.

HRW underpins its advocacy strategies with its own research and verification processes. Apart from its 'effective use of the media' and 'generating extensive coverage in local and international media' and using this to leverage its position in pressing for changes in policy and practice, HRW might arguably be seen until recently as closer to the model of a low-profile 'think tank'⁶⁰⁹ than to the publicity-driven model characteristic of many TANs. McGann and Sabatini (2011:97) include HRW on their list of successful global think tanks. These authors claim that while the transnational bodies on their list do share some commonalities, hybridisation is strongly evident in the way each has evolved uniquely by blending previously defined boundaries and transforming themselves into 'amalgams of policy research, advocacy, political affiliations and academics'. Moreover, they claim, those entities that could be described as 'advocacy tanks', tend to be differentiated in having strong value positions and taking institutional positions on policy issues, thereby facing a tension between maintaining consistent value positions and perceptions of objectivity and completeness (*ibid*: 21)⁶¹⁰. Furthermore, McGann and Sabatini explain:

To the extent that their messages are perceived to reflect inflexible values rather than 'objective' analysis they may simply be ignored by a large part of their potential audience.

This observation has obvious implications for TANs, such as Greenpeace and HRW, which make truth claims based on their own research. But, above all, McGann and Sabatini point out, the primary objective of a TAN is to raise global consciousness (*ibid*: 70). At this point of analysis, I suggest, HRW parts company with the traditional 'think tank' model (as adopted by McGann and Sabatini) and exploits the relatively recent, consciousness-raising, communications resources that now facilitate the agency of TANs. Such differences in perceptions by external observers further strengthens the argument that HRW is a NGO/TAN hybrid with a significant and growing advocacy function.

⁶⁰⁹ McGann and Sabatini provide a particularly clear definition of 'think tanks', including TANs and other hybrids (2011:17-20, 21, 69-70, 91).

⁶¹⁰ The damage to Greenpeace's reputation and credibility following the Brent Spar campaign may be better understood in light of this observation. See Section 6.1.

9.3 Socio-historical context

Formerly Helsinki Watch (Moyn, 2010:172; HRW data, 2012a), Human Rights Watch was established in 1978 as a private American NGO to support citizens groups that formed throughout the Soviet bloc to monitor government compliance with the 1975 Helsinki Accords. This support included exposing human rights abuses behind the Iron Curtain and encouraging democratic reform and liberalisation (Foreman, 2010; Bernstein, 2009). According to HRW's account (HRW data, 2012), Helsinki Watch adopted a methodology of 'naming and shaming' abusive governments through media coverage and through direct exchanges with policymakers. HRW claims (*ibid*):

By shining the international spotlight on human rights violations in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Helsinki Watch contributed to the dramatic democratic transformations of the late 1980s.

Reflecting the political upheavals in Central America, Americas Watch was founded in 1981 to critically observe the civil wars then engulfing the region. This role included the investigation not only of abuses and crimes against international humanitarian law, but also the involvement of foreign governments, particularly the United States, in providing military support to abusive regimes (*ibid*). A swatch of 'Watch Committees' followed during the 1980s: Asia Watch, Africa Watch and Middle East Watch. In 1988, these watchdog bodies amalgamated and adopted the all-inclusive name, Human Rights Watch.

Underscoring the importance of such developments, Clark (2008:566-567) relates that 'it is often argued that the growth of concern with rights in the former Eastern Europe during the Cold War period had a corrosive effect on the maintenance of authoritarian political systems in the region', thereby contributing to the collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989⁶¹¹. Unsurprisingly, that event was portrayed as a major step forward in extending the liberal order with its focus on rights (*ibid*). However, there was no dawning of a new liberal age in human rights worldwide, nor indeed in a liberal order: the rights battleground simply moved elsewhere and expanded to include the controversial concepts of economic and collective rights. Moreover,

⁶¹¹ HRW also makes this claim that demands for human rights helped to bring the Cold War to an end. See *Human Rights Watch World Report 1989: Introduction*.

the Western origin of the doctrine of rights had come to be seen as problematic in the post-colonial era (Brown, 2008:507). Consequently, the promotion of a type of universalism associated with this international human rights regime is today widely contested in non-Western societies and is thought to be evoking forms of religious and cultural resistance (Clark, *ibid*; Brown, *ibid*; Root, 2013:4-5, 66-69, 143-145).

9.4 Milestones and salient strategies

9.4.1 Milestones

In contrast to both Greenpeace and Oxfam, HRW's identity is not headlined as a major part of its historical narrative in its own published material. Instead, it concentrates on factual accounts of the issues it tackles, and claims specific instrumentality in a long list of successes, or milestones, during its almost 40 years of operation. This list of 'successes' in advancing respect for human rights runs to 25 pages on HRW's Website⁶¹². These include:

- Accreditation, in 1993, to hold Special Consultancy Status with the United Nations (UN-ECOSOC NGO List, 2011:39).
- Leading an international coalition to press for the adoption of a treaty banning the use of child soldiers;
- Documenting alleged abuses by the United States in the 'war on terror,' including the CIA's secret detention, interrogation and rendition programme, the torture of detainees held in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantánamo Bay, and unfair trials at Guantánamo Bay;
- In 1997, sharing the Nobel Peace Prize as a founding member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.
- Documenting violations of the laws of war in numerous conflicts, including Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Colombia, Congo, Kosovo, Georgia, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Iraq, Lebanon, Somalia, and Sudan;
- Working with international war crimes tribunals and providing evidence of abuses leading to convictions of officials from the former Yugoslavia (including the former President Slobodan Milosovic), and in Rwanda;

⁶¹² HRW Website at <http://www.hrw.org/about/success-stories>.

- Playing a leading role in pressing for the former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, to stand trial before an international tribunal in The Hague for war crimes and crimes against humanity;
- Helping to focus attention on abuses in China ahead of the 2008 Olympic Games;
- Documenting the killing and maiming of civilians by cluster munitions in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Georgia, and helping to bring about the international treaty ban; and
- In 2008, being one of the recipients of the United Nations Prize for Human Rights, in recognition of the role HRW has played in ending human rights abuses.

In addition, during the preparation of this thesis, HRW was highlighting the success of its globalised, real time, media coverage documenting human rights abuses throughout the Middle Eastern countries involved in the ‘Arab Spring’ and the subsequent, ongoing conflicts. This coverage included, Internet-enabled field reporting, video recording and intensive social media activity (HRW data, 2014a; HRW Annual Report, 2012). As discussed later, HRW is advantaged in demonstrating its effectiveness by being factually specific about its goals. Importantly, its communications strategies are tied to its communications goals.

Apart from recording the multiplicity of its successes, HRW, like Oxfam, shows little nostalgia for its corporate past and relates its history in a dispassionate, matter-of-fact, style. This thesis suggests that this difference from some other TANs (notably Greenpeace), is arguably related to HRW’s donor support base and indicates that the body takes pride in its record of goal attainment and the quality of its research, which has been HRW’s trademark since its earliest days (*vide* HRW data, 2014a; Ellis, 2012).

9.4.2 Overview of HRW’s advocacy strategies

Also in contrast to Greenpeace, HRW has not deployed advocacy strategies that involve high-visibility, activist confrontations in specific locations⁶¹³. Nor has HRW been remarkable for scandal, apart from the routinely high levels of criticism that

⁶¹³ Such as Greenpeace staged at the Brent Spar site in the North Sea, the South Pacific during the France’s nuclear testing, or, more recently, at oil exploration sites in the Arctic.

it attracts from those with whom it crosses swords over rights abuse cases, its North American image and Western values, or its *modus operandi*). Instead of milestones, the HRW story is arguably distinguished more by its steady development process: its capabilities having been progressively scaled up over three decades in order to do more of the same, in more locations, with more and better resources. Simultaneously, HRW has cultivated a reputation for credibility in its reporting and trustworthiness (Syracuse U, 2005; HRW Annual Report, 2013: 3-5, 13-15).

As a recent example, the then British Foreign Secretary⁶¹⁴ stated, in the UK Parliament, that HRW had issued ‘a very detailed report’ stating that, based on its own independent evidence and assessment, ‘*Human Rights Watch finds that Syrian government forces were almost certainly responsible for the August 21 attacks, and that a weapons-grade nerve agent was delivered during the attack using specially designed rocket delivery systems*’ (Hansard, 2013; HRW video, 2014a). This level of trust in a private sector information source, on a matter of critical international relations importance, is exceptional. It also demonstrates the Minister’s faith in the reputation of HRW to impress and convince his audience.

Today, HRW is an acknowledged power in the field of promoting human rights. In the words of another watchdog organisation, NGO Monitor (NGO Monitor, 2009:7):

With its global reach, plentiful funds, wide access to media, and the contacts to influence policy makers in the United States, HRW has become an NGO superpower.

But what does ‘an NGO superpower’ look like, apart from having a globally recognised public face and reputation as a formidable adversary in human rights issues? Although this study could not extend to an internal examination of HRW, indications suggest HRW might be considered as a composite of several core operations, or communities of professional practice⁶¹⁵. Thus, this organisation does not suggest the same degree of organisational logic that is projected, for example, by Oxfam. It seems possible from an organisational perspective that HRW

⁶¹⁴ The then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, The Rt. Hon William Hague.

⁶¹⁵ The ‘advocate (lawyers and journalists), part warrior (political activists), part academic and part diplomat’ as referred to in Section 9.2.

faces inherent challenges in amalgamating its hybrid of functional forms, and particularly in combining its vociferous advocacy and activist roles⁶¹⁶ with the deliberative and circumspect requirements of its diplomatic and lobbying roles. While these communities of practice within HRW evidently contribute individually and jointly to HRW's mission and growth, they suggest distinctively different approaches to the quest of protecting human rights. By comparison, this challenge is faced differently by Greenpeace, which tends to apply its trademark confrontational strategy in its engagements with all complex macro-level systems (e.g. the international system, Russia, the whaling industry, the ivory trade). In the case of HRW, however, macro- and micro-level interactions intersect not only with the organisation as an entity but with each of HRW's communities of practice, each having their own relations of exteriority and requirements for relationship maintenance.

What might HRW's emerging pattern of prioritising 'cutting edge' communications mean for its corporate identity? The primary strategy of a TAN is 'to raise global consciousness' (*vide* McGann and Sabatini, 2011:70. However, if we take HRW to be a hybrid organisation amalgamating a number of less visible human rights protecting functions, internal cross-functional disharmony and incompatibility over organisational resources allocation begin to emerge⁶¹⁷. Brown and Duguid (2002:160-61), shed light on a syndrome that emerges when organisations adopt the new information-enhancing technologies in some corporate divisions and to lesser extents in others. They highlight the contention associated with resource allocation from a central source, and the difficulties involved in building bridges between separate 'communities of practice' in order for the cross-functional parts to work as a synergistic whole.

As an illustration, a high-visibility schism in 2009 brought to light signs of internal tensions and accusations that the body had undergone significant detrimental change (reminiscent of Giddens's observations regarding 'shell institutions', that

⁶¹⁶ For example, see HRW's annual report (HRW Annual Report, 2013) showcasing a more dramatic and confrontational style of fact-finding, pursued by individual HRW investigators, than in past publicity outputs.

⁶¹⁷ This theory casting doubt on HRW's current and future corporate logics and identity emerged from the study and requires further exploration.

'appear the same as they used to be from the outside, and carry the same names, but inside have become quite different' (2002:18-19). HRW's founder, Robert Bernstein, denounced it for having strayed too far from its founding mission. In protest, Bernstein left HRW and established the rival, Internet-centred organisation, Advancing Human Rights (AHR). AHR, Bernstein explained, would leverage the power of the Internet to help 'online activists and cyber dissidents', whom he said, 'are the new generation of cutting edge human rights proponents' (Bernstein, 2009; Bloomberg, 2011; AHR, 2013; *N.Y. Times*, 2012b). Although these patterns appear to have implications for the way HRW's advocacy function is developing, it is too early to tell whether they will have any effect on HRW's interface with the international system.

Nevertheless HRW now claims (HRW data, 2014c): 'In times of crisis, we're at the forefront, releasing up-to-the-minute information and advocating for action'. The adoption of these new communications capabilities dramatically and irrevocably helped, *inter alia*, to change: (i) the global face of human rights advocacy; (ii) the ethos and operations of HRW; (iii) the relational interface between HRW and international actors.

As part of a major initiative to build a more global organisation, a new advocacy office is being planned for São Paulo with the intention of developing new ties to Brazil's media and policy communities (HRW Annual Report 2011:35). This initiative is part of HRW's Global Challenge Campaign, launched in 2010, to address the changing world situation by deepening the organisation's advocacy capacity throughout Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia. The rationale given for this project is to 'meet the challenges of a world in which the balance of power has shifted and governments in the global South play an ever-increasing role in shaping and influencing human rights policy' (*ibid*).

9.4.3 Overview of HRW's political strategies

Throughout its life, HRW's criticisms of national political leaders and their instruments of governance have been magnets for drawing criticism in return. Often these have been connected to perceived biases and imbalances over whom HRW selects to report on, and over-report on (especially Israel), and whom it chooses to ignore (such as Saudi Arabia and Iran) (Foreman, 2010; Bernstein,

2009; NGO Monitor, 2012). It seems self-evident that HRW's commitment to challenging authorities over alleged human rights violations will be controversial, whether relating to national sovereignty, security, cultural difference, international relations, national governance, or law and order. This thesis suggests that despite HRW's declarations of being apolitical, non-partisan and neutral in conflict situations (HRW data 2014c), the organisation's political dispositions and strategies have been evident from its beginnings, although they have changed substantially over time — even as concepts of what constitutes rights, and their abuse, have evolved and proliferated. These patterns of change are borne out in public statements made by HRW's founder, which are included later in this section.

From an external perspective, HRW might be viewed as having begun as a comparatively staid and small, private, NGO, monitoring compliance with the Helsinki Accords, and having nominally apolitical but recognisably liberal democratic underpinnings concerning individual freedoms and protections (Bernstein bio, 2014). Today, HRW's outputs portray an organisation that is, like Oxfam, stretched in addressing a dizzying array of projects across the world. Maintaining that it is apolitical, HRW nevertheless exhibits a characteristic targeting of the leaders of authoritarian regimes. A recent example is on the HRW Website: *Uprising: The Arab Spring* (HRW video, 2012). HRW's message is of political opposition not only to all authoritarian regimes, but to all the leaders and governments of countries involved in the Arab Spring. Conflating the social, religious, cultural, historical, economic and political differences between each of these countries — and, importantly, within them — HRW conveys the political message that authoritarian governments, should, and will, 'fall'. For an organisation with a distinctly Western image and U.S.-based management, HRW's support for dissident and rebellious elements in other societies is never far from criticism for bias, attempting to undermine national governments, and furthering Western imperialist ambition (NGO Monitor, 2012; *The Washington Post*, 2011). Consequently, HRW regularly comes under attack from governments, including China, Russia, Israel, Iran, Syria, Rwanda, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe (*The Washington Post*, 2011).

As with Greenpeace, HRW has been criticised by at least one of its founders for departing from its original principles. HRW's founder and chairman emeritus, the retired publisher Robert L. Bernstein⁶¹⁸, wrote in an op-ed in the *New York Times* (Bernstein, 2009) that he felt impelled to publicly join HRW's critics to denounce what he termed HRW's loss of 'critical perspective' in the Middle East. Mr. Bernstein accused HRW of bias and of casting aside the important distinction between 'open' and 'closed' societies when selecting political targets. HRW had, he said, written far more condemnations of Israel for violations of international law than for of any other country in the Middle East region⁶¹⁹ (Bernstein, 2009; Foreman, 2010; see also NGO Monitor, 2012 and *The Algemeiner*, 2011). In admonishing HRW, Bernstein wrote:

Only by returning to its founding mission and the spirit of humility that animated it can Human Rights Watch resurrect itself as a moral force in the Middle East and throughout the world. If it fails to do that, its credibility will be seriously undermined and its important role in the world significantly diminished.

In Bernstein's view HRW had strayed too far from the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and was now focusing its efforts on the wrong subjects. Instead of targeting authoritarian governments for their human rights abuses, HRW was often targeting open governments with democratic systems. Moreover, human rights groups were also involving themselves in spillover matters where they were out of their depth, such as advising democratic governments on how to fight wars and what weapons to use, while lacking the expertise to do so (Bloomberg, 2011)⁶²⁰.

⁶¹⁸ Robert Bernstein led Human Rights Watch for over 20 years (1978-98). See Bernstein (2009); Bloomberg (2011); AHR (2013).

⁶¹⁹ In a response, published five days later, HRW strongly rejected all criticisms of its commentaries on Israel (HRW, 2009).

⁶²⁰ As noted in Section 9.4.3, as a result of these differences, Bernstein parted company with HRW and established the breakaway human rights watchdog organisation, Advancing Human Rights, in 2010, with the aim of getting "back to the basics of human rights promotion, especially in the Middle East" (Bloomberg, 2011; also AHR, 2013 and *N.Y. Times*, 2012b). The declared strategy of the new organisation was to focus on influencing closed societies and 'leveraging the power of the Internet' to promote human rights and provide a platform for reporting rights abuses, dissident opinion and discussion.

9.5 Outcomes-in-process and indicative macroscopic patterns

9.5.1 Assessment of HRW applying a Complex Realism analytical framework

A complex realism approach aided understanding of the contentious matters of human rights abuse in HRW's operating environment, not as resulting from increasing scales of human immorality but as products of complex systems and social structural dynamics⁶²¹. Readily apparent complexity features identified in the HRW data included:

❖ Fitness landscape embeddedness

HRW emerged in 1978 due to the presence of an advantageous assemblage of enabling properties in its fitness landscape. Arguably, the most salient condition in this process was the political opportunity structure provided by the 1975 Helsinki Accords international security agreement. Coming at a time of heightened Cold War tensions, the conditions were evidently ripe for the co-evolution of a human rights monitoring and advocacy body, rooted in the democratic West, to monitor the USSR's compliance with the Accords. The Soviet crackdowns on internal dissent during the late 1970s and early 80's, and the human rights abuses of a number of authoritarian regimes, might be seen as providing further impetus for the growth of an array of 'Watch Committees' that consolidated to become HRW in 1988 (HRW data, 2014a; *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2014a).

With its reputation for scholarly research and exposure of rights abuses and abusers, HRW products have undoubtedly been of considerable instrumental value to the democracy-promoting elements of the international system in their wars of words with pariah leaders and regimes. This arguably reflects HRW's competency in understanding its operating environment. This evidently maximises HRW's ability to 'scale shift' issues to appropriate levels for their resolution and achieve its preferred outcomes in the international system.

⁶²¹ See Bhaskar (2011:2-3) for insights on the primacy of social structural dynamics in producing social phenomena. As discussed in Chapter 6, our age is not more dangerous — not more risky — than those encountered by earlier generations, but we face higher proportions of anxieties resulting from hazards created by ourselves (Giddens 2002:28-29). This thesis argues that the progressive propagation of laws and notions of human rights, and by extension the worldwide citing and combating of ever increasing abuses of them, appears to amply reflect this type of Man-made situation. A contingency that Giddens refers to as 'manufactured risk', a form of risk that is created by 'the very knowledge of our developing knowledge upon the world' and which we have very little historical experience of confronting (*ibid*).

❖ **Structural plurality and multi-dimensionality**

Evidence of underlying social structural dimensions to HRW's operations can be seen in the following patterns:

(i) National and international security structures involving military power. Structural restrictions can be seen in HRW's admitted inability to move its staff freely in conflict zones, such as Syria⁶²², and instead its increasing reliance on digital communications technology and social media to circumvent these structural barriers.

(ii) Political structures, generating pronounced differences in the form and levels of HRW's activity when engaging with liberal democratic, nominally democratic and non-democratic systems. For example, the HRW *World Report 2014* devoted less space to documenting the human rights situation in North Korea than to reporting on rights abuses in liberal democratic Australia (World Report, 2014:305, 292, CIA data, 2014).

(iii) Cultural dimensions, seen in HRW's projection of essentially Western standards of human rights norms against a global background comprising a diversity of social cultures, many of which reject these norms and the intrusion of Western values (Root, 2013:4-5).

(iv) Polarity patterns are evident in HRW's orientation to the advanced Western liberal democratic systems and practices, although efforts are being made to adjust HRW's traditional Northern hemispheric polarity to encompass the global South. A pronounced preference for West-based social media platforms is currently developing.

(v) Technological structures. HRW is evidently being shaped by the technological tools it adopts and their availability. Indicative patterns were seen in the expansion of HRW's network of country offices whose operations are enabled by modern communications; the escalating, ICT-enabled deluge in rights abuse claims from geographically diverse locations; and the adoption of advanced field reporting technologies that are shaping HRW's advocacy function in ways that resemble those of an international news agency, rather than those typically associated with a traditional NGO.

⁶²² For examples, see HRW Annual Report 2013:15, 31, 37.

❖ **Emergence**

HRW's emergence can be traced to the amalgamation of four earlier Watch Committees, which in turn emerged from the monitoring NGO model Helsinki Watch. Moreover, I argue that the emergence of the new human rights body, AHR, demonstrates the ways in which the fitness landscapes of complex organisations, such as HRW, are subjected to constantly evolving and shifting circumstances.

❖ **Co-evolution**

The emergence and development of human rights monitoring NGOs in various regions can arguably be viewed in terms of co-evolutionary responses to situations in which human rights were perceived to be imperiled.

❖ **Sensitivity to initial conditions**

Early adopter advantages can be identified in the HRW model. Sensitivity to the original international system fitness landscape and the development of inter-relationships characterised by experiences of trustworthiness and mutual value appear to be present. I argue that HRW's research capability to dovetail with international institutional conventions constitutes evidence of this.

❖ **Path dependency/Lock-in**

From its earliest days, HRW has declared a commitment to championing human rights via a multi-pronged strategy that exhibits signs of path-dependency. Thus, HRW pursued the same confrontational, 'naming and shaming' advocacy activities. The efficacy of a multi-pronged advocacy strategy accords with complexity theorisation, which holds that international affairs are necessarily multi-causal and multiple strategies on different levels of complexity are therefore needed to effectively address them. HRW's uncompromising adversarial posture in regard to rights abuse perpetrators also appears to be a locked-in strategy that is intrinsically linked to HRW's corporate identity, and is therefore resistant to change⁶²³.

This thesis argues that adopting the technological tools and techniques of contemporary communication has set HRW on a path-dependent course that is co-

⁶²³ This characteristic can be seen by comparing issues of HRW's flagship publication *World Report* (e.g. *HRW World Report, 2014, 2015*).

evolving with contingencies in its fitness landscapes, and especially with the capabilities of rivals in the human rights advocacy sector. These tendencies attest to McLuhan's theory (McLuhan, 1994:xi) that 'we shape our tools and, thereafter, our tools shape us', setting in train a systemic path dependency that becomes difficult to arrest.

❖ **Feedback mechanisms**

It appears that HRW's function as a feedback mechanism is its primary and most valued function in the international system, as seen in its awareness-raising, service-providing and legitimising features. HRW has been acknowledged for making substantial contributions to the processes of informing international debates and evidence-based international policymaking (UN-OHCHR, 2008:6; Hansard, 2013; Columbia U, 2009; HRW video, 2014; HRW Annual Report, 2013:5)⁶²⁴.

❖ **Attractor properties**

Further to the systemic attractors discussed under the 'Co-evolution' rubric, HRW exhibits core principles and a brand image that could be regarded as cognitive attractors⁶²⁵. An example of this manifestation is the behavioral motivation to join the organisation and engage in its advocacy activities.

❖ **'Adjacent possible' opportunism**

HRW's current image is, arguably, that of an iconic and progressive organisation that is stretched in its capacity to accommodate demands for intervention in cases of human rights abuse. Today, HRW processes such claims in over 70 thematic categories. This conditioned corporate response, I submit, is an example of systemic spillover into 'adjacent possible' opportunities to tackle human rights issues as and when they appear. A similar situation was arguably seen in the Oxfam data (Black, 1992:vii), which showed that Oxfam has grown into a globe-spanning confederation, stretched on multiple fronts.

⁶²⁴ See also HRW and OHCHR official Websites for evidence of communications traffic density.

⁶²⁵ See Geyer and Rihani (2010:38-39) for an overview of the role of attractors in understanding systemic behaviours.

❖ Unintended consequences

The path by which the original Helsinki Watch was established and then merged with the parallel organisations tackling other areas of the globe, appears to be a logical response to the existing legal and humanitarian situations at the time. However, there appears to be no evidence of any intention to develop further. It therefore appears that the huge organisation HRW has grown to today — a global TAN icon for human rights advocacy, employing some 400 staff — was an unintended consequence of complex system dynamics⁶²⁶.

9.5.2 Assessment of HRW using a political theoretical framework

In light of the allegations against HRW alleging political bias, its professed commitment to eschewing political causes and adopting non-partisan positions could be considered debatable (HRW data, 2014c; Bernstein, 2009; Foreman, 2010; NGO Monitor, 2009, 2012). HRW has been strongly criticised by the Jerusalem-based organisation NGO Monitor, which claims that HRW analyses demonstrate a disproportionate anti-Israel prejudice. The monitoring body also claims that ‘many HRW officials, including the heads of the Middle East and North Africa Division, have a history of ideological bias’ (NGO Monitor, 2012). NGO Monitor documents (NGO Monitor, 2009) what it sees as HRW’s descent over time, from the ‘halo effect’ of its early years, when it established a reputation based on perceptions of expertise, morality and objectivity:

Our investigation shows a consistent pattern of ideological bias, lack of professional qualifications, and unsupported claims based on faulty evidence and analysis on the part of HRW. These are then replicated by governments and international organizations, including the United Nations, that adopt these allegations.

Drawing attention to what he saw as troubling political ideological biases among some HRW staff members and imbalances in the organisation’s selection of whom it regards as victims, Foreman states (2010):

Why does HRW seem so credulous of civilian witnesses in places like Gaza but so sceptical of anyone in a uniform? It may be that organisations like HRW that depend on the media for their profile — and therefore their donations — concentrate on places the media already cares about.

⁶²⁶ There are obvious similarities with the growth trajectories of both Greenpeace and Oxfam.

In what could be seen as a symbolic demonstration of HRW's assertion of impartiality, HRW carries a selection of opponents' criticisms against itself on its Website, under the tagline *What they say about us*⁶²⁷ (HRW data, 2012a). A number of these postings are from HRW's long-term targets, such as China, Somalia and the President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe — all with records as human rights pariahs. It could thus be concluded that their criticisms of HRW tend to enhance the organisation's reputation as a fearless rights defender, rather than harm it⁶²⁸.

Despite the assumption in the developed West that their ethnocentric views on rights and the need for their adoption are universal, they sometimes clash sharply with other deeply held worldviews on governance and rights (Root, 2013:4-5). For example, the 2013 Pew Survey of Global Attitudes showed that 85% of Chinese were 'very satisfied' with their country's direction, compared with just 31% of Americans (Pew, 2013). Thus, in considering the political implications of HRW's worldwide operations and effectiveness, the age-old values debate⁶²⁹ concerning moral universalism *versus* moral relativism cannot be ignored. According to Brown (2008:518-519), the debate pendulum has, in recent years, possibly swung more towards the moral relativism position following accusations — particularly in the non-Western world — of Western political, economic and cultural imperialism after the end of the Cold War and the international psychological fallout associated with 9/11 (*ibid*).

Aside from the moral and political debates, however, the practical challenge of presenting human rights arguments on the world stage lies in the fact that, despite the powerful rhetorical appeal of the liberal position and the moving voices of victims of oppression, human rights are essentially conflictual⁶³⁰ — *inter alia*, with political and religious ideologies, cultures and nationalities. Globalisation effects notwithstanding, Smith (1990:188) points out that a world comprising competing cultures, each seeking to improve its comparative status rankings and enlarge its cultural resources, affords little basis for global projects, despite the

⁶²⁷ At URL: <http://www.hrw.org/what-they-say-about-us>.

⁶²⁸ A similar reverse psychology communications tactic was seen in the case of Greenpeace.

⁶²⁹ See Brown, 2008:516.

⁶³⁰ For examples see Ignatieff, 2001:20 and Brown, 2008:510-519.

technical and linguistic infrastructural possibilities. If rights conflict and there is no unarguable order of moral priority in rights claims, then, Ignatieff argues, we cannot speak of rights as trumps⁶³¹.

An additional dilemma for human rights activists is the non-negotiability of the nature of rights. Ignatieff points out that when rights are introduced into political discussion they create a spirit of non-negotiable confrontation, running a risk that the issue will become irreconcilable. Compromise is not facilitated by the use of rights language, since to call a claim a right is, essentially, to declare it non-negotiable (*ibid*). This, I suggest, is easier for the advocate and activist to do, than it is for the concession-making diplomat working within the international system. From the perspective of attracting mass media attention the inherent conflicts adhering to human rights issues are highly newsworthy, particularly if they are framed dramatically, or in ways that point to scandalous or inhuman behaviour by state leaders or administrations. This facet of political advocacy was greatly in evidence in the case study on Greenpeace and, this thesis submits, is increasingly the case in HRW's adoption of the voice-amplifying tools of the new media⁶³².

Tensions and conflicts might be usefully understood as intrinsic characteristics for a TAN such as HRW, which asserts an *a priori* basis for universal human rights, yet seeks to change the behaviours of state actors through increased information supply and argument within the cultural and developmental diversity of the international system. However, this thesis argues that this method of leveraging political influence through increased communications is risky and has a significant counter-intuitive aspect, according to Ackoff ⁶³³ (1999: 36-37):

⁶³¹ Dworkin (1977), cited in Ignatieff, 2001:20; 50. Ignatieff argues that the realisation of liberty and equality, freedom and security, property and distributive justice, conflict, and, because they do, the rights that define them as entitlements are also in conflict.

⁶³² An example of this type of news sensationalism is, arguably, the full page publication of an old (2005) photograph featuring political leaders who are currently unpopular in the West, in HRW's latest Annual Report (HRW Annual Report, 2013:37). The photograph has little relevance to the accompanying report and bears the arguably gratuitous caption: 'Russian President Vladimir Putin and then-wife, Lyudmila, welcome Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his wife, Asma, in Moscow on January 23, 2005'.

⁶³³ The U.S. organisational and systems theorist, the late Russell L. Ackoff.

Unfortunately, when conflict is based on differing values or scarcity of resources, an increased flow of information, contrary to conventional wisdom, does not improve but aggravates the conflict.⁶³⁴

Reminiscent of Keohane and Nye's observations of information overload, 'white noise' and 'gridlock' that were already being experienced by international institutions in the mid-1980s in their interactions with transnational civil society groups (1988:89), Ackoff asserts (*ibid*:36):

[A]s the amount of information received increases beyond the amount receivers can handle effectively, they use less and less of it. Not only do receivers become saturated with information — and therefore cannot receive any more — but they can and do become supersaturated and discard some of the information they already have.

Moreover, the nexus between political intention and political advocacy and influence is an intricate one. In order to influence or persuade others, political information and ideas must be conveyed to them in acceptable ways (Broom and Sha, 2013:323).

There are two further interrelated factors that I consider play a critical role in determining the type of NGO model that HRW has evolved into and the type of strategies it chooses to pursue its aims. These are: 1. How independent and autonomous is HRW? And 2. Does HRW's funding model have a determinative effect on the political strategies it chooses?⁶³⁵ In this context HRW declares (HRW data, 2014d):

Human Rights Watch is an independent, nongovernmental organization, supported by contributions from private individuals and foundations worldwide. It accepts no government funds, directly or indirectly.

And (HRW data, 2014c):

To ensure our independence, we do not accept government funds, directly or indirectly, or support from any private funder that could compromise our objectivity and independence.

⁶³⁴ Ackoff gives as an example 'the more information enemies at war have about each other, the more harm each can inflict on the other' (*ibid*:36).

⁶³⁵ These two factors have particular relevance to the PRQ and H₅: *The funding models TANs adopt have a determinative effect on their advocacy strategies.*

According to its statements (HRW Financial Statement, 2013), HRW obtains its financial support primarily from foundation grants and contributions from private individuals, but also from estates, trusts and businesses. This funding model may need to change as HRW's financial resources appear to be under pressure⁶³⁶. It could not be established, by way of this external audit, whether HRW's funding situation was causally related to its advocacy patterns of change. However, it is clearly evident that HRW's advocacy patterns are changing (Section 9.5.3).

This sense of a stretched organisation feeling the strains of the tasks it has undertaken is evident in HRW's Annual Reports. In 2011, the Executive Director's overview of the year spoke of 'staffing inadequacies' and the 'extreme burden' faced by researchers in trying to carry out assignments in a number of countries simultaneously, across the turbulent Middle East region (HRW Annual Report, 2011:1; 2012:43; 2013:1).

HRW's claim that it is independent financially relates to the non-acceptance of financial support from any government or government-funded agency. Nevertheless, this asserted independence does not necessarily equate to an organisation that is independent of non-financial drivers, such as ideologies, dispositions or influences. HRW's boilerplate claim to be 'independent and autonomous', therefore, seems somewhat ambiguous. In 2010, HRW accepted a grant from George Soros's⁶³⁷ Open Society Foundations of US\$100 million (*ibid*:16; OSF data, 2012), to be donated in \$10 million installments over 10 years, for the purpose of extending HRW's global presence, particularly in the global South. Over this period, HRW is expected to find funding to match the grant (HRW audio, 2010). According to *The Washington Post* (*The Washington Post*, 2010), HRW is also seeking to cultivate a new generation of foreign donors, to raise its 30% funding from outside the U.S. (which in 2010 came mostly from Europe, with some

⁶³⁶ For example, in 2011 HRW raised US\$151.6 million from its revenue sources and recorded expenditure of US\$50.6 million; in 2012 it raised only \$70.5 million and had expenditure of \$58.7 million. In 2013, \$64.6 million was raised and expenditure was \$65.3 million (HRW Annual Report, 2012; 2013).

⁶³⁷ Investor and philanthropist George Soros is the Chairman of the Open Society Foundations, a body he established in 1979 to help countries make the transition out of communism. URL <http://www.soros.org/about>. The link between HRW and the OSF is not tenuous: one of the founders of Human Rights Watch and its Executive Director for 12 years, Aryeh Neier, is President Emeritus of the Open Society Foundations (<http://www.soros.org/people/aryeh-neier>).

input from Japan) to 50% within a decade. Clearly, this gearing up in HRW's fundraising overtures to attract a qualitatively new category of non-U.S. donor will predicate changes in advocacy strategies. *The Post* reported (*ibid*) that the Soros grant would ensure the financial health of HRW for years to come and enable it to increase its staff by one third. It commented:

The group [HRW] will also set up regional headquarters in the capitals of emerging political and economic powers, where leaders have frequently criticized human rights advocacy as a Western tool to impose their will on small countries.

The report quoted HRW's Executive Director, Kenneth Roth: 'We need to be able to shape the foreign policies of these emerging powers, much as we have traditionally done with Western powers'. I argue that at least three pressures on strategy directions are evident in the acceptance of this grant: (a) the obligation to apply it specifically to global expansion, especially in the South; (b), the use of strategies intended to 'shape the foreign policies of these emerging powers' in accordance with those used in the West; and (c), the imperative to match the grant with a vastly expanded programme to attract donor funds. This thesis further suggests that whether one agrees with the open society/pro-democracy political stance of the Soros organisation, its aims and operations are overtly ideological and distinctively political (OSF data, 2012; *The Washington Post, ibid*). Signs that HRW's funding model and funding imperatives have a determinative effect on the strategies it chooses are thus clearly evident.

Some scholars, who challenge assumptions about the principled, normative motivation of INGOs, suggest that market forces and instrumental concerns, such as the 'desire to please multiple donors who control the purse strings', should have a higher priority in analysing the strategies and behaviour of INGOs (Cooley and Ron, 2010:205; Lecy, Mitchell and Schmitz, 2010:235). Lecy *et al* point out:

Advocacy organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch do not pick their targets primarily on the basis of the greatest violation of human rights principles, but instead are driven by a need for mass media exposure and for securing increased funding⁶³⁸.

⁶³⁸ See also Ron, Ramos and Rodgers, 2005, for a comparative study on the factors shaping transnational human rights NGO agendas. Support for this assessment is also provided by Foreman (2010).

9.5.3 Assessment of HRW using an advocacy theoretical framework

HRW projects an assertive global brand identity as a champion of human rights. How has it achieved this? This thesis argues that a critical determinant is that HRW's communications aims are tied to communications strategies. This ensures that the strategic target is achievable with the actions proposed; that the action is being taken towards a real and logical target, rather than an arbitrary one, using a real lever to produce the desired effect. In this light, an organisation is able to connect its publicity to actual performance and claim credit where it asserts it is due. The principle of cumulative advantage, whereby HRW's prominent, publicity-generating outputs have been amplified in mass media discourses, appears to have played a prime role in establishing HRW's global reputation (*vide* Arthur, 1989; Watts, 72-75; Adler, 1985).

Unlike both Greenpeace and Oxfam, HRW does not commit to an overall ideal that leaves much to subjective interpretation about what is meant. In this respect, HRW's operations are guided by the relatively more practical mission statement:

Human Rights Watch is dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world. We stand with victims and activists to prevent discrimination, to uphold political freedom, to protect people from inhumane conduct in wartime, and to bring offenders to justice. We investigate and expose human rights violations and hold abusers accountable. We challenge governments and those who hold power to end abusive practices and respect international human rights law. We enlist the public and the international community to support the cause of human rights for all.

This gives HRW a potential advantage in demonstrating its effectiveness by being factually specific about its goals, in comparison to the nebulous goals set by both Greenpeace and Oxfam⁶³⁹. Importantly, HRW's work is underpinned and guided by international human rights and humanitarian law (HRW data, 2014c). Thus, when HRW commits to 'protect people from inhumane conduct in wartime', the internationally acknowledged referent for 'inhumane conduct' is unambiguous and breaches of its stipulations are measurable.

⁶³⁹ Greenpeace's goal is 'to ensure the ability of the earth to nurture life in all its diversity' (GI data, 2012d); Oxfam's goal is 'finding lasting solutions to poverty and injustice' (OI data, 2012a).

According to Lombord there is sound logic in promoting and upholding a material object, such as international human rights law, rather than ideals (2001:5-6). He points out that in comparing the state of the world with an ideal situation we are implicitly making a political judgment. He adds: 'If we are to understand the real state of the world, we need to focus on the *fundamentals*⁶⁴⁰ and we need to look at *realities*, not myths'. And for this we need statistics⁶⁴¹ (*ibid*: xx). Therefore, Lombord asserts, it is crucial to distinguish between what the world is like and what we think it ought to look like, if the best possible, sound information is to be used to prioritise projects and resources and formulate policy (*ibid*:4). Given HRW's background in scrutinising legal compliance and mounting legal arguments, this logic is likely to be persuasive for HRW staff and supporters.

A further advantage in demonstrating efficacy lies in the selection of performance indicators for HRW's mission-related activities that are relatively easy to set, and to varying degrees fulfill — and, moreover, to quantify and publicise in a positive light. Although this theory requires further substantiation by way of an internal audit of HRW it is inconceivable that HRW does not evaluate its performance against its mission commitments⁶⁴². Such a process is obviously superior to unsubstantiated claim-making of effectiveness, credit assignment and victories. In the case of HRW, this type of performance efficacy assessment would appear to contribute to the levels of credible quantitative and qualitative data available regarding HRW's activities and effectiveness, as well as enabling comparison and trend monitoring.

Until recently, HRW typically adopted the role of narrator, or conduit, in exposing human rights news — unlike Greenpeace and Oxfam, which to varying degrees position themselves prominently within the news stories they frame. Recently, however, HRW has increasingly used modern communications tools to showcase the lives and activities of its field reporters and executives in surmounting danger

⁶⁴⁰ Emphasis as in original.

⁶⁴¹ Bjørn Lombord asserts that, in many areas, statistics are the only means by which we can make a scientifically sound description of the world (2001: xx)

⁶⁴² For example, a thematic performance survey within HRW might conceivably enquire: Did we 'stand with victims and activists to prevent discrimination', etc? Answer: Yes, we did. We did the following ... (outputs or interventions x, y z, and outcomes, can then be listed). Question: Did we 'investigate and expose human rights violations and hold abusers accountable'? Answer: Yes, we did. We did ... (outputs/interventions and outcomes can then be listed).

to bring rights abuse cases to light (*e.g.* HRW Annual Report 2013; 2012; 2011; HRW video 2012; 2014a; 2014c). In this analysis, HRW demonstrates both its transition from operating on the lines of a traditional NGO model to those of a contemporary media-savvy TAN and its metamorphosis into a type of international news agency.

The question arises: just how significant is this transformation of HRW's advocacy function in relation to its other functional components? A review of HRW's dissemination of information, via press releases and publications determined what changes had been made in these communications outputs over time. I found that the advent of affordable global communications technology has rapidly revolutionised HRW's messaging content and volume. To illustrate this, the earliest edition of HRW's flagship annual publication *World Report* that can now be found on the HRW Website is for the year 1989. Although this Report declares that 1989 was 'a momentous year for human rights' (Introduction to *Human Rights Watch World Report 1989*), with demands for human rights being credited with bringing down the Berlin Wall, overturning dictatorships, helping to bring the Cold War to an end, arousing hopes for peaceful change in southern Africa and eliciting the Tiananmen Square crackdown in China, it is surprising to realise that the means HRW had to disseminate its views on these historical events, and the audiences it could reach, were then relatively restricted⁶⁴³: the year 1989 was pre-World Wide Web so the report was not available online — instead, this flagship publication was printed, using an outdated typewriter typeface and presented in a dense uniform format that would have arguably challenged the perseverance of even the most dedicated human rights researcher or news reporter.

As recently as 2006, the *World Report* was still presented in a very basic format. Then in 2007, it sprang to life with colour photographs throughout, and in 2008 its presentation leaped forward again with the online version innovatively carrying an embedded podcast, amidst a more easily readable text. Naming and shaming in human rights advocacy had taken on new dimensions and become widely accessible. Today, HRW maintains a vibrant, reader-oriented, Website providing rapid news and information, photographs, videos, podcasts and RSS feeds;

⁶⁴³ Ulrich Beck describes 1989 as the symbolic date that 'will go down in history as the end of an epoch' (Beck, 1994:1).

maintaining a presence on leading social media networks; distributing images captured on cell phones and video cameras by human rights victims and advocates (BBC news, 2012); and facilitating low-cost networking with its stakeholders and audiences. In the words of a senior HRW staff member⁶⁴⁴, when it comes to compelling information that will help its causes, Human Rights Watch 'is going to get it, get it out there, and we're going to let the whole world know' (HRW video, 2012).

Replicating the distinctive operational model of a 24/7 news agency, this side of HRW's work includes: directing its field staff on extensive, covert, fact-finding operations; interviewing victims and eye-witnesses to abuses; researching, reporting, photographing and filming; whistle-blowing; monitoring compliance with regulations and laws; bearing witness in often dangerous situations; attending international forums; and presenting its spokespersons on-camera (*e.g.* *N.Y. Times*, 2012a and BBC news, 2012). Instead of relying on the traditional media organisations to transmit its messages to their audiences, HRW is increasingly connecting directly with its own target audiences (Ellis, 2012). This not only bypasses the traditional media⁶⁴⁵, or gatekeeper, but enables HRW to customise its messages, take advantage of cheaper delivery platforms, and guarantee dissemination of its releases. Acknowledging the move into the media business, HRW's Bogert⁶⁴⁶, commented (Ellis, *ibid*):

We consciously ape the style of media in our communication in order that what we produce looks more like journalism. We're a nonprofit and we're moving into the media business.

However, although HRW's media mentions have risen steadily in recent years, Bogert emphasises that a scattergun approach to a mass audience is not where HRW is aiming. Its targets are presidents, prime ministers and other powerbrokers in a position to effect change (*ibid*):

We want to make sure we're occupying all the information channels flowing into the brain of a decision maker.

⁶⁴⁴ This comment is by the HRW Executive Director, Middle East and North Africa Division, New York Office, Sarah Leah Whitson, speaking in reference to the uprising in Syria and the difficulties faced in gaining access to the country (HRW video, 2012).

⁶⁴⁵ Sometimes also referred to as 'legacy' media.

⁶⁴⁶ Deputy Executive Director for External Relations, Carroll Bogert.

But, Bogert admits, HRW faces various dilemmas in navigating in these channels. For one thing, she wants HRW to shun the sensationalist methods of mainstream journalism. And she finds that balancing content for disparate audiences is challenging:

I think the question for us is what is the right balance between the short-form content that social media requires and the long-form content by which Human Rights Watch has made its name.

Reinforcing the depiction of HRW as a quasi-news agency, one New York newspaper observed (*The Village Voice*, 2006): ‘There’s more hard-hitting journalism going on in its offices than in most of the bigger newsrooms in this country.’

In HRW advocacy, it is the events and revelations themselves that are often dramatic and fiercely contested and, therefore, irresistibly newsworthy. In further contrast to Greenpeace and Oxfam, HRW’s issues are represented in terms that are gritty and dark, especially in the case of torture. Its victims of abuse appear to be authentic: often presented before the eyes of the world still battered and bleeding from instances of alleged abuse. In terms of assessing the ‘dependent affectedness’⁶⁴⁷ of these human voices, the effectiveness of HRW advocacy arguably trumps all others⁶⁴⁸.

HRW may be increasingly challenged in the future not only in its audience targeting but also in its selection of cases to pursue. This challenge will come from the inherent tensions in choosing between illuminating deserving rights abuse causes and the need to compete with other information-disseminating organisations to attract audiences by telling compelling narratives. A question that might be asked is: Does HRW increase the steady tally of success stories on its Website — where every story requires a photo, a video, a podcast, or a link to something visual — or does it fight the quiet, low-profile, unphotogenic battles, where the human rights abuses may be insidious but equally brutal? (Weiss,

⁶⁴⁷ See earlier reference to ‘validity of voice’ assessment criteria in Section 6.6.2 and Bendell, 2006.

⁶⁴⁸ Examples of these dramatic images are readily available in the press release, publications and multimedia sections of the HRW Website at www.hrw.org and the HRW Annual Reports for 2011, 2012 and 2013.

2013:49-52). In the same way that Greenpeace has been criticised for increasingly selecting global brands to target in its recent campaigns, HRW may need to avoid a similarly sensationalist image as a quasi-news agency, particularly one that, I argue, is increasingly adopting the familiar media principle: 'If it bleeds, it leads'.

Framing instances of political dissent in terms of human rights abuse keeps HRW in the forefront of news coverage of significant political events. The Arab Spring presents an exceptional and timely backdrop against which to analyse HRW's current positioning in the field of political advocacy. Framing these events as 'essentially human rights uprisings', a HRW official in Washington (Porteous)⁶⁴⁹ provides a vivid account of HRW's distinctive *modus operandi* by explaining its activities during the turmoil in the Middle East (HRW video, 2012). He relates how HRW had been reporting on human rights abuses in affected Arab countries for years and had an intimate knowledge and understanding of their background and problems. When violence broke out in Egypt, he explains, no other human rights monitor had been as well placed to supply the global media with credible, in-country, data — particularly in regard to atrocities and numbers of casualties with which to challenge government accounts. This thesis suggests there are obvious comparisons and theorising that can be made here between the traditional media news supplier in the form of the now-vanishing foreign correspondent, who was usually a country expert, and the replacement of these news sources by activists with cell phones.

HRW had also channeled its field information to the U.S. authorities 'to enable them to put pressure on the Egyptian army, with whom they had close contacts, to convince President Mubarak to step aside'. Which 'is essentially what they did', Porteous adds. In describing HRW's frontline, albeit self-appointed, non-official role in the conflict zone, Porteous claims (*ibid*):

Human Rights Watch has never before faced a multitude of crises across such a wide region. But our methodology is the same as our methodology anywhere else: we get as close as possible to the abuses that are taking place. Our work involves speaking to witnesses — and also to the perpetrators; gathering as much evidence — photographic evidence, or video evidence — and then we

⁶⁴⁹ Tom Porteous is the Deputy Programme Director of the Human Rights Watch Washington Office. His comments are featured in the video *Defending Human Rights Worldwide*, (HRW video, 2012).

put it all together and we get the information out there, to change the situation on the ground.

In view of the new communications technologies that HRW has recently adopted (HRW data, 2012a), it was not surprising that HRW has ‘never before faced a multitude of crises across such a wide region’. HRW’s most senior executives recently declared (HRW Annual Report, 2013:1):

Human Rights Watch’s increasingly global reach has bolstered our impact, but the challenges before us are immense and increasing.

9.5.4 Assessment of HRW’s relationship with the United Nations

The international system has a statutory commitment to close collaboration with NGOs involved in championing human rights (see Chapters 4 and 5). In its guide to CSOs on engagement with the various UN civil rights bodies and mechanisms, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights⁶⁵⁰ (OHCHR) stated: ‘one cannot overestimate the contribution that civil society has made towards the development of international human rights standards’, their views, practical knowledge and scholarship being consequently regarded as ‘crucial’ to the advancement of the human rights movement (UN-OHCHR, 2008). This work, the Commissioner added, includes: sharing information, advocating and scrutinising the implementation of human rights, reporting violations, assisting victims of abuses, and campaigning for the development of new human rights. Furthermore:

They give voice to the powerless in venues that may, otherwise, be out of the victims’ reach, including international human rights forums and mechanisms.

Therefore, the Commissioner pointed out:

Clearly, there is a need on the part of civil society actors to deeply understand and master the modus operandi of national, regional and international human rights institutions.

HRW’s interface with the UN could be summed up as: accreditation, collaboration and heavy traffic. HRW has a collaborative and assertive interface with the international system, as may be gauged by its communications traffic with its primary international institutional target, the OHCHR. Evidently, the OHCHR

⁶⁵⁰ Ms. Navanethem Pillay.

encourages this level of engagement, stating that it is committed to strengthening civil society's capacity to use the UN human rights programme effectively (UN-OHCHR, 2008:7). The OHCHR declares (*ibid*, 3):

Local, national and international human rights NGOs are a vital part of the international human rights movement and an essential partner for OHCHR. They alert the world to human rights violations. They defend victims, promote rights through education, and campaign for improvements and advancements. The relationship between OHCHR and civil society is a dynamic and collaborative one, which infuses all parts of OHCHR.

By assessing HRW's heavy usage of this interface mechanism it may be deduced that the arrangement has value for all parties. For example, the OHCHR Website⁶⁵¹ currently contains over 2,500 items relating to mutually relevant issues with HRW. For its part, HRW's Website⁶⁵² posts over 17,000 items — reports, submissions, press releases, etc. — relating to its interface with the UN. The institutional mechanism, therefore, appears to be maintained by mutual commitment, engagement and, presumably, mutual rewards.

To a large extent, HRW's work within the UN system involves assisting the UN's human rights treaty bodies (which are committees of independent experts), to monitor the implementation by Member States of the UN's 10 human rights treaties⁶⁵³ (UN-OHCHR, 2012). In addition to their obligations to implement the treaties to which they are signatories, States are required to submit regular progress reports for consideration by these committees. The committees also receive information from UN agencies, national human rights institutions and civil society actors, in particular NGOs, professional associations and academic institutions (UN-OHCHR, 2008:31-35). It is here that HRW can be seen to have a high level of input, submitting detailed reports, frequently taking issue with the assertions of individual States, and providing counterclaims and information

⁶⁵¹ OHCHR Website at http://search.ohchr.org/search?site=default_collection&client=default_frontend&output=xml_no_dtd&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&Entqr=0&ud=1&sort=date%3AD%3A%3Ad1&proxystylesheet=en_frontend&q=Human%20Rights%20Watch

⁶⁵² HRW Website at

http://www.hrw.org/search/apachesolr_search/United%20Nations?filters=tid%3A680

⁶⁵³ These treaty bodies are the committees on: Human Rights, Against Torture, Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Rights of the Child, Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Migrant Workers, Enforced Disappearances, and the Sub-committee on Prevention of Torture.

concerning serious or systematic violations of treaties.

A typical example of the type of correspondence between UN bodies and HRW can be seen in HRW's *Report on Human Rights in Yemen*, which was submitted to the UN Human Rights Committee in advance of its Review of Yemen in March 2012, and which I have selected from among the thousands of instances of HRW's engagements with the UN (HRW Report, 2012). Written in plain, unambiguous language, without the use of rhetorical flourishes so often favoured by some TANs⁶⁵⁴, the 18-page report points out 'systematic violations' of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Having argued its points with characteristic concision, the Report provides the Human Rights Committee with a footnote URL to a more comprehensive account of the interviews with child soldiers (HRW data, 2011). To assist these processes, HRW has a dedicated office to handle UN-related issues, supervised by an international communications professional⁶⁵⁵.

9.6 Summary

HRW exhibits all of the essential properties this thesis associates with TANs. However, HRW is also a TAN hybrid: while its traditional service-providing functions were shown to be maintained at a high level of operational efficiency, a vigorous advocacy function has developed to the point where it resembles an international news agency. Its traditional NGO function includes the provision of legal expertise, treaty monitoring services, academic research and analysis. Capabilities include evidence-based argumentation and navigation of the international institutional landscape, bridging varying levels of complexity — from empowering the voices of individual rights abuse victims to complex international deliberations, diplomatic liaison and lobbying. These distinctive differentiating properties do not appear to be replicated by other TANs and were seen as lending value to HRW's international relationships and the UN system. Evidence was

⁶⁵⁴ For example, describing the UN's Earth Summit as a 'failure of epic proportions' (GI news, 2012b) and accusing world leaders of 'dithering and a lack of political will' (GI Naidoo, 2014).

⁶⁵⁵ HRW's United Nations Director, Philippe Boloignon, a former international journalist and UN correspondent for the French news organisation, *Le Monde* (HRW data, 2012b).

presented that HRW has established an influential voice in international politics, supporting H₁, H₂, and H₃⁶⁵⁶.

The increasing adoption of advanced ICTs and communications techniques, since around 2007, has dramatically changed the advocacy face HRW presents to the world. This corporate brand identity promotion ensures that HRW is globally recognised as an important and effective voice in championing human rights issues in national and international contexts (H₁).

Today, HRW operates concurrently as both 'insider' and 'outsider' in the international institutional system. However, HRW's 'outsider' role is developing conspicuously. A cycle of shaping the tools of advocacy and being shaped by them is evident. By adopting the latest ICTs and tools, HRW's upscaled communications function is enabling unprecedented numbers of rights abuse claimants to raise their protests from micro-level social situations, to the uniquely complex macro-level of international discourse and decision-making. There were indications-in-process that this enhanced use of advocacy tools in various regions, particularly in the global South, may have been necessitated by HRW's imperative to raise its non-U.S. profile, in order to attract substantially increased donor funding. Internal tensions between the insider/outsider roles were evident in Bernstein's breakaway to form a more ICT-focused TAN, and the comments by Bogert, that it is HRW's policy to retain its traditional, service-providing fundamentals and 'shun the sensationalist methods of mainstream journalism' (which, I argue, it is reasonable to suggest HRW currently is not doing) (H₂, H₅)⁶⁵⁷.

HRW's traditional information-sharing function appears to determine that it has a mutually rewarding and satisfactory relationship with the international system, with the exception of some currently notable, 'pariah' states. HRW's traditional

⁶⁵⁶ H₁: *Contemporary TANs are an important NGO variant in international politics that have unprecedented properties and powers emerging from their advocacy communications, which are typically neglected in politics theorising.*

H₂: *The international system is struggling to accommodate TANs and the elements of the international institutions have a distinctively troubled interface with modern TAN-type NGOs.*

H₃: *The adversarial advocacy strategies typically adopted by TANs constitute a barrier to them achieving their aims in the international policy-making environment.*

⁶⁵⁷ H₂ (As per previous footnote).

H₅: *The funding models TANs adopt have a determinative effect on their advocacy strategies.*

'long-form' research outputs remain a trusted resource within international society, despite some specific criticisms (notably, of an anti-Israel bias). This thesis argues that HRW increasingly tries to embody the contrasting needs of public advocacy and international diplomacy. Internal and external tensions are thus unavoidable, as those involved in high-stakes confidential negotiations, such as Member State representatives, might be mistrustful of them disclosing details of confidential deliberations (UN Report 2004c).

The evidence points to a striking difference between the adversarial stance of HRW and some other TANS, such as Greenpeace, in that HRW's adversarial strategies are directed at specific targets, typically controversial national leaders and their governments, rather than at the international order *per se*. HRW makes conspicuous efforts to understand and work within the international system to lobby support, surmount barriers and leverage change (H₃). However, comments by HRW's Roth that 'we need to be able to shape the foreign policies of these emerging powers' (*The Washington Post*, 2010), appear to be at variance with HRW's undertakings to the UN to 'not engage in a politically motivated act against a Member State [...]' and to 'Respect the norm of non-interference in the internal affairs of states' (UN-ECOSOC, 2011c).

Complex realism was a useful analytical framework for explaining the development of HRW. There were signs of the systemic influences that led to the emergence of Helsinki Watch, in a particular fitness landscape, followed by adaptation of the model into other 'Watch Committees' and then HRW. HRW's spillover into adjacent possible opportunities is accommodated in this conceptualisation. Moreover, an important driver of HRW's growth appears to be the systemic properties of the advocacy communications function, which, having adopted new ICTs and tools, is increasingly disposed to adapt to changes in the myriad of fitness landscapes that attract HRW's interventions. HRW was also seen as (a) providing a valued feedback mechanism in the international system; and (b) developing capacities to enable grassroots voices to 'scale-shift' their concerns to national and international sociological levels at which they might be addressed. This capability to evolve fitness properties suited to its environments was seen as an indicator that HRW is effective in achieving its aims. Moreover, HRW's setting of

practical goals and measurable, multi-pronged, strategies was seen as beneficial in establishing the validity of credit claims (H₄)⁶⁵⁸.

HRW's funding model appears to have a clear determinative influence on its advocacy strategies. This could present a dilemma because of evolving changes in its funding needs and present financial sources, in view of its declared independence. The undoubtedly timely award of US\$100 million from the pro-democracy Open Society Foundations in 2012, might be usefully regarded as a bailout, albeit with obligations regarding HRW's future strategic direction.

It appears that the present challenges for HRW are how to: (i) cope with the pressures of supply and demand in its chosen field; (ii) manage resources; and (iii) set priorities amid the increasing cacophony of newly-enabled voices around the world that are pleading for a global champion to listen to them and protect their human rights.

This thesis posits that only time will tell to what extent the contemporary Human Rights Watch model will be able to effectively contain the contradictory elements of its hybrid corporate body as a coherent, trusted, international intelligence source and reliable consultation partner, as the tensions between modern advocacy's need to spin dramatic and compelling narratives, and the needs of diplomacy for the discipline of considered verification, grow ever stronger⁶⁵⁹.

⁶⁵⁸ H₄: *A complex realist approach has exemplary merit in approaching the subject area and primary research question of the thesis.*

⁶⁵⁹ For additional, contemporary, insights on such tensions, see Zuckerman (2012).

10. Conclusion

*Don't raise your voice;
improve your argument.*

Archbishop Desmond Tutu (2012)

10.1 Introduction

This thesis investigated a practical conundrum emerging in international politics: What is the place and function of transnational advocacy networks in the contemporary international system and how effective are they in achieving their aims? The primary reason for framing this interface zone as a research problem was due to evidence of a paradox: while TANs are a rapidly proliferating phenomenon in international contentious politics and are widely known for waging headline-grabbing wars of words, TANs, both as a phenomenon and individually, remain on the whole opaque to outside scrutiny and are under-theorised on important levels of analysis. Unsurprisingly, they have been termed 'elusive' in the political literature. Typically portrayed as vital service-providing agencies that by-pass official controls to relay civil society concerns to the world's media and international policy-makers, TANs are commonly assumed to be the vociferous, Internet-enabled, offspring of traditional NGOs and, thus, heirs to the reputational capital of NGOs. However, despite this respected provenance, it is evident that TANs frequently fail to achieve their goals.

The rationale for this thesis was thus found in lacunae and areas of apparent oversight in the literature on contentious international politics, a relatively recent political paradigm that appears to have emerged from a need to accommodate the multitudes of non-state actors now present in the international arena. This literature focuses mainly on conflict and competing ontologies over the way the world is, or should be, and are typically waged as wars of words between civil

society activist organisations and the nation-state elements of the international system. By engaging with this problem space, the thesis sought to build on this literature by showing why the emerging NGO typology of TANs cannot be explained without paying attention to the systemic complexity of their environment and their essentially communicative functioning. Indeed, this thesis argues that advocacy is best understood when it is regarded as a communications function, not a political role. Furthermore, by adopting a pluralist approach that assumed contingency, temporality and multi-causality — while rejecting reductionism absolutely — the thesis aimed also to demonstrate the analytical value of applying complex realism to conceptualise and empirically examine interacting IR subject matter of this nature.

This course was indicated by my development of the following two theories concerning the functioning, relationships and effectiveness of TANs, namely: (i) that the advocacy characteristics of recently emerging transnational 'advocacy' networks differentiate them markedly from other typologies of NGO operating in the international arena — raising questions regarding widespread assumptions that contemporary TANs are due inheritors of the reputational capital of traditional NGOs; and (ii) these important, differentiating, properties of contemporary TANs notably arise from the advocacy function of their organisations, are typically overlooked by political theorists and, therefore, are not problematised in Politics thinking and debates. This thesis aims to contribute towards further shaping this thinking and these debates.

In accordance with opinion that outcomes in complex systems are always outcomes-in-process⁶⁶⁰, I emphasise that the results presented in this chapter summarise my analysis of patterns, tendencies and trends, which are not asserted to be conclusive, or concluded, at this point in time but are suggestive of underlying structures and generative mechanisms conditioning the manifest events and relational behaviours of agents. Despite the deluge of information that characterises the modern Information Age, with issues framed as important for targeted audiences, and the unremitting publicity on 'micro events that fascinate the media' (Wight, 2013:91), on-going monitoring will be necessary to determine

⁶⁶⁰ See Section 3.2.1.

which of the events, tendencies or trends, could prove significant in shaping change at the macro-sociological level.⁶⁶¹

I turn now to summarising the results of the research and showing how exploring the PRQ and five hypotheses helped to focus the research and shed light on neglected but important areas of TAN activity, particularly those that have an interface with the international system. The first part deals with the results of the research. This is structured under four rubrics: a brief summary of each chapter and an evaluation of the findings; the place and function of TANs in the contemporary international system; the contribution of the five hypotheses to supporting the thesis; and the effectiveness of TANs in achieving their aims in the international system. The second part discusses the wider debates involving NGO and TAN activity in international politics and sums up the contributions of this thesis. It concludes by indicating a number of pathways into promising areas for further research.

10.2 Overview and chapter summaries

While some scholars have observed that research in this subject area has been mainly driven by a normative desire to support the 'principled-issues' TANs champion, this thesis held normativity to be an unstable, relatively conditioned, platform from which to obtain scientific knowledge of either a globalised social phenomenon, or international affairs. Instead, I argued that the so-called 'normative turn' in IR since the mid-1980s might help to explain why political understandings of TANs have tended to approach TANs, uncritically, on their own terms, and are characteristically ethnocentric, partial and fragmented. Moreover, initial research showed that contemporaneous developments in both globalisation and technologically-enhanced communications are widely recognised as two of the principal catalysts for TAN emergence: enabling multitudes of situated individuals with genuine concerns for their welfare and that of distant others, to seek collective empowerment by aligning with the projected aims and values of civil society norm-entrepreneurs, such as TANs, in order to take open issue with the management, by states and the international institutions, of complex, macro-structural problems and global challenges. These initial findings highlighted the

⁶⁶¹ This understanding is guided by Wight (2013:91-93).

unprecedented scale of collision between representative agents at disparate and incompatible levels of social complexity in the international environment and the contrasting weights of their argumentation. This was shown in the thesis to be problematical, since complexity theory posits that the reality of higher orders in complex systems cannot be predicted, or explained, by using only understandings of lower order complexity.

From the outset, this thesis has tried to avoid entering the morality-based melees involving TAN ideological choices, by focusing instead on the advocacy strategies they choose in order to champion their political causes. However, personal experience of international communications praxis raised many questions regarding the ethical use of affordable, globe-spanning communications tools and techniques: tools that can alert us to important risks to humanity and struggles for social justice but which also enable complex international political issues to be routinely misdiagnosed as to causality and key actors to be routinely misrepresented and/or disparaged, in simplified rhetoric by pressure groups vying globally for media attention and financial support.

Additionally, in Chapter 6, I discussed insights by Giddens, Beck and Lash, *et al*, on the manufacture of aggressive publicity by competing protest groups, relayed by the mass media, which promotes not only awareness of their selected issues but also generates alarm, distrust of public officials and political institutions, and mounting anxieties over our 'risk society' and 'runaway world'. Moreover, the frustrations commonly expressed by TANs revealed high levels of failure and consequent condemnation of officials and official institutions whose persuasion, paradoxically, is necessary for policy change. Since there is considerable evidence and patterning at the macroscopic level that these assessments are often faulty, the line argued in this thesis was that these failures should be analysed in alternative ways: (1) as communications strategy inadequacies (*i.e.* non-alignment of aims and strategies; misjudgements in targeting strategies that might 'scale shift' issues to appropriate levels for their resolution; and inadequacy of resources required to achieve the preferred strategies); (2) as misunderstandings of the differing scales of complexity conditioning the micro-macro landscapes of international politics; and (3) as misunderstandings of the time-space distancing effects caused by

disparate social structures effecting individuals in their relations with institutions and social systems.

These concerns led to the development of the PRQ and the first hypothesis of the thesis (H₁)⁶⁶²: viz. that the ‘advocacy’ communications functions of advocacy NGOs are typically neglected in politics theorising but are analytically crucial to explaining their functioning and place in the contemporary international system. Thus, the underlying research design approached the subject of TAN relationships in the international arena from a radically different, cross-disciplinary, perspective: exploring, *inter alia*, the structural predestination of their behaviours and functional attributes; adopting recent complexity scholarship to conceptualise TANs as complex systems, embedded in a myriad of complex systems — including the international system — intersecting, interdependent, challenged by and competing with other agents (seen as systemic elements), and co-evolving in structurally-conditioned, multi-dimensional fitness landscapes. Furthermore, complexity insights were employed to analyse the ‘fitness’ of TANs to interact, form international relationships, survive and be effective on multiple levels of social complexity. The dominant communicative functioning of TANs and the quality of their relationships, commonly taken-for-granted or assumed in political theory, were then tested by introducing substantive theoretical lenses from communications science, with heartening results.

Firstly, the research approach understood the primary research question to be (a) chiefly concerned with relationships and (b) complex and multidimensional — implying the need to investigate different strata of complex social reality, occurring on different timescales and suffused with political power inequalities. The linking of TANs to the international institutional system — both as individual organisations and as a cluster — had implications for at least two thorny challenges in sociological analysis: the micro-macro (levels of analysis) problem and questions of time-space distancing. The latter relating to the entrenched structural properties of on-going, complex, social systems that stretch over time and space and their intrinsic resistances to manipulation and change by any

⁶⁶² H₁: *Contemporary TANs are an important NGO variant in international politics that have unprecedented properties and powers emerging from their advocacy communications, which are typically neglected in politics theorising.*

individual agent. These challenges were addressed by applying complex realism to conceptualise the ontology of these relationships as intersections between systemic elements embedded in fitness landscapes and constituted on different social levels and scales of complexity. This led to the development of a research design involving both 'top-down' macroscopic analysis of the macro-sociological features of the international system interface with TANs (observed mainly in behavioural patterns that reflected the underlying and enduring social structures of institutions, including powers, tendencies, trends and relationship qualities, such as trust and mutual understanding); and 'bottom-up' case study analysis of three iconic TANs: Greenpeace International, Oxfam International and Human Rights Watch. This scalable methodology enabled the study to transcend the micro-macro problems inherent in the primary research question.

The Literature

The research commenced by undertaking a wide-ranging literature review. This enabled identification of the key actors, issues and debates, and led to the refinement of the primary research question and development of five grounded hypotheses. However, it was clear from the outset that writers dealing with NGOs, in general, and the relatively recent, ICT-enabled, TAN phenomenon in particular, lacked a common terminology for identifying TANs and their essential characteristics. This led me to develop an original referent model for the TAN typology that I had identified from the literature and discourses as being distinctively different and analytically important from the traditional NGO model. From these early results, I formed a premise that political theory alone was insufficient to unlock the research problem and shed light on the emerging hypotheses, owing to fundamental idiosyncrasies in the way politics theorisation looks at TANs — unable to adequately explain relationships, other than in terms of competing ontologies; lacking the tools to examine fundamental changes in the media ecology and contemporary communications praxis, as adopted by TANs; and customarily conflating micro- and macro- levels of social systemic complexity, which tends to confound efforts to interpret international relations.

Hence, the thesis is situated at the intersection of three principal literatures: (1) contentious international politics (reflecting a zone of clashing worldviews involving TANs) ; (2) international relations and policy studies (particularly the

'globalisation' debates concerning the role and power of civil society organisations in international institutional processes and political transformations); and (3) political advocacy communications in the Information Age. This cross-disciplinary combination was necessary to investigate the complex, multi-dimensional, nature of the research question; the plurality of academic disciplines interested in TANs and their diverse approaches and perspectives; and the politics/communication/media/technology genre, which views TANs, collectively, as a relatively recent, technology-enabled and significant political force in the international arena. Importantly, this review led to the discovery that, despite their increasing numbers and prominence in mass media accounts of their activities, not least via their own publicity efforts, throughout the academic political literature transnational, advocacy-prioritising, NGOs are invariably considered to be an ill-defined, perplexing and inadequately-theorised social phenomenon.

The 'contentious international politics' literature, typically associated with the work of Tarrow, Tilly, McAdam, della Porta, Diani, Melucci, Sikkink, Keck, Finnemore, *et al*, provided the core of academic thinking in the subject area relating to the PRQ. However, owing to what I considered to be its distinctive fragmentation and imprecision, not least in the terminology commonly used to examine non-state elements engaged in the international political domain, this literature was unable to provide a clear definition of the TAN phenomenon. Therefore, its chief value was in understanding how research in the long-established field of 'social movements' has evolved, since the mid-1990s, to accommodate unprecedented forms of transnational and deterritorialised civil society activism, including TANs.

Overall, this body of opinion reflected a sociological paradigm that is keenly aware it faces methodological challenges in dealing with the unfamiliar forces driving transnationalism and shifting analytical focal points. In this regard, 'scale shift' theory, posited by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, provided a useful basis for thinking about how this literature was trying to cope with these new tensions. Scale-shift theory, which holds that contentious political environments are constituted by multiple levels of social interaction, thus usefully informed this thesis. However, it did not go far enough explain the nature of these social 'levels', or to transcend the micro-macro and time distancing problems inherent in the research question.

Nevertheless, it was apparent that the literature on pre-90s social movements while necessary for tracing the emergence of TANs and their issues, was largely outdated in regard to addressing the key questions and hypotheses of this thesis. Significantly, this literature typically revealed a rigid focus on the contentious political and historical underpinnings of TAN activism but suffered from a critical analytical blind spot in regard to the ways in which TANs — whom I identify as a new social phenomenon that is constituted and defined by its communications function — use advanced communications tools and techniques to express their causes and ideologies to the wider world.

Bearing in mind Castell's assertion that 'the networked social movements of the digital age represent a new species of social movement', this TAN communications oversight leaves this sector of the political literature with a significant lacuna, due to its inability to provide us with sophisticated, qualitative and scientifically sound understandings of (a) the *relationships* between the state and non-state elements in the contemporary international system; and (b), the international political impacts of unprecedented levels of human interconnectivity afforded by digital communications technologies and tools, as utilised by TANs. In order to connect TANs to the international system and unlock the interface landscape between TANs and the UN, I accessed the literatures taking a largely macroscopic perspective on international politics and relations, governance and globalisation. Despite the comparatively more generalised nature of these perspectives and the contested topic of 'global civil society' these texts tended to take a more detached, objective approach, concentrating largely on comparative socio-economic matters, political and historical contexts, institutional processes and collective experiences. Most importantly, they enabled the investigation of macroscopic perspectives and patterns in the relationships.

A third literature was required to cover the importance of the 'Information Age' to the development and effectiveness of TANs. This literature was necessary for understanding the part of the PRQ relating to the effectiveness of TANs in achieving their aims, which I hypothesised was significantly influenced by their communications strategies and performance.

But there were shortcomings in the available literature, due mainly to: (i) the limited ability of discipline-oriented studies to reveal more of the ontological ‘big picture’ on questions involving complex relationships on varying planes of analysis, and/or crossed paradigm boundaries; and (ii) the serious, but inevitable, delays between academic research into dynamic, contemporary, social phenomena and the availability of published analyses⁶⁶³.

Consequently, the existing literature had little to say about recent patterns and trends in TAN relationships. This struggle to capture what is important and different in these new forms of social activism permeates the literature, prompting Klandermans, Staggenborg and Tarrow to remind us that until very recently the entire focus of social movement research was the nation state. In some cases this domestic focus works adequately, since many of the activities of TANs are carried out at local and domestic levels where the enablements and resistances they encounter are familiar; but some activities, particularly the ones of interest to this thesis, are not. Moreover, while writers in the contentious international politics paradigm frequently mention the work of others, for the most part, they tend to be engaged in separate conversations. The body of literature itself is essentially fragmented due, perhaps, to the fact that many research projects involving social movements and activism are based on fragmented case studies of specific local, regional, or national groups. The varied terminology used to refer to TANs and TAN-type organisations appears to be a reflection of this heterogeneity. Chandler’s observation (2005:166), that constructivist (*i.e.* mainstream) approaches to global civil society seem to be driven mainly by a normative desire to support the ‘principled-issues’ advocated by non-state actors, was also evident in the body of work reviewed.

The implications of this challenging literature landscape for this thesis was that although it was useful for factually and theoretically underpinning some sections of the thesis, particularly those relating to the international system and socio-

⁶⁶³ In a recent example, political magazine commentaries on the Occupy movement in the U.S. were collated to create an ‘instant book’ that was published in under three months, while a text on the same subject by the noted writer on political activism, Noam Chomsky, was not published until some seven months after the Zuccotti Park events (van Gelder, 2011: *vii*; Chomsky, 2012). In such cases, I suggest, the value of high quality mainstream media accounts cannot be ignored.

historical and political contexts, it was largely unsuited to the task of closely examining the contemporary international relations of the case study organisations and providing substantive evidence about them. As may be seen in the bibliography, large volumes of additional primary and secondary data needed to be accessed from a wide range of media and website sources. It was therefore a valuable aspect of this study that TANs typically release large volumes of publicity outputs about themselves that can be readily accessed. In fact, the demonstration of this methodologically pluralist, multi-focused, approach to the subject matter is offered as a key contribution of this thesis.

Although there is abundant literature on the readily perceived aspects of NGOs/TANs, scholars had little to say on the rationality of the emerging TAN model as an all-purpose communications vehicle for deployment across the multi-level, multi-dimensional social landscape of the world. The fact *that* TANs have emerged can be explained with reference to a rich mixture of historical and contemporary circumstances, which is adequately reflected in the literature. *Whether* transnational advocacy collectives are best suited to accomplish the goals they set for themselves, using the tools they select, appears open to question in light of uncertainties in the literature regarding their definition, common characteristics, and about their roles and performance in their interactions with the international system. Thus, the exploration of TANs and their emergence and relationships, as assertive contenders in the international system, became the principal line of investigation in this dissertation. Constructivist narratives on the evolution of social movements may adequately explain the motivations and rationality of contemporary TANs and the ways in which they interact with communications technologies in pursuit of their goals, but the compilation of large numbers of individual narratives do not, I submit, adequately explain the ways in which TANs interact with international institutions, and the reasons why they are considered to be conceptually 'elusive' and 'frequently fail to achieve their goals'.

The gaps in the literature uncovered by this review made it impossible to answer the PRQ and hypotheses without conducting further, original, research. These gaps were most apparent in the areas of (a) bringing into the contentious international politics paradigm more scientific and up-to-date understandings of the role of state-of-the-art communications in interpreting the interface between TANs and

the international system; (b) explaining the barriers to international-level relationships, roles and effectiveness that some TANs encounter; and (c) explaining the different environments and effectiveness conditions that TANs encounter at various levels of complex interaction, beyond the basic mechanism identified by scale-shift theory. Moreover, these lacunae highlighted the lack of a unifying analytical framework in which micro- and macro-sociological phenomena could be accommodated and their inter-relationships explained. Through an iterative process, the literature enabled me to refine the primary research question and develop five hypotheses that had the potential to shed greater light on TAN relationships with elements of the international system.

The United Nations

As the principal organ of the international system, consisting of the *sui generis* systemic linking of the greatest number of nation states, the UN's suitability to represent the 'system' in this thesis was asserted. Moreover, the UN was identified also as the epitome of a complex system that is embedded in, and intersected by, countless other complex systems. It was argued that many of the institutional characteristics widely associated with the UN could be usefully regarded as manifestations of complex systemic 'path-dependent' behaviours set up over the course of the UN's history. These included the enduring primacy of the UN Charter of 1945 and the perturbations introduced by large scale decolonisation after World War II. The UN was presented as an association of 193 of the world's sovereign states, founded in the aftermath of World War II and representing the best Man has been able to do to live in harmony with his fellow man. It was pointed out that the UN is not a world governance body and it lacks coercive powers to compel Member States to comply with its recommendations. Furthermore, the UN and its systems of interconnected and ancillary systems was seen as deeply flawed and mired in perpetual crisis, still served by yesteryear's institutional arrangements and urgently in need of reform, yet notoriously resistant to instituting the scale of adaptation needed to tackle the present generation of global problems. This opinion testified to Durkheim's conviction that institutions are intrinsically limited and necessarily slow in their ability to undertake major transformations (as opposed to evolutionary ones), vis-à-vis political agitation for change that is intrinsically tied to the life-span and other constraints of individual agents.

Thus, despite the many criticisms of the UN's performance record, there seems little likelihood that, without the UN, the world would have seen a more stable world order during the past six decades. Notwithstanding the deterritorialising effects of globalisation and increasingly complex interdependencies between nations, grounds were seen for the Westphalian order of states, underpinned by the principles of the UN Charter, remaining the most intellectually coherent basis for conducting international affairs for the foreseeable future. That is not to deny the dynamic and emergent properties of the UN system, nor the imperative for new knowledge, fresh ideas and outspoken voices in the system that are non-aligned with domestic governments, not obligated to protect national sovereignty at any cost, and willing to propose solutions that transcend ideologies. The chapter concluded with a reminder that the UN can do little more than promote priorities for action, help monitor, and provide modest levels of technical and financial support.

The U.N. Interface with Civil Society

The interface between the UN and NGOs is a densely crowded landscape. Over 13,000 civil society organisations have established a formal relationship with the UN — over 4,000 of them in accredited consultancy relationships at various levels of participation and influence in international affairs and policy-making. Meanwhile, some 31,000 NGOs have an interface with the system in various other roles. However, gauging an accurate picture of the place and function of civil society organisations in their relationships within the international system is problematical: UN official statements concerning NGOs were assessed as largely appreciative, if measured, regarding the overall contributions of civil society actors to the UN system; while NGOs in consultative roles, although very numerous, make few public comments on the quality of their relationships with the UN — with some notable exceptions, such as Greenpeace, which has a long record of outspoken criticisms of the world body. Nevertheless, through a combination of content and discourse analysis, aided by diachronic process tracing, definite patterns and tendencies in these relationships could be discerned. It was emphasised that taxonomy and ambiguous terminology are major challenges in differentiating between civil society actors operating in the UN

system, since the UN makes no formal distinction between NGOs functionally, or philosophically, whether service-providing or lobbyist, radical or reformist, as long as they meet the UN's accreditation criteria for consultancy status. It could be deduced that owing to the large and increasing numbers of NGOs either in, or seeking, relationships with elements of the UN system, that consultancy status is generally considered to be worthwhile. On the other hand, the UN has officially encouraged dialogue between Member States and NGOs since its beginnings, and has a long, albeit inconsistent, record of creating opportunity frames for these engagements, such as World conferences on topics of mutual importance.

There were signs, however, that the UN's contemporary relationship with NGOs is greatly encumbered by historical baggage, which can be usefully understood as resulting from the complex system effects of sensitivity to initial conditions, path dependency and lock-in. The Cardoso Report (2004), which sought to reform the UN's arrangements for engaging with NGOs, and the UN Secretary-General's response to the Report, were particularly valuable sources of primary data and surprising candour on the state of these relationships.

It was emphasised that the UN Charter, so visionary in its conceptualisations in the mid-1940s, did not envisage a world facing today's global challenges, developmental disparities and shifting power relationships; nor one endowed with such a wealth of scientific and technological advances. It did not foresee the evolution of powerful, supranational actors on the world stage that were not states or inter-governmental organisations. And yet, the UN provides the institutional structures for civil society actors to achieve their aims, allowing them, as necessary, to by-pass domestic structures.

However, significant downsides were seen for NGOs in seeking relationships with international institutions: many fearing that, *inter alia*, they could lose their independence, funding or ability to react quickly to situations if they were encumbered by international institutional bureaucracy and processes. In addition, significant sectors among NGOs/TANs evidently find the statutory obligations required for UN consultant accreditation — such as supporting the Charter and work of the UN and not engaging in 'politically motivated' acts against Member States — incompatible with their ideological principles and posing insurmountable

barriers to their participation in the contemporary international system via the UN (see Annex 4 for further examples of the difficulties faced by NGOs in measuring up to the UN's affiliation criteria for consultancy status). There were, however, signs of a turning point and a new trend in relations with NGOs, stemming from the UN's recent introduction of outreach initiatives to include a greater component of business and commercial interests in the consultation framework with civil society. This apparent trend was also reflected in the new 'coalitions and partnerships' terminology in UN publications. Certainly, some NGOs represented at the UN have expressed their dismay at the perceived 'elevation of the private sector over and above NGOs'. To what extent this apparent change of policy reflects the differences in leadership culture between Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon, is not yet reflected in current commentaries but may become more evident in time.

Therefore, the capacity to include TANS in decision-making processes exists, affording some of them a formal place and a function in the international system, although the ECOSOC mechanism appears to operate in an inconsistent manner: in theory open to all issues and all applicants, apart from paedophile groups, Nazis, and organisations that propagate racial and/or religious discrimination — in practice, the accreditation criteria appears to be applied flexibly. Overall, NGOs, including TANS, appear to *function* in the UN system in an irregular, unpredictable, manner that is not easily comprehensible without taking into account an examination of the distinctive nature of TANS (Chapter 6) and empirical case studies of individual TANS in relationships with the UN (as presented in Chapters 7 to 9). The *place* and *function* of NGOs is formally established by the UN Charter, but in practice, NGOs appear to contribute to policy-making at arm's length, if at all, and Member States, on the whole, prefer to keep things that way.

Transnational Advocacy Networks

This chapter pointed out that a significant number of political sociologists consider TANS to be politically important (thereby supporting my H₁), increasing rapidly in number, distinctively different and characteristically rejecting of the international governance order (H₂, H₃). But, there remains much confusion and significant gaps in the literature regarding the essential nature of these differences and how to approach and analyse them. An advocacy-oriented referent model was presented

as a practical step towards addressing this lacuna (H₁). A set of substantive communications theoretical lenses was also presented to both confront some of the conventional wisdoms with a range of phronetic wisdoms regarding TAN activity; and, thus, aid understanding of the advocacy strategies that contemporary, ICT-enabled, TANs are increasingly employing in pursuit of their goals (H₂, H₃). A discussion was opened regarding the competencies and consequences of the strategic communications choices now being commonly employed by TANs, on both international stakeholders and heterogeneous worldwide audiences. The complex, multi-dimensional and analytically multi-level international landscape, in which UN consultant TANs operate, was described (H₄). Support was presented for H₅, which proposes that the funding models TANs adopt have a determinative effect on their advocacy strategies. The argument then proceeded to analyse three iconic TANs that exhibit the TAN-model characteristics to varying degrees.

Greenpeace International

Greenpeace was presented as an archetypal TAN, embodying all eight referent criteria to a high degree. Indeed GI was the most TAN-like of the three cases. Greenpeace was therefore examined in the light of patterns seen in the macroscopic analysis of the international system and UN relationships to find support for the hypothesis that the most TAN-like organisations were also more likely to experience the most difficulty in their relationships with elements of the international system and achieving their aims in that environment.

GI's UN consultancy role, or function, thus possessed considerable analytical value, especially in light of GI's frequent negative statements regarding its inter-relationships and perceived lack of influence in the international *fora*. The conclusion arising from this pattern was that GI's *place* in the international system is in a constant state of flux and can be seen to fluctuate in relation to GI's adaptations to: (i) its role and value to other sub-elements of the system (such as allies who facilitate its activity and opponents who restrict it); (ii) perceptions of its role, reputation, and the value it derives from the system; and (iii) its contribution to the collectively-determined purposes, joint agreements and continuing well-being of the overall system (H₁, H₂, H₃). Consequently, GI's *function*

in the international system is constantly shaped by its interactions with other sub-elements in the system (H₄).

Greenpeace exhibited an apparently locked-in commitment to its founding ethos of 'creative confrontation', strategically developing 'media mindbombs' and bearing non-violent witness to issues it believes transgress its ideological positions. The study found that Greenpeace has developed a distinctive style of interpreting and framing complex global environmental and political issues according to a narrow set of campaign issue areas, which appear to have been developed to suit its organisational capabilities. It has a distinctive style of framing complex issues by focusing on its own roles and the news-making responses it provokes. Meanwhile, the complex issues are characteristically presented as a backdrop to these activities and are communicated in simple campaign frames containing rhetorical techniques, repetition and emotional cues and stereotypes. Publicity outputs also contained simplified personal viewpoints; linear snapshots of complex problems; and popular assumptions, often employing stereotypes and humour. There was a high incidence of human-interest detail, often involving anthropomorphised wild animals. However, a fundamental consideration in communication praxis is that intended audiences need to be accurately identified and the issues framed for those audiences in ways that resonate with different degrees of expertise, information needs, and resistance. For over 40 years, Greenpeace has developed and maintained a sector-leading brand presence in the TAN sector, using the newest ideas and most up-to-date communications and brand marketing techniques and technologies. Today, we see a large-scale decentralisation of resources and, arguably, degrees of strategy incoherence and decreasing effectiveness in which the numerous Greenpeace branded campaigns appear to compete with each other, and with other environmental TANs, in terms of their capacity to mount attention-grabbing spectacles and secure resources. In light of the crowded, competitive, world of environmental politics, Greenpeace claims of effectiveness and conclusive victories for its confrontational activism model cannot be validated (H₄).

The study found no evidence to support the Greenpeace key claim that world leaders and the international world are 'sleepwalking' into global catastrophe and

doing little to find answers to the world's intractable ecological challenges. On the contrary, in light of the evidence of intensive efforts and concerns, the contradictory Greenpeace message framing appears likely to strengthen barriers to the TAN's international influence-brokering and goal attainment (H₁, H₂, H₃). Furthermore, there was no clear evidence that the trademark 'Greenpeace action' of creative confrontation is effective in matters impinging on any nation state's security and macro-economic issues (H₃).

Greenpeace's ongoing condemnations of state actors and international *fora*, and calls for mass civil disobedience, are arguably at variance with at least four of the undertakings it made to secure NGO consultancy accreditation to the UN in 1998 (H₂, H₃). In its recent announcement to prioritise the fostering of Internet-enabled activism and 'people power', there is evidence that Greenpeace elides the notions of 'collectivity' and 'connectivity' in estimating the potential of Internet-enabled activism and the possible mobilisation of 'people power' (H₁, H₃).

A growing body of evidence suggests that the formulaic 'Greenpeace action' model of protest has become less effective as a news-making strategy — a casualty of its own renowned success — and lacks novelty and impact. The political protest landscape, at all levels of complex interaction, is now crowded with later models of activism based on the Greenpeace prototype (H₄). Yet Greenpeace continues to apply this locked-in strategy, developed for a different media environment over 40 years ago, which arguably failed to achieved the intended aims then and, the organisation's CEO admits, is not forcing the desired responses from the international system now. The three most publicised events in Greenpeace history — the original Amchitka voyage, the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior* and the Brent Spar campaign — were shown to be unintended outcomes, not strategic achievements.

Support was found for Wittner's theory that when faced with an impenetrable barrier to aim-achievement in the international arena, some activists have shown a pattern of developing systemic analyses and fighting side battles instead (H₄). Similar outcomes were seen in GI's gravitation towards 'adjacent possible' opportunities to campaign against nuclear energy producers and, additionally, to battling climate change *via* vigorous campaigns aimed at shaming leading

commercial brands for allegedly harming the environment. It was observed that all of the campaigns against prominent corporations — negatively framed as ‘Goliaths’ and ‘business elites’ — showed the discursive emblems of an underlying anti-capitalist agenda: the populist rhetoric, arguably, indicative of a NIEO revivalist vision.

Corroboration was found for the hypothesis (H₅) that the funding model Greenpeace has adopted to finance its operations has a deterministic influence on the communications strategies it selects; and that this, in turn, has a critical bearing on this TAN’s place and function in the international system and on its effectiveness in achieving its aims in the international arena. In stark terms, the high visibility self-promotion and adversarial rhetoric that Greenpeace invariably adopts in its public advocacy regarding the UN, and other international actors, is undoubtedly effective in resonating with diverse audiences in the news media, donors and supporters (H₁, H₂, H₃). On the other hand, it is clearly indicative of poor relationship quality with international system counterparts. In probing why this might be so, the study found wide contrasts between the relative unaccountability of Greenpeace in its trademark framing of global challenges, repetitive argumentation and pressure tactics, and the mature, ordered and institutionalised deliberative processes of contemporary international engagement (H₁, H₂, H₃).

There is clear evidence in numerous statements by the CEO that Greenpeace does not consider itself to be effective in achieving its aims in the contemporary international system. Naidoo’s ‘Message’ that ‘We are winning battles, but losing the planet’, is apposite, given that Greenpeace declares its main purpose is ‘to ensure the ability of the earth to nurture life [...]’. Greenpeace aims and its communications strategies are clearly not aligned. I argue, therefore, that Greenpeace is largely not effective in achieving its aims in the contemporary international system but confuses the picture by claiming sequential victories on a micro-sociological agenda.

Oxfam

Oxfam International embodies all eight referent criteria for an archetypal TAN. This is an important distinction because Oxfam is recognised primarily for its

traditional service-providing NGO function, which has evolved in a complementary relationship with its advocacy function. However, the increasing, ICT-enabled assertiveness of OI's political and socio-economic ideological advocacy on matters that are not tied to specific humanitarian projects (as evidenced in OI's current five-year *Strategic Plan 2013*), does not yet appear to be widely recognised as an OI policy change (H₁, H₂, H₃). This strategic redirection shifts OI's focus away from service delivery in favour of ideological political advocacy, including a range of activities supporting a new world economic order. This rhetoric is suggestive of a NIEO revivalist campaign (H₁, H₂, H₃).

Oxfam has maintained a 'place' in the international system since 1945. This stems from its adaptation to a new fitness landscape at the end of World War II and its redrafted strategic aim (*viz.* to provide 'relief of suffering caused by any wars'), which necessitated the establishment of inter-relationships with international actors. OI also has a recognised place in the UN system by way of its accredited NGO consultant status. This status provides a mutually beneficial mechanism: it gives Oxfam direct access to international audiences, whilst also providing for the TAN to function as part of the international system's feedback mechanism and legitimising substructure. Oxfam's 'place' and 'function' in the international system are further indicated by its strategic involvement in a complex array of institutional relationships, especially as a prominent advocate of human welfare, rights and social justice issues and as a long-established provider of international crisis and development aid services (H₁).

Considering the huge proportion of Oxfam's funding that comes from international institutional sources the strategic maintenance of an embedded position in the international system would appear to be a shrewd policy (H₂). There are indications that Oxfam's funding model has had a determinative effect on its advocacy strategy of avoiding 'naming and shaming' governments (H₅).

Oxfam has traditionally founded its reputation on a platform of apolitical and areligious aims and practices. It cannot be predicted where the observed tendencies towards more overt political advocacy will lead OI in the future. The influence and instrumentality of public relations and communications strategies

are notoriously difficult to measure; can have unpredictable and unintended consequences; generally need to be administered over time; and are difficult to interpret in value-for-money terms — none of which are likely to prove appealing in the donor-funding market (H₅).

Using complex realism to trace and interpret its historical path, Oxfam revealed an array of key features associated with complex systems. There were strong indications that Oxfam's functional hybridity emerged from its original mixture of core attractor properties. Furthermore, it was noted that while it has undergone significant changes during its evolution, the organisation has continued to sustain, and be sustained by, these locked-in primary drivers and the corporate capital they amassed. This approach provided analytical tools to extend understanding of Oxfam and its relationships, and was far from exhausted by this study (H₄).

In its extrapolation of the issues and understandings of 'dependent affected' individuals to explain complex macro-sociological challenges, Oxfam demonstrates a particular TAN characteristic: the conflation of scales of complex social reality to emphasise particular rhetorical arguments (H₁, H₂, H₃).

Of the three case studies, OI was distinctive in one particular aspect: it exhibited the most striking historical pattern of restructuring its strategic approaches to fit the changing circumstances in its worldwide bailiwick. When faced with changes in its operating environment, Oxfam has characteristically readjusted its strategic goals and forged new paths to achieve them. In contrast, the other two TANs showed strong, complex systems path-dependency attributes by strict adherence to their foundational aims and imperatives, irrespective of altered socio-political and power contexts. However, there are signs emerging that OI is placing increasing emphasis on tackling its primary goal of ending poverty and injustice via advocacy strategies.

Until recently, Oxfam's strategic communications had not adopted an adversarial position vis-à-vis other international actors and, therefore, the overall linguistic tone of its public communications has apparently not constituted a significant barrier to its place, function and effectiveness in the international arena. However,

there are indications that its impartiality, as laid down in its constitution, may be compromised. Parallels are now appearing between Oxfam and Greenpeace in their use of the same social stereotypes and political ideological cues. Oxfam's drift into more outspoken advocacy in human rights and social justice is undoubtedly more controversial than its humanitarian aid-delivery work has been. Oxfam's commitment to assisting grassroots political organising and fostering Internet-enabled activism and 'people power' is, arguably, at variance with its UN consultancy undertakings to refrain from engaging in any 'politically motivated act against a Member State' and respecting 'the norm of non-interference in the internal affairs of states' (H₂, H₃).

Arguably, OI's advocacy messages now echo the alter-globalisation and anti-capitalist political lobbies of the developed West. Income inequality and redistribution has recently become a political theme and there is strong evidence of social-boundary construction in Oxfam's portrayals of implied wrong-doing by those perceived as the 'rich' and powerful in societies, against the interests of 'ordinary people', and 'everyone else'. Oxfam appears to be reviving the grievances and power struggles that characterised the NIEO campaign in the 1970s and 80s. Right to Communicate and New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) themes are also in evidence in Oxfam's more recent communications outputs.

Oxfam has carried out policy changes in line with assumptions regarding predictions of favourable socio-political conditions in the emerging BRICSAM economies. However recent economic analysis has shown that this interpretation of shifting polarity in the world economic order has been overestimated. It remains to be seen whether OI's recent strategic repositioning in solidarity with social mobilisation in the BRICSAMs and more adversarial rhetoric directed at the 'rich countries', will have a bearing on OI's international institutional funding, its place and function in the international arena, and its effectiveness in achieving its globe-spanning aims.

HRW

Human Rights Watch exhibits all of the essential properties this thesis associates with TANs. However, HRW is also a TAN hybrid: while its traditional service-

providing functions were shown to be maintained at a high level of operational efficiency, a vigorous advocacy function has developed to the point where the outward face of the organisation resembles that of an international news agency. Its traditional NGO function includes the provision of legal expertise, treaty monitoring services, academic research and analysis. Capabilities include evidence-based argumentation and navigation of the international institutional landscape, bridging varying levels of complexity — from empowering the voices of individual rights abuse victims to complex international deliberations, diplomatic liaison and lobbying. These distinctive differentiating properties do not appear to be replicated by other TANs and were seen as lending value to HRW's international relationships and the UN system. Evidence was presented that HRW has established an influential voice in international politics, supporting the hypotheses H₁, H₂, and H₃.

The increasing adoption of advanced ICTs and communications techniques, since around 2007, has dramatically changed the advocacy face HRW presents to the world. This corporate brand identity promotion ensures that HRW is globally recognised as an important and effective voice in championing human rights issues in national and international contexts (H₁).

HRW operates concurrently as both 'insider' and 'outsider' in the international institutional system. However, HRW's 'outsider' role is developing conspicuously. A cycle of shaping the tools of advocacy and being shaped by them is evident. By adopting the latest ICTs and tools, HRW's upscaled communications function is enabling unprecedented numbers of rights abuse claimants to raise their protests from micro-level social situations, to the uniquely complex macro-level of international discourse and decision-making. There were indications-in-process that this enhanced use of advocacy tools in various regions, particularly in the global South, may have been necessitated by HRW's imperative to raise its non-U.S. profile, in order to attract substantially increased donor funding. Internal tensions between the insider/outsider roles were evident in Robert Bernstein's breakaway to form a more ICT-focused TAN, and the comments by Bogert, that it is HRW's policy to retain its traditional, service-providing fundamentals and 'shun the

sensationalist methods of mainstream journalism' (which, I argue, it is reasonable to suggest HRW is currently not doing) (H₂, H₅).

HRW's traditional information-sharing function appears to determine that it has a mutually rewarding and satisfactory relationship with the international system, with the exception of some currently notable, 'pariah' states. HRW's traditional 'long-form' research outputs remain a trusted resource within international society, despite some specific criticisms (notably, of an anti-Israel bias). This thesis has argued that HRW increasingly tries to embody the contrasting needs of public advocacy and international diplomacy. Internal and external tensions are thus unavoidable, as those involved in high-stakes confidential negotiations, such as Member State representatives, could be reasonably assumed to be mistrustful of non-state participants disclosing details of confidential deliberations. Such fears were highlighted in the UN Secretary-General's response document to the 2004 Cardoso Report.

A striking difference was evident between the adversarial stance of HRW and some other TANS, such as Greenpeace, in that HRW's adversarial strategies are directed at specific targets, typically controversial national leaders and their governments, rather than at the international order *per se*. HRW makes conspicuous efforts to understand and work within the international system to lobby support, surmount barriers and leverage change (H₃). However, comments by HRW's Roth that 'we need to be able to shape the foreign policies of [...] emerging powers' appear to be at variance with HRW's undertakings to the UN to 'not engage in a politically motivated act against a Member State [...]' and to 'Respect the norm of non-interference in the internal affairs of states'.

Complex realism was a useful analytical framework for explaining the development of HRW. There were signs of the systemic influences that led to the emergence of Helsinki Watch, in a particular fitness landscape, followed by adaptation of the model into other 'Watch Committees' and then HRW. HRW's spillover into adjacent possible opportunities is accommodated in this conceptualisation. Moreover, an important driver of HRW's growth appears to be the systemic properties of the advocacy communications function, which, having

adopted new ICTs and tools, is increasingly disposed to adapt to changes in the myriad of fitness landscapes that attract HRW's interventions. HRW was also seen as (a) providing a valued feedback mechanism in the international system; and (b) developing capacities to enable grassroots voices to 'scale-shift' their concerns to national and international sociological levels at which they might be addressed. This capability to evolve fitness properties suited to its environments was seen as an indicator that HRW is effective in achieving its aims. Moreover, HRW's setting of practical goals and measurable, multi-pronged, strategies was seen as beneficial in establishing the validity of its credit claims (H₄).

HRW's funding model appears to have a clear determinative influence on its advocacy strategies. This could present a dilemma because of evolving changes in its funding needs and present financial sources, in view of its declared independence. The undoubtedly timely award of US\$100 million from the pro-democracy Open Society Foundations in 2012 might be usefully regarded as a bailout, albeit with obligations regarding HRW's future strategic direction.

It appears that the present challenges for HRW are how to: (i) cope with the pressures of supply and demand in its chosen field; (ii) manage resources; and (iii) set priorities amid the increasing cacophony of newly-enabled voices around the world that are pleading for a global champion to listen to them and protect their human rights. This thesis posits that only time will tell to what extent the contemporary Human Rights Watch model will be able to effectively contain the contradictory elements of its hybrid corporate body as a coherent, trusted, international intelligence source and reliable consultation partner.

10.3 Contribution of the five hypotheses to supporting the thesis

Each of the five hypotheses proved helpful in exploring the PRQ and broad subject matter of the thesis.

H₁: Contemporary TANs are an important NGO variant in international politics that have unprecedented properties and powers emerging from their advocacy communications, which are typically neglected in politics theorising.

The study found that both government officials and NGOs/TANs struggle to accommodate each other in their relationships within the context of the

international system, exhibiting patterns that show significant deficiencies in regard to the relationship qualities of trust, respect, mutual understanding, *etc.* The politics literature contains subjective comments on relationships, particularly based on interview data gathered from individuals, but possesses no qualitative theoretical framework for analysing them. The literature generally assessed TANs as 'important' and containing qualitatively different characteristics to traditional, service-providing NGOs, but political scholars were generally unable to identify many characteristics that TANs commonly shared, beyond the adoption of modern communications technologies and the definition provided by Keck and Sikkink in 1998, and thus were unable to provide a stable analytical unit for investigating the TAN phenomenon.

H₂: The international system is struggling to accommodate TANs and the elements of the international institutions have a distinctively troubled interface with modern TAN-type NGOs.

All three case study TANs appear to be in breach of their undertakings to the UN in order to achieve accredited consultant status, however, no publicly-available reaction from the UN was found. Research into the UN's archives, especially statutory documents relating to the relationship with NGOs overall, reveal that UN officials tend to be guarded in their willingness to countenance a wider role for civil society in international policymaking processes. The Cardoso Report and the UN Secretary-General's official response to it provide clear indications of tensions and mistrust in the UN's interface with TANs.

H₃: The adversarial advocacy strategies typically adopted by TANs constitute a barrier to them achieving their aims in the international policy-making environment.

The case studies presented evidence that, overall, Greenpeace disseminates a key message that is highly critical of the contemporary international system and world leaders and has a dysfunctional relationship with the UN. Its evident path-dependent features signal that this situation is unlikely to change. Oxfam, until very recently, appeared to be comparatively restrained in condemning other international actors and the international system as a whole. Over many decades Oxfam has also received large amounts of international institutional funding and has worked closely with many UN agencies on crisis and development aid projects and does not appear to have faced significant barriers to this collaboration.

Recently, however, Oxfam has shown signs of a strategic reversal in this policy, which could result in barriers to this level of access. Oxfam's capacity to change its aims and strategies reveal a tendency to avoid path-dependent policies, which could indicate that any barriers it faces could be temporary. Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch is noted for sharply rebuking individual 'pariah' governments, but appears to have established a durable symbiotic role in the international institutional system and conducts much of its work through contacts between its professional staff and public officials. The heavy traffic in HRW's patterns of interaction with the UN agencies and officials of states speaks for itself about the apparently robust quality of HRW's current relationships with international system agencies. Although HRW is firmly path-dependent in its assertion of human rights, it appears to maintain a mutually-valued, symbiotic, relationship with the liberal democratic elements of the international system, in general.

H4: A complex realist approach has exemplary merit in approaching the subject area and primary research question of the thesis.

Complex realism helped to show how the place, function and effectiveness of TANs are both exogenously and endogenously produced and are in a constant state of flux. The extraordinary scale of the international system's complexity determines that it is impossible to ever have knowledge of all factors that are possible in a complex situation. However, complex realism can help to identify factors that may be more explanatory than others in understanding the outward manifestations of behaviours and to better understand the multiplicity of hidden, social structural factors, conditioning them. This study found instantiations of each of the following key features of complex systems in the data: fitness landscapes, structural plurality and multi-dimensionality, emergence, co-evolution, sensitivity to initial conditions, path dependency and lock-in, the effects of negative and positive feedback loops, 'attractor' properties, exploration of 'adjacent possible' opportunities and unintended consequences. These theoretical lenses provided the study with a wide range of alternative analytical perspectives. These enabled the thesis to advance propositions regarding the PRQ and hypotheses and offer fresh ways of thinking about TANs and their relationships with the international system.

H5: The funding models TANs adopt have a determinative effect on their advocacy strategies.

The funding imperatives of TANs were shown to be a source of concern for the case study TANs, impacting on the sense of financial pressures conveyed in their publicity messages and their survival. The thesis showed that the scale of funding required by today's TANs can be enormous. In the 2012 financial year alone, the three case study organisations reported expenditures of €274 million (Greenpeace); €920 million (Oxfam); and US\$58.7 million (Human Rights Watch). All three TANs exhibited patterns of strategy selection influenced by funding imperatives.

10.4 The place and function of TANs in the contemporary international system

General conclusions regarding the 'place' and 'function' of TANs, as a cluster

When TANs are viewed as elements in a complex international ecosystem, co-evolving with other elements in a constantly shifting landscape, and sensitive to considerations of value mutuality, it was apparent that their place and function are never static but constantly adapting to internal and external conditions. In examining questions regarding the place and function of a TAN that has verifiable relationships with the international system, it was thus important to keep in view that the research was not focusing on a stable set of relationships or a static entity, but one that comprised a heterogeneous multitude of TANs, each co-evolving and charting its own course from moment to moment in a dynamic environment.

Support was seen for arguments by Waltz and Donnelly that NGOs, as an analytical unit, do not participate in international relationships in the same way that sovereign states do. Hence, TANS, like all NGOs, are subordinate to states. Supporting this contention, the Cardoso Report revealed that states 'call the shots' in the international realm: displaying Thucydidean-type suspicions regarding their perceived adversaries, they control the fluctuating fortunes and scale of involvement by civil society representatives in global governance, enabling NGOs to contribute to international policy-making at arm's length, if at all.

In Chapter 5, it was shown that the 'place' of thousands of NGOs in the international system has been acquired by a negotiated structural adjustment of the system to accommodate them, formally, in a long-established NGO consultancy programme at the UN. In complexity thinking this establishes all UN-accredited civil society agents as elements of the international system and accords them two obvious potential functions: (a) providing value to the system in terms of support and services, as specified in their accreditation agreements; and (b) providing a feedback mechanism to the system. Since the international system does not formally differentiate between typologies of NGO— and it was beyond the scope of this project to comprehensively TAN-test more than three case study organisations — the 'place' of TANs, as a distinct typology of NGO, could not be established by a small *n* study. However, it was evident that by using diachronic process tracing methods to investigate the case study TANs, snapshots could be taken of the 'place' of *individual* TANs in the international system, at particular points of time, and useful patterns in their relationships could be traced.

Similarly, the 'function' of TANs in the international system also could not be conclusively established at cluster level for UN-accredited TANs. However, patterns were seen in the data — again, particularly in the Cardoso Report, case studies, and in UN documents and statements by a succession of UN Secretary-Generals — indicating that the functioning of NGOs in the international system is in a state of constant, co-evolutionary, flux and participation levels appear to be contingent on the perceived value of individual NGOs to the other elements of the system and *vice versa*. By extension, this state of affairs covered TAN-type NGOs, which, it was shown in the three case studies, face individual challenges in securing perceptions of value to other elements of the system — and *vice versa*. The question of value mutuality to other elements of the international system was therefore considered separately in assessing the effectiveness of each case study organisation.

The 'place and 'function' of individual TANs: Contribution of the case studies

The three case study organisations were selected for examination primarily on the basis of the following criteria: firstly, their official listing as being in formal consultancy status with the UN (UN-ECOSOC, 2011:4, 6, 39), which establishes

their suitability to be examined as elements of the international institutional system; secondly, their identification as TANs; and thirdly, their established status and the fact that they have been interacting with the international system over a period of time that was assumed to be sufficient to afford them, and external observers, a well documented perspective on their relationships within the international system. In light of the rich data generated by analysing these organisations, their selection was fully justified.

The exploration of the three case studies was undertaken as a second stage, 'bottom up' investigation to test whether the findings and patterns observed in the macroscopic analysis of the UN's interface with NGOs/TANs were borne out in the context of relevant cases of micro-situational reality. This step was necessary to ensure the consistent validity of the developing 'big' picture of the 'place', 'function' and effectiveness of TANs in the international system. Thus, it was crucial to be precise in identifying NGOs that exhibited the characteristics associated with TANs, that the thesis held to be both relevant to the hypotheses and determinative of their relationships within the international system. In this distillation task, I applied three criteria: (a) a demonstrable relationship with the elements of the international system, in order to apply a coherent analytical framework and substantive theoretical lenses relating to the international system and international politics, relationships, and complex systems behaviours; (b), Keck and Sikkink's 1998 criteria for describing transnational advocacy networks; and (c), my original, eight-point, referent template for identifying contemporary TANs as an emergent, communications-oriented, typology of NGO (*Figure 6.2*). In Chapters 7, 8 and 9, I provided details of the evidence produced by mapping the TAN identification matrix onto the data for each organisation. These analyses revealed that each of the selected cases fitted the TAN referent template and should be regarded as a TAN for the purposes of this thesis. Hence, the findings are relevant to them. *Figure 10.1*, following, is a tabulation of collated results.

TAN Identification Matrix including case study analysis

<u>Iconic attributes of case study TANs</u>	Greenpeace International	Oxfam International	Human Rights Watch
1. Distinctive, highly-visual, transnational, corporate identity	✓	✓	✓
2. Demonstrable prioritising of self-promotion	✓	✓	✓
3. Demonstrable prioritising of voice-amplification strategies in advocacy	✓	✓	✓
4. Highly media-savvy with unremitting media relations activity	✓	✓	✓
5. Demonstrable high degree of adoption of sophisticated public/political communications style and strategies	✓	✓	✓
6. Demonstrable high-degree of adoption of advanced information and communications technologies	✓	✓	✓
7. Demonstrable high degree of strategic social boundary mechanism construction	✓	✓	To some extent
8. Demonstrable differentiation strategies within the NGO sector and within the typology of TANs	✓	✓	✓

Figure 10.1

This thesis has no criticism of any of the characteristics shown to be associated with contemporary TANs — indeed, these attributes are highly desirable and should be expected of determined, transnational and progressive organisations that have adopted ICTs and communications strategies to enable them to gain a competitive advantage in the saturated NGO protest market, bypass media gatekeepers and increasingly emulate global news media agencies, in order to drive their visions for significant political change and a better world.

However, this thesis offered an alternative perspective on how we might interpret these essential TAN attributes, which TANs share with today's commercial multinational corporations, and none of which were seen to be valued by the nation states of the international system, nor generally regarded by them as contributing towards system welfare or equilibrium. Indeed, most of these overt brand-promoting activities, predominantly aimed at achieving frequent, maximum publicity impact in the voracious news-making sphere of mass media, appear to be out of step with the deliberative procedures of international, evidence-based, decision-making. It is reasonable to consider that the distrust of NGOs (expressed by state representatives in the Cardoso Report) on account of their potential to

undermine the confidentiality of deliberations between Member States of the UN, is magnified greatly in the case of archetypal TANs, whose *raison d'être* is changing the behavior of states and international organisations through the 'creative use of information' to strengthen their advocacy outputs.

Similar tendencies were pointed out to show that the globalised popular news media and the emerging communications-oriented advocacy model adopted by some TANs function in ways that are shaped by the information tastes and habits of their target markets. It was shown that all three case study TANs are evolving to better serve this 24/7, breaking news market. The mass media — focused on popular, micro-sociological practices, events and interests, which individuals experience as undergoing rapid, constant change — have developed a symbiotic relationship with some TANs. Moreover, modern communications increasingly enables these relationships to operate within the same timeframes.

Nevertheless, the media, having its own agendas — and attuned to newsworthy issue framings that feature threats and scandal — was seen to be an uncertain and uncontrollable instrument for the purpose of publicising civil society messages to international system officials. But when TANs emulate international news agencies themselves they need to find ways to drive new stakeholder audiences to their Websites, otherwise they are mostly 'preaching to the converted'. This may have advantages in stimulating donor funding, for example, but the current Website content of the case study TANs appeared to be even less reliable than the media as a means of influencing multiple levels of complexity in the international institutions. The strategic deployment of celebrity influencers, or 'ambassadors', appeared to be a way of creating intersections to different and desirable audiences for TAN communications and, therefore, may assist this process. Ranging from pop stars to influential community leaders, their selection as strategic tools for TANs obviously depends on the type of audience the TAN wishes to reach and the action it wants those audiences to take to assist its strategic aim achievement. As NGOs evolve, it seems reasonable to surmise that many more will adopt the attractive, affordable, tools and techniques of modern communications and become more TAN-like.

10.5 Effectiveness of TANs in achieving their aims in the international system

While on-going research is needed to monitor the ebb and flow of TAN effectiveness in their aim achievement, in the timeframe of this study there were indications that TANs that are effective in achieving an acceptable proportion of their aims in the international system tended to exhibit the following attributes:

- ❖ Capability to contribute services within the international system that are commonly valued by the other elements of the system — notwithstanding the fact that these criteria are constantly in flux. Services that presently appear to come into this category include: reliable feedback; high-level professional expertise, such as legal and diplomatic services; scholarly research; and corporate values and practices consistent with the UN's accreditation criteria for consultancy status. Complexity insights concerning systemic feedback mechanisms indicated that TANs, in general, perform a 'bellwether' role in the international system, alerting international agencies and policy-making processes to new or developing concern issues; providing some indications (not necessarily validated) of the strength and scale of social concerns; contributing to knowledge on concern issues; and presenting alternative issue framings and arguments geared towards their preferred outcomes.
- ❖ Aims and strategies that are not overtly adversarial towards the international system *qua* system, nor present serious risks to the security and/or economy of any of the nation states in the system. Conversely, adversarial positions based on uncompromising ideologies tended to constitute a barrier to TANs participating in international debating processes and achieving negotiated outcomes in pursuit of their goals. The overtly confrontational strategies of Greenpeace were notable in this regard and this TAN's international system relationships were assessed as currently dysfunctional. It was noted, however, that this was not always the case and Greenpeace relationships fluctuate, like all others.

- ❖ Realistic aims that are aligned with appropriate, multi-pronged, strategies to achieve them underpinned by rigorous research.
- ❖ Communications strategies aligned with aims of a communications nature, attended by understanding of the enablements and limitations of communications strategies.
- ❖ Capability to 'scale-shift' their political arguments to multiple-levels of social complexity, including sound knowledge of the enablements and constraints prevailing at each, more challenging, level of complexity; combined with the capability to present convincing argumentation for specific pockets of resistance. Published guidance by UN officials contained encouragement for NGOs/TANs to adopt a non-adversarial mien in consultancy relationships and so integrate and frame their issues in ways that resonate with the audiences they aim to influence.
- ❖ Capability to engage with the deliberative processes and institutional machinery of the international system, including capability to develop evidence-based argumentation suited to international debate.
- ❖ Demonstrate a range of good relationship qualities in engagements with other international systemic elements, prioritising trust, mutual respect, mutual understanding and accessibility. The quality of 'tact', identified by both Giddens and Goffman, appears also to be a condition of good relationships.
- ❖ Aiding inter-relational accessibility and liaison through internal policies and practices aimed at social boundary *deconstruction*, co-operation and political issue scale-shift to facilitate relationships at the international level. One of the main findings of the thesis was that although social boundary construction appears to aid brand differentiation and development, public fundraising and social group solidarity efforts, strong rejectionist ideology and in-group symbolic interaction rituals appear to support observations on social status groups by Weber, Collins, Tilly, *et al*, that emphasising the

'otherness' of outsiders and adversaries had the effect of confining people in the same networks of status interactions and limits their possibilities to interact with other social networks perceived as different. Thus, the study found indications that the barriers many TANs encounter are endogenously produced.

Further observations connected to effectiveness were:

- ❖ Effective goal-attainment by TANs was seen to be clearly influenced by numerous contingent factors, including underlying social structures, that impact on their network structures. This was seen in North/South polarisations resulting in representation imbalances, clumping, and under-representation of significant regions of the world. These tendencies arguably reflected normative and cultural influences and differences, digital technology divides and, not least, patterns of 'open societies' with liberal democratic political system structures, as opposed to relatively 'closed' totalitarian regimes. An instance of this was seen in HRW's report on North Korea, juxtaposed with its report on Australia.
- ❖ TAN publicity regarding the size of their individual supporter bases tended to be overestimated and unsubstantiated. Nevertheless, claims about the size of collectivities typically go hand-in-hand with statements about their transnational outreach and large NGOs invariably publicise the number of people they count as supporting their mission. However, this study found that taking supporter statistics published by TANs at face value is unwise. For example, the claimed size of a TAN's supporter base was in no case indicative of the relative strengths of commitment; whether that commitment was waxing, waning, or even dormant; the length of time individuals had held their present opinions; the age and geographical dispersion of supporters; the voter status and political systems relevant to responders; the date on which the opinions were polled and the validity of the auditing mechanism; the extent of the support provided and its limitations; and the factors that most influenced the formation of opinion, which could be no more significant than impulse, peer pressure, complaisance, or misunderstanding. Moreover, supporter statistics

supplied by TANs gave no indication of each individual's willingness or capability to mobilise and become involved in political activism that extends beyond momentary mouse clicks.

- ❖ Due to the 'clumping' effect noted in networked organisations such as TANs, particularly between the global North and South, there were signs that the global coverage and extent of influence in the international realm may be significantly more restricted for some TANs than they claim. The recent trend, seen in the three North-headquartered case study TANs, to prioritise opening new offices in the global South, appeared to signal a co-evolutionary effort to redress imbalances of representation and to take advantage of perceived improvements in the economies of the BRICSAMs.

10.6 Directions for further research

The following patterns and tendencies indicated a number of pathways into promising areas for further research:

- ❖ An emerging and potentially politically disruptive feature of some contemporary TANs was seen in the growing capability to depart from the ideologically-predetermined campaigning of the past to wage increasingly populist, consensus-driven, campaigns on the basis of their Internet traffic monitoring. Possibly signaling the emergence of a new genus of TAN, advocacy organisations appear to be increasingly adopting Internet-based petitioning and promoting notions regarding the political force of 'people power'. As a general trend, many TANs were observed moving towards greater use of these tools and tactics. The trend was evident to a high degree in the campaigning strategies of Avaaz and 38 Degrees but was also noted in the communications practices of Greenpeace and Oxfam. By virtue of recent Website traffic monitoring capabilities, these TANs frame and publicise topics that might concern individuals, then monitor responses, *en route* to reframing the feedback as political issues and encouraging crowdfunding of the most popular issues as the basis for new campaigns.

- ❖ There were signs of a re-emergence of the failed NIEO campaign in recent political issue framing, cues and rhetorical techniques used by some TANs. Further research is needed to substantiate signs of a neo-NIEO revival, which might be fruitfully investigated from a number of different research trajectories, including IR approaches employing complex realism.
- ❖ Reflections of Habermasian thought were observed but the extent of this philosopher's influence, and patterns of strategic use, could not be established. Although Habermas is not particularly identified with the contentious international politics subset of the political sociological literature, I suggest his influence can be recognised in the communications strategies of many TANs, and hence on the subject matter on which many writers on contentious international politics focus. Further study is required to substantiate a link.
- ❖ Patterns were seen of 'bandwagoning'⁶⁶⁴ by some TANs. This involved TANs moving into activist issue areas at an advanced stage of campaigning by others and claiming victory. It was noted that in the months, or weeks, ahead of an anticipated major official announcement on an issue that had been the subject of an advocacy campaign extending back over years, or even decades of negotiations and lobbying, some TANs begin to campaign on the issue, typically mounting an online petition, appealing for urgent donations to fight opponents and, afterwards, claiming credit for their short-term advocacy strategies and the pressure of 'people power'. The Greenpeace Arctic campaign appeared to be an example of bandwagoning. Ongoing monitoring of this trend is suggested.
- ❖ Development of my TAN referent template proved useful in recognising definitive characteristics of TANs. Wider application and/or development of this tool is suggested to assess its accuracy and/or refinement; and to investigate further if the criteria point to the determinative effects on TAN effectiveness in the international system that is asserted by this thesis. Such

⁶⁶⁴ The term bandwagoning is used here in a similar sense to that employed by Waltz (1979:126). However, Waltz uses the term in reference to manoeuvring by weaker states in order to benefit from alliances with stronger states.

studies might cover case studies involving official UN bodies, such as ECOSOC and the NGLS.

- ❖ Further to Willetts⁶⁶⁵, researchers might fruitfully examine the relationship qualities of the few 'high-status' NGOs that are among the Observers cadre at the UN General Assembly, and those participating in intergovernmental committees at the UN, to assess their relative values to the system and whether organisations demonstrating archetypal TAN behaviours are among them.
- ❖ Metatheoretical work using complex realism to advance understanding of the relationships between the multiple, micro-macro, planes of social interaction than span multiple analytical levels — from agents representing the concerns and aspirations of vulnerable individuals and communities to agents representing the global priorities of states and other international communities. Metatheoretical research was also indicated to determine the applicability of complex realism to examining time-space distancing effects on TANs in their relationships with international institutions. Due to space and time constraints, this enquiry was deferred in this thesis in favour of a closer engagement with micro-macro considerations, which were considered to be of greater relevance to the research question.
- ❖ Further investigation into the determinative effects of funding models on strategy choice, design and effectiveness, is suggested.
- ❖ Greenpeace and Oxfam both exhibited the contradictory characteristics that Giddens associates with 'shell institutions' — bodies that retain an enduring outer brand identity, although they have undergone significant change internally and in their aims and strategies. This tendency appears worthy of further examination.
- ❖ A clear symbiotic pattern was seen between TANs' emergence and strategies and the ICT-dependent tools they use. This shaping by the

⁶⁶⁵ Willetts (2011:83) refers to a small number of 'high-status' NGOs that have carved influential roles for themselves in the international system.

structural interaction effects of, *inter alia*, technology structures and political structures, is open to a wide spectrum of possibilities as ICT develops further. Ongoing monitoring of this trend for TANs to co-evolve with the socio-political elements in their fitness landscapes and be shaped by the communications tools they adopt, is suggested.

10.7 Contributions to knowledge

This thesis sought to make three principal contributions to knowledge in the contentious international politics paradigm. Firstly, it presented an explication of the complex interface between transnational advocacy networks and their relationships with elements of the international system, which was based on a four-year period of empirical research. This covered three interconnected literatures and three case studies and was aimed at deepening and broadening understanding of a rapidly proliferating contemporary phenomenon in international politics that is generally regarded by scholars as important. Secondly, it tested the premise that a complex realist philosophical and methodological approach has the ability to demonstrate new, theoretically rich, and cogent ways to understand the relationships between state and non-state actors in the contemporary international system and to better explain them. Thirdly, the thesis demonstrated the value of applying substantive theoretical lenses from the Communications paradigm to test whether TANs are different to other NGOs, and why this matters in any attempt to evaluate their inter-relationships, contributions to international system purposes (thus effecting their 'place' and 'function'), and their effectiveness in achieving their stated aims.

It is hoped that by presenting (a) an original template for identifying the emerging NGO typology of TANs; (b) interrogating their political aims and essentially communicative strategies and functioning; (c) unlocking parts of the systemic complexity of their international environment; and (d) evaluating the quality of their international relationships, this thesis has helped to advance this serious and worthwhile endeavour.

Having examined '*What is the place and function of TANS in the contemporary international system and how effective are they in achieving their aims?*', complex realism shows us that the answers to questions involving social phenomena and the unfolding of their relationships will always be contingent, never static or certain, and should sensibly conclude with the classic, contingency-grounded, complexity *caveat*: 'It depends ...'

ANNEX 1: Evidence Tracing Log

Hypothesis #1: Contemporary TANs are an important NGO variant in international politics that have unprecedented properties and powers emerging from their advocacy communications, which are typically neglected in politics theorising.

Argument Summary: The essential characteristics of recently emerging transnational 'advocacy' networks differentiate them from other typologies of NGO operating in the international arena. These important, differentiating, properties of contemporary TANs notably arise from the *advocacy* function of their organisations, are typically overlooked by political theorists; and, therefore, are not problematised in Politics thinking and debates. This thesis addresses a lacuna in the political science literature.

What evidence would support this argument?

Evidence and indicative patterns of communications/advocacy tools and strategies that constitute contemporary TANs and make them a significant variant to the traditional NGO model.

- ❖ Test data generated by the TAN referent criteria developed for the thesis, showing that TANs typically and distinctively possess the following communicative properties:
 - Distinctive, highly-visual, transnational corporate identity.
 - Demonstrable prioritising of self-promotion.
 - Demonstrable prioritising of voice-amplification strategies in advocacy.
 - Highly media-savvy, with unremitting media relations activity.
 - Demonstrable high degree of adoption of sophisticated public/political communications style and strategies.
 - Demonstrable high degree of adoption of advanced information and communication technologies.
 - Demonstrable high degree of strategic social boundary mechanism construction.

- Demonstrable differentiation strategies within the NGO sector and within the typology of TANs.

Evidence that contemporary TAN-type NGOs possess unprecedented properties and powers arising from their advocacy communications choices and function.

- ❖ Empirical observations confirmed by the research data set.
- ❖ Validation by commentaries in discourses and the literature.

Evidence that contemporary TANs are an important NGO variant in international politics.

- ❖ Evidence of the unprecedented emergence of many thousands of NGOs/TANs in the international political arena since the late 1980s.
- ❖ Evidence, or indications, that TANs emerge in order to influence international politics.
- ❖ Evidence that NGOs/TANs claim to have changed, or intend to change, aspects of the international system and/or international policies.
- ❖ Empirical evidence that knowledgeable observers, from a range of perspectives, consider TANs to be important international political actors. Also, evidence that TANs consider themselves to be important actors in international politics.

Evidence that the advocacy communications of contemporary TANs are typically neglected in politics theorising.

- ❖ Empirical observations confirmed by the research data set.
- ❖ Published comments to this effect by knowledgeable sources.
- ❖ Shortcomings in the politics literature

Hypothesis #2: The international system is struggling to accommodate TANs and the elements of the international institutions have a distinctively troubled interface with modern TAN-type NGOs.

Argument Summary: The elements of the international institutions have a distinctively troubled interface with modern TAN-type NGOs. Furthermore, these differentiating communicative properties that TANs possess to varying degrees, significantly influence the place, function and effectiveness of TANs in the international system.

What evidence would support this argument?

Documents, discourses and signs that relationships are troubled and relationship quality is wanting between NGOs/ TANs and other elements of the international system.

- ❖ Cardoso Report conclusions.
- ❖ Public statements and discourses attesting to relationship quality deficiencies.
- ❖ Clear indications that traditional, service-providing, NGOs with no TAN characteristics, or varying proportions of them, appear to enjoy a different/more harmonious quality of relationships with other international elements, than those that have a closer fit to the archetypal TAN model.

Documents, discourses and signs that the international system is struggling to accommodate NGOs/TANs.

- ❖ Cardoso Report conclusions.
- ❖ Public statements and discourses attesting to relational dysfunction.

Comparison of specific relationship quality evidence, or indications, in light of substantive communications theory regarding relationship quality criteria, especially observations relating to trust, access, mutual respect and mutual understanding. In analysing international diplomatic situations the presence of an additional quality, 'tact', was also tested; although in the international negotiations culture this could be considered an aspect of mutual respect and mutual understanding.

- ❖ UN ECOSOC statutory arrangements for UN consultancy accreditation for NGOs.
- ❖ UN reports on status of relationships with NGOs operating in the international system.
- ❖ Public statements and discourses attesting to the quality of UN/NGO relationships involving the three case study TANs.

Hypothesis #3: The adversarial advocacy strategies typically adopted by TANs constitute a barrier to them achieving their aims in the international policy-making environment.

Argument Summary: In sharp contrast to the adversarial strategies typically associated with much TAN activism, transnational interactions in most other spheres of globalising human activity, whether commercial, political or social, emphasise relationship-building (especially the fostering of mutual trust, respect and understanding) and conflict calming. Thucydidean theory, arguably the foundational proposition in International Relations, offers further strong support for the existence of such a barrier. With the expansion of the international system to accommodate greater numbers of non-state entities, this thesis argues that Thucydidean theory nonetheless applies equally to non-state actors in international politics as to state actors. The peremptory, results-oriented and urgency imperatives of contemporary TAN advocacy constitute additional impediments to the achievement of collaborative outcomes in the international arena.

What evidence would support this argument?

Empirical and substantive theoretical evidence that TANs typically adopt adversarial advocacy strategies. Furthermore, that these strategies are to varying degrees incompatible with the UN Charter and established codes of practice in the international dialectical environment.

- ❖ Research-based primary and secondary commentaries attesting to the typical adoption of adversarial advocacy strategies by TANs.
- ❖ Published statements by the case study TANs, and other TANs, regarding their strategic choices.

- ❖ Published commentaries by knowledgeable observers, including international officials, diplomats, academics, think-tank scholars, journalists and traditional NGOs, attesting to the suitability and efficacy of typical TAN advocacy strategies in the international environment.
- ❖ Published statements by UN agencies regarding NGOs that adopt an adversarial mien that is incompatible with the collaborative Charter and practices of the international system.
- ❖ Theoretical support by assessing the commensurability of Thucydidean theory with the international practices of contemporary NGOs/TANs.

Hypothesis #4: A complex realist approach has exemplary merit in approaching the subject area and primary research question of the thesis.

Argument Summary: A complex realist philosophical and methodological approach has exemplary merit in approaching the subject area and primary research question of the thesis. First, by conceptualising a category of international political relationships constituted on different scales of complexity, it demonstrates a framework that reclaims structured macroscopic analysis as a first-stage research approach to complex social relationships and appears to solve the micro-macro problematique in political sociology. Second, it deepens and broadens our understanding of an important, emerging political phenomenon — namely, transnational advocacy networks — in the international relations/global politics paradigm. By adding a focus on the advocacy properties of TANs, a richer understanding of their outcomes is more evident than a single focus on their normative political concerns will allow. This feature, I argue, is a more compassionate and socially beneficial means of understanding this contentious political subject matter.

What evidence would support this argument?

Empirical and substantive theoretical evidence that complex realism provides exemplary ontological and methodological frameworks for investigating and explaining the complex, multi-dimensional, problem space of the thesis.

- ❖ Demonstration of the exceptional explanatory merit in conceptualising the ontological reality of the international system as if it were a complex, multi-

dimensional realm in which the elements of innumerable intersecting sub-systems are embedded in fitness landscapes.

- ❖ Demonstration of the suitability of a theoretically multi-lensed epistemological approach to the subject matter, including validation of the theories selected for the investigation (*i.e.* political theory and communications theory).
- ❖ Demonstration of the different scales of complexity that TANs encounter in their international political relationships — ranging from the relatively micro level of an individual organisation's relationships within its own organisational system and its sub-systems, to the meso level of relationships with other TANs (considered as a cluster), and to the macro level of complexity comprising the TAN's relationships with elements of the international system.

Hypothesis #5: The funding models TANs adopt have a determinative effect on their advocacy strategies.

Argument Summary: The funding models TANs adopt have a determinative effect on their advocacy strategies and this factor, in turn, has a determinative effect on each individual TAN's place and function in the international system and on their effectiveness in achieving their aims in the international arena.

What evidence would support this argument?

Empirical examination and identification of the different funding models adopted by the case study TANs, and other TANs.

- ❖ Analysis of constitutional funding commitments, financial statements, annual reports, etc., to determine the funding model, relative financial wellbeing, resources and sources of individual TANs.
- ❖ Published research and commentaries regarding the determinative effect of NGO/TAN funding models on advocacy strategy selection.

Analysis of the advocacy strategies chosen by the case study TANs, and other TANs, vis-à-vis their chosen funding models and their chosen 'insider/outsider' orientation.

- ❖ Guidance provided by substantive theory and in the literature on the effects of funding sources on advocacy strategy selection.
- ❖ Empirical evidence of patterns and tendencies that are supported by the substantive theory and show that specific funding models have clear links with specific advocacy strategies.

ANNEX 2: Selection of Complex Realism

Elaboration of the grounds for selecting Complex Realism in this thesis

Complex Realism is the name given to a sociological conceptualisation and theorisation ‘tool’ (Cudworth and Hobden, *ibid*: 13), or ‘toolkit’⁶⁶⁶ (Walby, *ibid*), which provides access to new ways of thinking about the social world and conducting systematic analyses of social interconnections. Essentially, complex realism is a synthesis of a scientific/critical realist ontology (which, *inter alia*, understands reality as intransigent, stratified and differentiated), and complex systems theory (which understands the social world as composed of complex open systems). Furthermore, this accords with *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology*, which points out the ‘tendency for social systems to become increasingly complex as they develop, in particular through specialization [...]’ (Johnson, 2000:88). This feature, I argue, is especially relevant for understanding the evolution of the international system interface with NGOs and the emergence of the contemporary TAN social model, availing of the recent advances in affordable communications technologies and specialising in the advocacy aspects of NGO outreach. Reed and Harvey (1992:359) define complex realism as:

[...] a scientific ontology which fits Bhaskar’s philosophical framework: one which treats nature and society as if they were ontologically open and historically constituted; hierarchically structured, yet interactively complex; non-reductive and indeterminate, yet amenable to rational explanation; capable of seeing nature as a ‘self-organizing’ enterprise without succumbing to anthropomorphism or mystifying animism.

Complex realist approaches to social enquiry thus avoid the unsatisfying reductionism, fragmentation and false over-generalisation that I, and others, maintain have often tended to distort postmodern approaches — the major alternative theorisation paradigm for the study of social relationships (Walby, *ibid*; Reed and Harvey, *ibid*; Byrne, 2011: 9; 21-23; Byrne and Ragin, 2009: 23-24).

⁶⁶⁶ The ‘tool’ connotations are most commonly encountered, although Byrne describes complex realism as a ‘meta-theoretical framework for methodological practice’ (2011:28-29), which, he asserts (*ibid*; also citing Unger, 1998:23-24), resolves the lack of an explanatory frame of reference in historical and social practice that is sensitive to structure but aware of contingency.

Although ‘complex realism’ emerged during the social and political ferment of the 1960s in response to the worldviews of that era (Harvey, 2009:24), it has had to undergo a rigorous testing period in the intervening years, during which both realism and Waltzian-style systems thinking⁶⁶⁷ have taken a hammering within the IR discipline and become widely unfashionable⁶⁶⁸, while constructivist, Marxist and International Political Economy approaches and normative concerns have generally dominated socio-political research (Adler, 1997).

Since the early 90s, however, a new, complex systems-inspired, worldview in social theory has been emerging. (Reed and Harvey, 1992; Geyer and Pickering, 2011; Kavalski, 2007; Lehmann, 2012; Sawyer, 2005: 1-2; Bousquet and Curtis, 2011; Rosenau, 1990: 9-11; 23-25⁶⁶⁹). Some have even witnessed its development as a ‘new paradigm’ (Kavalski, 2007; Walby, 2007; Urry, 2003:12). In this intellectual movement, which has also been termed a ‘third wave’ in systems thinking (Sawyer, *ibid*), there has been a reworking and revivification of the concept of social system — impelled, *inter alia*, by the urgency of an array of intractable global challenges and increasing dissatisfaction with the inability of IR theorisations to explain or address them. This comparatively quiet, but irrepressible, revolution in the philosophy of science has been energised by the explanatory power of complexity theory (*vide* Morin, 2006; Bousquet and Curtis, *ibid*; Rosenau, *ibid*: 9-11). Reed and Harvey (*ibid*) claim the new approach ‘promises to profoundly change how we look at the world about us’.

Increasingly, therefore, political sociology scholars have synthesised the philosophy of critical realism (sometimes referred to also as ‘scientific realism’, or

⁶⁶⁷ As expounded by Kenneth Waltz, notably in his 1979 text, *Theory of International Politics*.

⁶⁶⁸ *i.e.* unfashionable in the Western countries that dominate IR academic discourses.

⁶⁶⁹ Although Rosenau does not put a precise label on the new intellectual wave that he identifies as ushering in a major transformation in theorising about international relations and world politics — apart from referring to it as ‘Multi-level Theory’ that is characterised also by complexity, dynamism and turbulence (1990:23) — his insights are clearly in step those of other writers on complexity theory, complex realism and ‘third wave’ systems thinking. Notable in Rosenau’s text are his references to multi-level systems, dynamic and complex interactions, multi-causal explanations for turbulent events, the need for systems analysis in world politics at macro and micro levels, and the need to supplant formerly unquestioned notions about the virtue of parsimony and simplicity in social theorising and acknowledge, and learn to deal with, complexity (1990).

'transcendental realism'⁶⁷⁰), with insights from complexity theory⁶⁷¹, with encouraging results. This synthesis of conceptual tools is sometimes referred to by the contraction 'complex realism' (Reed and Harvey, 1992; Walby, 2007; Cudworth and Hobden, 2011:14; Byrne, 2011: 21-22; 2009:102). Indeed, there is a growing recognition that attempts to understand the social world via dated ways that seek to mimic the linear approaches⁶⁷² of the conventional 'hard sciences' are mostly useless, given the recent accumulation of knowledge regarding the complex systems character of society (Byrne, *ibid*: 23; 235; Geyer and Rihani, 2010:5-7; Morin, 2006). However, elements of overlap and complementarity may be found in combining old and new systems approaches (Cudworth and Hobden, *ibid*: 14).

Among the contemporary theorists contributing in this area, Byrne argues for the adoption of complex realism as 'a methodological foundation for many methods in the investigation of reality in all its aspects' (Byrne, *ibid*: 3). Although the literature reflects that scholars have approached this new intellectual path from a number of different academic vantage points over the past decade or so, and sometimes, understandably, show slight variances in their terminology, I suggest that theoretical commensurability is now evident in a significant body of work and the outlines of the evolving complex realist research toolkit and framework are clear and accessible to political sociological researchers.

Byrne (2011:20-21) develops a useful account of 'complex realism' (that I apply in my present study), which is typically based on a synthesis of critical realist thinking, most commonly associated with the work of Roy Bhaskar (1979), and with Edgar Morin's programme of 'general complexity' (2006). In essence,

⁶⁷⁰ The terms critical realism, scientific realism and transcendental realism have often been elided by scholars in referring to the general account of ontology conceived by Bhaskar (Collier, 1994:xi). Bhaskar, himself, retrospectively accepted the term 'critical realism', which had been applied by others, and noted that the scientific, transcendental and critical realism that he expounded fundamentally amounted to the same thing (Bhaskar, 2011/1989: 2; 82-82).

⁶⁷¹ The term, 'dissipative systems' theory has also been used in, arguably, a synonymous sense (Reed and Harvey, 1992).

⁶⁷² For this reason, I reject the linear conceptualisation and argumentation of Keck and Sikkink's influential 'Boomerang Pattern' representation of the interaction between state and non-state actors (1989:12-13). In particular, I argue, Keck and Sikkink's constructivist treatment leads to the flattening-out and simplification of complex, international relationships and does little to explain the dynamic, complex world of international politics. Moreover, Keck and Sikkink's fuzzy conceptualisation of transnational NGO network 'pressure' on states (graphically portrayed by thick arrows presumably representing strike capability, target accuracy and irresistible force) while admittedly politically seductive, is arguably devoid of any explanatory value in the real world.

Bhaskar's critical realism (CR) conceives of the world as being structured, differentiated and changing. It holds that social phenomena, like most natural phenomena, are the product of a plurality of structures, and that we will only be able to understand — and so change — the social world, if we identify the structures at work that generate phenomena, such as events and discourses. To bring order to this research, critical realism provides a set of perspectives on society, and on nature, that helps to guide empirically controlled investigations into the structures generating social phenomena (*ibid*: 2-3).

In a study of complexity and realism in the social sciences, which they cast in terms of 'new science' supplanting the 'old', Reed and Harvey (*ibid*), point out that philosophical ontologies, such as Bhaskar has conceived⁶⁷³, contribute to scientific activity by showing the scientist a broad outline of what the world, and what his or her knowledge of it, should look like. However, philosophical ontologies 'only describe the boundaries of an intellectual continent, not its surface details'. For this further task, a scientific ontology is needed that is compatible with Bhaskar's philosophical framework, and this, these writers and others assert, has been accomplished by the advent of new complexity approaches to systems theory (Reed and Harvey; Cudworth and Hobden, *ibid*: 15). Indeed, Geyer and Pickering assert (2011)⁶⁷⁴:

Increasingly, complexity-based thinking is challenging the dominant rationalist, realist and reductionist international relations (IR) framework.

To denote this practice, Kavalski (2007) uses the neologism 'complex international relations theory' (CIR).

While acknowledging that 'complexity theory' is not a unified theory, but a somewhat contested term for a range of theories and concepts originating in the study of self-organising physical systems, scientists in a growing number of paradigms are becoming increasingly comfortable with adopting its useful insights, metaphors and explanatory theories in their work. Among the complexity scholars

⁶⁷³ Bhaskar's oft-cited remark that philosophy should be conceived of as an 'underlabourer for science' is relevant here (Bhaskar, 1989: *viii*; 2).

⁶⁷⁴ Additional intellectual weight might be accorded to these insights, given their inclusion in the 'Special Issue: Complexity and international affairs' of the *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (2011), Vol.24 (1).

most frequently credited with making groundbreaking contributions to the new complexity science paradigm are the chemist and Nobel Laureate, Ilya Prigogine and his colleagues, and the economist Brian Arthur and cross-disciplinary researchers at the Santa Fe Institute in New Mexico (Cudworth and Hobden, 2011: 4-5; 13; Byrne, 2009:29; Reed and Harvey, *ibid*; Room, 2011:15). Although these refreshing winds of change have only recently been carried into the silos of political sociology, I suggest that the new approaches should be seen in terms of an evolutionary process, building solidly on the work relating to ‘social systems’, ‘social structures’, non-linear ‘assemblages’ and ‘international systems’ theory of the paradigm’s more familiar names – Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Kenneth Waltz (1979), Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), Anthony Giddens (1984:25); Barry Buzan and Richard Little (2000), and Manuel DeLanda (2006).

In their recent work, which specifically analyses the value of complex realism approaches to international politics and International Relations⁶⁷⁵, Cudworth and Hobden (2011; 2010) assert that considering international actors as elements (or units) in complex adaptive systems that interact with each other and have a tendency to self-organise, opens a fruitful new route for analysing relations between them — whether they are, *inter alia*, states, international non-governmental organisations (*such as TANS*⁶⁷⁶), non-governmental organisations, or transnational corporations (2011:72).

Epistemologically, complex realism enables investigations that delve beyond superficial phenomena (as in mainstream actualist perspectives), to see complex adaptive systems as having distinct properties, powers and causal effects (or, emergent properties) (*ibid*:14; Mitleton-Kelly, 2003; Bousquet and Curtis, 2011; Geyer and Pickering, 2011; Walby, 2009:17). From this basis, arguments can be made that the international system can be envisaged and analysed as being embedded within, and intersected by, a range of physical systems, and other social systems — including those which reproduce a range of relations of domination, or

⁶⁷⁵ See also the recent journal article by Bousquet and Curtis (2011) for the *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* on the growing interest in applying complexity approaches to international relations theorisation.

⁶⁷⁶ This author’s own emphasis.

social inequality (such as gendered, racial, class-based, religious, national, and colonial relations) (*ibid*, 2010; Walby: 2007).

Importantly, complex realism is a flexible tool, enabling scientific inquiry across a range of disciplines in both the natural and social sciences. For the first time, it enables researchers to construct analytical frameworks for approaching and understanding, *inter alia*, the structural architecture of complex open systems and the ontological depth of systems of social relations; the points of intersectionality and disruption in these systems; the relationships and behaviours of actors and agents; and, indeed, better understanding social transformations. It is emphasised that this theoretical device is adopted in this empirically grounded dissertation as an approach to questions and challenges in international relations praxis, including exploring the characteristically adversarial relationships between state actors and civil society advocacy groups, and the conditions of possibility for the resolution of 'wicked problems' that are often the source of political differences between them (*vide* Chapter 6). For these tasks, it is eminently suited (Byrne, *ibid*: 8-9; Walby, 2007; Segal, 2010).

ANNEX 3: ‘Networks’ and ‘Transnationalism’

Reasons for departing from the popular academic approaches of ‘Networks’ and ‘Transnationalism’ in studying Transnational Advocacy Networks

The advent and influence of ‘network’ thinking

As constructivist thinking evolved in IR⁶⁷⁷, a sociological turn toward social movements and networks began to catch hold, especially the idea of transnational advocacy networks (Adler, *ibid*: 100). Consequently, many scholars adopted methodological approaches to civil society interactions via various forms of social network theory (Diani, 2002:173-194) — particularly Actor Network Theory (Latour, 2007; Law, 2004, *et al*). As a theory that appears to have been imported into IR from organisation and systems theorising in contemporary business studies, this thesis considers the case for applying network theory as an analytical framework for the study of the international system and transnational civil society remains to be made. However, considering the pervasiveness of thinking about new forms of social connectivity that was ushered in by the advent of the World Wide Web, Internet and other new telecommunications technologies, delivered by way of infrastructural ‘backbones’ and ‘networks’, I suggest that it is not surprising to find these then modish terms appearing metaphorically in the discourses on contemporary trends from about the 1980s onwards,

In their work on TANs, Keck and Sikkink identified not only transnational advocacy ‘networks’, but three different types of transnational network, which despite their differences were ‘characterized by voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal exchanges of information and services’ (see Section 6.5). Although they considered networks were ‘difficult to organize transnationally’, these scholars considered their ‘agility and fluidity’ made them particularly appropriate to historical periods ‘characterized by rapid shifts in problem definition’⁶⁷⁸. Consequently, they anticipated the role of ‘networks’ in international politics

⁶⁷⁷ See Chapter 3 for this discussion.

⁶⁷⁸ This statement is noted but not contested in this thesis owing to space limitations. However, I should add the comment that it appears to be nonsensical to surmise that there have ever been historical periods characterised in terms of ‘rapid shifts in problem definition’.

theorising would grow. In view of this increasing significance, the two writers opined, scholars of international relations should pay more attention to network forms of organisation (1998: 200)⁶⁷⁹. Keck and Sikkink found that ‘networks have considerable importance in bringing transformative and mobilizing ideas into the international system,’ and offer promising new directions for further research. Therefore, studying the trajectory and influence of transnational civil society *via* the concept of transnational advocacy networks could help to explain how issues get on to the international agenda, how they are framed in the ways they are, and why certain kinds of international campaigns, or pressures, are effective in some cases but not in others (*ibid*: 217).

Lending enthusiastic support for these views, particularly the horizontality aspect, Rosenau (2000:229) argued that while a number of dynamics had ‘contributed to the diminution of state capacities’, one of the most important had been what he saw as a shifting balance between hierarchical and network forms of organisation, entailing a shift between vertical and horizontal flows of authority. Rosenau held that:

Greatly facilitated by the Internet, people now converge electronically as equals, or at least not as superiors and subordinates. They make plans, recruit members, mobilize support, raise money, debate issues, frame agendas, and undertake collective action, amounting to steering mechanisms founded on horizontal rather than hierarchical channels of authority.

Furthermore, Rosenau said he shared the view that in the future conflicts would be increasingly waged by ‘networks’, rather than hierarchies — meaning that ‘whoever masters the network form stands to gain major advantages in the new epoch’. He saw the advent of new collectivities based on horizontal structures of authority as having profound implications for the creation of new rule systems; the exercise of authority *via* electronically transmitted requests (rather than directives); the further bifurcation of global structures in to state-centric and multi-centric worlds, and ‘the possibility that a global civil society may be emerging’. This view — albeit a contested view — that the world may be experiencing the end of national sovereignty

⁶⁷⁹ One noted scholar in this field, Manuel Castells, produced his seminal work *The Rise of The Network Society* in 1996 and continues to publish consistently on the theme of networked activism – new communications – contentious politics (1996, 2004b, 2007, 2009, 2012). His work informs this thesis and is cited frequently.

with the arrival of many new, fragmented, sub-national and international organisations vying with states for authority has a niche academic following and has been sometimes referred to as the 'new medievalism'⁶⁸⁰ (Smith *et al*, 2008:9; Gilpin, 2002: 246). In the main, however, the research model adopted by Keck and Sikkink has been followed by a large number of scholars contributing in this field. In many cases, these texts are devoted to case studies of specific advocacy groups within networks and their principled causes (*e.g.* Edwards and Gaventa, 2001; Khagram *et al*, 2002; Dakroury *et al*, 2009), with writers invariably concentrating their accounts on describing individual NGOs, their issues and activities, and implying that their significance relates to the networks they are connected to and the wider world.

However, this thesis, guided by classical realism's theorisations regarding political power disparities and complexity insights, is strongly at variance with both linear conceptualisations of complex social interactions and the disregarding of power differentials within them. Indeed, the above convictions about 'horizontal exchanges', horizontal 'channels of authority' and the notion that 'electronically people now converge as equals' are thus challenging to understand in any real sense, although they hint not only of the architectural language of the World Wide Web, but at the type of hyperbole often associated with technological fetishism⁶⁸¹, a by-product of the new communications tools described in Section 6.6.2.

Thus, this thesis agrees with Mann (2003:144-145) that the outlook 'is not rosy' for redressing the presently observed imbalances and 'clumping' in distribution, composition and influence seen in transnational networks, (Mann, 2003:144-145; Florini, 2000:7). Mann takes issue with 'the more enthusiastic of the globalists and transnationalists', whom he sees as having little sense of history and global differentials in their optimism regarding the expansion possibilities for transnational networks. He points out that the world remains conflict-ridden and beset with uncertainty in areas as diverse as eco-tensions, rising ethnic separatism, power struggles between major countries and the proliferation of nuclear

⁶⁸⁰ Coining of this neologism has been attributed to the realist international affairs philosopher Hedley Bull (Gilpin, 2002: 237; 243).

⁶⁸¹ See also Morazov, 2011:303-313 and Dean, 2009:31.

weapons. 'It is unlikely that militarism and war will just go away', Mann explains, therefore, 'all these threats constitute serious obstacles to the diffusion of transnational and universal global networks'. Adding strength to this argument, Peters (1998:23-25) says that if networks are to be used as an analytical tool to explain policy outcomes, or intergovernmental relations, 'or indeed anything', then networks themselves require a collective explanatory feature, apart from that of the behaviour of individual organisations within the network.

Also taking a less than optimistic view of the effectiveness of networks in the political process, Marsh (1998) suggests that while the network concept helps to simplify complexity among component groups and aid the internal aggregation of information, it hampers external expression of TAN agency and therefore overall effectiveness. According to Daugbjerg (1998:81), a low-level of institutionalisation, lack of cohesion (sometimes referred to as 'weak link' networks), and constant struggles over rules, procedures, norms and resources further destabilise issue networks. At the same text, Daugbjerg and Marsh (*ibid*: 71) caution against underestimating the limitations of network analysis in trying to understand policy outcomes. They claim:

It can't explain policy outcomes simply by reference to the structure of the network or the behaviour of the agents. We need to know why the networks take the form they do, how they relate to the broader political system and how the network structures and actor behaviour affect outcomes and restructure networks.

Certainly, they claim, there is no unidirectional link between networks and policy outcomes (*ibid*: 197).

Therefore, it appears to be axiomatic that despite its appeal as a description of some important realities in contemporary political systems, there are significant questions about using the concept of 'networks' (Peters, 1998:21-22). Peters asserts that although the concept of using a network approach to examine the relationship between state and society is now pervasive in the European literature (and becoming more widespread in the U.S.), more work is needed to determine what it contributes and the extent of the theoretical utility its advocates appear to assume (*ibid*). He queries whether networks are better understood simply as a

metaphor, or as a more substantive means of explaining political interactions and policy-making. Furthermore, he asks:

Do networks exist in any meaningful sense, or are they mere constructs imposed by researchers for their own intellectual convenience?

A lack of distinction in the literature between types of networks is also problematical in that they all appear to be effectively the same, with insufficient focus on *how* they exert influence (*ibid*: 30). In Marsh's view (*ibid*: 118) both structural and interpersonal aspects are crucial in trying to explain the outcomes achieved by 'networks'. In this context, there appears to be a consensus amongst observers of issue networks that internal conflict is inherent⁶⁸², leading McAdam *et al* to comment on what he called one of the 'great paradoxes' of contentious politics (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001:159):

[...] how contingent assemblages of social networks manage to create the illusion of determined, unified, self-motivated political actors, then to act publicly as if they believed that illusion.⁶⁸³

Furthermore, Urry cautions that the concept of networks remains 'underdeveloped' in the context of understanding the elements and behaviours of complex systems (2002:8-12).

When considering this approach, I found the network conceptualisation to be planar and unsuitably linear for investigating complex, non-linear and intersecting social systems and their environments. Assemblages theory, as propounded by Deluze and DeLanda (2006:10) appeared initially to offer a more compelling proposition, in its assertion that wholes can be characterised by relations of exteriority and display emergent properties, however, in the course of the research I found it to be more useful as a stepping-stone to the richer toolbox of complexity theory. Social network theory was also a useful stepping stone, insofar as it formed a basis for Granovetter's foundational work on weak link and strong link networks (1973; 1978), which emphasised the need to consider the immanent and emergent properties of individuals, groups and crowds in understanding their relationships,

⁶⁸² This internal conflict characteristic is clearly evident in the case studies on Greenpeace and Human Rights Watch.

⁶⁸³ See also Goffman (1959: 28-82) for his seminal work on 'performativity', which examines the self-belief individuals have in the social roles they play.

behaviours and thresholds for action. Consequently, this thesis was influenced by Granovetter's seminal work in this field. Indeed, I argue, that the key to better understanding the disparate degrees of effectiveness of TANs and NGOs is revealed when Granovetter's theoretical insights regarding the properties possessed by individuals engaging in collective behaviour is synthesised with complexity insights into the properties of the fitness landscapes affecting the complex systems in which they are embedded. Moreover, this argument had a great deal to say about civil society aspirations in complex environments and exposes the limitation of the increasingly popular concept and dream of 'people power'.

Thus, in reviewing these debates, I found the more convincing arguments advise caution in assuming the influence of networks in policy processes, especially in regard to nodal imbalances and clumping in transnational network structures, assuming uniformity of commitment⁶⁸⁴, unity of collective purpose, and the effectiveness of external expressions of TAN agency to diverse external audiences. Certainly, the literature demonstrated a need to be more sceptical, than at present, in assuming the lines drawn on network organisational charts represent the strength, direction of power flows, or the value and equivalency of links. I suggest that they may be illusory, or indicative, at best⁶⁸⁵. For these reasons, I consider the analogy of 'network', now commonly used to frame TANs as coherent entities on the international stage is generally used unconvincingly to try to bridge divides between the domestic and international political realms. Therefore, while this thesis acknowledges that the network framework is popular in the field of NGO/TAN analysis, and notwithstanding the quantitative research appeal of Actor Network Theory (ANT)⁶⁸⁶, with its possibilities for simple, graphic, tabulation of points of contact between entities, these approaches appear to be highly unsuited to qualitative depth analyses of the types of complex, intersecting,

⁶⁸⁴ See Granovetter's work on 'threshold models' of collective behaviour (especially his 'riot' model), which rejects the possibility of, *inter alia*, uniform attitudes and levels of commitment and predictable behaviours within collectives (1973, 1978; Watts, 2011:67-71). Kant famously expounded on the impossibility of 'subjective universality' (2008/1790:49), pointing out that there are the impenetrable cognitive barriers to the dissemination of subjective definitions of objects that are universally valid for everyone.

⁶⁸⁵ Moreover, as I discuss in Chapter 3, the scale and richness of data required to validate causal claims at diverse levels of complexity is a heuristic impossibility.

⁶⁸⁶ See work by John Law (2004), Bruno Latour (2007), *et al.*

multidimensional systems and disparate power relationships that constitute the international system.

Transnationalism as a conceptual framework

Turning to 'the transnational' aspect of TAN identification, this study found that the conceptual usefulness of notions of transnationality were impoverished in regard to understanding TANs. The crucial consideration of context is simply ignored and the meaning of 'transnational' is assumed to be as applicable to a weak relationship between any two nations as it is to an instance of intensive interconnections between many nations⁶⁸⁷. Asserting the vital importance of context, Goodin and Tilly (2006:4), caution that contextual nuances disappear from large-scale quantitative modeling and explanations based on abstract, general or universal laws of human behaviour. Social relations in local contexts matter, because:

[...] how political processes work and what outcomes they produce depend heavily on the contexts in which they occur.

Moreover, in the modern era of affordable globe-encircling transportation and telecommunications technologies, the notion of transnationalism is not particularly meaningful. Therefore, I suggest that the criterion of an organisation's 'transnational' aspect would make very little sense as a main analytical framework in most investigations aimed at understanding political outcomes. Presumably, the work the concept of 'transnational' is often meant to be doing in its common usage in TAN identification is to suggest not only that units, or nodes, of networks are linked across borders and geographical distances but that they are necessarily strengthened by their unity⁶⁸⁸. Perhaps the notion of trans-national links ostensibly hint also of the cross-cultural (even universal) appeal of an organisation's ideology and mission, extent of influence, weight of numbers and political power. But it is an Aquila, only symbolic of power rather than possessing it: some TANs are huge and influential but most are not. And, as discussed in

⁶⁸⁷ See also Florini's comments on the 'somewhat ungainly term' transnational civil society (2000:7).

⁶⁸⁸ This study found no instances in which TANs admitted that they has been weakened by their expanding transnational networks, although this is common with other organisations, corporations, and indeed states, and such a consequence seems to be as likely as not. Both Oxfam and Human Rights Watch did admit to being severely stretched in trying to meet their expanding worldwide commitments with available resources, and Oxfam GB has embarked on a programme of large-scale staff cuts and pulling out of some countries (*The Guardian*, 2013; HRW Annual Report, 2011:1; 2012:43; 2013:1).

Section 3.2.1, the properties of a fitness landscape are a crucial factor in a TAN's goal attainment and may not necessarily be influenced by the size and transnational components of the TAN⁶⁸⁹.

The fact that the literature established that most NGOs/TANs have their roots and large support bases planted firmly in the developed countries of the West⁶⁹⁰ was a further argument for rejecting transnationalism as the primary research unit for analysing them (see Florini, 2000:7; Tarrow: 2005: 42-43, 68-72). Moreover, Tarrow is persuasive in his identification of transnational activists as a sub-group of 'rooted cosmopolitans' (*ibid*:42-43), claiming that 'most activists are embedded within the power structures of their own countries' (*ibid*:60) and 'global thinking', with Mittelman (2004), is strongly associated with neoliberal visions, well-educated individuals and elites, and is not universally shared.

Thus, it was incongruous that descriptions of domestic activist network nodes commonly featured communities embedded in separate, vastly different social 'worlds' to each other, while the globe-spanning TANs to which they were linked were commonly assumed to operate in one world. This, I held to be a superficial conceptualisation of TAN agency, which in a complex realist reading might be more usefully envisaged as social networks of complex intersecting world-systems, because when we think in global terms we are trying to link people existing in entirely different worlds, even as they inhabit the Earth in the same moment.

International relations scholars, anthropologists, human geographers and many others, have long identified at least four 'worlds'. These have been held to be the notion emerging during the Cold War period of (1) a First World, comprising the U.S. and its allies; (2) a Second World made up of the USSR and communist bloc; and (3) a Third World of non-aligned nations. Some also see (4) a Fourth World of indigenous peoples and anti-imperialist movements, who seek to safeguard alternative identities and futures for themselves other than those imposed or expected of them by people in the other 'Worlds' (Hall, 2003; Manuel, 1974). In

⁶⁸⁹ See Mark Granovetter's work for more on this (Granovetter, 1978; Watts, 2011: 61-72).

⁶⁹⁰ Illustrating this point, quite fortuitously, the three case study TANs are all headquartered in the developed Western world: Greenpeace International (Amsterdam), Oxfam International (Oxford, UK), and Human Rights Watch (New York).

particular, these political advocates, who are increasingly networked *via* new communications technologies, typically propound 'another world is possible' and seek to counter the hegemonic spread of European civilisation through the forces of globalisation (Hall: *ibid*). The aspirations of some of the many strands of this movement typically find their transnational expression in the advocacy communications of the alter-globalisation movement. In fact, a further, yet unexplored, hypothesis that I drew from the research data, is that the digital divide appears to be generating an emergent Fifth parallel world that is greatly advantaged by the changing power dynamics enabled by digital technologies and is vastly overrepresented in online opinion by a social sector that is young adult, male, highly educated, non-poor, urban, Western and white (see Hindman, 2009:9, 18-19).

ANNEX 4: UN Consultation Criteria

Implications for TANs in measuring up to the UN consultation criteria

The implications of the UN's 1996 accreditation criteria for TANs (UN-ECOSOC, 1996) are evident on even the most cursory reflection. Applying these criteria to the data set, I prepared the following *indicative* list of challenges that, I submit, are faced by TANs in meeting a representative selection of the UN accreditation criteria:

- ❖ Must work in a field that is relevant to the work of the ECOSOC —
 - TANs generally form to set the agenda for political debate, prioritise the issues to be addressed by the international community and frame the meaning in which the issues should be approached (Keck and Sikkink, 1998:25, 30), not to conform to the work and needs of an IGO.

- ❖ Must have aims and purposes that conform to the spirit, purposes and principles of the UN Charter —
 - Many TANs form specifically to oppose, change and/or circumvent international policy and institutions, particularly in regard to addressing contemporary global challenges⁶⁹¹. They often take an adversarial stance on issues and also contest the authority of the international system (UN-NGLS, 2003b; Chandler, 2004).

- ❖ Should undertake to support the work of the UN and promote knowledge of its principles and activities —
 - As above. Additionally, it is noted, in this context, that only 1,300 NGOs have signed up to a separate UN accreditation scheme operated by the UN's Department of Public Information (UN data, 2011c), to promote the exchange and dissemination of UN information among civil society. It is probably reasonable to assume that TANs that prioritise their own self-publicity and efforts to 'change the behaviour of states and of international organizations' (Keck and Sikkink, 1998:2), are even less inclined than other NGOs to support the positions of those they regard as opponents.

⁶⁹¹ These are listed at the beginning of Chapter 4.

- ❖ Must not engage in a politically motivated act against a Member State, or promote activities that are against the UN Charter —
 - As mentioned earlier, interpretation of what constitutes a ‘politically motivated act’ may be highly contested. It is reasonable to regard all external affairs activities of TANs as politically motivated acts, and many are against the interest of one, several, or all UN Member States. Keck and Sikkink (*ibid:x*) assert that:

[...] voices that are suppressed in their own societies may find that networks can project and amplify their concerns into an international arena, which in turn can echo back into their own countries. Transnational networks multiply the voices that are heard in international and domestic policies.
 - Such statutory obligations to help preserve the international order of sovereign states are clearly incompatible with the ideologies of cosmopolitanist TANs and pose insurmountable barriers to their participation in the contemporary international system via the UN.
 - Similarly, TANs engaged in ‘politically-motivated’ acts against states, such as those exhibiting contempt for law and order, strategically provoking coercive powers of states and calling for civil disobedience, appear to also encounter resistances and barriers to their aims to influence the international policy-making processes.
- ❖ Should be a representative body, with identifiable headquarters and an executive officer. It should have a transparent and democratic decision-making mechanism and a democratically adopted constitution —
 - Contemporary TANs connected in horizontal network organisational structures may have difficulty meeting these criteria. Linked on the basis of advocating for one or more principled issues, or values, and the exchange of information, they may have no hierarchy or material presence, in a traditional sense, in any one country. Furthermore, issue networks are notably unstable structurally, characterised by a low-level of institutionalisation, lack of cohesion (sometimes referred to as ‘weak link’ networks), and constant struggles over rules, procedures, norms and resources (Daugbjerg, 1998:81). However, TANs may consider these network characteristics to be distinctively advantageous in their dealings with states. Rosenau (2000:229) contends that while a number of dynamics have ‘contributed to the diminution of state capacities’, one of the most important has been the shifting balance between hierarchical and network forms of organisation, between vertical and horizontal flows of authority. Rosenau continues:

Greatly facilitated by the Internet, people now converge electronically as equals, or at least not as superiors and subordinates. They make plans, recruit members, mobilize support, raise money, debate issues, frame agendas, and undertake collective action, amounting to steering mechanisms founded on horizontal rather than hierarchical channels of authority.

Furthermore, Rosenau says he shares the view that conflicts will increasingly be waged by 'networks', rather than hierarchies — endowing whoever masters the network form to gain major advantages in the new epoch.

❖ Must have authority to speak for its members —

- As above. This is a significant challenge for TANs, who try to ensure that their 'strategic portrayal' of issues will work for the different actors in the network and also for target audiences (Keck and Sikkink, *ibid*:8). This study found that this requirement often meant that, in order to form consensus, the strategic messages of networks were often highly generalised, even banal. This, and the non-hierarchical structure of networks, could compromise any effort by any one element of an advocacy network to officially speak for any others.

❖ Must have appropriate mechanisms for accountability —

- As above. Additionally, the heterogeneity and relativity of transnational networks, among other things, make this requirement problematical. One might question, for instance: What mechanisms and levels of accountability are considered to be 'appropriate', and by whose estimation? Accountable for what and to whom, and on whose authority? Chandler (2004) observes that some approaches ascribe a distinctive radical ethics to global civil society in that its members refuse to play by the rules laid down by state-based territorial politics. Chandler opines:

Whereas state-based political action is held to reinforce frameworks and hierarchies of exclusion, new social movements, said to constitute a global civil society 'from below', are seen to herald new forms of emancipatory political action that recognise and include diversity and build new forms of global 'counter-hegemonic' politics.

- ❖ Must be funded mainly by its members and provide the Committee with its financial documentation and reports —
 - As above. Heightened suspicions about NGO underpinnings and motivations during Cold War political manoeuvring led to the review of the NGO consulting arrangements, resulting in Resolution 1296 (XLIV) of May 1968 (UN-ECOSOC, 1968; UN Report, 2003), and the requirement for NGOs to submit regular reports of their operations and finances. As discussed earlier in conjunction with the concerns expressed in the Cardoso Panel survey and the Cardoso Report (UN-NGLS, 2003b; UN Report, 2004a) and more recently by Zettler (2009), this can be problematical in situations in which the applicant NGO is supported by political opponents of the government of the Member State. Although the 1968 Resolution also specifically encouraged engagement with NGOs from developing countries (UN Report, 2003), a contradiction exists today in that this stipulation presents particular problems for under-resourced NGOs from the global South.

- ❖ Cannot be a profit-making body. Individual companies cannot gain consultative status, but trade federations and commercial interests are recognised as NGOs —
 - As shown in this thesis, the accreditation terminology can be ambiguous and open to subjective interpretation. ‘Profit-making’ and ‘commercial interests’, for example, can be interpreted both rigidly and in a very liberal sense. NGOs who see themselves as part of a civil society that inhabits a space that is non-state and non-market contest the UN’s acceptance of trade federations and commercial interests as part of civil society (UN Global Compact, 1999, 2007, 2008)⁶⁹² and the deduction that they are, therefore, covered by the *Article 71* provision for consultation with non-governmental organisations (UN Charter, 1945).

- ❖ Cannot use or advocate violence —
 - This requirement is self-evidently problematical, in light of the frustrations experienced by some sections of global civil society, such as the anti-globalisation and anti-capitalist movements (Chandler, 2004), which have become defined worldwide by their strategic use of violent protest action and high level of media attention. Moreover, the definition of what constitutes ‘violence’ is contested (Galtung, 1969) and, as demonstrated in the case studies, is typically considered by individual TANs to be relative to their ideological commitments and concerns.

⁶⁹² It is clear from [UN Secretary-General] Kofi Annan’s speech to the first meeting of the United Nations advisory body, the Global Compact, that the UN considers private sector business executives, labour organisations and civil society bodies to be covered by the *Article 71* provision for non-governmental organisations (UN Global Compact, 2008).

- ❖ Must respect the norm of ‘non-interference in the internal affairs of states’. This means an NGO cannot be a political party, but parties can, like companies, form international federations. Similarly, NGOs concerned with human rights should not restrict their activities to a particular group, nationality, or country —
 - Again, the definition of what constitutes non-interference in the internal affairs of states is highly controversial. It presents particular problems for TANS, which in their advocacy of universal norms and acceptance of their worldviews, arguably display characteristics that resemble a new form of ‘global political party’, albeit in an international context that has no institutional legislative mechanism for their participation beyond that of accredited consultants. Furthermore, many TANS focus their claims, criticisms and demands on particular ‘rogue’ states with whom they have issues, particularly in the areas of human and animal rights and the environment. For example, Human Rights Watch stakes its reputation on its uncompromising ‘interference’ in the human rights abuses it documents in the world’s states (see Chapter 9 and HRW World Report, 2014).

- ❖ Cannot be an intergovernmental organisation —
 - The NGO Committee has had issues in the past with NGOs that were found, or suspected, to be puppet organisations for governments (UN Report, 2003; Martens, 2004), but this is unlikely to be a significant hurdle for TANS due to the staunchly non-state ethos with which they characteristically identify.

- ❖ Must have been in existence for at least two years before applying —
 - This does not appear to be a controversial requirement at the present time, however, given that TANS often mobilise rapidly in response to urgent issues and the process for obtaining an accredited voice in the UN may take several years, it is possible that it could become one.

ANNEX 5: Communications Strategies

This annex sets out briefly the communications theoretical background for a selection of public communications strategies and tactics often used by organisations in both the public and private sectors. They are customarily the product of strategic corporate decisions and are designed to elicit predetermined responses from targeted audiences in accordance with the organisation's preferred outcomes and goals⁶⁹³. Those observed as being used by TANs include:

1. Framing, priming and cognitive cues

Of all the rhetorical techniques typically practiced by advocacy organisations, strategic framing and reframing of issues is arguably the most well known, even by lay audiences. The term 'framing' is generally taken to refer to the use of interpretive perspectives and frameworks to customise selected facts or information prior to its distribution to intended audiences, or 'publics' (van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009:149; Kahneman, 2011:363-367; Miller, 2005:275-276). For example, packaging information in terms of 'the crisis' or 'catastrophe' is commonly seen in advocacy framing. This attention-capturing device is also activated by purely symbolic threats and emotionally-loaded words, or cues (Kahneman, *ibid*: 301, 367). By analysis of Website feedback, these techniques enable organisations to model their user preferences and customise new content that optimises the capture of user attention and reinforces satisfaction levels. However, although this form of research is useful for analysing information regarding already engaged audiences, it can tell strategists almost nothing about resistant and gatekeeper audiences. It is a tenet of modern communications practice that in order to influence others to act in desired ways and achieve one's goals, it is crucial to understand *their* attitudes and values (Brook and Sha, 2013:28, 51; PRSA, 2014). As the Chinese general Sun-tzu asserted: '[...] he who not only is ignorant of the enemy, but also of his own resources, is invariably defeated' (2010:24)⁶⁹⁴.

⁶⁹³ This explanatory note is based on analysis of the academic and professional literature and discourses, combined with a personal career of over 30 years as a senior communications executive.

⁶⁹⁴ Commonly shortened to the well-known aphorism: 'Know your enemy.'

Priming and cuing of audiences by using stock terminologies and familiar linguistic short forms, often frequently and repetitively, helps to simplify messages about complex subjects, recall prior contexts, prioritise importance of a topic, link to ideological biases, and reinforce notions of identity and solidarity (van der Eijk and Franklin, *ibid*: 88; Miller, *ibid*). Indeed, as advocacy organisations, it is to be expected that the primary purpose of TANs is to strategically communicate information to the actors within their networks and to their target audiences (Brader and Valentino, 2007:184, Keck and Sikkink, 1998:2, 8). Among the cognitive cues this study found to be most in evidence in TAN communications were (i) stereotypes, which can lead people to habitually look for a particular undesirable, or desirable, trait or inconsistency in another; (ii) associative biases with things that are liked or, especially, disliked; and (iii) priming for receptiveness to ideas and suggestions (see Kahneman, 2011: 50-58). These techniques also fall into the category of ‘rhetorical techniques’.

2. ‘Fuzzy’ brand promises

A ‘fuzzy brand promise’ is a promise that has an idealised but unactualisable goal. In the conceptualisation of fuzzy brand promise delivery, a brand delivers on a fuzzy promise to the extent that the brand universe encourages a form of consumer-brand interaction, which — if adopted by the target consumer — brings about the promised future state of affairs (Anker *et al*, 2012:282). In order to have cross-cultural impact, TANs often appear to employ this communications technique of designing ‘fuzzy brand promises’ that trigger emotional responses with widely diversified audiences. This can happen because we invoke cognitive shortcuts, based on our subjective understandings in order to make sense of the world. Global commercial brands, such as Coca-Cola, trigger positive responses in their audiences by linking their products to universal situations, such as the quenching of thirst, enjoyment of flavour, the excitement of sport and the happiness of celebrations with family and friends. These are simple messages calling for clear and simple responses. However, when transnational advocacy communications strategists seek to influence worldwide mass audiences concerning ideologies or political issues of extreme complexity, and with which the audiences have low familiarity, the message framing inevitably suffers from oversimplification, emotional rhetoric and attitudinal prompts such as urgency

and risk alarms. In 'fuzzy promises' theorisation, brands⁶⁹⁵ deliver fuzzy, functional, symbolic, and experiential promises to their target consumers that result in behaviours that, *inter alia*, encourage consumers to use brands as narrative material to communicate self-identity; facilitate courses of consumer action that are conducive to the promised functionality; and motivate consumers to adopt and play a social role implicitly suggested and facilitated by the brand.

3. 'Validity of voice' authentication

Bendell (2006) has shown that there are five primary bases upon which a 'voice' can be considered to have value in political deliberations — a subject of particular significance for those who advocate on behalf of others. Providing these findings in a UN Dossier (*ibid*), Bendell lists the following five evaluative criteria for the 'validity' of the advocacy 'voice': the relevant experience of the speaker, the speaker's expertise, novelty, content, and what can be called the 'dependent affectedness,' of the voice. Of these, Bendell asserts that the last is considered to be the key to effectiveness. His theory holds that those most affected by an issue are considered to have the greatest 'validity of voice' in discourses on that subject. Deployment of this tactic is clearly evident in the strategic presentation of personal experiences of advocates, novelty such as the deployment of celebrity influencers including film stars, and personal accounts focusing on the experiences of victims and the relief provided to them.

4. Perlocution

Perlocutionary communications tactics are often evident in TAN communications — that is, linguistic forms that have action as their aim and imply action but do not embody an explicit call for the receiver to take an action (Habermas, 1989:133; Miller, 2005:147). Oblique forms of persuading, or convincing, may fall into this category. In fact, Habermas (*ibid*)⁶⁹⁶ discusses the role of perlocution in political activism, as a means of eliciting the cooperation of others in accordance with a speaker's imperatives. He observes that in the initial phases of cooperative

⁶⁹⁵ Apart from satisfying a consumer's rational and emotional needs, successful brands are generally conceptualised as essentially projecting some kind of promise, which forms an ethical bond between the parties that has consequences if broken. Pearson asserts: 'Frankly, a brand is a promise. And promises are meant to be kept' (Pearson, 2006:385; Anker *et al*, *ibid*; de Chernatony *et al*, 2011:31).

⁶⁹⁶ This communications theory is presented in Volume 1 of Habermas's *magnum opus*, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1989:331).

interpretive processes differing levels of information, interpretations and understandings can be a handicap to achieving coordinated actions. Thus:

[...] through perlocuting effects, the speaker gives the hearer something to understand which he cannot (yet)⁶⁹⁷ directly communicate. In this phase, then, the perlocutionary acts have to be embedded in contexts of communicative action.

Habermas theorised this concept in this diagram:

Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action⁶⁹⁸



Figure 6.3 Habermas theorised the overt and covert strategies that can be used in political activism to elicit the cooperation of audiences who may be unfamiliar with the subject matter (1989:331).

According to Habermas, 'mechanisms of deception' need to be mastered for practising systematically distorted communications in activism focused on influencing public audiences. These include using language to confuse the boundaries between 'seriousness' and 'play' (*ibid*). Also:

[...] the linguistic construction of a fictive reality, wit and irony, transposed and paradoxical use of language, allusions and the contradictory withdrawal of validity claims at a metacommunicative level⁶⁹⁹ — all these accomplishments rest on intentionally confusing modalities of being.

⁶⁹⁷ Parenthesis as in original.

⁶⁹⁸ Diagram reproduced from Habermas, 1989:333.

⁶⁹⁹ I posit that an accessible example of this linguistic device is Mark Antony's famous funeral oration in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, during which the prevailing sentiment of a crowd is manipulated from one extreme to another.

An example of this tactic, relating to an anti-whaling campaign, is shown in the thesis text.

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