

“Portrait of Global Civil Society at the Bretton Woods Institutions, 2000-09”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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1. Brief History of Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI)-NGO Interaction

Sustained NGO protest around the BWI began in the late 1980s. The neoliberal turn of the BWI brought left-leaning NGOs into the streets. What began as a primarily Western movement expanded to include non-Western NGOs; the end of the Cold War freed up civil society energies around the planet. NGOs previously limited to service provision-roles in development projects found a political voice and re-imagined themselves as democratizers or pluralizers of global governance.

As globalization gained pace in the 1990s, the BWI felt compelled to respond to the regularization of a leftist street protest bloc, as well as growing criticism from even moderate and more institutionalized NGOs. BWI-NGO interaction slowly formalized. Consultation increased and normalized both in Washington and in borrowing countries. The most professionalized NGOs gained regular if informal access to BWI elites. NGOs were increasingly deployed to improve (hopefully) outcomes and bring a mild veneer of legitimacy or approval to contested programming. In Washington the Bank and IMF developed NGO/civil society staffs and budgets, and drifted toward NGO positions on the environment and transparency.

By 2000, such measures were insufficient. NGOs had successively disrupted the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, the Seattle WTO ministerial, and the Prague BWI Annual. NGOs focusing on the BWI were hardening into the distinctly leftist ‘antiglobalization movement’ with unanticipated moral suasion on Western publics. The BWI, unaccustomed to major media scrutiny, fumbled with an image of elite, exploitative institutions far from the suffering they created in the developing world. NGOs were emerging as an existential threat to the BWI.

In this context, President Wolfensohn sought to formalize the policy-level NGO consultation begun in Prague. ‘Civil Society Dialogues’ (CSD) would henceforth parallel the regular intergovernmental Spring and Annual Meetings. This research tracks NGO participation in the CSDs.

2. Data Challenges of Studying NGOs at BWI

There are few datasets on global civil society (GCS); hence the particular value of CSD attendance. The Union of International Associations and ECOSOC provide global tracking, but nothing specific to the BWI. The UN-NLGS, World Social Forum, LSE’s *GCS Yearbook*, and the Congress of NGOs have only patchy, incomplete lists. This leaves the question of who, exactly, are the BWI-relevant NGOs. For all the protest, there is little detail. Relevant economic journalism (*Financial Times*, *Economist*, *Atlantic*, *New Republic*) too blithely speaks of anarchists and malcontents.

The CSD sign-in sheets provide a methodologically coherent alternative. They specify precisely who cares enough about the BWI to attend at least one meeting. The data detail which NGOs come, from where, with how much staff, to which kinds of meeting. I have compiled a spread-sheet with NGO names in the rows crossed against CSD meeting titles and years in the columns. NGOs are defined to exclude unions, GONGOs, and Northern think-tanks. In 2008, I published a first analysis of the data, 2000 Annual – 2007 Spring.^a This research extends it, and compares through 2009 Spring.

^a “Portrait of Global Civil Society at the Bretton Woods Institutions: Civil Society Dialogue Participation, 2000-2007,” *Korean Journal of International Relations*, 48/5, 2008: 51-80.

3. NGOs at the BWI

Between the Prague 2000 Annuals and the Washington 2009 Springs, the World Bank held 132+^b CSD meetings. 469 NGOs attended at least once. Through the 2007 Springs, 82+ meetings occurred with 358 NGOs. Through spring 2009, the IMF held 66+ meetings with 348 NGOs attending at least one CSD. Though spring 2007, 287 NGOs had attended at least one of 47+ meetings.

- Attendance (2007 v 2009)

- Top Performers (NGOs attending at least 10% of CSDs)

	2007		2009		Change
World Bank	30/358	8.4%	25/469	5.3%	↓ 3.1%
IMF	47/287	16.4%	39/348	11.2%	↓ 5.2%

- Bottom Performers (attended only one CSD ever)

	2007		2009		Change
World Bank	195/358	54.5%	238/469	50.7%	↓ 3.8%
IMF	195/287	67.9%	215/348	61.8%	↓ 8.1%

- Geographic Dispersion (2007 v 2009)

- World Bank

	2007		2009		Change
Northern NGOs	203/358	56.7%	259/469	55.2%	↓ 1.5%
Southern NGOs	155/358	43.3%	210/469	44.8%	↑ 1.5%

- IMF

	2007		2009		Change
Northern NGOs	171/287	59.6%	203/348	58.3%	↓ 1.3%
Southern NGOs	116/287	40.4%	145/348	41.7%	↑ 1.3%

^b “+”: Individual meeting details are not available for the Prague 2000 Annual nor the Dubai 2003 Annual. Given that at least one meeting happened at each missed Annual, 2+ meetings are added to total.

- Meeting Types (2007 v 2009)
- World Bank

Meeting Type	2007		2009		Change
Individual Countries & Regions	6	7.5%	17	13.1%	↑ 5.6%
Globalization/Development Policy	11	13.8%	15	8.5%	↓ 5.3%
Development Financing & Private Sector	5	6.3%	8	6.2%	↓ 0.1%
Aid & Debt	14	17.5%	17	13.1%	↓ 4.4%
Health	7	8.8%	11	8.5%	↓ 0.3%
Poverty	7	8.8%	10	7.7%	↓ 1.1%
Environment/Energy	8	10%	16	12.3%	↑ 2.3%
Rules Governing IFI Instruments	7	8.8%	9	6.9%	↓ 1.9%
Trade	5	6.3%	5	3.8%	↓ 2.5%
Transparency/Oversight/ Accountability/Governance of BWI	10	12.5%	22	16.9%	↑ 4.4%
TOTALS^c	80		130		

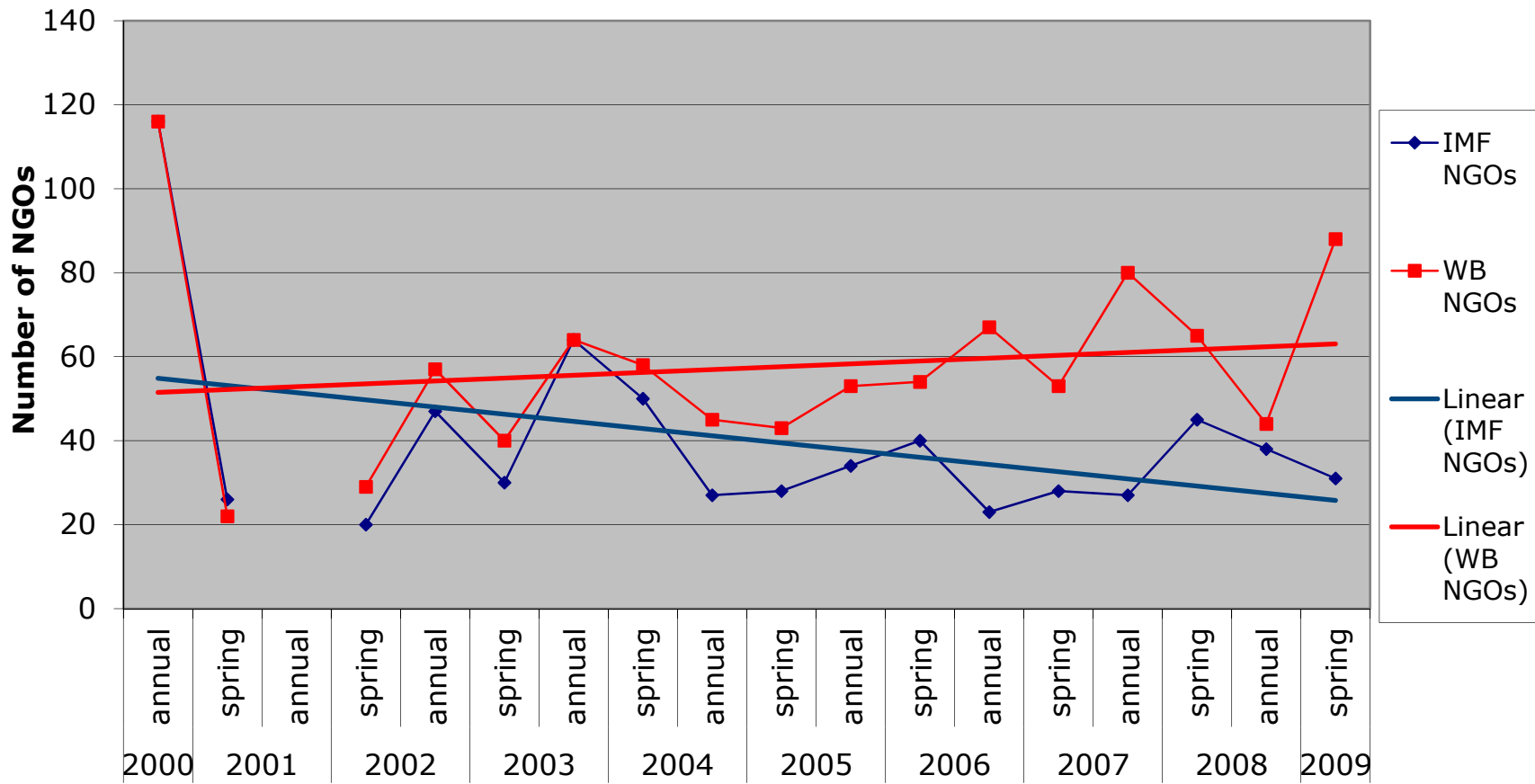
- IMF

Meeting Type	2007		2009		Change
Individual Countries & Regions	2	4.4%	4	6.3%	↑ 1.9%
Globalization/Development Policy	5	11.1%	8	12.5%	↑ 1.4%
Development Financing & Private Sector	1	2.2%	2	3.1%	↑ 0.9%
Aid & Debt	12	26.7%	16	25.0%	↓ 1.7%
Health	4	8.9%	6	9.4%	↑ 0.5%
Poverty	7	15.6%	9	14.1%	↓ 1.5%
Environment/Energy	0	0.0%	1	1.6%	↑ 1.6%
Rules Governing IFI Instruments	3	6.7%	4	6.3%	↓ 0.4%
Trade	3	6.7%	3	4.7%	↓ 2.0%
Transparency/Oversight/ Accountability/Governance of BWI	8	17.8%	11	17.2%	↓ 0.6%
TOTALS	45		64		

^c Meeting totals exclude the data gaps for Prague 2000 and Dubai 2003. Cf. fn. b.

- Aggregate Portrait: World Bank v IMF, 2000 Annual – 2009 Spring

NGOs sending one or more Representatives to the IMF and World Bank Annual and Spring Meetings



4. Inferences/Conclusions

In 2007 (cf. fn. a), I suggested 3 inferences. 1) The CSD process was declining, as had previous efforts such as the Bank-NGO Committee and the Joint Facilitation Committee. NGOs had nursed high hopes for policy impact in the Wolfensohn era. Inevitable disappointment bred disengagement, and that retrenchment was most pronounced at the IMF. 2) Much-touted Northern domination of GCS was correct. A healthy majority of attendant NGOs were Northern, and their issues dominated the meeting choices. 3) A coopted epistemic community had evolved. A hard core of intensive, repeat NGOs dominated attendance; the 'usual suspects' on the NGO and BWI sides came again and again.

When I spoke at the Fund in August 2009, I revised these conclusions. The CSDs are reviving. Attendance is up at both BWI. The NGO split between the Bank and IMF persists. Attendance is much greater at the Bank, and Bank chairs more meetings. Mild Southernization has deconcentrated the NGO portrait. Southern NGO attendance is up and clearly spikes when the Annuals occur outside of Washington. More CSDs are focused on individual borrowing countries than the macro-policy topics of interest primarily to leftist Northern NGOs. There are fewer top and bottom performers, so the hard core of usual suspects has dissipated mildly. Nonetheless, Northern Attendance remains higher. The top 25 performers at both BWI include only two Southern NGOs, and the 2007 and 2009 top 25 performers are almost identical.