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# Global Rules, Local Rulers

Reflections and Suggestions for Carnegie UK Trust, March 2013

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## Executive Summary

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The project Global Rules, Local Rulers is a very welcome initiative from the Carnegie UK Trust to reinvigorate discussion, capacity building, and mobilisation in civil society around questions of global economic governance. The global economy and the rules that govern it have far-reaching implications for welfare, equity, sustainability and democracy in Britain today. Yet UK civil society activism on issues such as global finance, trade, production and investment remains modest in relation to the stakes at hand, and many activists struggle with the issues in a rapidly changing global economic policy environment. The challenge then is to encourage more sustained, more informed and more influential civil society mobilisation in Britain on these matters.

The initial Global Rules, Local Rulers survey research and report have usefully identified key issues in UK public perceptions of global economic governance. Building on this promising start, this follow-up report addresses a broader scope of global economy (i.e. beyond trade) and its governance (i.e. beyond well-known intergovernmental institutions such as the World Trade Organisation). It is also important to enlarge notions of citizen activism on global economic issues beyond non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to cover other types of citizen groups, including more informal social movements. In addition, domestic activism within Britain is often closely connected with wider international mobilisations.

Furthermore, it is crucial to understand the dynamics of this activism: why, how and with what consequence it happens. Factors that trigger civil society mobilisations include levels of economic literacy, resource availabilities, accessibility of relevant governance institutions, and tipping points of grassroots frustration. Once activism is underway its sustainability is largely a

function of communications networks, coalitions, and relations of civil society groups with other sectors (e.g. business, government and media). Combinations of these forces to stimulate and sustain mobilisation in turn determine whether or not the activism makes an impact, and of what kind.

The Carnegie UK Trust and other civil society organisations can apply the framework of thinking developed in the present report: (a) in commissioned research on concrete experiences of UK citizen engagement of global economic governance; and (b) in capacity development activities such as workshops, short courses, web-based information, and school curricular materials.

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# Introduction

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The project Global Rules, Local Rulers is a very welcome initiative from the Carnegie UK Trust to reinvigorate discussion, capacity building, and mobilisation in civil society around questions of global economic governance. The initial survey research and report have highlighted key issues about contemporary economy and society that other UK foundations have neglected. The global economy and the rules that govern it have far-reaching implications for welfare, equity, sustainability and democracy in Britain today. Yet UK civil society activism in this area remains modest in relation to the stakes at hand, and many activists struggle with the issues in a rapidly changing global economic policy environment.

The project's report on initial research, published in June 2012, gives a useful overview of relations between NGOs and intergovernmental bodies and assesses survey evidence on UK public views of global economic governance.<sup>1</sup> The report contrasts vocal and influential civil society campaigning around the creation and early years of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in the 1990s with current, mostly muted, civil

society responses to the recent global financial crisis. More specifically, the report suggests that 'citizens feel increasingly disempowered by recent economic events' and identifies a 'disconnect' between the crisis responses of international institutions and the general public.

In a follow-up to this initial work, the Carnegie UK Trust has asked an interdisciplinary group from the University of Warwick Global Research Priorities in Global Governance (GRP-GG) programme to reflect on the findings of the June 2012 report and to develop suggestions of relevant research and capacity building activities that might be taken forward in the future by the Trust or others. Brief profiles of the Warwick team can be found in the Appendix.

The present follow-up paper is divided into two main parts. In the first part, the Warwick group seeks to place the core findings of the initial Global Rules, Local Rulers report in a broader context, in order to inform future thinking. The second part identifies potential avenues of future research and suggests a number of related capacity building activities.

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<sup>1</sup> This report can be downloaded [here](#).

## Part I - Reflections on Global Rules, Local Rulers

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The initial Carnegie UK Trust research on contemporary public responses in Britain to the global economy and its governance has very helpfully highlighted the significance of forming a coherent and ambitious civil society response to the changing contours of global economic governance. The research has thereby opened important discussions that invite further development.

In this follow-up report, GRP-GG builds on the initial research by highlighting the areas of global economic governance that were less considered in the initial report. In general terms, the main GRP-GG suggestion is to widen the scope of attention. Firstly, in relation to global governance, a broader approach would entail looking at more issues, more institutions, and more (including deeper)

layers of regulation. Secondly, in relation to civil society, a wider examination could: consider more types of associations beyond NGOs; link UK domestic activism with wider world movements; and address informal as well as formally organised initiatives. Thirdly, future work could attend more systematically to understanding the dynamics of activism: that is, why UK citizen groups mobilise on global economic issues in certain situations but not others; how civil society acts on those occasions when it does mobilise; and what circumstances shape the success or failure of civil society initiatives to influence global economic governance. These three main points and related sub-points are expanded in the paragraphs below.

## More Global Governance

Regulation of today's global economy is a complicated matter. Contemporary global governance involves more than a few traditional issues (e.g. trade and security), more than a few well-known intergovernmental organisations (e.g. WTO and United Nations), and more than just concrete institutions (e.g. embedded discourses of neoliberalism). Much civil society activism (in the UK and elsewhere) struggles to come to grips with these realities.

### More Issues

The original Global Rules, Local Rulers report puts its main spotlight on trade, with some secondary attention to finance. Certainly, cross-border exchange of merchandise and services is important in the global economy today. However, it is important to keep a larger picture in mind as well.

For one thing, financial flows have expanded exponentially to dwarf the scale of 'real' trade. The weekly volume of foreign exchange transactions now exceeds the annual volume of world trade. Thus global finance is no longer mainly an adjunct of global trade, but it has become a key issue-area in its own right. 'Financialisation' is one of the most important

trends in capitalism today; yet most people (including many professional economists) still tend to think of global markets first and foremost in terms of old-style trade. Many commentators underestimate the impact of finance in the contemporary global economy and, more specifically, the particular importance of the City of London in the UK's involvement in the global economy.

Beyond trade and finance, other major issues for today's global economic governance include investment (e.g. adequate public-interest regulation of transnational corporations), communications (e.g. measures for equitable digital access worldwide), and economic migration (i.e. licit and illicit movements of labour in the global economy). In addition, all of these flows – of trade, finance, direct investment, communications and people – are related to important concerns about environmental sustainability and human dignity.

In short, it is important that any analysis of the global economy addresses trade, but it is also important in today's world not to reduce the global economy to traditional trade flows alone and to place trade within a wider picture of economic activity.

### More Actors

Likewise, it is important not to adopt an overly narrow conception of regulatory bodies for global economic governance. The WTO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Union (EU) are important sites of governance; yet today's 'polycentric' regulatory apparatus for the global economy also has many more nodes.

For one thing, a larger array of intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) is involved in governing the global economy. Many agencies in the United Nations (UN) system are also relevant: ECOSOC, FAO, UNCTAD, UNDP, WHO, etc. In addition, several hundred committees and working

groups on economic issues meet through the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The Bank for International Settlements (BIS) plays a key part in the global governance of finance, assembling central bankers from around the world to discuss monetary policy and banking regulation. Unfortunately, much civil society mobilisation on IGOs in global economic governance does not extend beyond ‘the usual suspects’ of the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO. Indeed, in the trade sphere, bilateral and regional agreements are now widely perceived to be more important than the WTO and its long-stalled Doha Round of multilateral negotiations.

Beyond IGOs, it is nowadays vital also to consider the role in global economic governance of so-called transgovernmental networks (TGNs). The many examples include the Group of 8 (G8), the Group of 20 (G20), the International Competition Network (ICN), the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), and the International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS). These regulatory institutions assemble officials from participating states in ongoing communication and collaboration. However, in contrast to IGOs, TGNs operate without a permanent secretariat and without a formal treaty basis in international law. Learning how to engage with TGNs effectively – given all of their informality and opaqueness – is one of the main challenges for today’s citizen activism on the global economy.

Also important in many areas of contemporary global economic governance are private regulatory arrangements. For instance, standards and certification of fair trade emanate mainly from non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Corporate social responsibility schemes for transnational enterprises are mainly run through private bodies such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). The governance of global finance involves a host of private mechanisms, including the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), the World Federation of Exchanges (WFE),

and the Wolfsberg Group. Global governance of online communications occurs mainly through the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). Neglect of the large swathe of private regulation is a major oversight in most current citizen campaigning on the global economy.

Finally, global economic governance also involves hybrid institutions that combine public, market and/or civil society participants, as well as international and national elements. Examples in this category – sometimes also called ‘multistakeholder initiatives’ – include the Financial Stability Board (FSB), the Global Compact (for corporate social responsibility), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). In particular, the FSB (created in 2009 from the earlier Financial Stability Forum) has tremendous potential impact on global economic governance, but it has so far received scarcely any civil society attention. In addition, primary commodity roundtables bring together NGOs, producers and buyers in efforts to set sustainability criteria across a range of products.

In short, it is important to examine IGOs in relation to today’s economy, but it is equally important that civil society activists do not reduce global governance to a few IGOs and also consider other types of regulatory institutions.

### **More Layers**

As well as a wide consideration of issues and institutions, it is also important to have a well-rounded understanding of ‘governance’. ‘Rules’ for society involve more than a ‘visible’ layer of directly articulated statutes, codes and directives as processed through formal regulatory organisations. ‘Rules’ also take more diffuse, implicit and indirectly expressed forms. These ‘deeper’ or ‘structural’ manifestations of governance need to be understood alongside – and to make fuller sense of – the surface appearances of global economic regulation such as the WTO and the IMF.

Different perspectives offer different accounts of the nature of the deeper layers of global economic governance. For instance, some analysts stress the importance of discourses in regulation of the global economy. Discourses – that is, reigning ideas and ideologies – ‘govern’ the global economy by shaping the agenda and framing the policy options. An important example is neoliberal discourse about free markets, efficiency, growth, etc. Although these ideas are, in principle, debatable, they have become such an entrenched ‘common sense’ for most policymakers and citizens that they do not need to be justified. Also significant in more recent years is an underlying reformist discourse about social and environmental sustainability, as reflected in talk of corporate responsibility, poverty reduction, tax justice, etc. Some scholars have suggested that the global economy is also ‘ruled’ by certain deeper historical trends such as business cycles and/or ‘long waves’ of alternating faster and slower growth. Polanyian thought argues that the global economy develops through a ‘double movement’, where a phase of laissez faire (with associated social and environmental harms) is followed by a phase of ‘re-embedding’ the market in society. On this view, the rise of trade unions and the welfare state was the social response to liberalised markets in an earlier historical period, while the more recent rise of ‘alter-globalisation’ movements is the social response to contemporary neoliberal globalisation. Others maintain that global economic crises result from the structural rules of capitalist development.

In short, while it is important that civil society associations understand the overt manifestations of rules and regulatory processes in today’s global economy, public knowledge will be incomplete – and citizen mobilisation less informed and effective – if activists do not also relate directly visible governance to deeper layers of economic and social order.

## A More Intricate Civil Society

And who are the activists? The scope of civil society engagement with global governance ranges widely. Any analysis of this issue should encompass a broad range of citizen associations, understand the links between activism within the UK and larger international movements, and consider informal as well as formally organised modes of citizen action.

### More Associations

Civil society can be defined for present purposes as a political space where associations of citizens seek to shape governance from outside political parties. In part, civil society encompasses NGOs such as Friends of the Earth, the National Trust, and Oxfam, all of whom play an important role in linking ‘ordinary people’ in the UK to global governance, but the civil society arena also ranges more widely. For example, labour movements, farmers unions and professional associations often bring citizen voices into the politics of the global economy. In addition, business forums such as chambers of commerce, employer federations and other industry lobbies are prominent players around global finance, trade and investment. Think tanks and other research bodies can significantly communicate – and influence – public opinion on the global economy and its governance. Many citizens channel their political energies through faith-based organisations such as churches, mosques, temples and related associations. Civil society engagement of the global economy can occur as well through other community groups, including co-operatives and youth initiatives.

Indeed, it is important to consider that some citizens might prefer to engage with the global economy through civil society channels other than NGOs. For instance, on questions of employment and labour standards in a global economy many workers might look to trade unions before NGOs. Businesspeople would generally turn to commercial lobbies rather than NGOs to pursue

their concerns about the global economy. Some citizens may favour faith-based organisations rather than secular NGOs when it comes to charitable donations against global poverty.

Moreover, some of the most influential citizen campaigns for change in global economic governance have involved coalitions that span several sectors of civil society. For example, the civil society drive for debt relief of low-income countries brought together NGOs, faith-based organisations, trade unions, think tanks and some reform-minded business forums. Cross-sectoral coalitions also figured strongly in the civil society campaign to block the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) in the late 1990s.

None of this is to deny the significance of NGOs in UK citizen responses to global economic governance. It is only to suggest that a narrow focus on NGOs does not cover the full scale, variety and richness of citizen mobilisation on the global economy in Britain and elsewhere.

### **Linking the Domestic and the International**

When examining citizen activism in the UK, it is important to place these initiatives in the context of mobilisations in the wider world. Separating the domestic and international arenas of civil society is unsustainable analytically and can also be disabling politically. In practice, the 'internal' and the 'external' are deeply intertwined in UK civil society.

Most of the UK advocacy on global economic governance mentioned in the June 2012 report has transpired as part of international activism. Oxfam and Friends of the Earth are international NGOs. The Make Poverty History campaign in the UK was part of the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP). Occupy involved simultaneous mobilisations across Europe and North America in 2011-12. UK Uncut has been paralleled by similar civil society resistance to austerity policies in other countries. Indeed, protests in the global south against IMF-supported structural adjustment programmes started as early as the 1970s.

Not only are UK civil society actions on the global economy usually connected with international movements, but they often require transborder links in order to make significant impact on global governance institutions. Thus, for example, the Jubilee campaign would not have achieved debt cancellation for poor countries had it been a UK initiative alone. Likewise, the Robin Hood Tax campaign in Britain has attained advances on a financial transactions tax (FTT) as part of an international movement. The same holds for the successes of the fair trade movement, the Tax Justice Network's steps to increase transparency of offshore finance centres, and so on. In each case, UK activists have collaborated with allies abroad.

### **Beyond the Formal to the Informal**

Informality alongside formality is a third way that civil society becomes larger and more intricate than might initially be envisaged. In other words, not all citizen activism vis-à-vis the global economy and its governance happens through legal and bureaucratic organisations such as NGOs, trade unions and research institutes. In many other cases, civil society engagement is spontaneous, self-generated and temporary.

Street demonstrations on global economic issues are often largely informal in character. Prominent examples in Britain include mass protests at the Birmingham G8 Summit in 1998, the Gleneagles G8 Summit in 2005, and the London G20 Summit in 2009. Likewise, the Occupy camp outside St Paul's Cathedral and the activism of UK Uncut have operated without formal registration and statutes. Yet these informal initiatives can draw larger participation – and greater media attention – than many events and campaigns which are put on by formal civil society organisations.

New social media have also opened up large spaces of informal activism in Britain regarding global economic governance. Many citizen deliberations about finance, trade, investment

and migration now occur via websites, listservs, blogs, Twitter feeds, SMS circulations, Facebook campaign groups, and YouTube videos. For example, the Move Your Money UK initiative operates mainly online ([www.moveyourmoney.org.uk](http://www.moveyourmoney.org.uk)). Formal civil society organisations often participate only marginally if at all in such discussions and any resultant mobilisations.

Hence, to obtain a full picture of public mobilisation on global economic governance, it is necessary to consider the wide array of activism in Britain today that does not emanate from an office or carry a registered label. A formalistic approach to civil society can overlook many of the motivations and triggers of citizen activism, as well as important parts of the dynamics that make campaigns either succeed or fail.

### Dynamics of Engagement

In order more fully to understand UK civil society engagement of global economic governance, analysis needs not only to describe citizen perceptions and movements, but also to explain these phenomena. It is important not merely to map attitudes and activities in civil society as regards the global economy, but also to determine when, how and why mobilisation happens, and under what conditions it brings results.

#### Why Does It Happen (or Not)?

UK civil society responses to the global economy and its governance have been uneven. From time to time mobilisation on these issues is intense; yet for other stretches of time the civil society scene is quiet, even though global economic problems might be pressing. Moreover, some aspects of the global economy such as fair trade and poor country debt have attracted substantial campaigns, while others such as financial markets and arms exports have drawn less civil society attention, in spite of their major significance for the UK.

What accounts for these variations? It is important to have systematic understanding of the circumstances that promote or hinder activism in this area. Such knowledge would also help civil

society organisations to promote the desired mobilisations.

A number of conditions might figure in either stimulating or stifling UK civil society activism on global economic governance. One important factor might be levels of literacy on the subject, in civil society associations as well as in the public at large. Perhaps it is vital to have leaders with passion, commitment, strategic acumen and charisma to drive forward a campaign. Maybe mobilisation arises from spontaneous outbursts of grassroots frustration. Perhaps the ability to build coalitions across different civil society groups and sectors is a telling factor. Possibly the priorities and resource allocations by foundations and other sponsors of civil society activity make a key difference. Perhaps the receptiveness of global economic institutions to civil society interest is crucial: e.g. proactive outreach by the World Bank versus opacity at the BIS. Maybe the (perceived) economic interests of UK publics and civil society organisations make them eager to open some issues and reluctant to broach others. Possibly the power of neoliberal discourse described earlier discourages large and sustained challenges to existing global economic governance arrangements. Most likely outcomes arise from a combination of these or other factors.

Yet all of these suggested forces can only be hypothesised at this stage. Systematic research is required to develop a fuller and substantiated account of the conditions that stimulate or inhibit UK citizen mobilisation on the global economy.

#### How Does It Happen?

As well as comprehending the triggers of, and brakes on, UK civil society activism concerning global economic governance, it is also important to understand how this mobilisation operates once it is underway. This means examining the internal workings of civil society organisations as well as exploring their relations with each other; with wider actors such as political parties, the mass media, and the general public; with

the regulatory agencies; and with the deeper structural order of global governance.

A number of issues arise regarding the internal operations of UK civil society organisations as they engage with global economic governance. For example, it would be helpful to know more about the kinds of people who become civil society professionals and/or street activists, in terms of their social positions and personality traits. Also, how does a civil society association organise its activism: horizontally or vertically; and with or without clear divisions of labour? How well or poorly are the campaigns resourced, and who funds them?

It is additionally important to understand how civil society associations relate with one another in campaigns on global economic governance. With what means and intensities do they communicate with each other? How are relationships among various advocacy groups (within the UK as well as internationally) collaborative and/or competitive? What forms do coalitions take (formal agreements, loose networks); and what sustains (or breaks) these alliances? Do certain associations act as coordinating hubs for particular issues or campaigns?

Widening the field further, how do UK civil society groups relate with other kinds of actors in their activism on the global economy? What alliances are made with political parties and parliamentarians (in Cardiff, Holyrood, Stormont and Strasbourg as well as Westminster)? How extensively and successfully do civil society campaigns on global economic governance engage the mass media (through public service, commercial and community channels)? What about connections with the corporate sector? How do the civil society associations in question relate with the general public: e.g. through membership subscriptions, petitions, consumer campaigns, shareholder activism, new social media, advertisements, citizen education initiatives, etc?

Also of particular interest are the ways that UK civil society associations engage directly with the institutions that regulate the global economy: that is, the IGOs, TGNs, private mechanisms and multi-stakeholder initiatives described earlier. Some of these governance agencies have official policies and procedures to consult with civil society groups. In a few cases civil society organisations may even sit on the board of a regulatory institution. Meanwhile, other governance bodies pursue only ad hoc exchanges with civil society, while others eschew all contacts with affected citizens. In addition to participation in policymaking processes, civil society actors may also connect with regulatory agencies through monitoring and evaluation exercises, as well as by invoking complaints mechanisms where they exist. In other cases citizen groups reject dialogue with some or all governance organisations and instead opt for street demonstrations and other protest actions.

Finally, there is the question of how UK civil society groups engage with the deeper layers of governing the global economy: the reigning discourses, the overall structure of capitalism, etc. Some actors (e.g. many business forums and mainstream think tanks) might in conformist fashion mainly endorse the existing global economic order. Other civil society associations such as the major trade unions and NGOs might on reformist lines seek change, albeit within the existing global economic order, rather than systemic change. Meanwhile, other parts of UK civil society might in a transformist vein aim to subvert prevailing structures and promote a radically alternative design for the global economy.

As in the earlier discussion of causal triggers, the present report can only catalogue relevant questions concerning the ways and means of UK civil society activism on the global economy. Fuller understanding of these issues – which would be vital to support expanded and more influential campaigns on global finance, global investment, global trade and global migration – requires systematic careful research.

## What Makes an Impact?

Next to understanding the triggers of UK citizen mobilisation on global economic issues, as well as how that mobilisation operates, it is also interesting and important to assess outcomes. Which civil society initiatives in Britain, using what kinds of tactics and strategies, have made an impact on governance of the global economy? Unfortunately, there is at present a dearth of solid research into these matters.

There would appear to be a number of cases where civil society in Britain has made a difference to rules and regulatory processes in the global economy, although usually as part of larger international mobilisations. Influential campaigns for debt cancellation, fair trade and a financial transactions tax have already been mentioned. In addition, a number of UK-based civil society organisations have figured prominently in global drives against corruption and in the promotion of corporate social and environmental responsibility. Civil society pressure has furthermore borne results in substantially increasing the transparency of some intergovernmental organisations, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO. Also successful in realising their aims were civil society efforts to block the MAI and the campaign to improve access to essential medicines.

In contrast, civil society movements in Britain and further afield have made little or no impact on some other issues of global economic governance. For example, transparency is still sorely lacking in respect of many regulatory arrangements for the global economy. In addition, apart from the long drive for a financial transactions tax, citizen activism has generally had at best marginal effects on re-regulating financial markets in the public interest. Likewise, the tax justice campaign has struggled to get beyond the modest victory of some tighter control of offshore finance centres. Civil society efforts to link trade with environmental concerns at the WTO have likewise made only small advances, in spite of two

decades of advocacy. Occupy drew considerable public attention, but it is hard to link that public protest to concrete policy changes.

Further research is required to examine these and other experiences of advocacy in order to identify the circumstances that enable UK civil society initiatives to influence governance of the global economy. Which of the above mentioned possible stimuli to civil society mobilisation also helps the resulting campaign to make an impact; and which of the abovementioned ways and means of activism helps to generate that impact?

## Summary

The *Global Rules, Local Rulers* project highlights a key problem that other UK-based philanthropic funders have neglected: namely, how to develop larger, more sustained, more informed and more influential citizen engagement of the global economy and its governance. The initial study and report have helpfully identified a range of issues, initiatives and attitudes.

However, as elaborated above, a fuller understanding – and sounder capacity development activities that build on that understanding – would need systematically to consider:

- more aspects of global economic governance
  - a) more issues
  - b) more actors
  - c) more layers of regulation
- more aspects of civil society
  - a) more types of associations
  - b) domestic-international links
  - c) formal and informal activities
- explanation as well as description
  - a) triggers of activism
  - b) ways and means of mobilisation
  - c) keys to impact

## Part 2 - Priorities for Future Work

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The following paragraphs first highlight the value and importance of an interdisciplinary approach to action-oriented research on global economic governance. Then brief illustrations are given of the sorts of research and capacity-building activities that could be envisioned to help address some of the issues and challenges set out in Part I of this report.

### Interdisciplinarity

Questions of civic engagement with global economic governance are best addressed in an interdisciplinary fashion. From one angle, such an approach explores the legal basis of global governance and can address the content and implications of institutional and organisational arrangements. In addition, an interdisciplinary approach is attuned to the political economy of global governance and can engage the shifting dynamics of the global economy in order to highlight the significance of a particular sector, e.g. finance. Finally, linguistic and sociological dimensions of analysis bring out the importance of discourses that communicate the 'common sense' knowledge upon which global governance is constructed. Policy-relevant understanding of global economic governance is especially advanced when expertise from different disciplinary angles is combined. Unfortunately, most current research on global governance is restricted to an individual academic field, be it economics or law or politics or sociology.

### Possible Lines of Research

Interdisciplinary research could develop further the framework of action-oriented knowledge sketched in Part I of this report: namely, to map the larger webs of interaction between civil society and global economic governance; and then to explore more precisely the triggers, trajectories and impacts of activism. Such research cannot be comprehensive, of

course, so the question arises of formulating more specific projects that can most advance knowledge and practice in desired directions. Three possible lines of research are sketched in the following paragraphs for illustrative purposes.

### Discourse and Power in Global Economic Governance

Civil society actors can easily underestimate the significance of language in governance. Rules and regulatory arrangements rest not only on foundations of material power (economic, financial, military, etc), but also on the discursive power of terminology, argumentation and ideology. For example, discourses of 'growth', 'efficiency', 'flexibility', 'competitiveness' and 'austerity' can have powerful effects in underpinning existing economic governance. Activists, too, can (unconsciously) be pulled into prevailing discourses and can find it difficult to advance alternative core language, for example, of 'care' and 'sustainability'.

Important research could therefore explore how governance institutions have used language and discourse to promote certain lines of law and policy, as well as to ward off other approaches. For example, the speeches, reports and communiqués issued by intergovernmental organisations such as the WTO or the IMF could be examined to identify the strategic use of language and discourse. Knowledge of discursive power in global economic governance could help civil society groups to push authorities to go beyond catchwords and slogans towards more detailed and substantiated defences of prevailing policies.

In addition, research on discourse and power could help civil society actors to devise and promote alternative language for different policy directions in the global economy. The research could further explore how citizen advocacy

groups can spread different discourses through the strategic use of communication – not only through more traditional channels such as speeches, meetings, reports and discussion papers, but also through the use of new electronic and web-based media, such as blogs, chat rooms, twitter, social networking sites and e-petitions.

### **Engaging Citizens with Financial Institutions**

In another project, interdisciplinary research could focus on building knowledge for financial citizenship. Finance has become a predominant force in the contemporary global economy; however, its workings generally seem highly obscure to citizens, much more than questions of environment, human rights or trade. Financial governance institutions such as the Bank of England, the European Central Bank and the IMF – as well as mainstream financial journalism – seem to engage with citizens in ways that stymie financial literacy and financial inclusion.

Research could identify how and why this disempowerment of citizens happens. The causes might lie, for example, in policy procedures, institutional cultures and/or (once again) language and discourse. Such knowledge could also point the way to alternative and more empowering modes of interaction and communication between financial governance institutions and citizens. A combination of elite interviews, focus groups, and analysis of the published texts of financial institutions would be used to explore how citizen engagements with financial institutions can be made more inclusive and legitimate.

### **From Aim to Impact**

Part I of this report has indicated that many forms of civil society associations can engage with many sorts of global economic issues, towards many kinds of aims, using many variations of advocacy, under many types of circumstances. The resultant picture is very complicated and messy, with little indication of how, more precisely, matters develop from the articulation

of objectives, via the pursuit of activities, to the realisation (or not) of outcomes.

Research could undertake a systematic investigation of these processes. A project could examine a set of cases from the recent history of UK civil society engagement of global economic issues: e.g. Oxfam's Rigged Rules of Global Trade Campaign; the Jubilee Campaign; the Robin Hood Tax campaign; Occupy; Avaaz; the Move Your Money initiative; etc. Comparative analysis could assess the potentials and limitations of different forms of citizen engagement, with a view to identifying key features that hold particular promise for future activism. This knowledge would assist civil society actors in their strategic decisions about engaging global economic issues and could also assist funders in making decisions on the kinds of activities to prioritise.

### **Possible Lines of Capacity Building**

Research such as that just described could be used in order to better inform NGOs and other citizen groups about how to engage in a more critically aware and strategic fashion with issues of global economic governance. There are also a number of practical ways in which civil society awareness and capacity may be increased.

First, in terms of substantive content, capacity building efforts could contribute to developing a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of various types of citizen engagement with global economic governance, as outlined in the first part of this report. Greater awareness of the breadth and diversity of existing activism would be helpful both for civil society actors and for the regulatory institutions that might engage with them.

Second, with regard to skills enhancement, this report has underlined that the rather technocratic language used in global economic governance creates barriers to meaningful and effective citizen engagement. Capacity building efforts

could aim to familiarise civil society actors with key terminology, while at the same time holding activists back from the trap of uncritically adopting hegemonic discourse.

Third, in respect of political mobilisation, capacity building efforts should provide citizens with tools for translating enhanced awareness and skills into effective action. Thus, it is important to develop citizens' understanding – from as early as school age – of the different forms that engagement with global economic governance can take and to draw attention to the many opportunities that exist for becoming engaged.

A number of avenues could be pursued to deliver this type of capacity building:

- **Workshops** are an effective means to bring together actors from various backgrounds (e.g.

academic and practitioner) and to facilitate exchange of opinion on citizen engagement with issues of global economic governance.

- **Short courses** take a more directed approach to content delivery and could focus on specific themes in global economic governance.
- **Web-based information material** could include background briefings on key issues in global economic governance or updates on ongoing global economic governance research activities.
- **School curriculum development** could promote economic literacy as part of Citizenship Studies, a mandatory subject for pupils in UK schools from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4.

## Appendix - Contributing Researchers

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The University of Warwick Global Research Priorities in Global Governance (GRP-GG) programme was launched in 2011 as part of a wider initiative to promote the University's excellence in policy-oriented interdisciplinary scholarship. The GRP-GG assembles more than 80 researchers based in 14 departments across four faculties of the university. Development of the network is overseen by an Academic Lead and an advisory Convening Group composed of 14 researchers from the various departments and projects that contribute to the GRP-GG.

**James Brassett** is Reader in International Political Economy in the Department of Politics and International Studies. Previous work on the Tobin Tax has been published by Routledge, the European Journal of International Relations and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD). He is currently working

on issues of deliberative democracy and global financial governance.

**James Harrison** is Associate Professor in the School of Law and Co-Director of the Centre for Human Rights in Practice. His core research interests focus upon analysing the broader social and environmental impact of economic laws and regulations. He has published widely on a range of social justice issues in relation to trade law, investment law and the activities of multinational corporations. He has experience of working with a wide range of civil society organisations including the Alternative Trade Mandate Alliance, Liberty UK, Amnesty International, the Canadian Council on International Co-operation, and various fair trade and ethical finance organisations.

**Malcolm MacDonald** is Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics in the Centre for Applied Linguistics. His main research interests lie in

institutional discourse, with a particular interest in security discourse and medical discourse; and intercultural communication, with a particular interest in intercultural ethics. Malcolm has published widely in journals such as *Discourse and Society* and *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*. He is also editor of the SSCI-listed journal *Language and Intercultural Communication*.

**Lena Rethel** is Assistant Professor of International Political Economy in the Department of Politics and International Studies. Her current research is on global financial governance; the relationship between finance and development; and Islamic finance. Her book, *The Problem with Banks* (co-authored with Timothy J. Sinclair) was published by Zed Books in 2012. She has recently co-edited a special issue on 'Global Governance in Crisis' in the journal *Global Society*.

**Jan Aart Scholte** is Professor in the Department of Politics and International Studies and Academic Lead of the University of Warwick's Global Research Priorities in Global Governance. His research interests span globalisation theory, global governance, civil society in global politics, and global democracy. Much of his fieldwork across five continents has involved civil society responses to global economic governance. In 2003 he drafted the International Monetary Fund's staff guide for relations with civil society organisations. Jan Aart previously co-directed the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation (2003-7) and co-convenes the Building Global Democracy Programme (since 2008). He is also a former editor of the SSCI-listed journal *Global Governance* (2005-9).

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