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# Global action networks: Agents for collective action

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### ABSTRACT

Global action networks (GANs) are civil society initiated multi-stakeholder arrangements that aim to fulfill a leadership role for systemic change in global governance for sustainable development. The paper develops a network approach to study some of these GANs as motivators of global collective action and investigates how in their interaction processes the actors involved create the organizational capacity for collective change. Based on a variety of case studies, the paper highlights crucial factors determining the performance of GANs; among them the characteristics of the issue field and the development stage of the GAN. The analysis also shows how GANs play two crucial roles, sometimes in combination, sometimes successively. These are labelled as the broker and entrepreneur role. The paper concludes with some conditions for collective action that are underexposed in collective action theory.

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## 1. Introduction

"It is no longer even a reasonable simplification to think of world politics simply as politics among states" (Keohane, 2002, p. 1). Particularly regarding sustainability issues, both in the environmental realm and related to issues of social equity, we observe the institutionalization of many new global action networks (GANs).

GANs, a term introduced by Waddell (2003, 2005, 2007), are a specific form of 'global issue networks' (Rischar, 2002) or global partnerships (Glasbergen et al., 2007). They are defined as civil society initiated multi-stakeholder arrangements that aim to fulfill a leadership role in the protection of the global commons or the production of global public goods. Though some of these relatively new institutional arrangements seem to be designed merely to benefit their own membership or constituencies, many of them have a wider public dimension and attempt to create a morally inspired voluntary sustainability agenda and new sustainable practices that transcend sovereign territories (Khagram, 2006; Khagram and Ali, 2008).

Most GANs focus on sustainability issues that are already addressed in formal policy regimes, for example peace and conflict resolution, protection of biodiversity, fighting poverty and unequal-

ity, improving health and labor relationships.<sup>1</sup> They call for an increased attention for these issues, often reframing them in such a way that they obtain higher priority, or aim to add **implementation** capacities to the existing regimes. Characteristic of the leadership role sought is the anchored position in multi-stakeholder and multi-sector processes. GANs fulfill a systemic change agent role and aim to bring in an array of stakeholders across sectors from government, business and civil society to develop a common framework for debate, research and action. The definitional qualities of their strategies have been described as:

- Global and multi-level (across and beyond the local, national, regional and international levels of governance).
- Interdisciplinary action-learning and reflective action (to produce synergies between knowledge development and practice).
- Multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral, inter-organizational networks (linking international agencies, governments, businesses, civil society organizations and other actors while still utilizing hierarchies or markets as appropriate).
- Systemic change producers through a range of non-violent, boundary-crossing and diversity-embracing activities (agenda-setting, knowledge generation, capacity building, resource mobilization, conflict resolution, education, certification, etc.).
- Public good development in areas of global sustainability and security (while ensuring the empowerment of marginalized groups and harnessing the energy of potentially divergent private interests) (Waddell and Khagram, 2007).

This paper aims to understand in what way and to what extent GANs as new forms of organization are able to overcome a collective action problem. Most research on the development of collective action has been focused on individuals or single groups. According to the classical interpretation, public goods and services

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<sup>1</sup> The term GAN is also used by a community of GAN leaders, researchers, funders and other stakeholders. Participating GANs are, among others discussed in this paper, Transparency International, the Global Fund to Fight Aids and Tuberculosis, the Global Water Partnership, the Global Reporting Initiative, and the Microcredit Summit Campaign (see [www.scalingimpact.net/gan](http://www.scalingimpact.net/gan)).

are unlikely to be produced by private initiatives. A rational actor will not participate in such an activity, because the results of participation are non-excludable and invisible. Participation of private actors is only possible under very specific conditions. In most circumstances, however, there is need of some external force of a regulatory apparatus to solve the collective action problems. However, this approach seems to be less valuable to understand the mobilization of transnational collective action (Ansari et al., 2009). In our case we have to do with networks. These networks may be viewed as political arrangements that have a certain organizational capacity for collective action (Considine, 2005). The development of this capacity places the 'logic of collective action' in the broader context of the nature of the interactions among the actors involved in an issue field. Based on this focus, this paper takes the networking processes through which the actors realize collective action as the main units of analysis. As a central hypothesis it is assumed that *vital* GANs develop as adaptive arrangements, which are able to balance flexibility versus fixation in their processes. It is furthermore assumed that this requires specific management capabilities, which we relate to emotional and transactional aspects of networking and the capacity to create an enabling environment. By studying how these capabilities are used and structure the interactions in the networks we will answer the question of their performance in term of bringing about new forms of global collective action.

First, the paper will characterize GANs as specific enablers of collective action, followed by the development of an analytical framework based on networking activities to study their performance. The empirical basis of the paper consists of four case analyses in different issue fields. The GANs we will analyze are well known in their problem field as the principal initiatives for collective action: the promotion of organic agriculture as an alternative to traditional agriculture by IFOAM; institutionalizing fair labor conditions in the apparel industry by FLA; the prevention of armed conflict by GPPAC; and the protection of biodiversity in so-called biodiversity hotspots by CEPF. The final section of the paper presents a comparative analysis and considers the implications of the findings for the theory on collective action.

## 2. GANs as agents for collective action

Olson's seminal work on the logic of collective action defined the problem of collective action as the conflict between individual group member's pursuit of their own interests and the need of the group as a whole. According to his theory, rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests, because the individual costs are higher than the individual benefits (Olson, 1965). Olson opened up a new theme for social scientific research that has been approached in different ways: from experimental group studies, to formal game modeling exercises, and to empirical studies of group behavior in cases of common pool problems. Most of the research, however, is based on the study of small groups. Research studying more complex forms of organizations, such as in the field of global governance, recently focused mainly on formal international policies and collaboration of states (Barnett and Duvall, 2005; Sandler, 2004), or collective actions in social movements (Edwards and Gaventy, 2001; Diani and McAdams, 2003; Burstein and Sausner, 2005).

In particular, the studies of single groups have refined Olson's theory. Part of the research focused on the motives for collective action. It made it clear that besides material motives, people work for the common good because of a sense of solidarity, which arises from interaction with others, and purposive motives, to be described as the moral feeling of self-satisfaction from doing the right thing. Another part of the research studied group variables. Some of the premises, though not uncontroversial, are that the

main variables influencing the organization of collective action are physical proximity, group size, homogeneity, and leadership. Groups with communication difficulties, larger groups, and heterogeneous groups that lack leadership, have more difficulty solving collective action problems. The key reasoning is that under these conditions the transaction costs of coordination become higher and collective action is less likely to occur (Monge et al., 1998; Carlsson, 2000). However, GANs are quite different from the classical objects that were studied to better understand collective action. From the perspective of the classical motives and conditions GANs even seem to be ill equipped for collective action and the production of public goods. With GANs the focus is not on face-to-face interacting individuals, not on small social groups, or a group with a common cultural identity. GANs often lack clear leadership structures, and their specific characteristics create specific problems for collective action.

- First, the collective action is not only based on personal contacts but is also strongly **media-based**. GANs can constitute new forms of collective action as a consequence of the changing nature of information and communication technology (Florini, 2000; Bimber et al., 2005). It is only through the instant worldwide communications in the contemporary media environment that interaction and negotiation may easily take on multi-level, multi-actor, and multi-sector characteristics. Though face-to-face personal contacts are important they are often impossible to organize in an intensive way.
- Second, the collective action is **not based on individuals but on organizations**. GANs aim to bring together organizational actors with rather similar or connected value premises and worldviews in an interactive process to induce a common understanding of what is at stake in a specific problem field and how these issues should be addressed. Though united on value orientation, participating actors come from a pluriform cultural background and situational circumstances, and in that sense GANs are rather heterogeneous.
- Third, **the collective action does not take place in single groups but in networks**. In organizational terms GANs can be placed between social movements and professional bureaucracies. GANs share the attachment to changing values with social movements and participation takes place in the context of a collective activity. However, **GANs are based less on the tactics of resistance and campaigning and more on long-term structured strategies for change**. Participating organizations are more strongly tied to the GAN and are usually considered formal 'participants'. GANs are also more self-regulating than professional bureaucracies, in the sense that members establish their own agenda, range of action, and conditions for public service delivery (Carlsson, 2000; Wijnen and Ansari, 2007).

## 3. Analytical framework: collective action in a networking process

GANs aim to be 'institutional innovators' (Kuhnert, 2001); they create new private governance spaces to accomplish their mission. In that capacity they are inherently political. Space should be understood here in the figurative sense, e.g. a new locus of focused interaction among agencies of various sectors and levels. Within the spaces actors assemble for negotiation and deliberation, while they aggregate through new forms of concerted action for societal change. 'Political' refers to the element of public responsibility that is involved. Because of these characteristics, a process approach, focusing on the interactions, seems to be more instructive than an approach based on pre-determined variables. This approach takes as its starting point the networking activities that are central to the

development of GANs, investigates the nature of the interactions among the actors involved, and how they generate a kind of organizational capacity in their issue field (Considine, 2005, p. 137; Weyrauch, 2007).

Networking must be understood as a continuous process in which interacting agents create emergent properties, qualities, and patterns of behavior. A central feature of such a process, combining actors from different backgrounds to overcome a collective action problem, is their capacity to combine the partners' strengths with the identity of the network. Single identities of the partners need to be kept, while the network as a whole benefits from their mobilization in a new arrangement (Rydin, 2006, p. 19). The performance of networks will, therefore, be largely determined by their adaptive capabilities in terms of finding a continuous balance between the flexibility of self-organization of potential partners and fixation of the network as a strong arrangement able to induce societal change. This requires specific management capabilities that we specified in terms of governance related to emotional and transactional aspects and the creation of an enabling environment.

### 3.1. The creation of a psychological space

This is a space where all the participants can feel co-ownership and responsibility for the network as a whole. Networks must be sources of inspiration, unity and moral support. Participants must be motivated to participate actively. The inspiration should be derived from a shared vision on the issue area and a shared mission to fulfill. This vision and mission should be broad enough to be recognized by the participants as of their own, create added value for each of the participants, but also needs to be specific enough to direct the actions of the network as a whole, making it recognizable in its issue area as a valuable new change agent.

### 3.2. The creation of a transaction space

This is a space in which the participants can productively combine knowledge exchange and action-oriented functions. This function requires some formalization of the relationships between the participants while keeping the flexibility of bottom-up processes. Several mechanisms, each with potential tensions, play a role. Related to the internal structure this is, for example, the definition of 'participant', in terms of level of involvement and 'membership' with related responsibilities. Too tight descriptions might result in losing potential participants, too loose descriptions are non-committal. But also the definition of quality standards related to the activities, including financial accountability, monitoring, and evaluation, is difficult. Not all participants might have those capacities. Another tension area is the role of the coordinating agency, which needs to show leadership, but may not be the central and decisive power; which works internally at the interface of the global, regional and local, each with different social, political and cultural backgrounds, and needs to balance power differentials; and which needs to balance the internal and external environment.

### 3.3. The creation of an enabling environment

GANs as new governance spaces are both sources of change and enablers of change. They are sources of change in the sense that actors that used to act independently from each other assemble to develop a common perspective to base their activities upon. In the process, those directly involved will be subject of change themselves. GANs also enable change through their activities directed to participants outside the network and they aim to act as change agents in their issue field. Networks that act as change agents need to organize their relationships with the relevant

others in the social and political context of their issue area. They want to influence the outer world, but may become dependent at the same time. Most GANs need external funding, aim to involve important donors, but take the risk that instead of organizations working for social change they become project deliverers for donors who impose their preferred solution upon them. Roots in formal decision-making structures are vital, but may also endanger the vitality. In this process dynamic learning, dependent on the state of each participant, its history and constitution, and the state of the GAN as a whole, will be a prerequisite for organizational evolution necessary for the change agent role.

From this perspective we assume that **three capabilities are crucial** for collective action in a networking process. All three relate to the problem of fixation versus flexibility:

- The capability **to stabilize participants' orientations, expectations and rules of conduct, while maintaining a dynamic innovative potential;**
- The capability **to reduce variety by central rules, while facilitating self-organization of participants;** and
- The capability **to induce joint activities in a formalized internal structure, while keeping the interfaces with the outer world open and constructive.**

Fig. 1 represents our analytical approach and connects these capabilities to the spaces that need to be created.

### 3.4. Methodology

To analyze the cases in a systematic way on the dimensions formulated above a stakeholder network mapping methodology was applied. This tool was used as a heuristic device to define an influence network map of the GAN and its development path. Based on this methodology and a preliminary literature and dossier study a questionnaire with open question was constructed. The questionnaire was sent to the GAN leaders before the interviews. In intensive sessions with these leaders the development of the GAN was first sketched; which participants came in, how and why, and what strategy was used – explicitly or implicitly – to develop the GAN. This resulted in a rough map of the structure of the GAN with an internal circle of participants that may be seen as members, a second category of relationships with actors who influence the GAN, and as a specific third category the relationships with government agencies. In the next step the map was used to specify the relationships in terms of formal and informal links of command, division of tasks and responsibilities, flows of funding and information, accountability and support structures. Further steps in the analysis focused on the mapping of managerial activities and an evaluation of successes and failures, as well as specific topics, such as the issues of leadership, membership, ownership and accountability. The sessions were completed with a

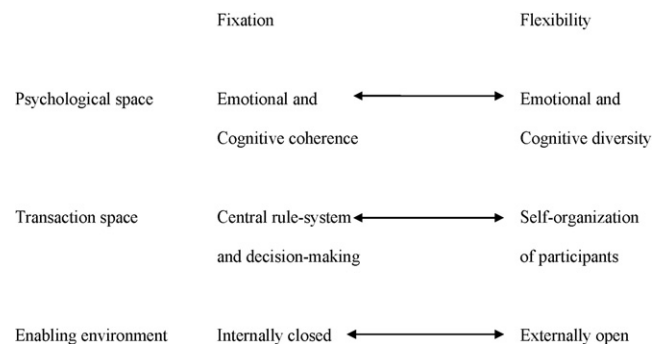


Fig. 1. Dimensions of global collective action of GANs.



view on the future development of the GAN. The results of the sessions were used in a further dossier analysis and resulted in a draft text that was sent to the GAN for comments.

The case analyses that are described below follow a specific line: after a short introduction follows an analysis part and the studies are concluded with a reflection.

#### 4. The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)<sup>2</sup>

##### 4.1. Introduction

IFOAM started out in 1972 as a grassroots movement, in close connection with farmers' organizations. Initially, it was to provide a platform for consultation on the intrinsic value and characteristics of organic agriculture and to promote its growth as an environmentally friendly and socially responsible alternative to conventional agriculture. But IFOAM grew into a global network primarily focused on the development of international norms for organic agriculture. Its current mission is leading, uniting and assisting the organic movement in its full diversity. Though the name of IFOAM suggests otherwise, IFOAM is not a federation, nor does it organize movements. IFOAM is a membership organization; however, most of its funding originates from other activities such as the management of projects, grants and donations, and the provision of services (publications, training material, workshops and conferences). IFOAM now has around 700 members in 110 countries. Nearly 50% of the members are located in developing countries. Its multiform membership encompasses traders, consultants, governments, farmers' organizations, and fair-trade organizations. IFOAM has a subsidiary organization founded in 1997 (IOAS) for accreditation. It also has long-standing relationships with many scientific researchers studying organic agriculture. IFOAM may be regarded as the focal global meeting point for organic agriculture. This primacy is expressed in its wide scope: the advocacy and networking qualities of its headquarters in Bonn (Germany); its on-going contacts with many governments, multinationals, UNCTAD, FAO; and its consultative status at the UN. One might say that the standards that IFOAM has set are recognized as the best practice, the 'gold standard' for international trade in its issue field. Since the 1990s, however, two trends have put IFOAM under pressure. One is related to external developments, the other to the internal governance structure.

##### 4.2. Analysis

Though organic agricultural products still comprise merely 2.7% of the global market, the organic sector has grown gradually at double-digit rates over the last two decades. Once the niche market became more important, governments started to become involved in the 1990s. Since then, many governments have decided to regulate organic agriculture in one way or another; 60 governments currently have their own regulation and some 30 governments are in the process of formulating one. Though IFOAM often was involved, and its standards were widely accepted (for example, India and the EU based their standards on IFOAM), the regulatory landscape it was working in has changed fundamentally. Especially its pursuit of uniform global standards was threatened. The USA, for example, organized its own accreditation and certification system. Attempts to harmonize the USA – EU schemes appeared to be unfeasible. Given the hundreds of private

<sup>2</sup> This case analysis is mainly derived from: IFOAM Annual Report 2005–2006; IFOAM website; Codex Alimentarius website; IFOAM structures overview 2008; IFOAM Program 2011; and an interview with Angela Caudle, Executive Director IFOAM, Bonn, 22 March 2008. The author would like to thank her for making some internal documents available.

certification schemes, each with its own standards, the issue field was becoming very complex. This trend was further complicated by the new strategies of some movements/organizations working on organic agriculture. Particularly the ones that have a local or regional focus started to address the consumers directly, bypassing governmental systems and even the market.

At the same time, promoting organic agriculture became part of the economic strategy of some developing countries, in certain cases with support from the World Bank. For IFOAM the challenge was to again become a leader in standard-setting, so harmonization became more urgent than ever. It succeeded in joining forces with UNCTAD and the FAO in a Task Force on Harmonization (2003). The Task Force has almost finished its work. It has developed two tools: international requirements for certification bodies; and a 'tool of equivalence' to evaluate existing systems of standards. However, apart from the Task Force, the FAO and UNCTAD have been rather reluctant to fully support organic agriculture.

Certifying organizations join IFOAM because of its credibility. As a long-standing network it has built up many international contacts. Its members are convinced that IFOAM has some control in the complex field of organic agriculture, although this might not be entirely true in view of the trends noted above. Networking opportunities and access to resources also play a role in an organization's decision to participate. Because they expect to gain credibility and status, 35 certifiers have become accredited by IFOAM-IOAS. At the same time the loose platform structure is a weakness. Moreover, the governance structure is rather unclear due to the incremental growth of the network. Apparently IFOAM had expanded without a clear organizational model in mind. Its baseline consists of the member organizations, which convene in the General Assembly where they elect a World Board (executive board). The World Board is the legally responsible agency, consisting of ten members chosen by the Assembly. There is no regional or other form of representation. For the last 20 years the Head Office has been run by an Executive Director, but under that level there is a wide range of organizational diversity. For example, there are Regional and National Groups. One of these, the EU Group, has 400 members, its own staff, and its own membership fee. There are also independent country organizations in the EU (notably France and Italy). Other independent associations include those for the Mediterranean countries, Japan, Latin America and the Caribbean. Japan has its own affiliate members that do not belong to IFOAM. In addition to these regional activities there are Sector-Specific Interest Groups, Regional Offices, Standing Committees (on norms, standards and criteria) and temporary Task Forces. In the absence of a central policy and guidance, the Regional and National Groups as well as the Sector-Specific Interest Groups are self-organized. Many of these parallel activities overlap and sometimes even compete with those of the central Head Office. The Regional Offices are supposed to function as a catalyst in the region. However, most of the work is voluntary and fulfillment of responsibilities is not really monitored. Many organizations and committees work under the IFOAM brand name and logo, and there are meeting points at conferences. Yet while the IFOAM organization looks like an entity on paper, it is partly inactive and does not operate as a coherent whole.

##### 4.3. Reflection

IFOAM created the psychological space within which it could play a vital role in clarifying what an 'organic' claim on a product means and has developed an outstanding system of third-party certification. However, the organic market is still confronted with hundreds of private-sector standards and governmental

regulations, and a host of conformity assessment and accreditation systems. Mutual recognition and equivalence among these systems is still limited. This cognitive diversity forms an obstacle to rapid development of the sector, as the standards are competing and do not present a coherent operational philosophy. Producers in developing countries face the additional problem of high costs of access to export markets, because of the need to require multiple certifications. Based on its harmonization efforts IFOAM recently set to work on promoting adoption of the recommendations and tools developed by the Task Force. Yet, one might doubt if IFOAM has an organizational structure strong enough to create a coherent enabling environment. The leadership of IFOAM recognizes this problem.

The strength of this GAN lies in its contribution to setting standards, particularly under the guidance of the Head Office. IFOAM has had the opportunity to involve many experts in its work. During the last few years it further refined and updated the Principles of Organic Agriculture, the Organic Guarantee System, Basic Standards and Accreditation Criteria. Its work on a Participatory Guarantee System sustains quality-assurance initiatives specific to individual communities, geographic areas and their markets. IFOAM organizes and acts as a representative at international events on organic agriculture and lobbies for international, legally binding agreements. Moreover, it participates in international agricultural negotiations, develops training materials, and even fought a successful legal case against biopiracy.

However, as the best practice the system is also controversial. It is faced with the challenge to find a balance between the need to accept regional differences in standards but also to ensure global harmonization of standards. The network recognizes the need to work on the capacity for organic agriculture to alleviate poverty, to facilitate access to markets, and to sustain the smallholder group certification systems needed to accomplish that. Its pluriform membership also sparks internal discussions about which groups are best served. On the one hand, the benefits accrue to the traders and export industry, on the other hand to farmers in developing countries. Though being a strong force in the global organic agriculture movement, with a coherent program, IFOAM is still weak as a transaction space as it lacks a really convincing internal governance system.

## 5. The Fair Labor Association (FLA)<sup>3</sup>

### 5.1. Introduction

Particularly in the seventies and eighties of the last century global supply chains in the apparel industry not only became longer, but also more complex. Driven by purely economic motives, issues of fair labor relationships were generally completely neglected. The symbol of this new development was the 'sweatshop', a concept that expresses the slave-like conditions of work, including child labor that had come to typify production in the global apparel industry (Fung et al., 2001; O'Rourke, 2003). Though some firms recognized the risks this posed for their reputation and brand image, it was only through concerted USA based NGO campaigns against leading firms – for example, Liz Claiborne (1994), GAP (1995), and Nike (1996) – that public opinion was mobilized and consumer pressure started to threaten the interests of the firms. As a reaction, many firms introduced a corporate code of conduct and an internal monitoring system for workers rights within the factories of their suppliers; among them Levi Strauss and Co., Nike, Reebok and Liz Claiborne. However,

these private policies, consisting of differing standards and criteria for monitoring, would inevitably lack credibility. Just like the campaigning NGOs, organized labor in the USA was rather critical of the private codes. It also condemned the sweatshops and fought production abroad under conditions that could not be competitive in the USA.

A triggering factor for further action by government was the television exposure of Kathie Lee Gifford's line of clothing, also sold by Wal-Mart, which still made use of sweatshops in the nineties. On the initiative of the White House, the Apparel Industry Partnership (AIP), linking all relevant sectors of the apparel industry, NGOs and labor unions, set out to develop credible and operational universal standards for fair labor. This process took several years, with many conflicts of interest, a stalemate, and many compromises. It is only through continued NGO campaigns and student organizations – which started to campaign to require adequate workers rights standards of the licensees making apparel for the universities (a very profitable market activity of universities in the USA) – as well as continuous government pressure, that an agreement on a code of conduct and principles of monitoring could be realized in 1997. The Fair Labor Association was formed to implement the policy, which started real activities in 2001 (Bobrowsky, n.y.).

### 5.2. Analysis

The FLA has a rather straightforward organizational structure. The main governing body is the Board of Directors, with six representatives each from the categories of industry, labor/NGO, and university, and an independent Chair. The Board appoints a President and CEO, as well as an Executive Director who manages the headquarters. Multinationals participate voluntarily and FLA is self-sufficient, deriving income from membership fees.

Because of the compromises that were made on issues such as living wages, the disclosure of factory information, and the nature of independent monitoring, some groups terminated the agreements. Among them were the labor unions; this is not surprising since it was regarded as difficult for them to sign an agreement that legitimizes the relocation of employment to other countries.

The mission of the FLA is to combine the efforts of industry, civil society organizations, colleges and universities to protect workers' rights and improve working conditions worldwide by promoting adherence to international labor standards. For that purpose it conducts independent monitoring and verification, and it accredits independent external monitors.

It does so through a system that holds factories and the manufacturers who produce in them accountable to the FLA Workplace Code of Conduct. It also does so by developing programs and projects that help improve conditions for workers and build sustainable methods for code compliance.

When the FLA started, its greatest challenges were evaluating the situation in a particular factory and determining how best to target efforts to improve workplace conditions. Conducting unannounced audits and then exposing violations were regarded as the most effective tool. This was followed up by the creation of a corrective action plan that included remediation and subsequent verification that the necessary changes had been made. These core activities were refined, expanded and improved in the course of time. More and more companies, colleges and universities and their licensees were committing their manufacturing processes to the regime of the FLA code of conduct. Today, many of the largest brands have affiliated with FLA, and their supplying factories are subject to unannounced random audits. Results are published, as are remediation plans and the subsequent verification audits. For example, in 2006 FLA-accredited monitors visited 147 facilities worldwide, of which 75% were in Asia; they conducted 20

<sup>3</sup> This case analysis is mainly derived from websites of labor rights codes of conduct and internal dossiers of the FLA, and an interview with Auret van Heerden, President and CEO of the FLA, Geneva, 17 March 2008. The author would like to thank him for making some internal documents available.

verification audits; and reacted to 23 third-party complaints, a provision available in its regime. At that time, over 5000 factories were reported as applicable facilities. These factories employed an estimated 3.76 million workers. Special projects at that time encompassed, for example, activities to raise the culture of compliance with international labor laws in India and China. Tailor-made training modules and software have been made available that enabled even basic management structures to use it effectively. A special project was a cooperation of six leading international Code initiatives for corporate accountability and workers rights in Turkey (2004–2007).

Currently, the FLA is in the process of implementing the FLA 3.0 regime. This system eliminates the often negative connotation of audits, which are perceived as mainly reporting noncompliance and are thus difficult to encourage in a positive way. Recognizing the importance of giving credit for the work being done and the value of cultivating a relationship of trust between the FLA, the supplier, and the buyer, the new system starts with a baseline assessment and conducts an impact assessment at the end. The baseline assessment consists of a management self-assessment and a worker survey administered by an external service provider. It is hoped that combining the two sources of information will bring the root causes of the problem areas into better view. Corrective decisions are assumed to be better when they are made on the grounds of a capacity-building plan. So, **while the FLA 2.0 system started with an audit, its sequel begins with a needs assessment, proceeds through a capacity-building process, and ends with an assessment.**

The FLA might be characterized as a top-down unilateral initiative. In the unregulated environment of the nineties there was urgent need for a response to unfair labor conditions in the global apparel industry. More and more products were produced in situations where labor laws, if available, were not enforced. The USA government was a convener in a multi-stakeholder process that resulted in the FLA. Though intended to further develop as a multi-stakeholder endeavor, the FLA's constituency base is rather small. Labor unions are not interested in participating; the same holds for governments. Nor do developing country representatives want to participate. **One might say that the FLA lacks a forum.** Though it acts as a change agent in its issue field, the FLA mainly functions as an entrepreneur in the market of global labor issues. It does so in a specific way in an issue field with very specific features.

The FLA introduced a new system of regulation, using the power of the private contract. One might interpret this as a two-folded contract – one between the brand and the consumer and the other between the brand and the supplier. The FLA leverages the influence/power of both. It can be effective because the underlying mechanism of reputation damage works in the apparel industry. The apparel sector has everything to do with functional consumer reactions. Attempts to introduce fair labor codes with other products, such as toys or electronics, have not been successful up to now. Where consumer attitudes are not involved, it seems much harder to introduce fair labor standards. Expansion beyond the apparel industry, apart from the variety of products made by a college or university licensee, has proved to be difficult.

The FLA deliberately stays away from campaigning and regards itself as a safe place for companies. Building up close relationships with major players in the industry may result in less stringent standards than would otherwise be the case. For example, the FLA still accepts a standard for hours of work that is more flexible than in the ILO convention, because companies wanted 'to be realistic' and stay close to the local norms. In other cases, for example the definition of 'forced labor', including overtime, the FLA uses a stricter definition. In general, however, FLA standards are in

congruence with internationally accepted labor laws. Furthermore, standards are always improved in an incremental way.

New 'clients' come forward on their own initiative. A few do so for positive Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reasons, as they themselves feel the need to produce differently than in the past and in a more sustainable way. Most had been involved in labor scandals before they became convinced of the need for more sustainable production. This last category only acted after feeling external pressure from NGO campaigns. However, because of the voluntary approach, multinationals can easily opt out. So far, this has happened in two cases. The voluntary character makes the system vulnerable if for one reason or another campaigning NGOs would become less active or if the public were to lose interest.

One might debate whether private initiatives serve as a form of labor law enforcement (see also Kolk et al., 1999). Private measures, mostly by way of contractual conditions, can only work on individual companies. The challenge will be to use those examples to set standards for groups of companies and industrial sectors as a whole and to move from individual commitment to sector commitment. Moreover, there are several other international initiatives for a fair labor code: for example, the Clean Clothes Campaign; Ethical Trading Initiative, Fair Wear Foundation; Social Accountability International; and the Workers Rights Consortium. Hundreds of private certification schemes with a light CSR methodology may be added, which shows that **the field is very fragmented.** All initiatives together only cover a small share of the market. Moreover, there is much duplication; some factories delivering to several brands have to deal with several certifiers.

### 5.3. Reflection

The important role of the FLA in its issue field is based on a psychological space with a high degree of coherence. At the turn of the century unfair labor was recognized as a supply chain problem that had to be solved within the private sphere. The market mechanism, based on consumer pressure to hold companies accountable, was the single mechanism regarded suitable to fight the exploitation of workers. Companies in the apparel industry are susceptible to consumer pressure because they produce identifiable quality products. For them, participating in a verifiable system of fair labor practices had become an economic necessity.

There should be no doubt that codes of conduct, backed up by effective monitoring, can and do contribute to protecting workers rights in situations where they would not otherwise have enjoyed such protection. The FLA created its own transaction space with its business-like organizational structure and is generally regarded as one of the most stringent and transparent private regimes. Though externally open, the FLA faces problems with creating a really enabling environment. Not only because it is difficult to bring other industries in, but also related to government responsibilities. One might expect that national governments, and the ILO as their representative UN organization in this issue field, would fully protect labor rights. Voluntary, private initiatives could only become major players in the global labor market because of failing public agencies. In various countries the state has shown itself to be an unreliable enforcer of labor laws. In some developing countries co-optation between capital and organized labor sustains the incapacity of the state; in other countries anti-union strategies hamper any progress (Rodríguez-Garavito, 2005). Against this background of failing markets and governments, a third governance form, that of private regulations, developed to harness implementation of the international labor laws, which would otherwise remain merely good intentions on paper.



Attempts to better connect or even integrate the FLA as an implementing structure of fair labor laws into the ILO have failed up to now.

## 6. The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)<sup>4</sup>

### 6.1. Introduction

Can civil society organizations play a role in promoting peace? Can they be agents of security? GPPAC answers these questions in the affirmative and aims to put a role for civil society in peacebuilding on the global (political) agenda. It has to do so in a world where states have a primary responsibility to provide this public good. For a long time, armed conflict was reactively approached. States and multilateral organizations only came into action when the conflict was already manifest. Security was translated into terms of military capacity and the threat of force. In case of conflict solutions were sought at the top leadership levels of conflicting parties. Peacebuilding, aimed at preventing and managing armed conflict and sustaining peace after large-scale violence has ended, was only recognized as a policy issue in the early 1990s.

The concept of peacebuilding marks a change in conflict management from a pure focus on security considerations to a focus on the systemic causes of armed conflict and on possibilities to establish socio-economic conditions to guarantee long-term stability. This change in the conceptualization of conflict and peace opened up an increased space for civil society to participate in conflict transformations (Barnes, 2006; World Bank, 2006).

### 6.2. Analysis

An important triggering factor for concrete action was the former UN Secretary-General's report on Preventing Armed Conflict in 2001. Kofi Annan's call to civil society organizations to elucidate their role in peacebuilding was taken up by a small foundation in the Netherlands: the European Centre for Conflict Prevention (ECCP; 5 staff members at that time). ECCP, with a background in development cooperation, had many contacts with civil society groups working on peace, but observed that they had hardly any contact with one another. ECCP approached the UN with the claim that it could create a network of civil society organizations, which became the GPPAC (2003). As a result, the first global conference on the role of civil society in the prevention of violent conflict and the building of peace was held at the HQ of the UN in New York in 2005.

The conference, ostensibly by invitation of the UN but organized by ECCP/GPPAC, was attended by some 900 participants: 600 from CSOs and 300 from governments and the UN. Its success strongly depended on one person and his contacts with NGOs. Based on these contacts, and subject to a positive reaction, more than 15 regional conferences were organized prior to the conference, in which more than a thousand NGOs participated. The secretariat of GPPAC stimulated regional conferences, together

with regional initiators, key organizations in the region that became the core members of GPPAC; stimulated the development of Regional and Global Action Agendas; produced a book with many examples of successful stories of NGO involvement in peacebuilding; and worked out the mission of GPPAC (Tongeren et al., 2005).

The global conference may be regarded a milestone in the issue area. This was the first time that civil society organized around peacebuilding, debated their contributions, and got some real recognition that they might play a role in peace issues.

Unlike the peace movement, GPPAC does not demonstrate but tries to find out what groups and organizations working on peace can mean for each other, how they can sustain each other, and what activities they can jointly undertake to strengthen the role of civil society in peacebuilding. GPPAC calls for a fundamental change in dealing with violent conflict: a shift from reaction to prevention. Its activities are based on the following problem definition:

- Governments fail; they particularly fail when they need to react in cases of imminent conflict.
- Governments cannot solve conflicts on their own. A lasting peace is not an enforced peace and is not possible without involvement of civil society.
- The UN Security Council has hardly any facilities to prevent armed conflict; it mainly becomes active when the conflict breaks out. Peacebuilding is a gaping hole in the UN.

GPPAC makes a plea for local participation and ownership. Its activities are based on the idea that sustainable peace can only emerge when the people affected by conflict feel that the peace process is their own and not externally imposed. Therefore GPPAC works to create inclusive, diverse and vibrant civil societies which are committed to the long-term goal of transforming the conditions that give rise to conflict and the relationships that have been damaged by it. GPPAC promotes dialogue as a principal method to respond to conflict, and it aims to learn from practice. This is reflected in its mission that is described as follows: "GPPAC is building a new international consensus and enabling joint action to prevent violent conflict and promote peacebuilding, based on regional and global action agendas."

GPPAC aims to function as a global multi-stakeholder network of organizations. This network should include civil society organizations, governments, regional organizations and the United Nations. Though the network developed its structure organically over time, the stakeholder network has not fully materialized yet. GPPAC went through several financial crises, starting already prior to the conference. For example, only at the last moment was funding secured by some Northern governments so that NGOs from developing countries would be able to attend the conference.

After the conference, GPPAC struggled to work out what might be the best structure and function of a global network on peacebuilding. It was clear that communication should be improved and that a more operational action program should be outlined. But this would have to be implemented in an issue field that was not yet fully convinced that civil society had a role in peacebuilding.

As its first task GPPAC's secretariat felt compelled to create a stable donorship, and thereby to improve the regional associations and fit them into an organizational structure for GPPAC as a whole. Over time, GPPAC succeeded in securing basic funding, though only from a few Northern governments (7), and it was able to set up a stable secretariat (with about 12 employees). It also activated 15 regional networks each with a Regional Steering Group (RSG), an International Steering Group (ISG), and an ISG Executive Commit-

<sup>4</sup> This case analysis is mainly derived from internal documents of GPPAC and an interview with Paul van Tongeren, Secretary-General of GPPAC, Utrecht 22 March 2008. The author would like to thank him for making some internal documents available. Main documents used are: Conference report. From Reaction to Prevention: Civil society forging partnerships to prevent violent conflict and build peace. GPPAC, 2005. Charter of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. Initially approved by ISG, Nairobi, March 2006. Global Action Networks (GAN) Leaders Meeting, Washington, DC, 22 February 2007. Global partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. International Steering Group, *Intentional Design*, 9–11 October, Soesterberg, Netherlands, 2007. Global partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. International Steering Group, GPPAC Global Work Plan 2008, 9–11 October, Soesterberg, Netherlands 2007.

tee. There are liaison officers in place to connect the regional networks with the global secretariat.

Following the conference the Executive Committee met several times to translate the Regional and Global Action Agendas into Work Plans. The RSGs developed Regional Work Plans. In 2006 the ISG decided on five programs to be run at the local level—on Awareness Raising: Promoting acceptance of conflict prevention; Interaction and Advocacy: Promoting policies and structures for conflict prevention; Network Building: Building national and regional capacity for prevention; Knowledge Generation and Sharing; and on actions related to Early Warning/Early Response.

GPPAC's development was mainly driven by a mapping process in which the secretariat localized the groups working on peace and built up personal contacts. Initially this was done by just one person; later on regional representatives also took a leadership role upon themselves. One of the main strategies is documenting the activities of these groups to show the relevance of NGOs in the field of peacebuilding. Another strategy is knowledge sharing among the groups working on peace. Typical networking activities include lobbying, awareness raising and capacity building. GPPAC still has a very loose structure. The 15 regional networks develop their own program, which the secretariat facilitates as far as possible but is under no obligation to do so. The secretariat encourages the regional networks to explain what they want to do in the GPPAC context. There is no formal membership or a need to sign a statement of intent. Decision-making procedures are based on consensus-building. Participants join the regional networks and are then automatically involved in GPPAC. They join GPPAC so they can exchange experiences and acquire better skills to work on conflict transformation. There is a general feeling among the active participants that they now have more valuable contacts, that they learn from each other, and that their own profile is strengthened by GPPAC. But there is also a feeling that knowledge sharing is not enough; that GPPAC needs to develop methodologies for conflict prevention, and that more concrete actions related to specific conflicts at the regional level should to be prepared (Verkoren, 2006).

GPPAC has to work in an extremely fragmented and problematic issue field, one that is not very enabling for networking. Organizations working on peace at the local or regional level face high levels of mistrust, scarcity of resources, a malfunctioning infrastructure, low security and weak or bad governance. Unless the actions succeed, there is always a chance that a conflict will flare up again. The Southern groups working on peace often lack the organizational capacity and skills to work effectively. They are short on funds and understaffed. Attribution is a problem too: it is almost impossible to prove that a specific initiative brought peace or that it prevented a conflict. The problem of how to bring such groups, working on such an issue, together in a vibrant network is further complicated by characteristics of the field of stakeholders. First, it is not easy to find donors. There are no institutionalized budget lines for peace. It is also extremely difficult to campaign for conflict prevention and to fundraise for peace among citizens. Secondly, it is difficult to establish a firm collaboration with the UN and governments. The UN keeps its distance – as is often the case regarding CSOs – and is not willing to participate formally in GPPAC. The higher echelons still take a suspicious position toward GPPAC. This is also the case with many governments; for example, there is a lot of resistance in India, Pakistan, and Egypt. While there have been contacts with businesses, the topic does not appeal to them. As a consequence, the regional networks often remain limited to a narrow circle around the regional initiator. Moreover, some regional initiators tend to protect their own position. This may create tension with the secretariat, which feels that sometimes the credit only goes to the regions,

while the secretariat had opened up the opportunities to act regionally. Another source of tension relates to the strategy of GPPAC. Part of the peace movement takes an activist stance on human rights; another part works on dialogue, engaging people, building relationships, including governments, and finding joint solutions. Though GPPAC took the consensual approach, some of the regional groups prefer a more political activist approach.

### 6.3. Reflection

GPPAC created the psychological space within which it successfully highlighted the work of civil society in preventing or resolving violent conflicts and strengthened the role of NGOs in peacebuilding on the political agenda. GPPAC has represented regional concerns at the international level, contributed to the functioning of international systems for conflict prevention, and used its capacities to assist the implementation of key regional activities. Thanks to GPPAC, among others, the main question in the international debate changed from 'whether' civil society has to play a role in peacebuilding to 'how' it can best realize its potential. However, GPPAC is still characterized by a very loose and informal transaction space in a sometimes hostile or at least not very inviting environment. Currently it faces the challenge of making the change from a knowledge network to a more action-oriented network. Internally there are problems of ownership and leadership. Externally the field of possible stakeholders should be activated and become more committed to GPPAC's activities. This indicates a low cognitive coherence. Some regional secretariats are not clear of their purpose as a member and do not give GPPAC the attention that they themselves admit it would need. Some of them face internal power plays. The liaison officers need to further develop their commitment to tasks and reportages. And there is always the question of whether to act as a human rights activist or as a peace-builder. These are all indications of a still limited sense of ownership among the regional participants. External contacts are mainly personal contacts. Attempts are being made to change the informal contacts with other actors operating in the issue area into more formalized strategic alliances. Besides governments and international organizations these include the following: a network of practitioners who work as a consultant in conflict transformation; a network of academics working on peacebuilding; human rights organizations; and networks working on peace education.

The process through which GPPAC was established and has developed is largely top-down, with the ECCP in the lead. Up to now, the communication has run more from the global secretariat to the regional secretariats than the reverse. The secretariat's attempts to organize GPPAC in a participatory way, combined with its consensus-based approach, tend to slow the process of decision-making down. To make the change from a network for sharing knowledge to the implementation of action programs, GPPAC feels that it has to provide more clarity about the structure and processes of the network. Membership guidelines should be more clearly defined and decision-making procedures need to be formalized. Finally, there is the question of how far the global secretariat should go in taking the lead in the network. The secretariat faces the problem of finding a balance between GPPAC's internal coherence and external representation. With the establishment of a stronger forum function, involving governments and international organizations, with the improvement of the regional networks and national contacts, and with a clearer governance structure, GPPAC hopes to create more focused objectives and a more operational and active network that can act as a global catalyst for constructive change.



## 7. The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)<sup>5</sup>

### 7.1. Introduction

Biodiversity conservation needs priorities. One way to define priorities is to identify 'Biodiversity Hotspots'. This concept, based on ecological research, refers to places where exceptional concentrations of endemic species are undergoing exceptional loss of habitat. The concept of Biodiversity Hotspots has been an inspiration for governments, intergovernmental organizations and NGOs to develop conservation programs for over 20 years. Originally 25 Hotspots were located worldwide, which were supposed to cover more than 60% of the planet's terrestrial species diversity, but only cover just 1.4% of the Earth's land surface (Myers et al., 2000). CEPF has become a focal global alliance for the protection of these Hotspots. CEPF was founded in 2000 by the NGO Conservation International (CI), the World Bank (WB), and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which is, among other things, the financial mechanism for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation, and the French Development Agency followed later. CEPF is best described as a global grant-making program that invests in biodiversity protection through the activities of civil society. Ten Hotspots are currently eligible to receive grant resources. The CEPF Management Team is based within Conservation International, which is the central party. At the top level, the six partners are represented in the Donor Council, which provides strategic advice reviews and endorses ecosystem profiles and investment plans, and authorizes funding in block ecosystem funds. The Working Group, comprised of one representative per donor organization, fulfills a consultation role. There are regional coordinators connected to the secretariat. The organizational structure has not been changed fundamentally over the years.

### 7.2. Analysis

Prior to the founding of CEPF, CI had a long history as an NGO working on biodiversity issues in Hotspots. In some of the Hotspots it had already worked with regional offices. However, it struggled with the question of how to expand the activities. In its problem definition CI recognized the vital role civil society could play in conservation. To really make a difference it observed that its own activities could not be enough; it needed to strengthen the involvement of local and regional NGOs, but also create collaborations between NGOs and governments. Thanks to existing informal contacts in the field of conservation, CI succeeded to involve the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility in a cooperative new alliance. Both organizations saw in CEPF an opportunity to direct smaller funds to biodiversity protection, an activity they themselves are less able to do effectively.

CEPF could connect knowledge and contacts on the ground with existing policies and available funds. To operationalize its concept CEPF developed a fairly formalized decision-making process. CEPF has no participants or members, but Donor Partners. Instead, a small number of organizations, with CI in a leadership role, govern the core business: conservation and capacity building. For each Hotspot, the expected results are determined through a preparation and profiling process, resulting in a document called an Ecosystem Profile. This document determines the anticipated results per region and the investment strategy. On the basis of this strategy local and regional organizations in selected hotspots are

invited to make proposals for activities that may be funded. To be eligible for funding, the following criteria must be met:

- Projects must be within a biodiversity hotspot.
- Projects must be within a developing country that has ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
- Applicants must represent nongovernmental organizations, community groups or private-sector partners.

These prerequisites reflect the interests of the founding organizations: CI's focus on involvement of the NGOs, and the World Bank's focus on client countries. This explains why only Hotspots in developing countries are qualified. GEF's interests are not only secured by the reference to the CBD, but also in a less visible way. GEF has a representative in each of the Hotspot countries and has secured that this person must approve the activities. In this way CEPF activities are also anchored in national governments. This is a crucial success factor, as CEPF works in countries where it has no authority and is always dependent on the national approval processes.

Proposals for funding are reviewed and approved based on how well they meet a strategic direction for the area in question. The CEPF grant director, in consultation with the CEPF executive director, determines whether a proposal will be funded. CEPF allocates authority and accountability to each local or regional partner according to their strengths and responsibility. All grantees must submit regular financial and programmatic reports to the CEPF in a specific format. The programmatic reporting relates to demonstrating progress with respect to performance indicators. CEPF sustains them with capacity-building activities. Funding of projects is always time-restricted and co-financed. The objective is to create feelings of ownership related to the problems, not to CEPF, which is a passing organization.

This whole process may be labelled as a top-down bureaucratic process. In terms of decision-making this is indeed the case. However, this label should be nuanced a bit. Both the organizational structure and the conservation strategy have built-in flexibility elements. CEPF set up regional coordinating organizations, which consist of small groups of NGOs that coordinate the work in the region. They are responsible for strategy development in a stakeholder process. Initially the regions were organized around the local CI offices. However, this was criticized, and later on other NGOs could also fulfill this role. At headquarters several regional coordinators take responsibility for the activities in the Hotspots. They are the bridge between the local and regional level and the global organization. The regional organizations of the Hotspots have no contacts among themselves. Flexibility can also be recognized in the way of working. One of the strategies is the development of anchor projects, which are projects in or around protected areas. To secure careful spending a bigger grant goes to a vested NGO. Around it some smaller funds are distributed among smaller projects that support and/or complement the work by the anchor grant. These grants are often given to less established and/or local NGOs that can also build capacity through implementing these projects. This strategy fulfills several objectives: local communities become involved in conservation; opportunities are created for alternative livelihoods; and local NGOs learn to organize and manage in a more effective way.

CI's donor partners in CEPF are powerful political institutions. The institutions are represented in CEPF by top-level officials. This has opened up opportunities to effectively exercise political influence. Priorities of CEPF found their way into many national activities, and some of the target countries incorporated the Hotspot strategy in their national policies (for example, Madagascar and the Philippines). In some countries partnerships were established with businesses (for example, Indonesia). Moreover,

<sup>5</sup> This case analysis is largely based on information by Ingrid Visseren-Hamakers of Utrecht University, who studied CEPF as part of a larger research project, including interviews with the main CEPF participants, on biodiversity partnerships. See [www.unpop.nl](http://www.unpop.nl). The author would like to thank her for making some internal documents of the GAN available.

through its activities CEPF, sometimes in cooperation with others, has contributed to the implementation of many formal international biodiversity regimes in various ways, such as the CBD, CITES, and the UNESCO policies. To manage overlap and to realize government buy-in, the national GEF focal points are involved. Also, national government officials and national focal points of the international biodiversity regimes (e.g. GEF, CITES) are involved in the development of the Hotspot strategy. So the international commitments are incorporated in CEPF. There is, however, little effective operational collaboration between CEPF and its formal partners at the field level.

Recently, CEPF decided to reorient its activities and it selected six new Hotspots. Though this is more or less in line with the original philosophy, the idea that by providing seed money an incentive could be created for continued activities by others, the influence of the new donor partners is also clearly recognizable. France had a preference to be active in some of its former colonies, and Japan also expressed a country preference. Poverty alleviation has also been included as a funding criterion, as proposed by the new donors. Particularly the choice to focus on other Hotspots has been a topic of heated debate. The main question is how long it is necessary to stay in a region to be certain that the activities are rooted. The evaluation of the activities in the former Hotspots showed positive results, but also the fragility of the achievements (Wells et al., 2006). There is no certainty that activities will be continued when CEPF stops providing funding. As a compromise a small amount of money has been reserved for consolidation projects. This might become the Achilles heel of CEPF's collective action.

### 7.3. Reflection

Conservation International successfully organized a formal network to expand its core activities. CI, which was already a prominent actor in biodiversity conservation, needed partners to finance its target groups and the donor organizations needed an organizational structure for their funding activities. CI connected vision to money. This is one of the reasons why CEPF is able to commit other organizations to its activities rather easily and was able to create a psychological space with a strong cognitive coherence and an enabling environment. Another reason is that CEPF's mission is not controversial. There is no debate about the concept CEPF promotes. The donor partners opened up the opportunity to institutionalize an effective implementation organization. Their requirements do not restrict CEPF in its activities. CEPF complements the partners' regular activities, rather than duplicating or overlapping them. Therefore each funded activity naturally has linkages with several on-going activities by governments, international organizations, NGOs and others. In its early phase there was some criticism based on the argumentation that CEPF seemed to be a clever way of fundraising for CI. Nowadays a smaller part of the funds goes to CI alliances, and other NGOs can take the lead on the regional level. CEPF's main restriction is the amount of funding. The total amount of funds committed to date is \$125 million. Each donor partner has pledged \$5 million a year for 5 years. Given the problematic and the costs involved this is a small amount of money. **CEPF looks like a multinational, with a head office that formulates the main guidelines and production divisions to implement the policies.** In essence it created a hierarchical transaction space with a central rule-system. The management of the relationships with stakeholders that have an interest in concrete projects takes place at the local or regional level. In this way CEPF institutionalized flexibility in its activities. But in the end the head office makes the decisions. The impact of CEPF on the ground is difficult to measure, but it is certainly successful in strengthening the role of civil society in

conservation policies. A significant number of NGOs have been better equipped to contribute to biodiversity conservation, and several new NGOs have been established to do so. CEPF's work has also improved civil society's ability to manage overlap among its constituent organizations.

### 8. Comparative analysis and conclusions

According to classical collective action theory, GANs will hardly be able to contribute to the production of public goods and services. However, the analysis shows otherwise. All GANs that were studied put a new definition of a public issue on the global agenda. These are problem definitions that governments recognize as important but often are not willing or able to address effectively. IFOAM put the concept of organic agriculture on the agenda; GPPAC the role of civil society in peacebuilding; FLA developed a structure to implement fair labor rules; and CEPF developed an implementation structure for the protection of biodiversity.

As a central thesis it was assumed that adaptation capabilities are crucial to the performance of GANs. Performance is understood as the ability to create collective action. This perspective was further operationalized in a focus on the networking process. It was further assumed that managing the tension between fixation and flexibility will be a crucial challenge. The cases we analyzed indeed show this tension. It is difficult to say which of the GANs is more effective in solving this tension. Crucial factors determining the role GANs are able to play seem to be characteristics of the issue field and the development stage of the GAN. The analysis also shows that GANs play two crucial roles, sometimes in combination, sometimes successively. These can be labelled as the broker and the entrepreneur role. In the broker role GANs aim to organize actors around a specific discourse or paradigm. In the entrepreneur role GANs aim to develop concrete actions that change the whole issue field.

One of the strengths of GANs is their ability to bring actors together that are already in the same paradigm or discourse. This opens up opportunities to adjust the central mission to local and regional needs and contexts. Meanwhile it avoids the normative debate on the legitimacy of imposing a cultural import together with the capacity-building mechanisms at the expense of local values. At the same time it can be observed that the variety of cultural backgrounds and situational circumstances make it difficult to maintain a certain degree of cognitive coherence. GANs are not backed up by an internal legitimacy mechanism, as in democratic states, where the power is delegated through voting and sanctions. In other words, **there is no a priori mechanism to ensure commitment of participants.** GANs need to develop their own internal governance mechanism. For those who take an **entrepreneurial role, such as FLA and CEPF, this seems less a problem than for GANs that take a broker role,** such as IFOAM and GPPAC.

None of the GANs was 'designed' in great detail beforehand. All started as a very loose network structure. CEPF may appear to be an exception, but can also be regarded as an extension of an NGO that developed like that. FLA looks like a professional business organization today, but it originates from the loosely organized apparel partnership. IFOAM started as a grassroots movement and developed a professional headquarters over time. GPPAC is the most loosely organized network, but here the global secretariat takes the lead.

**To create a vital transaction space, two factors seem to be crucial: the definition of leadership and membership.**

In the first phase of development of a GAN there seems to be a need for leadership that takes a broker role. Leadership must inspire a shared vision on the issue area and a shared mission to fulfill. This vision and mission should be broad enough to be

recognized by the participants as their own. The perspective should create added value for each of the participants, but it would also need to be specific enough to direct the actions of the network as a whole, making it recognizable in its issue area as a valuable new change agent. Progressive development can still be realized in a process of learning by doing. The loose network, with an inspiring leadership, is a suitable structure if the ambition entails sharing ideas and global campaigns. One of the keys to success in this phase is the selection of common issues around which to focus. However, GANs need to develop a more action-oriented approach to become effective in their problem field. Actions are the backbone of developed GANs, which also implies another leadership and thus a different organizational structure. Leadership needs to be formalized to be able to speak on behalf of the GAN, represent the GAN to the outside world, and lobby on behalf of the GAN. This implies that horizontal ties should be replaced by more vertical ties, and that moral leadership needs to change into entrepreneurial leadership based on more accountable decision-making rules.

Membership is also dependent on the development stage of a GAN. Becoming a member implies formalization of the relationship of a participant with the GAN. A member is part owner and accepts some rights and obligations. Membership, therefore, is a crucial factor in the performance of a GAN. **Membership seems to be particularly problematic if the issue area itself is still in a process of institutionalization.** In that case GANs first need to orient themselves to determine whether there are any opportunities at all for collective action. This is clearly visible in the GPPAC case. This GAN works on one of the most complicated and controversial issues. There is hardly any alternative but to take the broker role and undertake the development of a knowledge network. However, making the shift to a more action-oriented network, thus switching from the broker role to the entrepreneur role, seems to imply a necessary shift from a rather loose participatory membership to a more binding one. FLA and CEPF solved this problem by taking on a more explicit entrepreneur role from the beginning. They are not dependent on members. IFOAM could solve the membership problem because it works in a highly institutionalized field of relevant actors. IFOAM lost some of its grip on its own internal governance structure, which meant that feelings of ownership would tend to decrease, but it solved the problem by undertaking other activities.

The ability of GANs to create an enabling environment strongly depends on characteristics of the issue field, in particular the stakeholder configuration it constitutes. Only CEPF is active in an issue field that is rather uncontroversial. All others are in a continuous value debate, sometimes internally – IFOAM on whom to serve; GPPAC on dialogue versus campaigning – but more often externally with stakeholders that are of relevance in the issue field. The configuration of stakeholders shows remarkable differences. Business is hardly ever a partner in conservation of biodiversity, nor does it want to participate in peacebuilding. As a consequence, governments are the natural partners of CEPF and GPPAC. With CEPF this is most clear; in practice, this GAN is an extension of governments. CEPF is almost fully dependent on government funding, and its contribution to collective action consists of adding implementation capacity to government policies. GPPAC is also dependent on government funding, but because of its controversial mission it is much more vulnerable. Only a few governments from the North sustain this GAN. Its contribution to collective action can be characterized as primarily agenda-setting. IFOAM and FLA function in a world related to business. This is particularly the case with FLA. One might say that FLA also adds implementation capacity to government policies, although it is not asked to do so, and operates rather at a distance from governments. Its contribution to a collective action problem consists of the creation of a

parallel governance mechanism that is necessary to fill the gap between government policies on paper and the inability to implement them. FLA is fully dependent on business funding, but its vulnerability ultimately depends on consumer power. **Like GPPAC, IFOAM's contribution to collective action is in agenda-setting.** Although IFOAM aims to change a commercial activity, it primarily addresses governments. IFOAM has become a central part of the fairly well developed niche of alternative forms of agriculture. It has built up rather institutionalized relationships with the relevant others. And it has become a natural contact when organic agriculture is being discussed. Its related accreditation facility strengthens its position.

GANs are private initiatives that directly involve the decisive target groups into the development of alternative behavioral practices. One strategy to create an enabling environment is to create a critical mass; that is, the objective is to bring more like-minded groups and organizations into the GAN. The other strategy is oriented toward participants outside the GAN. In that case the objective is to mainstream the practice in the issue field. Both strategies seem to be less dependent on each other than one might expect beforehand. FLA and CEPF are rather independent of the creation of a critical mass. IFOAM has already realized a critical mass, and needs to keep it alive. Only GPPAC's performance is dependent on the possibilities to organize the like-minded organizations in its issue field. **Critical mass seems to be more important in the early stage of development of a GAN and not decisive for its external influence.** Another factor seems to play a more crucial role in both the development of a GAN and its opportunities to mainstream its concept of collective responsibility. This is the ability to integrate the field of stakeholders in the issue area. **There are two reasons why GANs perform better when they are able to involve governments and international organizations in their mission and activities. First, mainstreaming of concepts can only be realized by governments or by their recognition of the private governance mechanism as an alternative tool to solve a collective action problem. Second, governments are also important because most GANs operate in an issue field with many competing private and public initiatives.** For most of the GANs studied, the competition poses a threat to their performance. It requires a form of meta-governance that only governmental organizations can deliver. From the perspective of solving a collective action problem, we may conclude that CEPF is the most viable of the GANs, as it has fully integrated its activities in the governmental field and it has no competitors. IFOAM is well integrated but struggles with the lack of meta-governance in its issues field, which results in competing governmental standards as well as competing private standards. FLA works in a field with mainly private competitors but is able to function rather independently of them. Though not officially recognized, it more or less implements the internationally labor regulations of the ILO. The collective action problem could be better solved if the ILO took up the meta-governance role, organized the field of private initiatives, and incorporated them in its policies. GPPAC is in a first phase of development; it needs to organize the private actors in its field, but it also needs more government support to further develop as a viable GAN.

To conclude GANs are able to make a noticeable contribution to collective action problems. They do so in a constructive way. Although campaigning might be part of their strategies, most GANs aim to build up positive relationships in their issue field and to encourage joint activities of interested stakeholders. In terms of agenda-setting, the operational definition of collective responsibilities, and implementation capacity, the GANs make a difference in their issue fields. **The absence of classical group characteristics such as physical proximity, group size and homogeneity hardly seem to be restraining opportunities for collective action.** The focus



on the networking process highlights some conditions for collective action that are neglected, or at least underexposed, in collective action theory:

- First, opportunities for collective action appear to be particularly determined by characteristics of the issue and the connected field of stakeholders.
- Second, given these conditions the opportunities to create internal coherence are particularly dependent on membership and leadership.
- Third, the role of GANs as change agents in their issue field is strongly dependent on their ability to involve governmental organizations in their mission and activities.
- Fourth, effective GANs change their loose network structure into a more vertically organized professional organization. In that process the emphasis on the broker role is replaced by an emphasis on the entrepreneur role.

The adaptation capabilities we assumed to be important relate largely to the last proposition. This implies that on the scale of fixation and flexibility the former will get more priority if the GAN wants to be not only a source of change but also an enabler of change.

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